



### Experts Highlight the Deterioration of Human Rights Under the Taliban in Afghanistan

Independent experts have highlighted the notable deterioration of human rights in Afghanistan during the past 13 months since the August 2021 Taliban takeover. They have also outlined that stronger accountability measures are needed in order to investigate grave abuses which have become commonplace under the Taliban's rule. The circumstances facing women and girls in Afghanistan have drawn particular concern, with rapid increases in systematic violations of fundamental rights such as access to education. In addition to this, a lack of social services and problems regarding aid reaching people in need are also major factors that have resulted in a worsening of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. The Taliban has imposed harsh restrictions and repressive measures after initially pledging to respect the rights of women and minorities, rolling back basic human rights, targeting opponents and critics, and clamping down on freedom of expression.

Since August of 2021, there has been a prevalence of human rights violations committed by the Taliban, from their oppression of women and girls to the abolition of any independent group that oversees mechanisms to protect fundamental rights. In fact, observers point out that nowhere else in the world has seen women's rights be so systematically attacked and restricted. Every aspect of their lives is watched under the guise of morality and a weaponized form of religion. Women and girls face the threat of violence such as extra-judicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture, and heightened risks of exploitation. Furthermore, arbitrary killings of human rights defenders, political activists associated with the previous government, and minorities have also been reported at an alarming rate. Freedom of assembly has been attacked as the Taliban uses the excessive force of their police to crack down on protesters, who are subjected to being beaten, arrested, or killed. Freedom of the press has also been repressed, with the Taliban issuing statements banning journalists from publishing anything that is "contrary to Islam" or "insulting to national figures."

A disturbing number of women and girls have been detained, and some even tortured, for merely holding peaceful protests. This has not stopped the movement as many still fearlessly march on the street demanding their rights to education and freedom. Since September of 2021, the Taliban has imposed a ban on girls moving on past the sixth grade. Thus, the demonstrators are fighting for the right to education, to walk around freely by themselves, to drive and be issued a license, and to not be seen as second-class citizens. The Taliban have also eroded mechanisms and services that were in place to provide protection and legal counseling to citizens, particularly women. They have replaced experienced judges with members of their party and courts no longer accept cases that relate to divorce, separation, or domestic violence.

A resurgence of the Taliban has left them in control of more of the country's territory than at any previous time since 2001. This has also caused a major immigration crisis with tens of thousands fleeing the country and others internally displaced. The United Nations is trying to provide as much assistance as possible to these refugees via life-saving shelter, food, water, and relief items for both those still in Afghanistan and ones who have emigrated to neighboring countries. Amnesty International and multiple other rights organizations are attempting to maintain focus on the Taliban's gross human rights violations and crimes under international law. Recently, the U.N. Human Rights Council held a conference about the situation in Afghanistan with the discussion covering issues like how to keep citizens safe, how to help Afghan women and make their voices heard, and how to restore justice in the nation.