UN Human Rights Council, 53rd session (19 June to 14 July 2023)

Item 2: Enhanced interactive dialogue on a report on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

Statement on Afghanistan

Speaker: Negina Yari

We fully agree with the Special Rapporteur and the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice that: “The pattern of large-scale systematic violations of women’s and girls’ fundamental rights in Afghanistan, abetted by the Taliban’s discriminatory and misogynistic policies and harsh enforcement methods, constitutes gender persecution and an institutionalized framework of gender apartheid.”

I repeat for the umpteenth time today, that the situation of women and girls must be taken seriously. The absence of female staff from humanitarian work restricts women’s access to humanitarian aid. Systemic discrimination against women and girls is normalising gender-based violence against them, with limited access to formal justice institutions. Violence threatens the lives of thousands of women and girls who live without hope. Every day, thousands of young women and girls are forced into early and child marriages because they do not go to school, do not go to work and are subjected to social pressure.

Since the Taliban ban on female humanitarian workers, women’s access to health services has significantly deteriorated in most provinces and women are losing their lives due to the lack of access to medicines at the local level. People’s only hope is to have a piece of bread on the table, but humanitarian aid programs have become highly politicised. Every day, the Taliban use a different pretext to influence the selection of beneficiaries and the distribution of aid packages, putting extreme pressure on national organisations and systematically closing women-led NGOs.

The international community is failing to meet its obligations towards Afghan women and girls. In this period of change, we, the women and girls of Afghanistan, have lost everything. But we will never forget how the world has failed to end our persecution. The international community including the United Nations should take serious steps to ensure access and participation of Afghan women and girls in all social and political spheres. Behind-the-scenes talks and invitations of leaders of Taliban groups at regional and national levels without the presence of Afghan women contribute to our persecution. The international community should remain engaged and take steps to:

- promote women’s active participation in public life, including in humanitarian operations,
- ensure that women and girls have equal access to health services across the country,
- and to support with long-term funding women-led organisations operating in Afghanistan.

1 Enhanced interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, on a report on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

2 A/HRC/53/21, para. 97