



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**  
**Ninety-first session**

**Summary record of the 2161st meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 24 June 2025, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Haidar

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(*continued*)

*Fourth periodic report of Afghanistan (continued)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention** *(continued)*

*Fourth periodic report of Afghanistan (continued)* (CEDAW/C/AFG/4)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Afghanistan joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair**, welcoming the delegation of Afghanistan to the meeting, explained that additional members of the delegation would be participating via video link.

*Articles 10–14*

3. **A representative of Afghanistan**, responding to questions raised at the previous meeting (CEDAW/C/SR.2160), said that the significant advances made, prior to the Taliban's return to power, in ensuring access to primary, maternal and paediatric healthcare and reducing infant and maternal mortality had almost all been reversed in the past four years. The reduction in humanitarian assistance meant that access to even the most basic healthcare services was under threat.

4. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that, contrary to claims by the de facto authorities, cases of anxiety, depression and suicide among women and girls were widespread and on the rise. Women and girls had no access to mental health support and were banned from being treated by male healthcare professionals. The decision by the de facto authorities to restrict women's ability to work in the health sector meant, therefore, that it was increasingly difficult for female patients, in particular those in rural areas, to obtain any kind of medical treatment. It had been reported that an increasing number of women in rural areas were dying during childbirth, owing to the resource shortages in maternity clinics. Women and girls were prohibited from entering bathing facilities, making use of recreational facilities and practising sports.

5. The ban on women training as healthcare professionals would serve only to compound the discrimination faced by women and girls and destroy the already fragile healthcare system. The fact that the number of female doctors, nurses and midwives had been very low before the ban meant that there would eventually be no professionals left to treat women, which would lead to many preventable deaths and higher maternal and infant mortality rates. She wished to encourage the Committee to call on the international community to step up its efforts to support the delivery of medical and counselling services and the creation of safe spaces for Afghan women, including those in exile.

6. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that the de facto authorities were denying girls access to education in order to increase their control over them. Women were prohibited from using contraceptives or undergoing abortions and lacked access to prenatal and postnatal care. The Taliban's efforts to strip women of their reproductive rights were contributing to an increase in poverty, which, in turn, would lead to a rise in child marriage and maternal and infant mortality. Its work to radicalize girls and train them to be obedient wives and mothers was being emulated by extremist groups in other countries.

7. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that the Committee was concerned about women's access to drinking water and sanitation, which had been almost fully eliminated as a result of various natural disasters and the policies imposed by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. Regarding the connection between poverty and child marriage, she would welcome the delegation's comments on the fact that parents were increasingly resorting to selling their daughters into marriage in order to earn money to feed other family members.

8. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that the de facto authorities had ended the programmes through which schools had distributed iron supplements to female students. Menstruation was considered a taboo subject, and the lack of menstrual hygiene products represented an additional challenge. The Taliban had suspended vaccination campaigns, despite Afghanistan being one of the only countries in the world in which cases of polio continued to be reported. Legal provisions prohibiting marriage under the age of 16 years were no longer applied.

9. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that the Committee was deeply concerned that the economic and social rights previously enjoyed by Afghan women and girls had been severely curtailed following the seizure of power by the de facto authorities, whose repressive laws, edicts and policies constituted flagrant violations of the State Party's obligations under international human rights law. The establishment of the so-called Commission for the Underprivileged and Beggars had led to a deplorable collapse of the social protection system, plunging more than 90 per cent of the population, mostly women and girls, into poverty. The strict enforcement of the requirement for women to be accompanied outside the home by a *mahram*, or male chaperone, meant that women heads of household, women with disabilities and other groups of disadvantaged women were prevented from engaging in economic activities or obtaining access to humanitarian assistance, which left them unable to meet their basic needs. It was with great dismay that the Committee had noted the sharp decline of the Afghan economy, the exclusion of women from educational and economic opportunities, the closure of tens of thousands of women-led businesses and the low percentage of women who had access to bank accounts and other financial services. She wished to call on the international community and private sector trading partners to increase the pressure on the de facto authorities to uphold article 13 of the Convention, with a view to safeguarding the economic well-being of Afghan women and girls.

10. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that the delegation was hopeful that the regression noted by the Committee would one day be reversed.

11. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that the rights of Afghan women and girls under article 13 of the Convention were not just being violated; they were vanishing. Women's exclusion from public life was deliberate, far-reaching and deeply destructive. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had reported that almost all women-led economic activities had been shut down or driven underground or were conducted through male intermediaries. Women's labour force participation rate had dropped below 6 per cent. Microcredit schemes for women had been abolished, and women no longer had access to pension schemes, emergency assistance and basic welfare payments. Fewer than 10 per cent of women-led households had successfully registered for humanitarian cash transfers owing to bureaucratic obstacles and gender-based restrictions. Women heads of household had been forced to choose between sending their children to work or marrying them off. Cases in which families had been required to sell their household belongings, or even their daughters, in order to survive were all too common.

12. Women were increasingly prevented from inheriting or owning land, housing or other assets, despite the protections that had been introduced prior to 2021. Widows and divorced women often found themselves without shelter, which led to deepening poverty and left them vulnerable to forced remarriage.

13. Women had been stripped of their rights to participate in cultural and recreational activities. Since April 2025, more than 40 public libraries and art centres had been closed. Many books had been banned, and numerous women artists, musicians and athletes had gone into exile. Those who remained in the country had had their instruments burned, their murals covered and their names deleted from public records. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had recently warned that the aforementioned measures amounted to gender erasure.

14. Rather than simply condemning the situation in Afghanistan, the international community must take coordinated and principled action to address it. Accordingly, he hoped that the Committee would call on the international community to ensure that women and girls, in particular those belonging to the most vulnerable groups, were able to gain access humanitarian aid without the need to be accompanied by a man and without any ideological interference. The Committee should also make recommendations concerning the strengthening of independent monitoring mechanisms; support for targeted economic initiatives that would enable women entrepreneurs in conflict-affected areas to contribute to an inclusive recovery; enhanced transparency of financial flows; increased access for women-led households to registration services; and the protection of women's contributions to the country's cultural heritage.

15. **Ms. Rana** said that the edicts and policies of the de facto authorities were having a devastating impact on rural women. Constitutional protections and institutional frameworks had been dismantled and replaced with regressive, customary structures that entirely excluded women, especially rural women, from community governance, local development planning and participation in public life. Rural women no longer had access to land or credit and, despite their central role in subsistence farming and natural resource management, they were systematically excluded from climate adaptation strategies. The maternal and reproductive healthcare system was near collapse in rural areas.

16. The Committee was concerned about the intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination faced by marginalized and disadvantaged groups of women, including Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek women, particularly in rural provinces, women with disabilities, internally displaced women, widows and single women without male guardians, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women. It was also concerned about the forced, mass returns of Afghan nationals, including many women and girls, from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan since September 2023; the almost complete lack of access for women from nomadic and pastoralist communities to land, services and civil documentation; the increased risk of trafficking and exploitation facing displaced and widowed rural women; the collapse of birth registration systems; the alarming plight of child widows and orphaned girls in rural regions; the disproportionate burden shouldered by women acting as caregivers in rural areas owing to the absence of State support; and the silencing or exile of rural women human rights defenders and activists.

17. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that the problems of discrimination faced by women in Afghanistan were compounded for women in rural areas and those from ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, many of whom also faced challenges relating to poverty, age or disability. Respondents to the survey described in the fourth periodic report (CEDAW/C/AFG/4), had reported very limited access to healthcare, other essential services and humanitarian aid and dire economic conditions in rural areas. Rural women were less likely to have registered and obtained licences for their businesses than urban women, as a result of which they were excluded from the formal economy and opportunities to grow their businesses. In addition, rural women experienced the brunt of the effects of climate change and natural disasters, and there were no strong systems in place to help them recover.

18. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that Afghan women and girls were facing a total blackout with respect to the digital revolution and the global transformation driven by artificial intelligence. They were therefore cut off from new livelihood opportunities. She wondered how, without either opportunities to develop the required new skills or access to digital tools and infrastructure, Afghan women would be able to thrive economically.

19. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that the de facto authorities in Afghanistan checked individuals' mobile telephones and monitored their communications on platforms such as WhatsApp. In at least two provinces, images of human beings were not allowed to be broadcast on television, in effect turning television into radio in those provinces. Female newscasters who appeared on television were required to cover their faces while reading the news. At a time when women's economic situation was deteriorating drastically in the country, the Taliban were increasing the tax burden on women entrepreneurs.

#### *Articles 15 and 16*

20. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that the Committee was concerned about the situation in Afghanistan with respect to women's rights in relation to legal capacity and property, inheritance, marriage, divorce and the custody of their children. Women in Afghanistan were no longer recognized as having legal capacity in civil and family matters, were treated as dependants with no separate legal personality and must obtain the permission of male guardians to marry, travel or have access to basic services. While the introduction of Decree No. 83/1, which contained provisions on inheritance, had led to an increase in the number of women asserting their inheritance rights before Taliban courts, many women continued to turn to informal community mechanisms because of their limited awareness of the law and minimal access to legal assistance, especially in rural areas. Women had few possibilities to defend their rights in the formal legal system. Courts were now in large part headed by male religious scholars without legal training, and female judges and lawyers had been removed

from their posts. Women were rarely allowed to represent themselves or even appear before the informal justice mechanisms known as jirgas, which favoured men overwhelmingly.

21. There had been an increase in the number of forced marriages and child marriages, which were often driven by poverty and the perception that marriage could offer a certain amount of protection in a context of general insecurity. Divorce for women had become almost impossible in practice, and those seeking separation or custody of their children faced the threat of detention and abuse. Gender-based family violence had significantly increased. Hundreds of cases of abuse and killings had been documented, but official data were unavailable, owing in part to the breakdown of protection services and the barriers to reporting.

22. In the light of the foregoing, the Taliban authorities should be urged to reinstate fundamental legal guarantees for women and girls, particularly in civil and family law matters; the application of Decree No. 83/1 should be reinforced; female judges and lawyers should be reinstated; legal training programmes for women should be supported, especially in rural areas; it should be ensured that civil or family courts, rather than jirgas, decided all civil and family law cases; dialogue with religious and community leaders should be promoted to raise awareness of the rights of women to be heard and participate in dispute resolution proceedings; child marriage should be expressly prohibited; economic and educational incentives should be introduced to encourage families to delay their daughters' marriages; the Taliban authorities should be called upon to take immediate steps to prevent and punish gender-based violence in the home; funding should be provided for shelters; networks for the documentation and monitoring of domestic violence should be strengthened; international humanitarian actors should be given the necessary access to the country; and the establishment of an international women's rights monitoring mission, with a mandate from the Human Rights Council, should be promoted.

23. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that, since the military takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, women's right to equality before the law had been completely curtailed, contributing to the perpetuation of all forms of inequality. Women activists, journalists and human rights defenders were being arbitrarily detained and denied access to justice, in violation of article 15 of the Convention.

24. The rate of forced marriage continued to rise despite the issuance of a decree prohibiting it, which was not respected by the de facto authorities. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as many as 57 per cent of Afghan girls were married before the age of 19, with many entering marriage at the age of 15 or 16. Reports indicated that families were marrying off young daughters to prevent them from being forced into unions. Owing to social and ideological pressures, forced marriages often went unchallenged, keeping girls in a cycle of dependency and subjection. In provinces such as Kunar and Balkh, the illegal customary practice of giving girls as compensation in order to resolve a dispute continued to take place.

25. Women were denied the right to divorce, the right to inherit and access to any support systems. They were adversely affected by polygamy, discriminatory rules governing the custody of children, inequalities in divorce proceedings and the division of assets, denial of the right to remarry following the dissolution of a marriage or the death of a husband, and restrictions on their inheritance rights. The situation was particularly problematic in rural and remote regions. Within the family, women did not enjoy equal rights and responsibilities were not equally distributed. According to the ideology of the Taliban de facto authorities, women were the property of their husbands and were expected to raise their children to follow that ideology.

26. In view of the dire situation of women in Afghanistan, the delegation would be grateful if the Committee would recommend that the international community should strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to protect and promote women's rights and increase funding for initiatives that promoted women's access to justice, supported survivors of gender-based violence and combated harmful practices, including early and forced marriages.

27. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that gender equality was being attacked on many fronts all over the world. Institutions set up to protect equality, such as the Human

Rights Council, the Committee, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, were increasingly under attack, leading some to believe that they were no longer effective. However, women in Afghanistan continued to have the utmost faith in those institutions. During every session of the Human Rights Council, countless women organized side events and conferences to give testimonies about their experiences.

28. In Afghanistan, all decisions were taken by the armed men in control of the country; the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments were not respected. Despite the announcement, in 2024, by a number of States of their intention to file a case against Afghanistan with the International Court of Justice for violations of the Convention, the situation in Afghanistan was not being treated with sufficient urgency and generations of women were being lost.

29. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that Afghanistan currently lacked an independent judiciary, effective law enforcement agencies and an elected political body to pass laws on behalf of the people. The leader of the Taliban had issued a verbal decree prohibiting polygamy for Taliban members, but some had failed to comply with it. The de facto authorities refused to respect women's inheritance rights and had cancelled all applications for divorce submitted by women. In order to support the women of Afghanistan, the Committee must act as a defender of justice and not merely as a monitoring body.

30. **The Chair** said that every member of the Committee was extremely concerned about the situation of women in Afghanistan. However, the delegation should note that the Committee members acted independently and did not represent any government. The Committee members would do everything possible, within their limited authority and mandate, to convey the delegation's message to persons and agencies who could take action to protect the rights of Afghan women. The Committee's task force on Afghanistan had considered how to bring the plight of Afghan women to the attention of the international community. The Committee would identify the most pressing problems affecting Afghan women, but it would be for other bodies, such as the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, to take action to tackle those problems.

31. **Ms. Rana** said that the suspension of constitutional protections for women, compounded by the imposition of patriarchal interpretations of sharia, had reduced women to a state of dependency. The structural exclusion of women from the courts and the denial of their rights to inheritance, divorce and the custody of their children reinforced intergenerational cycles of inequality, violence and poverty. Widows and women with missing, detained or ill husbands faced a heightened risk of destitution. The lack of safeguards for women in polygamous unions exposed them to financial insecurity and psychological abuse. The asymmetric nature of the rights afforded to men and women in divorce proceedings under sharia denied women the opportunity to make a dignified exit from abusive or harmful marriages. The Committee called on the de facto authorities in Afghanistan to restore women's rights as a matter of urgency and urged the international community to support legal and humanitarian mechanisms for the protection of women, including women-led local organizations and secure digital platforms.

32. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that Afghanistan was the only country in the world where an official ban had been placed on women's access to work, education and reproductive healthcare. The treatment of women in Afghanistan represented a threat to peace and security, not only in Afghanistan but also beyond its borders. The violation of all the articles of the Convention by the de facto authorities was a problem not only for Afghan women but for all of humanity.

33. **A representative of Afghanistan** said that, since August 2021, the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan had degenerated into a system of gender apartheid that violated every article of the Convention. The delegation urged the Committee to expand its procedures for addressing the critical situation of women in Afghanistan, including its cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It called on States to establish a gender-responsive mechanism for investigating violations of human rights in Afghanistan and holding the de facto authorities accountable. Lastly, it called for improved coordination across the United Nations system, civil society organizations, judicial mechanisms and relevant authorities with a view to promoting and protecting human rights.

*The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.*