

Urgent Action for the Rights and Protection of Women and Girls in Afghanistan

Your Excellency, Secretary-General Guterres,

We are a group of 40 youth advocates, writing this letter to raise our deep concern regarding the worsening situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, especially in Herat province and across the country.

For nearly five years, women and girls in Afghanistan have been systematically deprived of their most basic and fundamental rights. Girls have been banned from secondary schools and universities. Women have been removed from workplaces, public life, and decision-making spaces. Today, millions of Afghan women and girls are living under fear, silence, and severe restrictions.

One girl from Herat province, currently part of our advocacy program, shared that she lives in constant fear whenever she goes outside. She said that the Taliban authorities monitor girls and women closely, and she fears detention or humiliation each time she steps outside. She explained that even leaving home no longer feels safe for women and girls in Afghanistan.

In Herat and across Afghanistan, fear has become a daily reality — women and girls are afraid to leave their homes, knowing that simply going outside could mean detention, harassment, or punishment. These actions violate Afghanistan's binding obligations under CEDAW and contravene the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We strongly condemn the persecution of peaceful protesters and youth activists who raise their voices for education, dignity, justice, and equality. Peaceful protest is a fundamental human right and must never be answered with violence, intimidation, detention, or repression.

Afghan women and girls are tired of words without action. We are not outside observers. We are members of the Afghan community writing about our own lives, our own fears, and our own future. We are speaking directly to the UN, because our silence is no longer an option.

We call upon the United Nations to:

1. Take immediate and concrete action, including calling for the unconditional release of all arbitrarily detained women and girls.
2. Continue international pressure for the reopening of schools and universities for girls.
3. Advocate for women's right to work, freedom of movement, and participation in society.
4. Ensure accountability and transparency regarding policies imposed by Taliban leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada and other authorities responsible for violations of human rights.
5. Publicly condemn the detention, intimidation, and persecution of peaceful protesters and human rights defenders.
6. Increase international monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation, especially regarding women and girls in provinces such as Herat.
7. Support Afghan civil society, youth activists, and women human rights defenders who continue to advocate peacefully despite serious risks.

Afghan women and girls do not want sympathy alone. They want action, justice, education, freedom, and dignity. An entire generation is losing hope while the world watches in silence. We ask you to hear our voices and stand with the women and girls of Afghanistan before this crisis causes even deeper suffering and irreparable harm to our society. We believe the United Nations has both the moral responsibility and the international duty to act firmly against these ongoing injustices.

Respectfully,

We, 40 Afghan youth advocates engaged in Afghans for Progressive Thinking's Advocacy and Writing program, proudly add our names as signatories to this letter

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