



Plenary sitting

B9-0522/2022

22.11.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the human rights situation in Afghanistan and specially the deterioration of women's rights and attacks against education institutions (2022/2955(RSP))

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on behalf of the Renew Group

European Parliament resolution on the human rights situation in Afghanistan and specially the deterioration of women's rights and attacks against education institutions (2022/2955(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 the UN Resolution 2626 (2022) of 17 March 2022, on the extension of the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas since the Taliban took control of the Afghan government on 15 August 2021, the de-facto authorities reinstated the “Ministry of Vice and Virtue” while they closed the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Human Rights Council and other local structures providing support to women and girls, abolished previously enforced laws protecting women, and imposed harsh restrictions on exercising women's rights;
- B. whereas prior to August 2021, under the former Republic of Afghanistan, women thrived in high-level positions; whereas the Taliban forcibly removed female officials and have not included women in their new unrecognised government; whereas the European Union maintains a solid position of non-recognition of the de facto Taliban government;
- C. Whereas the Taliban deny secondary level education to over one million girls, which is a violation of their fundamental right to education for all children as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- D. Whereas the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is rapidly deteriorating which disproportionately affects women and girls; whereas the new policies introduced by the Taliban government have critically diminished the ability of women to work, including as aid workers, which has also negatively impacted women's ability to access humanitarian aid; whereas restricting women from the work force have pushed women further into poverty, has put an estimated 850,000 girls at risk of economic and sexual exploitation, as well as child marriage; whereas less than one out of four women human rights defenders who remain in Afghanistan reported having access to any type of humanitarian aid, financial and legal assistance;
- E. Whereas countries such as Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Iran forcibly deported Afghans back into Afghanistan; whereas several Afghan human rights defenders are still in transit countries, and face numerous administrative problems during their resettlement processes that have led them into a legal limbo for prolonged periods; whereas women face more difficulties accessing visas in third countries;

- F. Whereas the Taliban takeover has also led to an increase in human rights violations including the arrest, detention, abduction, torture, and extrajudicial killings of journalists, human rights defenders, ethnic and religious minority groups such as Hazara and Tajiks and LGBTQ people; whereas women human rights defenders have been especially impacted;
 - G. Whereas women's prison director in Herat Alia Azizi has been missing since October 2021 and is suspected by the human rights organizations to have been forcibly disappeared;
 - H. Whereas the Taliban have recently intensified their systemic suppression of women and girls during a wave of arrests of human rights defenders
 - I. Whereas judges of the International Criminal Court's Pre-Trial Chamber have recently ruled that ICC investigations into war crimes related to the conflict in Afghanistan – which were stalled for two and a half years – can now be resume;
 - J. Whereas due to soaring food and fuel prices as a result of failed government policies, drought and the war in Ukraine, over 90% of the population, and nearly all female-headed households face malnutrition; whereas the EU has launched a €1 billion humanitarian aid package for Afghanistan in October 2021 to support vulnerable Afghans who live in the country and the region;
1. Is deeply concerned about the humanitarian and human rights crisis that has been unfolding in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover; reiterates its unwavering solidarity with and commitment towards the people of Afghanistan;
 2. Deplores the fact that the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan has been steadily deteriorating in recent months and that, to date, it qualifies as a gender apartheid; condemns the Taliban's persistent focus on erasing women and girls from public life and denying their most fundamental rights;
 3. Commends the bravery of the women human rights defenders who take part in protests against the de-facto authorities of Afghanistan, one of the only prominent and peaceful civic forces resisting Taliban rule; strongly condemns the brutal crack-down on women protesters including arrest and harsh treatment while in custody; calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all women who have been arbitrarily arrested solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly; calls for a thorough investigation into Alia Azizi's enforced disappearance and her immediate release;
 4. Condemns, in the strongest terms, the Taliban's decision to postpone the return of girls above grade six to school indefinitely, despite their previous commitment to allow every citizen access to education; urges the Taliban to reverse restrictions targeting women and girls and to reopen the Ministry of Women's Affairs and other bodies responsible for the protection of human rights; urges the Taliban to comply with international human rights law and to ensure the right to education for all Afghan citizens, including women and girls;
 5. Is appalled by the Taliban's reintroduction of public corporal punishment, such as the public flogging of women for alleged adultery, and calls for the restoration of the rule of law;

6. Commends individual efforts of Afghans who despite arising risks took upon initiatives to establish unofficial schools for girls in their homes and various local and international initiatives that provide online schooling for Afghan youth;
7. Expresses grave concern that since the Taliban takeover, women and girls have faced an increased risk of exploitation, including the risk of being trafficked;
8. Notes that among prevailing challenges for Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries is difficulty to access education; calls upon neighbouring countries to address this issue and the EU, its Member States and the international community to provide needed support; urges to address the risks emanating from extremist religious education provided by religious actors in the region and to channel the support for educational institutions whose curricula revolve around nonviolence;
9. Expresses appreciation to European Universities and other educational institutions providing opportunities for Afghan students and scholars, calls upon the EU and its Member States to increase funding of scholarship and ensure expedited issuance of visas to Afghan students and scholars who are awarded with the EU scholarships; reiterates its support for the establishment of the Afghan Exile Online University, with financial support from the EU;
10. Notes the need for greater coordination efforts from the international community in order to streamline resettlement processes for those human rights defenders seeking emergency relocation; calls on EU member states to increase efforts in supporting political, economic, social empowerment and capacity-building for women in exile, by providing quality educational and employment opportunities;
11. Calls on the de-facto Afghan authorities to take immediate steps guaranteeing all fundamental human rights that are currently violated by members of the Taliban, including, but not limited to: allowing peaceful demonstrations, ceasing violence against human rights defenders and journalists, removing restrictions on travel for women and girls, allowing women to return to work, revoking the ban on girl's education; ensuring that equal education opportunities, removing restrictions on female students and teachers at all levels;
12. Calls on the de-facto Afghan authorities to form an inclusive government that involves women in the decision-making process at all levels; calls the de-facto Afghan authorities to remove any restrictions and obstacles to the provision of humanitarian assistance and emphasizes the need of an equitable access;
13. Urges the EU and its Member States to address the economic factors behind the ongoing humanitarian crisis by making every effort to scale up humanitarian assistance including a gender perspective; calls for the unfreezing of Afghan assets and urges the Commission to allocate adequate and specific funds towards women's rights programmes and projects;
14. Calls on the EU and its Member States to increase their support to women human rights defenders from Afghanistan and fully implement the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders; including by ensuring accountability for violations through private and public advocacy on individual cases;
15. Highlights the important role of journalists, media workers and activists in addressing abusive trends by Taliban in official media and online space, and calls for continuous support to their activities;

16. 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 Afghan authorities accountable for previous crimes and to not forget their atrocities; Calls on the EEAS to further involve the European Parliament and the rest of the EU institutions in the Afghan Women Leaders Forum; notes that further efforts at international level are needed in order to support women-led intra-Afghan dialogues and afghan women networks both inside and outside the country;
17. Welcomes the appointment of Ms. Roza Otunbayeva as the new Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA as well as the renewal by the UN Human Rights Council of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan; calls on the EU to continue supporting both the implementation of both mandates;
18. Recalls that the EU has a solid position regarding any political engagements with the Taliban, guided by five thematic benchmarks for engagement based on the principles of adherence to human rights for all and the rule of law; highlights that, since 15 August 2021, there has been only a clear deterioration in all these benchmarks, which cannot justify any de facto recognition of a Taliban government; points out that the existing benchmarks need to be updated, with a view to establishing an EU long-term strategy in Afghanistan in light of the current situation and the failure of the Taliban to deliver on any of their initial promises;
19. Strongly supports the resumption of the Afghanistan investigation by the ICC; calls on the EU to step up its support regarding information-sharing, research, monitoring and oversight for enhanced accountability;
20. 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 United Nations Human Rights Council and the Taliban's political office in Doha.