



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

Mr. Naseer Ahmad FAIQ

Chargé d'Affaires of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations

Security Council Meeting on the Situation in Afghanistan

26 September 2023

NEW YORK

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening this important discussion on Afghanistan's dire situation and I commend your leadership of the Council this month.

I am also thankful to Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, and Ms. Karima Bennouna, Professor of Law at the University of Michigan Law School, for their briefings today. They underscore the grim, dire, and deeply concerning situation in Afghanistan, which warrants urgent attention and action to overcome the current crisis.

We appreciate the remarks of Security Council members and the joint statement issued ahead of the meeting by members of this Council, reaffirming the commitments to continue supporting the fundamental human rights of the people of Afghanistan particularly women and girls, as well as efforts to bring about real peace, in a stable, secure and united Afghanistan.

We want to also thank all member-states member states, donors, UN entities, NGOs, and all other actors providing vital humanitarian support - in perhaps what is the most difficult period in the history of our nation.

Mr. President,

Tragically, two years since the Taliban seized control, the situation in Afghanistan has not improved. It has only deteriorated across humanitarian, human rights, social, security, and political spheres. Economic and humanitarian crises have deepened. Ninety-seven percent of the population is now living in poverty, and two-thirds struggling for basic survival. Hunger has affected 20 million people, unemployment has increased and migration continues despite grave risks.

Under Taliban rule, social conditions in Afghanistan continue to regress significantly. The rights and freedoms of women and marginalized communities have been severely curtailed. Women and girls face strict limitations on their mobility, access to education, and participation in public life. Cultural and artistic expressions are being suppressed, stifling the rich cultural heritage of Afghanistan. The population lives in constant fear of retribution for any perceived violations of the Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law.

Mr. President,

The hard-won rights and freedoms, particularly for women and girls, are under grave threat, with reports of gender-based violence, forced marriages, and sexual abuse, all perpetrated with impunity. Afghan women and girls are enduring gender apartheid, stripped of fundamental rights and economic opportunities, rendering them vulnerable. The closure of girls' schools and

restrictions on women's employment not only hinder gender equality, but poses a serious challenge to Afghanistan's development and the future of our nation.

Mr. President,

Since the onset of the crisis, and increasingly over the past year, the people of Afghanistan have looked to the international community to form the consensus that is needed to help overcome the crisis in our country. The holding of the UN meeting in Doha in May, the appointment of the UN Special Coordinator for Afghanistan, and recent high-level meeting in support of women and girls last week during high-level week, are welcome developments, which are recognized and valued by the people of Afghanistan. Having said that, such focus and measures need to sustain and grow stronger in the way forward in order to overcome the crisis in Afghanistan.

The people of Afghanistan welcome the statement endorsed by Thirteen Foreign Ministers, which strongly condemned the Taliban's gender-based persecution, called for an immediate halt to human rights violations. The statement also emphasized an inclusive political process involving all Afghans, including women, ethnic and religious minorities. As we have stressed time and again, this remains a vital issue to achieving comprehensive settlement, that leads to legitimate and inclusive governance that ensures national unity and political stability. And this should a priority in the international community's efforts on Afghanistan

We echo the call for a special session of the General Assembly to address gender apartheid in Afghanistan, which was reiterated by the Afghan women representatives during last week's discussions.

We also applaud statements and commitment to support the people of Afghanistan including women and girls and the calls on the Taliban in regard to respecting the fundamental human rights of Afghan people and inclusivity by several heads of delegations during the general debate of General Assembly. The statements delivered reflect a new degree of concern within the region and beyond on the current state of affairs.

We must remember that a nation's strength lies in empowering all its citizens, regardless of gender. However, The Taliban's rigid ideology refuses to embrace the benefits of modern science and technology. Instead, its focus has been to intensify the establishment of Madrasas and religious schools, deliberately radicalizing the Afghan youth, and compromising their future and that of our nation. Since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, 15,000 Madrassas have been established and just recently 100,000 Madrasa teachers have been recruited. It is our duty to liberate Afghanistan from the shackles of gender apartheid, radicalization, and extremism, allowing our women, girls, and youth to contribute to our society's growth and prosperity.

Mr. President,

The Taliban's grave human rights abuses, brutal punishments, and suppression of media and civil society have made crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law commonplace. Reports from UNAMA, Amnesty International, and the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan's human rights paint a grim picture.

The August 22nd UNAMA report documented over 800 cases of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, and enforced disappearances involving individuals associated in some way to former Afghan government and its security forces. In a report released on September 20th, UNAMA recorded more than 1600 instances of human rights violations by the Taliban during arrests and detentions, including acts of torture and other inhumane treatment by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the de facto General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) of the Taliban.

While these reports represent just the tip of the iceberg, we appreciate UNAMA's recent efforts and urge ongoing monitoring and reporting of Taliban human rights violations. The Afghan people continue to witness arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, and torture, especially among former security forces and civilians accused of being associated groups opposed to the Taliban. Amnesty International has reported on and verified the Taliban's systematic collective punishment, which has exacerbated their reign of terror to a new level.

Mr. President,

The ban on political parties solidifies Taliban autocratic power, extinguishing political diversity and inclusive decision-making. This isolation fuels turmoil and undermines peace prospects. Despite two years of global engagement, the Taliban obstinately reject demands, justifying actions with distorted religious and cultural interpretations. Their exclusionary policies exacerbate the crisis, rejecting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Despite claiming to encourage the return of former officials through the Commission of Contact with Afghan Leaders and Their Repatriation, credible reports suggest the killing of those former security forces who trusted the call and returned from neighboring countries. Even those former leaders who chose to stay are now subject to strict restrictions and house arrest.

Mr. President,

The security situation in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan is of deep concern. The Taliban's connections to terrorist groups and their sheltering of over 20 such groups, including Al-Qaida and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, transform Afghanistan into a hub of terrorism, endangering Afghan lives. Their extremist ideology and history of violence have created a pervasive atmosphere of fear and insecurity, eroding trust in regional and international security efforts. Afghan civilians have endured the scourge of terrorism for far too long.

Mr. President,

The Taliban, who were the primary source of instability and insecurity in Afghanistan by targeting innocent civilians and destroying public institutions and infrastructure over the past two decades, are now claiming credit for ensuring security and stability in the country. However, their promises of increased revenue collection have not resulted in tangible improvements for ordinary Afghans. Furthermore, transparency and accountability regarding budget utilization remain absent. Similarly, the Taliban's assertions of counterterrorism and counter-narcotics efforts ring hollow, as their leaders are deeply involved in narcotics production and smuggling. While dissent within the Taliban centers on power and resource distribution, the Afghan people continue to suffer under their despotic rule.

Mr. President,

Despite these challenges, the people of Afghanistan remain resolute, with diverse groups working tirelessly to defend their rights and national values. Civil society, women, youth, and political movements have mobilized to form a united national agenda.

On September 16th, our Mission hosted a Zoom meeting with 85 representatives of the Afghan diaspora, independent Afghan political figures, human rights and women's rights activists, as well as leaders of progressive and democratic parties and associations both inside and outside of Afghanistan. Allow me to convey their essential messages and demands:

- 1) They've urged international partners and this Council to sustain pressure on the Taliban, demanding the reversal of anti-women policies, including education and work bans. **They've also called on the UN to classify the plight of Afghan women and girls as "gender apartheid."** Recognizing and criminalizing this term would provide a vital legal framework, strengthening the global response to women's rights violations and holding perpetrators accountable in Afghanistan and beyond.
- 2) They **emphasized the necessity of ongoing humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan, subject to rigorous monitoring and supervision of aid delivery.** This may involve strengthening targeted humanitarian aid and supporting small-scale livelihood-saving and entrepreneurship development projects, particularly for women, which remain crucial. This includes serious consideration for merit-based inclusivity and diversity in the employment opportunities with the UN and other international organizations' locally hired staff.
- 3) They have called for robust support to ensure Afghan women and girls' full, equal, and meaningful participation in social, economic, and political domains, including decision-making roles. **Women and girls should be able to engage in all decision-making processes affecting their lives, even in international meetings concerning Afghanistan.**
- 4) They urgently seek **the UNHCR priority attention to protection and resettlement of Afghan refugees who fled Taliban persecution** in neighboring regions, especially

women and children facing detention and inhumane treatment. These refugees, including women's rights defenders, former officials, and security personnel, are in jeopardy, necessitating swift resettlement support.

- 5) They **support sanctions on Taliban leaders for violating women's rights and oppose normalizing engagement** with them until they respect the rights and will of the people of Afghanistan.
- 6) Dialogue with the Taliban alone has proven futile; the **call for engagement with democratic and progressive political forces is imperative**. The international community must play a more prominent role in helping Afghanistan achieve a legitimate government based on the people's will.
- 7) The need for a coherent and united international approach is essential. It requires inclusive dialogue and **principled engagement**, backed by the international community and facilitated by the UN, to establish a political roadmap toward an inclusive and representative governance system aligned with the will of the Afghan people.

8)

Mr. President,

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the situation in Afghanistan calls for urgent and concerted efforts by the international community. By prioritizing security, human rights, legitimate and democratic governance, and regional cooperation, it is possible to forge a path toward a more stable, inclusive, and prosperous Afghanistan.

Through principled engagement and a legitimate political structure aligned with the people's aspirations, we can help shape a better future for the Afghan people and prevent the country from once again becoming a breeding ground for extremism and terrorism. It is crucial for the international community to act swiftly and decisively to prevent further suffering and lay the foundations for real and sustainable peace in Afghanistan.