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Taliban Cracks Down On Private Children's Homes In Afghanistan

By [Sana Kakar](#)

The Taliban has launched a crackdown on private children's homes that provide shelter, education, and care to thousands across Afghanistan.

The hard-line Islamist group has forcibly shut down several private care facilities in recent weeks and transferred children -- many of them orphans -- to state-run facilities.

The Taliban government said the move is aimed at improving oversight. But critics said government-run children's homes lack resources and warned that the authorities could use them to spread the Taliban's extremist worldview and ideology.

An estimated **1.6 million children have been orphaned** by years of war in Afghanistan, according to the United Nations. Many live on the streets and struggle to find food and shelter. Extreme poverty and an opium epidemic have also left millions of children without one or both of their parents.

Among the facilities recently closed was Rayan Children, a private facility in the capital, Kabul, funded by Shafiq Mureed, a popular Afghan-born singer and composer who lives in the United States, and his wife.

"The children were crying because they were used to the same teachers, cooks, guards, and caregivers," Mureed said in a [Facebook post](#) on January 17. "Our 21 employees were like family to them."

Mureed made the post days after he said Taliban members arrived unannounced at Rayan Children and ordered the closure of the facility,

citing a decree issued by Taliban leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada that had not been made public.

In a [statement](#) on January 18, Rayan Children said the closure was not related to financial, political, or religious issues.

'Severe Psychological Harm'

Child rights activists have warned that the sudden transfer of children, especially those who have been orphaned, into Taliban-run institutions could take a heavy toll on them.

"Orphaned children are more vulnerable. They do not easily trust or adapt," said Mohibullah Zgham, an Afghan activist. "Removing them from an environment where they feel safe can cause severe psychological harm."

The head of a Kabul-based children's home mirrored those comments.

"If they are taken from this environment, it will disrupt their education and they will go backward instead of becoming self-reliant," said the head of the facility, who spoke to RFE/RL's Radio Azadi on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution. "These children study, sleep, and live here, and all their basic needs are met."

Taliban officials have maintained that the move is aimed at improving the care provided to children.

"We are merging private centers running facilities for children without guardians into orphanages managed by the ministry, so their needs can be addressed in a standardized way," said Samiullah Ebrahimi, spokesperson for the Taliban's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, on January 18.

Ebrahimi said the ministry currently runs 60 children's homes where some 10,000 boys and girls receive education and care.

The Taliban's crackdown appears to be part of wider efforts to bring all private schools and educational institutions under the group's control.

The Taliban has vowed to root out all forms of the modern secular education that thrived in Afghanistan after the US-led invasion in 2001 toppled the Taliban's first regime.

Since regaining power in 2021, the group has converted scores of secular schools, public and private universities, and vocational training centers into Islamic seminaries, leading to a surge in the number of madrasahs in the country.

Critics have accused the Taliban of using madrasahs to brainwash the young generation with their extremist ideology.

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