



Accountability Watch Afghanistan (AWA) calls on the international community to take decisive actions in helping end the Taliban's repression in Afghanistan by supporting accountability, recognizing the system of gender apartheid imposed against women and girls, and ensuring effective protection for persecuted communities inside Afghanistan, as well as at-risk refugees and asylum seekers abroad.

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End Taliban's Oppression in Afghanistan and Hold All Perpetrators Accountable

Over the past five years, Afghanistan under Taliban rule has suffered from profound multidimensional human rights, humanitarian, economic and security crises. The Taliban have systematically dismantled fundamental freedoms and civic space; institutionalized the oppression of women and girls including their exclusion from education, employment and public life; and subjected journalists, human rights defenders, protesters and perceived opponents to threats, arbitrary detention, torture and family intimidation. Moreover, the Taliban have continued the persecution of marginalized ethnic and religious communities such as the Hazaras, Ismailis, Sufis, Uzbeks, Turkmen as well as Tajiks through systematic discrimination, forced displacement and threats to their political, cultural and religious rights. The LGBTIQ+ community also faces serious threats and violations of fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Taliban have implemented their oppressive policies and practices with complete impunity. Since 2021, the group has introduced more than a hundred decrees, edicts and directives severely curtailing fundamental rights, and limiting access to justice, protection and accountability avenues. Its more recent measures include the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue (PVPV) Law, the Criminal Procedure Code for Courts and its Decree No. 18, which further entrench discriminatory restrictions on women and girls, non-Sunni Muslims, and other religious groups. These regulations contain provisions relating to practices such as slavery, caste-like differentiation of society, as well as child marriage.

The Taliban's use of arbitrary arrests, torture, public flogging, enforced disappearances, forced eviction, and extrajudicial killings present a horrific picture of their cruel, inhumane, and degrading conducts and reprisals. Between August 2021 and June 2023, despite the Taliban's proclaimed general amnesty, the group was [responsible for](#) 218 extrajudicial killings, 14 enforced disappearances, over 144 instances of torture and ill treatment, and 424 arbitrary arrests and detentions.

The institutionalized system of oppression against women and girls' based on gender identities constitutes [gender apartheid](#) and should be codified as such, under international law. The persecution of ethnic and

religious minorities, especially the Hazaras, amounts to [crimes against humanity](#) as reported by the United Nations Special Rapporteur. Furthermore, the documented pattern of systematic persecution and attacks against the Hazaras bear the hallmarks of [the crime of genocide](#).

Since their return to power, the Taliban's fundamentalist religious ideologies, ethno-nationalist approach and violent practices have threatened to turn Afghanistan into a hotbed of religious radicalization, jihadist ambitions and violent extremism, leading to serious national and transnational human and security threats. As of December 2025, as the [United Nations Security Council reported](#), more than 20 international and regional terrorist organizations, including IS-KP and al-Qaeda, remain active in the country. Between January and March 2026, during Taliban-Pakistan cross-border strikes, 372 civilians were killed and 397 injured in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have shown utter disregard for people's pleas, community-based advocacy and efforts to peacefully protest their oppression – including Afghanistan's religious scholars' repeated calls to lift restrictions on female education. When addressing genuine concerns to Taliban administrators, [community members and representatives](#) including victims and survivors report being mistreated and often remain fearful of further reprisals from the regime.

Even though the Taliban lack national and international legitimacy, many States, public institutions, and private entities have continued to unconditionally engage with them to the unmitigated chagrin of the people of Afghanistan. In 2025, [Russia](#) recognized the Taliban as a legitimate government, contributing to further normalization of the Taliban's oppressive rule. In 2026, the European Union ([EU](#)) hosted a Taliban delegation in Brussels for talks over forced return of Afghanistan's migrants, breaching the [refugee law](#) and the EU's own [benchmarks](#) for engagement. The growing trend of normalizing ties with the Taliban – whether for humanitarian needs or migration control – has only bolstered the regime's brutality.

Multinational accountability proceedings initiated by Australia, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women ([CEDAW](#)), the International Criminal Court ([ICC](#))'s arrest warrants for senior Taliban leaders for alleged crimes against humanity, and the [United Nations Human Rights Council](#)'s establishment of an independent investigative mechanism collectively demonstrate a clear message that the time for investigations and accountability has arrived and serious violations committed by the Taliban can no longer be treated as an internal matter or left to local informal mechanisms.

Recommendations:

Accountability Watch Afghanistan (AWA) urges States, international institutions and other relevant actors to move beyond expressions of concern and take decisive action to end the Taliban impunity, support the people of Afghanistan, and uphold their fundamental rights. We make the following recommendations:

1. States and international institutions should not allow the Taliban's de facto control of Afghanistan to shield it from international scrutiny or accountability. Claims of sovereignty, proclaimed peace and stability, domestic jurisdiction or even traditional norms must not be used to excuse violations of international law. De facto authorities remain bound by applicable international obligations and must be held responsible for violations committed under their authority.
2. States should ensure that engagement with the Taliban does not confer legitimacy or normalize repression. Political, diplomatic, economic and migration-related engagement should be guided by clear,

measurable and verifiable human rights benchmarks, including an end to discriminatory restrictions on women and girls, protection of fundamental freedoms, release of persons arbitrarily detained, and respect for the rights of minorities and other vulnerable groups.

3. States should support and necessary resources to all credible international and domestic accountability processes concerning Afghanistan. This includes cooperation with the International Criminal Court, UN human rights mechanisms and other relevant judicial and investigative processes. States and relevant actors should facilitate the collection, preservation and sharing of evidence, support survivor- and victim-centred approaches, and pursue targeted sanctions, prosecutions and other lawful measures against those responsible for international crimes and serious human rights violations.

4. States and international institutions should address the Taliban's institutionalized system of gender-based oppression against women and girls. They should support efforts to develop and codify gender apartheid under international law and use available international mechanisms to challenge policies that systematically exclude women and girls from education, employment, public life and other spheres of society.

5. States and international institutions should strengthen protection for ethnic, religious and other marginalized communities, including the Hazaras, Ismailis, and LGBTIQ+ persons. They should support monitoring, early-warning systems and effective use of existing international protection and accountability mechanisms to prevent further persecution, identify emerging risks and ensure timely and effective protection for communities at risk.

6. States, UN agencies and other relevant actors should support independent monitoring and documentation of forced evictions, unlawful land confiscation and forced displacement, facilitate access to effective remedies and restitution, where appropriate, and ensure that humanitarian and development assistance does not contribute to unlawful displacement or demographic engineering.

7. States and all relevant institutions should uphold their obligations toward Afghanistan's refugees and asylum seekers and ensure full respect for the principle of non-refoulement. No person should be returned to Afghanistan where they face a real risk of persecution, torture, or other serious violations. States should expand safe and accessible pathways for asylum, humanitarian admission, family reunification and resettlement, with particular attention to individuals and communities facing heightened risks of persecution.

8. The international community should urgently strengthen humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. States should provide adequate funding for the UN-led humanitarian response and humanitarian organizations, while ensuring that assistance reaches affected populations without discrimination and does not reinforce the Taliban's system of repression. Particular attention should be given to displaced persons, women-headed households, children, minorities and communities facing acute humanitarian needs.

9. States should support an inclusive, representative and participatory political process to meaningfully address Afghanistan's present governance crisis. In line with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, international actors should support the Afghan people—including women, minorities, civil society, human rights defenders, victims, survivors and the diaspora—in shaping a legitimate political and constitutional order and a government that reflects Afghanistan's diversity and guarantees equal rights and meaningful participation for all people of Afghanistan.