

Press Release Five Years of Resistance Against Repression in Afghanistan

15/08/2026

15 August 2025 marks the fifth anniversary of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan — a development that has brought serious, widespread, and devastating consequences for human rights and particularly for the rights of women and girls.. Yet even as the Taliban have imposed systematic restrictions on the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Afghan people over the past five years — above all on women and girls — this period has also witnessed the persistent resilience, resistance and advocacy of women educators and organizers, civil society activists, and human rights defenders, both inside the country and in exile. Despite the Taliban's ever-increasing restrictions and pressure, this resistance is alive and dynamic. Afghan women's struggle for dignity and rights has helped activate international justice and accountability mechanisms for Afghanistan, build and expand solidarity across the world, and raise global awareness of the human rights situation in the country.

The Taliban continue their campaign of gender persecution. They suppress freedom of expression and the media, and they carry out arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, and targeted and extrajudicial killings. Together, these abuses paint an alarming picture of the current human rights situation in Afghanistan. Alongside widespread human rights violations, these restrictions reflect an organized policy to crush civil society, silence critical voices, and eliminate the grounds for reform, change, and peaceful participation from within Afghan society.

Over the past five years, the Taliban have revoked, suspended, or effectively nullified the existing legal frameworks and guarantees that protected citizens' rights and freedoms. They have also enacted and enforced laws, regulations, and directives that stand in clear contradiction with human rights standards and Afghanistan's international obligations. Chief among these measures, the adoption and enforcement of the "Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" and the "Criminal Procedural Code" have further intensified repression, restricted citizens' fundamental freedoms, and driven violations of human rights.

Rawadari's findings show that between 15 August 2021 and 31 December 2025, 6,929 civilians were killed and injured in targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial killings; bomb and suicide attacks; by explosive remnants of war; and Pakistani military attacks.

During the same period, the Taliban and unidentified armed men killed at least 399 former government employees and members of their families in targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial killings. In addition, they killed at least 47 protesters, including 8 women, for organizing or taking part in peaceful protests.

Rawadari's findings also reveal the sheer scale of arbitrary and unlawful detentions. From 15 August 2021 to 31 December 2025, the Taliban — chiefly their intelligence agencies and the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue — unlawfully and arbitrarily detained at least 6,043 Afghan citizens, including 78 women protesters. Those detained included at least 646 former government employees; 643 civil society activists, journalists, and human rights defenders; and 1,366 people whom the Taliban accused of collaborating with, belonging to, or maintaining ties with opposition groups.

Over the same period, severe torture in Taliban detention facilities killed at least 51 detainees, and the Taliban forcibly disappeared at least 171 others. The victims included former government employees, activists, human rights defenders, and other civilians.

Furthermore, during this period, Taliban courts punished at least 2,423 citizens on various charges through extralegal, cruel, and inhuman methods. These punishments included the public execution of death and qisas (retribution) sentences, flogging, and blackening the faces of the accused.

Despite the widespread repression and restrictions of the past five years, the courage, creativity and civic resistance of Afghanistan's citizens — especially Afghan women and girls — in defense of their fundamental rights and freedoms have kept the hope alive for a future founded on human rights, equality, and human dignity. Civil society organizations, human rights defenders, media outlets, and journalists have likewise played a significant role in monitoring and documenting human rights violations, collecting and preserving evidence, and amplifying the voices of survivors.

On this devastating anniversary, drawing inspiration from the courage of women of Afghanistan, Rawadari calls for the reversal of all draconian restrictions on their lives and rights. Rawadari further calls for global solidarity with women of Afghanistan in their struggle for dignity and rights.

For an equal and peaceful Afghanistan.

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