

AFGHANISTAN: SITUATION OF SINGLE WOMEN

IRAP, September 2021

Table of Contents

Research Request	1
Research Timeframe	2
Sources Consulted.....	2
1. International Organizations:.....	2
2. Government Sources	2
3. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO).....	3
4. Media	3
5. Other	5
Findings.....	6
Women and girls in Afghanistan are reportedly being “deprive[d] of their participation in public and cultural life” since the Taliban’s return to power in late August 2021.	6
Life Under Previous Taliban Rule	6
Life in Afghanistan in the years since the fall of the Taliban in the Early 2000s generally... ..	8
Women’s Rights in Afghanistan Since the Fall of the Taliban in the Early 2000s	10
Taliban Return to Power in 2021	11

This report is intended as background reference material for asylum seekers and their counsel only, to assist in their preparation of their cases. It should not be submitted directly to asylum adjudicators in the United Kingdom or United States.

The information contained in this report is current as of September 2021. It is provided as a service to users and it is therefore general and should not be considered or relied on as comprehensive or as legal advice. Nothing contained herein creates an attorney-client relationship between IRAP or any of the law firms that participated in this project and any users of this information.

Research Request

Research Afghanistan country conditions for single women.

Research Timeframe

The earliest sources date from NOVEMBER 2001 and the most recent sources date from SEPTEMBER 2021.

Sources Consulted

All sources were consulted in SEPTEMBER 2021.

1. International Organizations:

- Electronic Immigration Network (EIN), “UK announces new resettlement scheme for Afghans; refugee and migrant groups say Government must also now abandon plans to criminalise asylum seekers,” 18 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ein.org.uk/news/uk-announce-new-resettlement-scheme-afghans-refugee-groups-say-government-must-abandon-plans>.
- United Nations, “Afghanistan women’s rights are ‘red line’, UN rights chief tells States, 24 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1098322>.
- United Nations, “Support Afghans in their most perilous hour, urges UN’s Guterres,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099732>.
- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “UNESCO sounds a warning on what is at stake for education in Afghanistan,” 10 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-sounds-warning-what-stake-education-afghanistan>.
- United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), “31st Special Session of the Human Rights Council, the serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan, Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 24 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27403&LangID=E>.
- United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) – “Afghanistan: UN experts deplore women sports ban, call for vigorous response,” 14 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.
- United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), “Afghanistan: Women’s full participation in public and political life is crucial,” 15 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27468&LangID=E>.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “UNHCR Position on Returns to Afghanistan,” August 2021, last accessed September 22, 2021, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/611a4c5c4.pdf>.
- United Nations Secretary General, “Remarks to the press on Afghanistan,” 13 August 2021, last accessed September 22, 2021, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/258601>.

2. Government Sources

- Congressional Research Service, “Afghan Women and Girls: Status and Congressional Action”, Updated 18 August 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11646>.

- Congressional Research Service, “U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions”, Updated 17 September 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46879>.
- Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Support for Gender Equality: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, February 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/gender-equality/index.html>.
- U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Report on the Taliban’s War Against Women,” 17 November 2001, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6185.htm>; CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule, 7 September 2012, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

3. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)

- Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), UN Human Rights Council, 48th Session, Item 4 – General Debate, “Oral Statement on the human rights situations in Afghanistan and Kashmir”, 27 September 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/afghanistan/oral-statement-on-the-human-rights-situations-in-afghanistan-and>.

4. Media

- CNN, “Afghanistan is now one of very few countries with no women in top government ranks,” September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/09/asia/taliban-government-women-global-comparison-intl/index.html>.
- CNN: “Afghan women are sharing photos of dresses to protest the Taliban’s black hijab mandate,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/asia/afghan-women-protest-hijab-mandate-intl/index.html>.
- CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.
- CNN, “Taliban spokesman responds to Biden’s move to freeze billions,” 24 September 2021, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2021/09/24/taliban-spokesperson-frozen-funds-robertson-hgt-intl-vpx.cnn>.
- The Hindustan Times, “UN warns of ‘incredible fear’ among Afghan women as Taliban rule returns,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/un-warns-of-incredible-fear-among-afghan-women-as-taliban-rule-returns-101631149297414.html>.
- Kare 11, “Under new Taliban rule, women in Afghanistan are the most at danger, according to United Nations,” 17 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/under-new-taliban-rule-women-in-afghanistan-are-the-most-at-danger-according-to-united-nations/89-ec1c2b5d-5893-489a-a622-69f99b171d0b>.

- National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.
- National Public Radio (NPR), Heard on Weekend Edition Saturday, “The Future Is Uncertain For Women In Afghanistan Under Taliban Rule,” 21 August 2021, 8:45 AM ET, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/21/1029957358/the-future-is-uncertain-for-women-in-afghanistan-under-taliban-rule>.
- National Public Radio (NPR), “The Taliban Swore to Kill an Afghan Doctor for Giving Birth Control to a Child Bride, 19 August 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/08/19/1029000262/the-phone-call-that-made-an-afghan-woman-doctor-flee>.
- NBC News, “Afghan women fear ‘dark’ future, loss of rights as Taliban seize control,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghan-women-fear-dark-future-loss-rights-taliban-gains-ground-n1276636>.
- NDTV, “Taliban Already Neglecting Promise to Respect Women’s Rights: UN Official,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/un-concerned-about-afghan-womens-rights-under-taliban-2534673>.
- The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools,” 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.
- The New York Times, “New Taliban Chancellor Bars Women from Kabul University,” 27 September 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/world/asia/taliban-women-kabul-university.html>.
- The New York Times, “Who Are the Taliban, and What Do They Want?,” 19 August 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/article/who-are-the-taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=style-afghanistan&variant=show®ion=hub&block=storyline_levelup_swipe_recirc.
- Reuters, “U.N. chief urges Taliban restraint, is concerned about women, girls,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 15 September 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/un-chief-urges-taliban-restraint-is-concerned-about-women-girls-2021-08-15/>.
- Sky News, “Afghanistan: ‘They are in grave danger’ – fears for influential women who ‘spearheaded change’ in country,” 16 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>.
- The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas, 12 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.
- The Wall Street Journal, “A Generation of Afghan Professionals Flees Ahead of Taliban Advance,” 7 July 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-generation-of-afghan-youth-afghanistan-american-troops-pullout-taliban-biden-11625667435>.

- The Wall Street Journal, “Two Young Afghan Sisters’ Journey Across Afghanistan to Escape the Taliban,” 6 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/two-young-afghan-sisters-journey-across-afghanistan-to-escape-the-taliban-11630964304?mod=series_usafghanistan.

5. Other

- New York University School of Law, GlobaLex, “Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Legal System and Research,” December 2006, last accessed 22 September, 2021, <https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Afghanistan.html>. National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

Findings

The findings in this report are presented by topic and generally organized within each topic by source, beginning with international organizations and government, moving to NGOs and ending with media outlets.

Women and girls in Afghanistan have been and are being deprived of their rights to education, work, and participation in political, public, economic, and cultural life since the Taliban's return to power in late August 2021.¹

When the Taliban was last in power in the late 1990s to early 2000s, women and girls of Afghanistan were “second-class citizens” with very few civil rights.² Forced into marriages, subjected to violence, unable to attend school or hold jobs in any capacity, or even leave the house without a male relative,³ women's lives were not their own. In the years since the Taliban fell in the early 2000s, Afghan women made strides towards equal rights. Afghan women and girls achieved gains since 2001 in health, education, access to justice, and political and economic participation.⁴ They were productive members of society, engaged in politics, government, the media, sports, and civil society, despite restrictive sociocultural norms and other barriers.⁵ Many young women now coming of age hardly remember a time when women were oppressed by the government simply for having been born female.⁶ Yet the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021 is destroying the progress that Afghan women have made in the last twenty years and threatens the future of women, the advancement of women's status, and women's rights overall.⁷

Life Under Previous Taliban Rule

- “Prior to the rise of the Taliban [in the 1990s], women in Afghanistan were protected under law and increasingly afforded rights in Afghan society. Women received the right to vote in the 1920s; and as early as the 1960s, the Afghan constitution provided for equality for women. There was a mood of tolerance and openness as the country began moving toward democracy. Women were making important contributions to national development. In 1977, women comprised over 15% of Afghanistan's highest legislative body. It is estimated that by the early 1990s, 70% of schoolteachers, 50% of government workers and university students, and 40% of doctors in Kabul were women.”⁸

¹ See United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) – “Afghanistan: UN experts deplore women sports ban, call for vigorous response,” 14 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

² CNN, “Afghan women are sharing photos of dresses to protest the Taliban's black hijab mandate,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/asia/afghan-women-protest-hijab-mandate-intl/index.html>.

³ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Report on the Taliban's War Against Women,” 17 November 2001, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6185.htm>; CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2012, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2012/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

⁴ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Support for Gender Equality: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, February 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/gender-equality/index.html>.

⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Support for Gender Equality: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, February 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/gender-equality/index.html>.

⁶ See generally “Life in Afghanistan in the years since the fall of the Taliban in the Early 2000s generally”, and “Women's Rights in Afghanistan Since the Fall of the Taliban in the Early 2000s,” *infra*.

⁷ See generally, “Taliban Return to Power in 2021,” *infra*.

⁸ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Report on the Taliban's War Against Women,” 17 November 2001, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6185.htm>.

- “Afghanistan under the Taliban had one of the worst human rights records in the world. The regime systematically repressed all sectors of the population and denied even the most basic individual rights. Yet the Taliban's war against women was particularly appalling.”⁹
- “The assault on the status of women began immediately after the Taliban took power in Kabul. The Taliban closed the women's university and forced nearly all women to quit their jobs.... It restricted access to medical care for women, brutally enforced a restrictive dress code, and limited the ability of women to move about the city.”¹⁰
- “The Taliban perpetrated egregious acts of violence against women, including rape, abduction, and forced marriage. Some families resorted to sending their daughters to Pakistan or Iran to protect them.”¹¹
- “Afghan women living under the Taliban virtually had the world of work closed to them... women could work only in very limited circumstances...As many as 50,000 women, who had lost husbands and other male relatives during Afghanistan's long civil war, had no source of income. Many were reduced to selling all of their possessions and begging in the streets, or worse, to feed their families.”¹²
- “The Taliban claimed it was trying to ensure a society in which women had a safe and dignified role. But the facts show the opposite. Women were stripped of their dignity under the Taliban. They were made unable to support their families. Girls were deprived of basic health care and of any semblance of schooling. They were even deprived of their childhood under a regime that took away their songs, their dolls, and their stuffed animals -- all banned by the Taliban”¹³
- “The Taliban quickly lost international and domestic support as the group imposed strict adherence to its interpretation of Islam in areas it controlled and employed harsh punishments, including public executions, to enforce its decrees ... It prohibited women from attending school or working outside the home, except in health care, and **publicly executed women for alleged adultery.**”¹⁴
- “Under Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001...women had to cover their faces and be accompanied by a male relative if they wanted to venture out of their homes.”¹⁵
- “The last time [the Taliban] ruled, they barred women and girls from taking most jobs or even going to school. And women caught outside the home with their faces uncovered risked severe punishment. Unmarried women and men seen together also faced punishment.”¹⁶

⁹ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Report on the Taliban’s War Against Women,” 17 November 2001, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6185.htm>.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Report on the Taliban’s War Against Women,” 17 November 2001, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6185.htm>.

¹¹ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Report on the Taliban’s War Against Women,” 17 November 2001, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6185.htm>.

¹² U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Report on the Taliban’s War Against Women,” 17 November 2001, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6185.htm>.

¹³ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Report on the Taliban’s War Against Women,” 17 November 2001, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6185.htm>.

¹⁴ Congressional Research Service, “U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions”, Updated 17 September 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46879>.

¹⁵ Reuters, “U.N. chief urges Taliban restraint, is concerned about women, girls,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 15 September 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/un-chief-urges-taliban-restraint-is-concerned-about-women-girls-2021-08-15/>.

¹⁶ The New York Times, “Who are the Taliban, and What Do They Want?,” 19 August 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/who-are-the->

- “The Taliban were founded in an ideology dictating that women should play only the most circumscribed roles in society.”¹⁷
- ““To say that this government was primitive and rights abusing doesn’t even touch on the scale of violations and harms.””¹⁸
- “During the Taliban's first time in power in Afghanistan, from 1996 to 2001, the group severely restricted the rights of women, who were virtually excluded from public spaces.”¹⁹
- **“Those who violated the Taliban's rules faced flogging in public and execution.”**²⁰

Life in Afghanistan in the years since the fall of the Taliban in the Early 2000s generally

- “Since 2001, Afghanistan has ratified international normative instruments on education and women's rights and enshrined the right to education for all citizens in the Constitution, guaranteeing 9 years of compulsory education for all boys and girls.”²¹
- “The 2004 Afghan constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender and enshrines equal rights between men and women. It mandates that at least two women be elected to the lower house of parliament from each of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, creating a female representation quota of about 27% in the lower house and 17% in the upper house. The Afghan government had also committed to achieving 30% representation of women in the civil service (around 27% as of 2019) and increasing the number of women in the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) (just over 2% as of May 2021).”²²
- “The Taliban emerged in the chaos and seized power in 1996. The Taliban soon grabbed headlines for ruthlessly enforcing an eye-for-an-eye brand of sharia law, brutally oppressing women and minorities, destroying cultural treasures, and sheltering al Qaeda. After 9/11, the U.S. invaded to root out those behind the attacks, but another, less clearly defined mission took shape. U.S. and NATO leaders hoped economic opportunity and democracy would inoculate the country from becoming a terrorist haven again. Education,

[taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=styln-afghanistan&variant=show®ion=hub&block=storyline_levelup_swipe_recirc](https://www.nytimes.com/article/who-are-the-taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=styln-afghanistan&variant=show®ion=hub&block=storyline_levelup_swipe_recirc)

¹⁷ The New York Times, “Who are the Taliban, and What Do They Want?,” 19 August 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, [https://www.nytimes.com/article/who-are-the-](https://www.nytimes.com/article/who-are-the-taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=styln-afghanistan&variant=show®ion=hub&block=storyline_levelup_swipe_recirc)

[taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=styln-afghanistan&variant=show®ion=hub&block=storyline_levelup_swipe_recirc](https://www.nytimes.com/article/who-are-the-taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=styln-afghanistan&variant=show®ion=hub&block=storyline_levelup_swipe_recirc).

¹⁸ Kare 11, “Under new Taliban rule, women in Afghanistan are the most at danger, according to United Nations,” 17 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/under-new-taliban-rule-women-in-afghanistan-are-the-most-at-danger-according-to-united-nations/89-ec1c2b5d-5893-489a-a622-69f99b171d0b>.

¹⁹ NDTV, “Taliban Already Neglecting Promise to Respect Women’s Rights: UN Official,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/un-concerned-about-afghan-womens-rights-under-taliban-2534673>.

²⁰ NBC News, “Afghan women fear ‘dark’ future, loss of rights as Taliban seize control,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghan-women-fear-dark-future-loss-rights-taliban-gains-ground-n1276636>.

²¹ United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “UNESCO sounds a warning on what is at stake for education in Afghanistan,” 10 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-sounds-warning-what-stake-education-afghanistan>.

²² Congressional Research Service, “Afghan Women and Girls: Status and Congressional Action”, Updated 18 August 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11646>.

political participation, and the status of women improved, but a deluge of foreign money exacerbated urban-rural fault lines.”²³

- “The present Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was agreed upon by more than 500 delegates representing Afghan men and women from across the country at the Constitutional Loya Jirga (December 13, 2003 - January 4, 2004). The Constitution was formally ratified by President Hamid Karzai at a ceremony in Kabul on January 26, 2004.” Some of “the key points of the Constitution are as follows:
 - Afghanistan is an Islamic republic with Islam as its ‘sacred religion’;
 - Followers of other religions are free to perform religious ceremonies in accordance with the provisions of the law;
 - No law shall be contrary to the beliefs and practices of Islam;
 - **Men and women have equal rights and duties before the law**”.²⁴
- “Afghanistan is one of the world’s poorest countries but has seen some advances. Access to health care and education has increased in the past 20 years, especially for girls. But conflict has continued to drive instability in key areas including standard of living, education, food security, and health.”²⁵
- Today, “more than three in four Afghans today are under 25: too young to remember the Taliban’s reign of fear and, especially in urban centers, too accustomed to freedoms to be eager to relinquish them. Some in rural areas see the fundamentalists’ return as inevitable and preferable, but many Afghans shaped by the post-2001 reality are defiant, unwilling to revert to a reactionary and repressive past.”²⁶
- “Youth movements across the country have empowered young women and men from diverse ethnic and religious communities. **A generation of young people has grown up with hope for a better future, and the knowledge of free, individual choice, while also being deeply attached to Afghanistan’s cultural and religious traditions.** These significant advances in human rights have altered mindsets and changed realities. They will not easily be erased. They are also essential to Afghanistan’s future trajectory. For the development and prosperity of any country to be sustainable, people need to live without fear, without discrimination, without repression and with full respect of their human rights.”²⁷
- In 2021, “‘The Taliban don’t understand this, it’s not part of their calculation that things have changed, that millions of people have received education and have different aspirations and different views,’ said Abdullah Abdullah, the country’s chief negotiator with the Taliban. ‘They are not counting this as a factor. They are only perhaps thinking of military strength.’”²⁸

²³ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

²⁴ New York University School of Law, GlobaLex, “Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Legal System and Research,” December 2006, last accessed 22 September, 2021, <https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Afghanistan.html>.

²⁵ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

²⁶ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

²⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), “31st Special Session of the Human Rights Council, the serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan, Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 24 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27403&LangID=E>.

²⁸ The Wall Street Journal, “A Generation of Afghan Professionals Flees Ahead of Taliban Advance,” 7 July 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-generation-of-afghan-youth-afghanistan-american-troops-pullout-taliban-biden-11625667435>.

Women's Rights in Afghanistan Since the Fall of the Taliban in the Early 2000s

- “Civil society organisations have flourished across the country. Women have assumed public roles and leadership positions in the media and across society. **In 2021, 27 percent of members of parliament and one fifth of civil servants were women. Some 3.5 million girls were attending schools** – compared to 1999, when no girls could attend secondary school and only 9,000 were enrolled in primary education.”²⁹
- “...the total number of enrolled students increased from around 1 million to 10 million learners; the number of teachers increased by 58%, and the female literacy rate almost doubled from 17% to 30%. Progress on female enrolment, was particularly striking: **the number of girls in primary school increased from almost zero in 2001 to 2.5 million in 2018. In 2021, 4 out of 10 students in primary education are girls. The number of girls in higher education increased from around 5,000 in 2001 to around 90,000 in 2018.**”³⁰
- “[F]rom 2002 to 2020, the [U.S.] Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the [U.S.] Department of Defense disbursed at least \$787.4 million for programs that specifically and primarily supported Afghan women and girls in the areas of health, education, political participation, access to justice, and economic participation. This understates the total U.S. investment in women and girls, however, since hundreds of additional U.S. programs and projects included an unquantifiable gender component.”³¹
- “In a February 2020 opinion piece published in the *New York Times*, Sirauddin Haqqani, the deputy Taliban leader, said, ‘I am confident that, liberated from foreign domination and interference, we together will find a way to build an Islamic system in which all Afghans have equal rights, where the rights of women that are granted by Islam—from the right to education to the right to work—are protected, and where merit is the basis for equal opportunity.’ The Taliban had made similar claims in their 2018 letter to the American people—and in fact their rhetoric has not much changed since their previous time in power. ... **The Taliban argue that, under their regime, women will enjoy all rights ‘granted by Islam.’ Given the Taliban’s track record of interpreting those rights, Afghan women’s rights advocates are wary.** Ghizaal Haress, assistant professor at the American University of Afghanistan, said, ‘If we leave it to the Taliban’s broad interpretation or to [their] broad idea of women’s ‘Islamic values,’ then we’re going to be in trouble.’ ... A better indicator of what a Taliban role in government might look like are Taliban practices on the ground, in areas they currently influence or control. Although detailed, reliable information on this topic is limited, making it difficult to draw broad conclusions, **there is evidence of significant regional variances among Taliban shadow governments in the imposition of their rigid dogmas,** as well as in service delivery.”³²

²⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), “31st Special Session of the Human Rights Council, the serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan, Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 24 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27403&LangID=E>.

³⁰ United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “UNESCO sounds a warning on what is at stake for education in Afghanistan,” 10 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-sounds-warning-what-stake-education-afghanistan>.

³¹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Support for Gender Equality: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, February 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/gender-equality/index.html>.

³² Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Support for Gender Equality: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, February 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/gender-equality/index.html>.

- “After the militants were removed in 2001, women were free to go to university and jobs.”³³
- “When the Taliban were in charge from 1996 to 2001, they barred women and girls from school. After the U.S.-led invasion toppled Taliban rule in late 2001, female students began attending schools and universities as opportunities blossomed. Women were able to study for careers in business and government, and in professions such as medicine and law. By 2018, the female literacy rate in Afghanistan reached 30 percent, according to a new UNESCO report. But the Taliban swept back into Kabul and seized power on Aug. 15, [2021] and since then they have said they will impose their severe interpretation of Shariah law.”³⁴
- “It wasn’t until after her 10th birthday that Homira Rezai first went to school. With classes inside a tent, it was too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. But education for girls had been banned under the Taliban government in Afghanistan, so when the diaspora community sent money home to build a school following the 2001 US-led invasion to oust the extremists, there were no complaints. **‘Those were the happiest days of my life,’ Ms. Rezai says. ‘It’s when girls in Afghanistan started to have hope. Not being able to go to school from a young age deprived me of many things.’**”³⁵
- “Ní Aoláin was appointed in 2017 to oversee counter terrorism policies for the United Nations. She says the U.S.-led toppling of the [Taliban] regime in 2001 was transformative for women. There was a steady rise in school enrollment, life expectancy and civil service. ‘Civil society didn’t exist because it was either killed or it left and you transformed this country into a place that had a vibrant, civil society where women were some of the most active and vocal participants in public, political life,’ said Ní Aoláin. **‘Women as journalists, women as doctors, women as politicians and all of these women understand today that their lives are over.’**”³⁶
- “With the return of Taliban rule...the United Nations has already received credible reports women are prisoners in their own homes once again, being told not to work and what to wear.”³⁷

Taliban Return to Power in 2021

Generally:

- “UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem insisted that Afghan women and girls must not be abandoned. **‘My message today: we must stand strong and stand together to protect the fundamental rights, freedoms and very lives of Afghan women and girls and not allow 20 years of hard-won gains to be**

³³ CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

³⁴ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools,” 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

³⁵ Sky News, “Afghanistan: ‘They are in grave danger’ – fears for influential women who ‘spearheaded change’ in country,” 16 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>.

³⁶ Kare 11, “Under new Taliban rule, women in Afghanistan are the most at danger, according to United Nations,” 17 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/under-new-taliban-rule-women-in-afghanistan-are-the-most-at-danger-according-to-united-nations/89-ec1c2b5d-5893-489a-a622-69f99b171d0b>.

³⁷ Kare 11, “Under new Taliban rule, women in Afghanistan are the most at danger, according to United Nations,” 17 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/under-new-taliban-rule-women-in-afghanistan-are-the-most-at-danger-according-to-united-nations/89-ec1c2b5d-5893-489a-a622-69f99b171d0b>.

eroded before their eyes,' she said. 'Neither religious beliefs nor politics must ever be used to justify curtailment of women's full participation in all aspects of society.'"³⁸

- "Women's full participation in public and political life [in Afghanistan] is crucial."³⁹
- **"We are deeply concerned at the rapid rolling back of women's rights on full display to the world, notably in the area of women's political and public life, with the Taliban's formation of an all-male interim administration and the imposition of restrictions on women in public spaces...Such backsliding is not only in total contradiction to the country's international commitments and in direct contravention of the country's international legal obligations, it is also unsustainable and harmful to the overall peace-building and development process of the country."**⁴⁰
- "In the wake of the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan, there has been a rapid deterioration in the security and human rights situation in large parts of the country...The upsurge of violence has a serious impact on civilians, including women and children. UNHCR is concerned about the risk of human rights violations against civilians, including against women and girls and against Afghans who are perceived by the Taliban to have a current or past association with the Afghan government or with the international military forces in Afghanistan or with international organizations in the country."⁴¹
- "The rapid seizure of much of the country, including the capital, by the Taliban has raised grave fears of a return to past patterns of human rights violations, and stoked desperation among many Afghans. **In particular, we have [] received credible reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law, and human rights abuses, taking place in many areas under effective Taliban control. They include, among others, [] restrictions on the rights of women – including their right to move around freely and girls' right to attend schools;** recruitment of child soldiers; and repression of peaceful protest and expression of dissent. **There are grave fears for women,** for journalists and for the new generation of civil society leaders who have emerged in the past years."⁴²
- "We have documented that the Taliban advances came with summary executions, disappearances, restrictions on women, media and cultural life. **This is not ancient history. This is earlier this month, and this is today.**"⁴³
- "Women in Afghanistan are being turned down (sic) from their offices by the Taliban, universities have been asked to discuss gender segregation possibilities, women are required to be accompanied by male members of their family in public, media are not broadcasting music, journalists and activists are in hiding

³⁸ United Nations, "Support Afghans in their most perilous hour, urges UN's Guterres," 13 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099732>.

³⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), "Afghanistan: Women's full participation in public and political life is crucial," 15 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27468&LangID=E>.

⁴⁰ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), "Afghanistan: Women's full participation in public and political life is crucial," 15 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27468&LangID=E>.

⁴¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "UNHCR Position on Returns to Afghanistan," August 2021, last accessed September 22, 2021, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/611a4c5c4.pdf>.

⁴² United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), "31st Special Session of the Human Rights Council, the serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan, Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 24 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27403&LangID=E>.

⁴³ United Nations, "Afghanistan women's rights are 'red line', UN rights chief tells States, 24 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1098322>.

or in flee (sic), former members of the Afghan National Security Forces are scared of the worst, the summary executions, house-to-house searches and information gathering has led to widespread fear.”⁴⁴

- “I am also deeply disturbed by early indications that the Taliban are imposing severe restrictions on human rights in the areas under their control, particularly targeting women and journalists. **It is particularly horrifying and heartbreaking to see reports of the hard-won rights of Afghan girls and women being ripped away from them.**” said Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, in remarks to the press on Afghanistan.⁴⁵
- “The status of Afghan women and girls is increasingly precarious in light of the Taliban’s takeover of the country in mid-August 2021.”⁴⁶
- “The Taliban have not stated whether it would allow programming intended to support Afghan women to be implemented by non-Taliban entities....it remains unclear as to whether U.S. or other foreign assistance represents a sufficient incentive for the Taliban to implement specific policies regarding women’s rights.”⁴⁷
- “Since 15 August [2021], the actions of the Taliban have proven that it has no intention of respecting human rights. The gains made over the past 20 years with regards to women’s rights and freedom of expression and assembly risk being completely erased. The Taliban has already enforced gender segregation in schools, prohibited many women from going to work, attacked journalists, and banned protests.”⁴⁸
- “Women and girls, ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ+ people, journalists and those seen as supporting an international organisation or the Afghan Government are now in immediate danger.”⁴⁹
- “Kobra, a woman human rights defender who spoke with Amnesty International, said that she lived in an area in Kabul where there were many Taliban sympathizers. She said that in the weeks before the city fell, shopkeepers and even police officers asked her about her occupation. ‘I was answering ‘I am a teacher’- they laughed and said no, I saw you in TV channels. I was wondering why I was asked the same question by different people of the area’. She fled the country on 19 August. **After she left her home, the Taliban came looking for her and asking her neighbours about her whereabouts.** Kobra shared that she was a vocal human rights defender in Afghanistan, often travelling to the provinces and appearing on television, speaking for women’s rights. She said that she covered her face when passing Taliban checkpoints to the airport to escape attention. **Despite having left the country, Kobra said she still fears for her family left behind, since the Taliban were enquiring about her in her neighbourhood.** She said, ‘women’s rights

⁴⁴ United Nations, “Afghanistan women’s rights are ‘red line’, UN rights chief tells States, 24 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1098322>.

⁴⁵ United Nations Secretary General, “Remarks to the press on Afghanistan, 13 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/258601>.

⁴⁶ Congressional Research Service, “Afghan Women and Girls: Status and Congressional Action”, Updated 18 August 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11646>.

⁴⁷ Congressional Research Service, “Afghan Women and Girls: Status and Congressional Action”, Updated 18 August 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11646>.

⁴⁸ International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), UN Human Rights Council, 48th Session, Item 4 – General Debate, “Oral Statement on the human rights situations in Afghanistan and Kashmir”, 27 September 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/afghanistan/oral-statement-on-the-human-rights-situations-in-afghanistan-and>.

⁴⁹ Electronic Immigration Network (EIN), “UK announces new resettlement scheme for Afghans; refugee and migrant groups say Government must also now abandon plans to criminalise asylum seekers,” 18 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ein.org.uk/news/uk-announce-new-resettlement-scheme-afghans-refugee-groups-say-government-must-abandon-plans>.

activists who raise their voices, people who were working with foreigners, journalists, and Afghan government army' are at high risk of reprisals.”⁵⁰

- **“The freedoms Afghans have gained since 2001 are in jeopardy as extremists complete their takeover of the nation, spurred by US exit.”**⁵¹
- **“In the days after the Taliban seized power in August [2021], officials went to pains to insist that this time would be better for women, who would be allowed to study, work and even participate in government. But none of that has happened.** Taliban leaders recently named an all-male cabinet. The new government has also prohibited women from returning to the workplace, citing security concerns, though officials have described that as temporary. (The original Taliban movement did that as well in its early days in 1990s, but never followed up.)”⁵²
- **“Nasreen Sultani, the principal of the Sardar-e-Kabuli Girls High School in Kabul, has spent years fighting for the rights of Afghan girls, but said she now lives in constant fear for the safety of her students....She said she had been threatened by the Taliban in the past. Sultani is one of many Afghan women in leadership roles who say they fear a return to Taliban rule will also spell a return to its austere and harsh interpretation of Islam, which long severely restricted women's rights until the U.S.-led toppling of the regime in 2001.”**⁵³
- “Fawzia Koofi, a women's rights activist, former lawmaker and member of the Afghan delegation that was working to negotiate peace with the Taliban before the U.S. military's withdrawal, said women felt ‘betrayed.’ ‘Women in Afghanistan are the most at danger or most at-risk population of the country,’ she said, adding that the ‘criminals’ the Taliban had freed from prisons to swell their ranks now also posed a threat, along with ‘those who [have been] upset with women becoming powerful in the last 20 years.’ **The future for women in Afghanistan appears ‘dark,’** she said. Already, women in cities that have fallen under Taliban control ‘are like prisoners in [their] home,’ according to a provincial government official in Afghanistan. ‘They can’t go outside,’ added the official, who requested anonymity because of fears over safety.”⁵⁴
- “Even as the Taliban have unseated the Afghan government and taken the country by force, they ‘cannot rule this new Afghanistan through the barrel of a gun,’ asserted Asey, the former defense official. **“This freedom-seeking, liberal, and tolerant generation will be the torchbearer of a new Afghanistan post-**

⁵⁰ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

⁵¹ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

⁵² The New York Times, “New Taliban Chancellor Bars Women from Kabul University,” 27 September 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/world/asia/taliban-women-kabul-university.html>.

⁵³ NBC News, “Afghan women fear ‘dark’ future, loss of rights as Taliban seize control,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghan-women-fear-dark-future-loss-rights-taliban-gains-ground-n1276636>.

⁵⁴ NBC News, “Afghan women fear ‘dark’ future, loss of rights as Taliban seize control,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghan-women-fear-dark-future-loss-rights-taliban-gains-ground-n1276636>.

U.S. withdrawal, and they will not tolerate their mothers and sisters being flogged in front of them, or people hanging in the streets.”⁵⁵

- “Women spearheaded the change that we see in Afghanistan. They’re the ones who promoted democracy, gender equality, the rights of the Hazara – an ethnic group that has long been discriminated against. They were finally saying that women can have a place in Afghan society but that is now being completely destroyed overnight.”⁵⁶
- “Ms. Rezai has made a list of 70 high-profile women who she says are now in danger for having previously spoken out about women’s rights. **She tells [] of a friend who has had her front door stained with bright paint by the Taliban – a marker that their forces will come back to target homes belonging to government workers or civil rights activists.**”⁵⁷
- “**The Taliban are more empowered and more cruel than they were before. And it’s the women who spearheaded change who have been left in grave danger.**”⁵⁸
- “**In many newly conquered areas, the Taliban have imposed harsh restrictions on the movement of women, not allowing them to leave the house without male relatives and mandating that they wear the all-enveloping burqa, according to local residents reached by phone. A man who fled Badakhshan province, in the northeast, said the Taliban had told his village that women weren’t to leave home without male chaperones. Men were ordered to go to the mosque for prayers five times a day. Families with more than one man were required to provide one to fight with the militants, he said.**”⁵⁹
- “The United Nations warned this week that it was receiving deeply disturbing reports of human-rights abuses in Afghanistan. ‘Hampering a woman’s ability to leave home without a male escort also inevitably leads to a cascade of other violations of the woman,’ said Michelle Bachelet, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights.”⁶⁰
- “Memories are vivid of the Taliban’s rule in the 1990s when there were severe restrictions on women’s rights, and **women and girls are understandably afraid.**”⁶¹

⁵⁵ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

⁵⁶ Sky News, “Afghanistan: ‘They are in grave danger’ – fears for influential women who ‘spearheaded change’ in country,” 16 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>.

⁵⁷ Sky News, “Afghanistan: ‘They are in grave danger’ – fears for influential women who ‘spearheaded change’ in country,” 16 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>.

⁵⁸ Sky News, “Afghanistan: ‘They are in grave danger’ – fears for influential women who ‘spearheaded change’ in country,” 16 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>.

⁵⁹ The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas,” 12 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.

⁶⁰ The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas,” 12 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.

⁶¹ The Hindustan Times, “UN warns of ‘incredible fear’ among Afghan women as Taliban rule returns,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/un-warns-of-incredible-fear-among-afghan-women-as-taliban-rule-returns-101631149297414.html>.

- “Davidian, the deputy head of UN Women in Afghanistan, was speaking to reporters in New York from Kabul. Pointing out that there were daily reports of the Taliban imposing restrictions on the rights of women, she said that the new rule is reminiscent of the previous Taliban regime in the 1990s when the Islamist rulers forbade women from working jobs or receiving education.”⁶²
- “The Taliban is already neglecting its promise to respect Afghan women's rights, a United Nations official based in Kabul said Wednesday. The terrorist group has ‘repeated the same statement that women's rights would be respected within the framework of Islam,’ said Alison Davidian, a representative for UN Women in Afghanistan. ‘But every day we were receiving reports of rollbacks on women's rights.’ For example, ‘women are prohibited from leaving the house without a mahram,’ or male family member, Davidian said during a video conference with journalists in New York. ‘In some provinces they (are) stopped from going to work,’ she said.”⁶³

Government and Statements from Taliban Leaders:

- “**The caretaker cabinet announced on September 7, 2021**, reinstates the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which enforced the Taliban’s interpretation of Islam in the 1990s. **It did not include the Ministry of Women’s Affairs**, which was not present in prior Taliban government but had been created during the most recent Afghan government.”⁶⁴
- “Zarifa Ghafari, Afghanistan’s first female mayor, told the media that the Taliban had searched for her, confiscated her car, and beaten up her guards. She has now left Afghanistan.”⁶⁵
- Anas Haqqani, member, Taliban Political Commission, brother of the Interior Minister, and according to Nic Robertson, CNN International Diplomatic Editor, a member of Afghanistan’s most powerful family, said the following in response questions about women’s rights in Afghanistan: “Those who raise this issue are the ones who don’t want peace, unity and national unity in Afghanistan. **They make the excuse of women and rights of minorities to try to damage the system.** We, praise be to God, have religious principles as well as national traditions. **The rights Islam has given to women cannot be found in any religion or nation.**” Nic Robertson then asked: “Is Afghanistan at risk over the issue of women of not getting its accounts unfrozen?” Haqqani responded: “The frozen money is the people’s right. It doesn’t have anything to do with the government and politics. It is the nation’s right. The poor nation. **With frozen money, they cannot make us copy and bring their culture here.** It is in contradiction with our history, beliefs, and traditions. ... If the world thinks that they can put a lot of pressure on us through this matter, that we will accept what they wanted us to accept during the war, this is a very wrong thinking of them. ... However, now the money freezing issue and other issues, this is inciting war, this is breaking relations.”⁶⁶

⁶² The Hindustan Times, “UN warns of ‘incredible fear’ among Afghan women as Taliban rule returns,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/un-warns-of-incredible-fear-among-afghan-women-as-taliban-rule-returns-101631149297414.html>.

⁶³ NDTV, “Taliban Already Neglecting Promise to Respect Women’s Rights: UN Official,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/un-concerned-about-afghan-womens-rights-under-taliban-2534673>.

⁶⁴ Congressional Research Service, “U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions”, Updated 17 September 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46879>.

⁶⁵ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

⁶⁶ CNN, “Taliban spokesman responds to Biden’s move to freeze billions,” 24 September 2021, last accessed 26 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2021/09/24/taliban-spokesperson-frozen-funds-robertson-hgt-intl-vpx.cnn>.

- “Afghanistan is now one of very few countries with **no women in top government**.”⁶⁷
- “After they reclaimed the country’s capital [in August 2021], the Taliban’s leadership claimed that it would not enforce [the] draconian conditions [of its previous regime] this time in power. But the absence of any female representatives from their newly-formed interim government and an almost **overnight disappearance of women from the country’s streets** has led to major worries about what will happen next for half of its population.”⁶⁸
- “The Taliban on Tuesday announced a government made up exclusively of men who are already members of the Islamist movement. ‘With the announcement (of their government) yesterday, the Taliban missed a critical opportunity to show the world that they are truly committed to build an inclusive and prosperous society.’”⁶⁹

Repression of, and Reactions to, Protests by Women:

- “Speaking at the Human Rights Council in Geneva...High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet stressed the extent of the humanitarian and economic crisis in Afghanistan. It had entered ‘a new and perilous phase,’ she maintained, **while many Afghans were also ‘profoundly concerned for their human rights, particularly women,** ethnic and religious communities.’ Ms. Bachelet’s comments followed a warning from her office, OHCHR, that **whips, batons and live ammunition have been used on peaceful protesters in the last week.**”⁷⁰
- “The 8 September statement suggesting exclusion of women in sports - coinciding with the announcement of an all-male interim government - is only one of the Taliban’s moves to arbitrarily deprive women and girls of their participation in public and cultural life reported in recent days, **including arrests of women protesters,** the ordering of some women to stay away from their workplaces, as well as exclusion from some educational settings and segregation in others. **Taken together this suggests a deteriorating human rights situation in the country.**”⁷¹
- “Protests against the group [the Taliban] have taken place in several cities across the country, including by hundreds of women in Kabul. The Taliban-led Interior Ministry issued a decree on September 8, 2021, banning unapproved demonstrations.”⁷²

⁶⁷ CNN, “Afghanistan is now one of very few countries with no women in top government ranks,” September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/09/asia/taliban-government-women-global-comparison-intl/index.html>.

⁶⁸ CNN, “Afghan women are sharing photos of dresses to protest the Taliban’s black hijab mandate,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/asia/afghan-women-protest-hijab-mandate-intl/index.html>.

⁶⁹ NDTV, “Taliban Already Neglecting Promise to Respect Women’s Rights: UN Official,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/un-concerned-about-afghan-womens-rights-under-taliban-2534673>.

⁷⁰ United Nations, “Support Afghans in their most perilous hour, urges UN’s Guterres,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099732>.

⁷¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), “Afghanistan: UN experts deplore women sports ban, call for vigorous response,” 14 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

⁷² Congressional Research Service, “U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions”, Updated 17 September 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46879>.

- “A number of women have publicly protested in Kabul and other cities to demand protection for human rights and inclusion in the Taliban government. Reports indicate some women have been beaten by Taliban fighters while protesting, and some journalists have been detained while covering the protests.”⁷³
- “Female protestors took to the streets demanding equality and freedom in Nimroz, Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, and other cities and provinces in Afghanistan- despite violent crackdowns on protestors on 2 and 6 September in Mazar-e-Sharif. Reporters were threatened by the Taliban to not report the protest in Mazar-e-Sharif.”⁷⁴
- “Protests have been held in Herat, Kabul, Badakhshan, Balkh, and other cities throughout Afghanistan. While some protests were allowed to continue peacefully, some were violently repressed by the Taliban using force that was not necessary or proportionate in the circumstances. Protests were violently dispersed using unlawful and disproportionate force against peaceful protestors by the Taliban in several cities including the capital Kabul where they beat protestors with batons, used tear gas, threatened them with guns and aerial firings.”⁷⁵
- “On 4 September, approximately 100 women had held a protest in Kabul to demand the inclusion of women in the new ‘government’, and for the Taliban to respect women’s rights more broadly; the protest was dispersed by Taliban special forces, who fired into the air and reportedly fired tear gas. When the protest was violently dispersed by the Taliban at least one protester suffered a head injury, with a video showing an injury on her forehead above her right eye. Others were beaten by the Taliban.”⁷⁶
- “Videos verified by Amnesty International corroborate media reports that the Taliban have used tear gas and electric tasers and hit women on the head with the magazines of guns in Kabul. Protestors and journalists have been injured as a result. Amnesty International verified videos from 7 September, showing Taliban firing shots to disperse protestors in Kabul. Amnesty International’s Crisis Evidence Lab verified two videos from 4 September, from national news outlets reporting that tear gas was used, and showing a group of protesting women clearly coughing. On 7 September, following a protest in Kabul, female protestors were allegedly illegally detained in a basement carpark in order to prevent them from joining a protest. A video, reportedly from a protest held on 8 September in Badakhshan, showed Taliban fighters using whips against women protestors asking for the rights to work and to education to be upheld.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Congressional Research Service, “U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions”, Updated 17 September 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46879>.

⁷⁴ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

Education:

- “If a ban on co-education is implemented, and on males teaching females, **this will deal a huge blow to women’s participation in higher education and to girls’ education more broadly, negatively impacting their lives, work and citizenship.**”⁷⁸
- **“The emerging government has made clear that it intends to severely restrict the educational freedoms enjoyed by many women and girls the past 20 years. The only question is just how draconian the new system will be,** and what type of Islamic-based education will be imposed on both boys and girls. Just as they did when they ruled most of Afghanistan in the late 1990s, the Taliban seem intent on ruling not strictly by decree, but by inference and intimidation.”⁷⁹
- **“Tightening the Taliban’s restrictions on women, the group’s new chancellor for Kabul University announced on Monday that women would be indefinitely banned from the institution either as instructors or students.** ‘I give you my words as chancellor of Kabul University,’ Mohammad Ashraf Ghairat said in a Tweet on Monday. ‘As long as a real Islamic environment is not provided for all, women will not be allowed to come to universities or work. Islam first.’” Mr. Ghairat, “a 34-year-old devotee of the [Taliban] movement...has referred to the country’s schools as ‘centers for prostitution.’”⁸⁰
- “When schools reopened Saturday for grades seven through 12, only male students were told to report for their studies. The Taliban said nothing about girls in those grades, so they stayed home, their families anxious and uncertain about their future. Both boys and girls in grades one through six have been attending schools, with students segregated by gender in the higher three grades.”⁸¹
- “The Taliban-run Ministry of Education has approved a proposal -- submitted by Afghanistan's union of universities, which represents 131 colleges -- on the separation of male and female students. According to the proposal, female and male students must enter their place of learning through separate entrances. Mixed classes are only allowed where the number of female students is fewer than 15, and the classroom must be divided by a curtain. Newly-created classes at private universities should be separate for boys and girls, the proposal added. And all universities are obliged to designate a separate area for female students to perform their prayers. In addition, ‘all female students, lecturers and employees are obliged to observe hijab according to Sharia,’ the proposal said. The hijab covers the hair but not the face. ‘In the future the universities should try to hire female professors for female students. In the meantime, efforts should be made to appoint elderly professors who are well-known for being trustworthy to teach female students,’ the proposal continued.”⁸²

⁷⁸ United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “UNESCO sounds a warning on what is at stake for education in Afghanistan,” 10 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-sounds-warning-what-stake-education-afghanistan>.

⁷⁹ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

⁸⁰ The New York Times, “New Taliban Chancellor Bars Women from Kabul University,” 27 September 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/world/asia/taliban-women-kabul-university.html>.

⁸¹ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

⁸² CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

- “A flimsy gray curtain divides a university classroom in Kabul in two -- on one side sit the male students, on the other the female students, wearing hijabs. It's a glimpse into what education could look like in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, as some students returned to classrooms for the start of the new school semester this week.”⁸³
- “While some women have returned to class at private universities, the country’s public universities remain closed. Even if they reopen, it appears that **women will be required to attend segregated classes, with only women as instructors. But with so few female teachers available — and many of them still publicly restricted from working — many women will almost certainly have no classes to attend.**”⁸⁴
- “There was a mixed response from female students to the education changes. ‘There are so many female students in Kabul who grew up in a free environment where they had the opportunity to choose what to wear and which university to attend or whether to sit in a classroom with the boys or not, but now it would be too difficult for them to adapt to these extreme rules,’ [Sahar, 21] said...She also said she would try to resume her studies under the new rules, but wasn't sure if she could continue for long.”⁸⁵
- “Ziba, another student in her early 20s in Kabul, said that she was planning to abandon hopes of graduating from the university due to the security situation and because the Taliban might impose stricter conditions in the future. She said that it was better to stay at home.”⁸⁶
- “By August [2021], when Taliban soldiers entered Kabul, [a 22-year old Kabul University student] was only months away from receiving her degree. But now the Taliban decree appears to have rendered her dream impossible. ‘All the hard work I have done so far looks like it is gone,’ she said. **‘I find myself wishing I had died...instead of living to see this.’**”⁸⁷
- “The acting minister of higher education last week said that women could continue to study in universities and graduate programs, as long they were in gender-segregated classrooms, but on Friday, the new government sent an ominous signal of its intentions. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs compound was converted into offices for the religious morality police, who brutally enforced the militants’ interpretation of Shariah law two decades ago. The building now houses the Ministry of Invitation, Guidance and Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.”⁸⁸

⁸³ CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

⁸⁴ The New York Times, “New Taliban Chancellor Bars Women from Kabul University,” 27 September 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/world/asia/taliban-women-kabul-university.html>.

⁸⁵ CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

⁸⁶ CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

⁸⁷ The New York Times, “New Taliban Chancellor Bars Women from Kabul University,” 27 September 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/world/asia/taliban-women-kabul-university.html>.

⁸⁸The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

- **“For female students, the sudden end to their academic freedoms has been both traumatizing and paralyzing. Many say the joy and anticipation they once felt when entering classrooms has been lost, replaced by fear and a surpassing sense of futility.** Zayba, 17, survived a devastating bombing at her school in May, for which no group took responsibility, though similar attacks have been attributed to the Islamic State-affiliated group operating in Afghanistan. Zayba stopped attending school after the Taliban takeover, which she said had robbed her of all motivation. ‘I like to study at home,’ she said. ‘I am trying to, but I cannot, because I don’t see any future for myself with this regime.’ Sanam, Zayba’s 16-year-old schoolmate, underwent two operations to repair injuries from shrapnel that tore into her the day of the bombing. On Aug. 15, [2021], she was taking an exam; she wants to be a dentist. When she returned home, she learned that the Taliban had seized political power.”⁸⁹
- **“I can’t concentrate in my studies,’ she said. ‘When we think about our future, we can’t see anything.’”**⁹⁰
- “For many girls, the end of their educational freedom also means shutting down their dreams. Zayba, the 12th grader, said she had planned since childhood to study for a career as a surgeon. But last month, she said, **her future seemed to evaporate. ‘The day the Taliban took control, I was thinking: This is the end of life for women,’ she said.**”⁹¹
- “Mohammad Tariq, an administrator at a private school in Kabul, said Taliban education officials had told him at meetings he attended that the new curriculum would include ‘special subjects’ that teachers will be required to teach. Girls will be taught by women, and boys by men, he said. ‘Change will come in the books, in the Islamic books,’ Mohammad Tariq said. **‘Certain subjects will be eliminated for girls: engineering, government studies, cooking, vocational education. The main subjects will remain.’** Mr. Mujahid, the Taliban spokesman, denied that any specific subjects would be removed from schools’ curriculum.”⁹²
- “Sumbul Rhea, 17, a student at Afghanistan’s National Institute of Music, is from a remote village in Nuristan. **Her father was kidnapped and ransomed three times by the Taliban, she says, for letting his daughters study music.**”⁹³

Dress:

- “In recent days the Taliban has mandated the segregation of genders in classrooms and said female students, lecturers and employees must wear hijabs in accordance with the group's interpretation of Sharia law. On Saturday photos emerged of a group of female students wearing head-to-toe black robes and waving Taliban flags in the lecture hall of a government-run university in Kabul. Other Afghan women

⁸⁹ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

⁹⁰ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

⁹¹ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

⁹² The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

⁹³ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

responded by posting pictures of themselves in bright and colorful traditional Afghan dresses -- a stark contrast to the black hijab mandate outlined by the Taliban.”⁹⁴

- “Shekiba Teimori, an Afghan singer and activist who fled Kabul last month, told CNN that the ‘hijab existed before Kabul’s fall. We could see Hijabi women, but this was based on family decisions and not the government.’ She said that before the Taliban came to Afghanistan, her ancestors were ‘wearing the same colorful Afghan dresses you see in my pictures.’”⁹⁵
- “Herat fell to the Taliban on Aug. 12 [2021]. Soon after, Maryam, dressed in her school uniform, and her grandmother, Zahra Sharifi, were stopped on the street by a fighter, **who ordered them to return home and not venture out again—unless they were accompanied by a male relative and wearing burqas...** ‘Next time I see you in this uniform, I will shoot you,’ Maryam said the man told her. Taliban officials eventually showed up at the family home, looking for Ms. Sharifi. Maryam, Mehrsa and their grandmother went into hiding, spending days huddled in dank basements as the Taliban prowled the streets of Herat.”⁹⁶
- According to Manizha Wafeq, President of the Afghanistan Women’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry: “And yes, there are a number of other items on that list of Sharia-based restrictions for women, such as, you know, how to cover themselves. OK. Sometimes when I talk to women this last week, sometimes we have said that maybe with the covering we would compromise. But all other things cannot be compromised.”⁹⁷
- *See also*, “Education,” *supra*, and “Careers, the Right to Work, and Businesses” and “Sports,” *infra*.

Forced Marriages, Child Brides, and Reproductive Rights:

- **“Taliban commanders have demanded that communities turn over unmarried women to become ‘wives’ for their fighters—a form of sexual violence, human-rights groups say.”**⁹⁸
- “After the insurgents in late June took the Rustaq district of the northern province of Takhar, a senior local Taliban figure addressed residents in the mosque during Friday prayers. **All girls over the age of 15 and widows younger than 40 should be married to the insurgent fighters**, he told the congregation, according to a local man who was present. **The man was later summoned and ordered to hand over his 15-year-old daughter**. He said in a telephone interview that he fled the area and was trying to make his way to Kabul from the province, whose capital fell to the Taliban on Sunday. **Experts said the openly declared demand for women for their fighters showed the Taliban had grown even more extreme**

⁹⁴ CNN: “Afghan women are sharing photos of dresses to protest the Taliban’s black hijab mandate,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/asia/afghan-women-protest-hijab-mandate-intl/index.html>.

⁹⁵ CNN: “Afghan women are sharing photos of dresses to protest the Taliban’s black hijab mandate,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/asia/afghan-women-protest-hijab-mandate-intl/index.html>.

⁹⁶ The Wall Street Journal, “Two Young Afghan Sisters’ Journey Across Afghanistan to Escape the Taliban,” 6 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/two-young-afghan-sisters-journey-across-afghanistan-to-escape-the-taliban-11630964304?mod=series_usafghanistan.

⁹⁷ NPR, Heard on Weekend Edition Saturday, “The Future Is Uncertain for Women In Afghanistan Under Taliban Rule,” 21 August 2021, 8:45 AM ET, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/21/1029957358/the-future-is-uncertain-for-women-in-afghanistan-under-taliban-rule>.

⁹⁸ The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas, 12 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.

than they were when their regime was in power the 1990s. The practice shows the influence of Islamic State, which enforced sexual slavery on women on a massive scale in Syria and Iraq.”⁹⁹

- “Eleven days ago, Dr. Akbari was at her clinic in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif when she got a call that made her drop everything. **It was a member of the Taliban who had been threatening her from afar for months because she had given a birth control shot to his 13-year-old bride.** ‘This time, his voice was actually really soft,’ recalls Akbari. ‘He said, “We’re entering the city. Soon we’ll come and get you.”’ **And even if Akbari could relocate to a different part of Afghanistan, she says, it would be impossible to practice medicine.** ‘If I see a woman in trouble, I will want to help her,’ she says. ‘And the Taliban will say it’s un-Islamic.’”¹⁰⁰

Careers, the Right to Work, and Businesses:

- “For example, since the takeover, the Taliban has targeted those who worked for the Afghan police force, and in one instance, killed Banu Negar, a former woman police officer who was [eight months] pregnant at the time.” “Others [women police officers] have reported the intimidation they face, and that the Taliban are asking for their home addresses. A former Afghan policewoman reported to the BBC that other former policewomen had received phone calls from the Taliban, asking them to come to work and demanding their home addresses. Female judges and prosecutors have also come under threat, not just from the Taliban, but also from men who had been convicted and imprisoned on charges of murder or domestic violence and freed from prison by the Taliban since 15 August. There have been reports of both ex-prisoners and Taliban fighters ransacking the homes of female judges.”¹⁰¹
- “The messages regarding women’s rights that have been communicated by the Taliban since they retook power, have been unclear and inconsistent and have left women across Afghanistan terrified. On 24 August 2021, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told reporters that women should refrain from showing up to work until ‘proper systems’ were put in place to ‘ensure their safety,’ and claiming it was a ‘very temporary procedure’, without giving any details. However, on 28 August, Suhail Shaheen, a spokesperson of the Taliban, tweeted that women working in the health sector were to report to duty. On 11 September, it was reported that all male employees of the Ministry of Finance were to report to work, and female employees were to stay at home until ‘a proper work environment is provided’. No further details have been shared, leaving many working women in limbo. While some have been able to continue working, others have been physically barred from entering their workplace by Taliban fighters; many more have stayed home out of precaution.”¹⁰²
- “In early July, as Taliban fighters began to take control of parts of the city of Kandahar, nine women were ordered to leave their offices at Azizi Bank; they were escorted home and told that they would be replaced by their male relatives. The same scenario repeated itself at Bank Milli in Herat a few days later. In Herat, soon after the Taliban claimed the city on 12 August, many women were barred from their workplace, including some from their jobs at the Industrial Park, where 300 factories

⁹⁹ The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas, 12 August, 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.

¹⁰⁰ National Public Radio (NPR), “The Taliban Swore to Kill an Afghan Doctor for Giving Birth Control to a Child Bride, 19 August 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/08/19/1029000262/the-phone-call-that-made-an-afghan-woman-doctor-flee>.

¹⁰¹ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

¹⁰² Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

producing food and construction supplies have employed many local women in recent years. On 2 September 2021, dozens of women protested in Herat against the Taliban's policies regarding women, including over the right to work."¹⁰³

- “Ayesha, a woman journalist, had to leave Kabul when she was informed by the organization she worked for, that her life was at risk. In the first few days, women journalists had been asked by their employers not to come in to work, due to fear of a crackdown by the Taliban. However, thereafter, Ayesha and her female colleagues had returned to their offices and conducted interviews with some Taliban fighters. ... Ayesha's organization had later informed all the female employees that if they wanted to continue working, they would have to dress according to Taliban requirements. After Ayesha left Afghanistan, the Taliban visited her family and threatened and harassed a relative, when they could not find her. Aadila, another woman journalist and human rights defender, described the first two weeks of Taliban rule as a time of fear and uncertainty. She had decided to stay in Afghanistan and continue her work, until one night when the Taliban came to her home and hammered on the door asking for her. Aadila said they did not open the door out of fear, following which, upon the insistence of relatives, she left the country on 29 August. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), two female journalists at Radio Television Afghanistan were taken off air by the Taliban and banned from entering their offices, shortly after the fall of Kabul.”¹⁰⁴
- “Ms. Tajik, a data analyst at a foreign-owned company in Kabul, makes enough money to support her parents and five siblings in their village. She said the Taliban won't allow a woman to work in her chosen field. ‘A lot of dreams, a lot of plans, and now they're all jeopardized. The first thing that I think about now is survival. It's so different from just a month ago,’ Ms. Tajik said. Her years of study, she said, may come to nothing.”¹⁰⁵
- According to Manizha Wafeq, President of the Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry: “So just taking our example, businesswomen - we have 57,000 women-owned businesses - women-owned and run businesses in the country. These women, among them, close to 2,500 of them are licensed formal businesses. And the rest are informal businesses. But altogether, they have created more than 130,000 jobs. There is a strong group of businesswomen who would like to negotiate their position.” “In terms of Sharia law, we all know how they interpret that. And so that's another thing that can worry everyone because they want fully segregated spaces for women. And I don't know how that would be practical and possible in every sector.”¹⁰⁶
- “In just one example, Taliban fighters entered a bank in Kandahar during fighting in July [2021] and ordered nine women working there to leave and said that male relatives should take their place, Reuters reported. And in the northern city of Kunduz [in August 2021], the city's new Taliban rulers ordered women who had worked for the government to leave their jobs and never return.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan's Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in the Balance: Afghanistan's Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, last accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ The Wall Street Journal, “A Generation of Afghan Professionals Flees Ahead of Taliban Advance,” 7 July 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-generation-of-afghan-youth-afghanistan-american-troops-pullout-taliban-biden-11625667435>.

¹⁰⁶ NPR, Heard on Weekend Edition Saturday, “The Future Is Uncertain For Women In Afghanistan Under Taliban Rule,” 21 August 2021, 8:45 AM ET, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/21/1029957358/the-future-is-uncertain-for-women-in-afghanistan-under-taliban-rule>.

¹⁰⁷ The New York Times, “Who are the Taliban, and What Do They Want?,” 19 August 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/article/who-are-the-taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=style-afghanistan&variant=show®ion=hub&block=storyline_levelup_swipe_recirc.

- *See also* “Taliban Return to Power in 2021,” *supra*, and “Forced Marriages, Child Brides, and Reproductive Rights,” *supra*.

Participation in Sports:

- UN Human rights experts have “deplored a statement to the media by a Taliban official on 8 September [2021] that women would not be allowed to participate in sport, warning that it could be a step toward ‘**gender apartheid**’ ... ‘The right to gender equality, and the right to take part in cultural life without discrimination require women’s equal access to participation in sports.’ **The deputy head of the Taliban’s cultural commission said in an interview [] that women’s sport was considered neither appropriate nor necessary.**”¹⁰⁸
- “‘This pronouncement that women do not need sports and may not participate in sports suggests **a return to the Taliban’s grim history of systematically excluding women from public life and practicing gender apartheid,**’ the experts said. ‘Today they will be kept off the fields and pitches, tomorrow it may be more widespread exclusion from public life as was the case under the previous Taliban regime.’”¹⁰⁹
- “‘Acquiescence to gender apartheid is complicity with gross abuses of human rights,’ the experts said. ‘Gender equality is a cornerstone of international law and the UN Charter itself. **International law entirely rejects attempts to justify violations of human rights on the claimed basis of cultural or religious arguments.** Women of every religious and cultural background participate in sports in every region of the world as part of their internationally guaranteed right to take part in cultural life, and to equality. Afghan women must not be denied this right.’”¹¹⁰
- “The Taliban have confirmed that women won’t be allowed to play cricket or any other sport, throwing into doubt November’s historic men’s cricket Test between Australia and Afghanistan. In an exclusive interview with SBS News, the **deputy head of the Taliban’s cultural commission, Ahmadullah Wasiq, said that sport is not seen as something that is important for women. ‘I don’t think women will be allowed to play cricket because it is not necessary that women should play cricket,’ Mr Wasiq said.** ‘In cricket, they might face a situation where their face and body will not be covered. Islam does not allow women to be seen like this. It is the media era, and there will be photos and videos, and then people watch it. Islam and the Islamic Emirate do not allow women to play cricket or play the kind of sports where they get exposed.’ Mr Wasiq told SBS Pashto last month that the Taliban would allow men’s cricket to continue and that it has given the green light for the mens national team to travel to Australia for a test match in Hobart later this year. ... Asked about the potential for the ICC to call off the test match in Australia, Mr Wasiq said the Taliban would not compromise. ‘Even for this, if we face challenges and problems, we have fought for our religion so that Islam is to be followed. We will not cross Islamic values even if it carries opposite reactions. We will not leave our Islamic rules,’ Mr Wasiq said. He said Islam allowed women to go out on a needs basis such as for shopping. Sport is not considered a need, he said. **‘In cricket**

¹⁰⁸ United Nations Humans Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) – “Afghanistan: UN experts deplore women sports ban, call for vigorous response,” 14 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Humans Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) – “Afghanistan: UN experts deplore women sports ban, call for vigorous response,” 14 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

¹¹⁰ United Nations Humans Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) – “Afghanistan: UN experts deplore women sports ban, call for vigorous response,” 14 September 2021, last accessed 22 September 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

and other sports, women will not get an Islamic dress code. It is obvious that they will get exposed and will not follow the dress code, and Islam does not allow that.’¹¹¹

¹¹¹ SBS News, “Taliban say women won’t be allowed to play sport,” 8 September 2021, last accessed 28 September 2021, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/taliban-say-women-won-t-be-allowed-to-play-sport/3d58c3c9-9ffd-4f13-98e7-b1ecfe9ce2df>.