

Statement of the Women Advisory Group the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) on the de facto Ministry of Higher Education's Decision to Ban Women from attending university

Since August 2021, Afghan women have been facing widespread poverty, inequality and lack of access to basic rights including the right to education and work, increasing restrictions on their participation and access to humanitarian aid. After banning girls from schools above grade 6 in March 2022, which had an immediate impact on their mental health, opportunities, and protection, the De Facto Authorities announced on 20 December an indefinite ban on women attending universities.

This decision is shameful and shocking. Afghan women have been full members of the Afghan society and public life for the past twenty years in the social, political, and economic fields. Closing the university doors on them will have deep and long-term consequences not only on themselves but on the society, the economy and the country as a whole. This decision will further entrench gender inequalities and will limit women's ability to work, including as part of the humanitarian response to reach affected women and girls.

Afghan women deserve a dignified life and the respect of their basic rights, including the right to education.

The world should not be a spectator of our situation. The women and girls of Afghanistan demand:

1. Education is our basic right and access to this right should not be taken away from women and girls. We request the De facto Ministry of Education to immediately overturn its decision and re-affirm women's right to access universities.
2. We request the international community not to be silent but to carry our voices outside the country in all relevant forums and in any engagement they have with the De facto Authorities.
3. We request Islamic countries, and the international community at large, to meaningfully engage with the De facto Authorities to re-affirm girls and women's education as a right under Islam, and remind them that no other country in the world bans girls from attending school and university.