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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0204/2022**

5.4.2022

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Afghanistan, in particular the situation of women's rights (2022/2571(RSP))

**Petras Auštrevičius, Abir Al-Sahlani, Olivier Chastel, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Javier Nart, Urmas Paet, Frédérique Ries, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Dragoș Tudorache, Hilde Vautmans**  
on behalf of the Renew Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, in particular the situation of women's rights (2022/2571(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Afghanistan,
- having regard to the Taliban's announcement of the creation of the caretaker government of Afghanistan of 7 September 2021,
- having regard to UN Resolution 2626 (2022) of 17 March 2022 on the situation in Afghanistan, which extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA),
- having regard to the UN Security Council press statement of 27 March 2022 on Afghanistan,
- having regard to the list of 2021 finalists for the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, which includes Afghan women,
- having regard to the Afghan Women Days at the European Parliament on 1 and 2 February 2022,
- having regard to the statement by leading MEPs of 8 March 2022 on defending the rights of Afghan women,
- having regard to the statement by the Chair of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with Afghanistan, Petras Auštrevičius, of 23 March 2022 on the Taliban's announcement to extend the education ban for female students above the 6th grade, and to the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), Josep Borrell, of 23 March 2022 on restrictions to the return to school,
- having regard to the declaration by VP/HR Josep Borrell on behalf of the European Union of 28 March 2022 calling for the immediate re-opening of secondary schools for girls,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951,
- having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979,
- having regard to the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the UN Global Compact on Refugees, which followed the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly on 19 September 2016,

- having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Taliban’s Ministry of Education announced in a statement of 21 March 2022 that ‘it is committed to the right to education of all its citizens’ and was working to ‘eliminate all kinds of discrimination’;
- B. whereas the de facto authorities of Afghanistan pledged on 15 January 2022 to allow girls to return to school at all levels after the start of the new school year in the second half of March 2022;
- C. whereas Afghanistan’s girls were due to return to school on 23 March 2022, but a last-minute government announcement postponed their return until the government decides on the appropriate uniforms for girls in line with ‘Sharia law and Afghan tradition’;
- D. whereas Afghanistan ranks last (170/170 countries) on the Global Women, Peace and Security Index, making it the most dangerous country for women;
- E. whereas Afghan women are facing increased levels of violence and repression under the Taliban as the international spotlight fades;
- F. whereas according to UN Special Procedures, Taliban leaders are attempting to erase women and girls from public life through systematic gender-based discrimination and violence;
- G. whereas since taking over the country on 15 August 2021, the Taliban have closed the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and recreated the Ministry of Vice and Virtue, which during the previous Taliban period resorted to public beatings and imprisonment in order to enforce restrictions; whereas the Taliban have abolished the laws protecting women and have imposed harsh restrictions on women’s right to work, access education and healthcare, participate in sporting activities and exercise their freedom of peaceful assembly and of expression; whereas the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has been closed since the Taliban takeover;
- H. whereas according to a new directive, Afghan women are not allowed to travel distances of more than 45 miles (72 km) from their home without the accompaniment of a close male relative; whereas this directive follows a directive issued in November 2021 that banned television stations from broadcasting programmes with female actors;
- I. whereas peaceful protests for women rights in Afghanistan are being suppressed with force; whereas human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, and women protesters and their family members have been abducted, with no information shared about their whereabouts, despite repeated pleas for their release from national and international human rights groups; whereas abducted women activists have later been found to be in Taliban custody, where some have been compelled to release public videos and/or ‘confessions’ under duress regarding their human rights work and activism; whereas human rights defenders who are released from custody, together with their families, continue to fear for their lives and safety;
- J. whereas among the 47 % of the country’s population who live below the poverty line, 61-72 % are women; whereas the restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women’s work have

had the greatest impact on female-headed households, driving them into poverty and hunger;

- K. whereas poverty is directly linked to higher rates of sexual violence and abuse against children and women; whereas previous to the Taliban takeover, 51 % of Afghan women had experienced both physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner and this figure is expected to have risen since the de facto government took power;
- L. whereas poverty has led Afghan families to arranging marriages and collecting dowries for their baby girls, and whereas as a result of girls not being able to attend school, there has been a 500 % increase in child marriages in Afghanistan; whereas previous to the Taliban takeover, 35 % of girls were married before the age of 18, and 9 % before the age of 15;
- M. whereas Afghanistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world, with 50% of births being unattended by a physician and thousands of women dying every year from easily preventable pregnancy-related causes;
- N. whereas the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is one of the fastest deteriorating crises in the world; whereas over half the population will require humanitarian assistance this year, driven by spiralling acute food insecurity, eroded livelihoods and the collapse of the economy and basic services; whereas nearly 100 % of female-headed Afghan households are facing insufficient food consumption and 82 % of these households are turning to drastic measures, compared with 70 % of male-headed households; whereas thousands of Afghans have resorted to selling their organs in order to feed their families and to prevent the sale of their child; whereas the ongoing humanitarian crisis will be prolonged by the freezing of Afghan assets and the resulting liquidity crisis;
- O. whereas a safe path via land or air out of Afghanistan is critically needed for all human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, seeking to leave Afghanistan while ensuring that the Taliban keeps their pledge to allow persons, including human rights defenders, to leave without harm; whereas there is currently lack of clarity regarding who would qualify for resettlement visas and what the process is; whereas for those who are able to access a visa, it remains challenging to obtain travel documents, visas to third transit countries and a safe pathway out of the country, and for those without passports, safely obtaining a travel document in Afghanistan requires diplomatic intervention;
- P. whereas those who have relocated to third countries, including women human rights defenders, are in urgent need of shelter, services and assurance against forced repatriation;
- Q. whereas according to the International Organization for Migration's March 2022 report, more than 1 258 million Afghans fled their country in 2021, twice as many as in recent years; whereas at the same time, the number of internally displaced persons returning to their home village has tripled, reaching a record 3.06 million returns in 2021; whereas across the region, nearly 5 million Afghans remain displaced outside the country, 90 % of whom are hosted in Pakistan and Iran;
- R. whereas according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), when seeking refuge in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan, 35 % of women and girls reported feeling unsafe due to

gender-based violence and only 70 % of girls were enrolled in schools, compared with 92 % of boys;

- S. whereas the EU has stepped up its support to the Afghan people by launching projects worth over EUR 268.3 million that focus on maintaining education, sustaining livelihoods and protecting public health; whereas these projects are part of the overall EUR 1 billion EU support package announced by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in October 2021 and include aid for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons by supporting human rights defenders and civil society organisations;
  - T. whereas according to Reporters Without Borders, 231 media outlets (40 %) have closed and 80 % of the 6 400 journalists who have lost their jobs are women; whereas the Taliban authorities have severely limited what the media can report, imposed restrictions on international media such as the BBC, and continue to detain, beat and flog journalists;
  - U. whereas until 15 August 2021, under the former Republic of Afghanistan, women thrived in high-level positions such as Members of Parliament, Ministers, judges, governors, lawyers and ambassadors; whereas the Taliban forces have forcibly removed legitimate former government officials and have not included women in its new unrecognised de facto government;
  - V. whereas the key request from Afghan women during the Afghan Women Days at the European Parliament in February 2022 was to have a platform for voices of Afghan women and girls to be heard and to ensure their participation in political decision processes regarding the future of Afghanistan; whereas the inclusion of civil society groups, including women's organisations, makes a peace agreement 64 % less likely to fail;
1. Deplores the fact that the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan has been steadily deteriorating since the Taliban takeover; Deplores the Taliban's continued efforts to erase women and girls from the public life of the country and to deny them their fundamental human rights such as the right to education, work and healthcare;
  2. Condemns in the strongest terms the Taliban's decision to postpone the return of girls to secondary education, despite their previous commitments to provide all citizens with accessible education and their binding-legal obligation to uphold the fundamental human rights of all Afghan citizens;
  3. Recalls that the EU has a solid position regarding any political engagements with the Taliban, which is guided by thematic benchmarks for engagement based on the principles of adherence to human rights for all and the rule of law; is of the opinion that, since 15 August 2021, there has been only a deterioration in these benchmarks, which cannot justify any de facto recognition of a Taliban government;
  4. Deplores the violent repression of peaceful women's rights protests in Afghanistan and calls for an end to the harassment, arrests and forced confessions of women's rights defenders and for their immediate and unconditional release;
  5. Welcomes UN Resolution 2626 (2022), which was adopted on 17 March 2022 and which extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); calls for

the EU and its Member States, in line with the UN Security Council press statement on Afghanistan of 27 March 2022, to support the mandate of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, including in engaging with all relevant Afghan actors and stakeholders to ensure the reopening of schools for all female students without further delay;

6. Calls on the de facto Afghan authorities to form an inclusive government that involves women in the decision-making process at all levels;
7. Insists on the need to develop a new EU strategy for Afghanistan adapted to the situation of women and girls in the country and which describes a concrete set of activities related to the promotion of women's rights and their participation in public life, in line with the extended mandate of UNAMA;
8. Expresses its full support for the efforts of Afghan women to regain their rightful place in society and remains committed to providing a platform for Afghan women to make their voices heard and to having their voices reflected in the actions of the international community as regards the Taliban and responses to the human rights and humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan;
9. Invites Afghan parliamentarians, former government officials and civil society activists, in particular the 2021 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought finalists, to actively engage with the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Afghanistan, relevant committees and other bodies in an effort to ensure that the EU's policy in support of Afghanistan responds to the needs of the Afghan people;
10. Welcomes the launch of the Afghan Women Leaders Forum, facilitated by the EU, aimed at helping to ensure women's active and meaningful participation in the dialogue about current developments and the future of Afghanistan; calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to further involve the European Parliament in this process;
11. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to convene the first International Conference of Afghan Women, with the overarching objective of rebuilding women's networks after the takeover of the country and complementing the work of the Afghan Women Leaders Forum from a broader and more inclusive perspective;
12. Takes note of the Oslo talks of January 2022 between European and US officials and a Taliban delegation, as well as the recent cancellation by the United States of the Doha Talks in response to the Taliban's decision not to reopen schools for girls; highlights that any further national talks with the Taliban must include Afghan women representatives and focus on alleviating the plight of Afghan women and girls; insists on the inclusion of women in the Western delegations engaging with the Taliban, as consistently demonstrated by the EU;
13. Urges the Taliban to reverse their decisions and restrictions that specifically target women and girls, re-open the Ministry of Women's Affairs and create an enabling environment to allow women, including those from rural areas, to return and fully participate in the political, social and economic spheres of society, in particular by including them in the governing structure; underlines that this must be an indispensable condition for any

further commitment by the international community with the de facto Afghan authorities;

14. Calls on the Taliban to uphold its commitment to ensuring the right to education for all Afghan citizens, including women and girls, to ending harassment, threats and attacks against teachers and students, and to avoiding any discriminatory policies affecting girls' right to education;
15. Praises and supports all women's rights activists, human rights defenders and civil society organisations, both in Afghanistan and in exile, who are still carrying out their legitimate and peaceful work, despite heightened danger;
16. Urges the Commission to allocate adequate and specific funds towards, and implement, women's rights programmes and projects as part of a comprehensive and long-term commitment to supporting human rights and women's rights in Afghanistan;
17. Calls on the Commission to ensure that EU support to the Afghan people channelled through UN agencies working in Afghanistan explicitly prioritises the needs of women and girls and the prevention of child marriage through a sustainable plan to allow access to education, healthcare, including sexual education and mental health services, financial assistance and economic entrepreneurship;
18. Notes that since the closure of schools and universities, Afghan girls have been secretly studying in online courses and using various forms of self-study; expresses its highest appreciation to the educators and civil society organisations that are making online education possible and calls for the EU and its Member States to provide financial support, and for EU-based educational institutions to contribute;
19. Calls on the de facto authorities to guarantee all women and girls full rights and access to healthcare, including reproductive and sexual healthcare, in all regions of Afghanistan;
20. Supports the establishment of the Afghan Exile Online University, with financial support from the EU;
21. Underlines the need to amplify advocacy opportunities headed by Afghan women, and to invest in innovative ways to provide direct financial or operational support to these activities, in particular in the fields of education, access to healthcare, job opportunities, sport activities and civil awareness, including the capacity for women and girls to express themselves in Afghan society;
22. Urges the international community to actively arrange and support the safe passage and evacuation of Afghan women and girls, who are at heightened risk of violence and abuse from the Taliban forces, non-state armed groups, community or family members, and who wish to leave the country;
23. Reiterates its call for a special visa programme and increased coordination among the EU and its Member States in granting visas for Afghan women seeking protection, in particular women's rights activists, women judges, lawyers, police officers, soldiers, politicians, journalists, artists and sportswomen, as well as the LGBTI+ community;
24. Calls for the EU and its Member States to provide assistance to Afghanistan's



neighbouring states in order to provide appropriate humanitarian support to all those fleeing the country;

25. Calls for the EU and its Member States to use every diplomatic avenue available to encourage neighbouring countries to ensure that their borders are open to those at risk seeking refuge and asylum from Afghanistan, and in particular women and girls, and to ensure that those travelling by air are not repatriated back to Afghanistan, especially for administrative issues with their travel documents;
26. Stresses the importance of addressing the problem of gender-based violence faced by Afghan women and girls in host countries, particularly in Iran and Pakistan, as well as ensuring that they attend school, participate in the labour market and have access to health services, including mental health services; recalls that refugees and those in transit are particularly at risk of experiencing gender-based violence; calls therefore for greater funding for humanitarian organisations and agencies carrying out protection work;
27. Deplores the fact that gender-based violence in domestic settings has risen considerably since the Taliban's takeover and the collapse of the Afghan economy; insists on the need to generate jobs and maintain the social fabric of Afghan society in order to shield women and children from this risk in the short term; stresses therefore that broader macroeconomic measures, alongside humanitarian assistance, will be crucial in tackling domestic gender-based violence;
28. Recalls its instruction to the EEAS to convey to Pakistan's leadership that it bears responsibility for security and stability in Afghanistan and that it must use its influence on the Taliban to achieve those aims, including ensuring fundamental human rights for Afghan women and girls;
29. Reaffirms the need for the EU to strengthen cooperation with Central Asian countries and to encourage their constructive practical role in settling Afghan refugees; stresses that this cooperation should not undermine the EU's defence of fundamental values and the rule of law;
30. Calls on countries to bring an immediate end to deportations and other returns to Afghanistan or to third countries where they might be at risk of being returned to Afghanistan;
31. Emphasises that the liberation of women and girls will remain unachievable as long as the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe continues; stresses that women's rights, like all human rights, begin with the right to life; urges the EU and its Member States to address the drivers of the ongoing humanitarian crisis by making every effort to restore liquidity and maintain basic social services; calls for the unfreezing of Afghan assets and increased financial support to programmes such as DG INTPA's assistance focusing on basic needs and livelihoods and the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund;
32. Regrets the fact that on 31 March 2022 international donors, including the EU and its Member States, pledged only USD 2.44 billion towards the UN's USD 4.4 billion appeal for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan under the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan aimed at addressing food insecurity and its dire consequences for the Afghan population and ensuring that crucial operational barriers relating to sanctions and banking restrictions are



addressed, and that exemptions and flexibility to repurpose programmatic funds are granted, so that humanitarian actors are able to absorb the funding and scale up their activities;

33. Insists on the need for unfettered humanitarian access to ensure that funds committed actually reach those affected, especially women and girls; recalls that humanitarian aid must be neutral, impartial, humane and independent and should never be subject to any conditionality; calls on the Council, the Commission and the EEAS to consistently convey the message that the provision of humanitarian assistance is not conditional upon the Council's five benchmarks for engagement with the Taliban;
34. Calls on the EEAS, the EU Delegation to Afghanistan and Member States' embassies and headquarters to provide increased support to human rights defenders, and in particular women's rights activists, in Afghanistan, and to make use of all the tools at their disposal and fully implement the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, including ensuring accountability for violations through private and public advocacy on individual cases and patterns of violations, ensuring internal protection mechanisms, services and support for those in the country, safe evacuation paths for those seeking to leave and specific measures to protect those in transit in third countries;
35. Supports the calls of Afghan civil society, in particular those of the participants of the Afghan Women Days at the European Parliament, to hold the de facto Taliban government accountable for previous crimes and to not forget their atrocities;
36. Calls for the new Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan to be provided with sufficient funds and the necessary expertise and diplomatic backing to fulfil his mandate; calls on the UN Human Rights Council to take the necessary action to establish a robust international commission of inquiry, or an independent international investigative mechanism, with a multi-year mandate and adequate resources to document, investigate, regularly report on and collect evidence of violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law committed across the country, including violations of women's rights and gender-based violence, by all parties; calls for the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to include prevention and accountability for human rights violations;
37. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Members of the Afghan National Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council and the Taliban's political office in Doha.