



ADDRESSING THE HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN

Recommendations to UN Security Council Members from Afghan Women for a Robust and Inclusive UNAMA Mandate Renewal

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, human rights violations in the country have drastically increased. Taliban authorities have led and overseen targeted attacks on peaceful protesters, extrajudicial killings, the suppression of independent media, and the detention and disappearance of women's rights activists, including ethnic and religious minorities. Such abuses and violations are occurring with impunity.

To date, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has failed to address the dire human rights situation in Afghanistan. As UNAMA is now the primary international entity operating on the ground – following the shuttering of embassies and international organizations – its effectiveness is more critical than ever.

In line with international commitments, including UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, **the Security Council must renew UNAMA with a robust and inclusive mandate.** This should include using its good offices to urge the Taliban to promote human rights, monitor and report on the Taliban's adherence to international human rights instruments, meaningfully consult with Afghan civil society, incorporate a gender-analysis in its monitoring mechanisms, and coordinate inclusive humanitarian assistance.

The following recommendations come directly from a panel of Afghan women leaders that testified at the United Nations on Tuesday, March 15, 2022.

- **UNAMA's mandate should not include language that could be misconstrued as leading to recognition of the Taliban,** such as referring to them as the de facto authorities or the Taliban government of Afghanistan.
- **UNAMA must maintain neutrality with all parties.** If its actions or words are seen to be aligned with the Taliban, it will fail in its duty to the people of Afghanistan, especially women and minorities.
- **UNAMA should use its good offices to urge and advise the Taliban and other stakeholders, including regional and local actors, to promote human rights.** This includes promoting national dialogue in order to advance inclusive governance and ensure the meaningful participation of women and minorities at all levels. UNAMA should also promote the re-establishment of key government ministries across Afghanistan's provinces, such as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- **UNAMA should maintain close contact with Afghan civil society, including women-led civil society groups, and facilitate their meaningful engagement in human rights reporting and accountability** for a more accurate understanding of the facts on the ground. This should include establishing a constructive dialogue platform to directly and safely hear civil society's concerns and recommendations, as well as enhanced coordination and information sharing mechanisms. Afghan civil society should also consult on any punitive measures toward the Taliban to ensure they are targeted and do not inadvertently harm the Afghan people.

- **UNAMA should monitor and report on the Taliban’s adherence to international human rights instruments that the State is party to, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).**
- **UNAMA’s monitoring mechanisms should incorporate a gender analysis to highlight abuses against women, girls, and minorities and promote:**
 - **A survivor-centered approach to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV),** including intimate partner violence and bacha bazi. UNAMA should back mechanisms to comprehensively address SGBV, including women’s protection centers, family response units, gender units, ERAW courts, and prosecution units.
 - **Access to quality education,** including holding the Taliban to account on their public commitment to resume schooling, and ensuring the provision of quality instruction and development of curricula that are not driven by extreme Islamic views.
 - **Independent media and freedom of press,** including protection of journalists.
 - **Rule of law and access to justice,** including urging and advising the Taliban to re-establish a functioning and fair justice system, and ensuring judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and frontline activists are protected from prosecution and retaliation.
 - **Right to employment.** The current humanitarian crisis is directly linked to economic collapse and a lack of employment opportunities, especially for women. Assets must be used for liquidity and economic recovery, and UNAMA should urge the Taliban to respect the right to employment for all Afghans.
- **UNAMA must coordinate inclusive humanitarian aid and assistance for basic needs.** The Taliban are being prioritized in aid distribution, while Afghan women heads of households, widows, and minorities are among the last to receive aid. UNAMA should monitor equitable humanitarian aid distribution to all Afghans, and promote the inclusion of women and minorities in the distribution process.
- **When the UN Security Council holds discussions on resources, Member States must ensure adequate resourcing and staffing of UNAMA to enable tracking, investigation, and reporting on human rights abuses across Afghanistan’s provinces.** This should include diverse staff with gender expertise to ensure UNAMA gathers accurate findings and mounts an effective response.

These recommendations were compiled from Afghan women leaders that briefed UN policymakers at the event [“Upholding Women’s Rights as Human Rights in Afghanistan: An Urgent Moment for UNAMA Renewal”](#) on March 15, 2022. The event was co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of the United Kingdom and Qatar, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan, with the Georgetown Institute for Women and UN Women, and co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of the United States, Canada, Ireland, France, and Indonesia to the United Nations.

These policy recommendations are part of [Onward for Afghan Women](#), an initiative of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security.