



General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 December 2023

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-third session

19 June–14 July 2023

Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Joint written statement* submitted by Interfaith International, Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, Rencontre Africaine pour la defense des droits de l'homme, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Taliban De Facto Governance and Women's Rights

For almost three decades, the Taliban has violated human rights like no other ruling group. Since the takeover of Afghanistan, the Taliban has made it clear that it is not serious about protecting or respecting human rights. We have already seen a wave of violations, from retaliatory attacks and restrictions on women to the suppression of protests, the media and civil society.

The Taliban's repressive actions since its takeover in 2021 have consistently undermined human rights gains over the past 20 years. Contrary to the Taliban's repeated claims of respect for the rights of the Afghan people, many reports, such as The UN Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan's report, show that human rights abuses, including the targeted killing of civilians, have happened throughout Afghanistan in large numbers, particularly in Kabul.

According to Yamini Mishra, Amnesty International's South Asia Regional Director: "Arbitrary detentions, torture, disappearances, [and] summary executions have returned as the order of the day. Women and girls have been stripped of their rights and face a bleak future, deprived of education or the possibility of taking part in public life."

Though the Taliban promised amnesty after the takeover, reports suggest that the group has killed dozens of former ANDSF members, former government employees, journalists, civil society members, and human rights activists. The Taliban focuses only on warfare and torturing civilians. It does not have a foreign policy but focuses on recognition and getting a seat in the UN. However, the main force of all its policies and plans for running the country is the social policy towards women. The foundation of Taliban de facto governance is based on the subjugation of women.

The Taliban has enacted extremely severe gender policies and justified them with the claim that the Sharia supports such measures, as do the traditional customs of Afghanistan. Just a short list of their gender policies includes forbidding women to work outside of the home; requiring women to wear a head-to-toe covering when out into public; forbidding girls from attending school; preventing women from going out in public unless accompanied by a close male family member; preventing women from wearing certain kinds of clothing or jewellery; and applying harsh punishments for fornication and adultery.

The Taliban's brutal policies towards women have greatly affected the country's entire population in every aspect of life. Afghan women have been removed from all parts of public life. The Taliban has literally placed women under house arrest, and women [have] disappeared from workplaces completely.

The Taliban denies women any sort of individual liberty by forbidding them from being in public unless accompanied by a close male relative. After years of war, women with close male relatives are limited to a rare segment of the population. In Kabul alone, there are about 30,000 widows, and most of them are the sole supporters of their children.

The biggest achievement of the Taliban is depriving women in Afghanistan of all their rights. According to the UN Women report, 2022, "Women's and girls' lives and prospects are confined to the home." Since it took control, the Taliban has not missed any opportunity to suppress Afghan women and deprive them of their basic rights.

With the fall of the republican system and the domination of the Taliban over the country, the base of the democratic system in Afghanistan has fallen apart. The achievements, 20 years in the making, of the system, as well as the people of Afghanistan in the political, civil, economic, social and cultural fields, are now seriously in peril.

According to UN Special Rapporteur's report, the situation with regard to human rights and compliance with the principles of international human rights in Afghanistan have become unprecedented, serious and worrying. The Taliban has widely, systematically and purposefully violated the human rights of Afghan citizens, especially women.

The Taliban widely violates the human rights and freedoms of women, vulnerable ethnic and religious groups, and former government employees. They target civilians, use extreme violence, torture, arrest civilians illegally, abuse human rights in field trials, usurp people's property, close girls' schools, and censor the Afghan media on a large scale.

The Taliban, despite national and international protests, has systematically and purposefully continued with its non-compliance in regard to human rights standards, which has become entrenched in its official programmes and policies.

The single-gender rule of the Taliban is in clear opposition to the demand for women's participation in public life. The Taliban de facto leadership has erased the presence of women in the fields of politics, public administration, the economy and culture. These restrictions are neither based on Islam nor the Afghan culture.

The Taliban has not been able to form the most basic standards of a legitimate government since the takeover. The de facto presence of the Taliban in power, through coercion and tyranny, is a clear violation of international law. The rule of the Taliban is an imposed, political force on the Afghan people, which should not have the right to monopolise power. The lack of capability to form a broad-based government, and the Taliban's gross violation of human rights, will eventually have serious consequences.
