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## Afghanistan's Taliban Ban Medical Training for Women

Closing One of the Last Loopholes for Female Education

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This week the Taliban in Afghanistan closed one of the last remaining loopholes in their ban on education for older girls and women by forbidding them from attending institutions offering medical education.

The Taliban have also banned women in some provinces from being treated by male medical professionals, which means that this new decree, halting the training of new female healthcare workers, will result in unnecessary pain, misery, sickness, and death for the women forced to go without health care, as there won't be female healthcare workers to treat them.

The Taliban's supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, issued this order, which was announced at a meeting of the Taliban Ministry of Public Health on Monday. The ministry summoned directors of private medical training institutions to be instructed about the new order.

In September 2021, the Taliban stopped girls from attending secondary school beyond sixth grade. In December 2022, they banned girls and women from attending higher education.

Since regaining control of the country on August 15, 2021, the Taliban have imposed rules that systematically violate the rights of women and girls in most aspects of their lives, including not only the right to education

but also to freedom of movement and speech, to work, to live free from violence, to participate in public life, and to access health care. Women and girls can't even go to a gym or walk in a park.

Women's rights defenders who protested against these rights violations, along with their family members, have faced grave retaliation from the Taliban, including physical assault, arbitrary detention, sexual violence, torture, and enforced disappearance.

Afghan women's rights defenders and human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have called for the Taliban to be held accountable for their crimes against women and girls as part of more comprehensive efforts to address impunity for grave crimes in Afghanistan.

There are prospects for accountability. The announcement by International Criminal Court prosecutor Karim Khan, also on Monday, stating that his team "will be announcing applications for arrest warrants in the Afghanistan situation very soon," prompts hope that perhaps soon – finally – there will be first steps toward holding the Taliban to account.

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