



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# DEATH IN SLOW MOTION

WOMEN AND GIRLS UNDER TALIBAN RULE

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**Cover photo:**

An Afghan woman poses for a portrait in her home .

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# MAP





*An Afghan woman poses for a portrait in her home. © Kiana Hayeri / Amnesty International*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“For women in Afghanistan, it’s death in slow motion.”*

**Adila, journalist**

In less than a year, the Taliban have decimated the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. Soon after they took control of the country’s government, the Taliban said they were committed to upholding the rights of women and girls. Yet they have violated women’s and girls’ rights to education, work and free movement; demolished the system of protection and support for women and girls fleeing domestic violence; arbitrarily detained women and girls for infractions of the Taliban’s discriminatory rules; and contributed to a surge in the rates of child, early and forced marriage in Afghanistan. Women who peacefully protested against these restrictions and policies have been harassed, threatened, arrested, forcibly disappeared, detained and tortured.

The scope, magnitude and severity of the Taliban’s violations against women and girls are increasing month by month. Within a year of its takeover of Afghanistan, the group’s draconian policies are depriving millions of women and girls of the opportunity to lead safe, free and fulfilling lives. They are being sentenced, as one Afghan woman put it, to death in slow motion. This death sentence for Afghan women and girls can only be lifted by major and wide-ranging policy changes by Taliban. The international community must urgently develop and implement a robust, coordinated and effective strategy that pressures the Taliban to bring about these changes.

Amnesty International conducted research on the situation of women and girls under Taliban rule from September 2021 to June 2022, interviewing a total of 90 Afghan women and 11 girls. The ages of these women and girls ranged from 14 to 74 years old, and they lived in 20 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. Amnesty International also interviewed six current or former staff members of Taliban-run detention centres; 22 staff members of national and international NGOs and UN agencies and mechanisms; and 10 Afghan and international experts and journalists. The research was conducted through in-person interviews in Afghanistan from 4 to 20 March 2022, as well as through remote interviews.

This report describes a web of interrelated restrictions and prohibitions in which Afghan women and girls



An Afghan woman poses for a portrait in her workplace. © Kiana Hayeri / Amnesty International

are trapped. It shows how the Taliban’s violation of any single right can have pernicious implications for the exercise of other rights. Cumulatively, Taliban policies form a system of repression that discriminates against women and girls in Afghanistan in almost every aspect of their lives.

On 1 July 2022, Amnesty International communicated the key findings detailed in this report in letters addressed to Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi and Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Abdul Wali. No response had been received as of 15 July 2022, when the report was finalized.

### **TALIBAN RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Since their takeover, the Taliban have issued a series of policies, decrees and guidelines that violate the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, including those related to education, work, free movement and clothing.

In the area of education, the Taliban have prevented the vast majority of girls at the secondary level from returning to school. The Taliban called girls at the secondary level to return to school on 23 March 2022, only to send them home the same day, citing a “technical issue” related to their uniforms. Fatima, a 25-year-old high school teacher based in Nangarhar province, summarized the feelings of her students: “These young girls just wanted to have a future, and now they don’t see any future ahead of them... There are millions of Afghan girls waiting for action.”

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At the university level, the Taliban's harassment of female students as well as restrictions on students' behaviour, dress and opportunities have contributed to an unsafe environment where female students are systematically disadvantaged compared to male students. As a result, many female students have either stopped attending or decided not to enrol in university. Other challenges affect girls' and women's access to education at all levels, including restrictions on their movement, teacher shortages and students' lack of motivation due to limited career options under the Taliban.

The Taliban have prevented women across Afghanistan from working. Most female government employees have been told to stay at home, with the exception those working in certain sectors such as health and education. In the private sector, many women have been dismissed from high-level positions. The Taliban's policy appears to be that they will allow only women who cannot be replaced by men to keep working. Women who have continued working told Amnesty International that they are finding it extremely difficult in the face of Taliban restrictions on their clothing and behaviour, such as the requirement for female doctors to avoid treating male patients or interacting with male colleagues.

Taliban restrictions on work have created a desperate situation for many women who were their families' sole or primary wage-earner. For instance, Farida, an office worker, said: "When Nangarhar collapsed, the office was closed down... because men and women can't work together... [My family] spent two weeks without food in our household. Previously, I couldn't even think that we wouldn't have food on the table."

Taliban restrictions on women's and girls' freedom of movement have become increasingly repressive. Initially, they ordered women and girls to be accompanied by a *mahram*, or male chaperone, for long-distance journeys. Most recently, they decreed that women should not leave their homes unless necessary. Women and girls told Amnesty International that in light of the numerous and evolving restrictions on their movement, any appearance in public without a *mahram* carried serious risks. They also said that the *mahram* requirements made their daily lives almost impossible to manage.

The Taliban have enforced increasingly strict guidelines on permissible clothing for women and girls. On 7 May 2022, the Ministry of Vice and Virtue issued a decree requiring women to cover themselves from head to toe. Male family members were made responsible for women's adherence to the new rules, and can be detained if women and girls in the family refuse to comply. Zainab, a 27-year-old woman based in Daikundi province, shared her reaction to the decree: "Why would we cover our faces and hide who we are?... I have worn a [head scarf] all my life, but I do not want to cover my face... I can't breathe now that I'm trying to talk about covering my face."

## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Before August 2021, women and girl survivors of gender-based violence had access to a nationwide network of shelters and services, including legal representation, medical care and psychosocial support. Specialized prosecution units and courts dealt with cases involving violence against women and girls. While the system had its limitations, it served thousands of women and girls each year. As the Taliban



*Afghan women pose for a portrait. © Kiana Hayeri / Amnesty International*

took control of Afghanistan, this system collapsed. Shelters were closed, and many were looted and appropriated by members of the Taliban. In some cases, Taliban members harassed or threatened staff. As shelters closed, staff were forced to send many women and girl survivors back to their families. Other survivors were forced to live with shelter staff members, on the street or in other unsustainable situations. Incomprehensibly, as the Taliban advanced across the country, they also systematically released detainees from prisons, many of whom had been convicted of gender-based violence offenses.

Survivors of gender-based violence and the women who worked within the system of protective services are now in grave danger. Meanwhile, women and girls who have fled violence since the Taliban's takeover have nowhere to turn. Fariha was nine months pregnant when she spoke to Amnesty International. She was desperately seeking a safe place to live after escaping her husband's abuse. "Before, there was a shelter, and I went to that place," she said. "They said it's not running now, and they can't accept any new cases. There are no options for me now."

### **ARBITRARY DETENTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS FOR "MORAL CORRUPTION" AND FLEEING ABUSE**

According to four individuals who worked in Taliban-run detention centres, the Taliban have arbitrarily arrested and detained women and girls for violating their discriminatory policies, such as the rules against



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appearing in public without a *mahram* or appearing in public with a man who does not qualify as a *mahram*. Those arrested have usually been charged with the vague and ambiguous “crime” of “moral corruption”. The four prison staff members also told Amnesty International that survivors of gender-based violence who were formerly based in the shelters are now being detained in the same two detention centres in Afghanistan. Women and girls arbitrarily detained due to alleged “moral corruption” or for fleeing abuse have been denied access to legal counsel and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment as well as inhuman conditions in detention.

One university student was detained in 2022 on charges related to the Taliban’s *mahram* restrictions. She said that soon after her arrest, Taliban members “started giving me electric shocks [with a taser]... on my shoulder, face, neck, everywhere they could... They were calling me a prostitute [and] a bitch... The one holding the gun said, ‘I will kill you, and no one will be able to find your body.’” She said that like all women and girls detained by the Taliban, her detention would stigmatize her for life. “For an Afghan girl, going to prison is no less than death... Once you enter the door, you are labelled, and you cannot erase it.”

### **CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE**

According to Amnesty International’s research, corroborated by national and international organizations operating in Afghanistan, local activists and other experts, the rates of child, early and forced marriage in Afghanistan are surging under Taliban rule. This increase is due to several interrelated drivers, many of which are attributable to the actions and policies of the Taliban and its members since they seized control. The most common drivers include the economic and humanitarian crisis; the lack of educational and professional prospects for women and girls; families’ perceived need to protect their daughters from marriage with a Taliban member; families forcing women and girls to marry Taliban members; and Taliban members forcing women and girls to marry them.

Khorsheed, a 35-year-old woman from a central province of Afghanistan, told Amnesty International that as a result of the economic crisis in Afghanistan, she had been forced to marry her 13-year-old daughter to her 30-year-old neighbour in September 2021, in exchange for a “bride price” of 60,000 Afghanis (around US\$670). She said that after her daughter’s marriage, she felt relieved. “She won’t be hungry anymore,” Khorsheed said. She said she was considering marrying off her 10-year-old daughter as well, but she was reluctant to do so, as she hoped this daughter might provide for the family in the future. She explained, “She went all the way to fifth grade. I wanted her to study more. She would be able to read and write, and speak English, and earn... I have a hope that this daughter will become something, and she will support the family. Of course, if they don’t open the school, I will have to marry her off.”

### **PEACEFUL PROTESTERS**

The systemic discrimination imposed by the Taliban has led to a wave of peaceful protests by women and girls across Afghanistan. The Taliban has violated the rights of these women and girls to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and subjected them to harassment and abuse during protests, including beating and electric shocks by tasers.

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On 30 May 2022, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Mutaqqi said, “In the past nine months, not a single woman has been imprisoned in the jails of Afghanistan either due to political opposition or raising voice against the government.” This is not true. Based on interviews with 12 women who were involved in protests after the Taliban’s takeover, five of whom were detained, Amnesty International has found that many women protesters in Afghanistan have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment.

One woman who participated in several peaceful protests was arrested and detained for 10 days in 2022. She described her treatment during detention: “[The Taliban guards] kept coming to my room and showing me pictures of my family. They kept repeating... ‘We can kill them, all of them, and you won’t be able to do anything... Don’t cry, don’t make a scene. After protesting, you should have expected days like this.’”

She said that while in detention, she was severely beaten on two occasions. “They locked the door,” she said. “They started screaming at me... [One Taliban member] said, ‘You nasty woman... America isn’t giving us the money because of you bitches’... Then he kicked me. It was so strong that my back was injured, and he kicked my chin too... I still feel the pain in my mouth. It hurts whenever I want to talk.”

Women protesters who were detained by the Taliban said they had inadequate access to food, water, ventilation, sanitary products and medical care. To secure their release, the women were forced to sign “agreements” that they and their family members would neither protest again nor speak publicly about their experiences during detention.

## **ACTION REQUIRED**

The Taliban, as the de facto authorities of Afghanistan, must uphold the rights of women and girls to access education, work, and move freely, as well as the right to access support and legal redress after fleeing violence. The Taliban must also immediately cease practices of arbitrary arrest and detention, and protect the right of all people, including women and girls, to protest peacefully. The Taliban is depriving millions of women and girls of rights enshrined in international law, and they must urgently change course.

Jamila, the principal of a primary and secondary school, told Amnesty International: “[The world] doesn’t hear or see what is happening to us, because they are not affected themselves. Only if this happened to them would they understand.” The international community must demonstrate to Afghan women and girls that it understands their plight. States and international organizations must send a clear, coordinated and resounding message to the Taliban that their current policies on women and girls will never be accepted and take concrete steps that impose consequences on the Taliban for their conduct. Such steps should include identifying and using forms of leverage that may influence the Taliban without harming the Afghan people, such as targeted sanctions or travel bans applied through a UN Security Council Resolution.

For their part, donor states must urgently address the humanitarian and economic crisis unfolding in Afghanistan, which they had a role in creating, and which also undermines the rights of women and girls.



*An Afghan woman poses for a portrait in her home. © Kiana Hayeri / Amnesty International*

Donor states must ease existing financial restrictions on Afghanistan, which are blocking the provision of healthcare, food and other essential services. They must also strengthen systems for the equitable and adequate distribution of urgent financial support and humanitarian aid in consultation with UN agencies, NGOs and humanitarian agencies operating in Afghanistan, local women activists, and organizations supporting other at-risk groups.

The stakes could not be higher. If the international community fails to act, it will abandon millions of women and girls across Afghanistan and embolden others to undermine the human rights of women and girls around the world. As Sabira, a journalist, said, “Our rights are your rights... You must support the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.”



*An Afghan woman poses for a portrait in her home. © Kiana Hayeri / Amnesty International*

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# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*“The Taliban are trying to cage us, to remove us from society and destroy everything we have. But we have hopes. We have dreams. Even if they put us in chains, we will prevail, and we will prove ourselves to them and to everyone.”*

**Meena, secondary school student<sup>1</sup>**

One year on from the Taliban’s takeover, the lives of many women and girls in Afghanistan have changed beyond recognition. They are being prevented from going to school, working, leaving their homes or dressing as they choose. They have been left with no system of support or redress after fleeing violence, are arbitrarily arrested and detained for infractions of the Taliban’s discriminatory rules and face increased risk of being forced into marriages to which they did not consent. When Afghan women resisted these changes in peaceful protests, they were met with harassment, threats, abuse, imprisonment, torture and lifelong stigma.

When asked for their messages for the Taliban and the international community, women and girls gave diverse responses. Yet one message was offered repeatedly: the international community must not recognize the Taliban, as doing so would appear to accept or at least tolerate Taliban’s policies toward women and girls. For instance, Farah, a woman from Logar province, told Amnesty International: “If they recognize the Taliban formally, in each corner of Afghanistan – in every province, district, and village – the ones who will suffer most is the women. When you recognize the Taliban, you may as well burn the women of Afghanistan.”<sup>2</sup>

Many women and girls said they felt the Taliban focus on repressing women and girls was distracting them from addressing the real problems facing the country. Metra, a university student living in Kabul, shared her frustration: “They need to stop worrying about our clothing and focus on saving the country. People

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1 Interview, 2022.

2 Interview, 2022. Amnesty International does not take a position on questions of state recognition.

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are dying from hunger. People are selling their children to feed their other children... Instead all they did for the past nine months was close every possible door for women.”<sup>3</sup>

Women and girls also expressed anger at the international community’s inaction and silence in the face of the Taliban’s treatment of women and girls. For instance, a woman who was arbitrarily detained by the Taliban after participating in peaceful protests, said, “I am tired of hearing that the world feels sorry for us... Don’t feel sorry, if you don’t want to offer any action.”<sup>4</sup> Abreshim, a service provider working with survivors of gender-based violence, told Amnesty International: “I feel so frustrated.... Over the past 20 years, we [women] were given the opportunity to raise our voice and work for justice... I feel like the international community has abandoned us – and not just the international community, but the whole world.”<sup>5</sup>

Women and girls interviewed by Amnesty International remained resolute in the face of discrimination and dehumanization by the Taliban. A protester who was imprisoned by the Taliban said she would never give up her fight for the rights of Afghan women and girls:

**The Taliban need to know that we women exist and we will endure. We will find different ways to fight, and different ways to resist... We are the generation of change. If we don’t work hard... who will save Afghanistan?... My responsibility is not only to my family, my village – it’s to the whole country... We need to open schools, to send women back to work, to make a lot of changes. We have a long way to go.**<sup>6</sup>

Asal, who was severely beaten by Taliban members for violating the Taliban’s *mahram* restrictions, shared a message of hope for other women across the world:

**I have a message to my fellow women: you should not give up... We women, we understand each other best, and we should not allow women’s rights to be violated. It’s not only about Afghanistan. Similar things are happening in other parts of the world. It should be a collective fight, and we should all support each other. We need to help each other, educate each other, lift each other up, stand up for each other...**

**The Taliban think women have no brains, that we are useless, that we are not equal to them. They don’t see us even as humans. That’s why they want to cover our bodies, faces, thoughts, dreams and hopes. They want to eliminate us. When we see that they are doing this, we have to become stronger.**<sup>7</sup>

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3 Interview, 2022.

4 Interview, 2022.

5 Interview, 2021.

6 Interview, 2021-2022.

7 Interview, 2022.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## TO THE TALIBAN, THE DE FACTO AUTHORITIES OF AFGHANISTAN:

- Respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls, in accordance with its obligations under international law, including but not limited to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Afghanistan is a state party;
- Reinstatement of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission;
- Continue to interact and work with UNAMA's Human Rights Service on a range of human rights developments, trends and cases;
- Continue to facilitate visits to the country by the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights for Afghanistan, ensuring full and unfettered access, including the right to conduct interviews in private;
- Engage constructively with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and respond promptly to its request for an extraordinary report.

## HUMANITARIAN AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

- Ensure that NGOs and UN agencies are able to exercise their expertise in the design and delivery of humanitarian aid, so that aid reaches and is most appropriate for those who need it most, including women and girls, without interference;
- Allow female humanitarian workers to carry out their work without constraints.

## TALIBAN RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Take comprehensive steps to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to education of women and girls at all levels, including by doing the following:
  - Re-open immediately all secondary schools for girls and communicate that schools are open and that all children – both boys and girls – should attend school;
  - Remove restrictions on female students and teachers at all levels, including discriminatory restrictions on clothing and conduct;
  - Ensure that the education and opportunities provided to women and girls is equal to that of men and boys in all fields of study, including by removing rules that restrict women and girls from learning alongside men or boys or with male teachers where this means that the education they receive is less accessible, of inferior quality, limited or in any other way negatively affected;
- Remove all restrictions on women's employment, including discriminatory treatment of female employees;
- Enable all women previously employed by the government to return to their former government positions, and allow women to work in all positions, including high-level positions, in all sectors;
- Ensure women who work in all sectors are entitled to equal pay, professional development and the same advancement opportunities as men;
- End all restrictions on women in the workplace, including restrictions on clothing and movement;



*An Afghan woman poses for a portrait in her home. © Kiana Hayeri / Amnesty International*

- Appoint women to senior roles in the cabinet and government, including the judiciary, and include women as full participants in all decision-making bodies;
- Remove all restrictions on women's and girls' freedom of movement, including the requirement for women to be accompanied by a mahram (male chaperone);
- Clearly communicate that women and girls have a right to freedom of movement that must be respected and protected, and take steps to address and sanction anyone seeking to limit women's and girls' freedom of movement or to deny them movement or punish them for not having a mahram;
- Uphold the rights of women and girls to choose their own clothing, free from coercion, violence and discrimination.

### **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)**

- Develop a comprehensive strategy, with the support of the relevant UN agencies and non-governmental organizations, to address gender-based violence against women and girls, in line with obligations under human rights law and standards for prevention, protection, punishment and redress of GBV against women and girls, which is based on a survivor-centric approach and respects the agency and autonomy of women and girls, including the following:



- Put in place comprehensive legislation to address all forms of GBV against women and girls, with meaningful participation of women's rights activists and national and international organisations;
- Immediately implement the provisions of the 2009 Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, take steps to publicise the law, and reinstate the specialized prosecution units and courts tasked with enforcement of the law;
- Reinstate all female police officers and work to recruit and retain additional female police officers;
- Ensure all police officers are trained in addressing GBV in a rights' compliant manner;
- Ensure that safe shelters for survivors of GBV are available across the country, including by allowing shelters that have been closed to reopen, and ensure access to other protection services for survivors of GBV, including legal aid, medical care, psychosocial counselling services and childcare;
- Take steps to encourage reporting on GBV by women and girls, without fear of retaliation, and ensure that all reported cases of GBV against women and girls are thoroughly, promptly and impartially investigated, and that perpetrators are prosecuted in accordance with international standards and, if convicted, sentenced with appropriate penalties, without recourse to the death penalty;
- Investigate the release of prisoners, especially those convicted of GBV, and ensure they are not able to evade justice and are held accountable for their actions;
- Ensure that survivors of GBV are provided with timely, effective and holistic reparations;
- Ensure that service providers for women and girl survivors of GBV can work freely and without fear of retaliation;
- End the arbitrary detention of GBV survivors.

### **CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE**

- Continue to publicize the Taliban's public stance against child, early and forced marriage and enforce the provisions of the Law on Elimination Against Violence Against Women and the Civil Code that prohibit child, early and forced marriage;
- Educate and inform Taliban members on the prohibition and harmfulness of child, early and forced marriage and ensure that no member of the Taliban pressures or coerces women or girls into marriage, including through sanctions against members found to have forced women and girls into marriage;
- Investigate and prosecute in accordance with international standards any allegations of child, early and forced marriage by Taliban members or others;
- Adopt the age of 18 as the minimum age for marriage for girls and boys, in line with internationally recommended standards, and prohibit all marriages for girls and boys under the age of 18;
- Take steps to recognize and address the drivers of child, early and forced marriage, including the economic and humanitarian crisis, the prevalence of gender discrimination and stereotypes and the barriers to education and employment faced by women and girls due to restrictions imposed by the Taliban;
- Ensure access to effective remedies, restitution and reintegration of women and girls in child, early and forced marriages as well as those who have left such marriages, including access to legal remedies, counselling support, and education and employment opportunities;

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- Put in place national systems that are compulsory, accessible and free for birth registration and marriage registration to effectively track and prevent child and early marriages;
  - Provide and support public awareness campaigns on child, early and forced marriage, including coverage of domestic and international law;
  - Develop a plan, in consultation with UN agencies and international and national NGOs, to address and prevent child, early and forced marriage.

### **PEACEFUL PROTEST**

- Ensure all people in Afghanistan, including women and girls, can exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- End the harassment, abuse, arbitrary arrest and detention of all protesters, including women and girls and their family members.

### **DETENTION-RELATED VIOLATIONS**

- End arbitrary arrest, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture and other ill-treatment, including against women protesters, women and girls detained on charges of “moral corruption” and women and girls fleeing domestic abuse;
- Make clear to all members of the Taliban that such violations will not be tolerated, and ensure credible investigation of all allegations and prosecution of any Taliban member responsible for such violations;
- Ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, including harmful conditions of confinement, and are treated humanely in accordance with international standards, including the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Mandela Rules) and the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules);
- Provide due process to all persons deprived of their liberty, including immediate access to counsel and fair, speedy and public trials, and end the use of “agreements” used to control and punish women protesters and their family members for speaking publicly about their experiences in detention.

### **TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING ALL UN MEMBER STATES:**

- Press the Taliban, at every opportunity, to respect the fundamental rights of women and girls, including their rights to access education, work, move freely, dress as they chose, seek support and legal redress after fleeing domestic violence, remain free from arbitrary arrest and detention, consent to marriage and peacefully protest;
- Work urgently to end Afghanistan’s humanitarian crisis by helping restore the economy to full functioning, under appropriate oversight, while continuing to provide humanitarian assistance sufficient to meet the needs of Afghans, including women and girls;
- Identify and use forms of leverage that may influence the Taliban without harming the Afghan people – such as targeted sanctions or travel bans imposed through a UN Security Council resolution – in a coordinated and vigorous manner, to end the Taliban’s violations of the rights of women and girls, and make clear what policy steps are required for the lifting of such measures;



*An Afghan woman poses for a portrait in her home. © Kiana Hayeri / Amnesty International*

- Terminate exemptions on existing travel bans for individuals in the Taliban who are responsible for violations of the rights of women and girls or are in a position to reverse discriminatory policies toward women and girls but have failed to do so;
- Use aid funding to support communities fighting for their own rights or for women's rights. For example, fund parts of the education system that do not discriminate against girls and make a targeted effort to fund provinces where girls' secondary schools are open;
- Fund alternative education options for girls who have been shut out of school;
- Grant international protection to all Afghan women and girls who are outside Afghanistan;
- Prioritize the evacuation to third countries of survivors of GBV and of women who worked within the system providing support for these survivors, and who cannot live safely in Afghanistan;
- Streamline the resettlement to third countries of survivors of GBV;
- Urge the Taliban to accept international monitors in all detention centres, and ensure such monitors are able to conduct unscheduled visits inside all places of detention;
- Provide adequate staffing resources to UNAMA's Human Rights Service to allow it to monitor, document and advocate on human rights abuses, pursuant to its March 2022 mandate;
- Offer strong political and practical support to the International Criminal Court's investigation on Afghanistan and provide adequate resources to allow the Office of the Prosecutor to investigate all crimes perpetrated by all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan;

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- Pursuant to universal jurisdiction principles, ensure that national-level investigations and prosecutions are undertaken into crimes committed in Afghanistan, particularly for crimes committed against women and girls.

#### **TO THE OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT:**

- Promptly investigate all crimes within its jurisdiction committed in Afghanistan, by all perpetrators.

#### **TO UN AGENCIES AND INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING IN AFGHANISTAN, AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL DONORS:**

- Develop further the plan for the distribution of urgent financial support and humanitarian aid in consultation with local women activists and groups and involve them in developing accountability and monitoring frameworks to ensure the plan is tailored to the specific needs of women and girls and effectively delivers the resources needed;
- Fund services for survivors of gender-based violence, including shelters, and pressure the Taliban to reinstate a system of protection and support for these survivors;
- Allocate funding for Afghan women's rights organizations through a simple and accessible application process and work with them in a flexible manner to ensure that they can deliver services in way that is safe for their staff and clients;
- Urge the Taliban to accept international monitors in all detention centres, and ensure such monitors are able to conduct unscheduled visits inside all places of detention;
- Conduct a nationwide assessment on the rates of child, early and forced marriage and track any variations since August 2021;
- Develop a comprehensive, rights-based and locally relevant plan to address child, early and forced marriage in consultation with Afghan women and girls and allocate funding for programming and assistance to address child, early and forced marriage;
- Engage in regular consultation with local women's rights activists and groups inside Afghanistan, and with experts among the diaspora. Incorporate their views into programming and policies and support their meaningful participation in international policy and advocacy activities.

#### **TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN SECURITY COUNCIL, UN SPECIAL PROCEDURES AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL:**

- Encourage UN agencies and representatives such as the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls in Law and in Practice; the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences; the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to continue to monitor the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and to speak out when their rights are violated, in close cooperation with UNAMA's Human Rights Service and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan;



*An Afghan woman poses for a portrait in her home. © Kiana Hayeri / Amnesty International*

- Urge the Taliban to accept international monitors in all detention centres, and ensure such monitors are able to conduct unscheduled visits inside all places of detention.

#### **TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL:**

- Visit Afghanistan and press the Taliban to uphold the rights of women and girls;
- Direct Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan to press the Taliban at every opportunity to uphold the rights of women and girls.

#### **TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL:**

- Adopt a resolution including a set of concrete steps the Security Council plans to take in response to the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan;

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## **TO THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL:**

- Continue to remain engaged on the situation in Afghanistan and take concrete steps towards supporting accountability for serious human rights violations in Afghanistan;
- Continue to support, strengthen and sufficiently fund the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan;
- Enhance and strengthen the reporting mandate on Afghanistan by the High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Build on the urgent debate that took place at the 50th session of the Council and the enhanced interactive dialogue scheduled for the 51st session of the Council to take urgent steps to address the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.


## **TO THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN:**

- Continue to engage with international and national human rights organizations to receive periodic briefings and to facilitate coordination around key issues;
- Seek, receive, examine and act on information from all relevant stakeholders pertaining to alleged violations, especially toward women and girls, in close collaboration with other international mechanisms, taking into account the Human Rights Council's reiteration of the urgency to initiate prompt, independent, and impartial review or investigation of all alleged abuses and violations of human rights to end impunity, ensure accountability and bring perpetrators to justice;
- Support requests by international organizations, including NGOs, to conduct research and monitoring in the country;
- Conduct ongoing, detailed research on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, release a comprehensive report on this topic, and speak out frequently about abuses against women and girls;
- Assist the UN and engage with relevant authorities in Afghanistan in fulfilling Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights instruments, including the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
- Support and facilitate the work of local human rights organizations, particularly those run by women.

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# DEATH IN SLOW MOTION

## WOMEN AND GIRLS UNDER TALIBAN RULE

In less than a year, the Taliban have decimated the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. They have violated women's and girls' rights to education, work and free movement; demolished the system of support for women and girls fleeing domestic violence; arbitrarily detained women and girls for infractions of the Taliban's discriminatory rules; and contributed to a surge in the rates of child, early and forced marriage. Women who peacefully protested against these restrictions and policies have been harassed, threatened, arrested, forcibly disappeared, arbitrarily detained and tortured.

The report is based on interviews with 90 Afghan women and 11 girls, six current or former staff members of Taliban-run detention centres and 22 staff members of national and international NGOs and UN agencies. The research was conducted through in-person interviews in Afghanistan in March 2022 as well as remote interviews between September 2021 and June 2022.

The Taliban's draconian policies are depriving millions of women and girls of the opportunity to lead safe, free and fulfilling lives. The international community must send a clear, coordinated and resounding message to the Taliban that their current policies on women and girls will never be accepted and take concrete steps to demonstrate to the Taliban the consequences of their conduct.

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