

1/6/23

Letter to the UN & OIC on Women's Human Rights in Afghanistan

To: Excellencies,

Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations,
Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations,
Ms. Sima Bahous, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women,
Ms. [Roza Isakovna Otunbayeva](#), [Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan](#) (UNAMA)
Mr. [Ramiz Alakbarov](#), [Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator](#),
Markus Potzel, [Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General \(Political\)](#),
Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC),

We, the undersigned members of civil society (including faith-based organizations and actors) note with great concern developments around the world which point to a calamitous regression in human rights for many individuals and groups, at the same time that our planet faces life-threatening challenges.

In particular, we are deeply concerned about the latest developments in Afghanistan where the higher education ban was reaffirmed and announced on 20th December 2022 [\[1\]](#) and on 24th December 2022 the ban of women working in NGOs and INGOs was announced with dire consequences. We can expect to see threats to both the humanitarian and human rights situations of *all* of the Afghan population, and we know these actions have implications for the rest of the world.

We are writing to **ask** you, in your capacity as leading inter-governmental organizations, and therefore as bearers of the welfare, rights, duties and obligations to serve our interconnected world, the following questions:

To the United Nations Officials:

- Have you shared your data on the number of women-headed households in Afghanistan, with the Taliban/De Facto Authorities?
- What are your predictions for the financial impact of the ban on women working in Afghanistan and how would this ban affect the households currently headed by women who are sole wage earners, including what would be its impact on the situation of Afghan boys? How many boys and girls are in households that would then have no wage earner?
- What are your projections for the impact on the Afghan nation's overall financial and economic health when women are no longer able to earn an income from their public service?
- Are you interacting with male community leaders in the country? Are they unanimously backing the Taliban in this decision?

To the Organization of Islamic Cooperation:

- This decision is being presented by the De Facto Authorities in Afghanistan as consonant with Islamic norms and values. Does the Organization of Islamic Cooperation stand by the same understanding of Muslim texts and tradition?

- If the OIC does, should we expect that all Muslim majority countries, including some of the most populous such as Indonesia, as well as Saudi Arabia (the Protector of the Two Holy Cities), will issue similar edicts prohibiting their women from serving their communities and nations?
- If the OIC does not stand by this, what *is* the OIC - with its 56 Member States, all of whom are also members of the United Nations – doing about this situation?

We ask these questions, of you, our intergovernmental and multilateral institutions, because as citizens of this world, each of us is working to serve the needs of our interconnected life systems, and we can do that work better with answers to these questions.

Thank you for your answers, which will help history document how your esteemed organizations, representing all of our governments, continue to honor basic obligations towards human welfare, in the most troubled times humanity faces.

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