



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

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Madam President,

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

We thank the Secretary-General for his latest report, Special Representative Roza Otunbayeva for her briefing, and Ms. Hanifa Girowal for her powerful remarks.

As this is SRSO Otunbayeva's final briefing, I would like to thank you for your efforts and commitment to the people of Afghanistan.

We warmly welcome this morning's joint statement by Council members who are signatories of Women, Peace and Security. Your unified stance reaffirms an unshakable commitment to defending the rights and dignity of Afghan women and girls, and sends a vital message of solidarity at this critical moment.

We are also grateful to the UN Secretary-General, Member States, and humanitarian partners for their swift response to the recent earthquake in eastern Afghanistan, which killed more than 3,000 people and left hundreds of thousands in urgent need. We thank all NGOs and UN agencies that continue to deliver life-saving assistance despite immense challenges.

Mr. President,

Four years after the Taliban's forced takeover, Afghanistan remains one of the gravest crises before this Council. Despite claims of calm, the reality is stark: deepening repression, humanitarian collapse, political deadlock, and a generation at risk of being erased in a country already crippled by man-made and natural disasters.

Politically, the Taliban continue to consolidate power. Marking their return to Kabul, the Taliban leader ordered removal of 'acting' from officials' titles, signaling a bid for permanent rule without legitimacy. Power is concentrated in the hands of male loyalists from one extremist group. There is no constitution, no inclusive governance, no credible path to reconciliation, and no consent of the governed. Instead, an unelected and unaccountable group, taken hostage a country, issues decrees that distort Islamic values and Afghan culture, while denying the people their right to shape their own future. This is the systematic dismantling of a nation's political identity.

Civic space is vanishing. Restrictions now target political discourse, media, poetry, cultural gatherings even funeral prayers. Civil society faces surveillance and harassment. Young people, stripped of hope, endure rising mental health crises. Forced displacement and targeted attacks on ethnic and religious minorities persist, particularly against the Hazara community. At least 60 women were arbitrarily arrested this summer. The high number of security incidents and the presence of terrorist groups further endanger regional stability.

First, the plight of Afghan women and girls is unprecedented.

Exactly four years ago today, the Taliban banned secondary education for girls the beginning of a campaign to erase women from public life. Universities remain closed, employment opportunities are

stripped away, and even humanitarian agencies face pressure to limit female staff. The Taliban went so far as to ban Afghan women from working with the UN and international NGOs, an attack not only on women's rights but on the humanitarian lifeline for millions.

Women once serving as doctors, teachers, engineers, and entrepreneurs are being forced into invisibility. The result is both a human rights catastrophe and an economic disaster that cripples Afghanistan's recovery. Female-headed households face extreme hardship, while the psychological toll on women and girls stripped of rights and dreams is immeasurable.

This systematic exclusion is nothing less than **gender apartheid**. We therefore strongly welcome the International Criminal Court's recent decision to issue arrest warrants for Taliban leaders for crimes against humanity. It underscores the gravity of their violations and affirms that impunity must not be tolerated.

Second, Afghanistan faces a humanitarian emergency of immense proportions.

More than 2 million Afghans have been forcibly returned from neighboring countries under unsafe conditions this year alone. They join nearly 23 million in need of assistance, while the humanitarian response plan remains less than one-third funded. Food, health, and education systems are collapsing. The Taliban continue to obstruct aid, impose discriminatory restrictions, and divert resources for political and military purposes.

The earthquake in eastern Afghanistan further highlighted how bans on women's participation in aid delivery directly endanger lives.

Third, the security situation remains fragile.

The latest Monitoring Team report confirms that the Taliban provide a permissive environment for terrorist groups, including ISIL-K, Al-Qaida, their affiliates, and foreign fighters, who operate training camps, conduct cross-border attacks, and access advanced weaponry, threatening both regional and global security. Equally troubling are threats and intimidation against UN personnel, including female staff, which directly undermine UN operations.

Meanwhile, the Taliban have banned fiber-optic internet in six provinces, blocking online education, while removing 51 school subjects and eliminating 18 university courses. They proudly report creating nearly 23,000 Islamic education centers or Madrasas in three years, where 300,000 children are enrolled. This trajectory is deeply concerning and fosters radicalization, suppresses knowledge, and risks the intellectual collapse of Afghanistan's future generations.

Fourth, civic space is shrinking further.

Peaceful protests are crushed with lethal force as in Badakhshan, where farmers resisting poppy eradication were killed. On September 16, retirees, including women, gathered in Kabul to demand long-withheld pensions. Instead of paying what was owed, the Taliban dissolved the pension system and tied disbursements to religious rulings, leaving thousands destitute.

UNAMA has documented grave abuses against Afghans forcibly returned from abroad. Women, girls, and former officials and security forces face arbitrary detention, torture, and persecution despite so-called “amnesties.” Walid Naimi, a former security officer returned from Iran, was found tortured and killed after disappearing for 15 days. Civil society activist Ahmad Mujtaba Mohammadi remains in Taliban custody. The Secretary-General’s report confirms 29,500 people are now held in Taliban prisons, the highest since 2021.

These practices flagrantly violate international law and the principle of non-refoulement. The Taliban’s actions constitute gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity. We urge all States to halt forced returns, expand protection pathways, and uphold the rights of those fleeing persecution.

Mr. President,

The people of Afghanistan and the international community need a government that is reliable, accountable, and legitimate, grounded in the rule of law, justice, the will of the people, and respects international obligations. This can only be achieved through a genuine political process that restores inclusivity and protects the rights of all Afghans.

The Afghan people demand nothing less than self-determination, representation, and dignity. They deserve a government chosen by the people, not imposed by force.

Therefore, this Council must send a clear and united message:

1. The rights of women and girls are non-negotiable. No authority can claim legitimacy while excluding women and the majority of Afghans.
2. Humanitarian assistance must remain principled, impartial, and unconditional, ensuring aid reaches people in need without discrimination or diversion.
3. Engagement with the Taliban must be principled and conditional.
4. Demand an end to gender apartheid, supporting strong investigative, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to hold the Taliban accountable under international law for crimes against humanity.
5. Prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a sanctuary for terrorism through robust monitoring, targeted sanctions, and regional cooperation.
6. Support a credible political process, under UN leadership, with participation of all credible Afghan representatives, aimed at restoring an inclusive, representative, constitutional order.

Mr. President,

The Afghan people have not given up. Inside the country, brave women, journalists, activists, ordinary citizens, and resistance movements continue to oppose oppression. In the diaspora, Afghans tirelessly advocate for freedom and justice.

What they ask of this Council is simple: do not abandon Afghanistan to tyranny. Do not normalize an extremist regime that oppresses half its population and threatens international peace and security. Do not allow the suffering of millions to fade into silence. We remain thankful to all international partners who, over the past four years, have supported the people of Afghanistan, especially women and girls in their pursuit of a free, inclusive, and sovereign Afghanistan.

Afghanistan stands at a crossroads between perpetual repression or the possibility of a democratic, inclusive, and peaceful future. This Council has the power, and the responsibility, to help ensure the path chosen is one of justice, dignity, and hope.

I thank you.