

Human Rights Council

Protecting the rights of women in Afghanistan and the Middle East

Forum:	Human Rights Council
Issue:	Protecting the rights of women in Afghanistan and the Middle East
Student Officer:	Sanvi Choudhary
Position:	Deputy Chair

Introduction

Since the end of World War 2, more than 300 treaties have been formed to ensure that humans can live with the assurance of having protection and, live happily with equality across the globe. Countless organizations and committees within the United Nations have formed to promote peace within the world for citizens by creating rights that every human deserves, such as freedom of speech, health, and education. Although the condition of humans has increased significantly since the 20th century, many households still struggle to accept gender equality and equal opportunities.

Although their condition is ever since improving in the middle east, discriminatory rules have still been put in place to restrict women in certain countries like Iran. Additionally, the Taliban, a terrorist group, has these exact segregating beliefs. Having formed in the 1990's, the Taliban follows extremist Sunni Islam views, imposing their idea of Sharia to lead the rights of women to be disregarded and even today, the situation in Afghanistan has shown more deterioration.

Even countries like Saudi Arabia, which were known for their strict regulations against women, started to lift bans like driving for women. In Afghanistan however, rights to working and freely walking on the streets have been removed for women. As their situation worsened, even the public rose and spoke against the regime of the Taliban. Although it seems unlikely that they will be taken down easily, Middle Eastern and Afghani women alike, have been speaking out.

Key Terms

Taliban

The Taliban is an oppressive Islamic terrorist group which has been ruling on and off in Afghanistan since the 1990's. Their purpose is to impose a strict interpretation of the Quran and Sunni Islamic practices which have been restricted against the citizens of Afghanistan, more specifically women.

Sharia

Sharia is a word derived from the Quran and the Hadith, a book which contains countless sayings of gratitude towards the Prophet Muhammed. The term is held close to a majority of the Muslims in the world as it refers to the choosing of the "correct path" by maintaining the right morals and values in life to remain closer to God.

NATO

The Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization, also known as NATO, is an organization comprising 32 nations whose purpose is to protect their people and land. Maintaining close allies' results in the threatening of one nation in NATO, as threatening all of them.

Gender Inequality

Gender Inequality is the unfair regulations or behavior shown to impose an evident difference between the different genders. Examples of gender inequality could be pay gaps or rules put in place against a specific gender.

Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian Aid is the assistance given to a country from organizations or allies during conditions in which the citizens suffer. This could be during a war or during an economic crisis.

Mujahadeen

Typically, from Islamic countries, these guerilla fighters fight against non-Muslim groups

General Overview

This general overview aims to highlight and go into depth regarding the topic that will be debated in this committee. Historic summarization, current-day implications, as well as more depth on specific cases like the Taliban have been explained in this section and hope to give you as a delegate, more of a base and support on your research and resolution writing.

Prominence of discrimination in Middle East

For a long time now, discrimination and gender inequality have been prominent factors of the lives of women living in the middle east as well as countries in Asia. Whether that is due to the regulations put in place by governments giving impunity to perpetrators who get freedom to do whatever they wish with women and the girls, all the way to extremist views on the religion which actually promotes peace and prosperity, gender inequality has been prominent in the Middle East putting the lives of many girls and women in danger. This, however, has not always been a prominent factor in the Middle East. With a diverse culture and traditions, only recently have more conservative roles for the genders been put in place due to colonialism and other factors like leaders who had strong views on segregation.

Treatment of Women

Many differences are seen within the Middle East and how the women are being treated. For example, Emirati, Qatari, and Omani women have the same rights as women all over the world with a literacy rate averaging 95.8% which is ever since, soaring. Contrastingly, countries like Iran and Iraq have constantly restricted women. For example, divorce is extremely difficult for women compared to men, and marriage is prioritized over a career placing a lot of girls in the dangers of child marriage, sexual violence, etc.

Improvement

Fortunately, for countries like Saudi Arabia, the struggles that the women face have decreased as bans have been lifted ever since the recent change in mindset in the country. For example, now women can drive whereas before 2018, that was not possible. Additionally, for countries like Iran, many protests have taken place to speak up against the unfair policies and regimes of the

government such as after the murder of Mahsa Amini in 2022 for “noncompetence” with the rules of the Hijab. Therefore, many companies and organizations like UNICEF and even citizens of the country have started to speak up against the unfair regulations of the governments who try to oppress women.

Taliban

However, gender inequality is not only seen in the Middle east as Afghanistan falls victim to it as well. In 1994, a group of Mujahideen fighters from Pakistan and Afghanistan grouped together to form the now notorious Sunni Islamic group known as the Taliban, who imposed their strict interpretations of the Muslim religion on Islamic states, more specifically Afghanistan. They, however, did not act alone in their rise to power as they also maintained close ties with Al-Qaeda, the terrorist group which was responsible for the 9/11 attacks.

The U.S Insurgency

Following the Bush administration in 2001, the Taliban were invaded by US Troops due to the deteriorating rates of crime, violence, and abuse against women, but more importantly (to them), the 9/11 attacks. The USA decided to put an end by dropping bombs on Taliban land. Therefore, the Taliban were overthrown and in December of 2001, they retreated from Kandahar. This ensured safety, however, was only temporary. On February 29, 2020, a Taliban Baradar and the U.S envoy signed an agreement to enable peace in Afghanistan and ban the usage of the country for terrorist activities. Although the agreement was not an opportunity for the allies to retreat immediately, it did begin the descent of the active personnel in Afghanistan. As the troops started to decline however, the Taliban regained their power in the country.

Limiting Women’s Rights

Since the regaining of control of the Taliban in August 2021, the situation has since then been declining for the country. The right to go to school, work, walk freely without a present male, showing skin in public, healthcare, and getting politically involved including NGOs have been almost completely removed. Many reported cases have occurred in which women get raped, beat, and murdered due to the lack of following the rules, making Afghanistan one of the most dangerous countries for a woman to live in.

Major Parties Involved

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is the country which suffers from the oppressive regime of the Taliban and is one of the most dangerous locations for a woman to live in. It was the originating country of the Taliban and is the main target of the terrorist group.

Iran

Also a victim to discrimination against women, Iran has been implementing many rules and laws to restrict the freedom of women, even resulting in the death of a young woman named Mahsa Amini. Similar to Afghanistan, Iran has an unequal and unfair civil code leading to segregation.

NATO

NATO played an important role in the restitution of the Afghani Government in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks by the Al-Qaeda group. After placing allied troops (US and Soviet Troops) into Afghanistan to prevent the Taliban's entry, Afghanistan remained protected until 2021 when the Taliban and the US signed an agreement to reduce the Taliban's violence in Afghanistan, after which the Taliban regained power.

Women for Afghan Women

Women for Afghan Women (WAW), is an organization striving to give humanitarian aid towards the women of Afghanistan who struggle everyday under the strict regime of the Taliban. Although they have faced immense challenges since their formation in 2001, WAW has reached over 340,000 individuals.

UNICEF

UNICEF is a committee falling under the United Nations who strives to give humanitarian aid to locations which are suffering. UNICEF has provided help in terms of food, education, and health towards the girls of Afghanistan, Iran, and other countries facing gender inequality since 1949.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Event
1996	The fundamentalist group; Taliban, first gains control over Afghanistan enacting strict rules to reduce women's rights.
2001	US/NATO troops take over Afghanistan removing the Taliban and securing the nation once again.
2003	Iraq War leads to segregation of the genders and hindered any progress
2013	A strategic plan called National Action plan for the women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) was formed to promote women rights.
2018	The ban for Saudi Women to drive gets lifted marking a beginning of reform in the country
2021	Due to the withdrawal of NATO troops in Afghanistan, the Taliban were able to re-enter the country and once again, inflict strict regulations.

UN Involvement and Other Treaties

This section is a good collection of treaties, resolutions, and conferences which are all significant to the expansion of protecting women's rights in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

- Security Council on Women, Peace, and Security, 31 Oct. 2000, (S/RES/1325)
- Security Council on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 19 Jun. 2008 (S/RES/1820)
- International Conference on Afghanistan: Women in the heart of peacebuilding, Dec. 2011, Bonn, Germany
- International Conference on Afghanistan, 28 Jan. 2010, London, United Kingdom
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 (20378)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Formation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CEDAW is a treaty signed by 189 states and focuses on the protection of women in the world. The formation of the treaty was hoped to indicate the dire situation that Afghanistan and other Middle Eastern countries faced. Containing 11 parts and 30 articles, the treaty aims to address the concerns related to women's rights while suggesting solutions as well. Although it was signed in 1980, the treaty still lives on as a reference towards many solutions that can be implemented to restore the safety of women globally, more specifically, in conflict zones like Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

International Conferences on Afghanistan

Since 2001, multiple international conferences have taken place to discuss the conditions of Afghanistan and how to combat them. During these conferences, the United Nations, multiple organizations, and heads of numerous states gather together to discuss possible solutions. Discussions regarding the humanitarian aid given to Afghanistan, political tensions between Afghanistan and enemy countries, as well as how to assist Afghani women occurred in the hopes to combat the situation.

UNDP Gender Equality Initiatives

The United Nations Development Programme is one that hopes to assist countries dealing with gender inequality with their laws, regulations, and education especially to the younger generation of girls who will grow up learning that the world that they live in is wrong. Previously, the UNDP has worked with Iraq and Lebanon to work on peacebuilding in the government and has even gone as far as to include internship programmes in the country for the young women so that they can also get a chance to build a career.

Operation Enduring Freedom

During the U.S Insurgency when they invaded Afghanistan and tried to successfully take over Afghanistan, leading to mass reform, the Taliban were overthrown which was a successful past attempt to not solve, but shed temporary light on the Afghani citizens and show them that reform is still possible.

Possible Solutions

Increased awareness in the education of young girls

Considering that girls in Afghanistan, and many households in the Middle East, are currently banned from going to secondary schooling, many of them are already in danger from a young age as after they are finished with their schooling, they are usually married off. This is why increasing awareness regarding their rights as an individual, regardless of whether they are being implemented in the country, is important. If young children grow up learning that the society that they live in is wrong, then as the future generation, they hold power for change and can bring reform to the country.

Aid in weaponry and personnel for Afghanistan

For the approximately 20 years in which the NATO troops were established in Afghanistan, the country was peaceful, and change was accepted into society. Women's rights were being incorporated and the country became safer for women to stay in. However, not long after the troops left, the Taliban regained power. Therefore, a potential solution to the problem could be to give temporary military assistance to overthrow the Taliban and create a strong political party before retreating.

Negotiations between the Taliban and Allied Organizations

As the Taliban has been previously negotiated with, leading to good reform in Afghanistan, a possible solution could be to retry this action. Creating an allied body consisting of neighboring nations and powerful states like the USA would pressure the Taliban into negotiating with them and creating peaceful agreements that benefit the Taliban and the citizens of Afghanistan alike. This would result in reform in the country, winning the women their rights back.

Humanitarian Aid

As the women are starting to protest and retaliate against the unfair system of the discriminating governments, making peaceful agreements regarding humanitarian aid would be a potential solution, also because many of the governments are corrupt which would help them and be seen as a possible benefit and alliance. This simultaneously gives the citizens of the countries better resources and allows for them to gain more understanding on how underdeveloped their country is, fueling protests and retaliation.

Bibliography

- Amnesty International. "A Brief History of Human Rights." *Amnesty International*, 13 Feb. 2024, www.amnesty.nl/a-brief-history-of-human-rights#:~:text=Since%201948%2C%20the%20United%20Nations. Accessed 9 June 2024.
- BBC News (2022). Who are the Taliban? *BBC News*. [online] 12 Aug. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718>. Accessed 10 June, 2024
- Inc, G. (2023). *Freedom Fades, Suffering Remains for Women in Afghanistan*. [online] Gallup.com. Available at: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/514232/freedom-fades-suffering-remains-women-afghanistan.aspx>. Accessed 10 June, 2024
- International Rescue Committee. "Afghanistan | International Rescue Committee (IRC)." *Www.rescue.org*, 9 June 2024, www.rescue.org/eu/country/afghanistan?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwpZWzBhCOARIsACvjWRNgnAbvnhoSNYtNHJ9F9_B0WaVbizJaPtyrroaX7uV-gDZNEVI0hjYaAipDEALw_wcB. Accessed 9 June 2024.
- Matamis, J. (2024). *The Status of Women's Rights in the Middle East • Stimson Center*. [online] Stimson Center. Available at: <https://www.stimson.org/2024/the-status-of-womens-rights-in-the-middle-east/>.
- Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 19 Jan. 2023, www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan. Accessed 9 June 2024.
- Nato parliamentary assembly. "Afghanistan | NATO PA." *Nato-Pa.int*, 9 Oct. 2017, www.nato-pa.int/content/afghanistan. Accessed 9 June 2024.

Robinson, Kali. "Understanding Sharia: The Intersection of Islam and the Law." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 17 Dec. 2021,
www.cfr.org/backgrounder/understanding-sharia-intersection-islam-and-law. Accessed 9 June 2024.

Security Council. "Resolution 1988 (2011) Adopted by the Security Council at Its 6557th Meeting, on 17 June 2011*." *Securitycouncilreport.org*, Security Council, 17 June 2011, pp. 1–11,
www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-resolutions/page/3?ctype=Afghanistan&cbtype=afghanistan#038;cbtype=afghanistan. Accessed 9 June 2024.

Women for Afghan Women. "What We Do." *Women for Afghan Women*, 5 Oct. 2022,
www.womenforafghanwomen.org/what-we-do/. Accessed 9 June 2024.

Women for Women. "Afghanistan | Women for Women International."
Www.womenforwomen.org, 15 Nov. 2023,
www.womenforwomen.org/where-we-work/afghanistan?src=GGEV235A&ms=cpc_google_awareness&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=awareness&utm_content=gg+ad&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwpZWzBhCOARIsACvjWRNzAmuDIRtu066cBkb5vBEkiAz16RZ_tRfu7NEoerl7C7MI0nn79k0aAuydEALw_wcB. Accessed 9 June 2024.

Appendix

- Amnesty International, [Amnesty International](#)
- UN documents Security Council Reports, [Security Council Reports UN](#)
- Council on foreign relations, [CFR on Afghani Women](#)
- Women for Women international, [Women for Women](#)
- Women for Afghan Women, [women for Afghan Women](#)