



Voices of the Silenced

59th Session Human Rights Council

Afghanistan – News Letter 16 June – 08 July 2025

INTRODUCTION

Let us raise our voices and expose the systemic persecution faced by women, minorities, and marginalized communities under Taliban rule. At the 59th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Afghan civil society presented urgent testimonies and evidence of crimes against humanity including gender apartheid, torture, and repression of ethnic and religious minorities. Together, we call on the UNHRC to take bold steps toward accountability, justice, and international protection.

From June 16 to July 08, 2025, the 59th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC59) convened in Geneva, Switzerland, bringing together UN Member States, experts, NGOs, and civil society actors to address some of the world's most urgent human rights crises. Afghanistan remained at the center of discussions, as the international community confronted a worsening situation under Taliban rule marked by escalating gender persecution, repression of minority groups, and the breakdown of access to justice.

Throughout the session, the Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN), Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+), World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), and Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organization (ADDO) stood in solidarity with Afghan human rights defenders. Together with national and international allies, we participated in key dialogues, side events, and high-level advocacy ensuring that the voices of survivors, former detainees, women leaders, and minority communities were heard at the highest levels.

This newsletter presents highlights from the 59th HRC session, including findings from the Special Rapporteur's report, key side events, and firsthand testimonies. It underscores the continued

determination of Afghan civil society to resist oppression and demand international accountability for the grave and ongoing violations of human rights across Afghanistan.

HIGHLIGHTS ON AFGHANISTAN

The Taliban's War Against Minorities in Afghanistan: Afghanistan's multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition has long faced challenges of representation and inclusion. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, violations against ethnic and religious minorities have intensified. Communities such as the Hazaras, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Shughni Ismailis, Hindus, and Sikhs face widespread exclusion from political, social, and economic life.

With the dismantling of constitutional and institutional protections, the Taliban have replaced the legal system with a set of arbitrary decrees rooted in their narrow interpretation of Sunni Hanafi Islam. This has left minorities vulnerable to targeted violence, forced displacement, loss of civil rights, and erasure of cultural identity.

PANEL AND SPEAKERS

The event featured a distinguished panel of experts and human rights defenders:

- Richard Bennett, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan
- Rahman Yasa, Representative from the South Asia Collective
- Nazifa Jalali, Journalist, Women Human Rights Defender
- Banafsheh Yaqubi, Disability Rights Activist and Advocate
- Moderator: Sayed Hussain Anosh, Executive Director of HRD+

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (59TH SESSION)
HYBRID - SIDE-EVENT:

**The Taliban's War
Against Minorities in Afghanistan**

Richard Bennett
UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights
Situation in Afghanistan

Dr. Banafsha Yaqoobi
Director of Rahrab Initiative Organisation
and Former Commissioner of Afghanistan
Independent Human Rights Commission

Nazifa Jalali
Director of Chiragh TV
and Human Rights Defender

Rahman Yasa
Researcher, Author of the Report,
Representative from the South Asia Collective

MODERATOR | **Sayed Hussain Anosh**
Executive Director of HRD+

For virtual (online) participation, please contact us at: info@cshrn.org

June 16, 2025 | **14:00 – 15:00 (CET)**
Venue: Palais des Nations, Room XXV

Organizer: with partnership of:

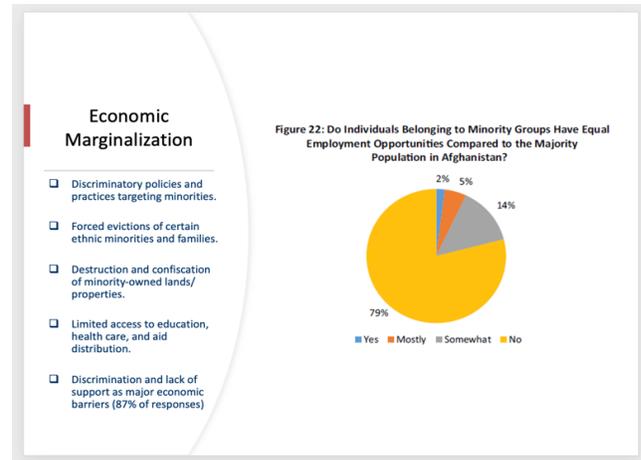
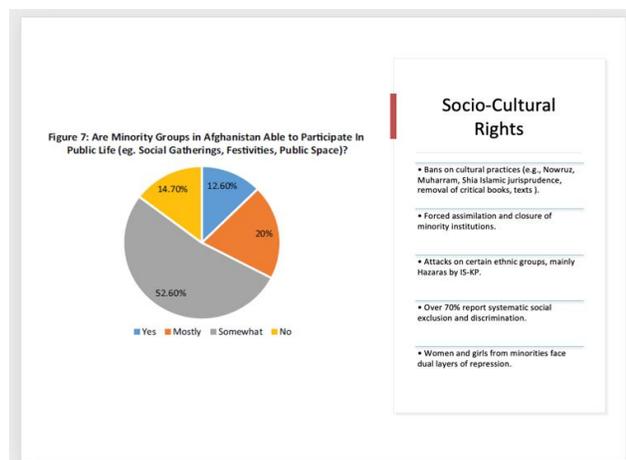
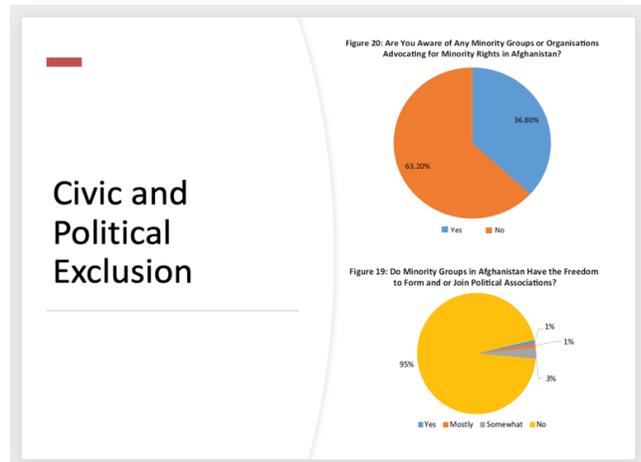
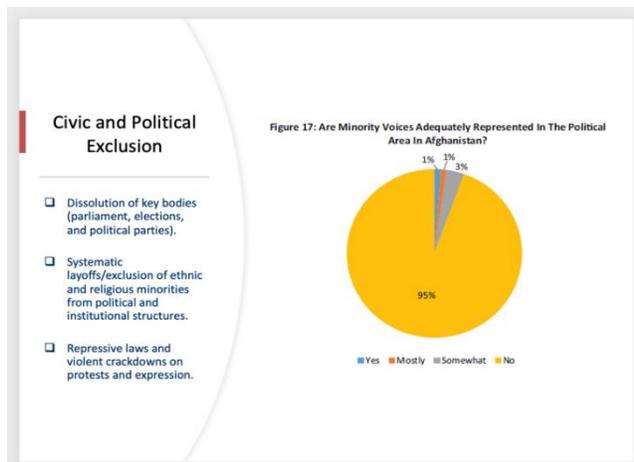
Co-Sponsors:



KEY FINDINGS

Speakers presented alarming evidence of ongoing violations against ethnic and religious minorities, including:

- Widespread targeted violence and discrimination against Hazaras by both the Taliban and ISKP
- Forced evictions and land confiscation disproportionately affecting minorities
- Elimination of Shi'a jurisprudence from the judicial system
- Imposition of Hanafi-only education in minority regions
- Lack of access to justice and biased courts for non-Sunni, non-Pashtun communities
- Religious-based persecution, especially of the Ismaili and Shi'a communities
- Multiple layers of oppression faced by minority women, including forced marriage and arrest.



INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON AFGHANISTAN

During the 59th session of the UN Human Rights Council, an Enhanced Interactive Dialogue was held on the situation in Afghanistan, centered on the presentation of the Special Rapporteur's report by Richard Bennett. The report detailed the Taliban's ongoing repression of women, minorities, and civil society, emphasizing the use of justice as a tool of persecution and calling for the creation of an independent international accountability mechanism.

A wide coalition of countries EU, France, Spain, Austria, Ireland, Albania, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Montenegro, Canada, South Africa, Greece, Australia, and Italy supported this call, with several declaring that Taliban actions amount to gender apartheid and crimes against humanity (CAH). France referenced its joint referral of Afghanistan's case to the ICC in November 2024, while Slovenia, Greece, and Spain highlighted the need for external and transitional justice rooted in victims' rights.

The EU and New Zealand raised alarm over violations against ethnic minorities, particularly the Hazara, and stressed accountability for gender-based persecution. UN Women and UNICEF condemned the exclusion of women from the judiciary and girls from education, while Japan, Netherlands, and Belgium underscored the importance of compliance with CEDAW and inclusion of women in peace processes.

Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC), Kuwait, Indonesia, and Malaysia voiced concern over diminishing humanitarian funding, with Pakistan noting its efforts to support women's education. Iceland and Switzerland emphasized youth and civil society participation, while condemning repression of activists and public executions.

Some states, like Iran, shifted focus to geopolitical roots of the crisis, while Qatar encouraged stakeholder engagement and mediation. Chile and Malaysia supported global discussion on legally codifying gender apartheid.

The dialogue reaffirmed strong international support for accountability, justice, and the urgent protection of Afghan women, minorities, and human rights defenders.



ADVOCACY MEETINGS WITH UN MISSIONS IN GENEVA

Dialogue on Better Advocacy Coordination on Afghanistan: Human rights defenders and partner institutes held a discussion aimed at strengthening coordination among organizations participating in the Human Rights Council. The focus was on improving collaboration, aligning key messages, and ensuring a unified voice at the next session. Around 45–50 human rights defenders and organizations took part. Sayed Hussain Anosh, Hamid Formuli, Freshta Abassi, and Fatima Ahmadi were selected to lead the next phase of coordination. The dialogue also covered how to use the joint letter and Q&A on the accountability mechanism in preparation for the September session.

Afghanistan Closed-Door Meeting, hosted by Norway: The Embassy of Norway in Geneva convened a closed-door meeting with the participation of 15 UN missions. Updates on advocacy efforts and progress toward establishing an accountability mechanism were shared with delegations, alongside inputs from Richard Bennett, Afghan human rights defenders, and civil

society representatives. Sensitive concerns that could not be raised publicly were discussed in this space.

Meeting with INGO “Food for Thought” and the Mission of Brazil: Food for Thought Afghanistan, in coordination with the Mission of Brazil, is supporting Afghan human rights defenders stranded in Pakistan after Taliban persecution. Efforts include relocation to safe third countries and a shelter program to protect the most vulnerable, ensuring their safety and reinforcing accountability against torture and repression.

SIDE EVENTS ON AFGHANISTAN

Several side events during the 59th Session of the Human Rights Council focused on human rights in Afghanistan, with particular attention to women, girls, and minorities under Taliban rule.

- **The Taliban’s War Against Minorities in Afghanistan (16 June 2025)** highlighted systematic targeting of Hazara, Tajik, Shi’a, and other groups, drawing attention to forced displacement and cultural erasure.
- **Innovating Justice for Afghanistan’s Women and Girls: Unlocking Pathways for Universal Jurisdiction (16 June 2025)** explored survivor-centred strategies, legal avenues for accountability, and the role of art in documenting abuses.
- **From Call to Action: Designing the Right Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan (17 June 2025)** examined models for an independent investigative body to strengthen accountability efforts.
- **Do Not Abandon Afghan Women: Showcasing Afghan Women’s Testimonies from Inside Afghanistan and Exile (17 June 2025)** presented testimonies on repression, resistance, and digital harassment faced by women.

- **International Conference – For Freedom: Global Solidarity with the Struggle of the Women of Afghanistan (19 June 2025)** gathered Afghan women and international experts to address gender apartheid and discuss global solidarity.
- **From Treaty to Action: Building a Global Alliance in Support of Afghanistan Women (23 June 2025)** presented new research on the impact of Taliban edicts and highlighted priorities ahead of Afghanistan’s CEDAW review.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



FOR FREEDOM: GLOBAL SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLES OF THE WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN.

This high-level international conference brings together Afghan women human rights defenders, UN member states, UN agencies, international human rights organizations, and other key stakeholders to address the ongoing crisis facing women and girls in Afghanistan.

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA
Building A Room VIII
19 June 2025

Please register with the QR code for participation.




Thursday, 19 June 2025 www.shahmama.org 03:00 PM - 06:00 PM (CET)

A panel discussion at the margins of the 59th Session of the UN Human Rights Council.

TRIPLE PERSECUTION
Hazara Women at the crossroads of gender, ethnic and religious persecution in Afghanistan.

June 18, 2025 | Room XXVI, Palais des Nations | 12:00 PM - 14:00 PM



Organized by: **BICLAG**, **FORUMASIA**

Co-sponsors: **SHAHMAMA**, **WOMEN'S RIGHTS WATCH**, **ICJ**, **WOMEN'S PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS FUND**, **WOMEN'S PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS FUND**

UN Human Rights Council 59th Session Side Event

FROM TREATY TO ACTION:
Building a Global Alliance in Support of Afghanistan Women



June 23, 2025
10:00 am – 11:00 am, CEST
Palais des Nations, Room IX, Geneva




از تعهدت عمل: اتحاد جهانی برای حمایت از زنان افغانستان



FARRAGEER

Do Not Abandon Afghan Women



Official Side Event During 59th Session of UN Human Rights Council

TESTIMONIES
From Afghanistan to Geneva

Tuesday
17th June 2025 - 13:00 to 14:00
UNHQ, Room XXIV

Please register with the link below or QR code for participation:
<https://bit.ly/43D68pb>




ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

HRD+, CSHRN and ADDO is thankful to individuals and organizations for their dedicated support. We specially thanks Sayed Hussain Anosh, Hazrat Khan Hoshmand, Nazifa Jalali, Sayed Abdul Ahmadi, Sibylle Mani, Hasina Sherzad for their in-person participation. We are more thankful to human rights defenders for their testimonies and supporting the mission.



Annexes

Oral Statement for the 59th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

On behalf of the Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organization (ADDO), the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), HRD+ and CSHRN.

We remain gravely concerned about the ongoing, systematic, and institutionalized discrimination, targeted violence, and exclusion of minority groups from education, healthcare, and political participation. Credible reports consistently document the forced conversion of Ismailis in Badakhshan, which is deeply alarming.

According to our documentation, at least 16 journalists are currently imprisoned. In 17 provinces, broadcasting images of living beings is prohibited, further shrinking freedom of expression and access to information. Media outlets are instructed on what to cover and what to suppress, in clear violation of journalistic independence and international standards. We call Afghanistan SR and UNAMA to urgently communicate their release with de facto authorities.

We respectfully urge the Human Rights Council to respond to our longstanding call to establish a comprehensive accountability mechanism one with the capacity and resources to monitor, document, preserve, and follow up on human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan.

We also call on the international community to support Afghan civil society and media actors by safeguarding their rights and ensuring they can operate in safe and enabling environments.

Thank you. Read by Hazrat Khan Hoshmand