

Ensuring Gender Equality and Human Rights in the Midst of Political Instabilities in Afghanistan

Forum: Human Rights Council

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Introduction

There are a lot of inequalities around the world, and gender inequality has been one of the most attentive assignments the world has been trying to accomplish. Afghanistan also was not able to get away with this issue. After the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, gender inequality aggravated significantly. Rules and public announcements restricted women, giving a rise to job loss, lack of education, and limited public and political life. In addition to gender inequality, many other human rights are also being violated and is a highly concerning problem in Afghanistan. The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan led the Afghans to struggle with having primary human rights. Thousands of Afghans were killed, including former officials, religious leaders, and women. Taliban and the Afghan government have been attacking and injuring civilians, taking away their right to live. They also restricted freedom of speech and limited the media by forcing many media outlets to shut down. Besides, numerous journalists were killed, and protests for women's rights were banned using violence.

Background

Taliban is a religious group that first emerged in the early 1990s. They follow strict Islamic ideology, including policies that ban women from public life and neglect human rights. Taliban gained substantial control over Afghanistan when they seized the capital city Kabul in 1996. They got effective dominance until 2001, when the United States initiated military actions to find the terrorists who took part in the September 11 attack and then hid to the Taliban. Later, on April 14, 2021, United States president Joe Biden announced that US military forces would withdraw from Afghanistan. Subsequently, leaving two weeks from the final removal of the US forces, the Taliban reentered Kabul on August 15, 2021.

Taliban violated human rights by performing public executions, forced confessions, and other types of abuses.

When they took over Afghanistan in August, they claimed that they would protect women's rights within the boundaries of Islamic Law. Taliban released a "decree on women's rights" that said, "A woman is not a property, but a noble and free human being; no one can give her to anyone in exchange for peace...or to end animosity." However, the only focus was on forced



Provinces that are controlled by the Taliban since August 13, 2021

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marriage and women's property, and there was no mention of education or work. The Taliban takeover interfered with the freedom and equality of women. Restrictions include women's right to work or have an education, inequality within the workplace, clothing regulation, and being obliged to be accompanied by a mahram (male relative).

Problems Raised

Sharia Law

Sharia is a religious concept and law of Islam which makes up a part of the Islamic tradition. Taliban strictly follows Islamic law, putting up restrictions related to the law. Sharia law has stringent regulations in clothing, so women following this law are forced to wear burqas that cover the body from head to toe. Additionally, if a woman goes out alone without a mahram, they can be beaten up or reported. People who break the Taliban's law can be publicly executed, whipped, or stoned.



Burqa worn by women in Afghanistan

Education

Before, there were no barriers to girls obtaining an education. All 34 provinces of Afghanistan provided equal education to girls, but as reported on 14 November 2021, only 7 provinces out of 34 have been providing secondary school education. In addition, there isn't any specific decision or policy made across the country regarding education for both girls and boys. The de facto authorities mentioned that they were working to implement a policy across the country so that girls would be qualified to access all levels of education. Besides, the Taliban announced that they would allow girls to study if it was within the boundaries of Islamic law.

Key Organizations

Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) is an institution made for protecting and encouraging human rights in Afghanistan. They announced that they would initiate an independent procedure that would monitor human rights violations in Afghanistan. The institution put into consideration of the unproven claim about women and girls, human rights defenders, civil society leaders, and journalists. This request by AIHRC was recognized by more than 50 national, regional, and international organizations, which urged the UN Member States to begin a fact-finding mission or an independent investigation process for Afghanistan.

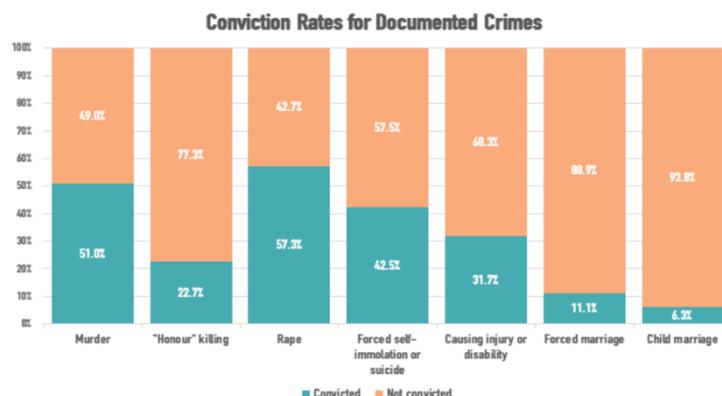
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a UN Special Political Mission established to support peace and development for the state and people in Afghanistan. UN Human Rights and UNAMA's Human Rights Unit (HRU) assisted the government to continue implementing the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) law. After carrying

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out the EVAW law there has been significant improvement in strengthening the legislative protection for women and girls. A result seen from this action was the police, prosecutors, and courts seen across the provinces of Afghanistan.

UNAMA also has kept a record of the crimes against women and girls to monitor the judicial process of the crimes and to grasp what kind of actions were taken from the justice system. The main state institutions that secure women's access to justice related to crimes are the Departments of Women's Affairs, EVAW prosecutors, and the Family Response Units of the Afghanistan National Police (ANP).



Conviction rates for the crimes against women and girls reported to UNAMA

Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education in Afghanistan is focusing on providing and developing quality education for everyone. In 2002, there were less than 1 million students enrolled in school, and recognizing the concerns, there has been more actions taken since then. After joining with other partners, there were some improvements: almost 7 million children were enrolled in school, and the number of girls was about 2.5 million people. However, this isn't enough to achieve gender equality. Though, the number of girls attending did increase a whole lot, the number was only 37% of the entire children in school, which is still a big gap between gender. In fact, after the takeover, the gender inequality in accessing education has been significantly distinct again.

Possible Solutions

Women Protection Centers

Currently, reported crimes or violence against women and girls are major problems that must be evaluated in the justice system. Yet, documented crimes against women and girls are only available when reported and reporting any crime and violence may come as a fear. Consequently, the rates of violence against women and girls (VAWG) have been extremely high, but with the Taliban's takeover, the services to protect VAWG survivors has worsen. The service suppliers have claimed that they have been threatened and targeted for the reason of supporting and protecting women and girls. For safety reasons, many suppliers have closed, which made many women and girls even more vulnerable. Therefore, more support for the Women Protection Centers will allow the survivors of the crime to be able to access shelter and security. With more attention to these centers, facilities such as shelters, or hospitals can be built for women.

Increase Education

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After the takeover, education has been inaccessible to many girls. Although the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan shows improvement in allowing education to many children, they still lack support for maintaining. Only a minor amount from the national budget is allocated for education, and finding donors with long-term donation is also a challenge regarding Ministry funds. In addition, the insufficient number of staff that manages the Ministry restrain them from initiating effective plans, policies, and programs. Thus, with more support for the institutions like the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan, the quality of education and the number of people enrolling in school could progress.



People allowed back into secondary schools are boys and male teachers

Glossary

Taliban: a religious group that strictly follow Islamic ideology

Mabram: women's husband or male relative

Burqa: clothing worn by women, which covers the body from head to toe.

Family Response Unit: part of the Afghan National Police (ANP) that deals with domestic violence, female victims of crime. They are staffed with policewomen that were trained from UNAMA.

Ministry of Education: a department from the government that is responsible for matters relating to education

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