



**4th
Edition**

**Three Years After
Afghanistan's Fall:**
**What Was Life Like Under
the Taliban Rule?**

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The fall of Afghanistan in 2021 jeopardized the hard-earned achievements of youth and rolled back decades of progress in education. Today, millions of young women are denied access to education, the unemployment rate reaches unprecedented scale, and, exacerbating the poverty level more, women are also banned from working for international and national non-governmental organizations. To make the situation even more unbearable, a new law was announced stating that if a woman is outside her home, even her voice must not be heard.

Afghans for Progressive thinking's work on raising the muffled voices of young women in the current challenging times aims to surface fresh perspectives and present the thoughts of those youth who currently experience the right-violating policies on the ground. We, at APT, believe that the current restrictions cannot overshadow the tremendous socio-political achievements of youth in the past two decades. Only through continued support can we help them raise again and to contribute to shaping a better future for the country. Our recent Mentorship program provided an opportunity for 30 young women to learn skills in critical thinking, conflict analysis, and reflective writing. At the end of the program, the participants were divided into six groups to write articles and address the current barriers they are facing by presenting recommendations for sustainable change. APT then collected and published them in a Booklet to further amplify the voices of young women in Afghanistan and share them with a wider audience.

This publication contributes to raising awareness about the situation in Afghanistan and how the freedoms of youth are being crushed bit by bit while the world is watching. It also aims to influence the policy makers on how best to engage youth for a better today and tomorrow. By doing so, readers can learn from young women authors in order to better work with them.

This publication was made possible by Caitlyn O'Flaherty's ongoing and fruitful contribution. Caitlyn not only facilitated the reflective writing sessions but also edited the articles and provided valuable feedback to the young women authors. Views expressed in this publication are those of the young women authors. We are deeply grateful for the time, energy and insights of all the APT team who contributed to this articles' collection.

Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) is a youth-led nonprofit organization in Afghanistan that actively addresses human rights crises, with a specific focus on women's rights, while simultaneously promoting girls' access to education through creative and impactful initiatives.

APT's initiatives encompass a range of key areas. It connects female university students in Afghanistan with mentors from abroad, forging valuable relationships and providing guidance. APT also facilitates networking opportunities for youth, both within and beyond Afghanistan's borders, to encourage open dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas and experiences. In addition to these endeavors, APT is preparing to equip a team of young women with expertise in the "Internal Family System (IFS)" trauma healing technique. This training will empower them to offer healing sessions to others and create safe spaces for family members in need of support.

Furthermore, APT offers a platform for young women to express themselves by writing and publishing their stories, particularly significant under Taliban rule.

Over the course of its 13-year existence, APT has successfully fostered meaningful engagement among young men and women. Through discussions and dialogues, they have influenced policies prior to the collapse. These conversations center on critical topics and propose solutions for a better Afghanistan and a better world. APT's work has played a pivotal role in shaping policies on both national and global levels, owing to the development of leadership and critical thinking skills among its participants.

Since its inception in 2010, APT activities have impacted and inspired over 60,000 youth and children to build a vision for a just and inclusive society.

You may read more about APT at: www.aptyouth.org

As darkness envelops a room where every lamp is shattered, so too are the hearts of countless Afghan girls, dimmed by despair and longing for the light of hope.

Three years after the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan, the ban on girls' education has not only stripped young women of their fundamental right to learn, but has also triggered a mental health crisis of alarming proportions. As educational opportunities vanish, Afghan girls grapple with profound feelings of despair, anxiety, and depression, which ripple through their families and communities. This situation starkly illustrates the broader societal implications of denying education to half the population, undermining future generations, and hindering national progress. It is imperative for the international community to unite in support of Afghan girls' education, advocate for their rights, and implement practical interventions that address both educational access and the urgent mental health needs stemming from this devastating policy.

Educational opportunities serve as a crucial protective factor against mental health issues. According to studies, lower education is associated with “a lack of psychosocial resources” (Neimeyer, H. et al., 2020) —such as a sense of control and resilience. For many, school is not merely an academic institution; it is a sanctuary where they cultivate community, purpose, and hope. The absence of such an environment leaves them susceptible to various psychological challenges, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Moreover, when women are denied education, entire communities suffer. Research indicates that educated women are more likely to invest in their families' health and education, creating a ripple effect that benefits society as a whole. The loss of potential leaders, innovators, and change-makers represents a profound tragedy that could take generations to rectify. While many girls remain hopeful and driven, others grapple with despair and lack of motivation. The uncertainty about their futures weighs heavily on their minds, leading to deep contemplation about an uncertain future and distress. I myself an Afghan girl talking to my peers about school and education, it reveals that reminiscing about past school experiences—sitting in classrooms with peers and teachers and pursuing dreams—evokes profound sadness and fear. These experiences are part of my everyday life. My sister who should have been starting seventh grade this year but instead laments how her classmates cried on the last day of school without even setting long-term goals. They were abruptly barred from further education. It is unjust that their educational journeys are halted at sixth grade.

Mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and increased suicidal thoughts are common among the people of Afghanistan under Taliban rule, with Afghan girls being hit hardest (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2021). Their mental health is suffering as their hopes for a better future fade. This pain extends beyond the girls themselves, affecting their families and communities, leading to

widespread despair and stagnation. Many girls who once aspired to become doctors, teachers, or leaders, and who worked hard to get an education and build a future, now feel a deep sense of disappointment—not just for themselves but also for their families and their country. The impact of depriving a girl of education goes beyond her own future, affecting three or more future generations in her community. This loss weakens the entire social structure and hinders progress. It's time for the global community to step up and take action. International organizations, governments, and individuals need to come together to support Afghan girls' education, advocate for their rights, and push for the restoration of their access to learning opportunities. By doing so, we can help restore hope, empower future generations, and give every girl the chance to make a meaningful contribution to society. Denying education to a girl means silencing her voice, wasting her potential, and stealing her future.

When considering the two Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) most relevant to girls in Afghanistan at this time—SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality)—(United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)) the situation is alarming. Teenage girls are unable to attend school, with their education often ending in the sixth grade. Education is a fundamental human right, and all Afghan girls deserve access to it. Achieving gender equality is challenging. “If we add the girls who were already out of school before the bans were introduced, there are now almost 2.5 million girls in the country deprived of their right to education, representing 80% of Afghan school-age girls,” UNESCO said. Girls are facing barriers to higher education, employment, and participation in governance. These persistent challenges hinder progress in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we must explore innovative solutions to create opportunities for the next generation of women in Afghanistan. The fight for girls' education is a universal struggle for equality and justice. It is time to advocate for Afghan women's right to education and mental well-being—a cause that belongs to us all.

Call to Action: Every problem has a solution. Together, we can create a better world for ourselves and future generations. Let's unite globally to pressure the Taliban and transform the lives of Afghan women and girls facing adversity.

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Social Media as an Advocacy Tool: Can Young People Use Social Media to Raise Awareness About Life and the Situation Under the Taliban?

In a world where information travels at lightning speed, can the voice of young Afghans break the noise to shed light on reality under the Taliban? In today's world, anyone with a smartphone and internet connection can be a reporter, and there is power in messages being streamed directly from the people to the world. So Social media can be the only wide and safe way for every Afghan to raise their voice. While Social media platforms primarily focus on building audiences, social networking sites emphasize the formation of communities for sharing information and exchanging messages. In this paper, we argue how youth in Afghanistan are using social media to raise awareness, advocate for women's rights, and mobilize fundraising efforts for resistance under the Taliban.

Social media can help young women and men to raise awareness virtually in a safe environment. In today's restrictive environment in Afghanistan, social

media can help youth by sharing their ideas because, in Afghanistan, girls couldn't use their talent, also, they can share the Afghanistan situation by spreading some internal news, I mean as in Afghanistan Taliban don't allow media to spread any news which shows them bad, but interact, especially girls can explain the situation by spreading some videos at Tweeter or Facebook and also, Instagram which is using nowadays more than. They can especially girls who are forced to live a life confined at home. Therefore, the Girls have utilized social media as a crucial platform for raising awareness and advocating for their rights. In an environment where traditional media is heavily restricted and dissent is often met with severe repercussions, social media offers a space for youth to express their concerns and share vital information. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become lifelines for documenting human rights abuses, highlighting issues such as gender inequality, access to education, and repression of free speech. By sharing personal stories and organizing virtual campaigns, these young activists not only inform a global audience but also inspire others within Afghanistan to join the movement for change. This digital activism is reshaping the narrative around the Taliban's rule, showcasing the resilience and courage of Afghan youth in the face of adversity.

Additionally, in Afghanistan, social media platforms have significantly impacted the activism, and political landscape, particularly among the youth. Young people can use social media as a powerful advocacy tool to raise awareness about women's rights in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Platforms like Instagram, and Twitter; enable youth to share narratives and visuals that highlight the struggles faced by Afghan women, such as restrictions on fundamental rights as education, employment, and basic freedoms. By using hashtags like #LetHerLearn and #AfghanWomenRise, advocates can create a unified message that captures attention and fosters community engagement. This digital activism not only raises awareness but also encourages global solidarity, urging policymakers and the international community to take action in support of Afghan women's rights. In essence, social media not only amplifies the voices of marginalized communities but also cultivates a sense of collective action, making it an indispensable asset in modern advocacy efforts for social change.

Moreover, social media has emerged as a crucial tool for fundraising and supporting vulnerable communities. Due to economic challenges, unemployment, and educational barriers enforced by the Taliban. Afghanistan and its people need the United Nations and international communities' support and assistance. When young activists use social media for fundraising, they can create campaigns and initiatives that trigger international support and provide essential resources. All of these can help the vulnerable community to foster resilience and self-reliance. By

mobilizing a global audience, young Afghan activists are not only raising awareness but also generating crucial support, ensuring that Afghans are not forgotten amidst the global news cycle.

In conclusion, social media serves as a vital platform for fostering social awareness and advocacy, especially in contexts where traditional forms of protest are restricted. In Afghanistan, where the Taliban has severely limited public dissent, social media emerged as a crucial tool for the youth to voice their concerns and champion women's rights. By leveraging platforms like Instagram and Twitter, young activists can share powerful narratives and visual content that highlight the challenges faced by Afghan women, galvanizing both local and global support. The use of targeted hashtags and collaborative efforts with organizations enhances their reach and impact, creating a collective call for action. Social media not only facilitates the dissemination of information but also empowers individuals to engage in meaningful dialogue and advocate for change. It is an indispensable resource in the fight for human rights and social justice in today's digital age.

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Introduction:

The women of Afghanistan have endured decades of conflict and hardship. Yet, the current landscape for female entrepreneurs has become particularly bleak following the Taliban's takeover in 2021. Restrictions on women's ability to work and build businesses have intensified, leaving many female entrepreneurs facing legal barriers, cultural and societal norms that limit their participation in the public sphere, limited access to resources, and heightened security concerns. This essay will examine the challenges confronting female entrepreneurs in Afghanistan and propose concrete solutions for empowering them, contributing to the country's economic and social development.

The Unbearable Weight of Restrictions:

Female entrepreneurs in Afghanistan face a multitude of obstacles, hindering their ability to thrive in the business landscape. Legal restrictions, often dictated by the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law, limit women's access to certain sectors, and in many cases, require male guardians' approval for business activities. Furthermore, deeply ingrained cultural and societal norms perpetuate the belief that women's place is in the home, making it challenging for them to network, access resources, and gain legitimacy for their enterprises.

The lack of access to financing, business training, and mentorship programs further exacerbates the challenges. Without adequate financial resources, access to training, or guidance from experienced mentors, female entrepreneurs struggle to establish and sustain their ventures. Finally, heightened security concerns pose a significant barrier, as female entrepreneurs must navigate a climate of uncertainty and instability, putting their personal safety at risk.

The Potential for Growth and Development:

Empowering female entrepreneurs in Afghanistan is crucial for the country's economic and social development. These women possess an immense potential to drive job creation, diversify the economy, and contribute to women's empowerment. Notably, a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report highlighted that the agency, in collaboration with partners, has supported 75,000 small businesses led by women in Afghanistan, creating job opportunities for 900,000 individuals (Tolo News, 2024). Investing in the success of these resilient and innovative women will have a ripple effect, benefiting not only the entrepreneurs themselves but also their families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

Supporting female entrepreneurs in Afghanistan requires a multifaceted approach involving the international community, governments, and non-governmental

organizations. Key interventions include:

- **Improving Access to Financing:** Microfinance initiatives, venture capital funds, and loan guarantees specifically targeted at female entrepreneurs can provide vital financial support to help them start and grow their businesses.
- **Comprehensive Business Training Programs:** Skill development, financial management, marketing strategies, and other relevant business training programs can equip female entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed.
- **Mentorship and Networking Opportunities:** Connecting female entrepreneurs with experienced business leaders and industry experts through mentorship and networking programs provides valuable guidance, support, and access to networks.
- **Advocating for Policy Changes:** Removing legal barriers and promoting women's economic participation requires advocating for policy changes that ensure equal rights and opportunities, such as equal access to education, property rights, and the right to work.
- **Strengthening Security Measures:** Creating safe spaces for female entrepreneurs to operate their businesses requires strengthening security measures, addressing safety concerns, and promoting a culture of respect and acceptance for women's economic participation.
- **Raising Global Awareness and Mobilizing International Support:** Amplifying the voices and stories of Afghan female entrepreneurs through global awareness campaigns and mobilizing international support can generate greater understanding, empathy, and resources for their cause.

Beacon of Hope: Success Stories and Best Practices:

Despite the formidable challenges, there are inspiring examples of female entrepreneurs in Afghanistan who have achieved remarkable success. These resilient women have leveraged innovative strategies, strategic partnerships, and community support to establish thriving businesses in various sectors, including e-commerce, agriculture, and artisanal crafts. Their stories serve as beacons of hope, demonstrating the power of determination, resourcefulness, and community support (UNDP, 2024). By highlighting these successful case studies and best practices, the international community can learn valuable lessons and replicate effective approaches to empower more female entrepreneurs in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in Afghanistan are complex and require a coordinated effort from the international community, governments,

and non-governmental organizations. Investing in these resilient and innovative women is an investment in the future of Afghanistan. By removing legal and societal barriers, providing access to resources, and fostering a supportive environment, we can empower female entrepreneurs to contribute to the country's economic growth, social development, and the realization of gender equality. Their success will not only benefit them and their families but also serve as a powerful symbol of hope and resilience for the women of Afghanistan.

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In a world where the plight of Afghan women and girls has become a stark symbol of human rights failures, the international community's response has been marked by growing urgency and limited impact. "Even if they take away our rights, our dreams cannot be taken," declares Fawzia Koofi, capturing the indomitable spirit of resilience that persists despite relentless oppression (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2023). Since the Taliban's takeover, severe restrictions have stifled women's access to education, employment, and freedom of speech. For example, women are now being detained simply for not adhering to the regime's strict dress codes or moving about without a male guardian (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2024). This analysis will delve into how Afghan women's fundamental rights have been systematically undermined, revealing the specific challenges they face and the broader implications for global human rights. By examining these issues, we aim to enhance understanding of the crisis and guide more effective international responses to support those in need.

Three years have passed since the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan. It remains the only country in the world where secondary and higher education for girls and women is strictly forbidden. According to UNESCO, this prohibition has left 1.4 million Afghan girls deprived of schooling—a fundamental human right (2024). "As an Afghan girl impacted by this ban, I feel profound sadness and anguish over the denial of access to essential opportunities for my education and personal development. "Education is crucial for personal and societal development, yet the Taliban's actions have systematically excluded girls from accessing it. This not only reduces individual development but also obstructs the advancement of the whole country. International organizations and global communities must act with urgency to address this injustice and advocate for the right of Afghan girls to receive education. Restoring educational opportunities is essential to ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, has the chance to learn and thrive.

Since the Taliban reasserted their dominance over Afghanistan in 2021, the country has become the only place on earth where girls and women are explicitly banned from pursuing secondary and higher education (Impacts of the Taliban's Ban, 2024). The policies of the Taliban have not only hindered individual growth but have also suppressed the overall progress of Afghan society. As an Afghan girl affected by this ban, the impact feels profoundly personal. Education, a crucial pillar for progress and empowerment, has been denied to millions, leaving a generation of girls without hope for their future. This cruel reality underscores the urgent need for the international community to take decisive action. Advocacy for restoring educational opportunities is not just about education; it's about restoring dignity, potential, and the future of an entire nation. The international community's response has been inadequate, with significant cuts in humanitarian aid and development assistance, leaving Afghanistan isolated and deepening the crisis. (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Following the Taliban's resurgence to power, freedom of speech in Afghanistan has been severely restricted, with increased arbitrary detentions of journalists and activists (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The day after Afghanistan fell to the Taliban, many journalists, activists, and media personnel fled the country, leading to the immediate cessation of activities for most TV channels. Since then, the Taliban has exerted tight control over the media, with severe consequences for those who attempt to report freely. As a result, most TV channels now censor news that could be perceived as critical of the Taliban regime. According to a report by the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR), 70% of media outlets have shut down (9 July 2024). By 2023, over 11 journalists had been killed, while those who remained face ongoing threats and violence (January-September 2021). These developments illustrate the extent to which the Taliban has stifled freedom of speech, leading to widespread censorship and the suppression of truth in Afghanistan.

To conclude, since the Taliban assumed control in 2021, Afghanistan's human rights situation, particularly for women and girls, has worsened dramatically. Restrictions, such as bans on education beyond sixth grade and prohibitions on most work for women, have marginalized them socially and economically. The ongoing economic crisis, compounded by inadequate international aid, has left millions of Afghans in dire conditions. We continue to seek support from the UN and its partner countries, hoping they will not let us down.

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The international community has been paying more attention to Afghanistan, especially in the wake of the country's profound political and socioeconomic transformations following the Taliban's 2021 takeover. As a result, there is an increasing need for inclusive government, human rights protection, and humanitarian aid. The international community is unequivocally demanding action to protect vulnerable populations, uphold women's rights, and ensure access to education. Humanitarian organizations also stress the critical need for assistance to solve health and famine problems. The fact that everyone is working together to achieve stability, justice, and dignity is a sign of a larger commitment to promoting security and peace. However, despite this collaboration, much more needs to be done to achieve true stability, justice, and dignity for all. It also highlights the necessity of human rights compliance and cooperation for the country's future. The international community can take specific actions to support rights of Afghan people and specially women.

Since August, 15, 2021, the doors of school are closed for girls in Afghanistan. It has been 1116 days. The fight for girls' education represents a courageous stand against deeply entrenched cultural and political barriers. Despite facing harsh restrictions and societal opposition, many Afghan girls and women continue to advocate for their right to education, striving for opportunities to learn and grow. This struggle highlights both the resilience of these individuals and the critical need for international support and intervention to make sure that educational rights are upheld and protected. In Afghanistan, where the situation for girls' education is particularly challenging due to cultural, political, and security issues, the international community can take specific actions to support and ensure the right of girls to education.

These include:

- **Funding education without funding that does not allow discrimination**
- **Supporting communities as they fight for girls' right to education**
- **Standing by Afghans under threat for defending the right to education**
- **Monitoring all aspects of access to education**

International leaders can engage with local religious and community leaders to promote the importance of Afghan cultural values that do not endorse discrimination. Moreover, they can encourage and support parents in understanding and advocating for their daughters, helping to shift cultural norms over time. By using these strategies, the international community can help promote the right of Afghan girls to receive an education, even in the face of significant obstacles (Bar, 2022).

Gender apartheid in Afghanistan means the complete subordination of women and girls deprived of their rights. The actions that the international community can take are numerous but the most important include increasing awareness, providing education and training, and advocating politically.

The first and perhaps the most significant step is to increase people's awareness of the problem across the globe. Media plays an important role in raising awareness of the public on abuse of Afghan women and girls and mobilizing support for matters affecting woman and girls in Afghanistan. Other international communities are also extending monetary assistance on programs that seeks to empower women. This support can assist in enhancing women's participation in meaningful leadership positions, employment, health, and education. Education and vocational training are crucial for the development of Afghan women and girls so that they'll be equipped to contribute to society. Also, humanitarian advocacy is critical activity that require implementation. Internationally there are efforts that can work towards the eradication of laws that infringe on the rights of women and coordinate with the Afghanistan government in the formulation of better laws. This includes forced marriage, child marriages, and domestic violence. There is a humanitarian crisis due to the displacement of Afghan populations due to warfare. International aid organizations need to offer shelter, food, clothing and, most importantly, medical attention to assist women and girls to rebuild their lives. It is also important to support local organizations in Afghanistan; foreign assistance helps to bolster local groups that are working to combat gender inequality and campaign for women's rights. When all these concerted efforts are taken, the world will be on course to eliminate gender apartheid in Afghanistan. (Sidhu & Popalzai, 2023)

Afghanistan has witnessed the violation of rights for more than 20 years, but it has become an urgent humanitarian crisis since the Taliban took power in 2021. Afghan women are known for their power of not giving up, patience and raising their voices because of injustice not only for themselves, but for all Afghan people who are living in a terrifying situation in Afghanistan. However, women are not getting the support they need. Afghan women are forced by Taliban to get married even as children. They cannot go out without facing threats from the Taliban because of their dress code and their way of wearing hijab. "The Afghan woman are being slowly erased from society, from life, from everything, from their opinions, their voices, what they think, where they are"

Consider a day that you are compelled to stay at home and you cannot go out; home becomes like a prison for you. It has not been a day, a month, or a year—it has been three years that women and girls in Afghanistan are suffocating under the role of Taliban. The world is in silence and those who can bring changes in Afghanistan by pressing the Taliban are silent (Afghanistan, 2023).

In conclusion, there is a strong commitment to humanitarian values and human rights shown in the demands made by the international community regarding Afghanistan. To meet pressing demands, advance inclusive government, and guarantee the protection of all citizens, especially vulnerable groups, foreign players must collaborate with local stakeholders considering the nation's unique problems.

Restoring stability and trust in Afghan society will require ongoing communication, funding for healthcare and education, an emphasis on sustainable development, and respect for the rights of girls and women. It is still possible to envision Afghanistan paving the way for resilience, empowerment, and enduring peace via coordinated international initiatives (The world Bank, 2023).

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The changes that occurred after the collapse of Afghanistan by the Taliban have profoundly affected Afghan society, particularly women and girls. The systematic discrimination against women since 2021 has led to gender apartheid characterized by the denial of access to public spaces, job opportunities, and education through various barriers; social, political, and physical. This pervasive discrimination has severe ramifications for the country's human rights, resulting in economic challenges and fostering a culture of fear and subjugation among women and girls. Consequently, this discrimination effectively removes women from participating in politics.

Since September 2021, the return to school for all Afghan girls over the age of 12 have been indefinitely postponed leaving 1.1 million girls and young women without access to formal education. (UNESCO, 2023) Girls have been banned from school beyond the sixth grade in most of Afghanistan since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021. In March, the Taliban ordered girl's high schools closed the morning they were scheduled to open. The May 26 protest saw about 26 women and girls marched to the gate of Kabul's Maryam High School while calling on the Taliban to reopen schools. "You took my bread and work, and I can't study," they shouted. (RFE/RL'S Radio Azadi. 2022). This denial of education is not a violation of the right to learn. It is a calculated attempt to undermine the future of Afghan women. Malala Yousafzai, a Nobel laureate and activist, survived a Taliban attack for advocating girls' education. She champions Afghan girls battling brutal circumstances. In a powerful op-ed in The New York Times, Malala wrote, "The Taliban want to erase women and girls from public life. "By denying them an education, they keep Afghan women voiceless and powerless. They remain trapped in poverty and dependence. (Malala Yousafzai, 2021)

The consequences of this exclusion are far-reaching. Education is more than gaining knowledge. It leads to independence, financial security, and social involvement. Without education, Afghan women and girls will likely confine to domestic roles. They will face early marriage and be forced to live in dependency. The lack of educated women in the workforce also hurts the economy. A World Bank report says that higher female education boosts economies and stability. Countries with more women in the workforce tend to do well, too (World Bank. 2022) By denying education to half its population, Afghanistan is sabotaging its own future.

The stories of Afghan women denied an education are heart-wrenching. They show the deep injustice they face. A 16-year-old girl from Herat, Fatima, had to give up her dream of being a doctor when the Taliban shut her school. She broke down during a BBC interview while sharing her new routine. Each day, her dreams slip away a bit more. "I wanted to serve my community, to heal the sick," she said. "Now, like I'm wasting my life."(Fereshta Abbasi, 2021)

As of August 25th, 2025, Nada Mohammad Nadeem, the Taliban's Minister of Higher Education, announced at a press conference in Kabul that, due to the current

situation, questions regarding women's education are on hold until further notice.' Nadeem requested that reporters refrain from inquiring about women's education as providing a satisfactory response at this time is not feasible. (Afghanistan International, 2024)

Three years on, the absolute absence of any concrete measures to address the human rights catastrophe in Afghanistan is a source of shame for the world. Professional opportunities for women have been severely restricted. Many women lost their jobs for no reason. Women working with humanitarian projects, which are urgently needed, have frequently been hindered in their work or prevented from carrying it out. As of April 2023, Afghan women can no longer work for the UN (Samira. 2024) Female doctors are prohibited from treating male patients or working with their male colleagues. Since the seizure of power by the Taliban, 84 percent of journalists have stopped working because of the fear of repression. Female lawyers and judges have mostly been excluded from their work. (UNICEF, 2021)

"With the help of a quota regulation, before the Taliban regime took power, women formed 27 percent of the Members of Parliament in Afghanistan. Across the country, 21 percent of all defense counsel were women and 265 judges were female out of a total of 1951. Now there is not one single woman as minister in the new Afghan government. The Taliban has once again set up the infamous Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice which enforces the misogynist decrees of the regime. It is forbidden for women to participate in the judicial system including female judges, prosecutors, and lawyers." (Medica Mondiale, 2023).

Following this Taliban announcement, some women's rights activists, civil society activists, and protesting women have initiated protest campaigns. Maria Nouri, a member of women's protest movements, stated in a video sent to the media: "The Taliban government's law on women's hijab is a set of severe and oppressive laws that restrict women by covering their bodies and silencing them. This law not only takes away women's freedom but also aims to exclude them from society." (Afghanistan International, 2024)

In conclusion, the gender apartheid enforced by the Taliban in Afghanistan represents a grave violation of human rights, particularly affecting women and girls. The systematic denial of education, public participation, and job opportunities not only stifles individual potential but also hinders the overall progress and stability of the nation. The narratives of Afghan women like Fatima from Herat underscore the devastating impact of such discriminatory policies, highlighting the urgent need for global intervention and advocacy. As we strive to address the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination, it is imperative to stand in solidarity with Afghan women, amplify their voices, and work toward a future where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive in a society free from oppression and injustice.

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The End