

Committee: Human Rights Council

Topic: Examining Ways to Protect Women's Rights under Taliban Rule in Afghanistan

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Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

It is my honor to welcome you all to the 7th DSTMUN. My name is Sofia Noli, and I am a 10th-grade student at Anatolia College. This year, I will have the utmost opportunity to serve as your Deputy President in the Human Rights Council.

First and foremost, I congratulate everyone for committing to this exciting experience, and investing in yourselves and your future. My fellow Chairs and I look forward to making this experience the best possible, and I am sure we will have a great time together.

Moving on, I would like to state some things about myself. Over the past years, I have been actively involved in MUN as a delegate, and this is my first time serving as a Student Officer; thus, I am honored to share this experience with all of you. Additionally, I would like to say that MUN is a truly unique experience and an opportunity to escape your comfort zone. Being a delegate in MUN will help you improve your public speaking, leadership, and collaborative skills, but most importantly, it will help you develop a new way of thinking.

This year's agenda includes three problems the Human Rights Council has to address and overcome. The topic we will analyze together is "Examining Ways to Protect Women's Rights under Taliban Rule in Afghanistan." This study guide aims to help you with your research by providing a general overview of the issue we will debate at the conference. You are strongly encouraged to conduct further research on the topic in order to be adequately prepared.

I understand that many of you might be overwhelmed by this task, but you shouldn't be. The beginning will be challenging; however, as you get a hold of the topic, you will be interested in learning more. Bear in mind that MUN is an opportunity for you to develop fundamental skills, so make sure to get everything you can out of it. Please feel free to contact me anytime if you have any questions regarding the topic, your country's policy, or anything related to your preparation. My email address is 20207091@student.anatolia.edu.gr.

I am counting down the days until our conference!

Sincerely,

Sofia Noli

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban, an Islamic political, religious, and military organization, re-emerged and took over Afghanistan, affecting the country both politically and socially. Two decades after the initial rise of the Taliban from 1996 to 2001, and following NATO's and partner forces' efforts to force them out of power, the movement reappeared, causing similar problems as the previous crisis. The Taliban gained control of the nation at an extremely rapid speed, taking over Kabul, the country's capital. Their sudden rise to power severely affected both the international community and the nation, leaving millions of civilians and later refugees in fear and uncertainty.

The resurgence of the Taliban movement has resulted in rather concerning changes and challenges, particularly when it comes to human rights and the status of women. Severe restrictions on women's rights, including bans on education and employment for women and harsh punishments, defined Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001. Despite initial assurances of a more reasonable perspective on their part, the Taliban's recent actions have raised serious worries about their return to power. The situation in Afghanistan under Taliban rule has not improved. It is still marked by extreme discrimination against women and girls, repression of political opinion and free speech, and lack of representation of minorities. Also, ongoing instances of extrajudicial killing, unreasonable arrests, detentions, and torture are nothing but mere examples of the human rights situation in Afghanistan today.

Under the Taliban's current control, Afghanistan's economy has collapsed, resulting in millions of citizens falling below the poverty line, with widespread hunger and lack of access to necessities becoming prevalent throughout the nation. International aid and support have also been frozen, as the Taliban's promises regarding security, governance, and human rights have not been kept. Efforts by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to engage with the Taliban on human rights issues have not been productive and haven't contributed to any impactful changes. The international community remains divided on how to address the situation; some countries and organizations aim to continue diplomatic engagement in order to encourage the Taliban towards obedience to human rights standards. In contrast, others insist on uncompromising conditions before granting recognition or assistance.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Women's Rights

The fundamental women's rights were established by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights on Women's Rights nearly 50 years ago, and apply to every human being on the planet. These rights include the right to live free of violence, slavery, and discrimination; The right to education, property, and vote, and the right to a fair and equal wage.

Taliban

An Islamic political, religious, and military organization, active in Afghanistan and Pakistan that emerged in the mid-1990s, was forced out of power by NATO and partner forces in 2001, regained power in 2021, and now has solemn control over the country.

Interim Government

An interim government, also called a provisional, emergency, or transitional government, is a temporary government formed to govern a state during a transitional period, often following state collapse, revolution, civil war, or any such complication. This type of government is enforced by the Taliban and was announced in 2021 after they took control of the country.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989)

After the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union constantly competed for global power in the guise of the Cold War. This led Afghanistan to turn to the Soviet Union for support after the U.S. established military ties with Pakistan in 1954. In return for their support, the Soviets used Afghanistan's strategic location at Asia's and the Middle East's crossroads to counter the U.S. alliance.

At the time, Afghanistan was led by King Zahir Shah, who could not merge the existing tribal society with the central government. This separation of the Afghan central government from local tribal leaders eventually caused a rebellion against the monarchy.

During the Saur Revolution of April 1978, an Afghan communist party, known as the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, seized power and assassinated the country's prime minister. This power shift created an opportunity for a foreign invasion, as Afghanistan was left without a stable or legitimate government.

Taking advantage of the unstable political conditions of the nation, the Soviets entered Afghanistan, imposing military and social changes that started to create opponents among various parts of the local population. These changes consisted of enforcing land reforms that concerned tribal leaders. Additionally, they implemented economic measures that worsened conditions for people of low economic status and attempted to suppress ethnic uprisings by mass arrests, torture, executions, and aerial bombardments.

These actions led to approximately 1 million Afghans dying during this period, with more than 8,000 people executed after being put on trial between 1980 and 1988. The crackdown led to resistance by the Mujahadeen, Afghan freedom fighters supported by the U.S. government. In 1988, the Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev withdrew Soviet forces from the country.

Formation and 1st rise to power of the Taliban (early 1990s-2001)

The Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989) led to the formation of the Taliban in the early 1990s. The organization was established by Afghan guerrilla fighters, known as the mujahideen, who had fought against the Soviet occupation with support from the CIA and Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI. Most members were young Pashtuns, members of an ethnic Islamic group primarily residing in northwestern Pakistan, who had studied in Pakistani religious schools or madrassas. The term "Taliban" translates to "students" in Pashto, reflecting the educational background of many of its members.

Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, different mujahideen factions fought for power. The fall of the Soviet-backed government in 1992 brought about even more instability, leading Afghanistan into a civil war. The Taliban quickly rose to power by promising to impose a strict interpretation of Sharia law, bringing order and putting an end to the corruption and lawlessness that had afflicted the nation. With such allegations, they were able to quickly garner a lot of support, especially from the Pashtun community.

The Taliban started extending their rule after seizing control of Kandahar, a significant city in southern Afghanistan, in November 1994. By September 1996, they seized the capital, Kabul, overthrew President Burhanuddin Rabbani's administration, and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The Taliban, led by Mullah Mohammed Omar, established a harsh government and enforced strict Islamic laws based on their interpretation of Sharia.

The Taliban imposed serious restrictions on women's rights. Women were not permitted to work or pursue education, and they were required to wear a burqa constantly. The Taliban also applied harsh penalties for crimes and outlawed music, television, and other forms of entertainment. The Taliban had managed to rule over 90% of Afghanistan by 2001 before NATO and allied forces drove them out of power after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and their subsequent invasion of Afghanistan from the NATO-led coalition.

The Taliban rose to power by using tyrannous and repressive tactics to force some semblance of stability and order in a nation torn apart by conflict. Their initial regime had a lasting impact on Afghanistan, which led to ensuing conflicts and the continuous struggle for power in the area. Although the Taliban were no longer the official government of Afghanistan, they still held significant influence in various rural areas, especially in provinces like Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul, and Uruzgan. These areas were traditionally strong Taliban supporters.

U.S. War in Afghanistan (1999-2021)

The U.S. War in Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001, as a response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States. The invasion aimed to dismantle Al-Qaeda and remove the

Taliban from power. The war lasted until August 30, 2021, marking the longest conflict in U.S. history.

The conflict's cause traces back to the Soviet-Afghan War. After the Soviet withdrawal, Afghanistan plunged into a civil war, which led to the rise of the Taliban in 1996. The Taliban provided a refuge for Al-Qaeda, the terrorist group responsible for the September 11 attacks. Thus, the U.S. and its allies invaded Afghanistan in order to eliminate Al-Qaeda and, therefore, force out of power the Taliban.

On October 7, 2001, the U.S. launched Operation Enduring Freedom with support from NATO and other international allies. The initial phase of the attack involved airstrikes and ground operations in coordination with NATO, an anti-Taliban group in Afghanistan. The plan was successful, as by December 2001, the Taliban regime had collapsed, and a new interim government was established under the Bonn Agreement, with Hamid Karzai as its leader.

The United Nations established the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in March 2002 in order to provide support to the Afghan government, but also to coordinate humanitarian aid. In 2003, NATO took control of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (an institution whose primary goal was to train the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and assist Afghanistan in rebuilding key government institutions), expanding its mandate beyond Kabul to provide security nationwide. Additionally, the international community focused on reorganizing and reconstructing Afghanistan, concentrating on infrastructure, democratic institutions, and training Afghan security forces.

Despite the initial successes of the NATO forces, the war evolved into an extended conflict as the Taliban regrouped and began an uprising, complicating efforts for national stabilization. In February 2020, the U.S.A. and the Taliban signed the Doha Agreement, which stated that U.S. and Coalition forces would completely withdraw by May 2021 in exchange for Taliban assurances to prevent terrorism. The withdrawal began in 2021, leading to the rapid advance of Taliban forces throughout Afghanistan. On August 15, 2021, the Taliban took control of Kabul, and the U.S. military presence ended on August 30, 2021.

2nd rise to power of the Taliban (2021-present)

The Taliban's second rise to power in Afghanistan led to their complete takeover of the country in 2021, following the withdrawal of U.S. military forces. A key event leading to their return to power was the Doha Agreement, signed in February 2020 by the U.S. and the Taliban. Although this agreement established the withdrawal of U.S. military troops in exchange for Taliban commitments to prevent terrorism, the Taliban continued their military operations against Afghan forces. Despite this, the removal of U.S. troops and NATO forces began in May 2021. Soon after, the Taliban rose rapidly, initiating a major attack and quickly capturing large territories.

By early August 2021, they had seized several provincial capitals. Afghan security forces, held back by low confidence and lack of support, often surrendered without a fight. The fall of Kabul was a significant milestone in the Taliban's resurgence; in August 2021, the Taliban entered Kabul with little resistance after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. This event effectively marked the collapse of the Afghan government and the Taliban's return to power.

The Taliban's rapid takeover resulted in extremely concerning and far-reaching humanitarian consequences, worsening existing crises and creating new ones for millions of Afghans. The impact spread across Afghan society, setting in great danger human rights, economic stability, healthcare, and internal displacement.

The Taliban brought immediate and severe restrictions on women and girls, reminiscent of their rule in the 1990s. Despite initial promises of obedience to international standards, civilians are victims of constant cases of women banned from working in many sectors, violence, limited access to education, and adhering to strict, irrational, and unfair dress codes.

The Taliban also interfered with media freedom and civil liberties. They targeted journalists, activists, and former government employees. Public protests, especially women-led, were met with violent suppression, arrests, beatings, deaths, and intimidation.

Furthermore, Afghanistan's economy, which was already heavily dependent on international aid, faced numerous challenges as assistance was stopped or reduced significantly due to the Taliban takeover. The freezing of Afghan government assets abroad further weakened the economy. Businesses struggled to operate, and many Afghans lost their jobs, pushing them into deeper poverty.

The economic collapse also heightened the food shortage. According to the UN World Food Programme, millions of Afghans are facing hunger, with many relying on humanitarian aid for survival.

Finally, the healthcare system, already fragile due to decades of conflict, suffered further setbacks. Many health facilities lost funding, leading to shortages of medical supplies and staff.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

China

China's position on the topic is influenced by its broader strategic interests in Afghanistan, including economic investments and security concerns. China typically avoids direct criticism of the Taliban's policies on women's rights, as their diplomatic engagement focuses more on stability and economic cooperation than human rights issues.

Iran

Iran also has a complicated stance on the topic since it shares a border with Afghanistan and has cultural and religious ties. Iran has expressed concern about the treatment of Afghan women under Taliban rule. However, its geopolitical interests, conflict with the United States, and desire for regional stability often affect its response. Iran has supported Afghan refugees, including women, and has called for the protection of human rights, but it generally approaches the issue with a broader prospect.

Israel

Israel's position is unclear due to its limited regional influence and lack of direct diplomatic relations. However, it generally supports global initiatives to defend women's rights. It condemns human rights violations alongside its Western allies but does not directly involve itself in the issue. The ongoing war in Gaza has not caused Israel to change its position. The country maintains a non-engagement policy and views the Taliban with suspicion despite the increased tension in the region.

Pakistan

Pakistan maintains a complex relationship with the Taliban, as they have a shared history and, therefore, influence over the group. While the Pakistani government has publicly called for the protection of women's rights, it has been criticized for not applying enough pressure on the Taliban to change their policies. Pakistan aims to balance its diplomatic ties and security interests with international values for human rights.

Qatar

Qatar is a mediator in Afghan matters, supporting peace talks between the Taliban and other parties. Although Qatar supports a more moderate and inclusive Taliban government that protects women's rights, its influence is limited. Qatar's diplomatic efforts primarily focus on being a neutral facilitator in the peace process rather than a strong advocate for human rights.

Russia

Russia has taken a relatively muted position, prioritizing regional security and counter-terrorism over human rights advocacy. The country engages with the Taliban mainly through diplomatic and security channels, expressing concern about potential terrorism. While Russia acknowledges the significance of human rights, it does not prioritize women's rights in its dealings with the Taliban.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a nation of significant influence in the Islamic world, and it has a cautious approach towards women's rights under Taliban rule. Although the country has stated its

general support for stability and peace in Afghanistan, it frequently places a higher priority on humanitarian aid and Islamic solidarity than on outspoken support for women's rights. Saudi Arabia's position on gender issues abroad is influenced by its conservative domestic policies.

United States of America (U.S.A.)

The U.S. has expressed strong disagreement with the Taliban's policies regarding women's rights in Afghanistan, has been a vocal advocate for the protection of their rights, and has used diplomatic methods to pressure the Taliban to uphold fundamental values. It has provided significant support and funding for humanitarian aid, including support for women's education and healthcare. Additionally, the U.S. has offered asylum and resettlement options for Afghan women at risk. The U.S.A. also led the international coalition that supported Afghanistan's democratic government after the Taliban's fall in 2001, providing military and economic assistance. This coalition mainly aimed to stabilize Afghanistan and prevent the Taliban from reappearing.

European Union (EU)

As part of its diplomatic efforts, the EU has pressed the Taliban to uphold international human rights standards, particularly regarding the treatment of women and girls. They have applied criticism of the Taliban's policies, promoted gender equality, advocated gender equality, and provided substantial financial aid for women's economic empowerment, healthcare, and education. They have also imposed sanctions on Taliban members who are responsible for human rights abuses.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Until its withdrawal in 2021, NATO maintained a significant military presence in Afghanistan. Since then, it has voiced concerns about the country's human rights situation. As part of more extensive efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, NATO has pushed for the protection of women's rights even though its primary concerns have been security and counterterrorism. Since the military withdrawal, NATO has continued supporting initiatives that advance women's rights through diplomatic channels and capacity-building programs.

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations is a strong advocate of women's rights in Afghanistan. It constantly highlights the importance of gender equality and human rights and has called for the protection and empowerment of women and girls through various agencies and bodies. The UN supports initiatives that provide humanitarian aid, education, and healthcare and works to document and report on human rights abuses. It also supports that it is of great significance that the international society develops diplomatic relations with the Taliban, both as independent nations and as a community, to safeguard women's rights.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) focuses on advocating for women's rights under Taliban rule. More specifically, it primarily concentrates on monitoring and reporting human rights abuses, such as violence against women and limitations on their freedom. UNAMA highlights that international pressure on the Taliban to respect human rights norms is essential. Additionally, it supports regional and global initiatives to give Afghan women and girls access to jobs, education, and humanitarian aid.

BLOCS EXPECTED

Bloc 1: This block consists of countries that advocate for human rights and obey international law, pushing for improvements in governance and respect for human rights. These countries generally do not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, they don't have official diplomatic relations with them and have taken a more conditional approach to engagement. Some of these countries include the U.S.A., the U.K., Australia, Canada, and most EU countries.

Bloc 2: This block consists of countries that maintain diplomatic relations and have a working relationship with the Taliban, engaging in dialogue and practical cooperation. Their engagement with the Taliban is more pragmatic and driven by specific strategic, economic, and security interests. Some of these countries include Russia, Iran, and China.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1994	Founding of the Taliban movement.
1996	The Taliban take over Kabul (Capital) and establish the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
1998	The Taliban controls about 90% of Afghanistan
2001	The Taliban's regime collapses as Kabul falls to U.S.-backed forces.
2013	The Taliban opened a political office in Doha, Qatar.
2020	U.S. and Taliban sign the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan in Doha.

2021	The Taliban capture Kabul as the NATO-Saudi-backed Afghan government collapses, and as the Taliban announce an interim government in Afghanistan.
2022	The Taliban ban girls from attending secondary schools.
January 2023	The Taliban ban women from working with NGOs and international aid organizations.
April 2023	Further restrictions on women's rights, including travel and public space limitations.

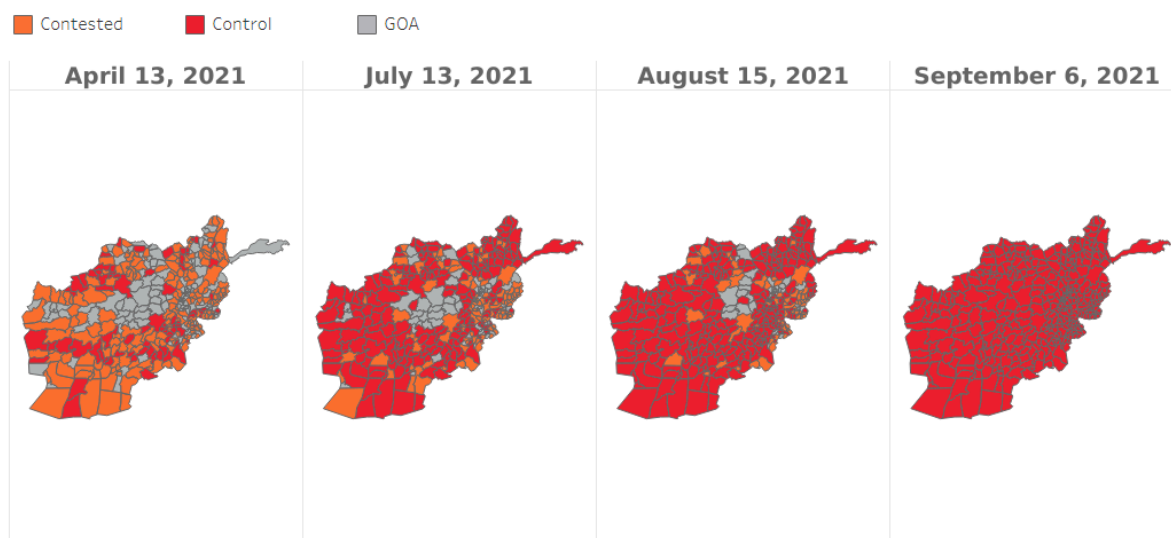


Figure 1: Time lapse of Afghanistan’s falling provinces¹

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

UN Security Council Resolution 1267 (1999)

The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1267 (1999) to establish a sanctions regime targeting individuals and groups associated with the Taliban and Al-Qaida. The measures consist of asset freezes, travel bans, and arms embargoes to exert pressure on the Taliban to act according to international norms, particularly those concerning human rights and gender equality.

¹ Roggio, Bill. “Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan | FDD’s Long War Journal.” *Long War Journal*, 21 July 2022, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/mapping-taliban-control-in-afghanistan>. Accessed 28 August 2024.

UN Security Council Resolution 2734 (2024)

This resolution addresses the global community to combat the threats posed by ISIS (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and any such organization. It focuses on the fact that overcoming terrorism and maintaining peace and security requires coordinated international action from all UN member states. The resolution also stresses the significance of respecting international law. Other initiatives recommended are enhanced cooperation between UN counter-terrorism bodies, extending the Monitoring Team's mandate to produce regular reports on terrorist threats, comprehensive approaches encompassing human rights issues and development, and underscoring the use of sanctions while ensuring they do not adversely affect humanitarian aid.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

International Sanctions and Diplomatic Pressure

Through steps such as Resolution 1267 (1999), the United Nations imposed sanctions targeting the Taliban, including travel bans, asset freezes, and arms embargoes. These measures aimed to pressure the Taliban to respect international law, including human rights standards. In addition, many countries and international organizations have engaged in diplomatic efforts to urge the Taliban to respect women's rights. Such actions included direct negotiations and conditional diplomatic recognition or financial aid on the treatment of women.

International Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns

International human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have consistently highlighted abuses against women under Taliban rule and advocated for international action. Furthermore, efforts to raise global awareness through media campaigns and reports have kept Afghan women's difficulties in the international spotlight, mobilizing public opinion and political action.

International Support and Protection Mechanisms

Some countries have offered asylum and resettlement options to Afghan women facing persecution, providing refuge for those most at risk under Taliban rule. In the meantime, efforts have been made to establish safe spaces and shelters for women experiencing violence and persecution, including forced marriages and/or domestic abuse. Some of these countries include the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, and France.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Providing humanitarian aid and support for women and girls

A critical step towards protecting women's rights in Afghanistan involves significantly increasing humanitarian aid directed towards women and girls. This support should focus on providing essential services such as health care, education, and legal assistance, especially in regions where women and girls are most vulnerable. In addition, funding programs that provide remote education and job prospects could help offset the economic burden imposed by Taliban policies, enabling women and girls to remain independent through continuing schooling and later on work.

Taking legal action under international law

Another potential solution involves legal action based on international law frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Cases against the Taliban or any state supporting their discriminatory policies can be brought before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or other international judicial bodies. Such actions will send a strong message that violations of international law, particularly concerning women's rights, will not be tolerated by the international community. Utilizing international legal frameworks to document violations and seek justice through bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC) is also essential.

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