

PRESS RELEASE

30 AUGUST 2026



**AFGHAN CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANISATIONS CALL FOR
THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF
SIX EMPLOYEES OF WCLRF
DETAINED BY THE TALIBAN
INTELLIGENCE**

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Afghan Civil Society Organisations Call for the Immediate Release of Six Employees of WCLRF Detained by the Taliban Intelligence

Six senior members of the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF), who were detained by the Taliban intelligence on 18 July 2026 in Kabul, were held for weeks in an “unknown” location, and reports now indicate that their case has been referred to a military court.

The undersigned Afghan civil society organisations express deep concern and call for their immediate and unconditional release, as well as an end to the arbitrary detention of human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society workers.

On 21 June 2026, Taliban intelligence forces entered the WCLRF office in Kabul, confiscated the phones and laptops of staff members, searched and sealed the office, and interrogated staff about the organisation’s activities, including its online education programme for girls, women’s rights activities, human rights research and reporting, and communications with international organisations.

On 18 July 2026, six senior members of the organisation were detained after being summoned under the pretext of collecting the confiscated equipment and were transferred to an unknown location.

For approximately one month, their families had no information about their place of detention, health condition, or the charges against them—a situation that, under international law, constitutes enforced disappearance.

Only last week was it established that they were being held at Taliban Intelligence Directorate 40, and some family members have been able to meet with them.

Reports now indicate that the case of these individuals has been referred to a military court. The alleged charges reportedly relate to activities such as providing online education to girls and producing investigative reports—activities that are entirely peaceful and aimed at supporting the rights of women and girls.

This Case Is Not an Exception, the case of the WCLRF employees is part of a broader pattern.

Human Rights Watch also issued a separate statement on 12 August 2026 concerning the detention of the six WCLRF employees and reported on the detention of two Afghan employees of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Herat by Taliban intelligence—another case in which families and lawyers have been denied access to the detainees.

More recently, Nawidullah Fitrat, a university professor, was detained in the city of Herat.

Mr. Fitrat had recently published a video on his Facebook page accusing the Taliban of pursuing ethnic objectives under the guise of religion and of undermining coexistence among Afghanistan’s ethnic communities through discriminatory treatment. He also called for the separation of religion from politics and urged religious scholars to take a position against the Taliban’s conduct.

The repetition of this pattern across different institutions demonstrates that what happened to WCLRF is not an isolated incident, but part of a systematic approach against civil society, particularly organisations working on women’s rights.

Legal Concerns

Detaining individuals without a court order, without informing them of specific charges, without prompt access to a lawyer, and without the possibility of challenging the lawfulness of their detention violates fundamental principles of fair trial and due process.

Prolonged detention without disclosure of the place of detention, in accordance with accepted international law standards, constitutes enforced disappearance.

The trial of civilians before military courts, in the absence of necessary guarantees of independence and impartiality, also raises serious concerns.

The undersigned organisations are also deeply concerned by numerous reports of torture and ill-treatment in Taliban intelligence detention facilities, particularly national security facilities.

Reports of beatings, threats, psychological pressure, denial of contact with family members, and lack of access to lawyers must be investigated promptly and independently.

Our Demands

- The six detained WCLRF members must be immediately and unconditionally released.
- If there are specific charges against them, these must be formally and transparently communicated to the individuals and their families.
- They must be guaranteed immediate and confidential access to a lawyer of their choice and regular contact with their families.
- Torture, beatings, threats, psychological pressure, and any other form of ill-treatment of detainees must be prevented.
- The families of all detainees must be informed of their health condition and place of detention.
- If judicial proceedings continue, the individuals must be provided with an independent, impartial, and fair trial in accordance with accepted human rights standards.
- Independent and effective investigations must be conducted into allegations of torture and ill-treatment in Taliban intelligence detention facilities, particularly national security facilities, and those responsible must be held accountable.
- The detention and persecution of individuals who engage solely in the peaceful defence of human rights, girls' education, media activities, research, or cooperation with international organisations must cease.

An Appeal to the International Community

We call on the United Nations, UNAMA, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, diplomatic missions, international human rights organisations, and the international community not to remain silent in the face of this situation and to use all available diplomatic and legal means to secure the release of these individuals and other detainees.

Defending human rights, educating girls, exercising freedom of expression, engaging in media activities, and documenting the human rights situation are not crimes.

The undersigned Afghan civil society organisations express their solidarity with the families of the detainees and with all human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society workers facing threats and pressure.

We reaffirm our call for the immediate release of the detainees, respect for their legal rights, access to justice, and an end to arbitrary detention and torture in Afghanistan.

Signatory Organisations

- Civil Society and Human Rights Network - CSHRN
- Afghanistan Institute for Democracy and Development – ADDO
- Human Rights Defenders Plus – HRD+
- World Organization Against Torture – OMCT
- Afghan Women News Agency Organization
- Generation of Peace Society
- Institutions of Civil Society and Human Rights in Afghanistan – ICSHRA
- General Council of People Unity – Parwan Province
- Women's Movement Towards Freedom
- Network of Afghan Women in Urban Governance
- Training Human Rights Association
- Women Aid Afghanistan
- Unity and Solidarity of Afghanistan
- Afghan Canadian Women for Global Cooperation