

UTPOST

MAGAZINE NO. 2

Year 2021



Afghanistan

Rights of the people

The influence for the people of the taliban takeover

• UTRIKESPOLITISKA FÖRENINGEN UMEÅ •

EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear reader,

How could this happen? Sometimes it is difficult to understand the truths of reality. There are distorted sentences and not everything is reported.

That is why I am so happy and grateful that together with the writers and the whole UPF I have the opportunity to share a piece of the truth.

For me, it was a natural choice to make a magazine about Human Rights in Afghanistan. Due to the attention the country has received since the Taliban overthrew the government, the focus has been on the regime more than on the people. Hereford, this magazine is entirely based on the people.

Until next time, Clarissa Moore, editor

IN THIS ISSUE

1. About the current state of the media in Afghanistan
6. Fighting to Survive or giving up life
11. Listening to the voices
17. The reality for children of Afghanistan
21. Evacuations reality
25. A Word from the President

UTPOST EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor:
Clarissa Moore

Graphic Design & Photographer:
Cornelia Sprangers

WRITERS

Jan Fritsche

Felicia Nyman

Clarissa Moore

Micaela Eriksson Viklund

Joakim Bourdette

Joakim Johansson

Adnan Moselimani

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA
@UPFUMEA

UTPOST is the magazine by the
association of international affairs Umeå.

Got feedback or want to write for UTpost? GET IN
touch with us!

THE UPF BOARD 2021-2022

Oliver Björkman
President/Ordförande
Mail: ordf@upfu.org

Philip Simonsson
Vice President
Mail: vice@upfu.org

Melinda Granberg
Secretary/Sekreterare
Mail: sekreterare@upfu.org

Anton Forsberg
Treasurer/Kassör
Mail: kassor@upfu.org

William Broberg
Head of Program/
Programansvarig
Mail: program@upfu.org

Magnus Dahlberg
Head of Program/
Programansvarig
Mail: program@upfu.org

Cornelia Sprangers
Head of PR/ Kommunikatör
Mail: info@upfu.org

Michaela Eriksson Viklund
Head of Travel/
Resansvarig
Mail: travel@upfu.org

Adnan Moselimani
Head of Activities/Aktivitetsansvarig
Mail: activities@upfu.org

Clarissa Moore
Editor/Redaktör
Mail: redaktor@upfu.org

Sofie Ådén
SAIA-representative/UPF-representant
Mail: umea@ufsverige.org

This material is entirely or partly financed by SIDA, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, through ForumCiv. SIDA/ForumCiv does not necessarily share the opinions found in the magazine. The responsibility for the content rests fully on the writer.



Photo: Flickr



Human rights in Afghanistan

Photo: Sztanko Demeter

Feardom of Expression: About the current state of the media in Afghanistan

“A free, uncensored and unhindered press or other media is essential in any society to ensure freedom of opinion and expression and the enjoyment of other Covenant rights. It constitutes one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. [...] The free communication of information and ideas about public and political issues between citizens, candidates and elected representatives is essential. This implies a free press and other media able to comment on public issues without censorship or restraint and to inform public opinion. The public also has a corresponding right to receive media output.”

- UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

General Comment no 34, Article 19 (13), emphasis added The above presented excerpt from the CCPR vividly displays the significant status which free and unrestricted media -

along with their immense value for society – hold in international human rights law. At the very heart of an unhindered press and uncensored media lies the principle of freedom of expression. A core value in international human rights law which is perceived to be a “necessary condition for the realization of the principles of transparency and accountability that are, in turn, essential for the promotion and protection of human rights”, as stated in Article 19 (3).

While some may consider these principles to be a given or self-explanatory, recent developments in Afghanistan remind us that freedom of expression and opinion should not be taken for granted.

The Taliban takeover in Afghanistan had drastic and wide-ranging implications for the country to which its media landscape did not pose an exception. Right after seizing rule over Afghanistan, the Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture around interim director Qari Muhammad Yousuf Ahmadi



Photo: Alessandro Pelligrini

imposed extensive restrictions on the news media. Following these regulations journalists are strictly obliged to report in compliance with the Taliban government's media office, e.g. prohibiting the publication of topics which stand in conflict with Islam as well as insult towards national personalities and figures.

In particular, the vaguely phrased nature of the regulations which is perceived to allow a broad and arbitrary interpretation by the Taliban government's media office fuels fear among journalists as well as heavy criticism among the international community. Furthermore, emerging reports documenting Taliban orders towards Afghan telecommunications companies to cut off internet and mobile phone services in particular areas in Kabul raise concern. Several human rights organizations are monitoring the precarious situation in Afghanistan. Christopher DeLoire, secretary-general of "Reporters without Borders" (RSF)

comments on the Taliban media regulations: "They establish a regulatory framework based on principles and methods that contradict the practice of journalism and leave room for oppressive interpretation, instead of providing a protective framework allowing journalists, including women, to go back to work in acceptable conditions. These rules open the way to tyranny and persecution." Further reports emerged on how the developments in Afghanistan resulted not only in severe burdens for Afghan and international journalists' professional work as previously mentioned, but factually created an environment of intimidation and exposure.

In this regard, Human Rights Watch (HRW) observed a recurring pattern in which Taliban target media workers. An engagement in which, according to HRW, an intimate knowledge of journalist's personal information and family relations by the Taliban leads to an encumbering pressure.

As result stands a compulsion for journalists or media workers to either censor themselves or to terminate their work entirely as violent consequences become increasingly probable.

Particularly, women journalists face an acutely harmful environment in Taliban- governed Afghanistan. Besides the initial threat emerging from the media regulations by the Taliban, female reporters encompass grave social norms according to which women are prohibited from working in a public position and expected to pursue household duties. A perception by the Taliban which intensively aggravates menace for female press and media workers.

On September 10 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a press statement commenting on the situation in Afghanistan. In the said press release several events ranging from the detention of press workers up to acts of violence towards journalists were mentioned.

Correspondingly, the OHCHR referenced credible sources and – inter alia – addressed protests in the provinces of Nangarhar and Kunar from 15 to 19 August. These protests which occurred during national flag-raising ceremonies were met with rigorous violence by the Taliban aiming to disperse the crowd. An engagement which led to the death of a man and a boy and left another eight protesters injured. Incidents of this nature became more frequent when on 7 September two men were killed during demonstrations in Herat and multiple protesters including women were detained and allegedly beaten in Kabul. In the latter case, up to 15 journalists were expected to be among the group.

The previously mentioned dangerous situation for women in Afghanistan became explicitly observable on the next day, 8 September. On this day, a protest carried out by a mainly female group in Kabul's Dashti- Barchi area resulted in the detention of five and severe beatings of two journalists.

In light of these developments, the OHCHR emphasized the status of peaceful protests and freedom of expression as subjects to protection under international human rights law. In particular, the freedom for journalists to report on peaceful assemblies – which “must not face reprisals or other harassment, even if an assembly

is declared unlawful or is dispersed” – has been accentuated. The Taliban are, thus, urged to cease their use of force and violence towards journalists and peaceful protesters that are solely exercising fundamental human rights.

Nevertheless, if the OHCHR’s call for the cease of violence will be met with acceptance by the Taliban remains to be seen and is at least to be questioned.

Being oppressed and not able to express your thoughts, feelings or even identity without risking putting yourself and everybody you know in the hands of an unknown fate.

This is a dystopic scenario that we only come in contact with while watching a horror movie or reading a George Orwell book, but for the LGBTQ community in Afghanistan is a reality, a reality that this community must endure and adapt to. Since the Taliban’s coup the LGBTQ people in Afghanistan are fighting not for the rights of being treated equal, but for the opportunity to stay alive.

It is still unclear how the Taliban’s are going to implement their religious laws as known as (Sharia laws) on the LGBTQ community, where a Taliban spokesman comment on the matter was that the Taliban have no official plan for the LGBTQ community yet, unlike the situation with the women’s rights that the Taliban’s made verbal overtures to protect. But Afghanistan is an Islamic republic, and the

Writer: Jan Fritsche

توانمند سازی زنان،
۱۶ جنوری
پہلی سہ ماہیہ ریاست خلیفہ راشد، قطر سہ ماہیہ



Photo: Flickr

Fighting to Survive or giving up life

Being a second-class citizen, being hunted down and forced to sleep with an open eye. Being oppressed and not able to express your thoughts, feelings or even identity without risking putting yourself and everybody you know in the hands of an unknown fate. This is a dystopic scenario that we only come in contact with while watching a horror movie or reading a George Orwell book, but for the LGBTQ community in Afghanistan is a reality, a reality that this community must endure and adapt to. Since the Taliban's coup the LGBTQ people in Afghanistan are fighting not for the rights of being treated equal, but for the opportunity to stay alive.

But being segregated for having an unconventional sexual orientation is not new in the Afghan community, not only because of the law but even due to the deep-rooted belief in the culture that emboss any homosexual relation

even before the Taliban's took power. Under the past regime sexual relations that were between people from the same sexual gender were punished by prison, which turned the LGBTQ community into an easy offer for harassment in the society. Which indicates that the LGBTQ people missis not only the support of the law but are even opposed by the society. Because of the constant threat the non-heterosexual people are living in due to the unknown fate they are facing now more than ever, many people that identify themselves as non-heterosexual decided to hide in basements desperately waiting for a chance to flee the country, others decided to hide their sexual orientation instead. Even not walking properly is enough to get abused, according to a 25-year-old gay person that had been beaten with a pipe and cursed on by a Taliban fighter because he did not "know how to walk as a man".



Photo: Scott Loren Moore

Even though the Taliban's claims they will rule more moderately than they did in the 1990s, the basis of their laws are unequivocal towards both women and the LGBTQ community. Despite not giving an official statement on how the LGBTQ community is going to be treated, Wahidullah Hashimi one of the top decision makers in The Taliban Movement said that the country would be governed by Sharia Laws.

A law that deprives nonconventional people from their rights of being equal citizens and inhibits the development of both people and society. The world needs to hold a common stand to protect the LGBTQ community in Afghanistan nevertheless human rights. We cannot let ourselves get manipulated by the propaganda they are spreading about protecting rights and encouraging development.

This is the last chance the children, women and LGBTQ people have live a safe and free life in the land they group in and abandoning them by signing treaties or encouraging any kind of trading with the Taliban regime means that the LGBTQ people needs to flee the country, because the only alternative is death.

Writer: Adnan Moselimani



Photo: Michael Colohan

Listening to the voices

What is happening in Afghanistan right now and how does it affect the rights of women? A lot of women's lives and their position in society is being affected right now in Afghanistan. There are occurrences leading to detrimental outcomes for certain groups in some countries. Matters such as being able to walk outside of your home, going to school or what occupation to have might not be available for these people. Even the ability to voice your own opinion could be very difficult. The point of this article is to describe how women's rights are affected by the Taliban's invading Kabul and to clarify how there are Afghan women raising their voices, trying to resolve the situation.

Afghanistan has had a presence in the media during the early autumn of 2021. The Taliban's invaded the capital Kabul and took control of the government, which occurred after almost all American troops were released from being stationed there.

The invasion was sudden and the previous government has as a result stepped down and let the Taliban take their place. The country has had a history of internal conflicts and the Taliban's have been present for many years. They controlled the country in 1996, which ended in 2001 by them being forced to step down by the United States and Nato, shortly after the happenings of 9/11. American troops who stayed in the country have been gradually removed and disappeared completely in 2021. This was according to one of the requirements made in a peace agreement in Doha, signed by the United States and the Taliban's in 2020. The Taliban is an Islamist, armed movement who interprets the sharia laws and act according to these interpretations. One aspect of their actions is how women should be respected in the framework of these laws. This affects women and their freedom to choose what a lot of people would deem a necessity, such as education and employment, or perhaps make errands in a town alone.



Photo: Jair Cabrera Torres

A number of regulations were implemented during the years of Taliban governance. Women were not allowed to appear in public without a close male relative. Access to education for girls was denied and women could not be officially employed. These are a few examples. But the repression of women's rights in Afghanistan has been an issue since 2001, and the presence of Taliban. Partnered women in Afghanistan experience physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.

A million girls did not attend school. But during the years without the Taliban government, opportunities such as a higher level of education and careers like lawyers and engineers, have become available for women. The topic of women's rights in Afghanistan involves people who have their own voice to be listened to.

It is clear that people in Kabul do not appreciate this turn of events. All the work towards equal opportunities is going in the opposite direction,

and as an answer people are voicing their opinions. Women are demanding their right to be seen and listened to. An example is protests taking place in Kabul by the Taliban since the previous government stepped down. The women were amongst other things protesting the abolishment of the women's

affairs ministry and the lack of women representation in the newly announced interim cabinet of ministers. When stopping the protest, a group of Taliban fighters used batons that exude electric shocks to beat them, and slashed them with whips as a means of method. „We know the Taliban will find us and might target us. But we don't have a choice. We have to continue.“, an Afghan woman said about the reason why the protests are taking place.

But women are not only fighting for their rights in Kabul. Afghan women leaders spoke at the UN headquarters in New York in October 2021.



Photo: Yiannis Yiannakopoulos

A first woman deputy speaker of the afghan parliament, Fawzia Koofi, said "Thank you for listening to the women of Afghanistan—women that are talked about a lot but listened to very little," during a side event at the UN. The women leaders want a space to be created, where afghan women leaders can speak directly to the Talibans. Afghan-women-leaders-speak-at-the-un Naheed Farid also spoke at the UN. She escaped from Afghanistan a week before the Talibans took control in Kabul. In her speech she talked about the need for women to be part of the decision-making process and have a position in the political space. She also expressed that the Talibans, who want recognition, should be held accountable for protecting human rights. Naheed Farid is the youngest elected parliamentarian, and has founded and led several NGOs assisting women and children and supported rural community development. Fawzia Koofi and Naheed Farid are not the only women speaking up about the situation.

There were other afghan women leaders at the meeting as well, with different kinds of knowledge. These women are parliamentarians, civil society leaders and women's rights advocates.

When a situation appears creating a climate which negatively affects women's rights, it is important to remember that the affected women might have a voice of their own, with a unique perspective to the situation. This article has included a few voices of the many women working with this situation and how to proceed as it evolves. To reach a deeper understanding of how women's rights are affected in Afghanistan right now and find ideas to how this could be solved, there are these voices waiting for someone to listen.

Writer: Felicia Nyman

Photo: Kehitys Lehti



FN: Harsh reality for the children of Afghanistan

The children of Afghanistan live under very difficult circumstances- Since the Taliban came to power the prerequisites have worsened. Many mothers have been forced to flee and have to live without sufficient nutrition. This problem is then transitioned to their children as they can't be breast fed because of the mother's malnutrition. Moreover, many children do not have the opportunity to go to school. For the possibility of a democratic evolution and for human rights education is essential. Education is especially important for young girls so their parents have reasons not to marry them away.

That Afghanistan is one of the most difficult countries to grow up in was a fact already before the Taliban came to power. More than 550 children have been killed in the country since last year and more than 1400 have been wounded.

This makes for great worry. Furthermore, more and more children suffer from severe malnutrition because their families have been forced to flee the conflict. At least 9,5% of the children suffer from severe malnutrition according to UNICEF. It is likely that that number could be even higher as many children do not get examined. Some children are so malnourished that they can't even straighten their fingers. In many cases even the mothers are malnourished which means that they can't breastfeed their children. This leads to the risk that generation after generation will become malnourished. The Covid-19 pandemic, drought and the winter make the situation even more difficult for the children of Afghanistan. According to UNICEF's calculations more than a million children will be at risk of malnutrition before the end of the year.

According to the UN, around 2000 violations of children's rights have been committed through assaults and through recruitment of children for military purposes.

4.2 million children have no access to education which will affect their future careers. 80% of Afghanistan's budget consists of international aid and a large part of that aid has now been frozen because of the Taliban's new regime. This makes the situation much more troublesome for the inhabitants of Afghanistan. The need for help is great. Children are in need of medical aid, food, water and basic sanitation. Even if the UN and UNICEF are doing everything they can in order to help the children it is of importance that the entire international community, even national governments, realizes the need for continued long term interventions. The UN and UNICEF are distributing food, water, vaccines and hygienic articles to the people and children of Afghanistan. Furthermore, UNICEF also helps with treatment of severely malnourished children and establishes temporary schools in migration camps to ensure that children can continue to be schooled. It is also of utter importance that the children get treated for their trauma.

This is something that UNICEF also helps with.

Sweden has the resources to be able to contribute with aid to the children of Afghanistan, but perhaps most importantly Sweden has the impact on making other governments engage themselves in the matter. It is up to the international community to ensure that humanitarian aid is reached to those that need it the most, women and children that is. If you want to help out you can turn to Save the Children International, UNICEF or the Red Cross. Your personal donation can make sure that a family gets nutritional food for weeks or they can get blankets and warm clothes so they can cope with the winter.

**Writers: Umeå FN-förening -
Joakim Bourdette & Joakim
Johansson**



Photo: Koldo



Escaping the conflict

More than two million Afghan refugees are scattered around the world. In Afghanistan itself, there are also well over three million people on the run. While the Afghans' need for refuge in other countries is now expected to increase, some European politicians say that the refugees should stay in Afghanistan's neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran and that they should not seek refuge in Europe.

Over 40 years of conflict, flight and poverty have resulted in Afghanistan's fleeing citizens becoming one of the largest refugee groups in the world.

Since mid August 2021 when the Taliban regained power and the United States army had withdrawn their troops, a large amount of the civilian population tried to leave the country. This group includes Afghans, people with dual citizenship and temporary residents.

The situation in Afghanistan has been deplorable for decades. The country has not had peace since the 1970s and is one of the poorest in the world. Conflicts, droughts and poverty have forced millions to flee. Many have lost hope for the future.

2.6 million Afghan refugees are scattered around the world, 90 percent in Iran and Pakistan. 3.5 million people are fleeing the country - 700,000 have fled this year alone.

Afghanistan has a population of 40 million people, 18 million of whom need emergency assistance to cope with everyday life. 3.6 million are on the run from their homes. The majority are young people who are facing a difficult and uncertain future.

Nearly 2,500 women and children have been killed or injured in battle this year, according to the UN. Armed groups quickly conquered both cities and villages. Families testify about fleeing for their lives, with only the clothes they were wearing.

In the year 2021 alone, more than 700,000 people have been forced to leave their homes and are displaced within the country, of which 80 percent are women and children. A majority of the displaced population reside in refugee camps and the need for basic supplies and protection is urgent. The violence has caused enormous human suffering.

One example of the struggle to get out of Afghanistan is Kabul airport. The Taliban made great strides in Afghanistan. On August 12, the United States began withdrawing its embassy staff from the country via Kabul Airport. 3,000 soldiers were sent to the airport to assist with the evacuation operation. The next day, several countries also start flying their citizens home.

A few days later, on August 15, word came that the Taliban had taken control of the capital, Kabul. All foreign embassy staff were therefore evacuated via the airport, which is controlled by the US forces.

Hours after the Taliban took power crowds of civilians flocked to the airport hoping to board a plane, but a lot of people didn't make it into the building. This led to the cessation of civilian air traffic and only military aircrafts were allowed into Kabul Airport. Because of this hundreds of people breached the fences, attempting to leave the country by climbing on top of airplanes and holding on to them while they took off. The people who managed to climb on top of the aircrafts tragically fell to their deaths once the planes increased in speed and altitude, making it impossible to hold on. These events stopped the evacuation temporarily, but continued later in the evening.

Taliban troops are stopping citizens from fleeing the country in several places, regardless if they're trying to get out via the airport or by crossing the borders in other ways. Threats and violence are the methods used to stop Afghans from escaping the country.

Bombings outside Kabul Airport have been carried out by IS and in response the US military issued a drone attack towards a vehicle on its way to the airport, containing several suicide bombers from the terrorist group. Later that same day another explosion occurred in the surrounding area where at least one person died and several were injured.

As the conflict escalates and the violence increases, more and more people are desperately trying to flee the scene. The people who cross the borders successfully are facing the next severe challenge: where are they going to go, where can they go, now that a lot of countries don't want to offer them refuge anymore?

Writers:

UPF - Clarissa Moore & Micaela Eriksson Viklund





Photo: Flickr

A word from the President

Dear members of the Association of International Affairs in Umeå,

It has been a turbulent year to say the least. A current global pandemic that has impacted all of us has still no end in sight; perpetuated by new variants and the fear of additional lockdowns and travel restrictions. Despite these challenges, we were given the opportunity to restart our operations on campus. This has meant that we were able to have our first campus lecture in over a year, planned and organised a trip for our members, and started to use the UPF Room to its fullest capacity: as the nucleus of our great member association. I find it a privilege to be a part of this shift back to campus from the digital operations of the previous operational year. I hope you share my excitement for the events to come and the next semester which I am certain will be the best one yet.

Whilst we are experiencing degrees of excitement and merriment, there are regions in the world that do not share this experience. One of these regions is Afghanistan. There has been cataclysmic altering of society, government, and basic human rights as a result of external actors and an internal power vacuum; with the prospect of becoming a fully fledged humanitarian disaster.

I hope that this Utpost will provide you, the reader, with necessary and important insight into the dire situation in Afghanistan and maybe it may influence some of you to take action for the improvement of the world around you and make it a better place for future generations; perhaps in places where it is needed the most.

Your President,

Oliver Björkman



GET INVOLVED!

WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR PEOPLE INTERESTED IN joining OUR DIFFERENT COMMITTEES, bring your skills and ideas and help us become even better!

PROGRAM

Our main focus is bringing interesting lectures from all over the world to our members, help Shape our agenda. program@upfu.org

TRAVEL

WHERE DO you want to go? Bring your ideas for interesting destinations and help us plan our annual trips. travel@upfu.org

EDITORIAL

Write articles, take pictures or help out making the layout for our magazine utpost_redaktor@upfu.org

DESIGN & PR

Use digital or analog illustration, graphic design & photography to reach our members in new ways. info@upfu.org

RADIO & PODCAST

Get your voice heard in our podcast “a voice from the north” discussing current events & politics. radio@upfu.org

ACTIVITY

Plan and organize social events, film screenings, dinners and much more to bring our members together. activities@upfu.org

Find our facebook page and visit upfu.org

