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World Report 2025 - Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan worsened in 2024 as the Taliban authorities intensified their crackdown on human rights, particularly against women and girls. Afghanistan remained the only country where girls and women were banned from secondary and university education, while also facing significant barriers to employment and freedom of movement, assembly, and speech. The Taliban also detained journalists and critics and imposed severe restrictions on the media. Afghanistan's economic crisis left 23 million in need of humanitarian assistance; women and girls were disproportionately affected.

Women's and Girls' Rights

Taliban edicts violated the rights of women and girls to [education](#), [employment](#), freedom of movement and expression. The Taliban have also dismantled protections for women and girls experiencing gender-based violence, created discriminatory barriers to their accessing [health care](#), and barred them from playing sports and visiting parks. Strict hijab and *mahram* (male guardian) regulations have impeded women from traveling for work or to receive medical treatment.

In August, the Taliban announced [a new law on promotion of virtue and prevention of vice](#), which prohibits women from traveling or using public transportation without a male guardian. Under the law, women and girls are required to cover their faces in public and are prohibited from singing in public or letting their voices be heard outside the house.

The Taliban also [detained women and girls](#) for not abiding by the prescribed dress code. UN experts have reported that some of those detained have been held incommunicado for days and subjected to [“physical violence](#), threats and intimidation.”

The UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, [has described](#) “an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity, and exclusion of women and girls.” In September, the Taliban [banned](#) Bennett from visiting Afghanistan.

Economic and Humanitarian Crises

[More than half](#) of Afghanistan's population—23.7 million people— needed urgent humanitarian aid and assistance in 2024, with 12.4 million people facing food insecurity and 2.9 million at emergency levels of hunger. As of November, the UN Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan had received only [31 percent](#) of the needed funds, and [humanitarian programs had closed](#) because of the lack of resources. The loss of foreign assistance has [severely harmed](#) Afghanistan's healthcare system and exacerbated the health impacts of malnutrition and illnesses from inadequate medical care.

[Women and girls](#) have been disproportionately affected by the healthcare crisis. The Taliban's ban on women's employment and restrictions on their movement outside the home have compounded the crisis by creating additional discriminatory obstacles to delivering and receiving assistance on an equal basis. Bans on secondary and university education for girls and women have also meant a [shortage of women healthcare workers](#).

Among those most affected by the healthcare crisis are people with disabilities. Because of aid shortfalls, the [few services that had been available for people with disabilities](#), including physical rehabilitation and mental health support, have largely disappeared since the Taliban takeover in 2021.

Extrajudicial Killings, Enforced Disappearances, and Torture

In two reports covering the [first](#) and [second](#) quarters of 2024, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 98 cases in which the Taliban carried out arbitrary arrest and detentions, and 20 instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials or security personnel. Nine members of the former government's security forces were killed. UNAMA also received reports that individuals who were forced to return to Afghanistan from Pakistan were also [subjected to torture, mistreatment, and other forms of harm](#). Taliban authorities [carried out](#) corporal punishments, including public floggings of at least 147 men, 28 women, and four boys.

[LGBT people](#) in Afghanistan faced persecution and serious ill treatment that could amount to torture because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Attacks on the Media and Civil Society

The Taliban [curtailed freedom of expression and the media](#) and arbitrarily detained and tortured journalists and other critics. In [September](#), they banned live broadcasts of political programs, criticism of the group, and limited interviews to individuals from [a pre-approved list](#).

The Taliban continued to arbitrarily arrest media workers in 2024, usually detaining them for several days. On [May 4](#), they arrested a journalist in Parwan province on allegations of sharing information with the Afghan diaspora media. He was released after three days. On [February 17](#), Mansoor Nekmal, the editor in chief of Khaama Press, was detained in relation to a report on the enforcement of the hijab decree in Kabul. He was released the next day. On [February 10](#), Saifullah Karimi, a Pajhwok News Agency journalist, was detained after requesting an interview with a Taliban official about the protests by restaurant and hotel owners over tax increases. He was released two days later. On [January 18](#), Jawad Rasouli and Abdul Haq Hamidi from Gardesh-e Etilat News Center were arrested and then released; on [January 17](#), Ehsan Akbari was arrested in Kabul and released on January 25. In most cases, Taliban authorities did not provide any information about the basis for these arrests or if those in custody would face trial. Detainees also lacked access to lawyers; in most cases even their family members were not allowed to visit them.

On [September 26](#), Jawed Kohistani, a well-known political analyst was detained by Taliban's General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) in Kabul and was released on October 15.

Afghan Refugees

[More than 665,000](#) Afghan refugees were forced back to Afghanistan after Pakistan launched a campaign in late 2023 of intimidation, arrests, and deportations targeting "illegal foreigners." Many had lived in Pakistan for decades or had been born there. Those arriving in Afghanistan faced severe economic hardship, and a lack of housing and access to schools.

Resettlement of [Afghan asylum seekers](#) and refugees in the US, UK, Germany, Canada, and other countries has been slow and limited, leaving thousands of Afghans who fled the Taliban in limbo in Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries.

In July, the UK announced a [policy change](#), introducing a route to allow some Afghans to reunite with their families who were evacuated to the UK after August 2021. However, serious problems with the UK's relocation and resettlement programs have meant that, three years on, many at-risk Afghans including women and girls, have [no safe pathway to resettlement in the UK](#).

Attacks on Civilians

The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghan affiliate of the Islamic State (ISIS), launched several attacks against ethnic and religious minorities, especially the Hazara community, as well as attacks on the Taliban that injured and killed civilians. On May 18, ISKP issued a statement [threatening](#) NGOs, media, and foreign aid agencies.

On [September 12](#), ISKP claimed responsibly for [killing 14 men](#) in Daikundi province.

The killings took place in a remote border district between Daikundi, which has a predominantly Hazara population, and Ghor provinces. ISKP [claimed responsibility](#) for an April 29 attack in which a gunman opened fire on worshippers inside the Shia Sahib-u-Zaman mosque in Guzara district, Herat province, killing six people. On [January 6](#), ISKP claimed responsibility for an attack on a passenger bus in the in Dasht-e Barchi area, a predominantly Hazara neighborhood in Kabul, that killed at least 5 and wounded 20 people.

On [September 2](#), ISKP carried out a suicide attack outside the Taliban's prosecution office, killing at least 21 people, most of them civilians.

Cross border fire by Pakistani security forces in May caused 25 [civilian casualties](#), including nine deaths. Airstrikes by the Pakistani military in Khost and Paktia [killed](#) eight civilians in March.

Justice and Accountability

In September, the UN human rights office [presented a report](#) on Afghanistan highlighting the importance of addressing decades of conflict and impunity for widespread human rights abuses and specifically referred to states involved in past military interventions needing to take responsibility for accountability for violations by their nationals.

In 2024, there was no reported progress in the first war crimes charges against a soldier accused of murdering an Afghan civilian in 2012. A UK independent [inquiry](#) into alleged abuses by the country's special forces during detention operations in Afghanistan between 2010-2013 continued in 2024.

On [September 25](#), Germany, Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands, announced that they were initiating legal proceedings against Afghanistan before the International Court of Justice, alleging that the Taliban's systematic gender-based discrimination and violence violates Afghanistan's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which Afghanistan ratified in 2003. It would be the first time a case has been brought before the court under this treaty.

The UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution in October underscoring the need to strengthen international efforts to advance accountability for past and ongoing abuses, including through the collection and preservation of evidence, but [did not create a mechanism that](#) could support these efforts.