

Dear Prime Minister,
Eduard Heger
Nám. slobody 1
81370 Bratislava
Slovakia

On behalf of Amnesty International Slovakia, I am writing to express our grave concern on the current women's rights situation in Afghanistan. As you are aware, the human rights gains that the Afghan women have built over two decades are at a brink of collapse.

The Taliban's seizure of power on 15 August 2021 has resulted in sweeping changes to the lives of all Afghans, but Afghan women and girls face particularly dire restrictions on their rights in their daily lives. Even as the Taliban leaders who have been involved in international negotiations claim the group's approach to women's rights has evolved, these statements were quickly contradicted by events on the ground.

Preventing women from working has exacerbated economic problems for many families, which a few months ago had a steady professional income but are now facing destitution. In addition to the economic implications, removing women from government jobs has left a huge hole in the government's capacity to govern effectively.

To reiterate the importance of women participation in rebuilding the Afghan society and urgent need of the protection of women's rights, Amnesty International, in its new briefing "THEY ARE THE REVOLUTION: AFGHAN WOMEN FIGHTING FOR THEIR FUTURE UNDER TALIBAN RULE", has highlighted the achievements of 16 remarkable Afghan women. These 16 stories serve as a reminder of how much Afghan women have achieved over the last 20 years despite political instability and conflict and the heightened risks that they now face under the present regime.

Some of the immediate concerns include women being barred from working, except for healthcare workers and a few other isolated exemptions. Women have been given no place in the new "government" announced by the Taliban. Girls above grade six (age 12 above) have been banned from going to school, while rigid gender segregation at universities has severely curtailed the possibilities for many young women to pursue a meaningful higher education.

While the situation in Afghanistan remains dire, it is of the utmost importance that the international community stands up for Afghan women and press the Taliban to uphold the rights of women and girls. Given our government's engagement and commitment on protecting women's rights in Afghanistan, I strongly urge you to,

- Listen and engage with women human rights defenders and activists from Afghanistan to understand the ground realities, their pragmatic recommendations and work with them to support women's rights in Afghanistan.
- Use available leverage during negotiations and discussions with the Taliban authorities to address women and girls' rights as a non-negotiable issue. Ensure women are part of all delegations meeting with the Taliban and raise concerns with the absence of women within the de facto government of Afghanistan.
- Allocate adequate and specific funds towards and implement women's rights programmes and projects as part of a comprehensive and long-term commitment to support human rights and women's rights in Afghanistan.
- Consider all Afghan women and girls as prima facie refugees, on the grounds of high risk of gender-based persecution upon return to Afghanistan.
- Actively arrange and support safe passage and evacuation of Afghan women and girls who are at heightened risk of violence and abuse from the Taliban forces, non-state armed groups, community or family members, and who wish to leave the country.
- Ensure humanitarian funding is accessible through a functioning banking system, provided to credible INGOs, NGOs and community-based organizations operating in Afghanistan, including local women's organizations, in a flexible manner. Provide international cash assistance if necessary, to prevent the collapse of the banking system, to avoid further deteriorations of all Afghans' economic, social and cultural rights, especially women.

We will be happy to provide you more information on the issue, should you require it.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,