



دادگاه مردمی برای زنان افغانستان
د افغانستان د بنځو لپاره ولسي محکمه
PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL FOR
WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN
PERMANENT PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL FOR WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN



Introduction

Given the devastating human rights situation for women and girls in Afghanistan and ever-increasing restrictions, Afghan civil society identified a pressing need for redress. Alongside formal judicial processes, engaging a complementary, grassroots mechanism was crucial to amplify the voices of Afghan women and hold the Taliban accountable.

Understanding this urgency, in December 2024, four human rights organizations – Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization (AHRDO), Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS), and Human Rights Defender Plus (HRD+) – submitted a request to the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) based in Rome, Italy to launch a People's Tribunal to hear and address international crimes, crimes against humanity, and gross human rights violations against women and girls in Afghanistan.

Acknowledging the dire human rights situation and systematic suffering of Afghan women and girls, the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal approved the request in February 2025, agreeing to conduct a hearing in October 2025, to examine human rights violations carried out by the Taliban. Currently, these four Afghan organizations, in continuous consultation with women and girls both inside and outside Afghanistan, and with the support of human rights organizations, civil society groups, legal professionals, and academic experts, are preparing and planning for this crucial hearing.

This document, "Frequently Asked Questions", is designed to address questions related to the People's Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan, and to raise public awareness and gain support and solidarity for the cause of women's rights in Afghanistan.

1 - What are People's Tribunals?

People's Tribunals are independent, civil society-led movements, also known as citizen or victim tribunals. These tribunals serve as an alternative to official international courts, addressing issues of impunity, especially where legal and judicial gaps prevent access to formal justice. In some cases, these tribunals pave the way and exert pressure on existing official courts to act or for the creation of formal tribunals. Furthermore, these tribunals may convene in parallel to official courts and judicial systems, even when cases are ongoing in formal settings. They play a vital role by offering findings, evidence, and decisions that inform or impact formal judicial processes.

People's Tribunals aim to combat impunity, acknowledge victims' voices, and end the silence that erodes accountability of alleged perpetrators of crimes. While these tribunals do not possess binding judicial authority, they have served as powerful mechanisms for many survivors, victims, and witnesses to share their stories, voice their pain, expose the truth, achieve recognition, seek reparations, restore dignity, and foster collective healing. These tribunals create an environment for rebuilding historical memory and recounting public narratives. In some instances, People's Tribunals have resulted in the recognition of committed crimes and compensation for victims.

2 - How do People's Tribunals differ from official international courts?

People's Tribunals, unlike official international courts, lack binding judicial authority, and their decisions typically include recommendations or are advisory, or symbolic in nature. However, in many cases, these tribunals' jurisdictional scope is broader than that of official international courts. For example, the International Criminal Court (ICC) only holds jurisdiction over specific individuals under certain conditions for specific issues, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) only addresses disputes between states. In contrast, People's Tribunals may issue judgments concerning both individual responsibility of natural persons and the collective responsibility of groups and states.

Unlike official international courts, whose legality and legitimacy stem from their founding documents and operations within those frameworks, People's Tribunals derive their credibility and legitimacy from public support, victim participation, transparency, independence, and the expertise of their members.

3 - What is the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT)?

The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) is an independent international body that operates with the support of the Lelio and Lisie Basso Foundation. This tribunal was established as a legal framework based on global public opinion, empowered to render decisions regarding severe crimes against people and minorities. The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal emerged in 1979 as the successor to the Russell Tribunals, which were created to judge crimes committed by the United States and other actors during the Vietnam war. Among People's Tribunals, the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal holds a

unique and significant position due to its permanence, composition of members, and presence of affiliated renowned international specialists.

To date, this tribunal has globally conducted over 50 hearings, addressing a wide range of legal and specialized topics. These include war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, as well as economic, environmental, and organized crimes. In the past, two sessions held by this tribunal focused on the former Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the Afghan people's right to self-determination and territorial integrity. These took place in Stockholm, Sweden (1981), and Paris, France (1982), respectively.

4 - Why did we decide to hold a hearing before the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal instead of creating a dedicated People's Tribunal?

Although both options fundamentally originate from the people and derive their legitimacy and credibility from the support of public opinion and expertise of their members, the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal was selected as it is a reputable, permanent international body commanding significant gravitas. This tribunal was established based on the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples, adopted in Algiers in 1976. It is recognized globally as an important and credible authority given its distinguished international experts reflecting the highest professional calibre and expertise in drawing global attention to people's rights and victims' support. Given these factors, the decisions issued by this tribunal will play a significant role in drawing global public attention to widespread and severe violations of women's and girls' rights in Afghanistan. They will also provide necessary recommendations and advice, leading to effective measures towards accountability and achieving justice in Afghanistan.

5 - What is the focus of this tribunal before the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, and why did we choose it?

The tribunal will focus on the international crimes against humanity of gender persecution, which the Taliban have allegedly committed against women and girls in Afghanistan. Additionally, it will examine Afghanistan's violations of international obligations under treaties related to women's and girls' rights, which the Taliban have disregarded and violated, and global implications. Furthermore, the tribunal will thoroughly investigate the violations of Afghan women's and girls' rights from the perspective of Islamic teachings. This inquiry will cover the period from August 15, 2021, to the present.

These issues have been identified for the tribunal's examination due to the ongoing and escalating commission of crimes and human rights violations against women and girls in Afghanistan, and the urgent need for accountability in this situation. These widespread violations have had profound, lasting, and irreparable effects on women and girls, and consequently on Afghanistan itself. We believe no solution exists other than ending this situation and holding the perpetrators accountable for these

crimes. Conducting these hearings and gaining practical experience in designing and implementing People's Tribunals will also provide Afghan civil society organizations with the opportunity to organize future People's Tribunals on other past or ongoing human rights violations in Afghanistan.

6 - What will be the significance and outcomes of this tribunal?

This tribunal holds immense significance because it will be addressing one of the most critical and agonizing issues of human conscience, : the commission of crimes against humanity and the widespread and systematic violation of human rights against women and girls in Afghanistan. This issue is not only a crucial turning point for Afghanistan and its future but also for all societies committed to human principles and values.

Given the serious consequence of the international community ignoring the plight of Afghan women and girls and harmful cross-border consequences, this tribunal can play a significant role in drawing global public attention to the human rights situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. By providing necessary recommendations, it can prompt effective actions towards accountability and achieving justice in the country.

As discussed, while this tribunal's decisions are not legally binding or enforceable, they can spark fundamental transformations and changes in Afghanistan, leading to the following significant outcomes.

- A documented and credible picture of the human rights situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, ensuring that victims' voices and demands are not forgotten.
- Diplomatic pressure on decision-makers in various countries and international organizations to adopt effective and decisive measures against the Taliban. This includes conditioning diplomatic and political engagement on their adherence to fundamental human rights principles, especially the rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls.
- Evidence and documentation gathered in this tribunal can serve as a credible basis for initiating or supporting ongoing investigations by official judicial bodies, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and for pursuing victims' complaints in third countries.
- Strengthen and accelerate existing international processes for justice and accountability for the Taliban's violations of international law. It will also advocate for the establishment of new mechanisms to address crimes against humanity and systematic human rights violations against Afghan women and girls that have not yet been activated.
- Training and capacity building for civil society organizations in human rights documentation, launching other forms of advocacy, and ensuring accountability and justice.

- Strengthening the element of hope in the civil struggle of the Afghan people, especially our country's pioneering women and girls, towards ending existing suffering and inequalities.

7 - Who are the parties to the case in this tribunal?

The claimants and applicants in this case are the women and girls of Afghanistan. Civil society and human rights organizations in Afghanistan, through the prosecutors, will present the charges and claims on their behalf. This work is carried out in continuous consultation with Afghan women and girls in cities and villages across Afghanistan, whose lived experiences now consist of daily violations of their fundamental human rights. The defendants, or the respondent party in this case are the Taliban and its members, who unlawfully and illegitimately control the territory of Afghanistan and have committed severe and systematic crimes and human rights violations against Afghan women and girls.

8 - Who will handle the prosecution, judgment, and defence in this tribunal?

Since the plaintiffs in this case are the women and girls of Afghanistan, four Afghan citizens will serve as the prosecutors. These individuals are experts in international law and sociology and possess the necessary knowledge and expertise in their respective fields.

A group of human rights experts supports the prosecutors in the collection of evidence for presentation to the tribunal. This team, by resorting to various methods and approaches such as referring to different local sources, using questionnaires, conducting interviews, assessing reports of other human rights organizations, comparing and analysing verifiable information and evidence, will ensure that only authenticated and verified evidence is submitted to the Tribunal. . During the process there has also been a group of six international experts who provide the prosecutors with requisite advice on different legal or evidentiary matters.

Independent international experts, with full knowledge and understanding of the situation in Afghanistan, the prevailing conditions, and circumstances faced by Afghan women and girls, will render a judgment in this tribunal after completion of the hearing. The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal selects these "judges" to ensure objectivity, transparency and independence. However, a key emphasis remains on selecting judges primarily from expert women from Islamic countries. This ensures they examine the issues not only within the framework of international law but also through the lens of Islamic teachings. The aim is for the judges to issue their ruling on these violations from both perspectives.

Given that the Taliban and their specific members are the accused and accountable party in this case, they will bear the responsibility for the defence. Although the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal will inform the Taliban of the accusations and violations against them, an ex officio will undertake the defence in their absence.

9 - What are the stages of the tribunal's work?

The tribunal's work proceeds in three stages: pre-trial, trial, and post-trial.

- The pre-trial stage begins when the requesting organizations submit their formal request to the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal's secretariat, and the tribunal accepts it. A crucial part of this stage involves appointing the evidence-gathering team, prosecutors, and experts by the requesting organizations, and the judicial panel by the Permanent People's Tribunal. After their selection, each group will carry out its specific duties. During this stage, the evidence team will gather information and prepare the necessary documents for the indictment. This group must adhere to security measures and ethical principles, taking necessary steps to maintain the security and confidentiality of information and protect the identities of victims and individuals willing to testify. This will both prevent identity disclosure and create a safe, trustworthy environment for witnesses' voluntary participation in the documentation process. The prosecutors, considering the evidence gathered and consultations with the public and victims, will prepare the indictment, which includes individual criminal charges and instances of widespread, gross human rights violations by the group. The expert group, comprising international specialists, will advise and guide the prosecutors in the drafting process of the indictment, ensuring it reflects the people's demands. The judicial panel, selected by the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, will consider the indictment's contents and evidence presented during the hearing also forms during this stage.
- The trial stage essentially encompasses the days of the hearings. These sessions will last from one to several days (three days in this case), depending on the breadth and volume of the issues raised in the indictment. During these hearings, the prosecutors will present the indictment before the judicial panel, and present necessary witnesses and evidence. A key component of this stage is the presentation of the judicial panel's preliminary findings, which will occur immediately after the hearing, on the following day.
- The post-trial stage begins after the hearing concludes and the judicial panel presents its findings. This stage includes the judgment session (which, according to the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal's guidelines, takes place two months after the hearing) and subsequent advocacy efforts. Presenting a comprehensive report of the judicial panel's findings to official authorities and institutions is a key action in the post-trial phase. We will send this report to official judicial structures, including



the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), relevant United Nations bodies, including the UN Human Rights Council, to garner international support, ensure accountability, and prevent the recurrence of similar crimes. This report will also be shared and followed up with refugee-hosting countries (to encourage victim support), diplomatic missions, and through international campaigns.

10 - How can people inside or outside Afghanistan cooperate with this process?

Since this process is people-centered, drawing on widespread public cooperation, participation, and support are decisive factors in its success. Afghans, both inside and outside the country, can contribute by providing relevant documents and evidence to the requesting organizations (contact information for these organizations is at the end of this document). They can also provide testimony in person, via video, audio, or in writing before the tribunal. Given serious security concerns and risks, we do not recommend undertaking these activities from within Afghanistan. However, individuals outside Afghanistan can contact the relevant organizations via email and the contact number provided at the end of this document to cooperate in the aforementioned areas.

11 - Is direct contact between individuals and the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal possible?

Direct contact with the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal is not possible, according to their guidelines. This is because the PPT primarily organizes the hearing, and the People's Tribunal judges render their findings and decisions. Therefore, any communication with the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal must occur through the requesting organizations.

12 - How can people inside or outside Afghanistan access the indictment and tribunal hearings?

The indictment, drawing on existing documents and evidence, close consultations with women and girls both inside and outside Afghanistan, and considering the views of civil society organizations, human rights organizations, and legal professionals, is currently in preparation. After finalization, a version will be published on the tribunal's website in three languages, omitting sensitive sections to prevent security risks for individuals and participants in the process.

The tribunal hearings will be accessible live and directly to all audiences worldwide. Anyone interested can watch these sessions both inside and outside Afghanistan through media outlets that will be announced later.

13 - What role will other civil society and human rights organizations, play in this process?

Given the role and importance of civil society and human rights organizations in such people-centered processes, numerous avenues exist for their active cooperation and participation. This collaboration, beyond providing documents and evidence to the requesting organizations, can also take shape within broader support and strengthening frameworks for this process. These organizations, in addition to raising public awareness about the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, can actively participate in subsequent advocacy efforts.

Although the requesting organizations have held numerous consultative meetings with various organizations, civil activists, and human rights defenders, due to the inherently people-centred and victim-focused nature of this process, there is a need for additional consultations and outreach related to this process.

14 - Where can the public find more information?

All information related to the tribunal and its proceedings at all stages will be available through the tribunal's associated social media channels (listed at the end of this document). Additionally, all this information will be disseminated through Afghan media operating outside the country.

15 - What are the key dates related to this process?

The key dates for this process are as follows:

- December 2024: The four requesting organizations submitted a request to the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal to conduct a hearing on gender persecution and systematic human rights violations against Afghan women and girls by the Taliban.
- February 2025: The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal accepted the request to conduct a hearing in 2025.
- April 2025: Appointment of the prosecution team, the evidence team, and international experts.
- July 2025: The official announcement of the People's Tribunal through a press release.
- August 2025: The official submission of the indictment to the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal by the prosecutors.
- August 2025: Appointment of the Tribunal judges by the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal.
- October 8-10, 2025: Conducting the hearing session of the Tribunal in Madrid, Spain.
- First half of December 2025: Announcement of the verdict of the tribunal by the judges.



دادگاه مردمی برای زنان افغانستان
د افغانستان د ښځو لپاره ولسي محکمه
**PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL FOR
WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN**
PERMANENT PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL

