

Statement on the Situation of Afghan Women and Girls

December 21, 2022 — Before the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, this coalition—the U.S. Policy Advocates for Afghan Women & Girls Working Group—alongside other women’s rights activists, gender experts, and most importantly, Afghan women themselves, warned of the potentially disastrous consequences of withdrawal for Afghan women and girls. Unfortunately, these warnings went unheeded and, to our alarm, the tremendous gains in rights, freedom, and agency that Afghan women had claimed since 2001 have largely disappeared since August 2021. Yesterday, the [Taliban banned Afghan women from attending university](#)—effectively ending girls’ educational opportunities after primary school. One year ago, on [International Human Rights Day](#), we put forth [practical recommendations](#) for U.S. action to address this crisis, and a [further set of recommendations](#) in August 2022 marking the one-year anniversary of the Taliban’s takeover. While the U.S. has made many statements in support of Afghan women and girls over that time, little action has been taken. As a result, the international community largely continues to fail Afghan women and girls, as well as marginalized ethnic and religious groups and members of the LGBTQI+ community in Afghanistan.

In the wake of International Human Rights Day this year—the theme of which is “Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All”—we issue a renewed call to action to end the ongoing [gender persecution](#) in Afghanistan and restore dignity, freedom, and justice for Afghan women and girls. Taking robust, meaningful action on the critical policy recommendations we set forward a year ago are vital to give life to the numerous U.S. pledges to stand by the women and girls of Afghanistan.

To that end, we call on senior U.S. Government leaders to elevate the rights of Afghan women and girls as a matter of political priority. We applaud the Biden Administration for appointing U.S. Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights Rina Amiri in January 2022. Special Envoy Amiri has leveraged her skill and expertise to drive engagement on these issues in numerous ways. However, this crucial work of addressing the world’s worst women’s rights crisis cannot and should not be relegated to one office and one official. We urge President Biden, Vice President Harris, Secretary Blinken, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Zeya, and others within the Department of State to prioritize these issues in their own diplomacy, elevate the critical work Special Envoy Amiri and her office are undertaking in high-level settings, and ensure she has adequate resources to advance this agenda. Consistent, regular statements and other diplomatic actions at the highest levels are essential to signal meaningful U.S. commitment to Afghan women and girls and influence other governments and international partners.

We also urge the U.S. Government to mainstream the push for Afghan women’s and girls’ rights across U.S. foreign policy. The human rights and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan touches on a range of U.S. priorities, including democracy promotion, atrocity prevention, economic security, women, peace, and security, and trafficking in persons, among other issues. We call on U.S. leaders responsible for these areas to integrate the restoration of human rights and meeting the humanitarian needs of Afghan women and girls into their respective work, reinforcing the U.S.’s commitment to making this a government-wide priority.

While much has changed since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, we urge U.S. leaders to utilize all diplomatic tools available to support the rights of Afghan women and girls, amplify their voices, and stand alongside them in their struggle for freedom and equality. As we mark International Human Rights Day and yet another violation of the fundamental rights of Afghan women and girls, U.S. Government officials at the highest levels and across agencies must take action on these pledges and urgently address the worsening human rights situation in Afghanistan.



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