
WHEN BEING BORN A GIRL BECOMES A PUNISHMENT: AFGHANISTAN'S ONGOING HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS

**SILENCED
TODAY,
ERASED
TOMORROW:
THE REALITY OF
AFGHAN WOMEN**



A few years ago, Afghanistan had women studying in universities, working as journalists, judges, doctors, teachers, and entrepreneurs. Today, much of that progress has disappeared. Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, Afghan women and girls have witnessed an unprecedented rollback of their fundamental rights. Restrictions that initially appeared temporary have gradually transformed into a system that excludes women from education, employment, public life, and even basic decision-making.

This is no longer merely a debate about women's rights.

It is one of the gravest human rights crises of our time.

The Taliban has introduced a series of policies that have prevented girls from attending secondary schools and universities, restricted women from working in several sectors, limited their movement in public spaces, and imposed strict dress regulations. More recently, international organisations have also expressed concern over legal provisions criticised for legitimising child marriage and treating a girl's silence during marriage proceedings as consent in certain circumstances. These developments have been condemned by the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and several other global organisations as serious violations of internationally recognised human rights.

The most disturbing aspect of this crisis is that Afghan women are not simply losing individual rights such as education or employment. They are gradually being removed from public life itself. When a woman cannot study, cannot work, cannot participate in society, and cannot freely decide the course of her own life, the issue extends far beyond gender discrimination. It raises a fundamental question about human dignity and equality.

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** recognises education, equality, liberty, and dignity as rights that belong to every human being without discrimination. Similarly, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** and the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** seek to protect women and girls from discrimination and ensure equal opportunities. Although Afghanistan's present political situation has made the enforcement of these principles extremely difficult, the international legal framework continues to recognise these freedoms as universal human rights rather than privileges granted by governments.

The international community has repeatedly condemned these restrictions and called for their reversal. However, statements of concern alone cannot restore a girl's education or a woman's freedom. Diplomatic engagement, humanitarian assistance, and sustained international pressure remain essential if meaningful change is to be achieved. At the same time, any response must prioritise the safety, dignity, and long-term well-being of Afghan women and girls.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is not that Afghan women have lost opportunities—it is that an entire generation of girls is growing up believing that their dreams matter less simply because they are girls. No society can progress by silencing half of its population. Education, dignity, and equality are not western ideals or political preferences; they are universal human rights.

The real question, therefore, is not whether Afghan women deserve these freedoms.

The real question is how much longer the world will remain satisfied with merely acknowledging their suffering.

