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Taliban Violently Disperses Protest Against Closure Of Beauty Salons In Afghanistan

- By [RFE/RL's Radio Azadi](#)

Security forces used water cannons and fired guns into the air to disperse a women's protest in Kabul on July 19 over the Taliban-led government's decision to close women's hair and beauty salons.

Dozens of women took part in the rare public protest in the center of the Afghan capital. They held a poster with the slogan: "Don't take away our bread and water."

Beauty salons are a source of livelihood for women in Afghanistan, where the Taliban-led government has curbed the rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls in education and most forms of employment.

One female protester told RFE/RL's Radio Azadi that Taliban security officers beat some of the demonstrators with batons and used tear gas to break up the demonstration.

"Yes, they were very violent. They fired shots in the air and sprayed water on us. They beat the girls. They took their mobile phones," one woman told Radio Azadi through WhatsApp.

Another demonstrator also described the violence used by security forces against the women.

"They shot around us. They hit us with electric batons. They beat us with rods. We ran from alley to alley," said the protester. "I am 15 years old, and I want to defend my mother's right, my sister's right, everyone's rights."

Both women requested anonymity to protect themselves from retribution. Their accounts could not be independently verified.

The office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) [responded on Twitter](#) to reports of the crackdown.

"Reports of the forceful suppression of a peaceful protest by women against the ban on beauty salons -- the latest denial of women's rights in #Afghanistan -- are deeply concerning. Afghans have the right to express views free from violence. De facto authorities must uphold this," UNAMA said.

The Taliban government's order to close women's beauty salons was issued last month.

The Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice issued a letter on June 24 conveying a verbal order from the supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada. On July 4, Mohammad Sidik Akif Mahajar, a spokesman for the ministry, confirmed the contents of the letter, which had been circulating on social media.

The spokesman justified the order, saying the salons charge exorbitant amounts of money for makeup and that some of the procedures performed, such as plucking eyebrows and adding hair extensions, are illegal.

The Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice gave women's salons a month to close their doors.

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