

FORUM-ASIA Calls for Global Solidarity to Address Afghanistan's Human Rights Crisis Following 5 Years of the Taliban Takeover

On 15th August 2021, the Taliban illegitimately seized control of Afghanistan, following the Western forces' withdrawal from the country. Five years since their takeover, the Taliban's oppressive rule continues to be marked by gender-based persecution, widespread violence and discrimination, ethno-religious domination, and systematic repression. Severe restrictions on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights combined with the Taliban's failure to address the country's economic needs and security challenges have further deteriorated the human rights and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan.

Taliban's war on women, minorities, and gross violations of human rights in Afghanistan stem from both extreme ideological interpretations of religion as well as the group's select political approach towards power centralization, securitization, and social control to continue their oppression in Afghanistan, in a state of absolute impunity.

Gender Apartheid

The hallmark of Taliban's rule has been its erasure of women and girls from public life. Through its various arbitrary edicts, decrees and regulations, the Taliban has established what UN human rights mechanisms have [described](#) as an "institutionalised system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls", a system that can be best described as [gender apartheid](#).

Taliban's so-called Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice ([PVPV](#)), issued in 2024, imposes restrictions on women's dress and public presence, reinforces requirements concerning male guardianship, and empowers morality officials to impose measures ranging from warnings to detention. Its recent Criminal Procedure Regulations introduced in January 2026 legitimises violence against women. Subsequent measures [introduced](#) in May 2026 restricts women's ability to seek protection from domestic violence and removes [minimum age](#) of marriage normalising child marriage while the ban on education for women and girls remain along with other measures that remove women and girls from virtually every sphere of public and private life.

Institutionalised Repression and Rule by Decree

The Taliban has replaced Afghanistan's system of governance with a system that rules by arbitrary issuance of decrees and edicts designed to maintain its power through domination and repression. Among these, the new Criminal Procedure Regulation entrenches discrimination based on gender, religion and social status and, alarmingly, expressly recognized [slavery](#), with provisions appearing to acknowledge ownership over certain individuals and distinguishing between "free persons" and "slaves". These provisions are especially alarming for Afghanistan's religious minorities, including Shia Muslims, Ismailis, Sikhs, Hindus and others.

The totality of decrees and edicts issued over the past five years demonstrate a broader pattern and transformation in which discriminatory practices are not merely imposed through informal coercion but increasingly embedded within the Taliban's de facto legal and institutional order.

Afghanistan today depicts a highly repressive environment in which gross human rights violations and abuses as part of the state policy are the norm.

According to CIVICUS Monitor, civic space in the country remains [‘closed’](#). Civil society actors such as journalists, human rights defenders, education rights activists and athletes face severe restrictions and violence, including arbitrary detention, harassment and torture, and family intimidation for their peaceful human rights activism.

Implications: Humanitarian and Migration Costs

The deepening humanitarian and human rights crises in Afghanistan stand in stark contrast to the image of a safe and secure country that the Taliban seeks to project to the international community. Taliban’s continued illegitimate rule in Afghanistan has had severe implications for the people of Afghanistan and beyond, affecting all areas of life for every community apart from those within the inner sanctum of Taliban’s rule.

While the ban on education and employment of women and girls deeply harms overall societal development, systematic marginalization and discrimination [reported](#) in humanitarian assistance delivery, such as those against the Hazara, Bayat, Ismaili and Tajik communities, connected to prioritizing Taliban-designated areas, lead to further [deprivation](#) of vulnerable individuals and groups at risk.

Reports also indicate that as of August 2026, 14 million Afghans are facing [acute hunger](#), while acute malnutrition of children has reached critical levels in one-third of the country.

Fleeing the Taliban’s persecution and the broader political, economic and human rights crises in the country, millions of refugees and asylum seekers have sought safety and livelihood outside the country, despite increasing crackdowns on asylum seekers in neighboring countries and their forced return. In this regard, recent developments in European countries such as Germany and Sweden that have actively sought forced returns of asylum seekers from Afghanistan also raise concerns about the application of international refugee law and protection mechanisms.

From Impunity to Accountability

Afghanistan has experienced over five decades of conflicts and violence, including the Taliban’s first rule between 1996 and 2001, when the group introduced misogynistic policies and committed mass murder of civilians, particularly targeting members of the minority Hazara community. Since the Taliban’s return to power in 2021, the regime’s increasing repression has far-reaching consequences for the entirety of the country.

Ending these repeated cycles of violence and conflict in Afghanistan requires international accountability. In October 2025, in a historic move, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted its strongest form of accountability mechanism, [the international investigative mechanism](#) for Afghanistan creating an effective pathway for accountability for these decades of violence.

In August 2024, a coalition of States including Australia, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands announced an [international accountability](#) initiative alleging the Taliban for breach of the

Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As an initial step, the effort significantly contributes to broader accountability calls for Afghanistan, and it must be taken further through legal, criminal and diplomatic avenues to keep Taliban into account.

In August 2025, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an [arrest warrant](#) against Taliban Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and Chief Justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani in connection with alleged crimes against humanity, specifically persecution on gender and political grounds. Following these two major developments. These developments represent important steps towards accountability. However, accountability cannot remain confined to political statements. The scale and persistence of violations require sustained political, diplomatic and legal action, including the preservation of evidence, protection of victims and witnesses, support for survivors, and cooperation between national, regional and international justice mechanisms.

The Need for Principled International Engagement

The international community must recognise that engagement with the Taliban and accountability for their conduct are not mutually exclusive. Dialogue may be necessary to address humanitarian, security and diplomatic concerns, but engagement must remain principled, transparent and centred on the rights of the people of Afghanistan. Taliban should not be allowed to use the language of sovereignty, stability or religion to justify violations of universally recognised human rights. Nor should the humanitarian needs of people of Afghanistan be used to justify the normalisation of a system that systematically excludes women, minorities and other marginalised groups. The international community must therefore move from episodic condemnation towards a coordinated strategy that combines humanitarian assistance, protection, documentation, accountability and sustained diplomatic pressure.

Call to Action:

FORUM-ASIA stands in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls, who have endured one of the world's most repressive regimes far too long. We call on the global community to:

- Support the people of Afghanistan in their struggle to establish an inclusive and democratic government where people of all backgrounds, including women, members of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, are well represented;
- Pressure the Taliban and keep them accountable against the gross human rights violations, including the repression of women and girls, persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, extra-judicial killings and arbitrary detentions;
- Protect vulnerable individuals and groups, including women human rights defenders and journalists, as well as persecuted communities at risk; uphold the principle of non-refoulement and immediately halt forced returns of Afghanistan's nationals to Afghanistan;
- Strengthen international accountability mechanisms across the UN and other avenues – including by ensuring that the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan

established by the UN Human Rights Council is adequately resourced and supported to implement its crucial mandate – and other legal, political and diplomatic means;

- Recognize and codify gender apartheid as a crime against humanity in international law in order to create possibility of comprehensive accountability for the Taliban's persecution of women and girls;
- End the normalisation of Taliban, respect human rights benchmarks and ensure that any diplomatic engagement with the Taliban is conditional on measurable commitments to human rights, including rights of women and girls, freedom of religion or belief, civic freedoms and the protection of minorities.

Five years after the Taliban takeover, repression must not become the new normal. The people of Afghanistan must be supported in their struggle for fundamental human rights and freedoms and determine their country's future.

Signatories:

1. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
2. Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN)