

Report on

Access To Education for Women Under the Taliban

Afghanistan Human Rights Center

December 2024

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Afghanistan Human Rights Center	3
Methodology	3
Right to Education in International Human Rights Documents	4
Deprivation of Women’s Education Rights as Violence against Women	5
Prohibition of women and girls’ Education by the Taliban in Schools and Universities	6
Consequences of Depriving Girls of the Right to Education.....	8
Reason for the Ban on Education for Girls by the Taliban.....	14
Failure to Adhere to Quality Education Standards	15
Expansion of Taliban Jihadi Madrasas	22
Online Education for Women and Girls in Afghanistan.....	26
Conclusion	32
Recommendations.....	33

Introduction

When the Taliban seized power in August 2021, the Taliban's first action was to prohibit the education of girls above the sixth grade, closing the doors of schools to them. Following this, over the past three years, the Taliban systematically and intentionally restricted the education of women and girls in universities and their participation in private educational centers, such as language and computer courses. In the most recent development, the Taliban also banned the education of women and girls in para-medical and nursing institutes. Currently, girls in Afghanistan are only allowed to attend primary schools, from grades one to six. Even in these primary schools, the Taliban policy have made changes with negative consequences, rendering the educational services both quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate and harmful, thus unhelpful for the students. Therefore, it can be said that women in Afghanistan are currently completely deprived of their right to quality education, which is one of their fundamental human rights.

The Afghanistan Human Rights Center, through the preparation of this report, analyzes and evaluates the extent of Afghan women's access to the right to quality education and the systematic, widespread and targeted violation of this human right by the Taliban. It has gathered accurate and reliable information from various sources on this issue. This report serves as a documentation of the widespread and planned violation of the right to education by the Taliban and as a credible source for advocacy and the pursuit of justice for both the present and future of Afghanistan.

In the first section of this report, the gradual deprivation of women's right to education at various educational levels is documented, along with the chronological account of the Taliban's oppressive actions. A brief analysis of the situation, based on international human rights documents, is also provided. In the next section of the report, the consequences of depriving women of their right to education are examined. The findings of this report indicate that the ban on women and girls' education has led to negative and damaging consequences for the women and girls themselves and for society as a whole, some of which seem irreversible. For example, the deprivation of education has led to an unprecedented and unparalleled increase in forced and underage marriages, the spread of depression and mental health issues among young women and girls, and an increase in suicide cases and attempts by victims.

The next section of the report assesses the extent of violations of global standards for quality education, which are guaranteed in international human rights documents. This section first describes the standards for quality education, then presents and analyzes the information gathered, which indicates violations of these standards. Important issues such as the evaluation of the curriculum and the harmful changes made by the Taliban, as well as the unprecedented expansion of the Taliban's religious-jihadi schools in Afghanistan, are included in this section.

In the next section of this report, online education for women and girls in Afghanistan is assessed. After the suspension of in-person classes in schools, universities, and other educational centers, a large number of online educational institutions were established and began operations. This section examines the extent of access for female students to virtual education, the problems and challenges they face in this area, and the

demands of the beneficiaries. It also outlines potential solutions that could increase access to these opportunities.

In the final part of the report, a summary of the contents is presented, along with a set of recommendations from the Afghanistan Human Rights Center to relevant national and international authorities. These recommendations are, in fact, the demands of the victims and the solutions proposed by the interviewees, which have been categorized and highlighted by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center. It is important to note that the information in this report covers the period from August 2021 to December 2024.

Afghanistan Human Rights Center

The Afghanistan Human Rights Center (AHRC) is a human rights monitoring organization established in 2022 by renowned human rights activists who have been forced into exile but bring with them over twenty years of experience in human rights work. The organization's primary aim is to monitor the human rights situation and advocate for the protection of the rights of Afghans by leveraging a vast local network of individuals who are capable and committed to defending human rights within Afghanistan. Drawing on the expertise and institutional knowledge gained from their previous roles at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), where the current leadership and staff were formerly engaged, the AHRC positions itself as following and contributing to the mission of Afghanistan national human rights mechanism.

The AHRC's programs and infrastructure are built on a solid foundation of experience and expertise, which enables it to effectively monitor, document, and advocate for human rights, even under the most challenging circumstances. With adequate resources and support, the AHRC is well-positioned to fill the critical gap that currently exists in the monitoring, protection, and promotion of human rights in Afghanistan.

Methodology

The primary source of information included in this report is direct and indirect interviews, conducted using questionnaires, with individuals and experts knowledgeable and related to the right to education both inside and outside the country. The Afghanistan Human Rights Center conducted interviews with 89 individuals, including students and pupils deprived of their right to education, victims of forced and underage marriages, current teachers, university professors, education experts and activists, students and informants from Taliban-run religious schools (Madrasas), as well as officials, professors, and students from online educational institutions, and other relevant individuals.

Additionally, this report uses information from research reports previously published by reputable international organizations, as well as credible media sources.

Reports published by government institutions of the previous Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, such as annual reports, reports from the Ministry of Education under Taliban administration, and websites associated with the group, are other sources of information included in this report. However, it should be noted that the information contained in reports published by departments under Taliban control is not verified, and the Afghanistan Human Rights Center does not endorse or validate such information. These sources are included in the report solely as evidence to demonstrate violations and human rights abuses by the Taliban, to be used in the future to seek justice.

To evaluate and legally analyze the data and information in this report, references have been made to the provisions of international human rights documents, including binding international treaties applicable to Afghanistan. According to the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, all conventions to which Afghanistan has acceded, and some of which have been ratified by the National Assembly and other legislative bodies, remain binding for Afghanistan, and Afghanistan is obligated and committed to implementing their provisions. Therefore, the primary standard for the legal analysis of the information and data in this report is the aforementioned international documents. Additionally, for the legal analysis, reference has also been made to some of the laws from the period of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, such as the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

During the preparation of this report, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center faced significant limitations and challenges. The Taliban imposed many obstacles within the country to prevent the free flow of information, creating a restricted and suffocating environment in which collecting information and preparing investigative and research reports, particularly in the areas of human rights and women's rights, has become extremely difficult and costly in terms of security. An education department employee, whose identity is withheld for security reasons, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "Education employees absolutely cannot provide information to the media or research institutions. Sharing any information from within the system, especially regarding women and girls, is a red line, and no one can express an opinion on this matter under any circumstances."

Despite the aforementioned suffocating restrictions, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center has managed to collect reliable, first-hand information about the current situation in the country regarding the right to education for girls and has been able to prepare this report. In this report, the names of all individuals, except for those living outside the country who are not at risk, are pseudonyms. Even the names of provinces mentioned have been altered to ensure that the identities of the interviewees cannot be identified in any way.

Right to Education in International Human Rights Documents

According to international human rights documents, the right to access quality education is a fundamental human right. As the right to education is the foundation for human understanding, human development, and a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights such as the right to work, political participation, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of belief, and religion, it holds a prominent place in the list of human rights and is considered a fundamental right.

The right to education is recognized and emphasized in almost all major international human rights documents. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities all recognize this right and emphasize the necessity of respecting and upholding it.

Additionally, Article 10 of the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women emphasizes that "all necessary measures should be taken to eliminate any form of discrimination against women and ensure their equal rights with men in the field of education." It further stipulates that women should have equal access to education, including obtaining qualifications from educational institutions at various educational levels in both rural and urban areas, and should have access

to curricula, exams, scholarships, educational facilities, and equipment on par with men in terms of both quantity and quality¹.

Similarly, Goal 4 of the International Sustainable Development Goals is dedicated to "ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all." The first to third sub-goals of this main goal state that "by 2030, all girls and boys should have access to free, equitable, and quality primary, secondary, and higher education, and equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and higher education²."

Deprivation of Women's Education Rights as Violence against Women

According to international human rights documents and Afghanistan's domestic laws, denying women access to their fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to education, and engaging in discrimination against women in this regard, constitutes violence against women. As stated and confirmed in the preamble of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, violence against women involves the violation of women's fundamental rights and freedoms, which harms their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms. Additionally, Article 1 of this international document defines "violence against women" as "any violent act based on gender that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including the threat of such acts, forced or arbitrary deprivation of rights and freedoms, whether in public or private life, or that is likely to result in such harm³."

Similarly, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence states that "gender-based violence against women" refers to violence that is directed at a woman because of her gender or disproportionately affects women⁴.

The Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which has apparently been annulled by the Taliban, criminalizes the denial of women's right to education as one of the forms of violence against women. It stipulates: "Any person who prevents a woman from her right to education, employment, access to healthcare services, or other rights mentioned in the laws, shall be sentenced to a short-term imprisonment not exceeding six months, depending on the circumstances⁵."

In light of the provisions of international documents and the provisions of the Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Taliban's prohibition of girls' education constitutes severe collective violence against the women and girls of Afghanistan. It is a clear violation of human rights and an act of criminal and unlawful conduct.

¹ United National General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, article 10

² Sustainable Development Goals, the fourth goal, targets 1-3

³ United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Dec 20, 1993, Article 1

⁴ The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Article 3

⁵ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Law on Prohibition of Violence against Women, Articles 5 and 35

Prohibition of women and girls' Education by the Taliban in Schools and Universities

A month after seizing control of Afghanistan, the Taliban banned women and girls' education beyond the sixth grade. In a statement released on, September 17, 2021, on their official Facebook page, the Taliban Ministry of Education called on male students in grades six and above to return to school starting on Saturday. The statement made no mention of female teachers or girl students in grades six and above, while the process of returning students in grades one to six had already begun⁶. Thus, the exclusion of women and girls from education beyond the sixth grade began simply and swiftly.

In the next step, the Taliban Ministry of Higher Education restricted the options available to women and girls during the first nationwide entrance exam (Kankor). Reports indicated that fields of study such as agriculture, veterinary science, oil and gas, mining exploration, and geology were removed from the list of options available to women and girls⁷. About a year later, the Taliban completely prohibited women and girls from participating in university entrance exams. The Examination Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education stated that only male students were permitted to take the upcoming exams⁸.

On December 20, 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Higher Education issued a letter stating that women and girls would be prohibited from continuing their education in both public and private universities "until further notice."⁹ The letter, addressed to all public and private universities, mentioned that, according to a decision made by the Taliban cabinet on December 19, 2022, the education of women and girls was "suspended until further notice." This letter was signed by Neda Mohammad Nadeem, the acting Minister of Higher Education. Consequently, the continuation of girls' education in universities was banned, and all female students were deprived of their right to education.

Exactly three days after the ban on women's' education in universities, on December 22, 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Education issued another official letter prohibiting the education of girls above the sixth grade in private educational centers and courses. This letter, signed by Mawlavi Habibullah Agha, the acting Minister of Education, stated that, based on the Taliban cabinet's



⁶ Iran International, “Taliban hozor dukhtaran kelas shashum ra dar madaris mamnu kard”, Sep 17, 2021, Available on: <https://old.iranintl.com/>

⁷ Etilaat e Roz daily, “waz’ mahdodyat bar entikhab reshta barye danishjoyan zan dar danishgah Kabul”, Jun 10, 2022, Available on: <https://www.etalatroz.com/156652/>

⁸ BBC Persian, “Taliban zanan ra az Sherkat dar kankor sarasari worodi danishgahaha man’ kard”, July 18, 2023, Available on: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c4n02ly581go>

⁹ Photo from Radio Azadi website, Dec 6, 2024, Available on: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/32189313.html>

decision, education for girls above the sixth grade in girls' schools and in courses for girls above the sixth grade was also prohibited until further notice¹⁰.

In the most recent development, the leader of the Taliban issued an order banning the education of women and girls in all medical and semi-higher education institutes. "The Taliban Minister of Public Health announced on Monday, December 2, 2024, during a meeting with officials of medical institutes in Kabul that from now on, girls will not be allowed to study in these educational institutions. During this meeting, the institute officials were informed that the doors of these institutions will remain closed to girls until further notice¹¹."

In addition to prohibiting the education of girls within the country, the Taliban have also prevented women from benefiting from educational scholarships. For example, on August 22, 2023, the Taliban stopped 70 female students from traveling to the United Arab Emirates at Kabul Airport, even though 12 of the female students were accompanied by a male "mahram" (guardian)¹².

With the restrictions as stated, women's access to educational services has drastically declined, and hundreds of thousands of eligible girls have been deprived of education in schools and universities. On September 18, 2024, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a statement on the social media platform X, announcing that the Taliban has deprived 1.5 million girls of their right to education over the past three years. According to the statement, an additional 38,000 girls will be deprived of education this year after completing grade six¹³. Currently, 2.3 million girls are enrolled in primary schools across Afghanistan, according to the UN.

Meanwhile, according to official statistics produced by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in 2020, 110,315 girls (28%) were enrolled in universities, and 3,561,264 girls (39%) were attending public schools at the primary and secondary levels¹⁴. However, according to a report published by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in April 2024, the percentage of girls/women with access to educational services has dropped from 39% to just 3%¹⁵.

¹⁰ Radio Azadi, "hukme taza Taliban; dros korshay aamozeshi baraye dukhtaran bala tar az senf shashum mamnu' shod", Dec 22, 2024, Available on: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/32189313.html>

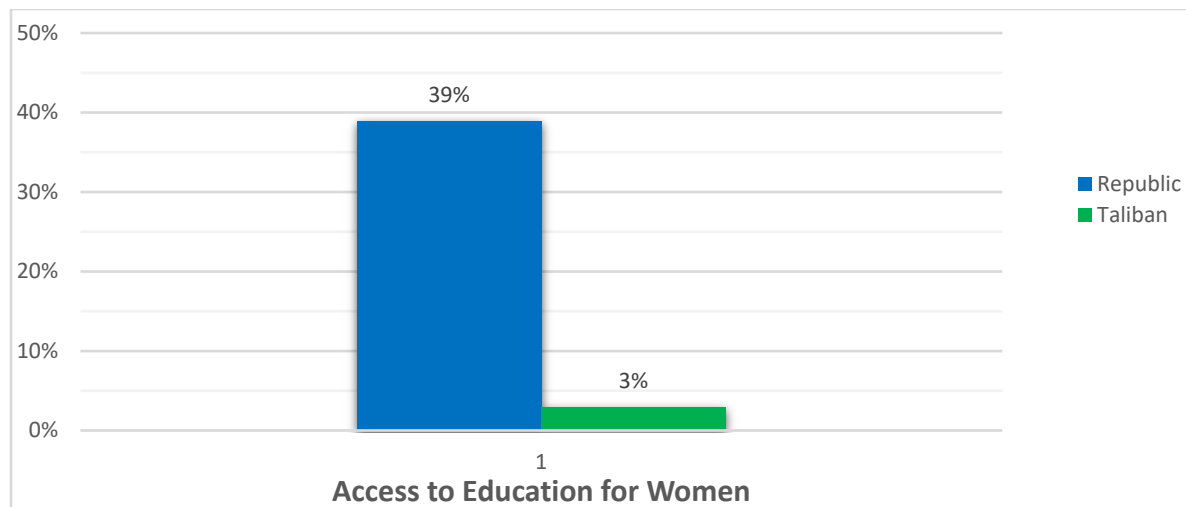
¹¹ Amu TV, "Taliban institute hay tebbi ra niz ba roye dukhtaran bastand", Dec 12, 2024, Available on: <https://amu.tv/fa/141076/>

¹² BBC Persian, "Taliban Mani' raftan danishjoy dukhtar ba dubai shodand", Aug 22, 2023, Available on: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cnkgz924ldno>

¹³ UNICEF, X, Sep 18, 2024, Available on: <https://x.com/unicef afg/status/1836287830886355319?s=48&t=qS0VfdmzmybDsexN78F3Ig>

¹⁴ National Static and Information Authority, Yearbook, 2020, No. 42, 27 and 58

¹⁵ UNAMA, Summary Report of Countrywide Women's Consultations, Apr 2024, 7



Consequences of Depriving Girls of the Right to Education

Findings by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center show that the ban on women's education in schools, universities, and other educational institutions has had negative consequences and impacted Afghan women and society as a whole. These include social isolation of women, turning them into inactive and unproductive members of their families, an increase in forced and underage marriages, experiencing various forms of domestic violence, mental health issues, and even suicide attempts, involuntary migration, a decline in the quantity and quality of education services in universities and schools, among other adverse outcomes of depriving girls of their right to education.

A) Deprivation of Women s Rights to Education and other Human Rights

The first direct consequence of the ban on girls' education is the deprivation of women s right to education, which in turn leads to the denial of other fundamental human rights. As a result of the restrictions imposed by the Taliban on girls' education, more than three million female students and schoolgirls have been directly deprived of the right to education, and, in effect, all women—and indeed half of Afghanistan s population—have been denied this right. It can confidently be argued that the scale of the violation of the right to education is unprecedented and unparalleled.

We all know that human rights are interconnected and indivisible; the violation of one of these rights leads to the violation of others. This rule is especially true regarding the right to education. When a specific social group—here women— is denied access to education, they lose the ability to effectively participate and compete in the job market and are deprived of the right to work and employment. Subsequently, they are also deprived of the right to social, political, and cultural participation, and over time, they are excluded from all fields and levels of social life, losing access to all of their rights and freedoms. Therefore, the intentional and widespread deprivation of a specific group, such as women, from their fundamental rights is considered a crime against humanity according to international law.

According to Article 7, Paragraph 1 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, one of the elements of crimes against humanity is "persecution." Paragraph 2 of this article defines persecution as follows: "persecution means the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to

international law by reason of the identity of the group or collectively.¹⁶ Based on this provision, the target group can be a group based on their gender, such as women. Therefore, whenever women, as a specific gender group, are systematically, intentionally, and extensively deprived of their fundamental rights, a crime against humanity may have been committed.

As mentioned in the first section of this report, over the past three years, the Taliban has systematically, intentionally, and extensively persecuted women, depriving them of their fundamental rights, including the right to education, on a wide scale. This action by the Taliban, based on the above definition, may constitute crime against humanity.

On the other hand, the available evidence indicates that these actions by the Taliban are institutional, systematic, targeted, and intentional. The group has issued dozens of decrees, official letters, statements, and verbal orders openly through its official channels and published them in the media, explicitly acknowledging that depriving women of their right to education and other human rights and freedoms is part of the group's official policies, and they have deliberately carried out these actions.

Of course, the Taliban's violations of human rights over the past three years may will have significant legal and criminal consequences for the group, ranging from the issuance of arrest warrants for Taliban leaders and affiliates to their prosecution and punishment. If the International Criminal Court investigates and prosecutes the Taliban's violations over the past three years, and collects and examines the undeniable documents, records, and evidence, all elements of the crime of crime against humanity in this case can be proven. The Taliban group, as the defendant in this case, can face legal prosecution. For these reasons, in November 2024, the Taliban's case was referred to the International Criminal Court by six countries¹⁷. This action by these countries is based on Article 14 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, indicating that these countries have concluded that crimes within the jurisdiction of the court seem to have occurred in Afghanistan, and they have requested the court's prosecutor to investigate this matter.

B) Decrease in Literacy Rate in Afghanistan

Another negative and devastating consequence of the policy of depriving girls of their right to education is the increase in illiteracy rates and the spread of benightedness in Afghan society. The policy adopted by the Taliban group deprives at least 50% of the Afghan population from the blessing of education. The increase in illiteracy rates will have destructive and irreparable effects on all economic, social, and cultural aspects of Afghanistan.

While, over the past twenty years, significant improvements had been made in the field of literacy development due to the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with the support of the international community, UNESCO announced in 2021 that Afghanistan had made considerable progress in literacy development over the past two decades. During this period, the literacy rate had increased from 34% to 43%. However, there were still 12 million youth and adults who lack basic literacy skills¹⁸.

¹⁶ The Rome Statute of International Criminal Court, Article 7

¹⁷ Afghanistan International, "*parwanda naqz hoqoq zanan dar Afghanistan ba dewaan kaifari bainalmelali erjaa' dada shod*", Nov 29, 2024, Available on: <https://www.afintl.com/202411284764>

¹⁸ Etilaat e Roz daily, "*UNESCO: dar do daha quzashta nerkh sewad dar Afghanistan 9 dar sad afzayish yafi*", Sep 1, 2021, Available on: <https://www.etilaatroz.com/130966/unesco-says-in-last-two-decades-literacy-rate-in-afghanistan-has-increased-by-nine-percent/>

On the other hand, Afghanistan is committed under the international Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to "ensure that all young people and a significant proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy in reading, writing, and numeracy by 2030¹⁹." However, the regressive and inhuman policies of the Taliban group are driving Afghan society in the opposite direction of this international development goal. With the continuation of these policies, the percentage of illiterate individuals increases every day.

C) Profound Gender Inequity and Gender Apartheid

The Taliban's policy of banning girls and women's education has led to the exclusion of women from all areas of society, resulting in a system where discrimination against women is institutionalized and systematically enforced and one gender group-men- dominate the other gender group- women- with incomparable superiority in all aspects for an extended period of time with intention to maintain them. This system is commonly referred to as gender apartheid.

Based on this reality, the CEDAW, CESC and CCPR provide for equality and prevention of and protection against discrimination based on gender. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recommend in their fourth goal that "by 2030, all forms of discrimination against women and girls be ended everywhere, gender inequalities in education should be eradicated, and equal access to all levels of education and technical and vocational training should be guaranteed for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people, and children living in vulnerable conditions or who themselves are vulnerable²⁰." However, the actions of the Taliban demonstrate that this group, with complete disregard for international documents and commitments, is seeking to deepen gender inequality and create a system of gender apartheid, where women have no human status.

D) Intensification of Poverty, Prevention of Sustainable Development and other Harmful Consequences

According to experts, poverty, underdevelopment, violence, sustainable peace, and other social and political issues are directly linked to the level of literacy and citizens' access to educational services. For example, lack of access to education, especially modern and technical education, has been a major factor contributing to unemployment and a dramatic reduction in job opportunities in Afghanistan. Subsequently, it has worked as a catalyst for intensifying poverty, violence, perpetuation of cycle of conflicts and the destruction of peace in Afghanistan.

This issue is emphasized in the fourth goal, sub-goal seven of the international Sustainable Development Goals document, which recommends that "access to knowledge and skills necessary for promoting sustainable development should be guaranteed for all learners (both women and men), particularly through education for sustainable development, promoting sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, respect for cultural diversity, and cultural participation in achieving sustainable development by 2030."

¹⁹ Sustainable Development Goals, the fourth goal, targets 1 and 6

²⁰ Ibid, Target 5

E) Increase in Forced Marriage and Child Marriage

Afghanistan Human Rights Center has interviewed numerous victims, female teachers in girls' primary schools, and eyewitnesses, discovering that a concerning percentage of female students and university students, after being forced to leave their education, are coerced into marriage. Most of these marriages are forced and occur under the legal age of marriage. Although there is no precise data on this, one female teacher in Kabul province told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "My personal estimate is that about 70% of girls, after leaving school and university, are forced into domestic life and child and forced marriages. In the area where we live, there are many families that, for various reasons, force their daughters into marriage."

According to the findings of this report, 10 of the interviewees were direct witnesses to 34 cases of forced and child marriages involving students in their communities, who were forced into marriage after the closure of schools and universities to girls. This statistic is deeply alarming and indicates a significant increase in such marriages.

Moatena (a pseudonym) from Takhar province, who is herself a victim of forced marriage and was forced to marry one of the Taliban fighters, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "I know 10 of my classmates and girls from my village who, after being deprived of education, were forced to marry people they did not want to marry."

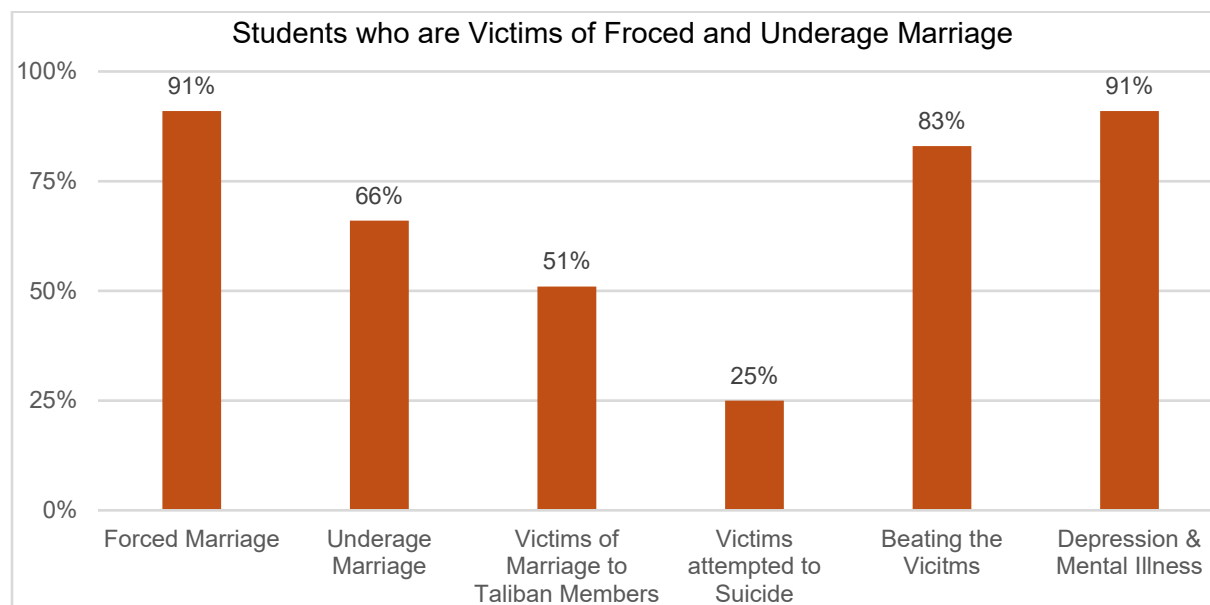
Nawida Kamali (a pseudonym), a female teacher in Kunduz province, stated to the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "As far as I know about 60% of my female students have been forced into marriage after the ban on education. With the schools closed, these girls have no hope for personal and educational development, they can't become self-sufficient, they can't work, so for these reasons, they are forced to marry. This has been seen everywhere. As a result, it is natural that they are suffering from mental illnesses, and most of the patients who visit psychiatrists are young girls deprived of education."

F) Victims of Forced and Child Marriage among Students

Despite the existing restrictions in the country, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center has managed to interview 15 students who are victims of forced and underage marriages, either directly or through close relatives and acquaintances. The findings of this research show that 91% of these marriages were forced and occurred without the consent of the victims, while only 10% of the victims reported that they married willingly. Even more shocking is that 66% of the victims were under the age of 18 and became victims of underage marriage. For example, Faiza (a pseudonym) from Herat was 14 years old at the time of her marriage and was forced to marry a 25-year-old man.

The Taliban has used this situation to their advantage. Enrolling women to their Madrassas and depriving them of other modes of education, they have been able to use their power and authorities to force women and girls to marriage. This has a precedent in the past during the first rulings of the Taliban. The Taliban used women deprivation, poverty and helplessness marrying women by using their force and authorities. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission at the time received many complaints from women victims of the Taliban misuse of power. The same method is restored during the recent reign of the Taliban.

In this regard, a painful case is the sad story of Hamida (a pseudonym) from Badakhshan. She is now 15 years old (at the time of the interview) and was forced into marriage in 2023, one year after leaving school, to a local Taliban commander who is 38 years old. Her husband, who is 23 years older than her, has been married twice before, and both of his previous wives live with Hamida in the same house. Hamida told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, "This forced life is very difficult for me, but I have no choice. I can never talk to my husband about my problems because he is very harsh and angry." Hamida now sees all her dreams shattered. She spends all her time doing household chores and taking care of a child she recently gave birth to. She has attempted suicide several times, but according to her, she has not been successful.



The findings by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center reveals that 66% of the victims of forced and early marriage were schoolgirls, and 33% were university female students. Deprivation of the right to education, in addition to forced and underage marriage, has had destructive and harmful mental consequences for the victims. 83% of the victims reported being subjected to physical violence (beatings) by their husbands, fathers, brothers, and other male family members. 91% of the victims mentioned that they had suffered from mental health issues and severe depression, while 25% admitted that they had frequently considered suicide and had attempted it, but according to their own statements, they were unsuccessful.

As seen in the chart above, one of the most concerning findings is that 51% of these forced and underage marriages were carried out by local commanders and fighters of the Taliban. Other victims, who were married to ordinary individuals, stated that their families forced them to marry another man to avoid the risk of being forcibly married off by the Taliban fighters. This suggests that members of the Taliban are also an indirect cause of forced marriages.

Fariba, a 15-year-old from Balkh province, was forcibly married to one of the Taliban fighters. A family member of hers recounts the tragic story of her marriage as follows: " After the prohibition of girls' education, Fariba was forced to leave school in the seventh grade. Due to her strong interest in education, she continued her studies at a religious school. Shortly afterward, one of the local Taliban commanders identified her at the school and forcibly married her. Fariba's brother played a role in this forced marriage due to threats from the Taliban commander. The commander is 40 years old, 25 years older than Fariba. At

the time of the interview, one month had passed since her marriage. During this short time, she attempted suicide for several times, and she has refused to eat during the day as a form of protest, but instead of listening to her complaints, she has been repeatedly subjected to severe physical abuse.

G) Decrease in the Quality and Quantity of Higher Education after the Ban on Girls' Education

Ms. Shahida Jawani (pseudonym), a former professor at a private university, says, "The denial of women and girls' access to education in universities has not only had a negative impact on women but has also broadly affected the motivation and overall performance of the education system. One of the biggest consequences of this action has been the reduction in motivation among both professors and even male students. When half of society is deprived of education and academic opportunities, a sense of discouragement and hopelessness spreads among both professors and students."

Likewise, Mr. Khairullah Mohammadi (a pseudonym), a professor at a public university, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "The quality of education at universities has drastically decreased. Both professors and students no longer have the motivation and enthusiasm they once had. There is a widespread feeling among both groups that, no matter how well they study, it won't have an impact on the future of the students. In terms of quantity, the absence of girls is particularly noticeable: previously, classes composed of both girls and boys would often exceed the standard number of students in most departments, but in the past two years, registration has sharply declined. In fact, some departments have faced cancellations due to not meeting the minimum requirement of ten students."

Another consequence of the ban on women and girls' education and the decline in the quality of education services is the dropout rate among male students. Several media outlets have reported that a significant number of students have dropped out in the past three years, with many opting for migration. On November 10, 2024, Amu TV reported that "1,600 male students from Herat University have dropped out in the past three years. Herat State University had 19,578 students when the Taliban regained power, of whom 10,500 were female students. The most significant reasons for student dropouts have been the change in educational standards according to the Taliban's preferences, the strict restrictions placed on students by the Taliban, the migration of university staff, and economic hardship²¹."

H) Decreased Significant Number of Female Students in Primary Schools

The findings of the report indicate that the ban on women and girls' education beyond the sixth grade has had a direct negative impact not only on the quality of education but also on the quantity of students in primary schools (grades 1 to 6), with a noticeable decrease in the number of female students. The vast majority of teachers currently working in girls' schools have confirmed this reality during interviews with the Afghanistan Human Rights Center.

Although the female students at this age are often not the decision-makers, the families of these students are, on one hand, feeling insecure and concerned about the safety of their daughters at school. On the other hand, they argue that there is no bright future awaiting their daughters as they are not allowed to continue education beyond the sixth grade. Therefore, they prevent their daughters from attending school.

²¹ Amu TV, "tark tahsil 1600 tan danishjo dar danishgah Herat dar se saal", Nov 10, 2024, Available on: <https://amu.tv/fa/136317/>

Kamila Sattari (a pseudonym), a female teacher in Baghlan province, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "The number of girls in primary school has also decreased drastically. Many families no longer send their daughters to school. When we talk to the families, they say, 'What's the point of our daughter going to school if she can only study until grade six and then stay at home?' On the other hand, the girls themselves have become very demotivated, especially when they reach grade six. They feel hopeless because they know it's their last year of education."

Based on the findings mentioned earlier, if the deprivation of women and girls' right to education continues, Afghan women will increasingly become victims and gradually lose all opportunities for education and empowerment. After a short period, the deprivation of education will restrict and eliminate women's access to all their rights and freedoms, pushing them completely to the margins of society. The negative consequences of depriving girls of education will not be limited to women alone; it will also have detrimental effects on the entire Afghan society. Massouma Behzad Yaqoubi, former Head of Research and Evaluation at the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan, states: "Depriving girls of education leads to a reduction in development, an increase in poverty, health problems, and ignorance in society. Continuing this situation will trap the community in a cycle of poverty, inequality, and ignorance."

Reason for the Ban on Education for Girls by the Taliban

A question that has been occupying public minds is: why does the Taliban group prevent women and girls from receiving education? What benefit does the group gain from closing schools and universities to women? There is no easy answer to this question.

There are three main reasons why the Taliban opposes women education and impose that opposition by "institutionalized way of discrimination, violence and exclusion" as was cited in the report of Richard Benette the Special Rapporteur on human rights situation in Afghanistan.

First, the Taliban follow Islamic Sharia that is based on the cultural and traditional way of interpretation of Islamic tenants on women. This mean that the Taliban has a genuine believe that women education is against Islamic values and prevent women from chastity and pureness and lead to immorality in the society.

Second, Taliban are following the rural tradition of Afghanistan and south Asian culture of treating women as a property and symbol of family honor. Allowing women to get education would lead to demanding freedom and human rights. This would weaken the tradition of Afghan rural communities.

Third, the Taliban fear women empowerment and perceive their education and freedoms a challenge to their power and dominance. Therefore, the Taliban impose extreme measures against women in Afghanistan. This is evident in harsh reactions of the Taliban against women protesting against the Taliban policies.

There are clear signs that the Taliban policy about the human rights, women's rights, and particularly the right to education is a political approach. The Taliban uses restricting women's and girls' access to education as a tool to control Afghan society. By depriving women of their right to education and other human rights, they can infiltrate families, prevent the upbringing of an educated and aware generation in the future, and hinder the human development of society. The Taliban view the enforcement of the right to education and, in general, human rights, as politically contradictory to their own group interests. The main goal of this group is to gain, solidify and maintain power by any means possible and to create an ideological,

monopolistic, and one-group political system in which the will of the people, their votes, and citizens' rights have no place, and the citizens must be obedient followers.

Over the past twenty years, the awareness level of women has risen, and they have been advocating for equal human rights with men. This progress has been unbearable for the Taliban. One female teacher, whose identity is not revealed here for security reasons, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "In the early days when the Taliban came, many Taliban fighters wanted to marry girls who were students in schools and universities, but most of the girls refused. This spirit and courage of the girls were unbearable for the Taliban, and they wanted to keep them uneducated or enroll them in religious schools so that in the future they would not face such spirit and that women would always remain obedient to them."

Failure to Adhere to Quality Education Standards

The Taliban, in addition to completely depriving women and girls above the sixth grade of their right to education, have also downgraded the quality of educational services for girls up to the sixth grade and boys' schools to a level that does not meet basic standards of quality education and is neither beneficial nor useful for the students. In reality, all students, both male and female, do not have access to quality educational services.

According to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda and international human rights documents, especially Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, citizens of a country have access to quality education when the educational services provided are standardized and in line with international standards.

A) Equal Access to the Right to Education

The first criterion for quality education is equal and non-discriminatory access to educational opportunities and services for all women and girls and men and boys. Every individual has the right to access equal educational opportunities and resources, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, language, and other factors. This principle is based on the concept of human dignity, as stated in Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

However, as mentioned in the previous section of the report, the Taliban have deprived hundreds of thousands of eligible girls of their right to education, which constitutes a previously unseen form of gender apartheid on a global scale and a clear violation of the "equal access to the right to education" standard.

Another important issue in this context is the access of women with disabilities to educational opportunities and services. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that women and girls with disabilities face multiple and compounded discrimination, and measures must be taken to ensure their full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms²². Article 24 of the Convention emphasizes the right to education for persons with disabilities, stating that equal educational opportunities must be provided to them, free from discrimination, and based on equal opportunity.

²² United Nations General Assembly, Convention on Person with Disabilities, Article 6

Despite these legal guarantees, it appears that women with disabilities in Afghanistan under Taliban rule face compounded discrimination. The Taliban's Ministry of Education's annual report states, "In 18 provinces of the country, educational services for 484 children with disabilities have been provided in special education centers²³." However, this report makes no mention of women or girls with disabilities, and it seems that girls with disabilities are excluded from these programs.

While during the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, women and girls with disabilities were included in the Ministry of Education's programs. As stated in the Ministry of Education's annual report of 2020, "A total of 401 children with disabilities, including 170 newly identified girls, were included in general education schools and special education classes. In total, 2,953 children (including 1,138 girls) with special needs (hearing disabilities, seeing disabilities, and special learning disability) were covered by the special education program. For 68 individuals, including 29 women and girls from general education schools, who had non-disabled classmates, training in Braille writing and sign language was provided so these students could assist their disabled classmates in academic matters. The General Education Directorate (Coordinating Education Agency) included 4,754 students with disabilities (1,717 girls and 3,037 boys) across 17 provinces of the country in schools and educational centers under three categories (sensory, mental, and physical disabilities)²⁴."

B) Educational Goals

The second criterion of quality education is its goal. According to international human rights documents, "The purpose of education should be the full development of the human personality, the enhancement of human dignity, and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education should promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial, or religious groups, and encourage the development of the activities of the United Nations in order to maintain peace²⁵."

In this context, the educational methods and curricula should not contain concepts or materials that violate human rights, the right to peace, the principle of tolerance, or discriminatory notions about the role and position of women in society.

The actions of the Taliban and the reports that have been published so far clearly show that this group has tailored educational goals to align with its extremist and violent ideology. They aim to alter the education system, including curricula, in a way that supports their political, military, and terrorist objectives.

On January 16, 2024, the Taliban Ministry of Education announced that it had changed the school curriculum up to grade six. According to media reports, the Taliban has removed certain subjects such as culture, civil education, and art from the curriculum and increased the number of courses on "Islamic culture" at universities. They have also expanded the number of Taliban-run religious schools (Madrassas) significantly. A Taliban spokesperson, in an interview with the national television under their administration, stated that they had removed subjects "against Sharia and Afghan culture" from the school curriculum, while increasing the number of religious subjects. Earlier, in late 2022, a report from the

²³ The Taliban Ministry of Education, Annual Report, 11, Available on: <https://moe.gov.af/sites/default/files/2024->

²⁴ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education, "Annual Report on progress of action plan and achievements in education", 2020, 26, Available on: https://moe.gov.af/sites/default/files/2021-01/MoE%20Annual%20Progress%20Report%201399%20%20National%20level%20Final_2_0.pdf

²⁵ United Nations General Assembly, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 13

Taliban's "Curriculum Evaluation Committee" was published in the *Hasht-e-Subh* daily, which outlined their plans for changing the curriculum²⁶.

The Taliban made report, in addition to removing certain subjects, proposed many changes that not only fail to meet the human development goals of international human rights instruments, but also teach students content that promotes violence, opposes the culture of tolerance, peace, reconciliation, and human rights values. Among the suggestions in the report were the removal of images of living beings, encouragement of jihad, prohibition of teaching concepts such as democracy, women's rights, and human rights, opposition to the education and freedoms of women, the Taliban's narrative of history, and the removal of non-Muslim scholars' names. These proposals are likely to be implemented step by step.

Changes in School Curriculum

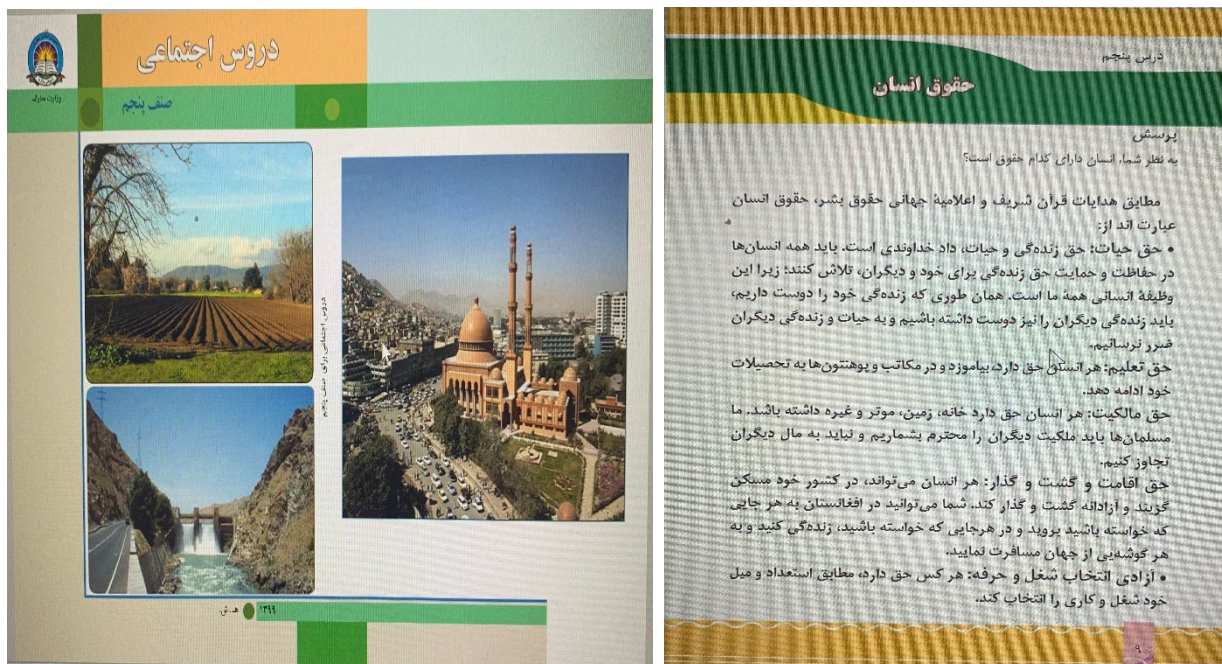
As mentioned earlier, over the past three years, the Taliban has consistently tried to manage and lead Afghanistan's educational system in a way that would ultimately align with the group's political and violent objectives. One of the key actions taken by the Taliban has been the modification of the curriculum, particularly in girls' primary schools.

The Afghanistan Human Rights Center, after interviewing over 12 female teachers in girls' primary schools across various provinces of Afghanistan, found that although new textbooks from the Taliban have not yet been distributed in the schools in the capital and provincial centers, the group has already removed certain subjects from the curriculum. They have also increased the number of teaching hours for some subjects and added a few new subjects to the curriculum.

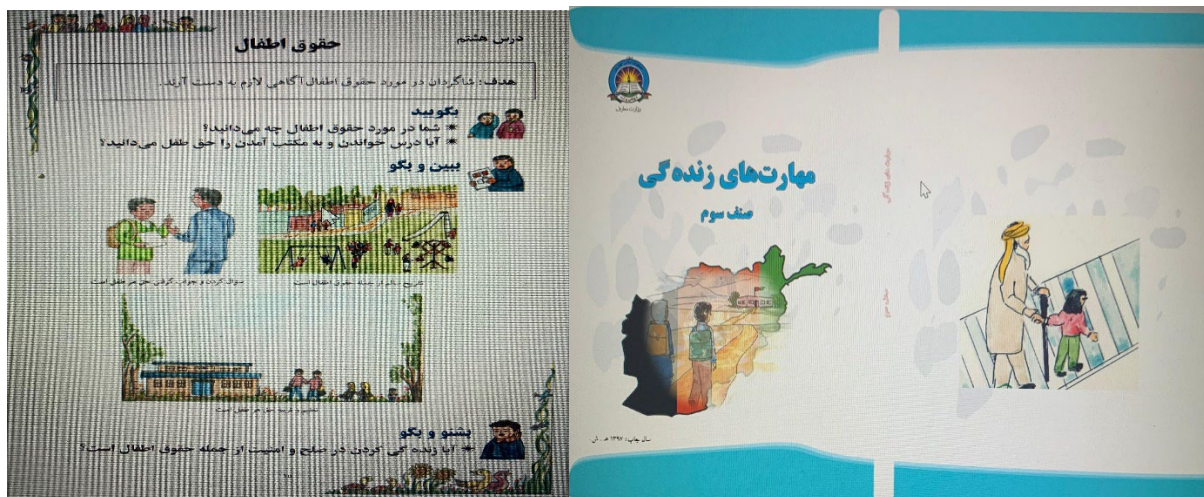
Nearly 80% of the respondents, who are female teachers in girls' primary schools, have told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center that the Taliban have removed several essential and important subjects from the curriculum, subjects that covered valuable concepts such as human rights, women's rights, peace, democracy, and other similar ideas. These teachers reported that the Taliban have removed subjects like social studies, civic education, skills, vocational training, art, and patriotism—subjects that were crucial in primary and secondary education—from the curriculum. In some schools, they even do not allow the teaching of science.

"Social studies" was one of the key subjects taught from grades four to six. The social studies textbook included topics such as "What is society?", "Human and society", "Human rights", "Education", and similar subjects, which are not aligned with the Taliban's ideology. For this reason, they removed these subjects from curriculum.

²⁶ Hasht e Subh daily, "*Taliban az taghir nesaab aamozeshi makateb ta senf shashum khabar dadand*", Jan 16, 2024, Available on: <https://8am.media/fa/the-taliban-announced-the-change-in-the-curriculum-of-schools-up-to-the-sixth-grade/>



Another subject that has been removed is "Life Skills," which was taught in primary school grades. The topics in this subject included self-confidence, children's rights, respect for others, forgiveness and reconciliation, environmental protection, and similar subjects²⁷. The civics textbook and other subjects that have been removed by the Taliban contained content that was largely in line with the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan and international human rights documents and was included in school textbooks. However, the Taliban considered teaching these concepts and values to be against their political and ideological goals, and therefore removed them from the curriculum.



²⁷ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education, Educational Curriculum, Nov 21, 2024, Available on: <https://moe.gov.af/index.php/dr/%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A8-%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%89>

Similarly, about 85% of the teachers who were interviewed by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center stated that, instead of the removed subjects, the Taliban added several new subjects to the curriculum and significantly increased the number of hours dedicated to religious subjects.

One teacher, whose identity is not disclosed for security reasons, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "Previously, religious subjects were taught for two hours a week, but now these subjects must be taught every day, and in the first three hours of each day, they must be taught in all grades. Primary school students, who have more energy at the beginning of the day and can study better, are not allowed to study core subjects like mathematics and science during these hours. Instead, they study these core subjects during the last hours of the day when they are tired, and of course, they don't learn well."

The teacher continued: "Along with the increased hours for religious subjects in schools, students spend half the day in mosques for religious studies, which is very tiring for them. This has led to unexplained absences among students. Half of the students are absent for nearly two to two and a half months, which is very concerning."

The majority of these teachers have informed the Afghanistan Human Rights Center that subjects such as "Emirate Studies," "The Leader's Emirate Recommendations," "Fiqh," "Usul al-Fiqh," "Sarf, and Nahw" have been added to the curriculum in various school levels. As mentioned earlier, one of the books that has been widely distributed in schools and religious schools by the Taliban and is being taught compulsorily is a booklet titled "Emirate Studies." The distribution and teaching of this book in schools and religious institutions have received widespread media coverage.

In the month of Asad, 1403 August 2024, the media reported, citing the office of the Taliban governor in Kandahar, that this book had recently been distributed to all students in schools and religious schools in the Spin Boldak district of the province. The office wrote on its X (formerly Twitter) page on Tuesday, "30 Asad," that these books were distributed in 95 schools and 21 Madrasas for the purpose of testing students. Some teachers in other provinces of Afghanistan have also confirmed the teaching of "Emirate Studies" in schools and Madrasas²⁸.

The findings of the Afghanistan Human Rights Center show that the "Emirate Studies" book was written by individuals named Qari Abdul Sattar Said and Syed Noor Mohammad Mohib Korabi. In this book, the Taliban group (referred to the group as the "Islamic Emirate") is introduced, and the history of the formation of this group is reviewed. Key topics in this booklet include the achievements of the Taliban's founder, the formation and goals of the Taliban group, the group's political and military activities, its first rule, the twenty-year war against the Islamic Republic government, and the return of the Taliban to power.

Section eleven of this book is dedicated to the topic of "Violence Against Women." In this section, it is stated that "the issue of women's liberation from the colonial era is considered one of the most important weapons of the West, which they use to accuse and deceive Muslims." The text continues: "The Islamic Emirate, based on Islamic teachings, has prohibited the mixing of men and women, enforced the wearing of hijab, and prevented women from engaging in actions that lead to their own sin and cause others to sin. The implementation of these Islamic rulings directly contradicted the lawless system of the West, and for

²⁸ Azadi Radio, "Taliban kitab "emmarat shenasi" ra dar makateb wa madares Kandahar tauzi' kardand", Aug 21, 2024, Available on: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/33087201.html>

this reason, the enemies of Islam became enraged and accused the Islamic Emirate of violating women's rights²⁹."

Overall, it appears that the Taliban, through the publication of this booklet and the mandatory teaching of it in schools and Madrasas, as well as conducting numerous tests for students and government employees, aim to promote their group and justify its actions while whitewashing their violent and criminal political and military record among the youth and adolescents of the country.

Oral Instructions to Female Students

All the teachers who were interviewed by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center reported that, in addition to the changes in the curriculum, the Taliban's religious police (Amr bil Ma'ruf) constantly advise female students aged six to eleven who even by Islamic norm has no obligation to follow Sharia, either directly or through the teachers, to observe proper hijab. One female teacher in a northern province of Afghanistan shared with the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "The Department of Promotion of Virtue advises female students that when you leave your house, you must wear Islamic hijab. Leaving the house without hijab is forbidden for a girl. Do not stare at men while walking in the street, strive harder to learn religious teachings, get to know Islam better, and other similar words and advice."

The type of hijab that is imposed on female students in primary schools is extremely restrictive and negatively affects their motivation and interest in school. All teachers from various provinces have confirmed during interviews with the Afghanistan Human Rights Center that the Taliban have even imposed this type of compulsory hijab on girls in grades one to six.

A female teacher in one of the provinces of Afghanistan stated: "In girls' primary schools, strict limitations are imposed on the girls' hijab. From a specific color of the burqa (black) to covering the entire body, with the eyes needing to be covered as much as possible, which has even caused difficulties in vision. The students find it hard to see their way or interact with others while walking around. If these strict regulations are not followed, severe consequences are faced by both teachers and students."

Another teacher from Herat province mentioned, "Teachers and female students are not allowed to wear any symbols of the former government's flag in their hijab, such as the three-colored bracelet or three-colored chador, etc." A teacher from Baghlan province said, "Wearing a mask is compulsory for girls in grade six, and the students in lower grades are monitored to ensure their clothing does not rise above the knee." Similarly, a teacher from Badakhshan province told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "Hijab is a very important issue for the Taliban, and if a student or teacher does not wear the Taliban-approved hijab (burqa and chador), they are not allowed to enter the school."

Although women are banned from universities completely, based on precise information obtained by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, the curriculum in Afghanistan's universities has been severely altered, with specialized subjects in various fields being diminished and replaced by an increase in religious topics.

C) Freedom in Education and Access to Modern knowledge

²⁹ Official website of the Taliban, Emirate Studies, Dec 12, 2023, Available on: <https://www.alemarahdari.af/category/islamci-articles/%d8%a7%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%aa-%d8%b4%d9%86%d8%a7%d8%b3%db%8c/>

The third criterion is freedom in the educational process; all individuals, especially students, have the right to choose educational institutions, educational content, and to establish educational centers freely. There should be no restrictions or discrimination based on gender or other affiliations in choosing academic fields or other educational matters. Freedom in education is addressed in various forms in the United Nations Charter and other international documents and is considered a subset of the right to freedom of thought and expression.

However, the data in this report shows that in Afghanistan under the Taliban's rule, freedom in education has been fundamentally eliminated. Among the most affected are women and girls, who are denied even the basic right to access educational services, let alone freely choose their field of study, educational institution, or other matters related to education. As mentioned in the first part of the report, when the Taliban had not yet fully banned women and girls' education, they had already restricted women and girls' ability to choose academic fields in the 2022 university entrance exam, which in itself is a violation of the principle of freedom in education.

The fourth criterion is that "primary education should be compulsory and made freely accessible to all. Furthermore, secondary education in all its forms, including technical and vocational education, should be expanded, and appropriate means, especially the gradual introduction of free education, should be provided to make it accessible to all³⁰." In addition, the fourth criterion also emphasizes modern education and facilitating students' access to current technical and scientific information, methods, and subjects, which is another important aspect of quality education outlined in international human rights documents. Adhering to this criterion empowers students to enjoy their other human rights, including the right to work, and helps facilitate their entry into the labor market and their constructive role in society.

The Taliban group has not only failed to comply with this criterion but has also, in addition to the aforementioned violations, removed the institutions that trained professional teachers from the Ministry of Education's structure. Instead, they issued educational certificates through a mock exam to their fighters—who are often religious students with no knowledge of modern sciences—so they could enter schools and universities as teachers.

The Taliban Ministry of Education annual report for the year 1402 stated: "A collective exam was conducted for 33,900 scholars (Mullahs) in the center and provinces of the country, as well as 1,300 Mullahs from Dar al-Hijrah, to assess their academic level, of which 21,300 were successful³¹."

At the same time, the Taliban group has diminished the quality and quantity of essential subjects across all academic disciplines, expanded religious subjects, and created what they call "religious Madrasas," thereby eliminating the opportunity for students to acquire modern knowledge. In fact, Afghanistan's educational system, where modern science and knowledge could be acquired, has collapsed. Reports indicate that instead of strengthening schools and universities that facilitated modern education, the Taliban has focused on the unprecedented expansion of their jihadist Madrasas.

³⁰ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 13

³¹ The Taliban Ministry of Education, Annual Report of the Ministry of Education, 4, Available on: <https://moe.gov.af/dr/%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4-%D9%87%D8%A7>

Expansion of Taliban Jihadi Madrasas

Religious Madrasas are religious schools or seminaries designed to train religious students and its curriculum and books are different from other schools. Many Madrasas provide free education, food and operate as boarding schools without charging tuition. It adheres to old Islamic tradition of teaching and curricula and often operates independent from the monitoring and oversight of official education system. Its funded by private people and it is mostly from the wealthy Arab countries and other private donors. Madrasas in the current form originates from Pakistan and were used during Mujahedeen fight against Soviet Union. It later became the training ground for the Taliban fighters where they were recruited from. The former Islamic Republic Government tried to counter the Pakistani Madrasas by initiating formal Madrasas in Afghanistan but the initiative was hijacked by hardliners and rendered unintended consequences. Since the return of the Taliban, building Madrasas in Afghanistan has become a new trend of power show off with numerous Taliban leaders establishing their own Madrasas and recruiting their own students.

In the past three years, the Ministry of Education under the Taliban has allocated the majority of its budget not for the development and improvement of educational services in schools, but for the expansion of religious-jihadi Madrasas. Recently, the Ministry of Education of the Taliban announced that religious Madrasas have seen significant growth, with their number reaching over 21,000. The Taliban's annual report for the year 1402 also shows that the group has established 21,257 religious Madrasas, or as they describe them, centers for Islamic education, across the country³².

However, according to this report, only 316 new schools (210 private schools and 106 government schools) were established across the country in 1402, bringing the total number of government and private schools to 18,337. The number of religious Madrasas created by the Taliban in just one year is 13% (2,920 Madrasas) more than the total number of schools established over several decades by the Ministry of Education under the previous government. The Madrasas that are run and operated by the Taliban commanders and are not registered are unaccounted for.

³² Ibid

Number of the newly Established Schools and the Taliban Madrasa by the Taliban Ministry of Education in 2023



However, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, through interviews with a large number of experts on Taliban religious Madrasahs (teachers, students, Ministry of Education staff, etc.), has found that the number of Madrasahs established by the Taliban, including the formalization of private Madrasahs set up by Taliban clerics in various areas and villages, is much higher than the statistics published by the Taliban's Ministry of Education. At the same time, the majority of interviewees stated that the Taliban has established at least one large Madrasa in each province, with a capacity of at least 2,000 students, complete with dormitories and all necessary facilities. Additionally, in the centers of districts, relatively large schools with dormitories and other necessary equipment have been constructed. It is no hidden secret that many Taliban commanders have initiated running Madrasahs ranging from one major to several ones at the provincial and district levels.

Ahmad Rashad (a pseudonym) from Balkh province told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "The Taliban have recently established a large jihadi Madrasa in Mazar-i-Sharif city with a capacity of 2,000 students, including dormitories and all facilities, as well as a school with dormitories in the center of every district, and smaller schools in the villages."

An education staff member from Kunduz province, in an interview with the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, stated: "In Kunduz province, four large jihadi Madrasahs have been established under the full control of the Taliban. In total, more than 800 religious Madrasahs for both girls and boys have been created in the province in the past three years. For example, in Khanabad district, there were three active religious Madrasahs during the Republic era, but in the last three years, 100 new religious Madrasahs have been established, all officially registered, and the Taliban Ministry of Education pays their teachers' salaries. At the same time, the majority of private religious Madrasahs have been formalized, and their teachers receive salaries."

Admitting Girls in Taliban Madrasas

Findings of the Afghanistan Human Rights Center indicate that, following the ban on women and girls' education, a significant number of female students have been enrolled in the Taliban religious Madrasa. A Ministry of Education staff member, who prefers to remain anonymous, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "I am personally aware of this issue. The recruitment of female students into Taliban religious Madrasa is very widespread, to the point that some Taliban religious Madrasas are unable to accommodate all the women and girls. The exact numbers are not clear, as no institution, not even the Taliban's Ministry of Education, has provided statistics."

The annual report from the Taliban's Ministry of Education also mentions that in the year 1402 (2023), a total of 24,520 female students were enrolled in Taliban religious Madrasas³³. Similarly, according to a deputy minister from the Ministry of Education, by August 2023, 339,595 students had been registered in the Taliban's state-run religious Madrasas across Afghanistan, with 95,662 (28%) of them being girls³⁴. Though this numbers need to be verified, it is indicative of the Taliban program of recruiting more women and girls in their Madrasas, which will have unintended consequences.

On the other hand, the Taliban's contradictory actions suggest that the group, with the aim of depriving women and girls of access to modern education and preventing the empowerment of women, has banned education for women and girls above the sixth grade in regular schools. However, in the case of enrolling women and girls in their religious Madrasas, no age limit is imposed. The group had previously stated that "Afghan women and girls of all ages are allowed to study in religious schools." Mansoor Ahmad, one of the Taliban's Ministry of Education spokespersons, told the Associated Press that there is no age limit for women and girls who wish to attend Madrasas controlled by the Taliban³⁵. This is in stark contrast to the Taliban's complete ban on girls' education above the sixth grade and their prohibition of girls attending universities.

All experts on Taliban religious Madrasas interviewed by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center confirmed that there is no age limit for girls enrolling in religious Madrasas. Taliban authorities admit girls above the sixth-grade age into their Madrasas. One of the Ministry of Education staff member in a northern province of Afghanistan told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "There is no age limit in Taliban religious Madrasas. Women older than the twelfth-grade age are also enrolled. That means women and girls of all ages are admitted to religious Madrasas."

Ali Rahman (a pseudonym) from Takhar has confirmed that "there is no specific age requirement for admitting women and girls to Taliban religious Madrasas. The Taliban usually encourage families to send their children, both girls and boys, to these religious schools, regardless of their age."

However, according to the interviewees, the Taliban prioritize other conditions for admitting women and girls, such as strict dress codes. For example, women and girls must wear full hijabs, which include long black clothing and cover all of their body except for their eyes. Women and girls are not allowed to wear

³³ Ibid, 51

³⁴ The UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Report on Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, Aug 30, 2024, Available on: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/unofficial-dari-translation-sr-afghanistan-ga79-report.pdf>

³⁵ DW, "Taliban: dukhtaran mitwanand dar hama senin dar madares dars bekhanand", Dec 22, 2023, Available on: <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/>

makeup, lipstick, nail polish, or dye their hair. They are also prohibited from attending wedding parties in hotels or dancing. Violations of these rules can result in expulsion from the school.

Teachers in Taliban Madrasas

According to the Human Rights Center of Afghanistan, based on interviews with experts on Taliban religious Madrasas across various provinces of Afghanistan, the vast majority of teachers in these Madrasas are male, even in the Madrasas established by the Taliban for women and girls. A very small percentage of teachers in girls' Madrasas are women, and these women are mostly from families affiliated with the Taliban. These female teachers are first trained by male instructors before they teach the girls.

Baz Mohammad (a pseudonym) from Balkh told the Human Rights Center of Afghanistan, "In boys' Madrasas, there are no female teachers, but in girls' Madrasas, male teachers teach. In some Madrasas, a curtain separates the male teacher from the female students during lessons."

Ghulam Farooq (a pseudonym) from Baghlan stated, "In girls' Madrasas, only a small percentage (perhaps 5%) of women, who are affiliated with Taliban families, teach."

This reality also highlights the contradiction in the actions and statements of the Taliban. On one hand, the Taliban have closed schools for women and girls above the sixth grade to prevent young women and girls from interacting with men, while on the other hand, they admit women and girls above the sixth grade into their religious Madrasas, where male teachers are the ones who instruct them.

Curriculum for the Taliban Madrasas

Afghanistan Human Rights Center has made efforts to gather credible and reliable information regarding the curriculum of the Taliban's religious Madrasas. Although a large portion of these religious Madrasas operate under the Ministry of Education, no information has been provided on this subject on the Taliban's official website or in related resources. Employees of the Ministry have also refrained from providing any information in this regard.

In the continuation of these efforts, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center has been able to interview around 20 employees of the Ministry of Education in various provinces, as well as students and individuals familiar with and connected to these Madrasas. As a result of these interviews, the Center discovered that a long list of religious books, mostly in Arabic and largely consisting of Hanafi jurisprudence texts, is taught in these schools. However, these schools do not have a fixed, defined, and uniform curriculum. Instead, the subjects, books, and resources vary from one Madrasa to another and from one province to another, depending on the preferences and decisions of the Madrasa's administrators.

The findings of the Afghanistan Human Rights Center show that the following books are taught to students in these religious Madrasas: Emirate Studies, Fiqh, Usul al-Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir (Quranic Exegesis), Tajweed, Sarf and Nahw (Arabic grammar), Tafsir Jalaalayn, Sahih Bukhari, the Quran, Arabic language, Islamic Saqafat (Culture and etiquette), the history of Islam, Islamic beliefs, the chapters of Sarf, Al-Tashil al-Fururi, Zad al-Talibeen, Sharh Nakhb al-Afkar, Al-Haq al-Mubeen, Daqiq al-Makhdoum, Intellectual War, Quduri, the Conditions of Prayer, Nur al-Ayda, Kanz al-Daqayiq, and others. As can be seen from this list, the vast majority of the books taught in the Taliban's religious Madrasas focus on religious sciences such as Fiqh (specifically Hanafi jurisprudence), Hadith, Tafsir, and Arabic language, with an emphasis on

older texts. According to the interviewees, the book *Emirate Studies*—which was introduced earlier in this report—is also taught in all religious Madrasas.

In addition to teaching these books, the instructors of these religious Madrasas also provide oral lessons and daily political and social advice to the students. All interviewees have reported to the Afghanistan Human Rights Center that the teachers recommend, for instance, adherence to religiously instructions, early marriage, the virtue of polygamy, raising children with a religious and jihadi mindset, the obligation to defend the Islamic system, the value and importance of jihad, hatred towards other religions, narrating stories of the Taliban's wars and comparing them to the battles of the Prophet Muhammad's era, labeling the previous government as corrupt, and opposing the Taliban's enemies. These oral lessons are continually given to students.

Benafsha (a pseudonym), a student at the Taliban's religious Madrasa in Baghlan province, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "They preach to us not to wear free clothing, and if someone else wears it, we should not allow it. They tell us about the age of marriage of the prophets and our mothers and recommend that the best jihad for women and girls is having children and preparing them for jihad. Another topic is the recommendation for marriage to expand the Muslim population, continue the lineage, and serve the cause of Allah, which is constantly told to us." She continued, stating that according to the teachers at her Madrasa, multiple marriages are the legal right of men, and obedience to husbands is the duty of women.

Documents, evidence, and information obtained show that the Taliban, by expanding religious Madrasas with the aforementioned agenda, aim to strengthen the ideological foundation of their rule. Through promoting violence, spreading their extremist views, and keeping society away from modern knowledge, they seek to maintain their power. In a short period, the Taliban has managed to exert a visible negative influence on the minds of the youth. The Afghanistan Human Rights Center has received numerous accounts of the Taliban's impact on the thoughts of young people. Among these is a video of a speech by a teenager named Mutawakil from the village of Anjir, in the Chah-abs district of Takhar province. This 16-year-old, after seven months of training in the Taliban's jihadist school, "Sayed al-Mursaleen," has developed an entirely extremist mindset. In his speech, he analyzes the reasons for the defeat of Muslims. He states, "The first reason for the defeat is the lack of unity and agreement, and there should be one caliph throughout the world. If a second caliph is found, the second caliph must be killed. The second reason for the defeat of Muslims is abandoning jihad. He calls on the audience to wage jihad against the infidels."

The Taliban have promised male students of their religious Madrasas that they will be issued valid certificates, and upon graduation, they will be appointed to good positions and jobs in government. Hanzala, a student of one of the religious Madrassas, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "We have been told that graduates of these Madrassas will be recruited into the ranks of the Taliban or other affiliated organizations. Many will be appointed as religious teachers, mosque preachers, enforcers of morality, or will work as judges or muftis in society."

Online Education for Women and Girls in Afghanistan

After the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and the ban on women and girls' education beyond the sixth grade, many individuals and organizations have established alternative solutions to continue women and girls' education through virtual (online) platforms such as universities, schools, and online courses. The majority of these institutions were newly established after the fall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Through interviews with officials and instructors from online educational centers, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center discovered that nearly 60% of these institutions were formed after 2021. In fact, the establishment of these organizations was a response to the ban on women and girls' education in the country and an effort to support the right to education for Afghan girls. Nearly 70% of these educational organizations are registered and based outside of Afghanistan. Some of the officials from these institutions told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center that there is no opportunity for such institutions to operate within the country, and therefore, they have been forced to register their educational institutions abroad.

The fundamental question in this area is whether online education can effectively fill the gap left by in-person classroom learning and serve as a relatively effective alternative. Given the existing limitations within the country, to what extent are eligible girls able to access these opportunities? What challenges do beneficiaries of online education face? The Afghanistan Human Rights Center, through interviews with officials and instructors from about 14 online educational centers, as well as around 25 students from these centers both inside and outside the country, has sought to provide suitable answers to these questions and related inquiries in this field.

Access to Online Education for Women and Girls

The level of access for women and girls who are deprived of education within the country is one of the most important issues in the field of online education. In the institutions interviewed by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, a total of 24,370 female students are currently receiving education. According to the officials of the mentioned educational institutions, approximately 75% of the beneficiaries are located in major cities like Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif, while the remaining students reside in remote provinces and districts. This figure indicates that girls in rural areas face far more limitations in accessing online education.

The findings of this report show that the majority of online educational institutions provide information and registration through the internet and social media platforms, such as their own websites, social networks, WhatsApp groups, and other virtual channels. However, some other educational institutions operating clandestinely within the country communicate and enroll students through personal networks, such as friends, relatives, and students.

According to interviews conducted by the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, 53% of female students and learners stated that they became aware of the educational institution and opportunities they are currently benefiting from through the internet and registered through this platform. Meanwhile, 46% reported that friends and acquaintances informed them about these opportunities and assisted them in the registration process.

Cost of Online Education

Afghanistan is a poor country and 92% live under poverty line. According to the findings of the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, the issue of online education fees has a significant impact on students' participation, given the dire economic situation in Afghanistan. The report reveals that only 57% of the institutions interviewed provide their services free of charge, while 43% charge up to 1,000 Afghanis per month from the beneficiaries. Institutions that charge fees include some private schools and language courses. However, all of the universities interviewed by the Human Rights Center stated that their services are free of charge.

For instance, officials from Afghanistan Roshan Online University, Women's Online University, and *Daricha* Private School have told the Human Rights Center that their online services for Afghan women and girls inside the country are entirely free. The Vice President of Academic Affairs at Afghanistan Roshan Online University mentioned, "Teaching at our university is free, and all of our colleagues work voluntarily."

It seems that one of the main reasons for the relatively low number of women and girls attending online educational institutions is the financial cost of their services.

Methods of Educational Services

The findings of the Afghanistan Human Rights Center show that the educational institutions interviewed employ various methods for conducting lessons and delivering educational materials to beneficiaries. Most of these institutions hold their classes synchronously via platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, and Teams. For those who cannot attend live sessions due to poor internet connectivity, class representatives record the sessions and send them to the students. Additionally, PDF versions of books and educational materials are sent via email, WhatsApp, or even Messenger.

For example, *Daricha* School delivers its online lessons by sending audio books to students. The Women's Online University has stated that, in addition to using the above-mentioned methods, recorded lessons are also shared on the university's YouTube page so that students can access them at any time.

Effectiveness of Educational Services

The Afghanistan Human Rights Center evaluates the effectiveness of educational services using objective indicators such as student attendance in classes, continuity of their participation in a course, and the results of exams. The vast majority of the educational institutions interviewed by the Center stated that the results of the lessons provided to students have been satisfactory and have, to some extent, managed to fill the gap left by in-person classes. About 90% of them reported that over 80% of students consistently attend lessons, with only around 10 to 15% of beneficiaries dropping out or discontinuing the course from start to finish.

Furthermore, the officials from these educational institutions mentioned that the exam results of students have also been satisfactory, with an average of 80% of students passing and progressing to the next level. Since online exams are not the same as in-person exams, assessing students' learning levels through these tests is somewhat more difficult. However, these institutions also evaluate progress and effectiveness in other ways.

An in charge of *Daricha* Schools network, told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center: "We don't have exams in the conventional sense for our online lessons, but we monitor students' progress through homework and class assignments." The director of the Women's Online University also mentioned: "Our exams are conducted through Google Forms. Based on the activities, the majority succeed and move on to the next semester, while a small number of students are given a chance exam, which is taken on a specified date."

Is the Online Education an Effective Alternative to In-Person Education?

As mentioned in the previous section, the officials of online educational institutions are somewhat satisfied with this teaching method. The majority have stated that the results achieved from this teaching approach are somewhat satisfactory. The Human Rights Center of Afghanistan also asked students who are benefiting

from online education whether, in their opinion, online education can be a good and acceptable alternative to in-person education. A significant number (54%) of the respondents stated that online education is in no way a good substitute for in-person education, 40% said that online education could be a relatively good alternative, but it depends on the conditions and resources, and only 6% of the respondents believe that online education is a suitable replacement for in-person education.

Nearly 60% of students have stated that they learned much more in in-person classes and understood the teacher's lectures better, which is why their grades were also better. Another 38% said that in-person classes were relatively better. Only 2% of the respondents said they learned better in online classes.

The assessments by the Human Rights Center of Afghanistan show that for the majority of female students, online education has not been an appropriate alternative. 56% of the respondents stated, "As a woman, I cannot focus on my studies at home because when I am at home, I am also required to do other household chores. Household duties are time-consuming and distract me." About 36% of them said they could not focus on home but were somehow able to manage the situation. Only 8% of these women and girls stated that they had no problem at home and could study well.

Challenges of Online Education for Girls

Online education, despite all its advantages and the hope it has created for women and girls in Afghanistan to continue their education, has its limitations and also faced serious challenges. These challenges have significantly limited women and girls' access to online educational opportunities and, for some, made it even impossible. A significant portion of these challenges has been expressed by the administrators, teachers of online educational institutions, and the students who are studying online, during interviews with the Human Rights Center of Afghanistan. This section of the report will examine these challenges.

1. **Limited Access to Regular Electricity:** Although online education has become a common and even effective method in many developed countries, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation in Afghanistan is quite different. Online education in Afghanistan is unavailable in most parts of the country to a wide range of students, inadequate and faces significant challenges and, in some cases, is even considered inaccessible. Beside inadequacy and unavailability, local challenges add to the problem. One of the major challenges of online education in Afghanistan stems from the lack of regular electricity in most parts of the country. Electricity in Afghanistan is imported, and only residents of the capital and a few large cities have access to electricity, which is also unreliable. In some remote villages, there is no electricity at all, not even intermittently.

Around 90% of female students, mostly from large cities in Afghanistan, have reported to the Human Rights Center of Afghanistan that they do not have regular access to electricity and rely on "portable chargers" (power banks) to charge their smartphones. As a result, 70% of the interviewees stated that they use smartphones for educational programs because they require less electricity. 10% mentioned using desktop computers, while 20% reported using laptops/tablets. Although smartphones have significantly fewer features compared to laptops or desktops, the students are forced to use them due to the lack of better options.

2. **Inability to Afford Internet Costs:** Poor-quality and expensive internet is another significant challenge to online education in Afghanistan. Students who wish to take online lessons must incur

high costs for internet usage. Additionally, the quality of internet service is very poor, which sometimes makes accessing such lessons practically impossible.

The Human Rights Center of Afghanistan, through interviews with online students, has found that the cost of internet access is one of the serious obstacles to their continued education. 74% of interviewees stated that online education is too expensive for them and that paying for it is very burdensome and nearly impossible. Only 26% of the interviewees said that the cost of internet and electricity is not a problem for them. Similarly, 60% of the interviewees mentioned that their families are no longer willing to pay for internet costs and other expenses related to online education, and they do not want them to continue their studies. In contrast, 40% of the interviewees said their families continue to support them, and they do not face issues with paying for internet and other costs associated with online education.

Another issue in this regard is limited access to strong internet. 53% of female students and learners, in interviews with the Human Rights Center of Afghanistan, stated that the internet in their place of residence is extremely weak and often inaccessible, making it impossible for them to participate in live online sessions. However, 47% reported having access to relatively strong internet, allowing them to attend educational sessions.

Among the 53% of interviewees who have weak internet, 53% said they go to their friends' houses to use their internet for online sessions, 36% mentioned that they use elevated places near telecommunications towers, and 10% said they occasionally visit internet cafes.

3. **Obtaining communication devices:** Another issue highlighted by both the administrators of online educational institutions and students is the inability to obtain necessary online educational tools such as smartphones, laptops, computers, and tablets. A significant number of female students and their families cannot afford to buy these devices due to economic hardship. Nearly 35% of students, in interviews with the Human Rights Center of Afghanistan, said they do not own personal devices (smartphones, laptops, etc.) and instead use those belonging to other family members for online education. The remaining 65% stated they have their own personal devices and use them for their studies. According to the interviewees, many girls who are not participating in online education cannot even afford to buy a smartphone, let alone other devices.
4. **Lack of focus and social isolation of female students:** One of the general weaknesses of online education is the potential to lead to social isolation of the participants. In online education, teachers and students do not see each other face-to-face, and social interaction is extremely limited. This can lead to increased isolation, which may negatively affect the learning process. However, for female students in Afghanistan, this weakness has become a significant challenge. Nearly 80% of female students interviewed by the Human Rights Center of Afghanistan expressed concern, stating that they feel more isolated, and their social interactions have become limited due to staying at home and not attending in-person classes. The remaining 20% said they do not feel isolated.

Solutions for Expanding Online Education Access to More Students

The evaluations conducted show that a very small percentage of eligible women and girls have access to online education services, particularly in remote areas of the country, where this percentage approaches zero. Given this concerning situation, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center, during interviews with

professors and officials of online educational institutions, asked them how more women and girls could be covered through online education to increase access to these services. The interviewees suggested the following solutions:

First) All interviewed institutions have suggested that internet costs for students and teachers at universities and schools should be covered so that those students who live in areas with mobile network coverage but cannot afford the internet fees can access educational services.

In an interview, the director of the *Daricha* Schools Network, proposed a different solution in this regard: "If an institution, like the branches of Elon Musk's companies, could provide free internet access to people across Afghanistan, and this internet was not under Taliban control, had good speed, and devices like computers and smartphones were made available to children, the issue of access could be somewhat addressed. Otherwise, I don't think anything except the fall of the Taliban and international support similar to that from 2001 onwards, with a government committed to the development of Afghanistan, can provide a solution."

Second) About 80% of the interviewees have suggested that financial assistance and cooperation should be provided to students in acquiring communication devices such as smartphones and laptops. It has also been proposed that power banks be provided to students to partially compensate for the lack/shortage of electricity. As mentioned in the previous section of the report, one of the reasons for the lack of access to online education for women and girls is the lack of communication devices and the shortage of electricity.

Third) Around 75% of the interviewees have suggested that capacity-building programs should be organized for the teachers and administrators of newly established institutions by experienced organizations, so that teachers can better understand the differences between online and in-person classes, acquire the necessary skills in this area, and use the most effective methods for teaching.

Fourth) Financial support for educational institutions to provide free services for students, such as paying salaries and covering the ancillary costs of teachers, is another suggestion raised by nearly 60% of the interviewees. Some institutions mentioned that their teachers and staff work voluntarily, but they are not very confident about the continuation of voluntary work.

Fifth) Support for online universities and schools by host foreign countries in terms of registering and accrediting the educational certificates issued by them to students was also suggested by the interviewees. Some of the institutions that have interviewed with the Afghanistan Human Rights Center are not yet registered, and the certificates they issue are not recognized. Without valid academic credentials, students may not be able to practically apply their knowledge.

Sixth) A number of interviewees have told the Afghanistan Human Rights Center that, given the serious challenges faced by online education, they have doubts about the sustainability of this type of service, its required quality, the validity of its certificates, and improving access to it. They believe that this approach (online education) is a temporary solution and cannot replace in-person education. They suggest that the international community should consider the reopening of schools and universities and the establishment of a democratic and people-centered political system in Afghanistan as a fundamental solution.

In sum online education both quantitatively and qualitatively cannot replace in person education. No online solution can address lack of access to education for three million girl students.

Demands of Online Students

As mentioned in the first part of this section, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center conducted interviews with 25 students from various provinces of the country to evaluate the effectiveness of online education. Among the interviewees, approximately 40% were university students, 30% were school students, and the remaining 30% were students from educational centers.

The Afghanistan Human Rights Center also asked the interviewees about their main demands. The interviewees shared their suggestions, strategies, and requests during the interviews, some of which were discussed in the previous section. However, in this part, we will examine two main demands of female students.

The primary demand of 100% of the interviewees is the reopening of schools and universities and the resumption of in-person education for girls in Afghanistan. All the interviewees expressed that their greatest dream and most important wish is to once again see women and girls in schools and universities.

At the same time, about 70% of the interviewees believe that if schools and universities do not reopen, online education should continue and access to these opportunities for women and girls should be strengthened. However, 30% of the interviewees are skeptical about the effectiveness of online education and believe that in any case, efforts should be focused on the return of in-person education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this report, it can be concluded that the prohibition and deprivation of women from education and learning in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan represents a systematic and institutionalized violation of the right to education and flagrant discrimination against Afghan women. This is part of the official and declared policies of the Taliban group. By preventing women and girls from education, the group is intentionally and openly opposing human rights and the fundamental rights of women, aiming for the complete isolation of women in society and depriving them of all their basic rights and freedoms.

As described in the report, women are in fact deprived of all educational opportunities, including primary school education. Although in appearance, girls are allowed to attend school until grade six, the restrictions imposed and the incorrect changes made in the curriculum, teaching methods, and academic staff in these schools have severely reduced the quality of educational services, making them ineffective.

The findings of the report show that the deprivation of women girls from the right to education has led to many negative and harmful consequences, such as an increase in forced and underage marriages, mental health issues and depression, a decline in the quality of education services in active educational institutions, and more. Further, this has allowed for the abuse of women and manipulating young women by the in charges of Madrassas. These harmful consequences are clearly addressed in this report.

This report also states that online education may have created much hope for women and girls deprived of the right to education, and many educational institutions are offering online services for Afghan women and girls. However, this method of education is in no way a substitute for in person education. It also facing significant challenges, and some argue that it cannot be a suitable alternative to in-person education because the necessary economic conditions and infrastructure for it are not sufficiently available in the country. Despite all these challenges, the majority of interviewees in this report have suggested that if schools and universities remain closed to girls, online education should continue and be further strengthened.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current report, the Afghanistan Human Rights Center makes the following recommendations to relevant national and international authorities:

1. It is recommended to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is currently investigating the situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban's case, that the systematic violation of girls' right to education by the Taliban be included in their investigations as an example of "persecution" against women, in accordance with Article 7 of the Rome Statute.
2. We urge the countries that announced in September that they would file a complaint against the Taliban in the International Court of Justice to fulfill their commitment and open a case against the Taliban for the widespread violation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, including the violation of the right to education. They should proceed with careful evaluation of risk of engagement with the Taliban and unintended consequences of providing legitimacy to the Taliban.
3. We call on the United Nations and its member states to take practical and serious measures within the framework of the UN Charter and other international mechanisms to stop the violation of human rights and women's rights by the Taliban, and to reopen the doors of schools, universities, and other educational institutions to girls in Afghanistan.
4. We Call on the UN to investigate cases of abuse of the Taliban and Taliban affiliated instructors at the religious Madrassas who prey upon women and girls studying at the Madrassas, forcing women to forced marriage and misconducts.
5. We urge the international community to financially support educational institutions and students outside Afghanistan, specially in the neighboring countries to provide continued quality education to women and girls from Afghanistan.
6. Since there is no reliable experience in providing online education services in Afghanistan, it is recommended to the international community to organize capacity-building programs for teachers and administrators of online educational institutions, so that they can enhance their skills in areas such as program planning, effective teaching methods, and utilizing technology and limited resources.
7. Since granting scholarships to developing countries, especially those with the lowest levels of development, such as Afghanistan, where the education system is collapsed, is a commitment of developed countries under the international Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4, Target 7), we urge the international community to facilitate continued education for Afghan women and girls abroad by providing educational scholarships.
8. We call on all media, civil society organizations, and human rights and women's rights activists to take part in raising awareness among the Afghan public regarding the importance of girls' education and the severe consequences of the ban on girls' education for families and society as a whole, so that families will support girls' education and help create opportunities for their learning and education.

The End.