

Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan:

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2025 UPDATE

About this update

This update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, covering the period from July to September 2025,¹ is based on monitoring by UNAMA's Human Rights Service conducted in accordance with its mandate from the UN Security Council.²

Women's rights

Right to work

From 7 September, *de facto* security forces prevented Afghan women (including UN staff, contractors and visitors) from entering United Nations compounds across the country, implementing the 5 April 2023 notification to the United Nations that no Afghan women would be permitted to work for the UN in Afghanistan.³ *De facto* security forces were deployed at the entrances of United Nations premises in Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif to enforce the restriction.⁴

As of the time of reporting, the *de facto* authorities have not permitted Afghan women to return to United Nations compounds and, as a result, Afghan female UN staff are working from home.

Education

Although women's and girls' education in schools and universities has been banned beyond grade six countrywide since 2022,⁵ religious education in *madrassas* has remained permitted for women and girls above grade six across the country. In late August, *de facto* officials in some provinces took steps to close *madrassas* to women and girls beyond grade six:

- On 23 August, in Kabul, *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors, accompanied by *de facto* Police, shut down three girls' *madrassas*. The closures were allegedly related to violations of the *hijab* rules, for admitting girls beyond grade six and teaching "modern secular courses" such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, and biology. Other *madrassas* in Kabul remain open to women and girls beyond grade six.
- Around 26 August, in Badakhshan province, Zebak district, *de facto* Department of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice ordered that girls over the age of 13 be barred from attending *madrassas* in the district.
- On around 27 August, in Paktika province, the *de facto* Department of Education ordered all religious schools to stop girls above 10 years of age and/or above six from attending classes. This order was subsequently implemented across the province.

Impact of enforcement of decrees and edicts by the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice

Throughout the reporting period, the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, through its provincial *de facto* departments, continued to enforce – often arbitrarily – a range of decrees and edicts impacting the lives of women and girls.

[1] All dates referenced refer to 2025, unless otherwise specified.

[2] United Nations Security Council Resolution 2626 (2022), extended by Resolution 2777 (2025).

[3] On 5 April 2023, the United Nations was informed by the *de facto* Ministry of Foreign Affairs that with immediate effect, no Afghan woman would be permitted to work for the UN in Afghanistan, and that this measure would be actively enforced. This decision extended the directive previously announced on 24 December 2022, banning Afghan women from working for national and international non-governmental organizations.

[4] UNAMA, *UN in Afghanistan calls for lifting of restrictions on female staff accessing UN premises*, 11 September 2025. Source:

<https://unama.unmissions.org/un-afghanistan-calls-lifting-restrictions-female-staff-accessing-un-premises>.

[5] The *de facto* authorities initially closed schools to girls above sixth grade in September 2021 and on 23 March 2022, announced that girls' schools above sixth grade would remain closed. Women and girls have been banned from attending higher education since December 2022.

Enforcement of the hijab decree

In July and September, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors undertook campaigns in Kabul and Herat aimed at enforcing women and girls' compliance with the *hijab* decree through verbal warnings and instructions, threats and arbitrary arrests and detentions.⁶

- In various areas of Kabul city, between 16 and 19 July, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors, accompanied by *de facto* Police, arbitrarily arrested more than 60 women and girls accused of violating the *hijab* decree. The women and girls were arbitrarily detained in *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice offices and police lockups for periods ranging from a few hours to overnight. Their male relatives were required to sign written guarantees to secure the women's and girls' release from detention.
- In Herat city, between 15 and 19 September, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors established checkpoints in the Jibreil area of the city to monitor women's *hijab* and ordered them to wear *chadors*. The following week, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors detained a group of women because they were not wearing *chadors*. The women were released after their relatives came to bring them *chadors*.

Implementation of the mahram requirement

The enforcement of the *mahram* requirement⁷ by *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and

Prevention of Vice inspectors continues to prevent women not accompanied by *mahrams* from accessing essential services such as shops, markets and transportation.

- UNAMA recorded incidents of *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors preventing women without *mahrams* from shopping in markets in Farah, Uruzgan and Kandahar in July and August.
- On 2 September, in Kandahar province, a driver and travel agent refused to sell bus tickets two women without *mahrams*, stating that *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice officials had instructed them not to provide transport to unaccompanied women and would be punished if they defied this instruction. The women had to return home to find a male relative to accompany them.

Access to healthcare

Women's access to healthcare is also impacted by the enforcement of decrees and edicts by *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors. During the reporting period, UNAMA spoke with NGOs providing healthcare services who said that *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors regularly visit their facilities across the country to check that rules regarding gender segregation, women's *hijab* and patients being accompanied by a *mahram* are observed. Specific instances of such monitoring were documented throughout the reporting period:

- On 26 July, in Uruzgan province, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors visited two district

[6] On 7 May 2022, the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice introduced the *hijab* decree requiring women to cover their entire bodies (except their eyes). The Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, made public on 21 August 2024, codified the *hijab* requirement.

[7] The Law on Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice stipulates that drivers of commercial and private vehicles should not offer to drive women unaccompanied by a *mahram* (male guardian). The previous instruction on the matter required women to be accompanied by a *mahram* for travel of distances over 78km, while the Law does not provide any distance for which women may travel unaccompanied in a vehicle. For a discussion of the PVPV Law, see: UNAMA, *Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: July – September 2024*, 31 October 2024. Source: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/english - unama - update_on_hr_situation_in_afghanistan - july-sept_2024.pdf.

health facilities, instructing staff to adhere to Sharia and to not provide healthcare to women unaccompanied by a *mahram*.

- On 1 September, in Kandahar province, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors inspected a healthcare facility and gave instructions that a *mahram* must accompany female healthcare workers to workplaces and stay with them the entire time they are at work. The inspectors also said that female patients without *mahrams* should not be treated.
- Between 10–14 September, in Paktika province, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors physically prevented women without *mahrams* from entering Sharana Hospital.

On 9 September, in Kandahar, officials from the *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice met with *de facto* Department of Health officials to reiterate to health sector NGOs that female healthcare workers must be accompanied to work by a recognized *mahram* who must remain with them the entire time they are at work.

On 22 September, in Kandahar city, *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice officials approached dental clinics and informed male dentists that they are not allowed to treat female patients. They instructed the clinics to hire female dentists if they want to provide dental services to women. Women have been barred from studying at medical institutes – including dentistry – since 2 December 2024.

Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice

The *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, in addition to its specific focus on decrees and edicts

concerning the lives of women and girls (as set out above) continues to implement its broad mandate, also impacting the human rights of men and boys.

During the reporting period, UNAMA documented at least 456 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 44 incidents of ill-treatment of Afghan women and men carried out by *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice personnel, primarily related to trimmed beards/Western haircuts, playing or listening to music, and alleged violations of the *hijab* decree. For example:

- Between 1 and 12 July in Kandahar city, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors arrested hundreds of men accused of shaving or trimming their beards. They were held in *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice offices and *de facto* police lockups in the city for periods ranging from a few hours to three days. They were released after promising to grow their beards.
- On 12 September, in Kunar province, Khas Kunar district, a public trial was held in the *de facto* district court against three barbershop owners who were charged with providing grooming services contrary to the Law for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Two of the barbershop owners were sentenced to three months imprisonment and one was sentenced to five months imprisonment.

On 21 September, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice published the Procedure of the Enforcement Committees of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. It requires provincial enforcement committees to promote the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice through meetings and seminars with key *de facto* authorities departments, as well as representatives from business, educational, sports and local communities.

On 28 August, the Taliban leader issued an edict which designates the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice as the entity responsible for referring people with mental health issues to the Afghan Red Crescent Society for treatment. In a 2 September tweet, the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice called upon the public to assist in identifying people with mental health challenges.⁸ According to information received by UNAMA, the process of referring individuals with mental health issues to the Afghan Red Crescent Society has already commenced.

Cross-border incidents

In August, cross-border incidents in Paktika, Khost and Nangarhar provinces resulted in 22 civilian casualties (five killed, 17 injured):

- On 8 August, in Paktika province, Wormamay district, an aerial attack by Pakistani military forces killed two men and injured three other men.
- On 27 August, at around 22:30hrs, in Khost province, Spera district, Sor Kokh village, Lahori area, aerial attacks by Pakistani military forces killed three children (one girl and two boys) and injured eight other civilians (four girls, one boy, two women, one man).
- On 27 August, at around 21:00hrs, in Nangarhar province, Ghani Khel district, aerial attacks by Pakistani military forces injured four boys and two women.

In response to the 27 August incidents, the *de facto* Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted a statement on X that it had summoned the Ambassador of Pakistan and given him a letter of protest which made clear to Pakistan that protecting Afghanistan's territory is a red line for the *de facto* administration and such

actions would have consequences.⁹ The *de facto* Ministry of Defence also posted a statement on X condemning the attacks noting such actions benefit neither side, widen the gap between two Muslim nations, and that actions would have consequences.¹⁰

Corporal punishment

The *de facto* authorities continue to implement judicial corporal punishment in public on a weekly basis. Prison terms are often imposed in addition to public floggings.

Between 1 July and 30 September, UNAMA Human Rights documented judicial corporal punishment against at least 242 individuals (191 men, 48 women, one boy and two girls).

For example, on 13 August in Sar-e-Pul, the *de facto* Appeal Court publicly flogged 21 people (four women and 17 men) between 21 and 39 times each, having convicted them of various crimes, including running away from home, having telephone contact with members of the opposite sex, theft, adultery, and murder.

Former government officials and former ANDSF members

During the reporting period, *de facto* officials made numerous public statements reiterating their commitment to the general amnesty. For example, on 17 July, in response to the news that a UK Ministry of Defence leak had led to a list of 19,000 Afghans affiliated with British forces in Afghanistan accidentally being made public, the deputy spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities, Hamidullah Fitrat, posted a statement on X noting that the general amnesty grants "immunity to everyone" and that: "No one has been arrested or killed for their past actions". The statement also said: "The intelligence apparatus has no need to pursue individuals who were previously granted amnesty. All documents and information related to them are available in

[8] X account of *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (<https://x.com/MOPVPE/status/1962810851422867947>).

[9] X account of *de facto* Ministry of Foreign Affairs (https://x.com/MoFA_Afg/status/1961023000360456362).

[10] X account of *de facto* Ministry of Defence (<https://x.com/MoDAfghanistan2/status/1961162256898752934>).

the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Intelligence; we have no need to use documents disclosed by the British.”¹¹

On 24 July, in response to UNAMA’s report *No safe haven: Human rights risks faced by persons involuntarily returned to Afghanistan*,¹² the deputy spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities issued a statement on X which said that all returning migrants benefit from the general amnesty, and while some minor incidents have occurred, these have been personally motivated rather than political and all incidents are investigated and the perpetrators punished.¹³

Between 1 July and 30 September, UNAMA Human Rights documented at least 21 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention and at least three instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and former ANDSF members, in addition to at least 14 killings of former ANDSF members. For example, on 20 July, in Baghlan province, Tala wa Barfak district, a former Afghan Local Police officer was shot and killed by two individuals. On 22 September, in Sar-e Pul city, a former ANDSF member was shot and killed by two unidentified men while on the way to his shop. He had been working as a shopkeeper for the past three years.

UNAMA has also documented some extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests of individuals who had recently returned to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan. For example, on 29 September, in Faryab province, Khoja Sabz Posh and Andkhoy districts, the *de facto* counter-terrorism unit arrested a number of former ANDSF members, shortly after their involuntary return from Iran. The charges against them are unknown.

Public display of body in Herat

On 22 August in Herat city, Darb-e-Kandahar area, *de facto* police killed a man then dragged his body behind a ranger vehicle before publicly displaying it in a square, hanging it from the barrel of an old military tank. The reasons for the man’s killing remain unknown.

Freedom of religion and thought

During the reporting period, the *de facto* authorities acted against individuals accused of religious violations, as interpreted by the *de facto* authorities:

- On 17 July, the Spokesperson of the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice announced on X that an individual was sentenced to death by the *de facto* Primary Court for alleged blasphemy. This individual was arrested on 19 June in Paktika province, Janikhail district, reportedly in connection with comments he made promoting modern education over religious studies. His sentence was later reduced to two years imprisonment by the *de facto* Appeal Court. At the time of publication, the case is pending a hearing before the *de facto* Supreme Court.
- On 6 September, the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice announced via a statement on X that it had arrested a prominent Sufi spiritual leader in Kabul the previous day.¹⁴ The statement said that he was arrested “for misusing the name of Sufism, performing un-Islamic practices and superstitions under the name of Sufism and religion”. It also stated that “Afghanistan is an Islamic country, all its

[11] X account of the deputy spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities (<https://x.com/FitratHamd/status/1945767838226034992>).

[12] UNAMA, *No safe haven: Human rights risks faced by persons involuntarily returned to Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025. Source: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_hrs_-_human_rights_risks_and_returns_-_3_august_25_final.pdf.

[13] X account of the deputy spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities (<https://x.com/fitrathamd/status/1948388504670536091?s=46&t=VEDmE35bfUTr2GXcjiUqLA>).

[14] X account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (<https://x.com/SAiFKHAIBAR1718/status/1964191130259472628>).

citizens are Muslims and they follow the Hanafi school of jurisprudence". The man was released from detention on 6 September.

In certain districts of Badakhshan province, the *de facto* authorities continue to pressure members of the Ismaili community to convert to Sunnism.¹⁵ In Nusai district, for example, adherence to Sunnism is reportedly a condition for receiving social assistance from the *de facto* authorities. In Nusai, Shakai and Meyamai districts, families are required to enroll their children in Sunni *madrassas* or face a fine ranging from 20,000 (\$250USD) to 100,000AFN (\$1,260USD). On 4 July, in Zebak district, Tezab village, a prominent figure of the local community was killed by unknown perpetrators. At the time of publication, no one had been arrested in connection with the killing.

Freedom of expression

In August, the *de facto* Ministry of Higher Education distributed a list of 679 prohibited books to universities. These books cover a wide range of subjects, such as insurance, banking, government, democracy, constitutional law, investigative journalists, history of Iran, as well as books published by Iranian authors and publishers. In early September, the *de facto* Deputy Minister of Higher Education for Academic Affairs convened a meeting with public and private university chancellors and deans in Kabul that discussed reforms to the university curriculum. Amongst some of the changes, universities were instructed to prohibit the teaching and recommendation of books authored by women, regardless of content or author's nationality.

Media sector

Private media continues to shrink due to severe financial difficulties and the impact of restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities.

Since the May announcement by the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice regarding the extension of its role in social media monitoring,¹⁶ UNAMA has documented numerous arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals posting content on social media.

Women in media are subject to additional restrictions and the few female journalists who continue to work face huge challenges. On 26 August, in Kabul city, during a press briefing, a female journalist attempted to ask the spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities a question, but her microphone was intentionally turned off. On 24 July, in Kabul city, personnel from the *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice and *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence arrested and ill-treated three male staff of the Afghanistan Media Organization, an organization that ran journalism workshops with women participants. They were accused of promoting women's education, spreading immorality and spying. The *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence informed UNAMA verbally that the individuals are being held in *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence detention with the case against them, led by the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, currently with the *de facto* court. The three men remain in detention.

[15] See incidents between 17 January and 3 February 2025 documented in: UNAMA, *Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2025*, 1 May 2025, p. 6. Source: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_update_on_human_rights_in_afghanistan_january-march_2025.pdf. Nevertheless, during this reporting period, UNAMA did not document incidents of physical assaults for those who refused to convert as in the previous reporting period.

[16] See 12 May 2025 announcement by the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice on Radio Television Afghanistan: <https://x.com/rtadarinews/status/1921787146626617562>.

Administration of justice

Applicable legal framework

On 14 August, the spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities, Zabihullah Mujahid, stated in an interview that there is no legal vacuum in Afghanistan, as an Islamic government is in place and Islamic Sharia applies, and highlighted that the current priority is on drafting laws for ministries and other institutions.¹⁷

Between 18 August and 25 September, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice announced the publication of several laws in the Official Gazette,¹⁸ including: Law on Financial Accounting,¹⁹ Law on Pilgrims' Teachers,²⁰ Law on Regulation of Poetry Gatherings,²¹ Law on Contracts of Ministries and Emirati Administrations,²² Law on the Prevention of Smuggling of Foodstuffs, Medicine, and Health Products,²³ and Law on the Tariff Board.²⁴

The *de facto* Ministry of Justice website, which hosts the collection of laws of Afghanistan approved since 1964,²⁵ lists the status of all legal texts approved prior to the takeover by the *de facto* authorities in August 2021 as "annulled", and legal texts issued by the *de facto* authorities, including decrees, orders, edicts and other legislative actions, as "in effect".

Rights of detainees

In July, the *de facto* Office of Prison Administration held meetings with other *de*

facto institutions to discuss coordination and partnerships. Meetings were held with the *de facto* Ministry of Education on the provision of literacy education to around 2,400 detainees,²⁶ and with the *de facto* Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs on the provision of vocational training to prisoners.²⁷

On 13 September, the *de facto* Supreme Court published a circular to all *de facto* courts which instructed that delegations that visit prisons to identify prisoners for release or sentence reduction must be led by the Head of the *de facto* Court of Appeal or Head of the Criminal Division, and comprise a judge from the relevant *de facto* court as well as representatives from the *de facto* Provincial Governor's office, *de facto* police and the *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence.²⁸

Developments within the *de facto* authorities concerning oversight of activities *de facto* Ministries

On 16 August, the *de facto* Ministry of Interior spokesperson said in an interview that the *de facto* Ministry of Interior's current priorities are the professionalization of *de facto* police and improving relations with the public. According to the *de facto* spokesperson, steps taken to date include: training with the Police Academy for all ranks of *mujahideen* [Taliban fighters] and instructions to wear uniforms.²⁹ He also stated that 65,000 former-Republic military personnel continue to work for the *de facto* Ministry of Interior, as well as 2,000 women serving as *de facto* police officers.³⁰

[17] BBC Pashto, YouTube, 14 August 2025. Source: https://youtu.be/Nc2MR1m_L60?si=dUQAw9jcwjUKvZg4.

[18] All texts are available on the *de facto* Ministry of Justice website: <http://laws.moj.gov.af>ShowLawPersian.aspx>.

[19] X account of *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/1957418945700643231>).

[20] X account of *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/1960223926509789394>).

[21] X account of *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/1961663170856017980>).

[22] X account of *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/196420692251443234>).

[23] X account of *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/1968541299738345780>).

[24] X account of *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/1971102824944824743>).

[25] See the *de facto* Ministry of Justice website: <http://laws.moj.gov.af>ShowLawPersian.aspx>.

[26] X account of *de facto* Office of Prison Administration (https://x.com/opa_af/status/1944710168761036828).

[27] X account of *de facto* Office of Prison Administration (https://x.com/opa_af/status/1948034366296236178).

[28] X account of *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1966903657724866846).

[29] On 7 July, the *de facto* Ministry of Interior announced that all *de facto* officials and military personnel must wear uniforms during official hours. This policy aims to enhance public identification of police forces, ensure security, enforce the law, and combat crime, while creating a clear distinction for *de facto* Ministry of Interior personnel. See: <https://x.com/moiafghanistan/status/1942091108386787783>.

[30] X account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry of Interior (<https://x.com/abdulmateenqani/status/1956684019183313221>).

On 16 August, the *de facto* Supreme Court released its *Qaza* magazine which included a 'Special broadcast' on the functions of the Central General Directorate of Judicial Inspection, which include: oversight of the *de facto* courts, including the quantity and quality of court decisions and the behavior of *de facto* court personnel towards the public; meeting detainees and sharing proposals to address their problems with the *de facto* courts; and investigating complaints against *de facto* courts. The magazine invited persons with a complaint against a court or a member of a court, including complaints of requests for bribes, to submit a written petition to the *de facto* Supreme Court.

On 26 August, the *de facto* Deputy Prime Minister announced the launch of Afghanistan's National Development Strategy, a five-year framework based on three pillars of good governance and the rule of law, security and public order, and socio-economic development. Priorities include enhanced transparency and accountability in public administration, reform of the security and defence sector, ensuring public safety and reviewing the curricula of security and defense institutions in accordance with Islamic Sharia. The Strategy commits to the full institutionalization of Sharia law in the next five years as the foundation of the country's laws and the basis for decision-making at all levels.³¹ It does not reference measures to address the challenges and systemic discrimination faced by Afghan women and girls.

[31] Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Year 1404 – 1408 (2025/26 – 2029/30), "Towards Stability and Welfare" (Unofficial translation). See the website of the *de facto* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 26 August 2025: <https://www.dpmea.gov.af/1404-English-News-89>.