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

### **Written statement\* submitted by Partners For Transparency, a non-governmental organization 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.

[30 May 2023]

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



# **The Situation of Women's Rights in Afghanistan**

## **Preface**

Being a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since March 5, 2003, Afghanistan is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. Despite the positive steps it has achieved over the past twenty years, the Taliban's seizure of power in 2021 once again created a systematic institutional exclusion of women and the suppression of their rights. Although the Taliban initially promised to support the rights of women and minorities, they imposed severe restrictions instead; in April 2023, women were barred from working for the United Nations and were limited in their participation in the workforce and daily life.

Based on this, Partners for Transparency shows its interest in presenting this intervention to clarify the violations women are subjected to in Afghanistan during the rule of the Taliban movement.

## **Violations of Women's Rights in Afghanistan**

Shortly after capturing Kabul, the Taliban abolished the 2004 constitution and replaced female civil servants with men. In September 2021, the Taliban closed the Ministry of Women's Affairs, replacing it with the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, and imposed a strict interpretation of Islamic law. In the following months, women and girls were denied secondary education, then university education, and were prevented from entering many public places, such as parks and gyms. Women were prohibited from working in sectors other than health care and primary education, then extended to Afghan women working for NGOs. In parallel, systems for reporting gender-based violence were suspended, the network of shelters closed across Afghanistan, and other support services were suspended. (1) They also restricted women's movement, requiring a male family member to accompany them when traveling, women's clothing, and women to cover their faces in public places. Girls and women are also no longer allowed to play sports.

### **1. Ban on Education from Primary to University**

A month after the Taliban took control, the government announced that women would be allowed to continue attending university - but with several caveats. Classes are segregated by gender, with the veil compulsory. Also, women are only allowed to take lessons from other women or elderly men. By 2021, the proportion of 10-year-old girls who attend school is about 60 percent. Among the 15-year-old girls, only 30% were still attending secondary education, and 80% of girls with a physical disability did not have access to education. On August 15, 2021, human rights violations against women and girls steadily escalated. The Taliban systematically excluded women and girls from public life. The Taliban also prevented girls from going to school after the sixth grade. (2) In March 2022, just hours after schools reopened, the government canceled classes for teenage girls. The matter reached its climax in December 2022, when the Taliban prevented women from entering universities and working in non-governmental organizations, and the decree entered into force immediately. Despite the closure of high schools, many Afghan girls continued their studies via the Internet to enroll in universities, but the world community widely condemned this decision.

### **2. Forced Marriage and Child Marriage**

Even before the Taliban rule in 2021, one in three girls was forced to marry before their 18th birthday. This high number has increased further since 2021 as the humanitarian crisis in the country has had a particularly severe impact on families with many children. Parents are turning to the patriarchal tradition of marrying off their young daughters in return for a dowry to avoid starvation. In addition, some families resort to the early marriage of their daughters

to protect them from the possibility of forcing them to marry a Taliban fighter. Reports confirmed that families are repeatedly forced to marry off their unmarried daughters. Other families choose to marry off their daughter to gain family protection. Although the Taliban issued a decree in December 2021 banning forced marriage, this does not protect girls.

### **3. Impose a Ban on Women Working in Non-Governmental Organizations**

Before the ban, women were 30-45% of staff in international NGOs and 50-55% of national NGOs. The ban on Afghan women working for national and international NGOs, imposed in late December 2022, has jeopardized the delivery of humanitarian aid, which is critical to the survival of millions of Afghans - men, women, and children - in a country in deep crisis due to many environmental and economic factors and political. Within a few days, a fragile exception for women working in NGOs in the health and education sectors was agreed upon. And in early April 2023, the Taliban went a step further by banning Afghan women from working in the United Nations mission in the country. Not only is women's participation in NGO activities for the social and economic empowerment of Afghan aid workers, but it is essential to the success of aid delivery to Afghan women in need. (3)

### **4. Discrimination and Lack of Political Participation**

With the help of quotas, before the Taliban took power, women made up 27 percent of the members of parliament in Afghanistan, 21% of all defense lawyers were women and 265 female judges out of a total of 1,951. Now there is not a single female minister in the new Afghanistan's de facto government. The Taliban abolished the Ministry of Women's Affairs and replaced it again with the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, known as the group's moral police. It enforced the Taliban's misogynist decrees and imposed their interpretation of Sharia, which included strict dress codes and public executions and floggings.

Since August 2021, the situation in Afghanistan has seen one of the largest declines in the world regarding respect for the human rights of women and girls. It has denied Afghan women and girls secondary and higher education, access to public spaces, political participation, and job opportunities and has largely halted support services for victims of gender-based violence. (4).

Accordingly, we affirm the full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and their equal and meaningful participation in society are goals and requirements for sustainable economic and political development, social cohesion, stability and peace in Afghanistan. Partners for Transparency recommends the following:-

- We call on the de facto authorities to fulfill their obligations under international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Afghanistan is a party;
- Lifting the ban on girls and women attending secondary and higher education institutions and allow them to resume their studies at the beginning of this school year;
- The international community must continue to provide support to Afghan women.
- Afghanistan shall reaffirm its commitment by taking concrete actions to support and fulfill the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, particularly their right to education and employment.
- Prioritizing the rights of women and girls in all their engagements with the de facto authorities and demanding the immediate repeal of decrees and policies that violate the rights of women and girls.
- Taking proactive measures to support Afghan women to participate in decision-making processes.

- Increasing support for Afghan women so that they can resume work, access assistance and health care (including reproductive health care), and enjoy a decent standard of living.

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(1) Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle, European Parliament, 4 Apr 2023, link, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747084/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)747084\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747084/EPRS_BRI(2023)747084_EN.pdf)

(2) In focus: Women in Afghanistan one year after the Taliban takeover, UN WOMEN, 15 Aug 2022, link, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/in-focus/2022/08/in-focus-women-in-afghanistan-one-year-after-the-taliban-takeover>

(3) Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle, European Parliament, 4 Apr 2023, link, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747084/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)747084\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747084/EPRS_BRI(2023)747084_EN.pdf)

(4) Joint Statement from Foreign Ministers on the Situation for Women and Girls in Afghanistan on International Women's Day, USA Department of State, 8 Mar 2023, link, <https://bit.ly/434dYVK>