

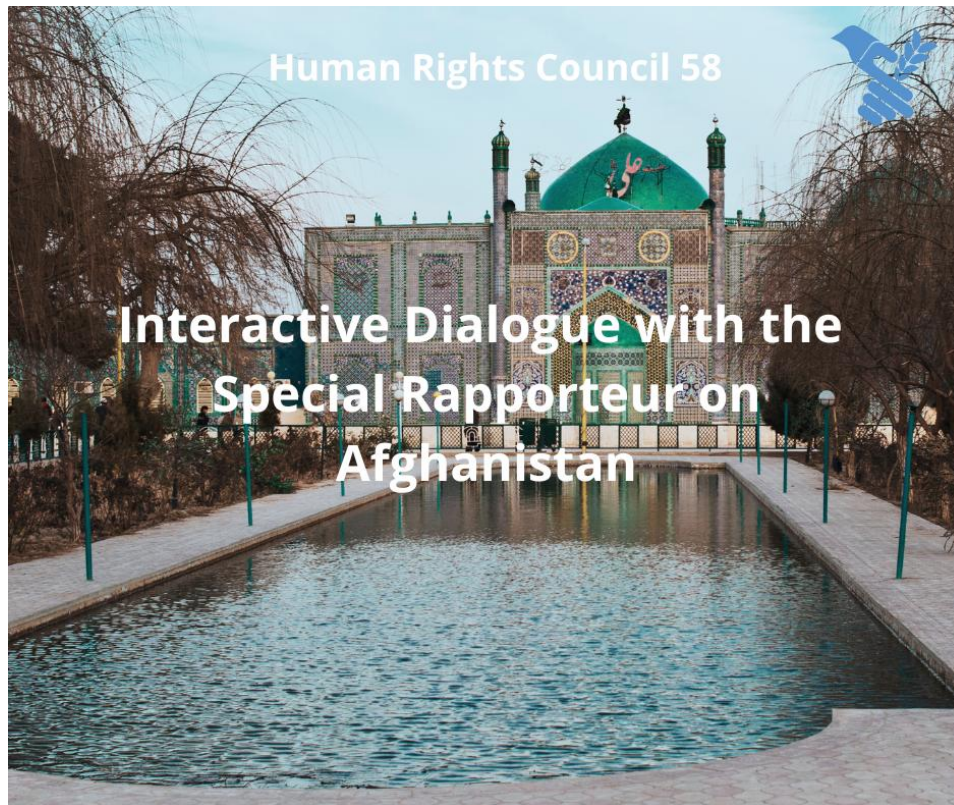


GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan

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PRESENTATION OF THEMATIC REPORTS

Mr. Richard BENNETT, Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan

The findings the SR presents today of two reports provide further proof of the deepening human rights crisis in Afghanistan. The Human Rights Council is facing numerous challenges in many parts of the world, and indeed the international human rights system has come under such increasing pressure that this week the High Commissioner described it as crumbling. However, the situation in Afghanistan calls for your ongoing attention and action.

The Taliban is continuing to impose and enforce its institutionalised system of gender-based discrimination, exclusion and oppression, perpetrated alongside other wide-ranging violations of human rights, all of which are having devastating impacts for the people of Afghanistan. Some **23 million people**, almost half the population, are **in need of humanitarian assistance**, a situation drastically worsened by the pauses and cuts to international aid. In his study on the so-called **‘vice and virtue law’**, the SR details how the Taliban is codifying, consolidating and adding to the many discriminatory policies it's imposed since seizing power.



Women and girls bear the brunt of this oppression. However, men, boys, gender-diverse persons, ethnic and religious minorities, marginalised communities and independent media all face a deeply repressive regime that dictates almost every aspect of life. No one is spared.

The SR previously warned that the **Taliban's institutionalised system of gender-based oppression** constitutes a widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population of Afghanistan and may constitute **crimes against humanity**, including gender persecution. The vice and virtue law not only forms part of this attack, it also provides further evidence that it is planned, orchestrated at the highest levels and pursuant to an organised policy. It is important to stress that the 'vice and virtue law' does not stand alone but represents the continuation of the Taliban's human rights-violating policies since returning to power and those imposed during the first period of its rule, as described in detail in his study.

It confirms that the group has not moderated its behaviour but instead remains committed to pursuing a deeply **discriminatory and misogynistic agenda**. To be clear, the law is not an endpoint but an indicator of further restrictions to come. Indeed, the Taliban is continuing to impose and enforce new restrictions and in December banned women from studying in medical institutes, including as trainee midwives and nurses. This decision will severely undermine **access to health care**, particularly for women and girls. The same month, the Taliban banned the construction of buildings with windows that overlook places usually used by women, a disturbing echo of a similar measure imposed more than two decades ago. Other restrictions remain in place, including the **exclusion of girls and women from education** above grade six and the **ban on women's employment**.

In many sectors, the SR is deeply concerned by ongoing violations and abuses against ethnic and religious minorities, including Hazaras. The killing of 14 Hazara men in Daikundi province in September and 10 Sufi men at a place of worship in Baghlan in November, both claimed by Daesh, must be independently and impartially investigated. Afghanistan has a long history of serious violations against ethnic, religious and other minority groups, almost always committed with impunity.

The SR also continue to receive reports of **violence, threats and intimidation against ethnic and religious minority communities** in the context of land disputes. Civic space, including the space for press freedom, has shrunk dramatically under Taliban rule. Independent journalists and media outlets are subject to severe censorship, while NGOs, in particular organisations led by and centred on women, face tightening restrictions on their operations.

Human rights defenders, including journalists and educators, remain at risk of detention, violence, threats and intimidation. Former civil servants, such as prosecutors and security force officials, continue to be targeted with reprisals. The SR is deeply alarmed by the **escalation in the use of corporal punishment**, which amounts to torture and ill-treatment. According to the *de facto* Supreme Court, since the start of this year, some 128 people, including 101 males and 27 females, have been subjected to corporal punishment, the majority for crimes such as adultery and sodomy, as well as for theft and murder. People are subject to state-sanctioned flogging regularly, almost always combined with a prison sentence. In the past 48 hours, 14 people, 12 males and 2 females, have been flogged in public. The SR also continues to receive reports of torture and ill-treatment in detention, including sexual violence.



The Taliban's oppressive policies, including their 'vice and virtue law', not only allow the *de facto* authorities to exert control over nearly every aspect of Afghans' daily lives, they reinforce a pervasive climate of fear that the SR has noted with growing concern since his first report in September 2022. The result is that communities are increasingly resorting to self-censorship.

Over time, this **fear and mistrust are likely to erode the social fabric**, with communities becoming more fragmented under the weight of growing collective suspicion. The SR has repeatedly warned that the Taliban's extreme policies, combined with economic hardship, are likely to fuel a dangerous ideology among generations of Afghans, particularly young men and boys, posing security threats in the region and beyond. As the Taliban tightens its grip on the people of Afghanistan, with further discrimination, oppression and control of information, these risks will only grow.

In the face of severe Taliban persecution, fear of arrest, lack of opportunities and increasing poverty, Afghans continue to flee the country in search of a better life for themselves and their families. Yet many who flee face an uncertain future with limited access to legal status protection and services. States that had seemed to welcome refugees have closed or drastically limited resettlement pathways. The SR is increasingly concerned about the **forced return of refugees to Afghanistan in violation of the principle of non-refoulement**, not only by neighbouring States, but also some who are farther afield.

The worsening human rights crisis in Afghanistan is compounded by the drastic reduction in support and assistance, including suspension and cuts to international aid. In recent weeks, the SR has spoken frequently with representatives of humanitarian agencies who paint a bleak picture. Critical humanitarian services, including health care, food aid and protection, faced severe disruption, with women and girls disproportionately affected and reproductive health services undermined. **Cuts in aid primarily harm the long-suffering people** of Afghanistan, who understandably already feel abandoned. They also threaten regional stability and will exacerbate migration pressures. Without an urgent change in course, millions will be left without essential support.

Challenges to discriminatory and oppressive policies and other human rights violations are most effectively led by the people of Afghanistan themselves. At the same time, Afghans have loudly and consistently asked for international support, yet there remains no comprehensive action plan to address the human rights, humanitarian and political crisis in Afghanistan. There have been some positive steps on accountability. The SR welcomes the recent initiative of a group of Member States to **hold Afghanistan accountable for violations of its obligations** under CEDAW, as well as the ICC Prosecutor's request for arrest warrants for two Taliban leaders.

Likewise, the SR welcomes **progress towards the Crimes Against Humanity Treaty** and urges the inclusion of gender apartheid as an international crime. But more must be done. He supports the call by Afghan and international civil society organisations to establish an independent investigative mechanism, one with a comprehensive and victim-centred mandate, and which is adequately resourced. That said, the potential of his Office has yet to be realised. Due to the UN liquidity crisis, the SR has less than half the support mandated by the UNHRC. Left unchecked, the Taliban is likely to intensify, expand and further entrench its rights-violating measures on the people of Afghanistan, in particular women and girls and likely religious and ethnic minorities, subjecting them to ever-expanding cycles of discrimination, segregation and oppression.



Considering the Taliban's oppression requires sustained and principled international pressure, strength and support for civil society and an unwavering commitment to accountability. Central to this must be the establishment of clear human rights benchmarks for engagement with the Taliban and a united commitment to ensure that there will be no normalisation of the *de facto* authorities unless and until there are demonstrated, measurable and independently verified improvements in human rights.

The **lack of a strong unified response** from the international community has already emboldened the Taliban. We owe it to the people of Afghanistan not to embolden them still further through continued inaction. We must not allow history to repeat itself. Doing so will have devastating consequences in and beyond Afghanistan.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By placing emphasis on the **situation of children and youth**, the SR explains that redefinition of childhood and erosion of access to education and health care have removed crucial protections for children and young women. Noting with concern the heightened risk of child marriage, child labour, abuse and trafficking, he also highlights the situation of multiple **ethnic and religious minorities** who have long faced discrimination and violence, often committed with impunity.

Regarding the **Taliban's decision to deny the SR a visa** and how he intends to ensure his work meets the needs of the Afghan people, the SR would prefer to be able to access the country and engage directly with a range of stakeholders there. The decision to deny him access has not stopped me from discharging his mandate. Much human rights monitoring now in many countries takes place remotely, often to protect the security of sources. However, he deeply regrets the Taliban's decision to not grant he access as it denies him the opportunity to continue a constructive dialogue with them in person. Nevertheless, he will continue to engage with the people of Afghanistan, both inside and outside the country, as well as a range of stakeholders to document human rights violations and advocate for improvements. Stating that no access does not mean no engagement, he continues to reach out actively to the *de facto* authorities, including seeking their input and feedback on my on his reports and findings.

Turning to the **resources for his mandate**, including the impact of the liquidity crisis on paper, the UNHRC has provided the SR with considerable resources - a team, translation resources and a travel budget. In practice, he receives less than half of what has been supported by the UNHRC. For example, his team of ten on paper is in reality just four persons. Despite this, he continues to discharge my mandate to the best of my ability, including by providing reports and undertaking documentation of violations. The mandate's full potential has not been realised and much more could be achieved if provided with the resources mandated.

Addressing questions on **the role of men**, highlighted in my study that men and boys are also subject to the Taliban's discriminatory and restrictive rules, and are required to adhere to the group's binary understanding of gender roles and responsibilities. They are also being increasingly forced into coerced compliance with the Taliban's dictates and to control their female relatives. The SR has warned on several occasions about the long term impact of entrenching the Taliban's ideology, including via the education and its impact that that is likely to on young men and boys and the potential security risks that may accompany this. He has also documented acts of resistance from Afghan men, such as arranging covert education for their



daughters, providing legal assistance and supportive accompaniment to ensure the female relatives can continue to work. A number of women human rights defenders have expressed their appreciation for the support of their male relatives and grave concern about their treatment and the risks they face. Almost every week he receives messages and photos from Afghan men who are expressing concern about ill-treatment. Those photos include bruises from beatings they have received after standing up for their female relatives and sometimes being detained. Men in Afghanistan are not just bystanders to oppression. Many are taking risks to challenge it. More should do so. They too need support.

There is a **global responsibility** to address the crisis in Afghanistan. All of us have a role to play in working towards an inclusive, stable, rights-respecting and prosperous country, not just for its own sake, but for the stability of the region and the world. To challenge and reverse the Taliban's egregious policies, to support the people of the country, and to ensure accountability, the SR is firmly convinced that no single action will be effective on its own, which is why he advocates for a comprehensive approach, an all-tools approach, one that is rooted in human rights and in the principles of justice, inclusion, equality and non-discrimination.

Such an approach includes several components, including establishing **clear human rights benchmarks for engagement with the Taliban**, making it clear that there will be no normalisation of the *de facto* authorities unless and until there are demonstrable improvements in human rights, particularly for women and girls. UN Member States should adopt a principled and coordinated strategy, as suggested by the Security Council mandated independent assessment. A **performance-based roadmap** rooted in human rights principles is vital in guiding this engagement. Ensuring justice and accountability is also vital, and it is crucial to send a strong message to the *de facto* authorities that there will be consequences for their actions. This can be achieved by utilising and strengthening existing accountability mechanisms.

Codification of the crime of apartheid is another matter the SR supports through discussions in New York on the Crimes Against Humanity Convention. There should be strengthened support for civil society, in particular funding for humanitarian and human rights crisis in Afghanistan and supporting initiatives, providing attention, education, especially for girls and young women. Support for the private sector is also important, particularly women owned or run businesses.

Embedding human rights and women's voices in accountability and decision-making processes is essential. Greater efforts are needed to ensure the equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and members of minority and marginalised communities in discussions about accountability in Afghanistan. More broadly, all of us need to keep the situation in Afghanistan meaningfully on the international agenda, in particular in international and multilateral forums and institutions.

We cannot and must not forget the people of Afghanistan who already and understandably feel abandoned as laudable and important as compassion. Maybe this goes beyond compassion and perhaps even **beyond moral and legal responsibility**. It appeals also to national, regional and perhaps global self-interest. To conclude, the SR expresses his profound gratitude and appreciation to the resilient people of Afghanistan who continue to show enormous courage and perseverance. What is happening in their country should shock our consciences. They demand and deserve our support, solidarity and protection.



INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by the Country Concerned

Welcoming the SR's report, **Afghanistan** commends the SR and his team for their commitment to diligently pursue this mandate or for updating this Council on the grave situation of human rights in Afghanistan, as regrettably it continues to deteriorate. Under the Taliban's oppressive rule, Afghanistan has become a place where fundamental rights are gradually and systematically dismantled, international norms are disregarded, and impunity prevails.

Despite international communities, including several OIC Member States' concerted efforts at expanding channels of engagement with the Taliban over the past five years and offering the Taliban *de facto* regime direct and indirect economic and political support, the group effectively shut down all doors and windows of open dialogue and engagement around June and July and August last year. The ban on SRs' visits followed by an issuance of an edict on so-called promotion of virtue and prevention of vice and a total ban on the medical institution for girls.

Recently, in a bizarre act of diplomatic ignorance, the Taliban announced that they wanted to **withdraw from the ICC**. To be precise, not from the International Cricket Council, where Afghanistan is doing better, but from the International Criminal Court. As these violations are presently taking place in the face of the world so far with impunity, the question is not whether the ICC's indictment and the Human Rights Council mandate is credible, but whether the Taliban *de facto* regime is left with any diplomatic and political credibility for constructive engagement with the world.

As the report rightly highlights, **systematic gender persecution** has deepened, particularly with the introduction of the so-called 'Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice' (PVPV law), which has institutionalised severe restrictions on women and girls, further eroding their fundamental rights. **Civic space has drastically shrunk** with increasing restrictions on media and civil society organisations. Journalists, activists, academics, writers, artists remain at serious risk of arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and persecution. Minorities in Afghanistan continue to face marginalisation, under-representation, discrimination, and lack of protection.

Girls are increasingly denied their right to education beyond grade six. The **ban on education** has heightened risk of child marriage, child labour, abuse, and trafficking. Former Government officials and security personnel remain at the particular risk of retaliation and reprisal. At the same time, a worsening humanitarian and economic crisis exacerbated by the international restriction, Taliban policies, and climate change continues to undermine the people of Afghanistan's access to food, health care, and livelihood. When confronted with the human rights concern, the Taliban respond with a denial and a non-engagement, branding such criticism as anti-Islamic or domestic matters. The Taliban claim to uphold human rights, but only within their strict and highly restrictive interpretation of Sharia law.

The report before presented today **only scratches the surface**. Money violation remains undocumented, and money victims remain unheard. The full scale of Taliban abuse is called for an urgent and coordinated international response. The international community cannot afford to stand by while atrocities continue to unfold. This is why the SR recommends that the Member States support a strengthened, survival-centred pathway for accountability for current and past



violations and crimes. A well-resourced **UN independent investigative mechanism** with a comprehensive mandate is essential.

Such a mechanism would be distinct, but complementary to the work of the SR on Afghanistan, much like similar mechanisms established on Myanmar, Belarus, and Syria. The creation of this mechanism will **complement other international accountability efforts**, such as the ICC's indictment of the Taliban leadership, the Four Countries Initiative to bring the Taliban before the ICJ, and the CEDAW Universal Jurisdiction Initiative, and the targeted individual sanctions, such as the EU sanctions against Taliban ministers of education. Together, these five mechanisms will address different aspects of accountability, closing the loop on impunity, and creating what could be called an accountability circle, or accountability ring.

This **accountability ring** will have a positive impact on prevention of further atrocities, creating a conducive environment for reform-minded individuals within the Taliban to either raise their voice or leave the ranks of the Taliban regime, and will help a broader transitional justice approach to contribute to a durable peace in a post-Taliban Afghanistan.

In conclusion, Afghanistan reiterates the following. First, the international community must actively support the establishment of an inclusive and representative government in Afghanistan that upholds human rights, respect for fundamental freedoms, and ensure the well-being of all people of Afghanistan. Second, all engagement must be contingent on tangible and verifiable progress in respecting human rights.

Views Expressed by State Delegations

Iceland jointly with Nordic Baltic countries remain deeply concerned by the institutionalised system of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation of women and girls in Afghanistan and the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that heightens the risk of abuse. The PVPV law further entrances the oppression and segregation of women and girls from public life in Afghanistan with severe human and socio-economic consequences. They stress the importance of accountability and call on the de facto authorities to abide by the obligations of Afghanistan under international law, including CEDAW and the Rome Statute. They fully support the work and independence of the ICC to ensure accountability for serious international crimes, including the crime against humanity, of persecution on gender grounds. They also remain firm supporters of the mandate of the SR and commend his commitment to the people of Afghanistan.

On behalf of the **OIC Group, Pakistan** takes note of the SR's report and reiterates its deep concern over the humanitarian, human rights and socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan. Recalling its consistent position on the rights of women and girls, the OIC Group urges *the de facto* authorities in Afghanistan to safeguard the rights of all Afghans, including women and girls' right to education and participation in the workforce. The teachings of Islam are clear on this matter. The OIC Group also underlines the need for instituting protections for persons belonging to ethnic, religious and cultural minorities as enshrined in Islamic law and Afghanistan's international obligations. The Group also stresses the SR's concerns as well that the much-needed funding to meet the humanitarian and other basic needs of Afghans is diminishing and thereby leaving millions at risk. In this context, the Group reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and calls on all stakeholders to continue their support, especially for the most needful.



North Macedonia remains alarmed by the persistent violation of human rights these past three and a half years, particularly against women and girls, ethnic and religious minorities, human rights defenders and journalists. The severe restrictions on the right to education and employment for women and youth contradict Afghanistan's international commitments. Reports of arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings highlight even more the worsening crisis. It urges the *de facto* authorities to immediately end these abuses, ensure accountability and respect international law. The international community must stay engaged, providing humanitarian aid, supporting civil society and protecting human rights defenders from persecution. Finally, it reaffirms its strong support for the SR's mandate and stresses the need for continued independent monitoring. Justice and accountability must remain at the core of our approach.

Reading the report has only strengthened **Monaco's** deep concern about the human rights situation in Afghanistan since the return of the Taliban, especially as regards women and girls. Their condition has gone from bad to worse. They are the victims of systematic political oppression. They are prevented from fully exercising their right to education, freedom of movement and to pursue a career of their choice. They can no longer go to social spaces such as beauty parlours, which have been closed down. They are not even allowed to speak loudly or sing in public. Women's voices have also fallen silent on the radio with the recent closure of Radio Begum. This situation is intolerable. It must be documented and denounced notably within the UNHRC. In this context, the work of the SR is absolutely essential. That is why Monaco supported its creation and the renewal of his mandate and we will continue to do so as long as need be.

Costa Rica continues to be concerned by the dramatic deterioration of the human rights situation in Afghanistan as well as the total collapse of civic space caused by arbitrarily applied laws, a lack of legal certainty and, gender-based oppression against women and girls. Under this misogynistic regime of oppression and discrimination, Afghan women and girls have been literally stripped of their voice. The recent broadening of unjustifiable restrictions, in particular as regards access to healthcare, education and work, will have negative impacts both on the physical and mental health of the population as well as on the country's economic development. Last month, last November, Costa Rica, along with a group of countries, submitted a referral of the situation in Afghanistan to the International Criminal Court due to severe human rights violations. Costa Rica reaffirms its solidarity and commitment to protecting the rights of Afghan women and girls and they must be free to take their own decisions without coercion. It urges the international community to step up efforts to demand accountability. It is urgent to restore women's rights and their dignity and full participation in public life.

Luxembourg is alarmed by the law on vice and virtue, which confirms and extends the severe restrictions imposed by the Taliban since they returned to power, further institutionalising a system of oppression, discrimination and control. Systematic persecution against Afghan women and girls amounts to gender-based apartheid. Discriminatory laws that deny women and girls the right to education, right to work, the right to freedom of movement and expression are erasing their presence in public spaces. Luxembourg also condemns restrictions on freedom of the media and arbitrary detentions of journalists. Afghanistan should fully abide by its international human rights obligations and we caution against any normalisation of relations with the Taliban in the absence of effective and real guarantees for human rights for all Afghans, male and female, and including religious minorities and LGBTIQ+.



Women and girls in Afghanistan are suffering unprecedented oppression and their human rights and fundamental freedoms are trampled upon. The prohibition of education and the dramatic limitation of freedom of movement deprive women of a future and condemn them to being invisible. Banning women from studying medicine will further worsen the public health crisis, placing thousands of lives at risk. Such discriminatory measures violate Afghanistan's international obligations and must be revoked. Since 2021, arbitrary arrests, censorship and acts of intimidation have reduced media spaces to a bare minimum. Women journalists have been silenced. Guaranteeing freedom of expression and freedom of the media is crucial for all societies. **Switzerland** calls for journalists to be protected and for there to be no restrictions imposed on the media. Impunity for international crimes cannot go on. Switzerland recalls that there are investigations underway carried out by the International Criminal Court and has taken note of requests for arrest warrants against two Taliban leaders for the crime against humanity of gender-based persecution. Switzerland also reiterates its support for the court as a judicial institution that is impartial and independent and we recall the importance of placing victims at the heart of accountability efforts.

Spain will continue to speak out to condemn this situation, which cannot be normalised, and to seek accountability, including before the International Court of Justice. The 'vice and virtue law' is the embodiment of systematic oppression by the Taliban, which reduces women to being objects without hopes or rights, and codifies practises which could amount to gender-based persecution in accordance with the Statute of Rome. For all persons, international law should be respected, and this everywhere. Afghanistan is no exception. Spain condemns violence, the death penalty, arbitrary detentions, torture, repression against freedom of the press, and the right to demonstration, as well as the lack of access to health care and education. It is essential to continue documenting human rights violations, and this work should be strengthened.

Australia is deeply concerned by the Taliban's ongoing campaign of oppression, targeting women and girls, the LGBTQI+ community, ethnic and religious minorities, civil society, and human rights defenders, among others. We are alarmed by your findings that since 2021, more than 80 edicts have been issued that target and restrict women's and girls' education, employment, and personal freedoms. Australia is gravely concerned by the institutionalised discrimination and segregation, and the ongoing and pervasive disregard for the human rights of all women and girls, which undermines their agency and attempts to erase them from public life. Australia supports strong international action to respond to the Taliban's oppressive practises against women and girls. That is why, together with Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands, it has taken action under CEDAW.

Japan remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly the institutionalised gender oppression faced by women and girls. As the SR highlighted in his report, the new restrictions under the so-called morality law are fuelling fear and anxiety among the population. Japan is also alarmed by reports of a new edict banning women and girls from receiving education at medical institutions. This directive would not only restrict women's rights to education and healthcare, but also undermine Afghanistan's social and health systems, further hindering its development. The international community must continue to engage with and support the people of Afghanistan. As the SR emphasises, the situation of Afghan returnees



and internally displaced persons is becoming increasingly dire. In response, Japan, in collaboration with UNHCR, has committed approximately \$6 million in assistance to improve the livelihoods of these vulnerable groups and host communities. Japan will continue to strongly urge the Taliban to reverse all policies that restrict the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Afghan people, while steadfastly working to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Bulgaria remains deeply concerned about the continued systematic violations and abuses of human rights in Afghanistan, including policies and actions of the *de facto* authorities which suppress the right to peaceful assembly, the freedom of expression and media freedom. We denounce the widespread arbitrary arrests, violence, torture and ill-treatment of journalists, activists and human rights defenders. It expresses serious concern about new measures further aggravating the discrimination, segregation, disregard for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls, such as the so-called PVPV law, which sets out wide-ranging restrictions affecting almost every aspect of women's and girls' lives. Bulgaria is outraged by the recent ban on women's medical training, which exacerbates existing difficulties for women and girls to access healthcare amid a severe shortage of female doctors, nurses, midwives and psychologists. Bulgaria is alarmed that children in Afghanistan continue to be particularly vulnerable to serious violations and abuses of their rights, including early child marriages and hazardous child labour. Bulgaria reiterates its appeal to the *de facto* authorities to restore respect, protection and full exercise of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons in Afghanistan. It calls for the elimination of the institutionalised system of discrimination, segregation and exclusion of women and girls, and for the robust protection of children from violations and abuses of their rights.

Indonesia is concerned by the lack of progress in human rights in Afghanistan. Despite continued calls from the international community, the ongoing restrictions imposed on women and girls have been worsened by the recent ban on female students from attending medical schools. Such degrading policies only further erode their dignity and rights, thus must be reversed immediately. Indonesia's commitment to supporting empowerment of Afghan women and girls remains unwavering. For ensuring access to higher education, Indonesia continues to offer scholarships, particularly to Afghan female students, to study in our universities. To support the right to health, it has provided 10 million doses of polio vaccine, as well as mobile clinics and ambulances, which also benefit women and girls. Last year, it collaborated with Afghan civil society on a psychosocial project for 400 Afghan women and adolescent girls, and helping them to engage in their social life. Indonesia is also committed to developing Islamic microfinance business models suitable for Afghanistan, especially for women entrepreneurs. In closing, Indonesia will continue to advocate the right of Afghan women and girls to equally enjoy the fundamental freedoms that they deserve.

Expressing concern over the human rights situation in Afghanistan, the **United Arab Emirates** reiterates that prosperity, peace, stability, and economic recovery in Afghanistan will only happen with the safe and complete participation of women and girls, and the preservation of their rights, and ensuring their access to work and education on an equal opportunity basis. The UAE has driven efforts to upgrade infrastructure in various development sectors in Afghanistan, particularly in health care. In this regard, the UAE has opened 10 maternal health care facilities in Afghanistan as part of the integrated development programme for Afghanistan that aims to upgrade infrastructure in various development sectors in the country. In conclusion, it calls upon



the international community to heed the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and to mobilise resources to improve conditions for women and girls in the health care, education, and entrepreneurship fields.

Malawi welcomes this report and thanks the Special Rapporteur for extensively and constructively engaging with a broad range of stakeholders regarding the human rights situation in Afghanistan. It notes with concern the wide range on human rights violations, such as the barring of women and girls from public life, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and torture. Malawi calls for a reversal of the situation, particularly the dismantling of the system of institutionalised gender oppression and discrimination, discriminatory policies and directives that restrict the rights and freedoms of women. Malawi bemoans the lack of accountability and deeply entrenched impunity, which have led to the widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It urges the international community to continue with efforts to find coordinated and workable solutions to the continuing circle of impunity and violations of the rights of the Afghan people

Malta agrees with the SR that the Taliban are implementing a deeply misogynistic system of oppression and discrimination against women and girls that is unparalleled with any other country. It is deeply disappointing that in December 2024, the Taliban banned all women from medical training facilities affecting thousands who up to then had served their country despite the already severe limitations on women in every sphere of public and private life. This decision will also negatively affect the rudimentary health services on offer to women. Malta also deplores the Taliban's redefinition of a child away from the CRC's stipulation of 18 years of age and instead linking it to biological development. This will have a severe negative impact on young women and girls and may be an excuse to permit child labour, child marriage. Malta reiterates its strong support for the special rapporteur and all other UN structures and mechanisms assisting Afghanistan.

The South African delegation shares the concern about the dire humanitarian situation and human rights situation for girls in Afghanistan, which is a matter that resonates with **South Africa**, a proud democracy today thanks to those countless heroes who fought on the front lines of the struggle against apartheid for equality for women and girls, not only in their country, but for women and girls everywhere. Accordingly, South Africa cannot remain silent while women and girls in Afghanistan are being robbed of their rights simply because they were born women and girls. This is reflected in the countless misogynistic decrees that have been issued since 2021, seeking to erase them from public life and relegating them into the shadows in an organised, widespread and systematic manner. These measures are cruel, inhuman and degrading and may amount to gender persecution. South Africa believes, therefore, that those responsible must be held accountable and as such welcomes the request by the prosecutor of the ICC for arrest warrants for senior Taliban leaders. However, the suffering of women and girls in Afghanistan today derives from the entrenched impunity accorded to multiple perpetrators over decades. Accordingly, any accountability mechanism which the UNHRC is duty-bound to pursue must adopt a comprehensive approach as echoed by the special rapporteur and build on the basis laid by HRC Resolution 57-3.

Chile expresses its deep concern about the findings in the SR's presentation. Afghanistan is the epicentre of an institutionalised system of discrimination and gender-based persecution with



facts that constitute crimes against humanity. The ‘virtue and vice law’ has only entrenched systematic oppression with a particular impact on women, girls and people of diverse gender or sexual orientation. This law has institutionalised what some people term gender apartheid. Women are being erased from society, deprived of their most fundamental basic rights and subjected to an existence governed by repression and fear. Chile refuses to be a silent witness to these atrocities. It will not stand by passively while half of Afghanistan’s population is stripped of its dignity, its autonomy and its rights. That is why Chile, along with other countries, last November presented a referral of the situation in Afghanistan to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court given the worsening of conditions and the gravity of the situation for all Afghan women and girls. Chile welcomes the Prosecutor’s decision to request arrest warrants for crimes against humanity on gender-based persecution grounds.

The **Netherlands** describes the human rights situation in Afghanistan as dire. The systematic oppression of women and girls has long reached an alarming level. Since the Taliban’s return to power, Afghan women have been stripped of their most fundamental rights. They have been denied access to education, including medical schools, are severely restricted in their freedom of movement and even in using their voice in public. This is outrageous. What will the next generation of Afghan society look like when women and girls are excluded from public life and systematically erased from Afghan society? It doesn’t stop there. The Taliban also targets minorities, independent media, human rights offenders and other critical voices. These are clear breaches of Afghanistan’s international legal obligations, including under CEDAW. It continues to urge Afghanistan to adhere to international human rights law. There can be no steps towards normalisation without improvements in the human rights situation.

In the same vein, **Albania** states that the situation of human rights in Afghanistan worsened during 2024 as the *de facto* authorities intensified their crackdown on human rights with systematic gender oppression, striking civic space and risk to journalists, activists and minorities. Systematic gender oppression has been further expanded and institutionalised through new measures, particularly with the implementation of the law on promotion of virtue. The denial of education to girls beyond grade 6, the prohibition of women from attending medical classes and the requirement for women to travel with a male guardian are just a few of the examples of draconian measures in place. Albania is deeply concerned about the dire effects of the economic crisis that has engulfed Afghans and continue to deeply impact Afghans’ rights to food, health and work. It welcomes the progress made by the International Criminal Court and other international bodies in seeking justice for crimes committed against Afghan women and girls. Albania remains committed to supporting the Afghan people, especially women and girls. Albania supports international efforts to hold the Taliban accountable for their action.

According to **Belgium**, the crackdown on Afghan human rights defenders, journalists, media workers, protesters, civil society activists and ethnic, religious and other minority groups is deeply alarming. Not only the seriousness of the violations, but also the impunity with which the Taliban carry out the most serious human rights violations. Similarly, the countless laws dictating women and girls’ bodily autonomy, erasing their economic options, educational access, participation in public life and many other fundamental rights are shocking and unparalleled anywhere in the world. This is unacceptable and this has to stop. The impunity with which the Taliban has step by step installed an institutionalised system of exclusion, discrimination and



segregation must be ended. Afghanistan is a state party to CEDAW and should respect the rights this fundamental convention guarantees to women and girls.

Malaysia remains deeply concerned over the continued restrictions on women and girls in Afghanistan, particularly the ban on education which contradicts both Islamic principles and international human rights law. It takes note of the SR's study on the law of propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice and stress the importance of ensuring that any legal framework respects rights and freedom of all Afghans including women and children in line with Islamic teachings and international obligations. It emphasises the importance of meaningful engagement between the SR and the *de facto* authorities to build trust and facilitate constructive dialogue on human rights concerns. In this regard, it hopes that the SR will be given full access to Afghanistan in order to deliver his mandate effectively. Malaysia will continue to play an active role in supporting Afghanistan towards achieving lasting peace and stability. It remains committed to strengthening people-to-people engagement and providing humanitarian assistance and human capital development for the Afghan people, including capacity building initiatives under the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme, and the Malaysian Defence Cooperation Programme.

New Zealand is gravely concerned by the ongoing systemic regression of fundamental freedoms for the people of Afghanistan, particularly the severe repression of women's and girls' rights. The Taliban must fundamentally change its approach on human rights and must comply fully with Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law. The Taliban must rescind all edicts and decrees that curtail these fundamental freedoms and human rights. Women and girls must be allowed access to secondary and tertiary education and work. Their freedom of movement must be respected, and they must be allowed to participate fully in public life without interference and harassment. New Zealand continues to stand with the brave people of Afghanistan. It strongly supports the mandate of the SR and his critical work in ensuring accountability for human rights violations and abuses.

Colombia shares the SR's view that persecution on grounds of gender is not only unacceptable but is a crime against humanity. Legislation approved by the Taliban in Afghanistan does not seek to promote virtue, rather consolidates a system of submission which denies women their dignity and autonomy. The situation in Afghanistan is a reminder of what happens when fundamental rights are dismantled systematically. Today, women and girls in Afghanistan not only face discrimination but also deliberate attempts to erase them from public life, to deny them the human rights inherent to all human beings. In so doing, the restrictions imposed on civil society and on the media are alarming signs of an escalating repression that seeks to isolate even more those who resist. The international community cannot ignore the devastating impact that the policies of the *de facto* authorities have had on the lives of millions of people, in particular women and girls.

Iran shares a historical neighbourhood enriched with deep cultural, linguistic, and social ties with Afghanistan. For decades, Iran has kept our doors open to people of Afghanistan, and today around 5 million of them live in our country. People in Afghanistan deserve a life determined by themselves, free from foreign intervention, and suitable for development. The prevailing challenge is Afghanistan, mostly eminent in the early years of extra-regional interference in this country, inconsiderate of human rights, and with unlimited and ongoing bothering consequences



of these people. Afghan women and girls have been the primary victims of such situations, bearing the greatest harm and requiring adequate attention. The international community must acknowledge the economic hardship of everyday life in Afghanistan, most of which stemmed from the past decades of turmoil. However, these challenges should not be used as a pretext of a new form of foreign intervention. The UNHRC should address the human rights situation with a realistic and comprehensive approach, with due consideration to all aspects of life and society in the respective country. At the same time, States have primary responsibility for protection and promotion of human rights and should utilise their full capacity to uphold and implement the fundamental and universal principles of human rights.

In contact with representatives of the Afghan authorities, **Russia** calls on them to implement early commitments to establish an inclusive system of governance, taking into account the interests of key ethno-political groups combating terrorism and drug trafficking, guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms to the population. At the same time, Russia is concerned by the restrictions on access to education for girls and women in schools and colleges. Russia believes that education without any discrimination is the guarantee for a prosperous socio-economic development for modern society. Russia expects very soon Kabul will take necessary measures to remedy that situation. It further notes the unacceptable attempts by the US, the UK and their allies to provide humanitarian assistance to the population of Afghanistan. It is specifically those countries of the collective West that bear direct responsibility for the dire situation that people find themselves in. It is clear that the current authorities are suffering a shortage of resources for normalising the socio-economic life in the country, including due to Afghan assets seized by the West. Moreover, the international community should recall the military crimes committed by the U.S. and NATO troops during their 20 years' presence in Afghanistan. The people of this long-suffering country continue to be forced to face alone the swathe of problems and challenges in times of ongoing sanctions pressure and unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

Since the drastic changes in Afghanistan in 2021, **China** has been concerned about the well-being and the future of the Afghan people. has noted that the interim government has made the return of refugees from abroad a priority of its work, and that opportunities are opening up for a solution to this problem that has plagued the region and the international community. The international community should objectively assess the situation. Chian hopes that the interim government will protect the basic rights and interests of all Afghans, including women, children, and ethnic minorities, and continue to make positive efforts in a direction that meets the interests of the Afghan people and the expectations of the international community. At the same time, some countries have long frozen the overseas assets of Afghanistan and imposed unilateral coercive measures (UCMs), which seriously jeopardise the human rights of the Afghan people, for which China expresses its deep concern. It calls on the international community to adhere to the basic principle of being led and owned by the Afghans to address the urgent needs of the Afghan people in a flexible and pragmatic manner and to provide targeted humanitarian and development assistance.

The **Republic of Korea** is deeply concerned by the continuing deterioration of the human rights situations for women and girls in Afghanistan. Since the enactment of the so-called morality law, women's voices and presence in public spaces have been systematically erased. Reports of further restrictions, including the ban on medical training for women and the announcement to revoke NGO licences for employing women, are highly alarming. It once again calls on the Taliban



to reverse these policies and uphold their obligations under international law. Furthermore, it strongly condemns any obstruction to humanitarian operation in Afghanistan and urges all relevant actors to facilitate humanitarian assistance. The full, equal, and meaningful participation of women is not only a fundamental right but also crucial to addressing their specific needs and mitigating the ongoing crisis. Against this backdrop, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to supporting collective efforts to uphold the fundamental rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls while continuing its humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

Poland is deeply concerned by the fact that more than three and a half years since the Taliban seized power, the human rights situation in Afghanistan has continued to deteriorate. As Special Rapporteur mentioned in his report, the Taliban have steadily and systematically escalated their oppression of women and girls. The Afghans, especially women and girls, are enduring serious hardships and their basic freedoms are under severe threat. Poland emphasises once again that Afghan women and girls must have access to education, work, and public life and that all Afghan citizens are protected from violence and discrimination. Poland reaffirms its commitment to the protection of human rights in Afghanistan and calls on the Taliban to stop violating human rights and take responsibility for the well-being of its citizens. As the international community, we should keep pressure on the Taliban regime to respect international commitments to which Afghanistan is a party and to uphold human rights, particularly for women, children, and minority groups.

Romania agrees with the SR that the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan is at its absolute worst. With the Taliban ideology directed especially against them, that would appear inconceivable had it not been so painfully true. The Taliban authorities continue to perpetuate extreme forms of gender-based discrimination against women and girls with increasingly exacerbated oppression against women day by day. And there is no option for the international community but to support the victims in Afghanistan and ensure justice for the crimes committed against them. Pathways for accountability must be ensured in order to bring the Taliban in line with their human rights and international humanitarian law obligations. Special Rapporteur, you speak in your report of the need of a coordinated, robust international strategy to improve the human rights situation in Afghanistan.

Austria thanks the SR for his report and study that show that systematic gender oppression continues to be institutionalised through new measures. Public dissent in any form is suppressed, affecting journalists and media workers, human rights defenders, academics, artists and educators, and their family members. As independent reporting inside the country has become increasingly difficult, Afghan-owned hybrid media organisations broadcast and publish from abroad, bypassing Taliban restrictions. It commends these acts of resilience and efforts to restore human rights for all Afghans. It will continue to listen to the voices of those demanding justice and accountability, most notably women and girls. Your advocacy efforts are recognised and your concerns heard. Accountability for human rights violations in Afghanistan and a change of course towards full respect, protection and promotion of human rights are the only way forward. It reiterates its call on the *de facto* authorities to abide by Afghanistan's international human rights obligations, including under the CEDAW, and to uphold the principles of non-discrimination and the rule of law.



In **Ireland**'s view, the SR's study on the PVPV law provides a harrowing analysis of the Taliban's appalling measures that are negatively affecting the lives of Afghans, especially women and girls. The Taliban's marginalisation of Afghans from diverse ethnic and religious groups is abhorrent. The targeting of individuals from marginalised communities, including the Hazaras and the members of the LGBTQI+ community, is egregious and wholly unacceptable. The continued targeting of women and girls may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute. The imposition of restrictive decrees by the Taliban that undermine human rights cannot be tolerated. Ireland condemns the Taliban's ongoing gross, widespread and systematic human rights abuses across Afghanistan and in the strongest terms. It calls on the Taliban to reverse immediately all decrees that deny Afghans their inalienable human rights. This includes the recent suspension of medical education for women. We call for the human rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW, to which Afghanistan is a state party, to be upheld. It also calls for accountability of those who are responsible for human rights abuses across Afghanistan.

The **United Kingdom** thanks the SR for your valiant efforts to shine a light on the dire human rights situation in Afghanistan. The UK Government fully supports your mandate. The Taliban continues to oppress women and girls in particular, denying them employment, freedom of movement and expression and education. The latest ban on women accessing medical education is appalling. Courses in nursing, midwifery and dentistry were some of the few educational avenues left open to women in Afghanistan. Their removal violates their human rights. The Taliban must reverse these inhumane restrictions to ensure a brighter future for all Afghans. We, the international community, must maintain collective pressure and stay committed to the people of Afghanistan. The UK's current £171 million aid programme provides life-saving support and access to assistance and services to the most vulnerable. The UK will continue in its unwavering commitment to Afghanistan and to promoting the human rights of all Afghans.

Deeming peace and development as crucial to improve the situation in Afghanistan, **Qatar** urges the international community to mobilise financial and technical resources to provide a humanitarian response and guarantee a decent life to the Afghan people. Qatar has maintained its commitment as an international partner thanks to our mediation efforts. By hosting under the auspices of the UN the three meetings of the Special Envoy, Qatar has been able to bolster the international consensus on a number of issues. Qatar continues to provide humanitarian development support to mitigate the suffering of the Afghan people. It has sought to include human rights questions in their discussions, including support and bolstering participation of Afghan women in peace process, as well as their right to education. In December last year, the Qatar Fund for Development, in the framework of its initiative to support women in conflict zones, began the second phase of the agreement to support livelihoods for artisans in Afghanistan to promote empowerment of women. Qatar signed with Indonesia in October a memorandum of understanding to provide grants to Afghan students to study in Indonesia, which contributes to giving young Afghan women and girls the means to build a better future.

Venezuela condemns any act that undermines the promotion and protection of human rights, especially of the most vulnerable groups. In that regard, we denounce all criminal action against the life, health, physical integrity and well-being of the Afghan people, especially women and girls. Venezuela reiterates the call for ethical dialogue in the country and for respect and protection of the human rights of the population as well as its condemnation of the critical humanitarian



situation Afghanistan finds itself, a country plunged into chaos and uncertainty since the brutal US military occupation, whose crimes against humanity cost the lives of more than 240,000 people between 2010 and 2020. Imposition of UCMs applied by those same countries that plundered the country's natural resources violate human rights and do not contribute to improving the situation on the ground. On the contrary, they exacerbate further the challenges that the Afghan people face. Therefore, we urge once again definitive and immediate cessation to those deplorable measures. Venezuela, as a peace-loving country, one committed to solidarity and cooperation at international level, promotes a peaceful, lasting solution in Afghanistan with respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and with strict abiding by the UN Charter.

Pakistan remains deeply concerned over the humanitarian situation and the human rights violations in the country. Pakistan has an unequivocal position on the need to protect and promote the human rights of all, especially of women and girls. Last month, Pakistan hosted an international conference on girls' education, affirming it as a fundamental right under the Islamic teachings and the international human rights law. Echoing the SR's concerns over the deteriorating international funding, we urge all stakeholders to support the people of Afghanistan during these challenging times. No country can match the support and hospitality accorded by Pakistanis to the brotherly people of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, there has been attacks against innocent civilians in Pakistan for decades which poses a direct threat to its people and the enjoyment of their human rights. Terrorism within and from Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the country itself and to the region. Therefore, it calls upon the Afghan interim authorities to uphold their commitments under the international law and the Doha Agreement and ensure that the Afghan territory is not used for terrorist activities against its neighbours. A secure and peaceful Afghanistan is vital for regional peace and development.

According to **France**, three and a half years after the Taliban took power, the situation of Afghan women remains catastrophic. The SR's report on the consequences of the adoption of the so-called Promote Virtue, Prevent Vice law is horrifying. It is prohibited now for Afghan women to take public transport alone and they have to hide their face. And even the very sound of their voice has become illegal. France firmly condemns this dehumanising, revolting policy against women and girls. This policy is likely to constitute a crime of persecution based on gender, which itself is tantamount to a crime against humanity. For these reasons, France, with five other countries, referred at the end of November 2024 the situation to the ICC. Any return to normal, no return to normal can be envisaged without a total immediate stop to these violations, as was clearly called for by Resolution 2593 of the UN Security Council. Given the persecution and obscurantism of the Taliban, France reaffirms its solidarity with Afghan women. France will pursue its cooperation with the UN and with NGOs on the ground who are doing crucial work in the fields of nutrition, education and health for the benefit of Afghan women and girls.

Montenegro has already pointed to Afghanistan as the epicentre of an institutionalised system of gender-based discrimination, oppression and domination, which may amount to gender prosecution, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute, to which Afghanistan is a party. The latest report sheds light on the further deepening of repression and erosion of the rights and freedoms of the Afghan people, thus reinforcing a climate of fear, division and exclusion, which normalises misogyny and perpetuates inequality and impunity. As the study of the so-called PVPV law exemplifies, extreme forms of discrimination are a key feature of the Taliban rule,



ideology and official policy. The law codifies and consolidates numerous restrictive policies, particularly against women and girls, who bear the brunt of this oppression. However, no one is spared, including children, ethnic and religious minorities, marginalised communities and independent media. Progress in international justice efforts, in particular the arrest warrants by the ICC Prosecutor for gender-based prosecution and the launch of an accountability initiative under the CEDAW Convention is also supported by Montenegro. Building on the UNHRC's consensus resolution of last October, Montenegro reiterates the importance of advancing justice, accountability and reparation for past and ongoing human rights violations and abuses, as well as its call on the Taliban to fully comply with Afghanistan's international obligations.

Croatia thanks the SR for his update and for his tireless efforts in advocating for the rights of Afghan people. Since retaking control of Afghanistan in August 2021, the Taliban has systematically stripped women and girls of their fundamental rights. The SR's study of the long propagation of virtue and prevention of vice clearly shows that discriminatory and oppressive policies are a continuum of Taliban rule. Croatia is appalled by the latest ban for female students from education at medical institutions. This ban might result in unnecessary pain, illness and preventable deaths for women and girls who will not be able to get the medical care as there will no be any female health care workers. Once again, it urges the *de facto* authorities to abide by international obligations and to grant full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in all spheres of life. Croatia welcomes the efforts of the international community in ensuring their accountability for these gross human rights violations and condemns the decision of the *de facto* authorities to withdraw from the Rome Statute.

The **Dominican Republic** is deeply concerned by the alarming and disheartening situation facing women and girls in Afghanistan who are the victims of systematic discrimination. It echos the SR's concern about the lack of implementation of prior recommendations which has resulted in a worsening of human rights violations of women and girls in Afghanistan. The denial of fundamental rights such as education, work and freedom of movement along with the lack of childhood protection and the fact that women are excluded from political and public life are perpetuating inequalities and seriously hampering the personal and professional development of Afghan women. Without recognition and guarantees for their rights, these women and girls are condemned to a life of dependency and poverty which strengthens the cycle of discrimination, inequality and violence. Joining the call by the SR, Croatia urges the authorities to comply with their international human rights obligations and to respect international treaties that the country has ratified ensuring protection and promotion for the fundamental rights of women and girls. Afghan women and girls need and deserve all our solidarity in the face of the deterioration of their living conditions and the institutionalised gender-based violence they face. It is urgent to end the system of discrimination and oppression they are facing.

Italy is particularly dismayed by the adoption of legislative measures that further restrict the fundamental freedoms of women and girls. They face an unacceptable violation of their rights, including bans on education beyond the 6th grade and on employment. Italy strongly condemns the recently introduced measures barring female students from attending medical schools. These restrictions not only hinder their access to education but also in the long run limit women's access to medical treatment, ultimately violating their right to health. Such a limitation deepens women's exclusion from all spheres of public life and institutionalised gender-based oppression.



Furthermore, restrictions imposed on international NGOs severely undermine their ability to deliver much-needed assistance and services for their arming Afghan communities. We call on the *de facto* authorities to fully restore NGOs' operational capacity for the benefit of the Afghans. Italy also expresses deep concern over the continued use of capital punishment in Afghanistan, particularly public executions. Italy remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting human rights in Afghanistan, especially those of women and girls.

Ukraine remains deeply concerned about the escalating human rights crisis in Afghanistan, particularly the systematic repression of women and girls. The Taliban's restrictive policies have greatly deteriorated the situation for them, depriving them of education, employment and fundamental freedoms. Their exclusion from essential sectors, particularly healthcare, exacerbates their vulnerability, leading to a concerning rise in mental health crisis and suicide. Such institutionalised discrimination may amount to crimes against humanity. Moreover, the space for civil society in Afghanistan is rapidly disappearing, with journalists, activists and human rights defenders facing arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions. Media freedom is under severe threat, as censorship intensifies and dissenting voices are silenced. Ukraine urges the Taliban to cease all human rights violations, repeal repressive legislation and impose an immediate moratorium on capital punishment. It calls on the international community to remain engaged, uphold accountability efforts and ensure that perpetrators of grave abuses face justice through international legal mechanisms. Ukraine stands firmly with Afghan people, particularly its women and girls, and will continue advocating for their rights, dignity and access to justice.

Canada is appalled by the ever-growing number of systematic human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by the Taliban, particularly targeting Afghan women and girls. The ongoing institutionalised discrimination and deprivation of rights, including the so-called morality laws, is extremely troubling. By excluding half of the country's population from society, the Taliban are jeopardising Afghanistan's future. Canada strongly condemns the Taliban's latest edict banning medical training for women and girls, a decision that endangers the health of Afghan women and children today and for future generations. It reminds Afghanistan of its international obligations under CEDAW and urge it to cease its violations of the human rights of women and girls. Canada is extremely concerned about the ongoing crackdown on ethnic and religious minorities, former officials, journalists and LGBTQI+ communities. Canada remains committed to defending their rights and amplifying their voices.

Germany is profoundly alarmed by the growing and more formal nature and rearm of the Taliban's system of oppression. Germany condemns the escalating gross and systematic human rights violations committed by the *de facto* authorities. Since retaking power in 2021, the Taliban have specifically persecuted women and girls. They are subjected to myriad violations of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, leading to the near erasure of public life. The Taliban have entrenched systematic gender discrimination, violating their international obligations under CEDAW. As a State Party to CEDAW, Afghanistan must be held accountable. Germany therefore calls on the *de facto* authorities to cease the violations of the rights of women and girls and instead restore their full, equal and meaningful participation. Germany thanks the SR for his deeply worrying report and study on the so-called promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice law. As highlighted in the EU statement, this law constitutes an unprecedented codification of discriminatory policies against many different parts of the Afghan civilian population.



Türkiye states that a stable Afghanistan in peace with itself and its region is in the interest of us all. Afghanistan will not achieve peace in itself until all segments of the Afghan society are included in the decision-making processes. However, restrictions on Afghan women have enormously increased since the Taliban takeover. Excluding girls from education worsens the already dire socioeconomic conditions. Steps pushing Afghan women and girls out of the public sphere from education and the NGO and UN work are worrying. Türkiye's President explicitly underlined that denying girls their right to education is neither humane nor in line with the tenets of our faith. The Turkish Mari Foundation runs 46 schools across Afghanistan. Following the Taliban takeover, Türkiye has reserved 200 scholarships for Afghan women. The international community must prioritise the alleviation of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Humanitarian aid operations need to run without precondition. Türkiye has stood in solidarity with the Afghan people, including Afghan women and girls, and will do so at every step of the way.

Views Expressed by intergovernmental Organizations

The **European Union** strongly condemns the systematic human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban's gender-based discrimination may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute, to which Afghanistan is a party. As outlined in your study, the so-called PVPV law confirms that extreme forms of discrimination are a core element of the Taliban's overall ideology and official policy. The law entrenches gender-based violence, the structural denial of the rights to education for all, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, movement and work, and the severe limitation of women and girls' full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in all spheres of society and public life. The EU calls on the Taliban to abide by Afghanistan's international obligations, including under the CEDAW and CRC. It further calls for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including ethnic and religious minorities such as the Hazaras, as well as LGBTI persons.

One year ago **UNICEF** urged its Council to press for the immediate reopening of secondary schools for adolescent girls and to protect Afghan children from unexploded remnants of war. Yet these major child rights and humanitarian concerns have worsened. Over 1.4 million girls remain barred from secondary education and at least one child is killed or maimed every day by explosive remnants of war. A 14-year-old girl from Kunduz who had lost eight family members and became disabled due to explosive ordnance said, no one takes care of us or takes us out to play with other children. Sometimes we feel lost and wonder what to do. Further new restrictions on women's access to medical and midwifery training have been instituted, thereby undermining maternal and child health. Half of Afghan society, women and girls, remain systematically excluded, undermining any hope of economic recovery and human capital development. A mother from here had shared the following: 'In 1996, I was just 10 years old when my school was shut down by the Taliban. By 14, I was married. I fear that my daughter is facing the same darkness. It feels like us women never escaped this cycle. Today, millions of adolescent girls in Afghanistan share her fear.' This cycle must be broken. UNICEF calls on the *de facto* authorities to lift all barriers to education, including medical training for women, and urges action to remove and destroy explosive remnants of war, expand mind-risk education, and strengthen climate resilience. It also requests the international community to continue to vigorously advocate on behalf of girls' education in Afghanistan. UNICEF stands ready to support.



Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

The **Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development** explains that after six months, the Taliban has expanded and intensified its war on women and girls. The recent ban on women receiving medical education under its ever-expanding system of gender apartheid has placed pregnant women and their children at high risk of death. Taliban's cruelty knows no bounds, targeting not only women and girls, but also children and boys, men, minorities, critics, journalists, and HRDs. Afghanistan's children face a violent and uncertain future. Girls are forced into early marriages, sold, and trafficked. Young boys are recruited into the Taliban's military, subjected to sexual abuses, mistreatment, and radicalisation. Taliban run religious schools. Public flogging and execution, including of women and children, have increased significantly. For over five decades, those responsible for grave crimes in Afghanistan have evaded justice. Without comprehensive accountability, this cycle of violence will continue to repeat. Yet, its call for a mechanism to ensure justice remains unanswered. It welcomes the SR's recommendation for such a mechanism and reiterate the urgent need for a UN-led, independent, investigative body with a broad mandate and comprehensive scope. We are eager to know how much longer will we allow Afghanistan women and children to be held hostage? How much longer will the Taliban be given political cover to commit these atrocities?

Jointly with other NGOs, **MADRE** welcomes the SR's report on the Taliban's new morality law. This decree institutionalises gender-based crimes and escalates the ongoing systematic oppression of women and girls and LGBTIQ people in Afghanistan. Since seizing power, the Taliban have subjected women, girls, and LGBTIQ people to detention, sexual violence, public flagging, and other torture. These grave violations drove the International Criminal Court's prosecutor's recent request to charge Taliban leaders with the crime against humanity of gender persecution. It urges the international community to (1) call on the Taliban to cease the crime against humanity of gender persecution against women, girls, and LGBTIQ individuals and ensure that all people in Afghanistan are treated with dignity and respect; (2) Prioritise accountability over engagement with the Taliban and support the International Criminal Court's investigation and decision to hold the Taliban accountable; (3) ensure Afghan women, girls, and LGBTIQ people have a meaningful role in international decision-making in Afghanistan; and (4) offer protection for Afghan women, girls, and LGBTIQ people at risk by extending humanitarian aid, offering asylum, and humanitarian visas.

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada and the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute welcome the ICC Prosecutor's request for an arrest warrant for the Taliban's leaders for the crime of gender persecution. It condemns the Taliban's increasing repression of women and girls' rights since 2021, including killings. Women and girls are denied the right to education and work. Repressive measures such as the confinement of women in their homes and requirements for building homes without windows are examples of the Taliban's oppression of women amounting to gender apartheid. Women are prohibited from speaking with other women or reading the Quran aloud, creating a climate of fear and isolation, and stripping away all their rights and freedoms, including religious expression. Prosecutors, lawyers, and judges had to flee to third countries and are at serious risk of deportation. The UNHRC has failed to respond adequately to the gravity of the situation. They call on the UNHRC to take overdue action and establish an independent gender-responsive accountability mechanism without further delay, mandate to



investigate, collect and preserve evidence, and identify perpetrators of past and ongoing international crimes, including the crime against humanity of gender persecution.

Jointly with other NGOs, **Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organisation** voices deep concern over the escalating human rights crisis in Afghanistan. Civic space is disappearing. Journalists, human rights defenders, and peaceful protesters face arbitrary arrests, threats, and violence for simply speaking out. Women and girls bear the brunt of this repression. The systematic erasure of their rights, ban on education, work, and public life amount to gender apartheid. The reports on torture, inhuman treatment, and forced confession from OMCT and Human Rights Defender Plus are deeply alarming. Political prisoners endure harsh conditions and unfair trials with no hope for justice. Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries face detention, insults, and forced deportation. This council must act. It urges the neighbouring countries, specifically Iran and Pakistan, to respect the rights of Afghan citizens according to the accepted international norms. Stressing that mass deportation is a serious concern, it calls for the immediate release of detained activists and journalists unjustly imprisoned for their work and the end to gender-based discrimination. Ensuring women and girls can access education and employment. It repeats its call on the UNHRC to create an independent accountability mechanism to monitor, document, preserve, and follow up on human rights violations and hold perpetrators accountable. Afghanistan must not be forgotten.

The **Centre for Global Non-Killing** explains that women and girls in Afghanistan are facing total exclusion from public life under the Taliban's rule, a grave violation of their rights that also threatens Afghanistan's future and global security. A generation of young boys is growing up in a society where the oppression of women has normalised, setting the stage for long-term harm and regional instability that could embolden other extremist groups. The international response has been inadequate. Engagement with the Taliban has failed to produce improvements and impunity prevails. We cannot allow gender apartheid to be normalised. It calls on the UNHRC to adopt a clear strategy with human rights benchmarks and consequences for non-compliance; to hold the Taliban accountable through international mechanisms; to ensure Afghan women's full participation in shaping the country's future; to increase funding for Afghan civil society and women-led initiatives; and to codify gender apartheid as a crime against humanity. It makes a direct appeal especially to men to take a stand. Gender apartheid is not just a women's issue but threatens the very foundation of human rights, justice, and peace. Silence is complicity. Men must actively challenge misogyny, use their positions of power to demand action, and refuse to be bystanders. The responsibility to uphold human dignity, life, and equality belongs to all of us.

According to **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom**, the PVPV law provides further evidence of the pattern of gender persecution and gender apartheid. This law comes against the backdrop of other severe violations, including due to Taliban restrictions on aid. These restrictions directly aggravate soaring needs for food, hygiene, and health services. Taliban threats have also resulted in closure of humanitarian NGOs and an increasing corruption in aid delivery. Pakistan and Iran are increasingly detaining Afghan asylum seekers. Pakistan even announced a March 31 deadline to deport asylum seekers awaiting relocation to third countries. Unless their cases are swiftly processed by the governments that agree to resettle them, these countries must urgently resettle Afghans who face risk of harm upon return. Finally, while the world faces an unprecedented backlash against gender equality, unspeakable violations of our rights as Afghan women are normalised. States are not taking action, some even dropping



support in aid. It calls on all countries to stop the normalisation of violations of women's rights and to denounce gender apartheid; to support accountability efforts, including at the ICC and the ICJ; and to support the creation of an independent accountability mechanism to complement the SR's mandate.

The **Human Rights Research League** stresses that Afghanistan continues to represent one of the gravest human rights and humanitarian crises in the world. The ban on girls' education beyond the sixth grade and the almost complete prohibition of women's participation in public life with concomitant huge gaps in health and other service provisions that depend on women performing their job functions contributes to undermining Afghanistan's recovery from four decades of conflict. The recent expulsions of Afghans from neighbouring Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran further exacerbated that situation. Today, four years after the *de facto* government assumed power, an estimated 22.9 million people, almost half of the population, requires humanitarian assistance to survive. At the same time, revenge killings of former police and government officials still continue today. In the face of these developments, it welcomes efforts on the part of the ICC to issue the first couple of arrest warrants against leading representatives of the *de facto* authorities and strongly supports the SR's request to states not to officially recognise the *de facto* government.

Human Rights Watch thanks the SR for these two important reports, which document how Afghanistan's human rights crisis has deepened over the past year. As the Taliban have intensified their egregious assault on the rights of women and girls and minority groups. The Taliban have threatened, assaulted, and arbitrarily detained women and girls for not abiding by the prescribed dress code. They have also threatened, arbitrarily detained, and tortured former security force personnel, journalists, human rights defenders, and LGBT people. The PVPV law further entrenched and codified the Taliban's ongoing rights violations, including the crimes against humanity of gender persecution, including by prohibiting women from travelling or using public transportation without a male guardian, from singing in public, or simply letting their voices to be heard outside their home. We share the Special Rapporteur's concern that the international community's failure to hold the Taliban accountable has emboldened them. It is vital that all grave violations, many of which may amount to international crimes, are robustly documented, including through the collection and preservation of evidence and identification of those responsible to ensure they're ultimately held to account. In October, the UNHRC agreed by consensus on the need for further concrete action to advance accountability for past and ongoing international crimes in Afghanistan. In line with the SR's recommendations, it should now establish, without further delay, an additional independence and comprehensive accountability mechanism as complementary but distinct to the vital ongoing work of the SR.

The **International Federation of Human Rights Leagues** and its Afghan partner thank the SR for his report, which details the Taliban's campaign of oppression against the people of Afghanistan. The enactment of the law, the permission of virtue, and prevention of vice further interchanges an existing system of gender apartheid, prohibiting women and girls from public life. The strangling of civil society space within Afghanistan has forced human rights defenders and journalists to feel abroad or risk arbitrary arrest, detention, sexual and gender-based violence, and enforced disappearance. They welcome the announcement by the ICC's Prosecutor that his Office is seeking the arrest of two Taliban leaders, and call on all states to cooperate with the court's investigation. Nevertheless, the international response to this violation, some amounting



to crimes against humanity, has been subdued. Afghan international civil society have continuously underlined the need for an accountability mechanism able to address both past and ongoing human rights violations. They echo the SR's call for the creation of an independent investigative mechanism with a comprehensive mandate, and adequate means to investigate, collect, and preserve evidence of violations committed by all perpetrators. This mechanism would complement the monitoring and reporting mandate of the SR and feed into international accountability efforts. They call on the UNHRC to heed the calls of Afghan civil society and take urgent action to establish this mechanism.

The **Shaanxi Patriotic Volunteer Association** firmly believes that loving one's own country, not sacrificing the interests of other countries, is a basic principle in international relations. The current situation in Afghanistan violates this principle, and it is rooted in the long-term interference and manipulation of the Western countries. Afghanistan was once a beautiful and prosperous country, but since the 19th century, it has become a battlefield for Western hegemonic powers. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, followed by the USA in 2001, which occupied the country for 20 years under the pretext of counterterrorism. During this period, extremist forces were not eliminated, but have reached their peak. Now the Taliban is back in power. There are issues with human rights. The Association condemns any human rights violations. At the same time, we must also confront its root cause, the long-term interference and manipulation of Western countries, including the USA, is an important factor in the Afghan issue. It thus calls on the international community, especially the UNHRC, to address the historic roots of the Afghan problem. The Afghan problem must be settled by the Afghans themselves. Let us work together to contribute to peace and stability in Afghanistan and the world.

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

45 State Delegations

2 Inter-Governmental Organizations

10 Non-Governmental Organizations