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## International community must not normalise Taliban rule in Afghanistan

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Over the past three years, the people of Afghanistan, especially women and girls, have been subjected to an appalling and intensifying attack on their rights and freedoms by a

regime that lacks legitimacy and inclusivity, quashes all forms of dissent, represses civil society and the media, and has shown a flagrant disregard for the principles of justice, non-discrimination, equality, and the rule of law. The situation continues to deteriorate, and stronger and more effective international action is needed immediately.

In the last year, the Taliban has further entrenched and intensified its system of institutionalized gender-oppression, introducing new discriminatory edicts and practices, and implementing them by harsh and violent means. Since taking power, the *de facto* authorities have issued more than 80 edicts, directives, and statements which specifically target and restrict the rights of women and girls. The Taliban's deliberate subjugation of women and girls is widespread and systematic, amounting to crimes against humanity, including the crime of gender persecution. The situation is so severe that many Afghans say the situation can be best described as 'gender apartheid'. Despite this, Taliban officials have insisted the situation of women and girls is an 'internal' matter.

Religious and ethnic minorities, children and youth, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other gender-diverse persons, human rights defenders, health workers, educators, journalists, judges, prosecutors, legal professionals, artists, cultural rights defenders, former security and government officials, and others are also being subjected to serious and targeted human rights violations by the Taliban. These include arbitrary arrests and detentions, unlawful killings, acts tantamount to enforced disappearance, rape and other crimes of sexual violence, and torture and ill-treatment. We are especially disturbed about the resurgence of public flogging and other forms of corporal punishment amounting to torture and ill-treatment. More than 200 people, men and women, have been subjected to public corporal punishment in 2024, in clear violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, both ratified by Afghanistan. While we acknowledge efforts to support returnees, we are concerned that internally displaced persons – including those displaced by disasters – are facing threats of forced eviction from informal settlements by the *de facto* authorities.

Amid an ongoing humanitarian crisis, we are increasingly concerned about fulfillment of the economic, social, and cultural rights of the people of Afghanistan, which require measures beyond humanitarian aid without benefitting the Taliban *de facto* authorities. Withdrawal of humanitarian aid and other assistance must not become a new chapter in the abandonment of the Afghan people. Now is not the time to disengage, but rather to recommit to the Afghan people and protect their lives, rights, and cultures.

The Taliban claims that over the three years of its rule, it has made progress in a number of areas, including anti-corruption, security and counter narcotics and has therefore earned international recognition. Any genuine progress is being undermined by ongoing human rights violations, including the evisceration of the rights of women and girls, the exclusion and subjugation of marginalized groups, and repression of anyone who opposes the Taliban's ideology. Further, the Taliban's claim that the rights of over half of Afghanistan's population is an internal matter is incompatible with Afghanistan's

international obligations and commitments and membership of the United Nations. International law requires that human rights and fundamental freedoms be promoted and protected regardless of economic, political, or cultural systems.

We stress that there should be no move to normalize the *de facto* authorities, unless and until there are demonstrated, measurable, and independently verified improvements against human rights benchmarks, particularly for women and girls. Any way forward should integrate human rights benchmarks through a principled, inclusive, coordinated and coherent approach, as proposed in the Security Council-mandated [Independent Assessment](#). Efforts resulting in improvements in the human rights situation will be acknowledged and supported.

UN Member States must not allow the ongoing situation to become a 'new normal'. Instead, they must launch a robust and coordinated effort to challenge and dismantle the Taliban's institutionalized system of gender oppression and dehumanization of women and girls, and find ways to leverage their power to prevent and stop human rights violations. We call for the adoption of an 'all tools approach', one which combines accountability and increased documentation, with greater support, solidarity, participation and protection for the people of *Afghanistan*, including women and girls, human rights defenders, ethnic, religious and belief minorities, and civil society activists.

With avenues for justice within Taliban-controlled Afghanistan virtually non-existent, pathways to survivor-centred justice processes should be identified and further strengthened. We urge the International Criminal Court to advance its investigation on Afghanistan, with a view to the expeditious issuance of indictments where there is sufficient admissible evidence. We also support efforts to initiate a case against Afghanistan at the International Court of Justice for violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other applicable instruments.

We underscore the importance of ensuring that human rights and the voices of non-Taliban Afghans, in particular women and persons from religious, ethnic or other minority or marginalized communities, are included in political processes and diplomatic engagement. This participation must be meaningful, consistent, and prioritize their safety and security. We further remind all international actors of their commitments to the women, peace, and security agenda under UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Moving forward, acceptable standards of consultation, representation and transparency are essential both to rebuild confidence among Afghans and to ensure that efforts towards a stable, inclusive and economically viable Afghanistan, at peace with itself and its neighbours, are credible and sustainable. We stand ready to offer our assistance to that end.

The people of Afghanistan demand and deserve to live in a country where the rights, dignity, and humanity of all are respected and protected. Now, more than ever, is the time

for robust and effective international action to meet their demands with increased protection, support, and solidarity.

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