



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan

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OPENING STATEMENT

Ms. Nada AL-NASHIF, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Deputy High Commissioner addresses the UNHRC on a matter of urgent and ongoing concern, the state of **access to justice and protection** in Afghanistan, particularly for women and girls. Since the Taliban seized power in August 2021, justice in Afghanistan has undergone a dramatic and deeply troubling transformation.

The legal framework established during the Republic of Afghanistan era has been effectively suspended or dismantled with new structures put in place. They include the reconfiguration of the judiciary, including the **removal of female judges**, the dissolution of the Office of the Attorney-General, restricted space for defence lawyers and the rights of the accused, and the removal of key protection mechanisms. In short, legal and institutional safeguards essential to upholding the rule of law have either been removed or severely compromised. These, along with the very **wide range of discriminatory measures** introduced by the de facto authorities, have had a profound impact on the population of Afghanistan, in particular women and girls.



Last October, the Council mandated the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan to prepare a report on access to justice and protection for women and girls. This report addresses the compounded effects of **multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination** and presents an important baseline study on the type of obstacles that women and girls face in relation to access to justice and protection in Afghanistan. It finds that across the country, while Afghans are encountering significant barriers in seeking legal recourse or redress for harms endured, the situation is particularly grave for women and girls.

Their access to justice has become practically **non-existent**. Without a *mahram* - a male guardian - women and girls cannot access a lawyer, courts or other institutions and cannot seek protection or reparation from harm. By virtue of this system, women who are victims of domestic abuse, whose *mahrams* may also be the perpetrators of violence or exclusion, are rendered invisible with no real hope of protection.

The country is witnessing an institutionalisation of the most extreme forms of **gender-based discrimination and segregation**. Women and girls have been systematically excluded from public life and to a large extent deprived of their most basic human rights, including access to secondary and higher education, healthcare, employment, freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Women and girls' access to justice is so challenging, whether in the formal or the informal justice system, that it amounts to barely any access at all.

This situation is especially devastating for those with **intersecting and marginalised identities**, namely women and girls from ethnic and religious minorities, women with disabilities and from female-headed households who face heightened risks of violence, exclusion and deprivation. They are doubly victimised in a system that already considers women and girls less deserving of rights and dignity.

It is important to acknowledge that these **challenges are not new**. Long before the Taliban's takeover, Afghanistan's justice system suffered from structural weaknesses with entrenched corruption, limited institutional capacity and widespread reliance on informal dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly in the rural areas. Impunity for violations committed by both national and international actors further eroded public trust and left many victims, once again especially women and girls, without effective protection or recourse.

Hopefully, today's discussion will help refocus global attention on the rights of Afghan women and girls, enhance robust and sustained political engagement by the international community along with financial support for the reforms. The credibility of our collective commitment to human rights - especially to the human rights of women and girls - is measured by our responses in situations as grave as this one. Let us act with resolve, in coordination and with urgency.

PRESENTATION OF THE THEMATIC REPORT

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

The thematic report the Special Rapporteur (SR) presents today examines **access to justice and protection for women and girls**. From his extensive consultations and from submissions from almost 200 women inside Afghanistan, it is clear that the meaning of justice can vary among and between Afghans and is shaped by different backgrounds, identities and lived experience. It



involves not only legal accountability but also the restoration of rights, access to essential services and the creation of conditions in which women, girls and all Afghans can live with dignity and self-determination. There is, however, a shared understanding that **injustice**, however understood, and the harm it causes is profoundly felt and enduring.

Today, under Taliban policies, access to justice and protection in Afghanistan has been severely compromised. It is virtually unattainable. The *de facto* authorities have **dismantled legal and institutional frameworks** and abolished crucial protection mechanisms, while support networks have either collapsed or been forced underground. The Taliban's transformation of the justice system weaponizes the legal, judicial and social order to oppress women and girls, their allies and LGBT persons. It is designed to enforce, entrench and sustain the group's **repressive and misogynistic ideology**.

While all women and girls bear the brunt, those with intersecting minority and marginalised identities are especially affected. This system of **gender persecution** amounts to crimes against humanity and is well characterised as **gender apartheid**. Any talk of normalisation in this context is vastly premature.

The SR invites the UNHRC to consider the situation beyond his latest report. His ten reports to the Council and the General Assembly since 2022 together chart an alarming trajectory of **deepening discrimination and repression** of the people of Afghanistan, especially women and girls. The situation is continuing to deteriorate, whether through ever-expanding restrictions, increasingly harsh enforcement of repressive moral codes, shrinking media and civic space, the alarming increase in corporal punishment, or continuing reprisals against former members of the security forces.

Against this backdrop, the SR is increasingly alarmed by any framing of Afghanistan as a kind of **lost cause** where nothing can be done to change the situation. This is not the case, as the people of Afghanistan are showing daily. When Afghanistan's future is discussed, who are the key stakeholders? The answer is, and must be, the people of Afghanistan themselves, including women, girls and youth in all their diversity, both inside the country and in exile. It is they who will build a more inclusive, equal and stable country.

The SR also asks whether the international community, including the UNHRC, is using all the tools at its disposal to support the people of Afghanistan to **counter creeping normalisation** in the face of no improvements on the ground and to challenge the Taliban's institutionalised oppression and persecution. The answer is no.

More can and must be done, including strengthening and expanding accountability measures that will tackle the pervasive impunity that continues. But there is no panacea, and effective action is needed to improve the situation on the ground now. The SR continues to advocate for an **all-tools approach**, a range of interventions that, together, exceed the sum of their parts and maximise the potential for the emergence of a safe, stable and inclusive Afghanistan.

This should include prioritising **support for Afghan-led civil society**, especially women-led NGOs, providing humanitarian assistance, funding education and economic empowerment initiatives for women and girls on the ground, and assisting states who are hosting Afghan refugees. It also includes supporting men and boys, including through initiatives that empower



them as positive agents of change. The international community must stand firmly with the brave people of Afghanistan who continue to risk everything in pursuit of justice, dignity and peace.

STATEMENTS BY PANELLISTS

Mr. Mohibullah TAIB, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to UN Geneva

Thanking the SR for his report and continued commitment, the Counsellor states the report paints a stark but accurate picture of the situation in Afghanistan, when the Afghan civil society, especially women, have been urging the UNHRC to confront with urgency. Since the Taliban's military takeover, Afghanistan has undergone **not a reform of justice, but a dismantling of it**. As detailed in the report, the Taliban *de facto* authorities have abolished the constitution, nullified all laws protecting women and children, and replaced the legal framework with unpublished edicts issued arbitrarily at provincial or national levels.

Courts are staffed entirely by Taliban-appointed male judges, often without legal training, enforcing a harsh interpretation of Sharia that lacks consistency and due process. Women and girls have been removed from every layer of the justice system as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and complainants. The Afghanistan Independent Bar Association has been dissolved. There are **no licenced female lawyers** in the country today. Police units handling gender-based violence have been dismantled, and complaints of abuse, rape, or forced marriage are either ignored or lead to reprisals against the victims. The **requirement of a mahram**, a male guardian, to access courts, travel, even appear in public, has become a tool for control, silencing women by cutting them off from any form of remedy.

Since February 2025, the Taliban have **escalated their repression**. They have banned women from attending private medical training institutions and threatened to revoke licences in case of injuries that imply women. In March, the so-called Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice began enforcing **bans on women's voices** in public broadcasts, **extending censorship** to include female poets, singers, and educators. The so-called courts have **overturned divorces** granted under the previous government, forcing women back into previous marriages or charging them with adultery for remarrying.

Peaceful protests have been met with violence. In late February, a group of women protesting education bans in Kabul was dispersed with gunfire, and several were detained and disclosed locations. More than 40 civil society activists, including 18 minority leaders, have been arbitrarily arrested since February, with many reportedly held with charge. The Taliban's General Director of Intelligence continues to carry out home raids, device searches, and enforced disappearance, especially targeting those suspected of dissent.

These actions are not administrative fillers. They are the core of an ideological project to enforce a **gender-segregated authoritarian regime**. As the most recent UNHRC Resolution on Afghanistan rightly stated, this is an **institutionalised system of discrimination and exclusion**. As the SR emphasised, this may amount to crimes against humanity, including **persecution on the grounds of gender**.

The international community cannot continue to express concern with the consequences. The Permanent Mission fully supports the SR's recommendation to establish a **new UN investigative**



mechanism, independent but complementary to the current mandate. It must be empowered to document violations, collect and preserve evidence, identify perpetrators, and support avenues for justice, including through the International Criminal Court and other accountability forms.

Any engagement with the Taliban must be strictly conditioned on **verifiable human rights benchmarks**. This includes immediate reopening of schools for girls of all ages, the removal of female restrictions, and the reinstatement of women's rights to work and move freely. Empathy rhetoric from the Taliban cannot substitute for measurable change. Support for Afghanistan's civil society, especially women-led organisations, must be sustained and expanded. The Counsellor urges all members to support the creation of an investigative mechanism, strengthen international accountability, conditions all engagement on human rights, and stand firmly and urgently with the people of Afghanistan, especially its women and girls.

Ms. Zahra¹, Teacher and Survivor of Child Marriage, Afghanistan

Speaking as a mother, a teacher, and a woman from Afghanistan who has lived through two Taliban regimes and 20 years of hope and heartbreak, Zahra was 13 years old when she was forced into marriage. That was the year 2000, during the first Taliban rule. The Taliban were going door to door searching for unmarried girls. Her family was afraid to protect her. They arranged her marriage to her cousin. He was 20. She was still a child. She cried. Her mother cried. She knew it would be painful, but leave it was safer than the Taliban might do.

She had been one of the best students in her class. All she wanted was to stay in school, but at 14 she became mother. While others were holding books, she was holding a baby. Her husband did not allow her to continue her education, but she never gave up. She studied late at night and worked during the day, raising five children. Then she became a widow. She had no partner and no support. She had to be both mother and father to her children.

When the Taliban were gone, Afghanistan had a period of hope. She earned her master's degree. She taught at university, became a journalist, worked for the government, and used her voice to support women. She believed they were building something better. Then, in August 2021, everything disappeared - her hopes, her job, her daughter's right to education. For 17 days, she hid with her children. Armed men came to their home with false accusations. Her family helped her move from place to place. Her children stopped laughing. They spoke only in whispers. There was no protection, no justice.

One day, she was in a car near Taliban checkpoint. Women were pulled out if they were not wearing black trousers and face veil. It did not matter if they were with husband. Officers from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtues sat nearby. They beat women on the legs and forced them to sit in the dirt for a lesson on hijab. She watched as the men sat back in silence. Some cried. Two women refused to sit. They stood their ground. The whips came down. Guns were raised. Women screamed. That day, it was not only women who were punished. The whole society began to crash. This is what it means when there is no justice, no system that heals us. No one to turn to. No freedom to walk outside without a *mahram*. No schools, no courts, no protection.

¹ Pseudonym.



The **injustice continues through generations**. In 2021, her daughter was 19. She dreamed of finishing school. But Taliban members began pressuring families to marry off their daughters. They sent letters offering money instead of using force. But the message was the same. 'Girls do not belong in school.' She faced the same nightmare her mother did. She made the same impossible decision. She married off her daughter. Not because she wanted to, but because she was trying to protect her. They were lucky. She chose a kind man. She is not unhappy. But many girls are not so fortunate. They are married against their will. Taken out of school and left without a future. The trauma continues. Still, she fights. Her younger daughters now study in secret. Their home has become a classroom. They learn quietly - always afraid, but full of hope.

To the UNHRC, she asks – 'Where is justice for Afghan women? Where is protection for girls who want to learn? Where is the action the world once promised? We are not asking for privilege. Only for rights, basic rights, every human being should have. If the world stays silent, the circle of fear and forced choices will continue. But if you stand with us, we can begin to break it. My daughter's life already mirrors mine. But I will not let the same fate reach my younger daughters. I will keep teaching them. I will keep fighting for them. I believe in them. And I ask you to believe in them too.'

Ms. Fatima AMIRI, Activist for Education for Afghan Girls, Student and Survivor of an Attack against an Education Centre in Kabul, Afghanistan

Speaking not only with words, but with the weight of stories - her own, and those of many who cannot be at the Council - Fatima came before the UNHRC to share a truth that must be heard. She is just an example of many girls, a woman in Afghanistan, who has been denied justice. She has felt every kind of pain that girls in her country experience.

She is the girl whose school was closed. She still remembers the day when her school was closed and how painful it was. Closing her eyes and ears – with all this pain she had - she participated in her exam to study at university to show them they could not stop her, to protest against them. But they closed universities.

She is the young woman who could no longer work in her own country. She was working and supporting her family. But they took this right from her. In her view, justice is about equality and not having to fight for basic rights. After losing her eye and her ear, with all this pain she had, they closed everything for her. But she is still standing. Still speaking. Still dreaming. Not just for herself, but for every girl still waiting for her voice to be heard.

She is a girls' education activist. Why? Because she feels every pain that they are experiencing right now. Because the first time when the Taliban came in Afghanistan, they closed her mother's school and she could not continue her education. This time, when they came, they closed hers. And she cannot let them do it to the next generation. With resolve and courage, she states - 'Despite every door that they have closed to us, we continue to learn - secrete in the dark, online, through whispers, through books passed from hand to hand, like precious treasures.'

Today, she does not ask for sympathy. She asks for solidarity, for support, for action. Speaking about justice and protection is not enough. Actions are needed - support for underground schools, protection for those fighting for the right to learn, equal opportunities, ending the every day's silencing voices. Education is everyone's right. It shouldn't be given to a few like a privilege.



If the UN or other countries cannot do anything to change the policy of the Taliban, then at least they shouldn't join them. In closing, Zahra calls on the Council not to recognise the Taliban. In her strong plea before the international community, Zahra pours out her heart – 'Let us ensure that the next generation of Afghan girls doesn't have to fight simply to go to school. I don't want to transfer the darkness to the next generation. I want to transfer knowledge.'

Ms. Maryam MITRA, Researcher, Poet, and Women's Rights Activist, Afghanistan

Maryam stands before the Council not only speak on behalf of women in Afghanistan, but also to be a witness of the **systematic elimination of women's presence, their rights, and their dignity**. When talking about justice, she speaks out of personal experience. As someone who lived through the first Taliban regime and was denied the right to an education simply because she was a girl. She lived through a time when **learning was a quiet act of defiance** and **teaching another girl was an act of resistance**.

Women and men of Afghanistan are **not passive victims**. They are resisting in various forms at extraordinary personal risk. They have marched in the streets knowing they might face beatings or arrests, with no fair judicial system to turn to nor institution to protect them. They have composed poetry and sang songs, turning words into acts of defiance. They have taught girls in underground classrooms, risking imprisonment but keeping hope and knowledge alive.

Many have been detained, tortured, disappeared, and killed, and yet still they continue to resist. Today, she does not bring only her voice into this room. She also carries with her the voices of countless women - especially the voices of oppressed writers, poets, and storytellers who can no longer speak freely or whose words remain trapped behind closed doors and on silenced pages. She shares with the Council a **poem** she composed in Farsi, in honour of the resilience and resistance of the women of Afghanistan.

*Oh girls who are tired of the city of silence and night,
Will you be able to close the window of your heart in the darkness of this pen?
Or will you be able to sing a poem in the light of the starry sky?
The faces do not believe my voice. As if I am dead, as if I am dead,
And the silence of the streets is made up of the voice of logic.
For years, the window of my life denies my voice.
For centuries, I scream with my wounded voice.
Believe me, I am not a shadow in the presence of a liar.*

'This is the spirit we must protect. This is the voice we must amplify. This is why your action, our collective action, is so urgently needed.' As someone who has known the silence of injustice firsthand, she urges the Council to take the following **concrete steps** to enhance justice and protection for Afghan women and girls.

- Formally recognise the Taliban's policies as gender apartheid and begin the process of establishing it as crime under international law.
- Ensure that women's rights remain at the centre of all diplomatic engagements with *de facto* authorities. No political negotiation should take place without women at the table and no agreement should be concluded if it ignores their rights.



- Support organisations that provide protection and offer judicial support, especially for women and other vulnerable groups, including scholars, activists, educators, and students, and expand safe pathways for them through humanitarian corridors, scholarships, and relocation programmes.
- Increase support for grassroots women's organisations, many of which continue to work in hiding. Their voices must shape our responses and guide our actions.
- Demand accountability. **Impunity must never be the reward for gender persecution.** The world is watching. History will judge not only those who perpetrate these crimes, but also those who remain silent in the face of such systematic oppression.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ms. Maryam MITRA stresses that the right to justice and protection is not a privilege. It is a fundamental human right. For women of Afghanistan and girls, however, this right remains increasingly elusive. The dismantling of legal safeguards, the exclusion from public life, and the climate of fear and impunity have placed **millions of women in a state of acute vulnerability**. Today, the Council has heard courageous testimonies and reviewed disturbing evidence. Women arbitrarily detained for seeking education, denied access to courts, and subjected to violence without recourse. They are not isolated incidents. They reflect a systematic erosion of rights and a profound failure to protect them.

The international community has both a **moral obligation and a legal duty to act**. We must amplify the voices of women, support women-led civil society organisations, and use every diplomatic, legal, and humanitarian tool available to press for accountability and restore access to justice. The SR's report on access to justice and protection provides further evidence that women and girls in Afghanistan face one of the **most widespread, institutionalised, and deliberate forms of gender-based oppression and persecution** in the world today. This is not merely gender discrimination. It is gender apartheid, a term that must be recognised, named, and acted upon by the international community. Justice for women in Afghanistan is not just about laws on paper. It is about restoring dignity, agency, and safety in their daily lives. It is about ensuring that no woman is invisible and no abuse goes unanswered. Let us reaffirm here and now that the rights of women in Afghanistan are not negotiable. Let us ensure that our commitment to justice is not spoken in Geneva, but felt in Kabul, Herat, and every province where women continue to resist with courage, grace, and unyielding belief in their worth.

Mr. Mohibullah TAIB states that Afghan women's voices resounding in the iconic UN human rights chamber and the SR's report presented today clearly show that we are facing one of the gravest, most institutionalised human rights crisis of our time. **The situation unfolding in Afghanistan** is not only a national tragedy. It is a **test of the Council's credibility**. We must not let the Taliban's authoritarian model become normalised. Beside the immediate establishment of a UN mechanism for Afghanistan, he calls on the international community to support the establishment of an inclusive, representative government which includes every aspect of the society, especially women and girls, in an equal manner.

Mr. Richard BENNETT continues to advocate for an all-tools approach, one that may relieve suffering in the short term and tackle entrenched impunity in the long run. Accountability is central to this strategy. In addition to political and financial support for **processes before the ICC**



and potentially the ICJ, the SR reiterates his call for the **codification of gender apartheid** as a crime against humanity. The SR also supports the establishment of an additional complementary international accountability mechanism with a comprehensive mandate. However, addressing the ongoing human rights crisis will require more than legal accountability, which takes time. A meaningful response must also seek to improve the situation on the ground now, including full **funding of the humanitarian response efforts** to expand education and economic empowerment opportunities for women inside Afghanistan and increased support for countries hosting Afghan refugees. We must respond to demands for restoration of rights, recognition of past harms, redress for inequality, meaningful inclusion in decisions affecting people's lives and futures, and the transformation of violent and discriminatory structures. The SR reiterates the importance of establishing **clear human rights benchmarks** for engagement with the Taliban, stressing again that there must be no normalisation without genuine progress on all human rights.

Despite much appreciated support from the Council, due to **severe resource constraints**, Mr. Richard BENNETT explains that his SR's mandate has not reached its potential. At present, the staff and other **support provided to the SR is only 30%** of what has been agreed. While recognizing the seriousness of the liquidity crisis, he stresses that without sufficient resources, it is increasingly difficult for him to discharge his mandate. I

In closing, Mr. Richard BENNETT stresses again the critical importance of ensuring that **Afghan women and girls, in all their diversity, are front and centre of all discussions** on Afghanistan. They and youth are the future, and leaving them out, as desired by the Taliban, whether from political discussions, accountability processes, or other initiatives, including limiting their ability to access international forums and processes, will not only perpetuate their exclusion, it will take us further away from the end goal, a safe, stable, inclusive, and rights-respecting Afghanistan.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by State Delegations

Albania commends the SR's unwavering commitment to documenting the grave and systematic violation of human rights under Taliban's rule. His report provides a sobering yet essential account of institutionalised gender-based discrimination and persecution that Afghan women and girls face daily. The report's findings on the dismantling of legal protection, exclusion of women from the justice system, and the use of the justice system as a tool of repression are of particular alarm. Albania condemns the policies of gender persecution that have stripped Afghan women of their most basic rights – education, employment, freedom of movement, access to justice. Albania has taken concrete steps to support Afghan women and refugees. Since 2021, Albania has welcomed over 4,000 Afghan families, providing them with shelter, health care, education, and integration support. Albania stands with the people of Afghanistan, especially women and girls, and will support international accountability mechanisms, including those addressing gender-based persecution.

Australia notes that the situation in Afghanistan is disturbing. The Taliban has effectively erased women and girls from public life, denying access to education, employment, and freedom of movement. Australia is deeply concerned by your findings that the Taliban's institutionalised system of discrimination, oppression, and domination amounts to crimes against humanity.



Survivors of violence, particularly women and girls, have no recourse to fair or independent legal remedies, legal representation, or protection mechanisms, allowing perpetrators of violence to act with impunity. Australia is deeply committed to supporting accountability for human rights abuses and violations in Afghanistan. In 2024, Australia joined with Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands to invoke Afghanistan's responsibility under international law for violations of the rights of women and girls, a global first for action of this kind. Australia calls on Afghanistan to comply with its obligations under international law and end its systemic campaign of gender-based discrimination, segregation, and violence against women and girls.

Austria notes that the Taliban's ban on education at medical institutions for female students is deeply alarming, further depriving women and girls of their right to education and weakening the healthcare system. Austria is further appalled by the increase in gender-based violence, forced and early marriage, and cases of women detainees being sexually abused and assaulted by the Taliban *de facto* authorities. Austria is also concerned by the widespread and systematic human rights violations carried out in Afghanistan, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detention, enforced disappearances, and acts of torture against former government officials, security personnel, journalists, and human rights defenders. Austria urges the *de facto* authorities to immediately stop public executions and abolish the death penalty by establishing, as a first step, an official moratorium. Austria 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.

Belgium notes with concern the crackdown on Afghan human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, protesters, civil society activists, and minority groups continues. The rollback on women's rights in Afghanistan is unprecedented, effectively erasing women from public life. As your report points out, these human rights violations are met with impunity in a hostile legal system that is weaponised by the Taliban to oppress women, girls, LGBTQI persons, and their allies. Belgium reminds that Afghanistan is a state party to CEDAW and should respect the rights this convention guarantees to women and girls. Belgium looks forward to the upcoming review by the CEDAW Committee. The situation in Afghanistan is also a litmus test for international commitments on gender equality, on accountability, and also regarding the women peace and security agenda. It is well-known that women's participation in peace processes and the economy is deeply interlinked with their involvement in political life and decision making, and this should also apply to Afghan women.

Bulgaria remains deeply concerned about the systematic human rights violations and abuses which continue to take place in Afghanistan. Bulgaria is alarmed by the ongoing pursuance of measures and practises that strip women and girls in Afghanistan of their rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the so-called Law for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Bulgaria calls for the elimination of the institutionalised system of discrimination, segregation, and exclusion of women and girls, which denies them the right to education, freedom of expression, movement, work, and access to justice, and thus precludes their full, equal, and meaningful participation in all spheres of public and political life in Afghanistan. Bulgaria joins others in condemning the continuing gender-based discrimination in Afghanistan, which may amount to persecution of women and girls on grounds of gender, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute. Furthermore, Bulgaria remains deeply concerned over the dismantling of key



legal safeguards and institutions protecting children from violations and abuses of their rights. therefore, it calls upon the *de facto* authorities in Afghanistan to abide by the international obligations of the country, including those under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Canada stresses that violence and discrimination on a persistent, systematic basis perpetrated by the *de facto* authorities in Afghanistan, including sexual violence and gender-based violence, are extremely concerning. The exclusion from women and girls from education, employment, political participation and the judiciary system is unprecedented. These measures constitute not only a flagrant violation of their fundamental rights, but also imperil peace and security on a long-term basis in Afghanistan. The alarming reports reflect gender-based violence, notably sexual violence in detention. These are cases that should be considered as a matter of urgency. All of the victims and all of the survivors of violations of individual rights require accountability and justice. Canada supports international efforts to investigate and demand accountability from the authorities, including under the CEDAW Convention. Canada remains unwavering in its call for the protection of protectors of human rights in Afghanistan who continue to plead for justice despite the huge risks to their life.

Chile is deeply concerned by the normative framework imposed by the *de facto* authorities. It is tantamount to a structure of domination over women and children with possible implications for crimes against humanity. The report shows how the state apparatus has been used to impose systematic restrictions, exclusion from public space of women, ban on secondary and higher education, the dismantling of the Human Rights Commission and the denial of guarantees of due process. Chile reaffirms its commitment to substantive equality with a feminist foreign policy, which promotes the use of international law as a tool against institutionalised discrimination. Valuing the proposal to open a serious debate on how gender apartheid can be conceived legally, Chile recognises that this can be used to effectively combat gender segregation. The international community cannot allow such structural serious violations. The principles of universality of human rights require concerted and sustained response.

Croatia states that Afghanistan is experiencing a profound human rights crisis that has reshaped the lives of its people, especially women and girls, who have been deprived of their fundamental rights and erased from public life. The report undeniably shows that these deprivations are systematic, unbacked by the legal and justice system controlled by the *de facto* authorities, and designed to enforce and sustain repressive and misogynistic ideology. Croatia strongly condemns these practises that may amount to crimes against humanity. Croatia is deeply saddened to hear about the lack of legal and institutional frameworks and protection mechanisms for women and girls, especially victims of sexual and gender-based violence. They are left without any support, and often forced to return to their abusers. Croatia calls on the *de facto* authorities to abide by the obligations under the CEDAW and the CRC, to which Afghanistan is a party. Croatia strongly condemns the reinstatement of corporal punishment, including public flogging and executions, and urge the *de facto* authorities to introduce an immediate moratorium on the death penalty, and with view to its abolition.

Czechia notes with concern the systemic dismantling of Afghanistan's legal and institutional frameworks has rendered justice inaccessible, particularly for women and girls. Justice and access to justice are fundamental rule of law elements. Denial of justice undermines trust in the



institutional framework. It is the state's key role to ensure justice and accountability for human rights violations in line with its international legal obligations. Human rights of the individual holder must be in the centre of the system of justice and no concept, not even the family honour, can surpass it. Czechia urges Afghanistan to hold the perpetrators of human rights violations accountable and ensure that women are guaranteed the right to a fair trial. Czechia supports the establishment of an independent investigative mechanism with a comprehensive mandate to document and address violations and abuses of human rights and IHL.

France notes that the situation of Afghan women has only deteriorated with systematic violations that women and girls in Afghanistan are suffering at the hands of the Taliban. They cannot take public transport alone, they are obliged to hide their faces, and this deprives them of their voice and is dehumanising. In addition to the ban on access to medical training, women are suffering many other violations. France strongly condemns this dehumanising and reprehensible policy against women and girls. This could be characterised as gender-based persecution, constituting a crime against humanity. This is why France and five other countries referred the situation to the International Criminal Court in November 2024. No return to normal will be foreseeable without an immediate and full cessation of these violations, as called for by Resolution 2593 of the Security Council. France supports any initiative to bolster the fight against impunity. Given the stubbornness and obscurantism of the Taliban, France stands in solidarity with Afghan women and will continue its cooperation with the UN and NGOs.

Greece remains gravely concerned by the continued erosion of fundamental rights in Afghanistan, particularly the systemic discrimination against women and girls and their exclusion from public life and justice mechanisms. This is a crime against the whole Afghan people and its future. As reflected in the report, access to justice for Afghan women is virtually non-existent, as discriminatory policies prevent them from approaching courts or legal institutions. Furthermore, the Taliban's restrictive policies have institutionalised gender-based discrimination in all aspects of life, education, movement, appearance, and participation. Greece stresses the urgent need for a transitional justice process that is inclusive, survivor-centred, and grounded in international human rights law, a process that ensures full and meaningful participation of Afghan women and girls, regardless of ethnic or religious background, and developed in close cooperation with relevant UN mechanisms, including OHCHR. Greece strongly supports all efforts to explore international accountability avenues, to address serious violations, and to uphold the rights of Afghan women and girls. In this vein, the Council's role to maintain close monitoring of the situation and to ensure the protection of human rights in Afghanistan is crucial.

Iceland on behalf of the group of Nordic-Baltic states remains deeply concerned about the grave human rights violations and abuses, including the widespread and institutionalised system of discrimination and oppression against women and girls in Afghanistan. Systematic gender oppression has been further expanded and institutionalised with women facing restrictions, including by removal from the justice sector. Today, the judiciary does not have any female judges or prosecutors, and no officially registered female lawyers, leaving women and girls with fewer safe channels to report violations and abuses, restricting their access to justice and protection. Furthermore, dismantling of essential legal protections and institutions safeguarding children's rights has led to a system where girls and boys are treated as adults. This not only violates their rights, it exacerbates the vulnerability of children and youth and their ability to seek justice.



Afghanistan youth must be recognised as key stakeholders. Protecting their rights and supporting their participation will be vital for building a more inclusive, peaceful and representative Afghanistan. The group calls on the *de facto* authorities to fulfil their responsibilities to international human rights treaties ratified by Afghanistan, including by reversing policies and practises that violate these obligations.

Indonesia remains deeply concerned by the continued deterioration of human rights in Afghanistan, which disproportionately affect women and girls. Suspension of laws and regulations that once safeguarded their rights and imposition of discriminatory policies that severely limit their participation in public life. Indonesia urges the *de facto* authorities to reverse these regressive practises. Ensuring women's access to justice and their representation within legal system is essential to building an inclusive and just society. Indonesia is also alarmed that WFP's nutrition programme this year faced a 60% cut, leaving over 30,000 women and children suffering from acute malnutrition without assistance. As basic rights, food, health and education serve as a strong foundation for Afghan women and girls to claim all their rights and secure a better future. Indonesia remains committed to the empowerment of Afghan women and girls, including through provision of educational scholarships. We will continue to support the restoration of fundamental rights of Afghan women and girls, as well as the whole people of Afghanistan.

Iran believes that the current paralleling challenges in Afghanistan are the legacy of endured years of extra-regional interference in this country, with their inconsideration of human rights and long-lasting consequences. Afghan women and girls have been the primary victims of such situations that suffer the most and require proportionate attention the most. Bearing this in mind, Iran believes that the problems in Afghanistan do not limit to the situation of women and girls. A holistic approach to all dimensions of the current situation with consideration of root causes should be taken into account. Iran shares a historical neighbourhood enriched with deep cultural, linguistic, and social ties with Afghanistan. All challenges in Afghanistan, mainly the destructive presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan during the last decades, had its spillover and continuous negative effects on Iran. For decades, Iran has kept its doors open to people of Afghanistan, and today around 5 million of them live in our country in a well-integrated manner in all segments of the Iranian society. The illegitimate and unjustified act of occupier Israel on starting war against Iran, attacking civilian areas, breaking food and water resources, and blindly killing innocent people.

Ireland states that today's presentations provide an abhorrent description of the situation facing women and girls due to the Taliban's actions, which overtly aim to undermine access to justice and protection. We are appalled by the Taliban's continued attack on women and girls' human rights, including access to education, employment, health and justice. This continued targeting of women and girls by the Taliban may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute. The Taliban's ongoing pursuit to undermine the human rights of marginalised communities is unacceptable. This includes the targeting of the Hazaras, members of the LGBTIQ plus community and other vulnerable groups. Ireland condemns in the strongest terms the Taliban's ongoing gross, widespread and systematic human rights abuses in Afghanistan and we call for accountability of those who are responsible. Ireland also calls on the Taliban to ensure the immediate reversal of all decrees undermining the inalienable human rights

of Afghans, including the rights enshrined in the CRC and CEDAW, to which Afghanistan is a state party.

Italy is appalled by the ongoing deterioration of the human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly the systematic and institutionalised oppression of women and girls. They continue to face unacceptable restrictions on their rights and freedoms, including the dismantling of legal protections, exclusion from public life, and imposition of discriminatory practises. While underscoring the need for justice and accountability, Italy notes with concern the assessment that such systematic oppression may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity under the Rome status to which Afghanistan is a party. Italy is also deeply concerned about the situation of children deprived of basic rights and services, and of women and girls from minorities and marginalised groups. Italy remains steadfast in its commitment to addressing this dire human rights situation.

Japan remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly the institutionalised gender oppression faced by women and girls. The exclusion of women from the justice system and the resulting barriers to legal access have long been alarming. The SR further highlights that for vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and refugees, access to justice and protection is often completely out of reach. Japan expresses its deep concern over these multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and underscores the importance of ensuring justice and protection for all Afghans. As noted in the report, civil society remains a vital source of hope. Japan is seriously concerned that many NGOs face growing restrictions, surveillance and arbitrary detention. The international community must stay engaged with the Afghan people. The denial of education, economic hardship and social stigma are worsening the situation for women and marginalised groups. For its part, Japan will continue to provide support for returnees, internally displaced persons, maternal and child health services and women's empowerment. Japan will continue to urge the Taliban to reverse its oppressive policies and reiterates its continued commitment to peace, stability and human rights in Afghanistan.

Kuwait is deeply concerned at the ongoing deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan. There are severe restrictions imposed on women and girls, including depriving them of education, jobs, and participation in public life. This is on top of suffering that has been endured by the Afghan people due to humanitarian and economic crises. The human rights situation in Afghanistan will require a comprehensive approach based on respect for the rule of law and participation by all segments of society, especially women and girls, in the development process. In this regard, Kuwait will continue to support the Afghan people, and this is part of our constant efforts to mitigate their suffering and improve living conditions in key sectors such as education, health, and nutrition. In closing, Kuwait calls for collective international action to promote independent action of the OHCHR in Afghanistan. We must urge the *de facto* authorities in Afghanistan to abide by their obligations under international human rights law to stop all discrimination against women and girls. They must open up the way for international civil society to promote human dignity.

Luxembourg pays tribute to the Afghan women present and on the screens, whose voices have been reduced to silence in their own country. However, without them, there can be no peace or sustainable development in Afghanistan. The human rights situation in Afghanistan remains extremely concerning. Luxembourg condemns widespread human rights violations, especially



the systematic persecution of Afghan women and girls, which is persecuted as a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute. Luxembourg reaffirms its support for the international criminal justice system. It reaffirmed this by aligning with the referral of the situation in Afghanistan to the ICC alongside five other states. Luxembourg calls on the Taliban to abide by obligations from international conventions to which the country is party. Luxembourg also calls for the protection of minority members, including ethnic and religious minorities, as well as LGBTI persons. In closing, Luxembourg supports the establishment of a comprehensive accountability mechanism, convinced that the gravity of the situation requires a firmer response from the international community, which should open the way for accountability for the Afghan people.

Malawi notes with concern that the continued curtailment of women and girls' enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms through a succession of restrictive edicts, orders and practises that have effectively arrested opportunities for women and girls in public and political life. Malawi calls upon the authorities to rescind discriminatory edicts and decrees that deny the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and enable their access to education and work, respect their freedom of movement and cease interference with other aspects of their daily lives. To conclude, Malawi notes the recommendations made by the SR and urges the international community to play its critical role in ensuring that Afghanistan returns to full observance of the rule of law and human rights.

Malaysia reaffirms the importance of ensuring access to justice for all, especially for women and girls, including the rights to education, which is a fundamental component of the rule of law, human dignity and sustainable peace. Justice systems should be accessible to all and provide protections against discrimination, violence and exclusion. Malaysia appreciates the role of the SR in undertaking a series of consultations and dialogues with relevant stakeholders in the hope to achieve a sustainable solution for human rights issues related to the rights of women and girls. While the call for the establishment of an accountability mechanism to undertake a comprehensive investigation on the human rights issues is important, Malaysia is also mindful of the potential budget implications of such a mechanism. Given the UN liquidity crisis, Malaysia encourages the identification of practical approaches focussing on delivering tangible support for the Afghan people, while ensuring that resources of the organisation fit the purpose and address the needs of the situation concerned. Finally, Malaysia remains steadfast in its support to the Afghan people by providing necessary humanitarian assistance and capacity-building programmes through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme.

Malta underscores that since the Taliban's return to power, women and girls have faced systematic exclusion from public life. Over 70 edicts and directives have been issued that severely restrict their rights to education, employment, freedom of movement, and access to justice. Malta is alarmed by the dismantling of legal protections for survivors of gender-based violence and the closure of women's shelters. Access to justice is a cornerstone of human rights. A society that excludes half its population cannot prosper. The systematic denial of the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan is not only a grave injustice, it is a barrier to any form of sustainable peace, stability, or development. Malta calls on the *de facto* authorities to restore women's and girls' access to justice and ensure their equal participation in all aspects of society. To conclude, Malta reiterates its support for the Special Rapporteur and all other UN structures and mechanisms assisting Afghanistan.



Montenegro remains deeply concerned about the unabated and acute humanitarian and human rights crisis in Afghanistan, in particular the unrelenting severe oppression of women and girls. As reported, the Taliban have transformed the legal and judicial system to enforce, entrench, and sustain the group's ideological repressive and misogynistic model of governance and to solidify their control over all of Afghan society. Montenegro strongly condemns a widespread systematic and institutionalised system of extreme gender-based discrimination and exclusion of women and girls under Taliban rule. This may amount to gender-based persecution, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute, or gender apartheid as increasingly termed. As the SR made clear that avenues for achieving justice inside the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan are virtually non-existent, international mechanisms are seen as the only currently available avenues to hold the Taliban accountable and to keep alive the hope of justice for Afghan women and girls. This includes the arrest warrants requested by the ICC for gender-based persecution and the launch of the accountability initiative under the CEDAW Convention, which Montenegro has also supported from the beginning. Montenegro reiterates its firm support to the SR's mandate, as well as to ANAMA and other UN mechanisms in Afghanistan.

The **Netherlands** notes that human rights situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate from an already disastrous level. Millions of Afghans are suffering daily. Since August 2021, we have witnessed systematic violations of human rights and discrimination of minority groups. In particular, Afghan women and girls have been systematically stripped of their most fundamental rights. The Special Rapporteur clearly points out in his report that the Taliban's policies of gender persecution have serious implications for women's access to justice. The basic right of equality before the law is not even respected. The systematic discrimination and exclusion of 50% of Afghan population from all aspects of life has serious implications for Afghanistan's future. What will this future look like if women, for example, can't even go to a doctor? As the international community, we must continue to insist that Afghanistan adheres to its obligations under CEDAW. We must continue to insist on the inclusion of the voices of women and girls in all aspects of Afghanistan's future. There can be no steps towards normalisation of diplomatic relations without significant improvements in the human rights situation.

New Zealand remains gravely concerned by the ongoing, systematic repression of fundamental freedoms for women and girls, including severe limitations on their access to justice and right to equal participation. The Taliban must fundamentally change its approach to 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. Their access to justice must be restored. The situation is profoundly alarming. New Zealand continues to stand with the brave people of Afghanistan.

North Macedonia notes that Afghanistan is experiencing a grave human rights crisis. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, women and girls have been systematically excluded from public life. Legal protection has been dismantled, independent institutions dissolved, and access to justice has nearly vanished. Today, there are no women judges or registered lawyers. The elimination of violence against women law has been suspended. Specialised courts and shelters



have been closed. Women cannot appear in court without a male guardian, and those who report violence risk arrest, public punishment, or worse. What remains is not a justice system, but a system of repression. One that punishes women for seeking safety, denies them education, and strips them of voice and dignity. Yet even under these circumstances, Afghan women continue to resist, quietly, courageously, and often at great personal risk. They are defending rights, supporting one another, and demanding international attention. We must listen to them. We must support women-led organisations, protect those at risk, and hold perpetrators accountable. Justice must be more than a word. It must be a promise kept.

Pakistan on behalf of the OIC group reiterates the group's consistent concerns over the humanitarian, human rights and socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan and remains particularly troubled by the state of human rights for women and girls in Afghanistan. Consistent with its longstanding position, the OIC group urges the *de facto* Afghan authorities to uphold the rights of all Afghans, especially women and girls, by ensuring access to education and participation in the workforce. Islamic teachings are clear on these issues. The group also emphasises the importance of establishing protections for individuals belonging to ethnic, religious and cultural minorities in accordance with both Islamic law and Afghanistan's international commitments. The OIC group reiterates its concern that critical humanitarian funding is declining, risking the well-being of millions. The international community must intensify its humanitarian efforts to provide essential support to the most vulnerable. It further stress that using Afghan territory for terrorist activities threatens the rights of people in Afghanistan and beyond, and this must be stemmed by the *de facto* Afghan authorities. Finally, while reiterating the OIC group's clear position, it regrets that several parts of the SR's report continue to delve into divisive issues such as SOGI. The group considers such references unnecessary and counterproductive.

Pakistan reiterates its repeated concerns regarding the humanitarian crisis and ongoing human rights violations in the country. Pakistan maintains a clear stance on the importance of safeguarding and advancing human rights for all, with particular emphasis on the rights of women and girls. Acknowledging the SR's concerns over the exclusion of women from the Afghan judicial system and its negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights by the people of Afghanistan, especially women and girls, Pakistan underlines that women empowerment remains vital for realistic socio-economic development of any society, and that the interim authorities in Afghanistan must fulfil their obligations under international law in this regard. Earlier this year, Pakistan organised an international conference focused on girls' education, reaffirming it as a fundamental right in line with Islamic teachings and international human rights law. Pakistan has hosted Afghan people with unmatched hospitality and warmth. However, terrorism originating from within Afghanistan continues to pose a significant threat to both our nation and the broader region. Regrettably, the TTP or Fitna-Al-Khawarij continues to target innocent civilians in Pakistan, thereby threatening our citizens and undermining their human rights. We therefore urge the Afghan interim authorities to honour their commitments under international law and the Doha Agreement, and ensure that Afghan territory is not used for terrorist activities against neighbouring countries. A stable and peaceful Afghanistan is essential for peace and development of the entire region.



Qatar stresses that Afghan people suffered for decades from conflicts, natural disasters and from terrorism. Afghanistan is currently facing social, humanitarian, political and economic challenges, which in its turn affect protection and enforcement of human rights. Countering the challenges requires further efforts in order to engage with all Afghan stakeholders in order to reach resolutions that achieve development and stability. Qatar lived up to its commitment as an international partner through mediations and through hosting, together with the UN, meetings of Special Envoys on Afghanistan in order to reinforce international consensus on various key issues as well as Qatar's humanitarian support in order to alleviate humanitarian suffering of Afghan people. In the same vein, Qatar is keen to include human rights issues in its negotiations with Afghan partners, particularly support women's participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding and ensuring their right to education and labour and ensuring the rights of all Afghans. In closing, Qatar calls upon the international community to provide technical and financial resources and to finance humanitarian reports planned in order to ensure dignity for Afghans.

The **Republic of Korea** remains deeply concerned about the systematic discrimination and oppression Afghan women and girls continue to face. Their access to education, employment, health care, and freedom of movement is severely restricted, respectfully excluding them from public life. Korea is particularly troubled by the report's conclusion that Taliban-controlled justice system serves as a tool for further institutionalisation of gender-based discrimination and domination, dismantling productive laws and institutions, reinstating corporal punishment for so-called moral offences and excluding women from the legal representation, and new processes show a system that reinforces discrimination rather than provides protection. Despite these restrictions, Afghan women, HRDs, and civil society continue to speak out with courage. As we mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we are reminded of our collective responsibility to defend women's rights and amplify their voices.

Romania notes with concern the catastrophic erosion of the access to justice for Afghan women and girls under the Taliban regime. The erasure of Afghan women and girls from all spheres of public life continues unabated. The SR's report underscores well that the Taliban's justice system is a tool of systemic oppression, where all due process or form of transparency are lacking, and where laws, edicts, and decrees are strictly directed at depriving women of their rights to education, healthcare, movement, legal protection, or public participation. Challenging and oppressing policies is met with public floggings, arbitrary detention, coupled with acts of torture and sexual violence. Romania stands firmly in condemning the Taliban's institutionalised and systemic discrimination of women and girls, and echoes the global call to ensure proper pathways for accountability for the crimes committed.

Slovenia acknowledges the ongoing deterioration of women's rights in Afghanistan at the four-year milestone since the Taliban enforced the widespread, systematic, and institutionalised system of gender-based discrimination and exclusion. All measures that directly and indirectly hinder women's and girls' access to justice are unacceptable and deplorable. As the reform of Afghanistan's domestic accountability mechanisms remains highly unlikely, we share the view that the alleviation of the situation of Afghan women and girls requires external facilitation. Slovenia supports the efforts of the international community to address these shortcomings through international accountability mechanisms. Slovenia strongly resonates with the words of an Afghan woman cited in the report that justice isn't limited only to seeking legal recourse and



services. For Afghan women, it often reflects their goals and aspirations to fully enjoy their fundamental freedoms and protections, equal and fair treatment, to be seen and heard, and to be safe. Slovenia will continue to work towards the safety, dignity, and redress for all Afghan women and girls.

South Africa reminds that today's Youth Day in South Africa where we commemorate the struggles waged by the students of 1976, many of whom were women and girls, who took to the streets on 16 June, ushering in an unprecedented wave of protest over the decades that followed, which ultimately served to bring the apartheid state to its knees. In so doing, the women and girls of 1976 were fighting for equality for women and girls, not only at home but everywhere. As such, South Africa cannot turn a blind eye to the cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment being borne by women and girls in Afghanistan, nor their valiant resistance on the front lines, which we are duty-bound to support. Already stripped of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, simply because they are women and girls, they are similarly being denied access to justice and protection as a tool to further institutionalise the widespread, systematic, gender-based discrimination and exclusion being perpetrated against them. This misogyny is intentional and, as such, may amount to the crime against humanity of persecution on grounds of gender. Accordingly, South Africa believes that those responsible must be held accountable. As part of this process, any accountability mechanism must, however, adopt a comprehensive approach covering both past and ongoing violations, building on the basis laid by UNHRC Resolution 57/3.

Spain pays tribute to the dignity and resistance of Afghan women and the organisations who face huge challenges but continue to speak out to claim their rights, and underlines that we cannot remain indifferent before what is happening. Spain remains unwavering in its commitment to Afghan women and believes that significant measures can be taken, and the ICC and the ICJ to put an end to the violation of women's rights. Spain thinks that the SR's mandate can be strengthened through an independent investigation mechanism, which would contribute to guaranteeing accountability for crimes committed in Afghanistan.

Switzerland remains deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Afghanistan, which is marked by persistent institutionalised oppression. In particular, the rights of women and girls are still being systematically violated. Exclusion from public life, a ban on access to education and employment, as well as restrictions on freedom of movement. These discriminatory measures can be deemed to be gender-based persecution, as per the definition of international law. Switzerland categorically condemns public executions. The number of these has recently worryingly increased. These practises were encountered to human rights and violate the absolute prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments, which are incompatible with international law. Switzerland is also extremely alarmed by the continued shrinking of civil society, and that includes the suppression of critical voices, journalists, human rights defenders and civil society. Switzerland calls on the Taliban to put an end to these violations and respect international obligations and re-establish a safe, inclusive environment based on the rights of the entire population.

The **United Kingdom** converges with the SR that at the eve of the fourth anniversary of Taliban rule, women and girls are denied their right to education, employment, freedom of movement and expression. Discrimination against so many is compounded by the lack of accessible, affordable and impartial judicial institutions. The Taliban must reverse these inhumane restrictions to



ensure a brighter future for all Afghans, including minorities such as LGBT plus individuals and people from ethnic Hazara communities. 23 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian assistance. The UK continues to provide assistance, working with the UN and others. The UK remains committed to working constructively with Afghanistan for an Afghanistan at peace with itself, its neighbours and the international community. Afghanistan cannot achieve long term stability and prosperity while half its population is systematically excluded from society. The international community must remain united in ensuring accountability and in urging the Taliban to change direction.

Ukraine remains gravely concerned about the widespread, systematic and institutionalised discrimination against women and girls in Afghanistan, which may amount to crimes against humanity and has been described in Afghan women as gender apartheid. The dismantling of legal protection, the imposition of repressive edicts and the exclusion of women from public and professional life have critically undermined access to justice, particularly alarming are the intersecting forms of discrimination affecting minority, LGBTQIA+, disabled, rural, displaced and female-headed households. Ukraine strongly condemns the return of corporal punishment and the instrumentalization of the justice system to reinforce repression. Ukraine is deeply troubled by the persecution of former female security personnel, civil society members and the complete removal of women from the judiciary. Ukraine urges the Taliban to immediately cease all human rights violations, restore protection for women and girls and end its defiance of international human rights law and the principles of the UN Charter. Ukraine calls on the international community to support efforts to ensure accountability, including through international legal mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court. Ukraine stands firmly with the Afghan people in their pursuit of justice, dignity and freedom.

Views Expressed by Intergovernmental Organizations and UN Agencies

The **European Union (EU)** states that the human rights and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains catastrophic. The EU condemns the systematic and systemic human rights violations and abuses. We particularly condemn extreme gender-based discrimination by the Taliban against women and girls, which may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute, to which Afghanistan is a party. The EU reaffirms its support for the international criminal justice system, for the fight against impunity, for preserving the ICC's independence and integrity. The Taliban has reshaped Afghanistan's legal system to serve their ideological and misogynistic model of governance. The EU calls on the Taliban to render their policies and practises consistent with the international human rights obligations of Afghanistan. Furthermore, many Afghans are affected by entrenched harms that arise to the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination. The EU calls for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Hazara as well as LGBTI persons.

Since 2022, **UNICEF** has regularly alerted the UNHRC on the dire situation of child rights in Afghanistan, especially girls, and today yet again expresses alarm at the violations of the rights of children, especially girls, in Afghanistan and at the systemic discrimination against girls, including their lack of access to justice. Today, 2.2 million girls have been excluded from secondary school, with the number growing each academic year. Women and girls also continue to be barred from attending higher education, which now includes medical training institutes,



further limiting access to health care for women. UNICEF urges the *de facto* authorities to comply with their legal obligations to our children in Afghanistan, especially girls. This includes immediately lifting the ban on girls' education and resuming learning for all children. It also includes ensuring access to an effective remedy for all girls whose rights are violated.

UN Women states that Afghan women and girls have been systematically stripped of their rights since the Taliban's takeover. The dismantling of legal protection, the exclusion of women from the judiciary and the enforcement of restrictive edicts have created a justice system that denies them safety, dignity and redress. This system of injustice is reinforced by exclusion from public life. Women and girls are barred from education beyond grade 6, denied access to most employment and erased from political and decision-making spaces. Their participation in the workforce is minimal and their access to financial services remains severely limited. The prevalence of violence against women remains alarmingly high. Despite these challenges, Afghan women and women-led organisations continue to demonstrate remarkable courage and resilience. Many are finding ways to advocate for their rights and pursue alternative pathways to justice, including through community-based mechanisms. UN Women echoes the SR's call to establish clear human rights benchmarks for engagement with the *de facto* authorities to ensure Afghan women's equal, meaningful and safe participation in all discussions regarding Afghanistan and to scale up sustained support for women-led organisations. Justice for Afghan women and girls must be central to any future vision for an inclusive Afghanistan.

Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

Madre Inc. agrees that the Taliban weaponizes the legal, judicial and social order to oppress women, girls and LGBTIQ people. The Taliban subject women, girls and LGBTIQ people to arbitrary detention, sexual violence and other torture. This systematic rights deprivations amount to crimes of gender persecution. Madre Inc. insists on Afghan victims' meaningful participation in negotiations on Afghanistan's future, whether in Doha, with UNAMA or elsewhere. It echoes the SR's call for the international community to establish a comprehensive, independent international investigative mechanism to document past and ongoing crimes against women, girls and LGBTIQ people; support the ICC's efforts to hold the Taliban accountable and states' efforts to bring Afghanistan before the ICJ for rights violations under CEDAW; and expand humanitarian aid, protection and asylum pathways for Afghan women, girls and LGBTIQ people and those with disabilities and support their organisations to provide aid and document rights violations.

The **Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development** states that the Taliban regime has left no doubt about the kind of society it seeks to impose in Afghanistan, one defined by the complete subjugation and domination of women and the erasure of fundamental human rights. Women and girls are stripped of all freedoms under a system of gender apartheid. This is not merely discrimination, but institutionalized violence enforced through so-called judiciary designed to uphold misogyny and silence dissent. This system enables atrocities with impunity against religious minorities and ethnic communities such as Hazaras, LGBTIQs, HRDs, journalists and critics. The Taliban has made its intention clear. Yet the international community continues to fall short, offering words of condemnation while quietly inching toward normalisation and engagement with a regime that has shown no willingness to meet its human rights obligation. Worse still, Afghanistan women and girls are being systematically excluded from conversations



about their own country's future, sidelined in the name of political expediency. The Asian Forum re-emphasises the urgent need for an independent international accountability mechanism with a comprehensive mandate to investigate, establish facts, collect and preserve evidence, identify perpetrators and support future prosecutions. Such a mechanism is not optional. It is essential if we are to ensure that the people of Afghanistan are not denied justice once again.

Outright Action International (OAI) welcomes the SR's report and echoes his findings on the devastating consequences of the dismantling of justice and protection frameworks by the de facto authorities. In today's Afghanistan, women and girls are deliberately and systematically prevented from accessing justice. Complaints, especially in cases involving domestic and sexual violence and forced marriage, are routinely ignored or dismissed. Without protection, survivors of gender-based violence must remain in abusive households. Additional layers of discrimination for those with disabilities and with diverse sexual orientation or gender identity makes justice and protection inaccessible to them. Yet civil society groups are navigating the highly restricted space to provide some protection. OAI therefore underscores the need to invest in grassroots organisations in Afghanistan and in exile to enable them to respond to the needs of women and girls in all their diversity. Recognise that for LGBTIQ people and others, protection requires safe, secure asylum pathways. Increase pressure on the Taliban to reverse discriminatory laws and practise policies and ensure support for international accountability processes.

Action for Development Switzerland states that what we read in reports and see in media is only a small part of the big picture. The situation in Afghanistan is much worse than it seems. Today, not only women, but also men are facing violence and torture. As one of the women who protest in Afghanistan, the speaker paid a huge price. She was arrested and tortured by the Taliban. But those women who escaped for this violence, especially protester women living in fear in the neighbouring countries like Iran and Pakistan. The women of Afghanistan like her call upon the UNHRC to create an independent accountability mechanism; recognise gender apartheid as a crime against humanity; and not normalise human rights violations under any excuse. Afghan women ask for justice. Without justice, there will be no humanity and peace.

Minority Rights Group (MRG) expresses alarm at the ongoing and systematic persecution of the Hazaras in Afghanistan. Hazaras face total political exclusion under de facto authorities. This marginalisation is coupled with policies that threaten their survival and dignity. Across Hazara populated districts, MRG is witnessing the forced displacement of families, siege of ancestral lands and resettlement of Taliban affiliated individuals. In Khorasan alone, at least 14 Hazaras have been arbitrarily killed by Taliban-backed groups from neighbouring areas, forcing many families to flee with their homes and lands subsequently confiscated. The law on personal affairs of Shia Muslim has been revoked, removing essential legal protection linked to Hazara religious identity. Equally alarming is the confiscation and redistribution of humanitarian aid. Aid collected by the Hazara community is diverted by local authorities and channelled to Taliban supporters. In education, Hazara academics are being systematically removed and replaced with Taliban-aligned religious clerics. MRG is particularly concerned by rising reports of gender-based violence against Hazara women and girls, including sexual violence, forced disappearances and arbitrary detention. Those who formerly served in Afghanistan's security forces are especially at risk, having been abandoned by the international community, left vulnerable to Taliban reprisals. MRG urges the Council to establish an independent investigative mechanism with a comprehensive



mandate, able to thoroughly investigate past and ongoing violations and crimes committed in Afghanistan, including against Hazaras. MRG further calls on all stakeholders to ensure the full and meaningful inclusion of the Hazaras in all policies and processes concerning Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organisation (ADDO) remains gravely concerned about the ongoing systematic and institutionalised discrimination, target violence and exclusion of minority groups from education, health care and political participation. Credible reports constantly document the forced conversion of Ismailis in Badakhshan, which is deeply alarming. According to our documentation, at least 16 journalists are currently in prison. In 17 provinces, broadcasting images of living beings is prohibited. Further shrinking freedom of expression and access to information. Media outlets are instructed on what to cover and what to suppress. In clear violation of journalistic, independent and international standards, ADDO calls on Afghanistan's SR and UNAMA to urgently communicate their release with the de facto authority. ADDO asks the UNHRC to respond to our long-standing call, even recommended in the SR's report to establish a comprehensive accountability mechanism, one with the capacity and resources to monitor, document, preserve and follow up on the human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan. ADDO further calls on the international community to support Afghan civil society and media actors by safeguarding their rights and ensuring they can operate in a safe and enabling environment.

Human Rights Research League explains that almost four years after the Taliban's seizure of power in Afghanistan, the humanitarian and human rights situation in the country remains dire. Hunger is widespread, with more than a third of the population facing acute food insecurity. The exclusion of women from work and public life and of girls from education beyond sixth grade further exacerbates this precarious situation and will have a lasting negative effect not only on the mental health of those deprived of opportunities for personal growth, but on the development of the country. As the SR outlined in his report, widespread illiteracy already limits women's and girls' understanding of the few remaining rights available to them. A situation even further aggravated by the Taliban's restrictions on education stripping future generations of the knowledge necessary to assert their rights. Even male scholars and others trying to stand up for women's rights face severe consequences for speaking up, as recent cases in Panjshir and Helmand provinces demonstrate. The League reiterates its strong support for the SR's call upon states not to commence any normalisation of engagement with the de facto authorities unless and until significant improvements in human rights, especially for women and girls, have been achieved.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) states that throughout Afghan history, women and girls have experienced systematic discrimination, but the Taliban's return to power has dramatically deepened this inequality with an institutionalized framework of gender apartheid. Women and girls with disabilities who now face heightened, multiple, and intersecting forms of discrimination and a protection crisis characterised by economic exclusion, social isolation, and the systematic neglect of disability rights. This includes unequal access to humanitarian assistance due to factors such as lack of disability, inclusive planning of aid distribution, and exclusion from the beneficiary list. These concerns are elaborated in a recent wealth submission to the CEDAW Committee, which draws from the finding of a study by a partner organisation. The study found that women and girls with disabilities are the most

marginalised and they serve a group in the population. As indicated by the SR, they are also among the groups of women and girls for whom access to justice and protection is often completely out of reach. WILPF calls for urgent and coordinated action by humanitarian actors, UN agencies, and donors to uphold the rights of women and girls with disabilities and ensure their full and effective participation. WILPF further reiterates the call for the creation of an accountability mechanism to complement the special reporter mandate.

The **International Federation for Human Rights Leagues (FIDH)** shares with the SR the gravity of human rights violations faced by Afghan women and girls. As FIDH documented, the Taliban's policies systematically exclude women from all aspects of public life, including education and most sectors of employment. Survivors of gender-based violence are left without access to justice and the few remaining protection mechanisms have been dismantled. This system of oppression amounts to gender apartheid. 2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran continue to face serious human rights violations and remain at risk of forced return. With recent US travel restrictions, certain Afghan national risks further endangering asylum seekers and complicating resettlement efforts. FIDH urges all states to uphold internationally recognised principles of non-refoulement and non-discrimination based on race or nationality. FIDH reiterates its call to establish an independent international accountability mechanism to investigate, collect, and preserve evidence of the human rights violations in Afghanistan.

The **International Commission of Jurists and IBAHRI** concur with the SR's main findings, including that Afghan women, girls, and LGBTIQ plus persons are systematically denied access to justice and human rights protection under Taliban rule. The Taliban administered justice system as a tool of repression, entrenching discrimination, punishing survivors of violence, and eliminating pathways to redress. Women and girls, particularly those with disabilities from minority backgrounds or facing other intersecting forms of discrimination, are particularly at risk, often rendered invisible or entirely excluded from what remains of the domestic justice system. This is a pivotal moment for states to take action on their commitment to gender equality. Justice cannot be delivered by those perpetrating abuses. They call on the Council to establish an independent international investigative mechanism with a comprehensive mandate for past and present violations and abuses, to collect, preserve, and analyse information and evidence with a gender-sensitive and intersectional lens, and make it available to accountability bodies acting in conformity with human rights. The UNHRC must not allow gender persecution in Afghanistan to be met with silence and impunity. The world is watching. Without decisive action, Afghan women and girls and LGBTIQ plus persons will be abandoned to face widespread and systematic human rights abuses, including crimes against humanity. These crimes must not go unanswered.

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

37 State Delegations

3 Inter-Governmental Organizations and UN Agencies

10 Non-Governmental Organizations