

AFGHANISTAN: SITUATION OF SINGLE WOMEN

IRAP, March 2022

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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 MARCH 2022.

Sources Consulted

All sources were consulted in MARCH 2022.

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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. Since 2001, Afghan women and girls achieved gains in health, education, access to justice, and political and economic

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 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2012/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

participation.⁴ They became 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
- “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

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>.

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>.

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
- “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

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-taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=stylein-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-taliban.html?action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection&state=default&module=stylein-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 12 March 2022, <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>.

- “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

- “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, 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;

¹⁹ NDTV, “Taliban Already Neglecting Promise to Respect Women’s Rights: UN Official,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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>.

²³ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

- **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
- “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

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

²⁴ New York University School of Law, GlobaLex, “Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Legal System and Research,” December 2006, last accessed 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-generation-of-afghan-youth-afghanistan-american-troops-pullout-taliban-biden-11625667435>.

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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27403&LangID=E>.

- "...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
- "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

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 12 March 2022, <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>.

³³ CNN, "Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule," 7 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

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

Women’s Rights Generally:

- “The Taliban’s renewed rule has been detrimental for the status of women and girls in Afghanistan.”³⁸
- Earlier in the week, Deborah Lyons, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) emphasized on 8 March that **women’s denial of rights to free movement, work, participation in public life and education, is limiting greater economic development for the country.** ‘More needs to be done to promote equality of opportunity for women and girls in all areas of their lives,’ she stressed, a point similarly echoed by [civil society leader] Mariam Safi, who — addressing the Security Council on 2 March — noted the rapid

³⁴ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools,” 20 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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 12 March 2022, <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>.

³⁸ Congressional Research Service, “Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy: In Brief,” Updated 17 February 2022, last accessed 23 March 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45122>.

deterioration of women's rights since the Taliban seized power, in August 2021. **'Repression of women's rights appears central to the Taliban's vision for Afghanistan,'** she warned."³⁹

- "The recent crisis has affected everyone in Afghanistan, but women and girls bear the consequences the most. Their rights and freedom of movement have been curtailed, and women's rights, including to education, work and holding public office, are in danger of being rolled back. **Restricting women's involvement in the workforce, including in humanitarian activities, will directly impact the ability of women and girls to access critical services. Their experience, capacities and leadership are invaluable for peace and security in Afghanistan.**"⁴⁰
- "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 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.'**"⁴¹
- "Women's full participation in public and political life [in Afghanistan] is crucial."⁴²
- " **'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.'⁴³
- "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."⁴⁴

³⁹ United Nations, UN News, "Women must be given space to lead if Afghanistan is to find peace: Bachelet", 10 March 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113742>.

⁴⁰ United Nations, "Nine things you need to know about the humanitarian crisis and response in Afghanistan, 24 November 2021, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://afghanistan.un.org/en/156613-nine-things-you-need-know-about-humanitarian-crisis-and-response-afghanistan>.

⁴¹ United Nations, "Support Afghans in their most perilous hour, urges UN's Guterres," 13 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099732>.

⁴² 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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27468&LangID=E>.

⁴³ 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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27468&LangID=E>.

⁴⁴ 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>.

- “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.”⁴⁵
- “ ‘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.** ’ ”⁴⁶
- “ ‘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 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. ’ ”⁴⁷
- “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.⁴⁸
- “The status of Afghan women and girls is increasingly precarious in light of the Taliban’s takeover of the country in mid-August 2021.”⁴⁹
- “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.”⁵⁰
- “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

⁴⁵ 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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27403&LangID=E>.

⁴⁶ United Nations, “Afghanistan women’s rights are ‘red line’, UN rights chief tells States, 24 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1098322>.

⁴⁷ United Nations, “Afghanistan women’s rights are ‘red line’, UN rights chief tells States, 24 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1098322>.

⁴⁸ United Nations Secretary General, “Remarks to the press on Afghanistan, 13 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/258601>.

⁴⁹ 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>.

⁵⁰ 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>.

segregation in schools, prohibited many women from going to work, attacked journalists, and banned protests.”⁵¹

- “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.”⁵²
- “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 activists who raise their voices, people who were working with foreigners, journalists, and Afghan government army’ are at high risk of reprisals.”⁵³
- “**The freedoms Afghans have gained since 2001 are in jeopardy as extremists complete their takeover of the nation,** spurred by US exit.”⁵⁴
- “Since taking power in August 2021, **Taliban officials have reiterated their commitment to protecting women’s rights ‘within the framework of *sharia*.**’ [A related footnote defines *sharia* as follows: “Sharia refers broadly to concepts and principles of Islamic religious jurisprudence that vary in their interpretation under different schools of practice.”] ... In the immediate aftermath of the takeover, Taliban leaders called on women government employees to return to their posts, as long as they were wearing the *hijab* (headscarf), and granted ‘amnesty’ to all men and women who worked with foreign powers. **Taliban leaders subsequently called for women to stay home** temporarily, citing concerns over new Taliban forces who ‘have not yet been trained very well’ and who may mistreat, harm, or harass women.”⁵⁵
- “**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**

⁵¹ 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->

⁵² 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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ein.org.uk/news/uk-announce-new-resettlement-scheme-afghans-refugee-groups-say-government-must-abandon-plans>.

⁵³ 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>.

⁵⁴ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

⁵⁵ Congressional Research Service, Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for Congress, 2 November 2021, last accessed 24 March 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46955>.

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.”⁵⁶

- “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.”⁵⁷
- “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-U.S. withdrawal, and they will not tolerate their mothers and sisters being flogged in front of them, or people hanging in the streets.”**”⁵⁸
- “‘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.’”⁵⁹
- “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.**”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ NBC News, “Afghan women fear ‘dark’ future, loss of rights as Taliban seize control,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghan-women-fear-dark-future-loss-rights-taliban-gains-ground-n1276636>.

⁵⁷ NBC News, “Afghan women fear ‘dark’ future, loss of rights as Taliban seize control,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghan-women-fear-dark-future-loss-rights-taliban-gains-ground-n1276636>.

⁵⁸ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

⁵⁹ Sky News, “Afghanistan: ‘They are in grave danger’ – fears for influential women who ‘spearheaded change’ in country,” 16 August, 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>.

⁶⁰ Sky News, “Afghanistan: ‘They are in grave danger’ – fears for influential women who ‘spearheaded change’ in country,” 16 August, 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>.

- “ ‘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.’ ”⁶¹
- “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.”⁶²
- “ ‘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.’ ”⁶³
- “[Alison] 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.”⁶⁴
- “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.”⁶⁵

Statements from Taliban Leaders and Spokesmen:

- “ ‘We assure our Afghan sisters that they would be allowed to attend school once our leadership makes a decision.’ Aziz Ahmad Rayan, a spokesman for the Education Ministry, said at [an all-boys school at] the ceremony [marking the reopening of schools]. He said the **Taliban’s acting cabinet needs to consider ‘some cultural and religious obligations’ first.** A statement from the Education Ministry said it hasn’t designed a school uniform for female students that is ‘in accordance with sharia [Islamic] law, Afghan culture and customs.’ ... Rayan, the Education Ministry spokesman, said that ultimately the decision on access to education for women and girls will have to be made by top leadership. “Reopening of girls’ schools above the sixth grade is beyond the mandate of the Education Ministry,”

⁶¹ Sky News, “Afghanistan: ‘They are in grave danger’ – fears for influential women who ‘spearheaded change’ in country,” 16 August, 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>.

⁶² The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas,” 12 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.

⁶³ The Hindustan Times, “UN warns of ‘incredible fear’ among Afghan women as Taliban rule returns,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/un-warns-of-incredible-fear-among-afghan-women-as-taliban-rule-returns-101631149297414.html>.

⁶⁴ The Hindustan Times, “UN warns of ‘incredible fear’ among Afghan women as Taliban rule returns,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/un-warns-of-incredible-fear-among-afghan-women-as-taliban-rule-returns-101631149297414.html>.

⁶⁵ NDTV, “Taliban Already Neglecting Promise to Respect Women’s Rights: UN Official,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/un-concerned-about-afghan-womens-rights-under-taliban-2534673>.

he said. But he added that the ministry will “work closely with Taliban leadership to secure permission for the reopening of all girls’ schools.”⁶⁶

- “Speaking to journalists on Saturday, Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for Afghanistan’s government and deputy minister of culture and information, said the group’s education department would open classrooms for all girls and women in the Afghan New Year, which starts on March 21. ... **Girls and boys must be completely segregated in schools, said Mujahid, adding that the biggest obstacle so far has been finding or building enough dorms, or hostels, where girls could stay while going to school.** In heavily populated areas, it is not enough to have separate classrooms for boys and girls – separate school buildings are needed, he said.”⁶⁷
- “In Afghanistan, the Taliban authorities say women seeking to travel long distances should not be allowed on road transport unless they are accompanied by a close male relative. The guidance issued on Sunday by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which also **called on vehicle owners to refuse rides to women not wearing headscarves**, has drawn condemnation from rights activists. ... **‘Women travelling for more than 72km (45 miles) should not be offered a ride if they are not accompanied by a close family member,’** ministry spokesman Sadeq Akif Muhajir said, specifying **that the companion must be male.**”⁶⁸
- “A Taliban spokesman, Bilal Karimi, said **no decision had been made about a future role for female judges and lawyers.** ‘Right now, they are on hold,’ Mr. Karimi said.”⁶⁹
- “We reached out to the Taliban to see if they had a timeline for when girls and women could go back to school. Press officer Bilal Karimi told us that solving these issues within the required framework is a logistical issue, so we can't say exactly when it will be solved. But God willing, it will be solved within the near future.”⁷⁰
- 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,

⁶⁶ The Washington Post, “Taliban reopens Afghan schools – except for girls after sixth grade,” 23 March 2022, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/23/taliban-afghan-girls-school-secondary/>.

⁶⁷ Al Jazeera, “Taliban says all Afghan girls will be back in school by March,” 17 January 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/17/taliban-says-will-open-all-schools-for-girls-across-country>.

⁶⁸ Al Jazeera, “No long-distance travel for women without male relative: Taliban,” 26 December 2021, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/26/afghanistan-long-distance-travel-women-without-male-escort-taliban>.

⁶⁹ The New York Times, “Afghan Women Who Once Presided Over Abuse Cases Now Fear for Their Lives,” updated 22 October 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/21/world/asia/afghan-judges-women-taliban.html?searchResultPosition=9>.

⁷⁰ NPR, Heard on Weekend Edition Sunday, “The Future of Women’s Education in Afghanistan Remains Uncertain,” 3 October 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/03/1042802598/the-future-of-womens-education-in-afghanistan-remains-uncertain>.

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.”⁷¹

Women Excluded from Government:

- “Afghanistan is now one of very few countries with **no women in top government**.”⁷²
- “Speaking from Kabul, where she is listening to women share their experiences - and talking to the de facto Taliban authorities about the urgent, critical need to bring an end to the serious human rights violations that women and girls face – [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights] Ms. Bachelet said **Afghan women have been threatened and attacked for speaking up, and excluded from positions of power**.”⁷³
- “Subsequently, **former Afghan women politicians took to the [United Nations] Security Council stakeout to ask the international community to pressure the Taliban ‘to put their words in action’ and fulfill their promises made in 2019 in Qatar including supporting girls’ education and women’s rights**. ‘The reason we are here today is to meet with different Member States and ask them to regard women and human rights in Afghanistan as a matter of national security of their own countries, because it’s not just a political or social issue but it’s a matter of security’, said Fawzia Koofi, former Peace Negotiator and first woman Deputy Speaker of Afghan Parliament. Former Afghan Parliamentarian and Chairperson of the House Standing Committee for Human Rights, Civil Society and Women Affairs, Naheed Fareed, questioned whether the world wanted to ‘register in history’ their recognition of ‘a de facto structure that is in place in Afghanistan’, to represent Afghan women, their dignity and desires. ‘From my point of view, they don’t’, she told reporters.”⁷⁴
- “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**.”⁷⁵
- “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.”⁷⁶
- “The Taliban have reinstated the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which enforced the Taliban’s interpretation of Islam in the 1990s. The **Taliban’s government does not include the**

⁷¹ 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>.

⁷² CNN, “Afghanistan is now one of very few countries with no women in top government ranks,” September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/09/asia/taliban-government-women-global-comparison-intl/index.html>.

⁷³ United Nations, UN News, “Women must be given space to lead if Afghanistan is to find peace: Bachelet”, 10 March 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113742>.

⁷⁴ United Nations, UN News, “Women in leadership ‘must be the norm’, Security Council hears,” 21 October 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/10/1103662>.

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 CNN, “Afghan women are sharing photos of dresses to protest the Taliban’s black hijab mandate,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/asia/afghan-women-protest-hijab-mandate-intl/index.html>.

Ministry of Women's Affairs, which was not present in prior Taliban government but had been a part of the former Afghan government.”⁷⁷

- “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.’ ”⁷⁸

Repression of, and Reactions to, Protests by Women; Disappearances of Women Protestors:

- “We must redouble our efforts to address the growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, and press the Taliban to respect the rights of all Afghans, including by **stopping the unjust detentions of women protestors and journalists**, ending reprisals, and allowing all Afghans to be educated and work in every sector.”⁷⁹
- Four women activists in Afghanistan have been released by the country’s “de facto authorities” after going missing weeks ago, the United Nations has said. ... Tamana Zaryabi Paryani, Parwana Ibrahimkhel, Zahra Mohammadi and Mursal Ayar went missing after participating in an anti-Taliban rally, but Afghanistan’s new rulers — whose government is still not recognised by any country — had consistently denied detaining them. **‘After a long period of uncertainty about their whereabouts and safety, the four “disappeared” Afghan women activists, as well as their relatives who also went missing, have all been released by the de facto authorities,’ the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said on Twitter on Sunday.** ... Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid had told AFP in an interview recently that the authorities had the right ‘to arrest and detain dissidents or those who break the law’ after the government banned unsanctioned protests soon after coming to power.”⁸⁰
- “The UN human rights office OHCHR, has said it is very alarmed over the continued disappearance of six people who were abducted in the Afghan capital Kabul, in connection with recent women’s rights protests.”⁸¹
- “In recent weeks, Taliban fighters have targeted women’s rights activists, especially those protesting the Taliban’s denial of their basic rights. **Armed militants have beaten female demonstrators, sprayed pepper spray in their faces and shocked them with electric prods, according to a half-dozen activists interviewed by The Washington Post. Other women have received threatening calls and text messages and have been harassed on social media. Several said they were followed by militants in an apparent effort to intimidate them.** Many went into hiding. All agreed to speak on the record because their faces and names are known to the Taliban. Then the threat escalated. **Gunmen, on the evening of Jan. 19, took into custody two well-known activists, Tamana Paryani and Parwana Ibrahimkhil, in separate operations.** Paryani and her three sisters were abducted from their third-floor apartment, while

⁷⁷ Congressional Research Service, Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for Congress, 2 November 2021, last accessed 24 March 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46955>.

⁷⁸ NDTV, “Taliban Already Neglecting Promise to Respect Women’s Rights: UN Official,” 9 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/un-concerned-about-afghan-womens-rights-under-taliban-2534673>.

⁷⁹ U.S. State Department, “Remarks at the UN Human Rights Council 49th Session: Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State,” 1 March 2022, last accessed 23 March 2023, <https://www.state.gov/remarks-at-the-un-human-rights-council-49th-session/>.

⁸⁰ Al Jazeera, “Missing Afghan Women Activists Released: UN,” 13 February 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/13/four-missing-afghan-women-activists-released-by-authorities>.

⁸¹ United Nations, UN News, “Six women’s rights activists still missing in Afghanistan,” 1 February 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1111012>.

Ibrahimkhil was taken with her brother-in-law in another part of Kabul, according to human rights activists and the United Nations. **Three days earlier, both women protested in the streets against the Taliban. Neither has been heard from since their disappearance.** ... On Thursday, the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan announced in a tweet that two more women's activists reportedly had been detained by the Taliban in the previous 24 hours. **At least eight women linked to activism are believed to have vanished in recent weeks, according to protesters.**"⁸²

- "The protests rarely last for long. Taliban enforcers have roughed up women, beaten them and sprayed them with chemical irritants, activists say. Ms. Elham and others say they have received threatening phone calls from intelligence officers, warning them to stay silent or face unspecified 'consequences.' **'He asked me if I knew they had prisons for people like me,'** Ms. Elham said of a Taliban intelligence officer who ordered her to end the demonstrations she has helped to organize. ... Taliban officials have said that prior approval was required to hold a protest. But when the women have requested permission, Ms. Rezai said, 'They don't allow it, and they never will.' On Jan. 19, three days after women protested the hijab directive, two activists were taken at gunpoint from homes in Kabul, said Zarifa Yaqoobi, 28, a leader of a group called the Afghan Powerful Women's Movement. Ms. Yaqoobi said the women's family members told her the women were taken away at night by armed men."⁸³
- "Stating that "the threat is very real", Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, called for an urgent coordinated response from the international community. **'Defenders tell me of direct threats, including gendered threats against women, of beatings, arrests, enforced disappearances, and of defenders being killed.** They describe living in a climate of constant fear', she said. **Those most at risk are people documenting alleged war crimes, women, in particular criminal lawyers,** cultural rights defenders, especially those working in banned sectors such as musical performance, and others from minority groups."⁸⁴
- "The Taliban have publicized demonstrations in favor of Taliban rule in which some **women were reportedly coerced to participate.**"⁸⁵
- "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.**"⁸⁶

⁸² The Washington Post, "Faced with Disappearances, Beatings and Intimidation, Afghanistan's Women's Rights Activists Go Quiet on the Streets, 8 February 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/02/08/afghanistan-taliban-women-protests/>.

⁸³ The New York Times, "Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban with Protests", updated 26 January 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/world/asia/afghan-women-taliban-protests.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

⁸⁴ United Nations, UN News, "'Climate of fear' prevails for human rights defenders in Afghanistan," 3 November 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1104822>.

⁸⁵ Congressional Research Service, Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for Congress, 2 November 2021, last accessed 24 March 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46955>.

⁸⁶ United Nations, "Support Afghans in their most perilous hour, urges UNs' Guterres," 13 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099732>.

- “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.**”⁸⁷
- “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.”⁸⁸
- “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.”⁸⁹
- “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.”⁹⁰
- “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.”⁹¹
- “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.”⁹²

⁸⁷ 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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

⁸⁸ 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>.

⁸⁹ 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>.

⁹⁰ 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>.

⁹¹ 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>.

⁹² 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>.

- “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 protesters asking for the rights to work and to education to be upheld.”⁹³

Education:

- “Education is a human right, and **the United States rejects the Taliban’s excuses for reversing their commitment to the people of Afghanistan that all Afghans would be able to return to school at all levels today.** As many girls and women were returning to secondary classrooms across the country, they were told to go home until further notice. We stand with Afghan girls and their families, who see education as a path to realizing the full potential of Afghanistan’s society and economy. This decision by the Taliban, if it is not swiftly reversed, will profoundly harm the Afghan people, the country’s prospects for economic growth, and the Taliban’s ambition to improve their relations with the international community.”⁹⁴
- “[W]e join millions of Afghan families today in **expressing deep, deep disappointment and condemnation with the Taliban’s decision not to allow women and girls to return to school above grade six.** ... This is a betrayal of public commitments that the Taliban leadership made to the Afghan people and to the international community. ... **The totality of our relationship with any future government of Afghanistan will be contoured around these very questions:** the extent to which the Taliban or any future government lives up to the commitments it has to the international community, but more importantly, the commitments it has to the people of Afghanistan. And again, our focus is on all people of Afghanistan — women, girls, minorities, those who have been historically marginalized within Afghan society.”⁹⁵
- “Despite pledging to allow girls of all ages to attend classes when schools reopened this week, the **Taliban’s Education Ministry issued a last-minute reversal that banned girls beyond the sixth grade from returning.** ‘At that moment, all we felt was sadness,’ said Fatima, 15, who like Khudija, 19, spoke on the condition that only her first name be used for fear of reprisals. ‘We suffered for a long time to get an education and faced many difficulties. So when we finally returned, and it was taken away, it was overwhelming. All we could do was cry.’”⁹⁶

⁹³ 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>.

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State, “Press Statement: Anthony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, Women and Girls’ Education in Afghanistan,” 23 March 2022, last accessed 23 March 2022, <https://www.state.gov/women-and-girls-education-in-afghanistan/>.

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Department Press Briefing – March 23, 2022: Ned Price, Department Spokesperson,” 23 March 2022, last accessed 23 March 2022, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-march-23-2022/>.

⁹⁶ The Washington Post, “Taliban reopens Afghan schools – except for girls after sixth grade,” 23 March 2022, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/23/taliban-afghan-girls-school-secondary/>.

- “School officials like Muhammad Ibrahim, a principal at Ayesha Durkhanai girls’ school in Kabul, were not informed of the reversal until Tuesday night, when he received a WhatsApp message in a group chat for his education district. **It was ‘heartbreaking,’ he said, to tell the older girls they were not allowed through the schoolyard gates and had to go home.** ‘This is something unprecedented.’ Social media was flooded with images and videos, some broadcast by local media, of young women and girls crying outside the schools they were barred from entering.”⁹⁷
- “On the first day back to school in September 2021, one month after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, Maryam, a 15-year-old girl from Mazar-i Sharif, remembers the fear and uncertainty she felt on her way to school. NPR is not using her last name so she can speak freely. She and other students were greeted by Taliban soldiers at the entrance. Later that day, they also came in to the classrooms. **‘The Taliban entered our class and most of the girls ran to the back of the classroom and turned around. They didn’t want to see their faces. They don’t want to see the Taliban,’ Maryam said. The Taliban came in to classrooms every day to check that all girls were wearing headscarves and gloves to cover their hands.** Maryam’s assigned seat was in the very front in the first row, and she recalls the anger and defiance she felt each time they barged in. ... Maryam is one of the few lucky older girls in Afghanistan who have been able to go to school since the Taliban takeover. **Mazar-i Sharif, where she lives, is in Balkh, the only province that has kept schools open for older girls. Several other provinces have had some schools open for girls at different times, but for the vast majority of the country, girls above the 6th grade have not been allowed to go to school.** The inconsistency is due to disagreements about girls’ education among the Taliban ranks, and without a cohesive policy on schools, the government in Kabul has left decisions to provincial Taliban officials. Now, schools in Afghanistan are expected to open for the new semester on Wednesday, after a long winter break. **But despite Taliban assurances that all girls will be allowed back in schools, students and teachers are still unclear about what will happen. Afghanistan’s Taliban-run Education Ministry did not respond to NPR’s repeated requests for comment.**”⁹⁸
- “All schools will be reopened to boys and girls beginning March 21, but the **Taliban’s requirements for the girls include teaching them separately from males, Aziz Ahmad Rayan, a spokesman for the Ministry of Education, told Reuters. Also, girls can be instructed only by female teachers,** but in the rare case a female teacher cannot be found in a rural area, males will be allowed to teach them. Afghan girls in grade seven and up have not been allowed to attend school in most of the country since the Taliban took control seven months ago. ... **Girls have been allowed to attend secondary school in just five of Afghanistan’s provinces. Last year, in the city of Herat, Taliban fighters passed out long scarves and hijabs for girls to wear as they returned to school with other boys.** Meanwhile, women who attended universities were required to wear a hijab in class and were taught separately from males.”⁹⁹
- “‘I love drawing, but my parents cannot afford to buy me any paper or paint,’ said Mariam, 16, who lives in Herat province. **‘Because I can’t go to school now, I just stay at home.’** The Spotlight Initiative (SI) in Afghanistan, among other activities, creates safe spaces where girls and women like Mariam can access psychosocial support, learning, and other services during time of insecurity and crisis. Mariam uses the safe spaces facilitated by the SI and its partners to paint, hoping that one day she will be able to complete

⁹⁷ The Washington Post, “Taliban reopens Afghan schools – except for girls after sixth grade,” 23 March 2022, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/23/taliban-afghan-girls-school-secondary/>.

⁹⁸ NPR, All Things Considered, “As school resumes in Afghanistan, will all girls be allowed to go?”, 20 March 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/20/1087734423/afghanistan-girls-school-taliban>.

⁹⁹ Newsweek, “Taliban to Allow Afghan Girls to Return to School, with Some Conditions,” 17 March 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.newsweek.com/taliban-allow-afghan-girls-return-school-some-conditions-1689143>.

her education and become a painter. Mariam's father is now encouraging other members of his communities to send their girls to these dedicated safe spaces. **For over seven months, teenage girls across Afghanistan have been forbidden from attending school.**"¹⁰⁰

- "Meanwhile, women and girls face great uncertainty when it comes to respecting their rights to education, livelihoods and participation. **Some 4.2 million young Afghans are already out of school, 60 per cent of them girls.** There has also been a decline in girls' secondary school attendance, even in provinces where the de facto authorities have permitted them to attend school. This is largely due to the absence of women teachers, since in some locations girls are only allowed to be taught by women."¹⁰¹
- "In September, secondary schools reopened in Afghanistan following months of pandemic-related closures. Sadly, only boys were allowed to attend. Girls were left behind. This is a reversal of the great strides in education, especially for girls, that the country had made in the past two decades. **'We've got around one million high school-age girls sitting at home, denied their right to an education,' Samantha Mort of UNICEF Afghanistan told UN News. 'If children are not in school, they're much more likely to be recruited by an armed group, or to fall into early marriage or to be exploited in some way.'**"¹⁰²
- "Zakia Menhas, medical student at Kabul University: 'And they haven't searched for the female professors. And actually, if I just talk about my university, there were just three female teachers. All my teachers were male. For medical, it is even much harder. If we have such females in our country, they won't appear because they can't feel confident to just teach in such condition.'" ¹⁰³
- "When Fariba Mohebi, an 11th grader, learned in September that most Afghan girls would not join boys returning to school under Taliban rule, she shut the door and windows to her room. Then she broke down and sobbed. From her despair, a poem emerged: 'Why Was I Born a Girl?' 'I wish I was a boy because being a girl has no value,' Fariba wrote. Afghan men 'shout and scream: Why should a girl study? Why should a girl work? Why should a girl live free?' Fariba's poem found its way to Timothy Stiven's A.P. history class at Canyon Crest Academy, a public high school 8,000 miles away in San Diego. It was relayed via Zoom calls between Canyon Crest and Mawoud, a tutoring center Fariba now attends in Kabul, where girls sit in class with boys and men teach girls — testing the limits of Taliban forbearance. ... The class has learned that **Afghan students risk their lives just by walking through the tutoring center's fortified gates. Mawoud's previous location was leveled by a suicide bombing that killed 40 students in 2018.** The school's new building, tucked into a tight bend in a narrow alleyway, is protected by armed guards, high walls and concertina wire. ... The San Diego students have learned, too, that attending class is a leap of faith for **Fariba and her female classmates, who make up 70 percent of Mawoud's student body. Mawoud prepares students for Afghanistan's rigorous university entrance exams. But there is no guarantee that girls will be permitted to take the annual exams — or to return to high school, attend a university, or pursue a career** in a country where the Taliban have begun erasing most women from

¹⁰⁰ United Nations, "Meet the Afghan women and girls who inspire and motivate us to work every day", 8 March 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://afghanistan.un.org/en/174137-meet-afghan-women-and-girls-who-inspire-and-motivate-us-work-every-day>.

¹⁰¹ United Nations, UN News, "Afghanistan: Humanitarian crisis threatens basic human rights," 14 December 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107902>.

¹⁰² United Nations, "Nine things you need to know about the humanitarian crisis and response in Afghanistan, 24 November 2021, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://afghanistan.un.org/en/156613-nine-things-you-need-know-about-humanitarian-crisis-and-response-afghanistan>.

¹⁰³ NPR, Heard on Weekend Edition Sunday, "The Future of Women's Education in Afghanistan Remains Uncertain," 3 October 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/03/1042802598/the-future-of-womens-education-in-afghanistan-remains-uncertain>.

public life. ... **Since the bombings and the Taliban takeover, the size of Mawoud's student body has dropped by about 90 percent**, the principal said. Some Mawoud students fled with their families to Pakistan or Iran. Others have stayed home, afraid of bombings or Taliban harassment. Fariba said she spent weeks persuading her parents to let her attend the center."¹⁰⁴

- “Although the Taliban has not officially banned girls’ education, the group’s fighters have shuttered girls’ secondary schools and barred women from public universities in some parts of the country. **Girls in most of Afghanistan have not been allowed back to school beyond grade 7 since the Taliban takeover**, and reversing that has been one of the main demands of women’s rights activists and the international community for months. ... ‘In many provinces, the higher classes (girls’ school) are open, but in some places where it is closed, the reasons are economic crisis and the framework, which we need to work on in areas which are overcrowded. And for that we need to establish the new procedure,’ he said. Girls older than grade 7 have been allowed back to classrooms in state-run schools in about a dozen of the country’s 34 provinces. ... ‘I don’t think they will reopen girls’ school because they have said so many things but haven’t followed up. If they really open the schools again it would be the best for girls,’ she [high school student Anzorah, who gave only her first name] said. ... In the capital, Kabul, private universities and high schools have continued to operate uninterrupted. Most are small and classes have always been segregated.”¹⁰⁵
- “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.**”¹⁰⁶
- “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.”¹⁰⁷
- “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.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ The New York Times, “‘Why Was I Born a Girl?’ An Afghan Poem Inspires U.S. Students”, 22 January 2022, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/22/world/asia/afghanistan-girls-school-taliban.html?searchResultPosition=4>.

¹⁰⁵ Al Jazeera, “Taliban says all Afghan girls will be back in school by March,” 17 January 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/17/taliban-says-will-open-all-schools-for-girls-across-country>.

¹⁰⁶ 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 12 March 2022, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-sounds-warning-what-stake-education-afghanistan>.

¹⁰⁷ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

¹⁰⁸ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

- “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.”¹⁰⁹
- “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.”¹¹⁰
- “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.**”¹¹¹
- “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.”¹¹²
- “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.”¹¹³
- “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

¹⁰⁹ CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

¹¹⁰ CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

¹¹¹ The New York Times, “New Taliban Chancellor Bars Women from Kabul University,” 27 September 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/world/asia/taliban-women-kabul-university.html>.

¹¹² CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

¹¹³ CNN, “Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule,” 7 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/afghan-university-male-female-segregation-curtain-intl/index.html>.

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.’**”¹¹⁴

- “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.”¹¹⁵
- **“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.”¹¹⁶
- **“‘I can’t concentrate in my studies,’ she [Sanam] said. ‘When we think about our future, we can’t see anything.’**”¹¹⁷
- “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.**”¹¹⁸
- “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.

¹¹⁴ The New York Times, “New Taliban Chancellor Bars Women from Kabul University,” 27 September 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/world/asia/taliban-women-kabul-university.html>.

¹¹⁵ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

¹¹⁶ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

¹¹⁷ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

¹¹⁸ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

Mujahid, the Taliban spokesman, denied that any specific subjects would be removed from schools' curriculum."¹¹⁹

- “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.**”¹²⁰

Dress and Makeup:

- “Noorullah Stanakzai, 45, of Logar province, had been informed that all his daughters could return to school Wednesday but that those in seventh grade and beyond **would be required to wear a head-to-toe covering, gloves and black shoes. Despite wearing the new uniform, he said, the girls were sent home.** The principal said the school did not have enough female teachers, Stanakzai said.”¹²¹
- “Ms. Sahebzada’s profile grew enough to catch the attention of producers at Tolo TV, one of the largest television broadcasters in Afghanistan. And in the spring of 2020, her [makeup] tutorials became a regular Sunday morning segment. ‘I was trying to show the girls they can be themselves in whatever creative way they want,’ she said. ... Around the time of the [U.S.] withdrawal [from Afghanistan], **Ms. Sahebzada received a late-night call from her producer at Tolo TV, telling her that the Taliban had informed the network that women were not to appear on the air until further notice** — and Ms. Sahebzada had been singled out. ‘The producer told me they specifically mentioned my name: “Zahra is forbidden to be on this program,” ’ she said. ‘I’m across the world. The fact that the Taliban knew my name, that was a scary thing.’ ”¹²²
- “Then, on Sept. 11, [Ms. Jalali, a visiting associate professor at Loyola University Maryland, and a member of the Afghan diaspora] saw **images of hundreds of women in Kabul wearing all black in full veils and long robes in a pro-Taliban demonstration.** (The timing of the demonstration — on the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks — along with the presence of Taliban fighters and official Taliban statements released afterward suggest that the demonstration was organized by the Taliban.) ‘It confirmed my fears that our culture, our heritage is coming under attack,’ Ms. Jalali, 46, said in a phone interview. ... Zarifa Ghafari, an activist who became one of Afghanistan’s first female mayors at age 26 in 2019 and had to flee the country in August, shared a photo on Twitter of the **vibrant Afghan clothing she wore earlier this month for the Geneva PeaceTalks. ‘With my traditional colorful dress** and a powerful msg from every part of my country representing Afghanistan in particular Afghan women at #GenevaPeaceTalks,’ she wrote. ... But ‘my mother, grand-mother and older generations have worn similar dresses with bright colors. This is our beautiful heritage, our rich culture, our joy of life.’ ”¹²³

¹¹⁹ The New York Times, “A Harsh New Reality for Afghan Women and Girls in Taliban-Run Schools, 20 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

¹²⁰ National Geographic, “As the Taliban return, Afghanistan’s past threatens its future,” 15 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present>.

¹²¹ The Washington Post, “Taliban reopens Afghan schools – except for girls after sixth grade,” 23 March 2022, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/23/taliban-afghan-girls-school-secondary/>.

¹²² The New York Times, “Supporting Afghan Women, From the Queens Waterfront”, updated 26 November 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/22/realestate/long-island-city-afghanistan-zahra-sahebzada.html?searchResultPosition=5>.

¹²³ The New York Times, “#DoNotTouchMyClothes: Afghan Women Protest Taliban Restrictions on Rights”, 29 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/style/donottouchmyclothes-afghan-women-protest-taliban.html?searchResultPosition=6>.

- “Afghan journalists and activists have expressed concern over a new ‘religious guideline’ issued by Taliban rulers, saying the move is yet another form of control over women. **The Taliban, which took over Afghanistan roughly 100 days ago, on Sunday urged female journalists to follow a dress code and called on TV stations to stop showing soap operas featuring women**, sparking fears over women’s rights and media freedom. Akif Muhajir, spokesman for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, said “these are not rules but a religious guideline”. ... It remains unclear whether going on air without the hijab or airing foreign dramas featuring women, would attract legal scrutiny. When asked if avoiding the guidelines would be punishable by law, Muhajir from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, told Al Jazeera citizens are “obliged to obey the guidance”, without elaborating. ... Since the guidelines do not specify the type of head covering women are expected to wear, Taliban officials will feel “empowered to determine what is and isn’t acceptable hijab,” [Co-Director of the Women’s Rights division of Human Rights Watch, Heather] Barr said, leaving women vulnerable to being stopped and harassed on the streets.”¹²⁴
- “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 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.”¹²⁵
- “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.’ ”¹²⁶
- “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, [her three-year-old sister] Mehrsa and their grandmother went into hiding, spending days huddled in dank basements as the Taliban prowled the streets of Herat.”¹²⁷
- 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

¹²⁴ Al Jazeera, “Afghan women speak up against new Taliban media guidelines,” 25 November 2021, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/25/afghan-women-speak-up-against-new-taliban-media-guidelines>.

¹²⁵ CNN: “Afghan women are sharing photos of dresses to protest the Taliban’s black hijab mandate,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/asia/afghan-women-protest-hijab-mandate-intl/index.html>.

¹²⁶ CNN: “Afghan women are sharing photos of dresses to protest the Taliban’s black hijab mandate,” 13 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/13/asia/afghan-women-protest-hijab-mandate-intl/index.html>.

¹²⁷ The Wall Street Journal, “Two Young Afghan Sisters’ Journey Across Afghanistan to Escape the Taliban,” 6 September 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/two-young-afghan-sisters-journey-across-afghanistan-to-escape-the-taliban-11630964304?mod=series_usafghanistan.

have said that maybe with the covering we would compromise. But all other things cannot be compromised.”¹²⁸

- See also, “Education,” *supra*, and “Careers, the Right to Work, and Businesses” and “Sports,” *infra*.

Sales of Children, Forced Marriages, Child Brides, and Reproductive Rights:

- “Briefing the UN Human Rights Council, [UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights] Nada Al-Nashif detailed how the profound humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is threatening basic rights, with women, girls, and civil society among those most affected. ... Ms. Al-Nashif said that **as Afghans struggle to meet basic needs, they are being pushed to take desperate measures, including child labour and child marriage. News reports have also surfaced of children being sold.** ... Although a 3 December decree on women’s rights was “an important signal”, Ms. Nashif said it leaves many questions unanswered. ‘For example, **it does not make clear a minimum age for marriage**, nor refer to any wider women and girls’ rights to education, to work, to freedom of movement, or to participate in public life,’ she said.”¹²⁹
- “Afghanistan is facing its second drought in four years, affecting one third of the country. That’s dire news for the seventy per cent of all Afghans who live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for food and income. **The drought has pushed poor families to rely on child labour, early and forced marriage**, and risky irregular migration. It has also led to a water scarcity crisis, which will further increase sanitation and hygiene needs.”¹³⁰
- “UNICEF has noted a rise in “negative coping mechanisms”, where people become so desperate that they begin doing things they would not normally consider, **like taking a child out of school or selling them for early marriage – sometimes babies as young as six months old.** Currently, Ms. Mort [Chief of Communication, Advocacy and Civic Engagement at UNICEF Afghanistan] said that adolescent girls have not been invited back to school. ‘We’ve got around one million high school-age girls sitting at home, denied their right to an education’, she said. ‘We want to see every child in school. **If children are not in school, they’re much more likely to be recruited by an armed group, or to fall into early marriage or to be exploited** in some way’.”¹³¹
- “The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has received credible reports of families in Afghanistan **offering daughters as young as 20 days old for future marriage** in return for a dowry. In a statement released on Friday, the agency’s Executive Director, Henrietta Fore, said that she was ‘deeply concerned’ over reports that child marriage is on the rise. Even before the latest political instability, UNICEF’s partners **registered 183 child marriages and 10 cases of selling of children** in Herat and Baghdis provinces between the ages of six months and 17 years from 2018 to 2019. The agency estimates that **28**

¹²⁸ 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>.

¹²⁹ United Nations, UN News, “Afghanistan: Humanitarian crisis threatens basic human rights,” 14 December 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107902>.

¹³⁰ United Nations, “Nine things you need to know about the humanitarian crisis and response in Afghanistan,” 24 November 2021, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://afghanistan.un.org/en/156613-nine-things-you-need-know-about-humanitarian-crisis-and-response-afghanistan>.

¹³¹ United Nations, UN News, “Interview: On brink of humanitarian crisis, there’s ‘no childhood’ in Afghanistan,” 18 November 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1106142>.

per cent of Afghan women between the ages 15 and 49 were married before they reached their 18th birthday.”¹³²

- “‘As most teenage girls are still not allowed to go back to school, the risk of child marriage is now even higher’, Ms. Fore [UNICEF Executive Director] said. ‘Education is often the best protection against negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage and child labour’. UNICEF is working with partners to raise the awareness of communities on the risks girls face when marrying early, such as a lifetime of suffering. **Girls who marry before they turn 18 are less likely to remain in school and more likely to experience domestic violence, discrimination, abuse and poor mental health. They are also more vulnerable to complications in pregnancy and childbirth.**”¹³³
- “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.”¹³⁴
- “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 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.”¹³⁵
- “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.’”¹³⁶

Careers, the Right to Work, and Businesses:

- “Hamida had worked in Afghanistan as a prosecutor, independent investigator, and civil society leader for more than 16 years. **Like many across the country, the women’s protection shelter Hamida used to run is now closed.** This shelter, run in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, hosted women and their children who would otherwise have

¹³² United Nations, UN News, “Afghanistan: Girls at increasing risk of child marriage,” 12 November 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1105662>.

¹³³ United Nations, UN News, “Afghanistan: Girls at increasing risk of child marriage,” 12 November 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1105662>.

¹³⁴ The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas, 12 August, 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.

¹³⁵ The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas, 12 August, 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.

¹³⁶ 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>.

remained trapped with the perpetrator of the abuse from which they fled. At these shelters, women learn how to read and write and acquire new skills that allow them to become economically independent. They also receive counselling to overcome trauma and interact with each other, sharing their stories in a healing way. Today, Hamida is still in Afghanistan, advocating for the rights of Afghan women and girls. She is in daily contact with the women who used to come to her shelter. She offers counselling over the telephone, but she knows that this is not enough for those women who are locked in with their abusers. **It is estimated that 9 out of 10 Afghan women will experience some form of domestic violence during their lifetime.** The United Nations in Afghanistan is advocating alongside women like Hamida for the reopening of life-saving services like women's protection centres across the country.”¹³⁷

- “**‘I used to be a university teacher, now I am unemployed,’ explains Shukriya**, an active member of her community until August 2021 who now finds herself standing in line for food distributed by the World Food Programme. Restrictions on women's rights, such as the right to work, push many women like Shukriya to line up for food for the first time in their lives, reflecting the shifting face of hunger in Afghanistan. ... **Some 35% of teachers in Afghanistan are women. Currently they are being paid only occasionally — or, as in Shukriya's case, not paid at all.** No durable peace, recovery, or stability is possible without women's active engagement and participation in their country.”¹³⁸
- “Before the Taliban seized power in August, Ms. Elham was director of women's programs for Afghanistan's Civil Service Commission. **But she and most other female government workers were prevented from returning to work by the Taliban's new Islamic Emirate. Now Ms. Elham, who says she has not been paid since August, is required to sign in at her old job site once a month — a fiction that allows the Taliban to deny that they have fired female government workers.**”¹³⁹
- “**Nearly all the women interviewed who previously had paid employment had lost their jobs.** ‘In Ghazni [province], **only female healthcare workers and teachers can go to work,**’ a nongovernmental organization worker said. **‘Women working in other fields are forced to stay home now.’** ‘A few days after the Taliban took over Ghazni and Kabul, Mullah Baradar [a senior Taliban leader] said that women can go back to work,’ a government worker said. ‘I went to work, but I was not allowed to go in. The Taliban members said, “We don't need women to work anymore. You should not come back until further notice.” But we are breadwinners of our families.’ Her last paycheck was in July, and she is losing hope of being paid. **‘We used to go to show attendance, but they asked us to stop that as well.’** She said some of her male colleagues were also dismissed and most government offices were closed because they did not have qualified staff. **Those still working have largely not been paid because health care and education were almost entirely financed by foreign donors, whose aid has been cut off.** The only interviewee being paid regularly was working for an international nongovernmental group.”¹⁴⁰
- “**Furthermore, women are largely prohibited from working, except for some teachers, health workers and NGO staff.** They also cannot take products to market since local de facto authorities have closed women-operated bazaars. ‘Many Afghan women and girls now have to be accompanied by a male

¹³⁷ United Nations, “Meet the Afghan women and girls who inspire and motivate us to work every day”, 8 March 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://afghanistan.un.org/en/174137-meet-afghan-women-and-girls-who-inspire-and-motivate-us-work-every-day>.

¹³⁸ United Nations, “Meet the Afghan women and girls who inspire and motivate us to work every day”, 8 March 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://afghanistan.un.org/en/174137-meet-afghan-women-and-girls-who-inspire-and-motivate-us-work-every-day>.

¹³⁹ The New York Times, “Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban with Protests”, updated 26 January 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/world/asia/afghan-women-taliban-protests.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, last accessed 23 March 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/18/afghanistan-taliban-deprive-women-livelihoods-identity#>.

relative whenever they leave their residence. These are strictly enforced in some places, but not all,’ Ms. Al-Nashif told the Council. She warned that UN partners estimate that restricting women from working will contribute to an immediate economic loss of up to \$1 billion.”¹⁴¹

- “Furthermore, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission has been unable to operate since August, while the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association faces a loss of independence as the de facto authorities now administer its activities under the de facto Ministry of Justice. **‘The safety of Afghan judges, prosecutors, and lawyers — particularly women legal professionals — is a matter for particular alarm,’** Ms. Al-Nashif added. **‘Many are currently in hiding for fear of retribution, including from convicted prisoners who were freed by the de facto authorities, notably men convicted of gender-based violence.’**”¹⁴²
- “[United Nations Deputy Resident Representative in Afghanistan, Ms. Surayo] Buzurukova explained that all the healthcare workers who have received salaries, were identified by a group of 16 civil society organizations which contribute to a World Bank project, known as Sehatmandi. ... The Deputy Representative recently returned from Mazār-i-Sharīf, the fourth-largest city of Afghanistan, where she visited a hospital to see for herself the impact the new initiative is having. She was particularly interested in talking to women workers. ‘It was really good to see that women are continuing in their jobs’, she said. Women’s rights are one of the biggest areas of concern for the United Nations since the Taliban takeover, but Ms. Buzurukova remains hopeful for the future.”¹⁴³
- **“Zahra Nabi, a broadcast journalist who co-founded a women’s television channel, said she felt cornered when the Taliban resumed power, and chose to go off-air the very same day.** ‘All the media is under their [Taliban] control,’ Nabi, who established Baano TV in 2017, told Al Jazeera. The network that was once run by 50 women was a symbol of how far Afghan women have come since the Taliban’s first stint in power in the 1990s. With most of the network’s crew members now gone, Nabi has remained adamant about doing her job, and like many other established journalists in Afghanistan, she has had to work under the radar. ‘We work in a very tough environment, and are even collecting reports under the burqa,’ Nabi said, referring to an outer garment worn to cover the entire body and face used by some Muslim women.”¹⁴⁴
- “The Mohib family is highly educated. Not only was Kamila Noori a respected judge who sentenced terrorists to death — including Taliban fighters — her husband worked as a prosecutor for the attorney general’s office. ... The occupations of Kamila and Mohibullah in particular forced the family to flee the country. On the day that Kabul fell into the hands of the Taliban, the family went into hiding. It was a decision that potentially saved their lives, because, **as relatives later confirmed, an angry mob was looking for them. ‘They were shouting and yelling, “She put us in jail for 20 years, for 10 years. Where is the judge? And where is the prosecutor?”’**” Noori said.”¹⁴⁵
- “When Nabila was a judge in Afghanistan’s Supreme Court, she granted divorces to women whose husbands were sometimes jailed for assaulting or kidnapping them. Some of the men threatened to kill her

¹⁴¹ United Nations, UN News, “Afghanistan: Humanitarian crisis threatens basic human rights,” 14 December 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107902>.

¹⁴² United Nations, UN News, “Afghanistan: Humanitarian crisis threatens basic human rights,” 14 December 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107902>.

¹⁴³ United Nations, UN News, “Salaries for Afghanistan health workers sends ‘message of hope’ to millions,” 10 November 2021, last accessed 24 March 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1105282>.

¹⁴⁴ Al Jazeera, “Afghan women speak up against new Taliban media guidelines,” 25 November 2021, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/25/afghan-women-speak-up-against-new-taliban-media-guidelines>.

¹⁴⁵ NPR, “From Kabul to Virginia: An Afghan Family is Starting Over in America”, 25 January 2022, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/25/1068149767/virginia-afghanistan-refugee-family-america>.

after they had served their time, she said. In mid-August, as the Taliban poured into Kabul and seized power, hundreds of prisoners were set free. Men once sentenced in Nabila's courtroom were among them, according to the judge. Like the other women interviewed for this article, her full name has been withheld for her protection. **Within days, Nabila said, she began receiving death threat calls from former prisoners.** She moved out of her house in Kabul and went into hiding as she sought ways to leave Afghanistan with her husband and three young daughters. 'I lost my job and now I can't even go outside or do anything freely because I fear these freed prisoners,' Nabila said by phone from a safe house. ... **More than 200 female judges remain in Afghanistan, many of them under threat and in hiding, according to the International Association of Women Judges.**"¹⁴⁶

- "On August 14, 2021, recently retired Judge Patricia Whalen was on a Zoom call from her home in Vermont with her friend Judge Anisa Rasooli, in Afghanistan. ... **At the time of the Zoom call, there were about 250 women judges in Afghanistan, amounting to 10 percent of the judiciary.** They served in courts that ruled on crime, corruption, terrorism, domestic violence, drugs, and more, often sentencing men to prison for their criminal transgressions. Judge Rasooli is a widely respected and long-standing jurist who is often described as the 'RBG of Afghanistan.' She has served on all of the major courts in Afghanistan, was the first woman nominated to the Afghan Supreme Council, and served as the head of the Afghan Women Judges Association. Earlier in 2021, she was a speaker for the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), which had been a sponsor of the Afghan women's exchange and training program. Now Rasooli told Whalen: 'You know, it's over.' She described that the Taliban were about to overtake Kabul in the face of the U.S. military withdrawal from the country. The consequences for women judges would be catastrophic. ... On the morning after the conversation with Judge Rasooli, Whalen and her IAWJ colleagues saw, like the rest of the world, that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan's capital had begun. **The Afghan women judges immediately lost their jobs. In an unprecedented move, the prisons were thrown open and tens of thousands of convicts, sentenced for every type of criminal activity, were released. The names and addresses of the judges were also unsealed.**"¹⁴⁷
- "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."¹⁴⁸
- "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

¹⁴⁶ The New York Times, "Afghan Women Who Once Presided Over Abuse Cases Now Fear for Their Lives", updated 22 October 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/21/world/asia/afghan-judges-women-taliban.html?searchResultPosition=9>.

¹⁴⁷ American Bar Association, "Women Judges Mobilize to Help Endangered Afghan Counterparts", 4 February 2022, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/women/publications/perspectives/2022/february/women-judges-mobilize-help-endangered-afghan-counterparts/>.

¹⁴⁸ 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>.

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.”¹⁴⁹

- “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 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.”¹⁵⁰
- “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.”¹⁵¹
- “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.”¹⁵²
- 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

¹⁴⁹ 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>.

¹⁵⁰ 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>.

¹⁵¹ 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>.

¹⁵² The Wall Street Journal, “A Generation of Afghan Professionals Flees Ahead of Taliban Advance,” 7 July 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-generation-of-afghan-youth-afghanistan-american-troops-pullout-taliban-biden-11625667435>.

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.”¹⁵³

- “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.”¹⁵⁴
- *See also* “Taliban Return to Power in 2021,” *supra*, and “Sales of Children, Forced Marriages, Child Brides, and Reproductive Rights,” *supra*.

Participation in Sports:

- “ ‘It is over,’ said 21-year-old Homaira Barakzai, the captain of Afghanistan's national handball team, adding that ‘Everything has changed with the political change (Taliban's return). Our only hope right now is to survive. Our future, as athletes, is unknown.’ ... The Taliban, who took control of Afghanistan in August, barred women from work, secondary education and playing sports. ... ‘Because my parents were worried about my safety, I had to move to a relative's house,’ said Barakzai. ‘Now I cannot go out. I have to stay at home.’ She added that other members of the Afghan national handball team also live in fear. Arzo Rahimi, chairperson of the Girls Football Federation in Afghanistan, told VOA that the international sports bodies should not forget about the country's women athletes. ‘They should not be left behind,’ said Rahimi. **She added that athletes' lives ‘are in danger under the Taliban,’** and urged the international community to help with their evacuation to safety.”¹⁵⁵
- “Last week, the world soccer body, FIFA, evacuated 100 football players and their families from Afghanistan with the help of the Qatari government. **The International Olympic Committee and a number of other sports bodies and countries have helped in the evacuation of dozens of other women athletes.** ... Freshta Ahmadzai, a member of the Afghan national basketball team, told VOA that women athletes, being at high risk, are ‘forced’ to leave the country because the Taliban do not give women their rights. **‘We live like prisoners at home. We will be forced to leave the country,’** she said.”¹⁵⁶
- “There was near silence when a Mawoud student, Sona Amiri, displayed her soccer medals, then said girls had stopped playing soccer after the Taliban takeover.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ 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>.

¹⁵⁴ 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.

¹⁵⁵ Voice of America, “ ‘Our Dream Came to an End’ — Afghan Female Athletes Speak Out About Taliban's Return,” 24 October 2021, last accessed 25 March 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/our-dream-came-to-an-end-afghan-female-athletes-speak-out-about-taliban-s-return-6280537.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Voice of America, “ ‘Our Dream Came to an End’ — Afghan Female Athletes Speak Out About Taliban's Return,” 24 October 2021, last accessed 25 March 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/our-dream-came-to-an-end-afghan-female-athletes-speak-out-about-taliban-s-return-6280537.html>.

¹⁵⁷ The New York Times, “ ‘Why Was I Born a Girl?’ An Afghan Poem Inspires U.S. Students”, 22 January 2022, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/22/world/asia/afghanistan-girls-school-taliban.html?searchResultPosition=4>.

- 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.**”¹⁵⁸
- “ ‘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.’ ”¹⁵⁹
- “ ‘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.’ ”¹⁶⁰
- “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 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.**’ ”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ 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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

¹⁵⁹ 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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

¹⁶⁰ 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 12 March 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27454&LangID=E>.

¹⁶¹ 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>.

Freedom of Movement:

- “ ‘Restarting girls’ schools is a good thing, [but] they need to be firm on their promise. These words should not just be for the sake of taking a stand,’ Kabul-based women’s rights activist Fatima Rae told Al Jazeera. The Taliban does ‘not like to see young girls at all’, she said. **‘The big obstacle for girls [in Afghanistan] is that the Taliban says they should only leave the house with a mahram [male guardian],’** she told Al Jazeera, explaining that this was a challenge many girls have to overcome when it comes to studying and working, and even basic freedoms such as movement.”¹⁶²
- **“The latest directive, issued by the Taliban’s Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, said women travelling for more than 45 miles (72km) should be accompanied by a close male family member.** The document calls on vehicle owners to refuse rides to women not wearing Islamic head or face coverings, although it does not say which type of covering to use. Most Afghan women already wear headscarves. It also bans the playing of music in vehicles. ‘I felt really bad,’ Fatima, a midwife who lives in Kabul, told the BBC, reacting to the directive. ‘I cannot go out independently. What should I do if either I or my child is sick and my husband is not available?’ She added: ‘The Taliban captured our happiness from us. ... I have lost both my independence and happiness.’ **Another Afghan woman told the BBC that, while the measure would help some women ‘feel at ease’, a family escort was no guarantee against violence and harassment.** She referred to an incident in Paghman in 2015 when four women were kidnapped from their family at gunpoint and later gang-raped. ... Since taking power following the departure of US and allied forces, the Taliban have told most female workers to stay at home while secondary schools are open only to boys and male teachers.”¹⁶³
- “The Taliban administration’s spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid had said at a media conference on Sunday that Afghans would not be allowed to leave the country unless they had a clear destination and that **women could not travel overseas for study without a male guardian.**”¹⁶⁴
- “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.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Al Jazeera, “Taliban says all Afghan girls will be back in school by March,” 17 January 2022, last accessed 22 March 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/17/taliban-says-will-open-all-schools-for-girls-across-country>.

¹⁶³ BBC News, “Afghanistan’s Taliban ban long-distance road trips for solo women,” 27 December 2021, last accessed 22 March 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59800113>.

¹⁶⁴ Reuters, “Taliban restrict Afghans going abroad, raises concern from U.S. and U.K., 1 March 2022, last accessed 23 March 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-restrict-afghans-going-abroad-draws-criticism-uk-envoy-2022-02-28/>.

¹⁶⁵ The Wall Street Journal, “Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced ‘Marriages’ in Taliban-Held Areas,” 12 August 2021, last accessed 12 March 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820>.