

Forum: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3)

Issue: Combating the rise in gender-based violence in Afghanistan

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INTRODUCTION

“We showed to the world that the Taliban have not changed... I did not imagine that one day my own voice would be stifled.” This was said by a female Afghan Radio Reporter, who, although under oppression, mustered up the courage to express how her voice was violently silenced.¹ This leads us to the topic at hand, namely: “Combating the rise in gender-based violence in Afghanistan”. Under the Taliban rule, women's opinions have become a shadow of the continuous arbitrariness, simulating a rather disturbing scenario of gender inequality.

The first invasion by the Taliban happened in 1998. However, after a US-led operation, they were thrown out of power, until regaining their command in 2021. Their fundamentalistic ruling was marked and continues to be marked by violence, hatred and diminishing of all crucial humanitarian principles. As has been clearly observed, the unjust actions stem from antiquated gender standards, which falsely constitute the male gender as superior to the female one. Thus, women are forced to live in darkness, to be commanded by men and to act as inferior beings to their spouses.

The United Nations have taken a stance several times against their tyranny, playing a pivotal role in the arrangement and funding of numerous missions and partnerships with the goal of providing support for the victims. Surrounding nations, the United States and the Security Council have executed orders condemning such behaviours, to no avail. In contrast to the legal principle of “stare decisis”, the Taliban government refuses to be held accountable, nor retreat. In the end, the tyrannical establishment set the official name “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”, actively declaring defiance against international law or pressure. The Taliban terror far exceeds the linguistic origin of the word: “Talibani”, meaning: “student”, symbolized as طالب and pronounced as ṭālib. The movement's establishment came from the Iraqi Kurdish Leader, Jalal Talabani, who served as the sixth President of Iraq from 2005 to 2014.²

In correlation with this year's conference theme, “Re-defining Human Rights in an everchanging world”, human rights of women in the Afghan region are at stake, in urgent need of a re-definition and aid. There could not be a more suitable topic for such a theme, seeing as basic, constitutional human rights are being left as prey. It is important to understand that

¹ “Off Air: One by One, the Taliban Are Removing Women's Voices from Afghan Radio.” *The Guardian*, 19 Feb. 2025, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/feb/19/off-air-one-by-one-the-taliban-are-removing-womens-voices-from-afghan-radio?

² “Jalal Talabani, Iraq's First Non-Arab President, Dies.” *Al Jazeera*, 3 Oct. 2017, www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/3/iraqs-former-president-jalal-talabani-dead.

gender-based violence is a result of long-rooted customs and ethical misconceptions, meaning that any effective solution needs to be planned for long-term action, as any swift, “aggressive” moves will only add to the pre-existing issue.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Gender-based Violence - Violence against Women

“Gender-based violence and violence against women are two terms that are often used interchangeably, as most violence against women is inflicted (by men) for gender-based reasons, and gender-based violence affects women disproportionately.”³

Sharia Law

The religious law of Islam is seen as the expression of God’s command for Muslims and, in application, constitutes a system of duties that are incumbent upon all Muslims by virtue of their religious belief. Known as the *sharī‘ah* (literally meaning “path leading to the watering place”), the law represents a divinely ordained path of conduct that guides Muslims toward a practical expression of religious conviction in this world and the goal of divine favour in the world to come.⁴

Afghan Government

“As Afghanistan is an Islamic state, governance is based on Sharia law, which the Taliban enforces strictly through extensive social and cultural policies.”⁵

Theocracy

Theocracy is a form of autocracy or oligarchy in which one or more deities are recognized as supreme ruling authorities, giving divine guidance to human intermediaries, with executive and legislative power, who manage the government's daily affairs.⁶

Interim

Seeing as Afghanistan has no established constitutions or law basis, the current government has self-taken the name: “Interim”, as it was during the first Taliban government from 1996–2001. Taliban leadership rules by decree and judges and Taliban fighters decide how to apply the law on the spot based on their interpretation of Sharia.

Mahram

Mahram, an Arabic term, refers to individuals with whom a Muslim is forbidden to marry or engage in intimate relationships due to their close familial ties. These relationships serve as a protective boundary, promoting modesty and respect within the Muslim community.⁷

³ “What is Gender-based Violence?” *Gender Matters*, www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/what-is-gender-based-violence.

⁴ “Sharia | Definition, Law, & Countries.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 July 1999, www.britannica.com/topic/sharia.

⁵ “Government of Afghanistan.” *Wikipedia*, the Free Encyclopedia, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc, 20 Sept. 2024, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Afghanistan

⁶ “What is a Theocracy?” *Historical Index*, 1 Aug. 2007, www.historicalindex.org/what-is-a-theocracy.htm.

⁷ Saber, R. (2023, November 22). Who is Mahram in Islam? Understanding close relatives. *Learn Quran online, Arabic & Islamic Studies Online | IQRA Network*.

Gender Apartheid

The term gender apartheid (also called sexual apartheid[a] or sex apartheid) refers to the economic and social sexual discrimination against individuals because of their gender or sex. It is a system enforced by using either physical or legal practices to relegate individuals to subordinate positions. Feminist psychologist Phyllis Chesler defines the phenomenon as "practices which condemn girls and women to a separate and subordinate sub-existence and which turn boys and men into the permanent guardians of their female relatives' chastity."⁸

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Background

Taliban Government Establishment / Pre-2001 era

It was September 27, 1996, when the Taliban power took control of Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The Taliban ideology-group emerged after the Afghan Civil War and reigned until 2001 when the United States officially intervened. It is said that the Talibani supporters are a product of the much-expected turmoil after the Soviet withdrawal, a faction-like organisation of Pashtun students from Islamic schools.

2001-2021 Period

The War in Afghanistan, lasting from 2001 to 2021, was a conflict initiated by a U.S.-led coalition in response to the 9/11 attacks. The initial objective was to dismantle al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban regime, which had harbored the terrorist group. The war saw the Taliban initially ousted from major population centers, followed by a long period of insurgency such as roadside bombings, attacks on military outposts and counterinsurgency operations like the development of the Airforce and the winning of public opinion. Ultimately, the conflict concluded with the Taliban regaining control of Afghanistan in 2021.⁹

2021- Present day

On the 15th of August 2021, Kabul was overtaken once again by the Taliban, following the withdrawal of all United States forces after an order by the Biden Administration. Until today, the Taliban reign continues and under the ethical conceptions that are mentioned below, carry on committing Gender Based Violence (GBV) and oppression.

Ethical Background

The Taliban Ideologies and Religion

The Taliban carry an ideology unlike other past Islamic movements in Afghanistan. The Taliban's ideology is a blend of Deobandi Islam, a strict interpretation of Sharia law and

https://iqranetwork.com/blog/who-is-mahram-in-islam-understanding-close-relatives/#google_vignette

⁸ "Gender Apartheid." *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, 3 Jan. 2016, archive.unescwa.org/gender-apartheid.

⁹ "The War In Afghanistan." George W. Bush Library, www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/the-war-in-afghanistan.

Pashtunwali, a traditional Pashtun code of conduct. They are led by their hatred towards all Western philosophies and deal in absolutes, highlighting an extreme interpretation of both the Quran and Sharia Law. Being the word of God and not the saying of God's supporters, they feel passionate in upholding its values and interpreting it to their advantage.

For example, the Quran quotes that: “ Thus, we have ordained a Law (Sharia) upon you in the matter, so follow it and do not follow the whims of those who know not”. While this may be expressing the need to be faithful and act in correlation with the religious principles, the Taliban people see it as a confirmation of their absolute ways and a reason to eliminate each and every group that does not follow the whims they set.

Moreover, Hibatullah Akhundzada, the current leader of Taliban, quoted a Quran verse: “Kill them wherever you come upon them and drive them out of the places from which they have driven you out. For persecution is far worse than killing. And do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque unless they attack you there. If they do so, then fight them—that is the reward of the disbelievers.” Ergo, he tried to justify killings against non-believers but quickly received criticism when it was proven that he purposely excluded the last part of the verse, being: “But if they cease, then surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful”. In this way, the audiences were manipulated, misinformed and coerced into agreeing with the strict ways of the Taliban.

The Taliban Political Structure - Propaganda

The situation in Afghanistan has become a matter of international interest, which inevitably comes against the Taliban plan, being the exclusion of all western impact. So, in order to control the public's opinion they utilize propaganda. Under the Taliban regime, the media was mainly used to lecture the population. Mullah Mohammad Ishaq Nizami, the head of Radio Voice of Sharia, declared: “Afghan people have to be told that we are good for them, that is our job and that is what we will continue to do”.¹⁰

The former foreign minister under the Taliban, Maw-lawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, claimed that the “Taliban suspended all TV and cinematographic shows but conversely enhanced radio programs and other state print media”.¹¹ The regime renovated printing presses and, like nearly every regime before it, created its own organ, Sharia, while continuing more established publications.

These were, however, slim and closely monitored to project positive images of the regime. Afghanistan Radio continued under the name Radio Voice of Sharia; presenters were punished if they did not read out Taliban statements in full. Music, except for unaccompanied religious chants, was banned. Television, photography and even the internet, in the later stages, were also barred, although a number of regime and pro-regime websites were maintained for external use.¹²

¹⁰ "Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?" Refworld, 1 Nov. 2023, www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/icg/2008/en/60724.

¹¹ "Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?" Refworld, 1 Nov. 2023, www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/icg/2008/en/60724.

¹² U.S. Alan Finder, "A Taliban past and a cloudy Yale future", The New York Times, 6 July 2006.

Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, "Afghanistan and the Taliban" Department of Justice | United States Department of Justice, www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2014/09/29/icg_07242008



Figure 1: Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei propaganda poster.¹³

Ethical Implications

Human Rights Violations

For a long time, outdated norms have been the reason for countless violations of human rights. In the case of Gender Based Violence (GBV), gender inequality –which places the female gender in an inferior position to the male gender– leads to arbitrations, violent acts, missed employment opportunities and even forced marriage arrangements, which can cause unwanted and forced pregnancies. Although GBV primarily remains physical, it can also appear via unfair and cruel treatment. In certain forced marriage arrangements, women are treated as slaves, deprived of human rights or the choice to determine their own lives. Since the Taliban interpretation of the Quran supports their absolute decisions, human rights directly clash with the Taliban principles.

Pre-Takeover Commitments

Before the Taliban takeover, the government of Afghanistan made commitments to protect and promote the rights of women and girls. Article 43 of the Afghan Constitution of 2004 guaranteed the right to education¹⁴, for example. Denial of education for women was defined as a form of violence against women in the Afghan Elimination of Violence Against Women Act of 2009. In 2015, Afghanistan adopted its first National Action Plan (NAP)¹⁵. This plan, set to be implemented in two phases from 2015–2018 and 2019–2022, was developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs along with several others. As a U.N. member state, Afghanistan committed to observing principles of the U.N. Charter, and the NAP was developed around the four pillars of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery.

¹³ "This Isn't a Leader. This is a Man in Hiding': the Myth ..." The Observer, 22 June 2025, [observers.co.uk/news/international/article/this-isnt-a-leader-this-is-a-man-in-hiding-the-myth-of-khamenei-is-over](https://www.observers.co.uk/news/international/article/this-isnt-a-leader-this-is-a-man-in-hiding-the-myth-of-khamenei-is-over).

¹⁴ "Afghanistan 2004 Constitution." Constitute, www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Afghanistan_2004.

¹⁵ "Afghanistan – 1325 National Action Plans." 1325 National Action Plans – An Initiative of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/afghanistan/.

To this end, the NAP set objectives for each pillar. These included increasing the participation of women in the civil service, elected government, and in the security sector; passing laws to address human trafficking and violence against women; improving women's access to justice in the legal system; measures to address the culture of impunity surrounding sexual violence; and increasing employment opportunities for women in all sectors of the economy.

Forms of Gender-Based Violence

GBV can appear either as psychological violence, sexual violence and even verbal violence. Unfortunately, women in Afghanistan are forced to face such extreme cruelties even before reaching adulthood. Forced marriages have become a common thing, usually between adult men and women, yet not of age. Most women report repeated physical harm and a thriving percentage of underage girls may even suffer permanent gynecological trauma.

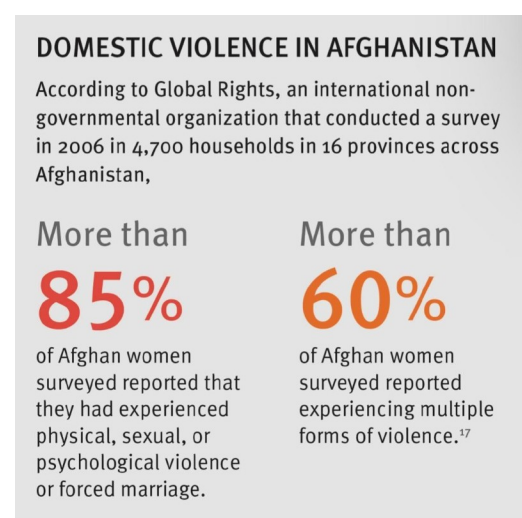


Figure 2: Infographic depicting percentages of women-victims regarding the form of GBV.¹⁶

Unfair Treatment and Living Conditions

Women in Afghanistan have been continuously led to social extinction. Not extinction as in genocide, but as a form of social exclusion and zero to minimum participation in anything involving being an active member of their community. Firstly, women are forced to be accompanied by a close male relative, a "mahram", when traveling, especially for long distances. Aside from that, the Taliban has mandated that women wear the burqa or at least a full hijab that covers their bodies and faces in public. Not wearing the hijab appropriately has constituted cause for punishment for many women in Afghanistan.

¹⁶ "World Report 2006: Rights Trends in Afghanistan." Human Rights Watch, 16 Jan. 2006, www.hrw.org/world-report/2006/country-chapters/afghanistan.



Figure 3: Picture of a woman wearing a hijab in Afghanistan as is mandated. ¹⁷

Besides social restrictions, for women, the sector of life perhaps most affected by the Taliban is education. According to UNICEF, 3.7 million children are currently out of school, and 60% of those are girls.¹⁸ Despite a pledge to allow all girls to return to school by spring of 2022, the government has continued to keep most of them out of school. In March 2022, the Taliban government declared girls could return to primary school (grades one through six) but that secondary and high schools for girls would remain shut.¹⁹ In December 2022, the government announced an indefinite ban on university education for women and girls, as well as an order forbidding females from working for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).²⁰

Regarding another living aspect, women are left helpless when seeking legal aid, seeing as courts are strictly functioning under Sharia Law, often blaming women and persecuting them for accusations of male individuals. Finally, Afghanistan, as mentioned before, is one of the countries with the highest maternal mortality rates as essential products and services are nowhere to be found, due to the systemic neglect of women's medical needs.

¹⁷ Rai, Arpan. "Taliban Says It Arrested Women for 'bad Hijab' As Dozens Go Missing." The Independent, www.independent.co.uk/asia/south-asia/taliban-women-arrested-afghanistan-bad-hijab-b2474939.html.

¹⁸ UNICEF Afghanistan Education, accessed Nov. 2, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/education>.

¹⁹ Susannah George, "Taliban Reopens Afghan Schools — Except for Girls Beyond Sixth Grade," The Washington Post, March 23, 2022.

²⁰ Ehsan Popalzai and Ivana Kottasová, "Taliban Suspend University Education for Women in Afghanistan," CNN, Dec. 20, 2022.

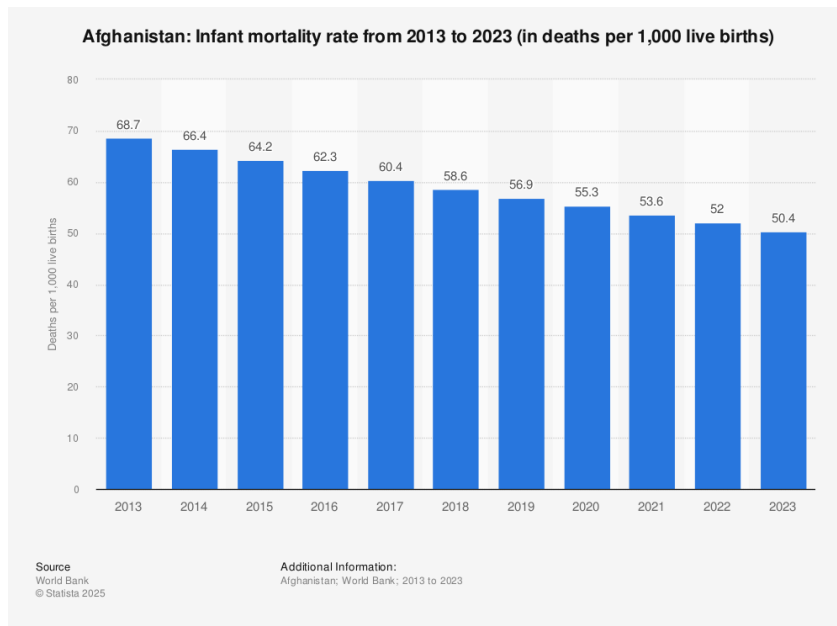


Figure 4: Graph explaining infant mortality cases in Afghanistan over the course 2013-2023.²¹

The Taliban government, nevertheless, has declared that the statistics provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) are negatively inclined against them and state that the unfair placement of Afghanistan as one of the countries most affected by maternal mortality rates, stems from Western propaganda and bias.

The principle of non-maleficence

In the medical field, the principle of non-maleficence is a core part and oath each individual needs to uphold. Generally, it states how one shall not harm another, cause damage to the other or act against them. In the Afghan region, beneficence has ceased to exist, leaving values like charity, aid, mercy and understanding behind. The strong connotation to do good has been overshadowed by continuous oppressive behaviour.

Gender Apartheid

Within Afghanistan, gender persecution is taking place within an institutionalised system of gender-based exclusion, segregation and oppression; meaning that the people in Afghanistan, particularly women and girls, are living under a regime of gender apartheid. This framing has been supported by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.

The International Service on Human Rights (ISHR) joins the call by female human rights defenders from Afghanistan, activists and legal experts in order for the international community to recognise, codify and prosecute gender apartheid in Afghanistan as a crime under international law.

²¹ "Afghanistan - Infant Mortality Rate 2013-2023| Statista." Statista, 24 Mar. 2025, www.statista.com/statistics/806605/infant-mortality-in-afghanistan/.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

The United States of America has traditionally been a primary stakeholder in combating Gender Based Violence (GBV) globally. The United States Agency on International Development (USAID) began employing efforts increasingly in the 1990s, primarily due to rape being used as a war tactic in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. As regards Afghanistan, due to the United States holding control over the region over the course of the past years, e.g. 2001-2021, it has focused greatly on tackling the issue at hand. While over their leadership the issue was somewhat combatted, they failed to maintain peace following the order from the Biden Administration for withdrawal of all United States forces from the area.²²

European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is an autonomous body within the core of the European Union, established to promote and ensure gender equality. It provides research, data, and analysis to support EU institutions and member states in their efforts to achieve gender equality. The Institute has stated that, in Afghanistan it denounces '*the establishment of a social organisation based on a system of segregation and oppression*' of women.²³ Based on reports from the European Union Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), it recognises that there is a presumption of recognition of the refugee status for Afghan women due to widespread gender-based persecution. All Afghan girls and women seeking asylum are therefore eligible for refugee status, solely on the basis of their nationality and gender.²⁴

Arab League

The Arab League is promoting key treaties to combat gender-based violence, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190²⁵, which is the first international treaty to recognize the right to a workplace free from any sort of violence or harassment, including GBV. It requires countries to pass laws and take action to prevent abuse in the workplace. Another certain step is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which obligates states to end discrimination and violence against women in all areas of life. The Istanbul Convention²⁶, while not specific to the Arab region, is a model many stakeholders refer to, setting detailed standards for preventing GBV, protecting victims and above all, prosecuting offenders. These treaties, together with

²² "Tackling Gender Based Violence in Afghanistan - U.S Gov." United States Agency on International Development, www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/258703.pdf.

²³ "Women's Rights in Afghanistan." European Parliament, [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747084/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747084_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747084/EPRS_BRI(2023)747084_EN.pdf).

²⁴ Court of Justice of the European Union: 'All Afghan Girls and Women Seeking Asylum Are Thus Entitled to Refugee Status, Solely on the Basis of Their Nationality and Gender'." Vues D'Europe, www.vuesdeurope.eu/en/court-of-justice-of-the-european-union-all-afghan-girls-and-women-seeking-asylum-are-thus-entitled-to-refugee-status-solely-on-the-basis-of-their-nationality-and-gender/.

²⁵ "International Labour Organization, 15 Apr. 2025, www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/violence-harassment/WCMS_721160/lang-en/index.htm.

²⁶ "Istanbul Convention Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, 11 Oct. 2023, www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention.

national laws aligned with the 5Ps framework (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Punishment, and Redress), form a full legal strategy to address GBV and uphold women's rights.

Türkiye

Türkiye has expressed strong concern over gender-based violence and the erosion of women's rights in Afghanistan, particularly under Taliban rule. In a March 8, 2023 joint statement with 16 countries and the EU, Türkiye condemned the Taliban's bans on secondary and higher education for girls, exclusion of women from public and political life, restrictions on employment, and the dismantling of services for GBV survivors.²⁷ While maintaining diplomatic engagement by hosting Taliban-appointed envoys in early 2025, Türkiye continues to emphasize that any sustainable cooperation depends on restoring women's rights, including education, safety, participation and access to protection and justice for gender-based violence. Nevertheless, the country's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention has portrayed them as quite a weak stakeholder in the issue.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
April 27, 1978	Saur Revolution - Overthrowing of President Mohammad Daoud Khan.
September 27, 1996	Taliban take over Kabul for the first time.
October 7, 2001	The United States invasion begins.
November 13, 2001	Kabul liberated from Taliban.
October 9, 2004	First-ever democratic elections in Afghanistan with Hamid Karzai elected as President.
August 1, 2009	Elimination of Violence Against Women Law enacted.
August 15, 2021	Taliban take over Kabul for the second time.
September 17, 2021	Female students are banned from secondary school under Talibani governance.
December 20, 2022	University ban for female students.

²⁷ Ministerial Statement on the Situation for Women and Girls in Afghanistan on International Women's Day, 8 March 2023 / Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs." Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, www.mfa.gov.tr/ministerial-statement-on-the-situation-for-women-and-girls-in-afghanistan-on-international-women-s-day.en.mfa?

January-July 2025	International Criminal Court persecutions of Taliban leaders.
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RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

E/CN.6/2003/12 Draft resolution II Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

The phenomenon of an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls are the main principles this resolution aims to secure. This resolution was passed when the Taliban had left leadership and the United States had taken control. In this resolution, passing merely unanimously, the first steps were taken towards tackling the issue, yet, were in vain, since the Taliban came back in power in 2021 cancelling every past endeavour.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan

To be able to evaluate the situation in Afghanistan and recommend protocols to strengthen already-existing acts this Report provided a clear picture of the living conditions of women in the region. Under the clearer scope, progress was made. Nevertheless, the individuals who formed the Report were criticized and blamed for bias and Western-based propaganda.

GAP III Thematic Focus Areas - The Afghanistan Gender Country Profile provides gender analysis and recommendations to the European Union (EU)²⁸

In this Country Profile, several measures were proposed forbidding any gender-blind interventions, so that rights are constructed as mutually reinforcing strategies. Amongst them was the adoption of the globally understood minimum percentage of funding for gender as a “principal objective”, the development and agreement among international actors, the commitment to “principled engagement” in any interactions on Afghanistan and the inclusion of costs in project budgets that create an enabling environment for women’s participation, including costs for mahram, childcare (including facilities), additional office space for women-only spaces, and other accommodations.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The 2001 International Coalition - North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Intervention

Following the 2001 U.S.-led invasion in the Afghan region, combined global powers collided to secure the integrity of the newly-freed state. NATO’s International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) intervened to safeguard, as said by them, the rights of the Afghan people. While this targeted intervention had an unforeseen effect, criticism has appeared relating to miscellaneous hopes within the area. It is questioned whether intervention was

²⁸ | UN Women – Headquarters.

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Gender-country-profile-Afghanistan-en.pdf>

initiated out of sheer willingness to aid or other interests. Be it the exploitation of natural resources, military enhancement or expanded governance, all participating parties benefited from the help they provided. That was until 2021, when following the U.S. withdrawal the Taliban regained power. As mentioned before, they managed to ensure safety for some years, while maintaining personal interests. Afghanistan came out of these years of peace (2001-2021) drained from natural resources and became subject to the arbitrariness of the enraged Taliban.

Government Accountability Office report number GAO-04-403 titled 'Afghanistan Reconstruction: Deteriorating Security and Limited Resources Have Impeded Progress; Improvements in U.S. Strategy Needed'

This state-funded report published in 2004, presented the underfunded reality of the Afghan support. Of the \$900 million that the U.S. government spent on nonsecurity-related assistance in Afghanistan in fiscal years 2002-2003, over 75 percent supported humanitarian efforts, including emergency food and shelter, and over 20 percent supported longer-term reconstruction. USAID, the Department of State, and the Department of Defense spent \$508 million, \$254 million, and \$64 million, respectively, for humanitarian, quick-impact, and some longer-term projects. U.S. funding represented about 38 percent of the \$3.7 billion the international community disbursed over the 2-year period.²⁹ U.S. coordination mechanisms for Afghanistan assistance were generally effective, but international assistance was not well coordinated in those years. In addition, the United States lacked a complete and integrated assistance strategy, which hampered the U.S. government's ability to focus available resources and hold itself accountable for measurable results. Said proven disorientation enhanced targeted intervention and provided orchestrated aid, as needed. Nevertheless, the improvement was temporary.

Tokyo Conference 2002

In the conference it was agreed that the Japanese government, in coordination with other donors, should help the Afghan government prioritize a select number of near to medium-term development projects. These projects should cut across key sectors such as agriculture and rural development, and include natural resources, energy, transportation, and private sector development.³⁰ The Tokyo Conference highlighted the need to reinvigorate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress for commitments made both by the Afghan government and by donors. Given that agreements at previous conferences on Afghanistan's reconstruction over the past decade were only partially followed through, such measures are especially crucial to avoid the recurrence of past problems. Japan's Prime Minister stated: "A successful Tokyo Conference will serve as a testament of Japan's unique position to contribute to global security."³¹ Clearly, Central and South Asia are gaining in geopolitical and geo-economic importance, especially when taking into consideration the rapid expansion of China's regional influence in recent years. This development emphasizes how the Tokyo Conference, while having the means to provide a solution, stayed in history as a partial distress-call to other Asian nations present.

²⁹ "GAO-04-403, Afghanistan Reconstruction: Deteriorating Security and Limited Resources Have Impeded Progress; Improvements in U.S. Strategy Needed." *Gao.gov*, 2 June 2004, www.gao.gov/assets/a242727.html

³⁰ Ashizawa, Kuniko. "Asia Pacific Bulletin Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan: Japanese Leadership at a Critical Juncture." *Number*, vol. 170, 2012, www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/apb170_0.pdf

³¹ *Co-Chairs' Summary of Conclusions the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan*. 2002.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

International Campaigns - Tackling work criteria for women empowerment

In the past, international campaigns were used as a means of influence and are a prime example of how women can be empowered and lead to female liberation, even in that region. Campaigns such as UNiTE to End Violence Against Women, Me2 Anti-Rape movement and the #16Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign as part of the United Nations International Conference on Women have emerged over the years as a response to the issue of GBV. Other campaigns have also appeared via marketing, where gender stereotypes are tackled and refuse to conform to a reality where women live in the 'outskirts' of society. Reebok's #FitToFight campaigns raised over 200 million that was directed to women under Afghan oppression, encompassing the true meaning of solidarity. In that way, supporting targeted campaigns can leave an impact both for women in need and emphasize the need for change.

UN peacekeeping forces within the Afghan Region / Negotiations with specialists

As seen in the past, the overturning of the Taliban ruling has led to extended freedom, reformed governance and some improvement regarding the safeguarding of women's rights. However, a form of invasion or UN-intervention via peacekeeping forces, while partially helpful, could prove seemingly catastrophic. While the blue helmet originally represents a symbol of unity and global peace, the individuals wearing it remain subject to bias and predispositional behaviour. In alignment with what was said before, the United Nations Forces could constitute a form of political governance, rather than just military presence. In Cambodia, El Salvador and Mozambique, post-conflict political aid was proven to be just what was needed. Effective diplomatic representation, officials in leadership positions, negotiation specialists in order to ensure region stability and overall, political reform.

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