



[The Taliban Detains a Canadian Aid Worker in Afghanistan Under Its Widening Crackdown on Rights Activists](#)

Afghan journalists, aid workers, professors, political analysts, and other activists have come under the increasing threat of arbitrary arrest in the months since the Taliban's takeover in August of 2021. One of the most notable recent cases involves Nadima Noor, a dual Canadian-Afghan national and aid worker, who was detained by the Taliban last month. Noor ran a small humanitarian organization, and her family has gone public regarding the ordeal after repeated failed attempts to negotiate her release with Taliban officials. The rising prevalence of incidents like this mark a growing trend of arbitrary arrests in Afghanistan by the Taliban of both foreign nationals and Afghans alike. Further fueling the notion is the fact that these detainments are often not coupled with the formal charge of any crime, demonstrating the frivolous nature of the practice. As such, human rights defenders have justifiably expressed concern at the current state of freedom and liberties in Afghanistan.

Initially, Taliban officials had stated that Noor would be released within days, but have since claimed to have expanded their investigation. She was arrested by a Taliban intelligence unit, which appears to be operating with near-total autonomy. Her imprisonment, along with that of one of her colleagues, has merely added to the number of foreigners currently detained by the Taliban. Noor is the first female dual national to be arrested since the United States' withdrawal and consequent Taliban takeover of Afghanistan back in August of last year. There also seems to be a lack of communication between different branches of the Taliban, which exacerbates the lack of clarity in trying to obtain information when someone is taken into custody. Nearly all arrests are carried out without formal charges, and diplomatic missions are often not notified until weeks later. In total, an estimated 20 or more female activists remain in jail despite international pressure.

It is clear that "the Taliban want to censor us," said Shams Amani, a political talk show host who often has guests that are critical of the Taliban appear on his program. Amani himself was threatened by Taliban intelligence to halt the broadcasting of any subversive views and in fact, one of his show's frequent guests – Sayed Baqir Mahsini – disappeared for two days after accusing the Taliban of censorship. The college professor appears to have been released, but others like him have not been as fortunate. The overall uptick in arbitrary arrests has curbed the hopes of many in the international community after the Taliban seemed to show initial restraint after their takeover. Some analysts have predicted that they may begin to impose the same harsh tactics used in rural parts of Afghanistan in larger urban areas as well. The Taliban is also increasing its methods of monitoring the Afghan population in an effort to further aid its ability to arrest any who are critical of it.

There is still hope that a myriad of attention regarding Noor's case will lead to her liberation after two United Nations journalists and the Afghan nationals who were working for them were released themselves in February. However, still concerning is the fact that a recent Human Rights Watch report has detailed the prevalence of attacks against journalists and activists in the country. Female journalists in particular have faced the harshest repression, with nearly 80% of them leaving their profession or being fired.