



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

Mr. Naseer Ahmad FAIQ

Chargé d'Affaires of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations

Security Council Meeting on the Situation in Afghanistan

18 September 2024

NEW YORK

(Please check against delivery)

Your Excellency Ms. Tanja Fajon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, distinguished members of the Security Council, excellencies, and honorable delegates,

Thank you for convening this critical meeting on the situation in Afghanistan focused on education for women and girls.

I commend you, Madam President, and your team for your excellent leadership of the Council. Thank you for the Joint Press Statement by Security Council signatories of the Statement of Shared Commitments for the Principles of Women, Peace, and Security, delivered this morning.

We thank Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women, for their insightful remarks.

We also appreciate the continued support of the Council, international partners, and donors for Afghanistan, particularly for its women and girls, who face immense challenges under Taliban rule. Your support and principled stance offer a beacon of hope during these dark times.

I also thank Ms. Mina, Civil Society Representative, for her valuable insights.

Madam President,

It is my solemn duty to reflect the real agonies of the people of Afghanistan—a people whose suffering, resilience, and hope demand the urgent attention of the global community.

Afghanistan today faces a devastating array of complex challenges: a deepening humanitarian catastrophe, severe poverty, rampant unemployment, widespread human rights violations, natural disasters, displacement, forced migration and a growing sense of despair and uncertainty about the future. People are pushed to flee their homeland in search of safety and opportunity,

The Taliban's military return to power in August 2021 marked a devastating turning point. Their hostile policies and total denial of the Afghan people's prosperity have transformed the country into a landscape of deepening crisis.

Madam President,

Afghanistan was not perfect before the Taliban's takeover. However, the citizens' rights and freedoms were protected under a constitutional order, and despite ongoing conflict, people were hopeful for a peaceful and prosperous future.

It has been four years since the Taliban's disregard for international norms and the legitimate demands of the Afghan people have exacerbated the current crisis and further isolated Afghanistan.

The humanitarian crisis unfolding in Afghanistan is catastrophic. Since the Taliban's takeover, the country has spiraled into a dire state where basic survival is the only concern for millions of its people. According to OCHA, 85% of Afghanistan's population is now living below the poverty line. 23.7 million people suffer from acute food insecurity, with six million people at immediate risk of famine. The country's GDP has contracted by 20.7% since the Taliban assumed control.

This is not simply a problem of inadequate resources; it is a crisis of access, distribution, and neglect. The people of Afghanistan are starving because they have been denied access to the tools, resources, and governance necessary for survival. The international aid, a critical lifeline, is shrinking at a time when the need is greatest.

The plight of children and youth is heartbreaking. UNICEF reports that almost three million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished.

Boys and girls are systematically deprived of access to equal and quality education and are encouraged to pursue their studies in "Jihadi Madrasas".

Afghanistan is the only country where girls are not allowed to study beyond sixth grade.

With over 70 decrees aimed at excluding women from public life, including barring Afghan women from working for NGOs, a systematic erasure has led to a gender apartheid regime with economic implications that have already cost Afghanistan an estimated \$1 billion, or 5% of its GDP.

This crisis has fueled a migration emergency, with hundreds of thousands fleeing violence and economic collapse. Neighboring countries like Pakistan and Iran are overwhelmed, and Afghans who returned home face dire conditions with no jobs or security.

This displacement destabilizes the region and threatens global security. Both Taliban policies and international inaction have failed these refugees. A coordinated global response is needed to address immediate needs and ensure long-term safety and dignity.

Madam President,

The Taliban's human rights violations remain a serious concern, marked by forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary detentions especially of former government officials and security forces.

Civilians are detained and tortured based on accusations of links to the National Resistance Front (NRF) or ISIL. Retirees are denied pensions, women's salaries are withheld or reduced, and the Hazara and Shia communities are prohibited from practicing religious ceremonies.

Forced and child marriages are on the rise. The UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan's human rights situation has been banned from visiting the country.

Just two days ago, polio vaccination campaigns were halted. Additionally, a new "morality" law codifies oppressive policies under a distorted interpretation of Sharia law, affecting all Afghan citizens, both women and men.

Security concerns over the presence of terrorist groups and foreign fighters under Taliban control have raised fears that Afghanistan could once again become a hub for terrorism, threatening both national and global security. Targeted attacks on Hazara and Shia communities continue unabated. Just last week, 14 Shia Hazara members were killed and six injured in an attack, underscoring the Taliban's inability to protect vulnerable groups.

This incident highlights the worsening persecution of the Hazara minority and the Taliban's failure to ensure safety, further destabilizing the nation.

The Taliban's rule, politically, fails to represent the will of the Afghan people or reflect true Islamic values or culture of our people. They have distorted Islamic laws to enforce a harsh ideology, effectively holding the Afghan people hostage.

Madam President,

Against this backdrop, I would first like to acknowledge and thank the regional and international efforts, including the UN-led Doha meetings, Security Council resolutions, and statements from Special Representatives of regional countries, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as the UN Security Council members and their joint press statements.

But despite these noble efforts, we must ask: Is the world doing enough? Are we, as an international community, truly meeting the scale of the challenge before us?

The reality is that Afghanistan is not just a national crisis. What is happening in my country has global implications and it requires a united and coherent international approach as well as a strong international political will.

While we welcome efforts under the UN-led Special Envoys meetings in Doha aimed for a coherent, united approach to international engagement on Afghanistan, unfortunately the process is being diverted and sabotaged by the Taliban's preconditions, disregarding human rights themes and Afghan women's voices. There are serious concerns that it risks normalization without tangible progress on the ground.

To avoid further diversion, the process should refocus on implementing the recommendations of the Independent Assessment report by adopting a transparent action plan with specific benchmarks. This requires the appointment of a special envoy to spearhead regional and international efforts, facilitating a genuine national dialogue to establish a legitimate governance system that reflects the people's will, upholds the rule of law, and ensures the full and meaningful participation of women. A united international approach is crucial to create an inclusive, representative government where women's rights are respected, and their voices are heard.

Madam President,

In conclusion, the fate of Afghanistan serves as a litmus test for the international community and this Council's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable and upholding the principles we have pledged to defend. I would like to end my remarks by emphasizing the following urgent calls for action:

1. **Increase and Sustain Humanitarian Aid:** Afghanistan's humanitarian needs are immense and growing. We call on donor countries to increase their aid contributions and to maintain support for life-saving interventions through transparent and monitored mechanisms.
2. **Restore Women's Rights:** Afghanistan cannot recover or rebuild without its women. The international community must demand the full restoration of women's rights, including their right to education, employment, and public life in all formats for engagement. Women are the key to unlocking Afghanistan's potential, and their exclusion is a violation that cannot stand.
3. **Address the Migration Crisis:** The Afghan refugee crisis demands a coordinated global response. Neighboring countries cannot shoulder this burden alone. We urge the international community to increase support for Afghan refugees and work toward long-term solutions that provide security, dignity, and opportunity.

While we thank neighboring countries for hosting refugees, we also call for the protection of their fundamental human rights in line with international humanitarian laws.

4. **Hold the Taliban Accountable:** The international community must use every available legal mechanism to hold the Taliban accountable for their human rights violations and crimes, particularly the systematic gender-based violence and gender apartheid policies they are committing against Afghan women and girls.
5. **The UN-led Doha meetings should prioritize achieving a comprehensive political settlement through "national dialogue,"** that leads to the formation of a broad-based legitimate political structure and system that reflects the people's aspirations and enjoys their support so that we can achieve a long-term and sustainable peace, stability, and prosperity in the country. This requires engagement with all Afghans and democratic political forces, including women and civil society representatives to help find a concrete solution to the crisis.

We must act decisively, with unity and determination, to reverse this course of destruction and restore hope to the millions of Afghans who continue to suffer. This is not only a moral imperative but a responsibility we all share as members of the international community.

Let us not fail the people of Afghanistan. Let us not fail the generations that will follow. The time to act is now.

Thank you.