



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations in New York

Promoting Women's and Girls' Equal Social, Economic and Political Rights in Afghanistan

6 March 2023

10:00-11:15 a.m.

Conference Room 1, United Nations Headquarter

Since forced takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban on 15 August 2021, Afghan women and girls have been the prime victims of Taliban's policies and they have systematically been erased from all social, economic, political and security spheres.

Over the past 17 months, Taliban de-facto authorities did not only fail to fulfill their commitments to international community and Afghan people to respect fundamental human rights of women and girls, including their right to education and work, but they also regressed to their 1990s draconian policies and practices by issuing orders and edicts to further restrict women and girls from society. Taliban have so far issued over 30 official orders and instructions to curtail Afghan women and girls from access to education, work outside home, travel without male chaperon and take part in any political, cultural, or economic activities. After Taliban's edicts to ban girls from secondary and tertiary education, they also went further and banned women from working at the NGOs and recently, they prohibited women medical students to take the "exit exam" the final medical exam at the medical faculty.

The Taliban de-facto authorities' behavior have reversed all hard-gained achievements Afghanistan made in the past two decades in different areas, including in the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. Women constituted 30% of civil servants and women held high-ranking positions at the government, including members of parliament, ministers, Ambassadors, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, military officers etc. There was a tenfold increase in enrolment at all education levels from around 1 million students in 2001 to around 10 million in 2018. Women's presence in Afghan higher education increased almost 20 times, from 5,000 female students in 2001 to over 100,000 in 2021. After taking over power in Afghanistan again in 2021, Taliban repudiated existing national laws and policies and the Constitution of Afghanistan which protected and guaranteed the rights of Afghan women and girls. Because of their repressive rule and violence, half of the population is deprived of their fundamental rights, and is forced to stay at home. As a result, women, girls and youth are compelled to leave the country through illegal routes of migration to neighboring countries and others. This has negatively impacted the already faltering economy of Afghanistan. Taliban's acts are not grounded in Islam nor in Afghan culture and they have been criticized by the international community, the UN and the Islamic Countries.

While the CSW67 is convened this year under the theme of “*Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*” and member states gather to discuss the role of technology in achieving sustainable development goals especially SDG4, Afghanistan is faced with multiple crisis and 28 million people including women and children are deprived of humanitarian assistance. The people of Afghanistan in general and the Afghan women and girls in particular are suffering from Taliban’s policies and a lack of responsible, inclusive and accountable government to address the root causes of all challenges and pave the ground for achieving 2030 development agenda.

The Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the UN in New York has the honor to convene this side event with the intent to provide a platform for representatives of Afghan women who truly represent the voices of Afghan women and would like to seek sustainable solution without any personal benefits attached.

The main objective of this event is to bring Afghan women to speak up on the current situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and share their demands to the high-ranking officials of the United Nations and member states with a focus on finding a short-term and long-term solution to the ongoing crisis women and girls face in Afghanistan.

The discussion will focus on the following questions:

- Is there any hope for a change in the Taliban’s behavior or reversal of their restrictive policies against women and girls?
- What are some alternative options or solutions for Afghan women and girls to continue their education under current circumstances?
- Would re-opening of schools and universities resolve the problem of Afghan women and girls?
- What would be the best way to ameliorate women and girls’ situation in Afghanistan in the long-term, given that they have not attended schools for over a year and with the ongoing bans are expected not to attend school?
- What could the international community do in addressing the overall situation in Afghanistan? What are your expectations from donors, United Nations member states and in particular the Security Council?

The invited speakers are:

- Ms. Yalda Royan, Afghan Women’s Rights Activist
- Ms. Asila Wardak, former UN Director General, MoFA, and Women’s Rights Activist
- Ms. Farriha Easer, Human Rights Defender, Social Activist and Researcher in the field of Women’s Studies
- Ms. Fatema Ahmadi, Human Rights Defender and Freedom of Religion Advocate
- Ms. Mariam Atahi, Women’s Rights Activist
- Ms. Lima Anwari, Afghan Youth Activist

The programme will include opening remarks, a keynote speaker, a panel discussion followed by Q&A and a closing.