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Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan:

APRIL – JUNE 2026 UPDATE

United Nations
Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

About this update

This update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, covering the period from April to June 2026,[1] is based on monitoring by the UNAMA Human Rights Service conducted in accordance with its mandate from the UN Security Council.[2]

Women's rights

Restrictions on women's freedom of movement

Between 6-8 June, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice officials in Herat city arrested at least 30 women accused of wearing improper *hijab.* See attached paper (Enforcement of the *hijab* requirement in Herat city) for further details.

On 18 June, the *de facto* Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs announced on its X account that "Observing *hijab*" would be the topic of the Friday sermon on 19 June.[3] A ten-page document was distributed to *imams* which explained that a *hijab* must:

- cover the entire body of a woman, except for her eyes, with a garment such as a *chador*,[4] or similar attire so that her body and her clothing remain hidden
- must be thick, loose and wide and not allow any part of the body to be visible
- not contain adornments
- not resemble clothing of men or "infidels"
- not contain fragrance

It further stated that a *hijab* is not a garment to be worn for the purpose of gaining popularity or fame.

During the reporting period, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice officials also visited shops and health clinics to advise them not to allow women to enter without a *mahram*.

For example:

- On 2 May, in Kandahar province, Kandahar city, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors visited several shops selling cosmetics and other products intended for female customers. They instructed shopkeepers not to sell any items to women without a *mahram.*
- On 21 May, in Uruzgan province, Dehrawood district, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors visited a health facility to assess compliance with its directives. They reiterated that female patients should not receive healthcare unless accompanied by a *mahram*, and that female health workers should be accompanied by a *mahram* during work hours.

UNAMA Human Rights Service also documented limitations on women's freedom of movement due to the *de facto* authorities' requirement that a *mahram* accompany women when outside the home.

For example:

- In May, in Logar province,[5] Mohammad Agha district, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors gave a verbal warning to a woman buying groceries, because she was not accompanied by a *mahram.* The male shopkeeper was slapped and taken to the *de facto* district Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice office. He was

[1] All dates referenced refer to 2026, unless otherwise specified.
[2] [Until 15 June 2026]: United Nations Security Council Resolution 2626 (2022), extended by Resolution 2818 (2026); [From 15 June 2026]: United Nations Security Council Resolution 2822 (2026).
[3] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs (https://x.com/mohiaAfghan/status/2067574703603028029).
[4] A loose full-body cloak that covers the head and body down to the ankles, leaving the face exposed.
[5] Exact date and location withheld for protection reasons.

released after a few hours, following intervention by community elders and after he signed a guarantee letter that he would not sell items to women without a *mahram* in the future.

- In June, in Badakhshan province,[6] *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors questioned women who were shopping because they were not accompanied by a *mahram* and not wearing "proper *hijab*". The male shopkeeper intervened on the women's behalf, and the *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors ordered the closure of the shop for three days and confiscated the key. On the third day, the shopkeeper went to the *de facto* Department of the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice to collect the key, which they refused. A verbal dispute ensued, after which the shopkeeper was detained in *de facto* police custody for several hours. He was released later the same day after community elders intervened.

Decree No. 18 titled "Code on Judicial Separation of Spouses"

On 14 May, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice published Decree No. 18 titled "Code on Judicial Separation of Spouses" dated 8 April 2026.[7] The Decree establishes grounds on which women may petition for judicial separation while men retain a unilateral right to divorce. Amongst other provisions, the Decree:

- renders the validity of a woman's marriage reliant on her guardian's permission: the Decree states that "A woman who… marries someone who is not compatible (*ghair-kufu*) without the guardian's permission, the marriage is not valid" (Article 3).
- implicitly sanctions child marriage: the Decree states that if any relative, other than a father or grandfather, arranges a marriage contract on behalf of a minor boy or a minor girl with a compatible spouse and for a customary dower (*mahr al-mithl*)[8], the contract shall be valid (Articles 5 and 6).
- limits the circumstances in which a child who is entered into a marriage can receive an annulment: for marriages arranged by a relative other than a father or paternal grandfather, a virgin girl's silence upon reaching puberty as to the continuation of the marriage invalidates her right to an annulment. However, the silence of a boy or a non-virgin girl (*thayyiba*) upon reaching puberty does not invalidate their right to annul the marriage. The right of a boy or non-virgin girl to an annulment can only be invalidated by an implicit or explicit expression of consent (Articles 5 and 7). In child marriages arranged by a father or paternal grandfather, the right to an annulment is only available where the girl can show that her guardian failed to "act with due care and compassion" (Article 8).
- imposes extreme obstacles for women seeking to leave a marriage: a husband must consent to separation, except in limited circumstances. Even in cases where a husband is missing, the wife must wait until "his death becomes certain and until the people of his generation have all passed away" (Article 15(2)).

On 20 May, in response to public criticism of the Decree, the spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities stated that the Decree is based on Sharia, and no consideration should be given to "any protest … waged by those who have

[6] Exact date and location withheld for protection reasons.
[7] Website of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (https://laws.moj.gov.af/ShowLawPersian.aspx).
[8] *Mahr al-mithl* means proper dowry or equivalent dower. It is a standard *mahr*/dowry for a woman applied in Islamic marriages when no specific *mahr*/dowry was agreed upon during *nikah*/marriage, or when the specified *mahr*/dowry amount is deemed invalid or unlawful.

problems with the religion and principles of Islam."[9] He stressed that fathers and grandfathers reserve the right to decide on the marriage of their children/grandchildren. He further stated that a girl betrothed for marriage: "Before she starts and continues the marriage … can go to court and express her objection to the father's or grandfather's guardianship and say that for these reasons I do not want the marriage to take place."

Access to UN premises

30 June marked 296 days since Afghan women were banned from accessing United Nations premises countrywide. The *de facto* authorities have prevented Afghan women (including UN staff, contractors, and visitors) from entering United Nations premises across the country since 7 September 2025.

Education

In May and June, the *de facto* National Examination Administration conducted public university entrance examinations across the country. A total of 120,000 male prospective students participated in the examinations.[10] No women and girls took part as they have been banned from higher education since 20 December 2022.

UNAMA Human Rights Service documented instances of *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice officials conducting inspections of schools to uphold their regulations. For example, on 13 April, in Herat province, Herat city, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors stationed outside a girls' school prevented female teachers not wearing *chador* from entering the school. They warned the women they would be dismissed from their positions if they did not wear a *chador* in the future.

Cross-border incidents

See attached Paper for an overview of civilian causalities attributed to cross-border incidents during the reporting period.

Corporal punishment

Since 22 April, the *de facto* Supreme Court has not publicly announced any corporal punishments on its social media accounts or website. UNAMA Human Rights Service verified that in some provinces *de facto* primary/district court officials carried out punishments after 22 April. In some instances, observers reported that the number of individuals present at the corporal punishment was limited mainly to *de facto* court officials. This is a departure from previous practice, in which punishments were announced on social media and often carried out in stadiums or court premises, with large numbers of local residents and *de facto* officials in attendance.

Between 1 April and 30 June, UNAMA Human Rights Service documented instances of the *de facto* authorities carrying out judicial corporal punishment against at least 137 individuals (112 men and 25 women).

Some corporal punishments were carried out publicly. For example, on 14 June, in Balkh province, Dehdadi district, *de facto* district court officials lashed six men and one woman. The six men had been convicted of breaking the Ramadan fast and sentenced to two months in prison and 20 lashes each. The woman had been convicted of having an illicit relationship and sentenced to one year in prison and 20 lashes. The punishment was carried out at a gathering attended by *de facto* authority officials and several local residents.

[9] X account of RTA Dari News (https://x.com/rtadarinews/status/2057126062337695946).
[10] Website of the *de facto* National Examinations Administration (https://nexa.gov.af/fa/news/details/149).

Attack on the Shia community in Herat

On 10 April, in Herat province, Injil district, Deh Meeri village, four unidentified armed men opened fire on civilians picnicking in front of the Sayed Mohammad Aqa Shrine (a Shia shrine). 12 civilians were killed (nine men, two women and one boy), and 14 others were injured (eight men, two women, two boys and two girls). There was no claim of responsibility for the attack. The spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry of Interior confirmed the attack via his X account.[11]

Former government officials and former ANDSF members

Between 1 April and 30 June, UNAMA Human Rights Service documented at least 29 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention and at least five instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), in addition to at least eight killings of former ANDSF members.

Former government officials and former ANDSF members involuntarily returned to Afghanistan continue to be at risk of human rights violations after their return. For example, on 10 April, in Herat province, Herat city, a former Afghan National Army officer was forcibly returned to Afghanistan from Iran by Iranian authorities. On the same day he was returned, he went missing and his family have not heard from him.

Poppy eradication campaigns in Badakhshan

On 8 May, in Badakhshan province, Argo district, Altin Jelaw area, protestors demonstrated against the destruction of poppy fields during *de facto* authorities' counternarcotic operations. The *de facto* security forces opened fire to disperse the crowd. A nine-year-old boy fell off a cliff and died while trying to run from the gunfire.

On 9 May, protestors gathered again in the same location. The *de facto* security forces opened fire to disperse the protests. A man was killed when the donkey he was riding became frightened and fell off a slope.

On 9 May, district and provincial representatives of the *de facto* authorities, led by the *de facto* Deputy Provincial Governor of Badakhshan and the *de facto* Deputy District Governor of Argo district, initiated talks with local community representatives. The poppy eradication activities were temporarily paused.

On 9 May, ToloNews reported that the spokesperson for the *de facto* Police in Badakhshan confirmed that two people had been killed in Argo district in relation to the protests.[12]

Freedom of the media

UNAMA Human Rights Service documented several instances of detention of journalists d and suspensions of media outlets , highlighting the difficult environment the media sector continues to operate in:

- On 11 April, in Khost province, Khost city, the *de facto* Department of Information and Culture and *de facto* Department of Education discontinued the educational programmes of Lawang Radio, stating the programme was not in compliance with the educational curriculum.
- On 17 May, in Bamyan province, Bamyan city, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence ordered the closure of Radio Bamyan. The station was accused of broadcasting without a valid license. It resumed broadcasting on 23 June.
- On 21 June, the *de facto* Ministry of Information and Culture allowed Rah-e

[11] X account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* Minstry of Interior
[12] X account of ToloNews (https://x.com/TOLONewsEnglish/status/2053060879000949076).

Farda TV to resume broadcasting. The channel was suspended on 28 February due to the owner's statement deemed by the *de facto* authorities to justify military action by Pakistan against Afghan civilians. The station was allowed to resume broadcasting after replacing its management.

- At least seven radio stations in Kandahar and Ghazni provinces could not continue operations due to their inability to meet financial and other obligations of maintaining necessary licences.

In May, in Kabul city, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence arrested three journalists in two separate instances:

- On 4 May, in Kabul city, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence officials searched the office of a news agency and confiscated phones, cameras, computers and documents. On 5 May, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence summoned and arrested the head of this agency who was released from detention on 7 July.
- On 7 May, in Kabul city, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence arrested two male television reporters. On 10 May, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence searched the offices affiliated with the two reporters and mobile phones, laptops, computers and cameras in the office. Many employees from the same media group were transferred to *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence premises for questioning for several hours. The two journalists were released on 26 May. No information was available about the charges against them.

Taliban leader restricts smartphone use by *de facto* officials

On around 15 June, the Taliban leader issued an instruction prohibiting smartphone use by *de facto* officials, including at educational and health facilities. The instruction states that smartphone use carries penalties including termination of employment and legal action. Some *de facto* departments interpreted the instruction as a prohibition of smartphone use in offices, while others interpreted it as a complete ban on personal smartphone possession. Employees' smartphones were confiscated and destroyed at some offices.

Several *de facto* officials ceased publishing announcements on social media since the instruction. For example, the spokesperson for the *de facto* Police in Kunduz province stopped posting on his Facebook account.[13] On 15 June, an official of the *de facto* Department of Information and Culture in Kunduz announced on his Facebook page that he would no longer use a smartphone.[14] On 28 June, he clarified that he would only post updates using a laptop after office hours.[15] The spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities' remains active on X.[16]

Propagation of virtue and prevention of vice

Between 1 April and 30 June, UNAMA Human Rights Service documented at least 389 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 65 incidents of ill-treatment of Afghan women and men carried out by *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice personnel, primarily related to alleged violations of the *hijab* instruction (for women), trimmed beards/"Western" haircuts (for men) and

[13] Facebook account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* Kunduz police (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550635618551).
[14] Facebook account of official of the *de facto* Kunduz Department of Information and Culture (https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CfxsFukjR/).
[15] Facebook account of official of the *de facto* Kunduz Department of Information and Culture (https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1E5RJvRiXT/).
[16] X account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities (https://x.com/Zabehulah_M33).

playing or listening to music.

On 28 April, the Law on Preachers was published in the Official Gazette No. 1483, dated 5 February 2025.[17] The law designates the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice as responsible for regulating the affairs of preachers across Afghanistan. Article 6 of the law requires a preacher to be a follower of Hanafi sect, preach in accordance with Hanafi sect (Article 10.1), avoid presenting controversial issues (Article 10.2) and not allow non-adolescent children and women to attend sermons (Article 10.3).

Freedom of religion

Since January, in Badakhshan province, the *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, together with other *de facto* entities in some cases, closed several Ismaili places of worship (*jamaat khana*) and instructed worshippers not to use them. The reason given was that the *jamaat khanas* have a *mihrab* (a prayer niche) and should therefore operate as mosques (these buildings were mosques before being used as *jamaat khana*). At least 17 *jamaat khana* were affected in Zebak district,[18] 14 in Ishkashim district and two in Wakhan district. Discussions at the local level are underway to resolve the closures.

The *de facto* Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed UNAMA Human Rights Service in writing that: "…based on field assessments [of the Jamaat Khana buildings] it became clear that the status of the Jamaat Khanas was not uniform…Some buildings had originally been mosques but had, during the previous administration, been converted to other uses and lost their original religious function. Some other buildings had been used for residential or other non-religious purposes, while in certain locations no mosque existed at all. Accordingly, separate administrative decisions were made for each case based on the findings."

The commemoration of Ashura took place on 26 June. Mobile phone networks in parts of the country were not in operation on that day;[19] network providers did not provide reasons for the outage. The *de facto* authorities also imposed some restrictions on the commemoration of Ashura. In Parwan and Logar provinces, the Shia community was required to hold Ashura-related activities at designated mosque premises. UNAMA Human Rights Service documented instances of detention relating to structures or flags installed for the commemoration. For example, on 18 June, in Kabul city, *de facto* Ministry of Justice personnel detained 45 Shia men for one night because they had displayed Ashura flags.

Administration of justice

Rights of detainees

On 26 May, the spokesperson for the *de facto* Office of Prison Administration announced the release of 1,191 prisoners nationwide for Eid ul-Adha, authorized by the Supreme Court.[20]

On 13 June and 15 June, the *de facto* Office of Prison Administration announced that 755 Afghan prisoners, including five women, had been transferred from Iran to Afghanistan and would serve the remainder of their prison sentences in Afghanistan.[21]

[17] Website of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (http://laws.moj.gov.af/ShowLawPersian.aspx).
[18] During February and March 2026, for the 23 *jamaat khanas* closed in Zebak district, six of them were allowed to reopen. On 8 April, Ismaili community elders of Zebak district submitted a formal request to the *de facto* District Governor to reopen the *jamaat khanas* affected. On 22 May, *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice formally refused to reopen the remaining 17 *jamaat khanas*.
[19] Mobile phone networks have also been suspended by the *de facto* authorities on Ashura in previous years, citing security concerns.
[20] X account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* Office of Prison Administration (https://x.com/lalahand2/status/2059139873748209956?s=20).
[21] X account of the *de facto* Office of Prison Administration (https://x.com/opa_af/status/2065680342716162149?s=20; and https://x.com/opa_af/status/2066420091353485348?s=20).

Announcements by the de facto authorities on the administration of justice

Between 28 April and 10 June, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice announced the publication of new laws and decrees endorsed by the Taliban leader, in its Official Gazette,[22] including, among others: the Law on Preachers,[23] the Criminal Code of Courts[24] and the Code on Judicial Separation of Spouses.[25]

On 16 April, the *de facto* Supreme Court announced new timelines for filing appeals, based on an order of the Taliban leader. They are:

- one month to appeal from the date of notification of a *de facto* Primary Court verdict;
- three months from the date of notification of a *de facto* Appeal Court verdict.[26]

On 8 April, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice announced that, it had provided free legal assistance to around 2,750 indigent suspects, accused persons, and victims defending their rights before justice and judicial institutions from 21 March 2025 to 20 March 2026.[27]

On 18 April, the *de facto* Supreme Court published its Gazette (No. 131) with an interview with its *de facto* Chief of Staff on the role of the Court's Petitions Management Office. In the interview, he invited individuals with claims their cases are not being properly addressed in the courts to submit a written petition to the General Directorate of the Office of the Chief of Staff (Room 12).[28]

On 13 May, the *de facto* Supreme Court announced that, from the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021 to 18 March 2026, *de facto* courts had resolved 1,121 murder cases through mediation, involving religious *ulema*, influential community figures and elders, thus avoiding the death penalty, noting *qisas* (the death penalty) has been applied in 12 cases.[29]

On 15 June, the *de facto* Supreme Court issued Mizan Gazette (No. 137) reminding courts that templates for official court documents exist in both official languages, Dari and Pashto, and instructed all courts that citizens may request court documents be issued in either language.[30]

On 24 June, the deputy spokesperson of the *de facto* Supreme Court posted an announcement reiterating that per Sharia law, a claimant bears the burden of proof to establish their claim against an accused with Sharia-compliant evidence and reiterating the presumption of innocence of an accused who takes an oath.[31]

During the reporting period, the *de facto* Supreme Court issued 34 announcements highlighting the *de facto* courts' role in mediating a total of 36 cases of killings in 13 provinces, including cases of murder potentially involving *qisas* (the death penalty), and unintentional killings.[32]

[22] All texts are available on the *de facto* Ministry of Justice website: http://laws.moj.gov.af/ShowLawPersian.aspx.
[23] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2048992590758826444?s=20).
[24] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2052298247863943410?s=20).
[25] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2054789787157221879?s=20).
[26] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2044673897346335082?s=20).
[27] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2041803261087252937?s=20).
[28] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2045500744913105112).
[29] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2054479403510317345?s=20).
[30] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2066519638188384280?s=20).
[31] X account of the deputy spokesperson for the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/Mansoorh321/status/2069804690506752389?s=20).
[32] Various announcements on the X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/).