



Plenary sitting

B9-0205/2022

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))

Pedro Marques, Maria Arena, Tonino Picula, Udo Bullmann, Elena Yoncheva, Maria Noichl, Mónica Silvana González
on behalf of the S&D 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 the situation in Afghanistan, notably that of 16 September 2021¹,
- having regard to the declaration of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on behalf of the European Union of 28 March 2022 calling for the immediate re-opening of secondary schools for girls in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the statement of the Chair of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with Afghanistan of 23 March 2022 on the Taliban announcement of the extension of the education ban for female students above the 6th grade,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 2626 (2020) of 10 March 2020 on the situation in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, presented at the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council of 22 February - 19 March 2021,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by Afghanistan in 2003,
- having regard to the Afghan Law on Protection of Child Rights, ratified on 5 March 2019,
- having regard to the Cooperation Agreement of 18 February 2017 on Partnership and Development between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, of the other part²,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, on Children and Armed Conflict, and on Human Rights Defenders,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in Geneva on 28 July 1951, and the 1967 Protocol thereto,
- 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

¹ OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 133.

² OJ L 67, 14.3.2017, p. 3.

September 2016,

- having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021 following the withdrawal of NATO and Allied troops; whereas it re-established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and appointed an all-male government, including several members from the 1996-2001 Taliban regime, some of whom are wanted on terrorism charges;
- B. whereas almost eight months after the Taliban seized control in Afghanistan, the political, security, human rights and humanitarian situations in the country remain dismal; whereas humanitarian needs are rampant; whereas Afghanistan now has the highest number of people facing emergency levels of food insecurity in the world; whereas women and girls are at particular risk of malnutrition, gender-based violence and early marriages due to efforts to ease food shortages within families;
- C. whereas the country remains extremely insecure; whereas terrorist organisations including the regional Islamic State group IS Khorasan and Al-Qaeda are active in the country; whereas violence, indiscriminate and targeted killings and forced evictions and other human rights violations are widespread; whereas during armed conflicts women have historically paid a higher price, suffering from gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and sexual violence as a weapon of war;
- D. whereas women's access to healthcare and information about their health continues to be at risk, as they are not allowed to access clinics and doctors without being accompanied by a male relative; whereas urgent or life-saving treatments could become impossible under such restrictions; whereas modern contraceptives, as well as prenatal and postnatal care, are often unavailable;
- E. whereas the United Nations Office for the Coordination of the Humanitarian Affairs estimates that more than half of the population will be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022; whereas in January 2022, the UN launched its largest-ever appeal (USD 4.4 billion) for humanitarian assistance for a single country to address the immense needs in Afghanistan; whereas to date only 13 % of the budget target is funded; whereas 3 million children are at risk of death from acute malnutrition; whereas Afghanistan faces mounting prices and increasing scarcity of agricultural imports and food aid, notably wheat, as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine; whereas the EU pledged EUR 113 million in new humanitarian funding for the year 2022, including EUR 18 million in support to Afghan refugees and their host communities in Iran and Pakistan; whereas the cumulative figure pledged by Team Europe at the Afghanistan pledging conference amounted to EUR 525 million;
- F. whereas in 2021, more than 710 000 people were internally displaced in Afghanistan, adding to the 4 million people already displaced in the country; whereas almost 6.5 million Afghans are living as refugees in Iran and Pakistan;
- G. whereas the human rights situation has rapidly deteriorated; whereas the list of vulnerable and at-risk individuals covers most of the population including women, girls, the LGBTI+ community, ethnic and religious minorities, civil society activists, academics, journalists, lawyers, judges, artists, and politicians and civil servants from

the previous Afghan Government; whereas possibilities to flee are rare and people are forced to stay in the country despite the risks they face daily;

- H. whereas extrajudicial killings and repression of freedom of expression have been reported; whereas many human rights violations and abuses go unreported owing to the absence of a proper human rights monitoring mechanism and civil society organisations under Taliban rule;
- I. whereas women and girls are being denied their fundamental rights and excluded from participation in public life in Afghanistan; whereas they face gender-based discrimination and violence, murder, forced and early marriage, intimidation and harassment; whereas there is a well-founded fear that the Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women, which imposes criminal penalties for child and forced marriages, domestic violence and numerous other abuses against women, will be repealed;
- J. whereas women's equal and meaningful participation in political leadership and activism is a precondition to democracy; whereas the Taliban has not envisaged the continued participation of women in leadership roles in Afghanistan, and is persecuting women leaders, officials and activists, as well as women academics, human rights defenders, journalists, civil servants, doctors and artists, and using lethal force to disperse women's rights protests; whereas there are reports of the Taliban tracking individuals who served the previous authorities and then carrying out revenge killings;
- K. whereas many women were dismissed from their employment following the collapse of the Afghan Government, and escorted home by members of the Taliban; whereas they were informed that male members of their family would replace them in the workplace; whereas women are still denied access to the labour market in many parts of the country;
- L. whereas Afghan women have been refused air travel unless accompanied by a male relative; whereas women have been denied access to sporting activities and public spaces such as parks;
- M. whereas the Taliban interim government contains no women, and in 2021 it abolished the Ministry of Women's Affairs; whereas the Taliban regime of 1996-2001 was responsible for some of the most fundamental and inhumane repression of women in the world; whereas the current Taliban regime has shown no sign that it has changed this regard, and is thus rolling back the progress made in the past 20 years;
- N. whereas girls over 12 years old are denied an education in Afghanistan; whereas the Taliban pledged that access to schools would be resumed for girls over 12; whereas it has been almost 200 days since this pledge was made and girls remain banned from schools; whereas schools and universities have been segregated by gender and a restrictive dress code for girls has been introduced; whereas this could also lead to lower numbers of girls entering primary education, as the perspective of higher education or gainful employment for women seem out of reach in the future; whereas this entails the risk of a lost generation of girls barely knowing how to read and write;
- O. whereas Afghan girls and women have bravely held peaceful protests in the country,

demanding that their right to education be respected;

- P. whereas there has been widespread condemnation among the international community of the continued ban on girls' education, including from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation; whereas the World Bank has frozen projects totalling USD 600 million in response to the ban, amid concerns that its initiatives will not be able to provide services for women and girls;
 - Q. whereas Afghanistan has one of the highest numbers of people with disabilities per capita and they are facing stigma, discrimination and a lack of support; whereas women and girls with disabilities are at particular risk of their needs being overlooked and of facing intersectional discrimination;
 - R. whereas considerable gaps remain in the level and accessibility of psychosocial support and services provided by EU Member States to Afghan refugees and evacuees, who have experienced enormous trauma and psychological distress;
 - S. whereas the EU has established five key priorities for engagement in Afghanistan, namely: allowing Afghan and foreign nationals the right to leave the country; respecting their right to freedoms, including freedom of movement; providing access to education, participation in public life and humanitarian assistance; preventing the proliferation of terrorism in Afghan territory; and establishing an inclusive and representative government;
 - T. whereas the Taliban controls systems holding sensitive biometric data left behind by Western donors, including digital identity and payroll systems containing Afghans' personal and biometric data, which could be used to target perceived opponents;
1. Deeply deplores the continuing deterioration of the political, economic, humanitarian, human rights and security situation in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of August 2021; strongly condemns the persecution of human rights defenders and journalists, extrajudicial killings and the repression of freedom of expression; particularly condemns the Taliban's repression of women's and girls' rights, among others their rights to freedom of movement, access to education and participation in public life; encourages the EU to make public diplomatic efforts to protect protesters and other rights defenders;
 2. Regrets the fact that no progress has been made on the five benchmarks to which the EU's engagement with the de facto Taliban government is linked; reiterates its continued support for the validity of these benchmarks, including women's and girls' rights such as access to education and full and equal participation in public life;
 3. Expresses its profound solidarity with Afghan women and girls; requests that the EU increase its political and financial support for women's rights activists in Afghanistan and that it guarantee their safety by all means possible;
 4. Deeply regrets the continued ban on girls' secondary education; underlines that access to education is a universal right and not a privilege based on gender; stresses that a peaceful and inclusive Afghanistan will require equal participation of men and women in education, employment and civic life;

5. Recalls the Taliban's promises that women's access to education would resume; insists, therefore, that the Taliban now adhere to its own commitments and reinstate provisions for all girls in all parts of the country to regularly attend school to receive a comprehensive and quality secondary education; urges the Taliban to set and observe a clear timetable for the resumption of classes without delay;
6. Commends the bravery of the girls and women who take part in protests, which makes them, de facto, the only opposition force left in Afghanistan; urges the Taliban ensure the freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, including as a means for people to voice their concerns and exercise their right to participate in public protests;
7. Calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission to engage with the de facto authorities of Afghanistan to demand the whereabouts of women protestors who are believed to have been detained and disappeared for demanding their rights, to call for their immediate and unconditional release and to demand that the Taliban immediately stop these arbitrary and extrajudicial practices, which are against international law;
8. Deeply regrets the fact that 20 years of progress in the rights of women and girls and gender equality is now under severe threat; reiterates its position that this progress must be carefully safeguarded and monitored; stresses that the right to education and employment, freedom from gender-based violence, the protection of fundamental rights, access to healthcare and full participation in decision-making in local and national political, public and civic life must be key demands of the international community in dialogue with the Taliban;
9. Condemns the fact that women have little or no opportunity to escape from increased gender-based violence; calls for the reopening of domestic abuse shelters, which have been shut down, in order to provide women with a safe haven from domestic violence and the possibility to leave their abuser;
10. Calls for the establishment of a representative and elected government in which women and minority groups can participate meaningfully; recalls that the long-term development of Afghanistan will depend on accountability, good governance, the sustainable provision of human security, including the reduction of poverty and the creation of job opportunities, access to social and health services, education, and the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights;
11. Notes that engagement with the Taliban is necessary for the provision of basic services and humanitarian access; underlines that this does not amount to recognition of the de facto Taliban authorities as a legitimate government; underlines that humanitarian funding should be made accessible through a functioning banking system and provided to credible NGOs and community-based organisations operating in Afghanistan, including local women's organisations, in a flexible manner;
12. Welcomes the UN report on human rights in Afghanistan and the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); notes that UNAMA performs vital monitoring, engagement and reporting functions in the absence of many international organisations and diplomatic missions; urges UNAMA to put human rights monitoring and engagement at the heart of its work, responding to the

specific challenges in the country;

13. Urges international organisations and institutions, notably the International Criminal Court, to address the worsening situation for women in Afghanistan and investigate the potential gender apartheid in place;
14. Stresses the fundamental right of those affected by conflict and persecution to seek safety, regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation; calls for coordinated and humane assistance for those fleeing the Taliban's rule; urges the Member States and the Council to be ready with increased reception capacity, to support safe pathways for people in need of protection and to develop ambitious resettlement programmes for Afghan refugees; underlines the need to mitigate vulnerability to gender-based violence and ensure access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health and rights and basic hygiene supplies, and for comprehensive psychological support to be provided for those fleeing the country;
15. Underscores the need to ensure that women and young people who have left Afghanistan can continue their education in other countries; encourages the development of innovative ways to continue empowering Afghan women and young people, particularly by providing scholarships to study at European schools and universities and high-quality online education; recalls the need to ensure that women's rights are respected in neighbouring countries to Afghanistan, particularly Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, which are already hosting Afghan migrants;
16. Reiterates its extreme concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation; welcomes the commitments made so far by the international community at the UN donor conference, and urges countries to step up and coordinate their humanitarian assistance with UN agencies and non-governmental organisations, including by creating humanitarian corridors for the provision of food aid, water, sanitation, and medication;
17. Recognises that beyond immediate humanitarian assistance, the rebuilding of the Afghan economy will require the resumption of development aid and the unfreezing of foreign reserves; notes that the political conditions do not permit these steps to be taken while the Taliban fails to respect basic human rights;
18. Urges the EU and all concerned donors to make public the kinds of data lost or potentially seized by the Taliban from biometric systems that it funded or built in Afghanistan, the architecture of these systems, the human rights and data protection impact assessments carried out before and during the life cycle of these systems, and the steps the EU has taken to inform data subjects of what has happened to their data, with a view to ensuring that all people in Afghanistan who may be in danger of retaliation due to data potentially seized by the Taliban are aware of possible retaliation risks, and that this is fully taken into account during asylum application procedures;
19. Believes that the EU should play a leading role in funding specific actions to contribute to alleviating the humanitarian crisis and preserving the social gains of the past twenty years, including support for rural development and agriculture, healthcare, energy, education and local governance;
20. Underlines that many of the provisions needed to rebuild the private sector and create

jobs in Afghanistan, such as increasing cash for work, private banking services, credit guarantee schemes and access to finance for entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises, could make particularly valuable contributions to job creation for and the economic independence of women;

21. Reiterates its support for targeted UN sanctions; urges the continuation of specific sanctions targeted at individual Taliban leaders, while ensuring that such restrictions do not prevent legitimate financial transactions related to humanitarian assistance and service provision;
22. 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, and the EU Special Envoy to Afghanistan.