

28 February 2025

## **UN Human Rights Council, 58th session (24 February to 4 April 2025)**

*Item 2: Enhanced interactive dialogue on the OHCHR report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the oral update by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan.*

## **Statement on Afghanistan**

*Speaker: Negina Yari*

We fully agree with the Special Rapporteur that the law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice “underscores the institutional, intentional, and ideological nature of the Taliban’s system of gender oppression in Afghanistan”.<sup>1</sup> It provides further evidence of the pattern of large-scale systematic violations of women’s and girls’ rights in Afghanistan, which constitutes gender persecution and an institutionalised framework of gender apartheid, as identified by the Special Rapporteur and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.<sup>2</sup>

This discriminatory law comes against the backdrop of other continued severe human rights violations, including of economic and social rights due to the Taliban’s restrictions on humanitarian aid, including the ban on women’s work in the aid sector. These restrictions directly aggravate soaring needs for food, hygiene, and health services, particularly for women and girls who need access to female nurses and who face additional barriers in accessing aid. Taliban threats and pressure have also resulted in the systematic closure of humanitarian NGOs, as well as in increasing corruption in the delivery of aid.

Pakistan and Iran have recently increased arbitrary detentions and arrests of Afghan asylum-seekers and announced their intention to deport them to Afghanistan. Pakistan has also set exorbitant visa fees for Afghans and complex administrative obstacles to visa renewals.<sup>3</sup> Pakistan’s Prime Minister also announced a 31 March deadline to deport Afghan asylum-seekers awaiting relocation to third countries unless their cases are swiftly processed by the governments that have agreed to resettle them.<sup>4</sup> Countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada, France, and Germany that evacuated Afghan human rights defenders after the Taliban takeover and left them stranded in third countries such as, Pakistan and Iran for three years, must not remain silent. These countries must urgently provide international protection and expedite resettlement for Afghans who face a risk of harm and reprisals from the Taliban upon return, including women human rights defenders.

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<sup>1</sup> Study on the so-called “Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice”, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett. UN index: A/HRC/58/74, para. 91

<sup>2</sup> Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls. UN Index: A/HRC/53/21, para. 97

<sup>3</sup> Reporters without borders, Police harassment, astronomical visa fees, deportation threats — RSF warns of the dire situation facing Afghan journalists exiled in Pakistan, available at: <https://rsf.org/en/police-harassment-astronomical-visa-fees-deportation-threats-rsf-warns-dire-situation-facing>

<sup>4</sup> AP, UN agencies raise alarm over Pakistan’s move to deport thousands of Afghans waiting to go to the US, 5 February 2025, available at: <https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-afghan-refugees-deportation-unhcr-trump-iom-38e518977ad7b784256b4e176c7590da>

Finally, while the world faces an unprecedented global backlash from conservative and authoritarian forces against hard-won progress on gender equality and gender justice, unspeakable violations of our rights as Afghan women are normalised, and States are not taking action, some even dropping support with cuts to international aid. Defending the rights of Afghan women and girls now is standing up for the rights of women and girls everywhere.

We call on all women and allies at all decision-making levels globally to:

- Act in solidarity to stop the normalisation of women’s rights violations and denounce gender apartheid in Afghanistan, which impacts women’s rights and situations everywhere and poses threats to peace and security.
- Support accountability efforts for crimes and violations of international human rights law committed in Afghanistan, including at the International Criminal Court, and at the International Court of Justice for violations of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- Support the creation of an independent accountability mechanism to investigate, collect, analyse, and preserve evidence of grave violations and abuses in Afghanistan, aiming to address entrenched impunity, advance accountability, and support victims’ rights to justice, truth, and reparation. This mechanism would complement the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Joint Updated **Q&As on the Establishment of an Independent International Accountability Mechanism** for Afghanistan. Available at [https://www.wilpf.org/advocacy\\_documents/updated-qas-on-the-establishment-of-an-independent-international-accountability-mechanism-for-afghanistan/](https://www.wilpf.org/advocacy_documents/updated-qas-on-the-establishment-of-an-independent-international-accountability-mechanism-for-afghanistan/)