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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0524/2022**

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 especially the deterioration of women's rights and attacks against educational institutions**  
(2022/2955(RSP))

**Pedro Marques, Andrea Cozzolino, Evin Incir, Karsten Lucke**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**B9-0524/2022**

**European Parliament resolution on the human rights situation in Afghanistan especially the deterioration of women's rights and attacks against educational institutions (2022/2955(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Afghanistan, notably those of 16 September 2021 and of 7 April 2022,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Council of the EU of 14 November 2022 on women, peace and security,
- having regard to the press remarks by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy after the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 14 November 2022,
- having regard to the United Nations General Assembly resolution of 10 November 2022 on the situation in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of 9 September 2022 on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan,
- having regard to the report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) of 20 July 2022 outlining the human rights situation in Afghanistan over the 10 months since the Taliban takeover,
- having regard to the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution of 8 July 2022 on the situation of human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan,
- 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 UN Security Council Resolution 2626 (2020) of 10 March 2020 on the situation in Afghanistan,
- 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 part,

- 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 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 fifteen months after the Taliban seized control in Afghanistan, the political, security, human rights and humanitarian situations in the country remain dismal, in particular for woman and other vulnerable groups; whereas humanitarian needs are rampant;
  - 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, potentially destabilising neighbouring countries; whereas violence, indiscriminate and targeted killings and forced evictions and other human rights violations are widespread;
  - D. 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; whereas since taking over the country on 15 August 2021, the Taliban have closed the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and re-established the former Ministry of Vice and Virtue;
  - E. 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 women are left without avenues to escape violence and forced marriages due to the closure of women’s shelters;
  - F. whereas the Taliban are 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, from 15 August 2021

to 15 June 2022, the UNAMA has documented human rights violations affecting 65 human rights defenders, 64 of which were attributed to the de facto authorities;

- G. whereas, on 3 November 2022, the Taliban disrupted a press conference announcing the formation of Afghan Women Movement for Equality, arresting one woman, Zarifa Yaqobi, and four of her male colleagues; whereas, on 11 November 2022, the Taliban arrested prominent activist Farhat Popalzai, one of the founders of the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women; whereas, on 13 November 2022, another women's rights defender, Humaira Yusuf, was taken into custody by the Taliban;
- H. whereas women are denied access to the labour market in many parts of the country, disproportionately affecting their ability to sustain themselves; whereas, in the informal sector, women can no longer take products to market due to movement restrictions and the closure of many women's markets; whereas women who continue to work often face harassment and abuse;
- I. whereas 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 women have been denied access to sporting activities and public spaces such as parks;
- J. 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;
- K. whereas girls over 12 years old are denied an education in Afghanistan; 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; whereas female students remain banned from attending seventh grade and above; whereas it is estimated that more than one million girls have been barred from attending high school lessons over the past year; whereas this is a violation of the fundamental right to education for all children as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; 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; whereas there has been a 500 % increase in child marriages in Afghanistan since the implementation of the school ban for girls; whereas recent reports indicate that the de facto authorities may in the future restrict access to tertiary education for girls and women in the country; whereas Afghan girls and women have bravely held peaceful protests in the country, demanding that their right to education be respected;
- L. whereas the Taliban takeover has led to increasing attacks of minority groups, in particular Hazara, Hindu and Sikh; whereas, since the Taliban takeover, more than eleven attacks have been carried out against the Hazara community, a Shiite minority, by the IS Khorasan

and other actors; whereas since August 2021, their places of worship and educational and medical centres have been systematically attacked and their members have been arbitrary arrested, tortured, summarily executed, evicted, marginalized and, in some cases, forced to flee the country;

- M. whereas, on 30 September 2022, a suicide attack inside the Kaaj Educational Center in the Dasht-e-Barchi district of West Kabul, Afghanistan, killed at least 53 people belonging to the Hazara community, including 46 girls and women, and wounded more than 110 others; whereas students demonstrated multiple times against the attack and to seek justice for victims of the attack; whereas Taliban forces reportedly opened fire and used physical violence to break up the protests; whereas, on 19 April 2022, a series of bomb blasts in Abdul Rahim Shaheed High School and near the Mumtaz Education Center, both of which are located within the predominately Hazara Shiite neighbourhood of Dasht-e-Barchi in West Kabul, killed six and injured more than 20 others, including children;
- N. whereas the UNAMA estimates that 59% of the population was in need of humanitarian assistance as of July 2022, that is, an increase of 6 million people compared with the beginning of 2021; whereas, in 2023, 28 million people are expected to require humanitarian assistance, out of which 13 million are children; whereas close to 20 million people, that is, 45% of the Afghan population, suffer from hunger, and nearly 6 million survive on less than 1 meal per day; whereas 1.1 million children under 5 years old are acutely malnourished and need medical treatment; 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 54 % of the budget target is funded; 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 allocated more than €174 million in humanitarian support to aid organisations operating in Afghanistan and the region;
- O. whereas a devastating 5.9-magnitude earthquake struck Eastern Afghanistan in June 2022, killing more than 1,000 and injuring over 6,000 people; whereas in August 2022, heavy rains hit several parts of Afghanistan, causing floods, flash floods and landslides killing more than 180 and injuring over 250 people according to media reports; whereas these have exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation;
- P. whereas in 2021, more than 777,000 people (57% children and 21% women) were internally displaced in Afghanistan, bringing the total number of people displaced by conflict inside Afghanistan to 3.5 million as of December 2021; whereas more than 6.5 million Afghans are living as refugees in Iran and Pakistan;
- Q. whereas the Taliban lately ordered judges to fully implement their interpretation of Sharia law, potentially leading to cruel and inhumane punishments, raising fears of further human rights violations;

- R. 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;
- S. whereas according to Reporters Without Borders, 40% of the total media outlets have been closed since the Taliban took power; whereas over 7,000 journalists, 60% of Afghanistan's journalists, are no longer working, especially women journalists, three quarters of whom are now unemployed and no longer exist in 11 provinces; whereas regulations decreed by various Taliban bodies have massively restricted journalistic activity and resulted in an increase in censorship and media self-censorship and an increase in arbitrary arrests of journalists; whereas two journalists are currently imprisoned in Afghanistan;
- T. whereas the recent closure of the websites of Hasht-e-Subh (8am) newspaper, Afghanistan's most widely circulated newspaper until the Taliban's arrival, and Zawia Media is another sign of the Taliban's continued suppression of the media in Afghanistan; whereas, from 15 August 2021 to 15 June 2022, the UNAMA has documented human rights violations affecting 173 journalists and media workers, 163 of which were attributed to the de facto authorities; whereas among these were 122 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention, 58 instances of ill-treatment, 33 instances of threats and intimidation and 12 instances of incommunicado detention; whereas six journalists were also killed;
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;
  2. 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; condemns the arrest of women's rights defenders Zarifa Yaqobi and her colleagues, Farhat Popalzai, and Humaira Yusuf;
  3. Calls on the de facto authorities to immediately and unconditionally release women's rights defenders; urges the Taliban ensure the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; calls on the EU to engage with the de facto authorities of Afghanistan to protect protesters and other rights defenders, to call for the immediate and unconditional release of those detained, and to demand that the Taliban immediately stop these arbitrary and extrajudicial practices;
  4. 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;

5. Deeply regrets the continued ban on girls' secondary education; underlines that access to education is a universal right; stresses that a peaceful and inclusive Afghanistan will require equal participation and access of men and women in education, employment and civic life; recalls the Taliban's promises that women's access to education would resume; demands, therefore, that the Taliban now adhere to its own commitments, lift the ban and resume classes without delay;
6. Calls on the de facto authorities to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the fundamental rights of women and girls, in particular, their right to education at all levels, employment, movement, full participation in decision-making in local and national political, public and civic life, and access to reproductive healthcare; stresses that this must be a key demand of the international community in dialogue with the Taliban;
7. 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;
8. Calls for the establishment of a representative and elected government in which women and minority groups can participate meaningfully;
9. Is appalled by the attack inside the Kaaj Educational Center in Kabul; expresses its condolences to the families of the victims and the survivors; expresses deep concern about the situation of the Hazaras and other minorities since August 2021, and the systematic attacks and broader discrimination against them, including arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, summary executions and enforced disappearances; condemns the increase in inflammatory speech against these minorities; urges the de facto authorities to protect all ethnic and religious communities by safeguarding their places of worship and educational and medical centres, to prohibit and prevent discrimination against them, and to ensure their representation in all decision-making processes affecting their lives;
10. Deeply regrets that, since 15 August, access to information has become increasingly challenging, journalistic independence has been significantly curtailed, and civil society organisations have been subjected to increasing pressure by the de facto authorities; urges the Taliban to provide an enabling environment for journalists, the media and civil society organisations to carry out their activities without hindrance and fear of reprisal, thereby guaranteeing freedom of expression and access to information;
11. Calls on the international community to strengthen support for the work of the UNAMA; notes that the UNAMA performs vital monitoring, engagement and reporting functions in the absence of many international organisations and diplomatic missions; urges the UNAMA to put human rights monitoring and engagement at the heart of its work, responding to the specific challenges in the country;

12. Supports the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, it being essential to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Afghanistan; calls for the Special Rapporteur to be provided with additional funds, expertise and diplomatic backing to fulfil its mandate; calls for the establishment of a complementary, ongoing accountability mechanism with the specific mandate to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights law amounting to crimes under international law in Afghanistan, including against women and girls;
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, particularly ensuring and supporting the safe passage of Afghans most at risk seeking to leave the country, such as human rights defenders, journalists, judges, prosecutors, minority groups and members of the LGBTIQ community, giving priority to women; 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; 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; 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;
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 fail to respect basic human rights;

18. 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;
19. Reiterates its invitation to 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;
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, and the EU Special Envoy to Afghanistan.