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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

The situation of human rights in Afghanistan

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/3, in which the Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to present a comprehensive report, including a mapping of policies and practices, edicts and legal measures promulgated by the *de facto* authorities that impair the enjoyment of human rights, also reflecting victims' and survivors' perspectives on the ground on justice and redress, building on the stocktaking of accountability options and processes for human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/3, requesting the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to present a comprehensive report to the Council at its sixtieth session. It provides an update for the period from 1 August 2024 until 31 July 2025, as well as broader a mapping of policies and practices, edicts and legal measures promulgated by the *de facto* authorities that impair the enjoyment of human rights, also reflecting victims' and survivors' perspectives on the ground on justice and redress, building on the stocktaking of accountability options and processes for human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan. It concludes with recommendations to the *de facto* authorities and international community.

2. This report was prepared by OHCHR, also drawing on the public reporting of the Human Rights Service of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The report was shared with the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations in Geneva and with the *de facto* authorities in Kabul. The liquidity situation of the regular budget of the United Nations Secretariat has directly affected the capacity of OHCHR to carry out the full extent of its promotion and protection of human rights work as planned.

II. The human rights situation in Afghanistan

3. In the reporting period, the people of Afghanistan continued to be faced with multiple challenges, including an ongoing economic crisis, persistent unemployment, limited access to basic services and frequent climate disruptions, such as severe droughts and floods,¹ with *de facto* governing institutions that remain unrepresentative of the population and increasingly oppressive.² The situation was further exacerbated by the economic and financial situation of the country, including sanctions and frozen State assets. Many Afghans remained trapped in poverty and faced food insecurity, with 9.5 million people severely food insecure and 4.6 million mothers and children malnourished.³ The continuing strict implementation and adoption of restrictive policies and practices by the *de facto* authorities, due in particular to multiple policies and edicts, such as the August 2024 Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (PVPV), has negatively impacted the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of the Afghan population, especially women and girls. As documented in previous reports, the rule of law and institutional protection of human rights continue to fall far below international norms.⁴

4. The situation was compounded by an ever-deepening humanitarian crisis. A recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, highlighted a deepening subsistence crisis with 75 per cent of Afghans now subsistence-insecure, a six percentage-point rise from 2023.⁵ Decreasing international financial assistance in 2025, and the continued freeze on Afghan State assets, has exacerbated the dire economic situation of

¹ See UNDP, "Afghanistan Socio-Economic Review", April 2025, p.7-9. <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/afghanistan-socio-economic-review#:~:text=April%2030%2C%202025,deep%2Drooted%20economic%20challenges%20remain.>

² Report of the Secretary-General, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, A/79/947-S/2025/372 11 June 2025, para. 69: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_june_2025_s-2025-372.pdf

³ See World Food Programme, Afghanistan Emergency at <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/afghanistan>

⁴ See for example UNAMA, De Facto Authorities' Moral oversight in Afghanistan, Impacts on human rights," July 2024: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/moral_oversight_report_english_final.pdf

⁵ United Nations Development Programme, "Afghanistan's fragile economic recovery no match for subsistence shortfall, new report finds", 7 May 2025: <https://www.undp.org/afghanistan/press-releases/afghanistans-fragile-economic-recovery-no-match-subsistence-shortfall-new-report-finds>

millions of Afghans and their families across the country pushing much of the population into deeper poverty and precarity.⁶

5. Afghanistan is also experiencing significant returns from neighbouring countries, in particular from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. More than 2.1 million Afghans have returned in the first six months of 2025, alone, placing additional strain on humanitarian response and available resources. Most returnees arrive with no assets, limited access to services, and job prospects⁷ Due to global funding shortfalls, support to returning families that had been provided in 2024, has been significantly scaled down in 2025.⁸ Many Afghans have also been forced to leave or issued ultimatums from several other countries. A number of countries are also considering reversing their asylum policies granting protection for Afghan refugees.⁹ This raises concerns over specific population groups being at risk of persecution, torture, ill-treatment or other irreparable harm, which would violate the principle of non-refoulement.¹⁰

6. A plethora of edicts and laws announced by the *de facto* authorities since 2021 have negatively affected the enjoyment of human rights of the Afghan population, but particularly women and girls, who face extreme forms of gender-based discrimination, and oppression, including through undue restrictions to their rights. These impact every part of Afghan women's lives and human rights; from health, in particular sexual and reproductive health, education and work to civic space and media freedom. The policies of the *de facto* authorities amount to a form of systematic gender persecution.

7. In July 2025, in the context of Afghanistan's fourth periodic report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) the Committee noted with concern that, among other issues, the system which had resulted in the disappearance of women from public life, may constitute gender apartheid.¹¹

8. Afghanistan remains bound by its obligations under international human rights law, which the *de facto* authorities, having assumed effective control over Afghanistan, must also uphold. In September 2024, Australia, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands announced that they have formally taken steps against Afghanistan under Article 29 of CEDAW, arguing that "the Taliban's policies since August 2021 constitute gross and systematic violations of numerous violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women".¹²

9. On 8 July 2025, the International Criminal Court's (ICC) Pre-Trial Chamber II issued arrest warrants for Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and Chief Justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani on charges of crime against humanity of persecution, on "gender grounds against girls, women and other persons non-conforming with the Taliban's policy on gender, gender identity or expression; and on political grounds against persons perceived as "allies of girls

⁶ Report of the Secretary-General, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, A/79/947-S/2025/372 11 June 2025, para. 69:

https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_june_2025_s-2025-372.pdf

⁷ UNAMA Press Release, 26 June 2025 "International Community must act now: 1 million returning Afghans": <https://unama.unmissions.org/international-community-must-act-now-1-million-returning-afghans-2025>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ OHCHR, "Afghanistan: Returns of Afghans creating multi-layered human rights crisis", 19 July 2025, [Afghanistan: Returns of Afghans creating multi-layered human rights crisis | OHCHR](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/07/afghanistan-returns-afghans-creating-multi-layered-human-rights-crisis)

¹⁰ OHCHR Press briefing note on Afghanistan, 18 July 2025.: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/07/afghanistan-returns-afghans-creating-multi-layered-human-rights-crisis>. See also UNAMA/OHCHR "No safe haven: Human rights risks faced by persons involuntarily returned to Afghanistan", July 2025:

https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_hrs_human_rights_risks_and_returns_-_3_august_25_final.pdf

¹¹ CEDAW Concluding Observations on fourth periodic report of Afghanistan, 7 July 2025, CEDAW/C/AFG/CO/4

¹² Launch of an initiative on accountability for Afghanistan's violations of CEDAW, 26 September 2024. See: https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/un-onu/statements-declarations/2024-09-26-women-femme.aspx?lang=eng.

and women”. The *de facto* authorities denounced the warrants and reiterated their non-recognition of the ICC jurisdiction and refusal of compliance.¹³

III. A mapping of policies and practices, edicts and legal measures impacting human rights in Afghanistan

10. The parliamentary system previously in place has been suspended and the *de facto* authorities govern by decree with the Taliban leader’s issuances as the final authority. Many edicts and decrees have had a deleterious impact on the enjoyment of human rights, in particular of women and girls, with only a limited number ostensibly aimed at protecting human rights. The latter category includes the decrees on the marriage rights of women and widows, as well as the prevention of torture and regulation of pre-trial detention.¹⁴ However, these have not been uniformly implemented and/or respected.

A. Enforcement of measures of the *de facto* authorities regarding “propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice”

11. The *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has continued to enforce decrees and edicts as well as directives regulating the daily private and cultural life of individuals, including the provisions of the August 2024 *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law (PVPV law). The PVPV law formalises and expands prior directives by the *de facto* authorities, codifying strict Islamic rules, as interpreted by the *de facto* authorities governing appearance, behaviour, and social conduct, targeting in particular women’s and girls’ autonomy. It embodies a determination by the Taliban leadership to ensure that its vision of a pure Islamic system is implemented nationwide, including increased restrictions on Afghans’ personal and private spaces, women’s and girls’ access to public spaces, healthcare, dress code, travel and mobility in general, and on the business, health, education and media sectors.¹⁵

12. The PVPV law mandates full hijab (full face and head covering) and voice concealment for women, enforces Islamic dress and prayer attendance for men, and prohibits various practices considered by the *de facto* authorities as “un-Islamic”, such as music, certain holidays, and gender mixing. It restricts women’s mobility without a male guardian (*mahram*), prohibits association with non-Muslims, and imposes strict media censorship.

13. Since August 2024 when the law was promulgated, the *de facto* authorities have rapidly built a comprehensive enforcement system deploying roughly 3,300 male *de facto* inspectors across 28 provinces, alongside provincial compliance committees chaired by *de facto* governors. The law grants broad powers to *de facto* inspectors, including detention, property destruction, and discretionary punishments, with escalation to courts if non-compliance persists.¹⁶

14. On 30 March 2025, in his Eid sermon, the Taliban leader issued several messages urging full implementation of Sharia law, with a focus on the enforcement of the PVPV Law. In its April 2025 report on the impact, implementation and enforcement of the PVPV Law, UNAMA reported that inspectors of the *de facto* Ministry of the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice monitored compliance with, and enforcement of, the PVPV law using

¹³ See 8 July 2025, BBC: “ICC issues arrest warrants for Taliban leaders for persecuting women and girls” <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c98jn0ry8jqo>

¹⁴ See for example, UNAMA, “The treatment of detainees in Afghanistan”, 20 September 2023: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_report_-_eng_-_treatment_of_detainees_sept_23_0.pdf

¹⁵ See Report on the Implementation, Enforcement and Impact of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Afghanistan. UNAMA, April 2025, and Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan, June 2025, para. 5.

¹⁶ For a full overview of its provisions, see Report on the Implementation, Enforcement and Impact of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Afghanistan. UNAMA, April 2025.

their broad, discretionary powers. Monitoring and enforcement involved verbal warnings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, physical beatings and other punishments.

15. *De facto* PVPV inspectors continued to restrict women's freedom of movement in the reporting period and, in certain provinces, denied women without a *mahram* access to health clinics, markets and public transportation. In some provinces, *de facto* security officials also denied women, including women with *mahram*, access to *de facto* government premises.

16. Enforcement occurred in public and private spaces, focusing heavily on women's dress, mobility (including *mahram* rules), but also regarding men's appearance. Between its promulgation and 31 March 2025, over half of arbitrary detentions under the PVPV involved men's non-compliant hairstyles or beards, and during Ramadan, non-attendance at congregational prayers. In some provinces during Ramadan, individuals who failed to attend prayers in mosques or who kept their businesses open were arbitrarily detained or ill-treated.¹⁷

17. Beyond formal mechanisms, enforcement has expanded through social pressure and community surveillance, including by family members, religious leaders, and neighbours. United Nations consultations and a survey showed male family member enforcement doubling from 22 per cent to 44 per cent and that by religious/community figures rising similarly.¹⁸ This has worsened existing gender discriminatory social norms, effectively embedding compliance into domestic life and creating widespread insecurity and fear.

B. Decrees and edicts affecting the rights of women and girls

18. During the reporting period, the *de facto* authorities continued to severely curtail the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms of women and girls, including as a result of additional edicts and decrees. On 20 March 2025, the school year in Afghanistan commenced for the fourth year with the exclusion of Afghan girls from secondary schools, due to the *de facto* authorities' continued ban on girls' education beyond sixth grade. Between May and July, the *kankor* (university entrance examination) was conducted without female students, who have been banned from higher education since December 2022.

19. In the first half of 2025, women's freedom of movement remained restricted by requirements to be accompanied by a *mahram* for distances beyond 78 km and for using a vehicle.¹⁹ Women and girls were sometimes prevented from travelling or even detained if they were not accompanied by a *mahram* or were deemed not to be wearing the correct hijab. In general, women's employment continued to be restricted to the health sector, primary education, security at airports and in detention facilities and some segments of the manufacturing sector. Some women's businesses and some limited peripheral functions within the *de facto* administration were also permitted.

20. On 19 March 2025, the *de facto* authorities published a new decree of the Taliban leader on the prevention of improper customs during weddings and funeral ceremonies and upon return from Hajj and Umrah. The decree reaffirms the *de facto* authorities' decree of 3 December 2021 on women's rights by stating that it is unlawful to compel a woman to marry and that "forcibly marrying or violating a woman's rights should be prosecuted in the courts of the Islamic Emirate". The decree also states that courts are obliged to handle complaints in accordance with the decree of 3 December 2021 on women's rights.²⁰ UNAMA however,

¹⁷ Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of Afghanistan, June 2025, para. 39.

¹⁸ Between 13-23 October 2024, UN Women, IOM and UNAMA conducted in-person and online group consultations as well as tele-survey interviews across Afghanistan, reaching 774 women across 34 provinces, as well as 76 men across 12 provinces.

¹⁹ On 31 December 2021, the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice announced that women must not travel without a *mahram* for over 78 km. Under Article 20 of the Law for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, drivers should not offer transport to women unaccompanied by a *mahram*.

²⁰ On 3 December 2021, the Taliban leader issued a 10-article decree on women's rights that, amongst other rights, granted "adult women" the right to consent to marriage and granted a "widow" the right to inheritance in the property of her husband, children, father and relatives.

recorded reports of survivors of gender-based violence experiencing significant barriers to accessing justice, including cases in which officials of the *de facto* authorities were accused of being both perpetrators of forced marriage and enforcing forced marriages.²¹ The Taliban leader's 3 December 2021 women's rights decree prevents forced marriage.²²

21. On 28 December 2024, a decree was passed mandating that newly constructed buildings must not have any windows through which their neighbours' courtyard, kitchen, well and other areas used by women are visible.²³

C. Policies, decrees and edicts affecting economic, social and cultural rights

22. The *de facto* authorities' policies have impacted the full range of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly for women and girls. This section highlights some illustrative examples.

1. Right to education

23. Initial policies introduced by the *de facto* authorities—such as the prohibition of co-educational settings in tertiary institutions, the revision of curricula, and the suspension of secondary education for girls—were initially communicated in vague terms and presented as temporary measures. However, these measures were later extended and evolved from partial restrictions to broader exclusions across educational levels above sixth grade, depriving millions of women and girls of their right to learn and halving female university enrolment rates since 2021.²⁴

2.. Right to work

24. Policies, decrees and directives regulating access to work continued to restrict women's access to employment in the public and private sectors, in international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and their participation in trade fairs. They also continued to ban women operating beauty salons and provided specific criteria on the workplace for both women and men. As in the case of education, the *de facto* authorities' policies relating to women's access to work and the regulation of the workplace have been incremental. Initial restrictions were imposed in relation to the workplace before work bans were subsequently introduced. Two edicts significantly affecting women's ability to work were the aforementioned *mahram* rule, which was subsequently incorporated into the 2024 PVPV law, and the ban on Afghan women's ability to work for NGOs and imposition of severe restrictions on national female staff working for the United Nations, with exemptions only in the health and primary education sectors.²⁵ In May 2025, dozens of UN female national staff were subjected to explicit death threats from unidentified individuals in relation to their work with UNAMA and other UN agencies, funds and programmes, requiring the UN to implement interim measures to protect their safety.²⁶

25. The exclusion of women and girls from education and employment opportunities has also negatively impacted the economy, with projections of a cumulative loss of US 920 million (5.8 per cent of the GDP) between 2024 and 2026.²⁷ The *de facto* authorities' ban on women working for national and international non-governmental organisations, despite a small number of exceptions, and restrictions on women's freedom of movement, continue to negatively impact on women's access to humanitarian assistance and the ability of

²¹ Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of Afghanistan, June 2025, para. 36.

²² Ibid.

²³ UNAMA Update on the Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, October-December 2024.

²⁴ Afghanistan: UNESCO warns of 'generational catastrophe' as girls denied education. 1 August 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153191>

²⁵ UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan - Update February to April 2023.

²⁶ UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan – Update April to June 2025.

²⁷ See UNDP, "Afghanistan Socio-Economic Review", April 2025, page 9.

humanitarian organisations to reach those most in need, particularly women-headed households.²⁸

3. Right to health

26. In early December 2024 the *de facto* Deputy Minister in the *de facto* Ministry of Public Health, issued a verbal directive banning women and girls from medical training—including programs in midwifery, nursing, laboratory sciences, dental prosthetics, etc.—at both private and public institutions, effectively ending the last remaining path for female higher education in technical health fields. This has, and will have, devastating consequences on women and girls’ right to health, in particular their sexual and reproductive health. It “decimates the supply” of female midwives and nurses in a country with extremely high maternal mortality.²⁹

27. In some instances, the *mahram* requirement for women and girls, was more strictly enforced than what is stipulated in the PVPV Law, further affecting women’s access to healthcare, including by requiring female healthcare workers to be accompanied by a *mahram* go to work.³⁰

D. Civic space and media freedom

28. Civic space and media freedom in Afghanistan continued to be restricted under the *de facto* authorities in the reporting period, characterised by a censorship, intimidation, and gender-based discrimination. A series of edicts have been passed that severely restrict civic space and media freedom. These include bans on images of living beings, music, and content deemed un-Islamic or insulting to Islam as interpreted by the *de facto* authorities. According to these, media outlets must align with Sharia, and content is subject to inspection and censorship by the *de facto* Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV). Journalists continued to face intimidation, arrest, and restrictions on covering women’s issues or dissent, contributing to widespread self-censorship.

29. According to a joint report issued in November 2024 by UNAMA and OHCHR examining the state of media freedom in Afghanistan,³¹ 336 human rights violations against media professionals, including 256 arbitrary arrests, 130 instances of torture or ill-treatment, and 75 threats or acts of intimidation were recorded since August 2021. Many outlets were forced to close due to official pressure, economic collapse, and the withdrawal of donor support. The report noted that media workers who crossed vague “red lines” faced detention without due process—some for months—and in some cases were convicted of crimes and imprisoned. The situation was particularly dire for women journalists, who were subjected to discriminatory regulations—such as dress requirements, workspace segregation, and limited participation in press events—that severely restricted their ability to report. The report found that interference by the *de facto* authorities with editorial content and in the operation of media outlets has substantially diminished media freedom. The prohibition on broadcasting music and dramas combined with the easy access to programmes from abroad over the Internet and by satellite, as well as the country’s economic difficulties, have contributed to a decrease in national media viewership and revenue. Journalists and media workers have been

²⁸ UN Women, “Out of jobs, into poverty. The impact of the ban on Afghan women working in NGOs”, January 2023: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/01/gender-alert-no-3-out-of-jobs-into-poverty-the-impact-of-the-ban-on-afghan-women-working-in-ngos>

²⁹ OHCHR, “Afghanistan: UN condemns Taliban ban on women attending medical classes”, 5 December 2024: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/12/1157866#:~:text=The%20UN%20human%20rights%20office,a%20of%20midwives%20and%20nurses>

³⁰ See Report of the Secretary-General, “The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security” 21 February 2025 para. 39, A/79/947-S/2025/372

³¹ UNAMA/OHCHR report “Media Freedom in Afghanistan,” November 2024. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/afghanistan/241120-Freedom-Media-report.pdf>

subject to threats, ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detention. Restrictions imposed on women in the media have either prohibited them from working in the sector or confined them mainly to office duties.

30. Article 17 of the PVPV law mandates inspectors to ensure media content complies with Sharia law as interpreted by the *de facto* authorities, does not insult Muslims and does not contain images of living beings. Media outlets were subject to frequent visits of *de facto* MPVPV personnel to monitor compliance of the PVPV law. After the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the *de facto* Ministry for PVPV instructed media outlets not to broadcast movies reflecting foreign culture or containing humour considered offensive. Women were prohibited altogether from appearing in movies. It required women media workers to wear a *hijab* with the types dictated by the *de facto* authorities and prohibited men to expose their bodies. It also prohibited movies deemed against Sharia principles and Afghan values. The *de facto* departments of information and culture regularly required journalists to obtain its approval before publishing journalistic reports, amounting to a form of censorship.³²

31. The types of content that are considered in compliance with Sharia can be subject to broad interpretation and may lead to further self-censorship among journalists as well as the PVPV law being used as a basis for arbitrary arrests and detentions.³³

32. While the prohibition of images of living beings was in place in some areas prior to the publication of the PVPV law, it was not immediately enforced across the media sector. As of July 2025, approximately half of Afghanistan's provinces are subject to some level of the prohibition of images of living beings – ranging from the prohibition of photos of the *de facto* authorities during meetings to a complete ban of images of living beings on television.³⁴

33. Under Article 13(3) and (8) of the PVPV law, women's voices are considered private and should be concealed, which contributes to pushing women further out of public life and discourse. On 26 October 2024, the *de facto* MPVPV stated that women's voices are only forbidden in reciting the Quran and singing loudly.³⁵ In some provinces, women's voices continue to be heard in radio programmes and women-run radio stations remain in operation. In May 2025, the *de facto* MPVPV, announced that it has extended its monitoring of social media.³⁶ On 14 May 2025, the Spokesperson for the *de facto* MPVPV stated that "the use of media for intellectual deviation, insult and humiliation, ethnic prejudice, and against religious values, is legally a crime". He further noted that no individual or institution was allowed to engage in "illegal activities" on social media. In the same month, UNAMA documented the arrests of five individuals, in Baghlan, Balkh, Kunduz and Zabul provinces, by inspectors of the *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. They were accused of posting videos with content considered inappropriate on TikTok.³⁷

³² Ibid.

³³ See Report on the Implementation, Enforcement and Impact of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Afghanistan. UNAMA, April 2025, p. 17. See also UNAMA/OHCHR report "Media Freedom in Afghanistan," November 2024, p. 20: Available at: <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights-monitoring-and-reporting-0>

³⁴ See: <https://rsf.org/en/afghanistan-disturbing-escalating-censorship-suffocating-free-press> and <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international-news/20241016-tv-channels-in-afghan-province-stop-showing-living-things>

³⁵ <https://x.com/MOPVPE1/status/1850065214445691021>

³⁶ RTA Dari News [@rtadarinews], X (formerly Twitter), 12 May 2025, 9:08AM. Available at: <https://x.com/rtadarinews/status/1921787146626617562>

³⁷ UNAMA Human Rights Update, April-June 2025: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/english_-_unama_hrs_update_on_human_rights_in_afghanistan_april-june_2025_final.pdf

E. The use of the death penalty and corporal punishment

34. Since August 2021, the *de facto* authorities have carried out ten public executions, rendering them arbitrary and a violation of the right to life,³⁸ contrary to Afghanistan's international human rights obligations. All executions have been of individuals convicted of murder. Four took place during the reporting period. On 11 April 2025, the *de facto* authorities carried out public executions in Baghdis, Farah and Nimroz provinces. In Baghdis, Qala-e-Naw city, two men convicted of separate murders were executed in public in the sports stadium by the respective victims' relatives. Two additional men were convicted of murder and publicly executed in sports stadiums: one in Nimroz, Zaranj city and one in Farah, Farah city. The latter was executed by being shot by the murder victim's wife and son.³⁹ These executions have followed judicial decisions approved by the Taliban leader, The *de facto* Supreme Court stated on its X accounts that, for each execution, mediation to seek forgiveness had failed, and the decision to impose the death penalty had been reviewed by the *de facto* Primary, Appeal and Supreme Courts and approved by the Taliban leader before being carried out.⁴⁰

35. In the reporting period, the *de facto* authorities continued to implement judicially ordered corporal punishment in public,⁴¹ contrary to Afghanistan's international human rights obligations.⁴² Generally, these have taken place in venues such as football stadiums and the exterior courtyards of local *de facto* government buildings, with both local residents and *de facto* officials in attendance. Such punishments involved a specified number of lashings, often accompanied by a period of imprisonment. The implementation of judicial corporal punishment is usually announced by the *de facto* Supreme Court via its X social media account⁴³ and concerns a variety of offences, including *zina*,⁴⁴ running away from home, theft, homosexuality, consuming alcohol, fraud and drug trafficking.

IV. Reflection of victims' and survivors' perspectives on justice and redress

36. Resolution 57/3 requested OHCHR to reflect in this report victims and survivors' perspectives on justice and redress, building on the stocktaking of accountability options and processes for human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan. While broad and inclusive consultations, including with victims and survivors of gross human rights violations and crimes under international law, are a key component of effective future accountability, including truth, justice and reparations,⁴⁵ opportunities to date for Afghan victims and survivors to be consulted with respect to their expectations for truth, justice and reparations, have been relatively limited. This section provides an overview of consultation processes conducted over the last twenty years, that provided some insights on victims' perspectives.

"A call for Justice" (2005)

37. In 2005, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) conducted a national consultation process to explore whether Afghans wanted the past legacy of human rights violations addressed and, if so, how. It covered the Soviet-backed era of

³⁸ See Human Rights Committee, General Comment 36, para.40

³⁹ UNAMA OHCHR Human Rights Update April-June 2025: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/english_-_unama_hrs_update_on_human_rights_in_afghanistan_april-june_2025_final.pdf

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See UNAMA Human Rights, Brief on corporal punishment and the death penalty, May 2023 and UNAMA/OHCHR Update on Human Rights January to March 2025.

⁴² Human Rights Committee, General Comment 20, para.5., HRI/GEN/1/Rev.1 at 30 (1994)

⁴³ https://x.com/supremecourt_af?lang=fr

⁴⁴ *Zina* is an Arabic term used to describe the prohibition under Sharia law of sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

⁴⁵ United Nations, Updated Set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity, 8 February 2005: E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1

1978 to 1992, the factional fighting between armed groups led by Mujahedeen leaders between 1992 to 1996 and the Taliban period from 1996, until the 2001 military action undertaken by the United States and its coalition partners.

38. The consultation comprised a survey designed to capture the quantitative data and test for preferences of 4151 respondents; and the convening of over 200 focus group discussions with over 2000 participants, of which 30 per cent were women, designed to capture qualitative data and test for perceptions. The consultation took eight months and covered 32 of Afghanistan's provinces as well as refugee populations in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. The consultation process resulted in the publication of "A Call for Justice",⁴⁶ which found that the vast majority of participants lacked trust in public authorities due to the absence of justice and protection of their rights and entrenched impunity. Many respondents called for the Government to hold known perpetrators to account as a way to restore trust and confidence in Afghanistan's then leaders. They further desired that their suffering be recognized and expressed their expectation that both the Government together with the international community act as the main providers of justice.⁴⁷ The report made a series of recommendations to the then Government and the international community, including for the Government to demonstrate a political commitment to justice; to vet human rights abusers in Government institutions and to undertake a wide range of legal and institutional reforms. It further recommended that capacity be built domestically, in particular through the establishment of a Special Prosecutor's office, to allow for criminal justice to occur in Afghanistan.

39. The then Afghan Government's reaction to the AIHRC's "A Call for Justice" was notably mixed and hesitant. The then Cabinet approved parts of the Action Plan for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation derived from that report, particularly initiatives aimed at acknowledging the suffering of victims, promoting truth-seeking, and reforming institutions. Implementation efforts effectively stalled, with almost none of the substantive justice mechanisms—like prosecutions, vetting, or institutional accountability—ever carried out.

Victim consultation processes on the Afghanistan situation before the International Criminal Court (2017- 2022)

40. As part of its investigation into the situation in Afghanistan, the ICC has undertaken several consultations with victims both prior and subsequent to the Taliban takeover, providing valuable insights into the perspectives of victims with respect to justice and redress.

41. A first consultation of Afghan victims was carried out by the Victims Participation and Reparations Section (VPRS) of the ICC Registry between November 2017 and January 2018. 699 representations were transmitted to the Pre-Trial Chamber, which were submitted primarily by victims' groups representing approximately 6,220 individual victims and 1,590 families. Of the 165 individual representations transmitted, only 10 were introduced by or on behalf of women, due to several structural and cultural barriers.

42. Main motivating factors invoked for continued investigation by almost all representations included the value of an impartial and respected international court; bringing the perceived perpetrators of crimes to justice; ending impunity; preventing future crimes; knowing the truth about what happened to victims of enforced disappearance; allowing for victims' voices to be heard; and protecting the freedom of speech and freedom of the press in Afghanistan.

43. In November 2021, the Pre-Trial Chamber invited the victims of crimes under the ICC's jurisdiction in the Afghanistan situation to provide further views. Sixteen representations were received covering approximately 11,150 victims and 130 families.

44. Supporting the need for continued investigation, the representations by victims emphasized the need for impartial, timely scrutiny to combat impunity, to comprehensively address crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed by all parties and to

⁴⁶ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, A Call for Justice - A National Consultation on past Human Rights Violations in Afghanistan, 25 January 2005.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

ensure victims' voices were heard. They also highlighted fears for their personal safety, the collapse of Afghanistan's justice system, and lack of domestic recourse.

Civil society initiatives

45. Over the past two decades, civil society has also engaged in transitional justice in Afghanistan, including by consulting victims. Momentum increased particularly after the Government adopted the Amnesty Law in 2007 and failed to implement the 2005 Action Plan for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation. Although civil society could not block the law, it secured a vital amendment allowing individuals to file claims against alleged perpetrators. One notable initiative, led by the Transitional Justice Coordination Group (TJCG) in 2010, consisting of 25 national and international civil society organisations, aimed to preserve a victim-centred justice approach and organized national events like the Victims' Jirga in May 2010, where victims publicly shared their experiences for the first time about the impact of all periods of the conflict and all regions of Afghanistan.⁴⁸ The final statement of the Victims' Jirga contained a number of outcomes and demands, which included the need to "examine the past and recognition of crimes against humanity, war crimes and human rights violations as well as their perpetrators and investigate the abuses and crimes of present time".⁴⁹ Numerous other civil society initiatives have taken place since then, aimed at gathering the perspectives of victims and survivors, both inside and outside Afghanistan.

46. It has been noted that historically victims' organisations remained weak and fragmented in Afghanistan, partly due to the fluid and multi-factional nature of Afghanistan's conflict, where shifting allegiances blurred lines between perpetrators and victims. Many communities remain unaware of atrocities outside their own regions, limiting national solidarity. Additionally, fear of reprisals has made civil society reluctant to address post-2001 violations. A lack of outreach beyond Kabul further restricted these organisations' ability to foster unified support for transitional justice across the country.⁵⁰ The current situation with respect to ongoing restrictions to civic space as outlined above, further places limitations on civil society's ability to mobilise and seek views of victims and survivors in Afghanistan. Notably, on 31 July 2025, a coalition of Afghan civil society organisations, launched a People's Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan before the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT), "to address the impunity around gender persecution in Afghanistan", with public hearings scheduled to begin in Madrid, Spain in October 2025.

UNAMA's work on victims' rights

47. UNAMA's mandate, as established by the United Nations Security Council, in addition to requiring it to monitor, report and advocate with regards to the situation for civilians, includes the promotion of responsible governance and the rule of law, including transitional justice, and providing support for the rights of victims.⁵¹ In line with this mandate UNAMA's Human Rights Service has continuously advocated with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, international military forces and the *de facto* authorities about the importance of ensuring accountability for human rights violations. Further, since 2024, UNAMA has continued the process of initial consultation with victims of armed conflict to understand the gaps in fulfilling their rights under international law and seek their views on what is needed to fulfil their rights in the future. A report on this work will be released in late 2025.

48. Since 2002, UNAMA also worked with the AIHRC and civil society on the victim-centred justice in Afghanistan. During peace talks in Doha from 2019-2020, UNAMA

⁴⁸ See "Tell us how this ends; Transitional Justice and Prospects for Peace in Afghanistan", Patricia Gossman and Sari Kouvo, 2013.

⁴⁹ See Transitional Justice Coordination Group- Afghanistan, "The Victims' Jirga; We're not seeking to wash blood with blood!", 9 May 2010, available at: [The Victims' Jirga | Transitional Justice Coordination Group – Afghanistan](#)

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ <https://unama.unmissions.org/mandate> and https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/scr_27772025_on_afghanistan_adopted_english.pdf

Human Rights Service and the AIHRC advocated for victims' concerns to be taken into account in a future settlement. Ultimately, however, the manner in which the peace talks in Doha unfolded, combined with the military takeover of country by the Taliban left little room for adequate representation of the voices of victims.

49. In 2020 and up to mid-2021, UNAMA's Human Rights Service conducted post-incident interviews with victims of the armed conflict. Those UNAMA interviewed spoke of how little was done to provide them with effective reparations, to acknowledge the harm done, and to fulfil their rights in the aftermath of civilian casualty incidents. Only in exceptional circumstances did the responsible party to the conflict reach out to recognise harm done or to apologise. Victims were often not aware of whether investigations were being conducted into the incident that caused harm, and few victims received compensation. Many victims indicated that non-recurrence of such incidents was of major importance to them and expressed their desire for peace.

Observations emanating from the consultation processes

50. Despite relatively limited consultation processes conducted with Afghan victims and survivors in the last 20 years, and their variations in approach, methodology and temporal scope, they provide important insights with respect to their needs and expectations regarding truth, justice and reparations.

51. Most notably, the desire for holistic and impartial justice, that combines various measures including acknowledgement of, and compensation for, harms caused; guarantees of non-recurrence; and the need for criminal prosecutions is a common thread among those consulted. While the primary duty to fulfil victims' right to truth, justice and reparation lies with the *de facto* authorities, without the necessary political will and domestic reforms, the pursuit of justice will inevitably require the involvement by the international community, both inside and outside Afghanistan to fulfil victims' rights to truth, justice and reparation. Victims and survivors have expressed their expectation that all parties and actors responsible for gross human rights violations and serious violations of international humanitarian law be held to account, and that international actors, also continue to bear responsibilities vis à vis victims in this regard, especially in the context of decades of conflict involving a multitude of actors.

52. In this context, inclusive consultation processes are needed, that ensure the full range of victims across Afghan society, including minorities and women, are fully represented, regarding justice and accountability for human rights violations. To date, the participation of women in these processes, in particular, remains glaringly inadequate. There are various reasons for this, including historical constraints and discrimination and past and current barriers to education for women and girls resulting in disproportionately low literacy levels, and general underreporting by women of gender-based crimes, including sexual violence in Afghanistan.

53. Going forward, it will be crucial to explore ways to ensure women and girls' specific perspectives on truth, justice and reparations can be collected, analysed and ultimately reflected in developing future options for gender-transformative redress, including with respect to allegations of recent and ongoing gross human rights violations and crimes under international law being committed against them.

54. Finally, although many domestic and international actors have been involved in raising awareness about victims' rights, additional work is needed to ensure sensitization around the various forms of redress that are - or could be - made available to victims to ensure a fully informed consultation process.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

55. The policies, practices, edicts and legal measures promulgated by the *de facto* authorities impacting the human rights of people in Afghanistan have had devastating consequences, in particular for women and girls. Many of them were framed as

temporary measures and were general and/or vague in language but have been progressively expanded to become formal *de facto* edicts and laws. To date, no practice, edict or legal measures adversely impacting human rights has been reversed or revoked, despite multiple calls to do so. The culmination of measures undertaken by the *de facto* authorities has silenced women's voices and deprived them of their autonomy. No country can progress – politically, economically or socially – while excluding half of its population from public life and systematically denying their right to equality, including in the private sphere.

56. Overall, in the reporting period the human rights situation in Afghanistan continued to deteriorate with ongoing gender persecution against women and girls. Recent mass returns of refugees from neighbouring countries further exacerbated the worrying human rights situation. Human rights defenders and media workers continued to be arbitrarily arrested and detained for expressing opinions perceived as critical of the *de facto* authorities. The death penalty continued to be applied, in public, as well as corporal punishment, in violation of Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law.

57. In reiterating previous recommendations to the *de facto* authorities to immediately cease all human rights violations, it is recalled that Afghanistan as a State remains bound by its obligations under international law, including the human rights instruments to which it is a party.⁵² Its *de facto* authorities remain accountable for crimes and violations committed on its territory. The international community has a prevention role in terms of ensuring the non-recurrence of violations in the future.

58. Holding all perpetrators of gross human rights violations and abuses and serious violations of international humanitarian law accountable through all available processes remains an essential pillar for long-term sustainable peace, development and reconciliation in Afghanistan. It is necessary for reestablishing the rule of law, strengthening the institutional protection of human rights and preventing the continued recurrence of gross violations and abuses, as it is for Afghanistan to achieve effective, lasting reconciliation, and for victims to achieve justice and redress, a holistic and comprehensive process is needed.

59. In advancing accountability and redress for human rights violations in Afghanistan, initiatives need to be further explored to find meaningful ways to consult with victims and survivors in a broad and inclusive manner, including women, girls in all their diversity, and minorities. They should also involve effective capacity-building and sensitization among all stakeholders, especially in relation to the concepts of truth, justice and reparations. They should not be construed as one-off events, but as ongoing processes that continuously capture the needs of victims, which may evolve throughout what are often decades-long transitions. The principles of do-no-harm, consent and confidentiality are essential requirements for meaningful consultations,⁵³ which remain particularly challenging in the Afghan context and that will require careful calibration in developing a way forward.

A. Recommendations to the *de facto* authorities

60. OHCHR reiterates its previous recommendations that remain to date unfulfilled, and renews its calls on the *de facto* authorities to adhere to international standards and the human rights obligations that Afghanistan is bound by, including those relating to women and girls, and reiterates its previous recommendations to urgently take effective

⁵² See tinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=1&Lang=EN

⁵³ See Guidance Note of the Secretary-General "Transitional Justice, A strategic tool for people, prevention and peace": <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/03/202307guidancenotettransitionaljustice.pdf>.

steps to fully comply with the obligations of Afghanistan under international human rights law.

61. OHCHR recommends that the *de facto* authorities:

(a) Promptly rescind all discriminatory laws, edicts and decrees and policies that deny the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Afghan population and especially women and girls, enable their access to secondary and tertiary education and work, their access to healthcare, respect their freedom of movement and cease interference with other aspects of their daily lives.

(b) Establish a complete moratorium on executions, with a view to the abolition of the death penalty and end the application of corporal punishment.

(c) Ensure that all legislation applicable in Afghanistan is in accordance with international human rights law.

(d) Permit resumption of the operation of a credible and independent national human rights institution, in line with the Paris Principles, with a mandate to support transitional justice initiatives and victim-centred redress.

(e) Respect and ensure the right to freedom of expression and remove restrictions on the media sector.

(f) Meaningfully engage with victims and survivors and promote dialogue and consultation about accountability and victims' rights to truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, whether through traditional and/or criminal or quasi-judicial mechanisms, ensuring processes are fully inclusive and gender-responsive.

B. Recommendations to Member States and the international community

62. OHCHR recommends that Member States and the international community more broadly:

(a) Bring to justice alleged perpetrators of gross human rights violations and serious violations of international humanitarian law and abuses, including crimes against humanity, by applying accepted principles of extraterritorial or universal jurisdiction.

(b) Support the ongoing investigation by the ICC into the situation in Afghanistan and provide all necessary cooperation to it.

(c) Provide support and platforms for victims, survivors and civil society representatives, particularly women in all their diversity, as well as minority groups, to hold consultations and advocate for truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, and map the results of these consultation processes.

(d) Undertake broad-based sensitization of the meaning of victims' rights among all affected victims' groups;

(e) Ensure the equal and inclusive and meaningful participation of women and girls, men and boys, in all their diversity, as well as minorities in consultation processes;

(f) Immediately halt all forced returns of Afghan refugees, ensuring protection against refoulement to Afghanistan of any person at real risk to life, of torture or other irreparable harm, including based on gender, and ensure the protection of Afghan victims and witnesses through resettlement and other measures, as appropriate.