

**Summary Report of the
61st Session of the
Human Rights Council
Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to UNOG**

*23 February – 31 March 2026
Geneva, Palais des Nations, Assembly Hall*



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I. The Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the UNOG

The Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) remains fully committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of the people of Afghanistan, with a particular focus on the rights of women and girls. Despite the current challenges, the Mission continues to engage actively with the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the broader international community to amplify the voices of human rights defenders, advocate for accountability, and ensure that the situation in Afghanistan remains high on the international agenda. Through its statements, diplomatic outreach, and participation in side events and other advocacy initiatives, the Mission strives to uphold Afghanistan's international human rights obligations and stand with the people of Afghanistan in their pursuit of freedom, justice, and dignity.

II. The Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations (UN) system, mandated to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide, address situations of human rights violations, and make recommendations to states on how to remedy them. It meets three times a year at the United Nations Office at Geneva and has the capacity to address all thematic human rights issues and country-specific situations that require its attention.

The Council serves as the leading international forum for dialogue and cooperation on human rights issues, bringing together UN officials, independent experts, states, civil society, and other stakeholders. It adopts resolutions and decisions during its regular sessions that express the collective will of the international community and signal strong political commitments on urgent human rights concerns.



III. Council Membership

The Human Rights Council comprises 47 Member States, elected directly and individually by a majority of the 193 members of the UN General Assembly. Seats are distributed equitably among the UN's five regional groups, with elections held every year to renew one-third of the Council's membership. Members serve for a three-year term and are not eligible for immediate re-election after two consecutive terms. All members commit to upholding the highest human rights standards and to cooperating fully with the Council's mechanisms. The rotation of membership ensures balanced representation and legitimacy when the Council speaks on human rights situations around the world.

Regional Group	Member States (2026)
African States (13)	Angola (2028), Benin (2027), Burundi (2026), Côte d'Ivoire (2026), Democratic Republic of the Congo (2027), Egypt (2028), Ethiopia (2027), Gambia (2027), Ghana (2026), Kenya (2027), Malawi (2026), Mauritius (2028), South Africa* (2028)
Asia-Pacific States (13)	China (2026), Cyprus (2027), India (2028), Indonesia (2026), Iraq (2028), Japan (2026), Kuwait (2026), Marshall Islands (2027), Pakistan (2028), Qatar (2027), Republic of Korea (2027), Thailand (2027), Viet Nam*(2028)
Eastern European States (6)	Albania (2026), Bulgaria (2026), Czechia (2027), Estonia (2028), North Macedonia (2027), Slovenia (2028)
Latin American and Caribbean States (8)	Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (2027), Brazil (2026), Chile* (2028), Colombia (2027), Cuba (2026), Dominican Republic (2026), Ecuador (2028), Mexico (2027)
Western European and Other States (7)	France (2026), Iceland (2027), Italy (2028), Netherlands (Kingdom of the) (2026), Spain (2027), Switzerland (2027), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2028)

*Second consecutive term

In addition to its 47 elected Member States, the Council's work includes the active participation of Observer States, intergovernmental organizations, national human rights institutions, and non-governmental organizations. This wide participation enables the Council to maintain transparency, inclusivity, and a strong link with civil society.



IV. 61st Session of the Human Rights Council

The 61st Session of the Human Rights Council (23 February – 31 March 2026) addressed a wide range of pressing human rights challenges. Six panel debates were held during the session, and more than 80 reports were considered under the Council’s various agenda items. Through enhanced interactive dialogues, panel discussions, and the consideration of draft resolutions, the Council focused on a broad array of issues such as violence against children, freedom of religion or belief, the field of cultural rights, human rights and a culture of peace, and human rights of persons in street situations. The session also gave special attention to country situations, including Afghanistan, Sudan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, South Sudan, Ukraine, Belarus, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and Nicaragua. This session spent considerable time discussing the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition to the Joint Interactive Dialogue (ID) with the Special Rapporteur (SR) on the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran was the topic of two urgent debates. One centred on Iran’s military actions against Gulf states, while the other focused on the United States aerial attacks on the Shajareh Tayyebah Girls’ School in Minab, Iran. Across all debates, the Council reaffirmed the importance of multilateralism and commitments to human rights in the face of the severe fiscal crisis and numerous conflicts worldwide.

The Human Rights Council concluded its 61st session after adopting 38 resolutions. Of these, 25 were thematic, 12 addressed country-specific situations, and one concerned organisational and procedural matters. This was a 2.6 percent decrease compared to the number adopted one year earlier at HRC58. Of these, 28 were adopted by consensus (81 percent), 10 by a recorded vote (19 percent), and none were rejected. Nineteen mandates were extended, including ten thematic mandates and nine country-specific mandates. The Council adopted the outcome reports of the Universal Period Review (UPR) Working Group for 13 States: Andorra, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Honduras, Jamaica, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, and Panama. Seventeen new Special Procedures mandate-holders were appointed to various mandates. These include:

Position	Name	Country	Region Represented
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia	Thomas Andrews	United States of America	N/A
Member, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent	John Phillip Binondo	Philippines	Asia-Pacific
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar	Kelley Anne Eckels-Currie	United States of America	N/A
Member, Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development	Serges Alain Djoyou Kamga	South Africa	African Group
Member, Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development	Xiaohui Liang	China	Asia-Pacific Group
Member, Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development	Ramona Biholar	Romania	Eastern European Group
Member, Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development	Brian Keane	United States of America	Western European and Others Group



Member, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Gam Awungshi Shimray	India	Asia
Member, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Dalee Sambo Dorrough	United States of America	Arctic
Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons	Zvezdan Pirtošek	Slovenia	N/A
Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context	Koldo Andoni Casla Salazar	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	N/A
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons	Katarina Schwarz	New Zealand	N/A
Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights	Elena Carolina Diaz Galan	Spain	N/A
Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights	Zeina Jallad	State of Palestine	N/A
Special Rapporteur on the right to food	Sofia Monsalve Suarez	Colombia	N/A
Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children	Ai Kihara-Hunt	Japan	N/A
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders	Andrea Bolaños Vargas	Colombia	N/A



V. Situation of Human Rights at HRC61

At its 61st Session, the Human Rights Council once more addressed the dire human rights situation in Afghanistan. The Taliban's de facto authorities have created a regime of gender apartheid, exacerbated the ongoing humanitarian crisis, dismantled the rule of law, and eroded civic space and human dignity. In January 2026, the de facto authorities established a new so-called criminal procedure code for courts. In reality, the purported code formally abolishes equality between men and women in the criminal justice system, enshrining men's authority within marriage, positioning husbands as legal superiors, and severely constraining women's access to protection and judicial remedies. This was on the heels of the de facto authorities' decree on the "Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice," which aimed to codify over 100 discriminatory decrees and edicts.

People of Afghanistan face an unprecedented human rights crisis. Freedom of expression remains tightly restricted. Journalists are arrested and detained, while the media is highly censored. Public executions and corporal punishments persist, including two public executions since fall 2025. Since August 2021, the de facto authorities have carried out 12 public executions of individuals, using methods such as stoning, that are contrary to international human rights law, including the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of life.

None suffer the consequences of the crisis more than women, who face an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by the de facto authorities. Women remain excluded from education above sixth grade, including higher education and medical training. Women were not permitted to participate in their medical graduation examinations, continuing a ban on women's access to higher education since 2022 and to medical institutes since December 2024. In 2025, authorities removed books authored by women from university libraries, including around 140 titles. Enforcement of strict dress codes for women has intensified, including mandatory wearing of the chador and, in some cases, requirements to wear the burqa to access public services. Non-compliance results in detention, removal from public transport, and denial of access to markets and services.

These human rights violations occur amid worsening humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions. More than half the population experiences acute food insecurity. Large-scale deportations from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran have left millions of returnees displaced and without resources. What little humanitarian aid that makes it into the country does not reach those most in need, especially women and girls. The Council's discussions underscored that the situation in Afghanistan reflects an urgent test of the international community's commitment to international law and human dignity.

Some notable progress has been made, however. The International Criminal Court's July 2025 arrest warrants against senior Taliban figures for the crime against humanity of gender persecution marked a historic recognition of these abuses under international law. On 6 October 2025, the Human Rights Council adopted Resolution A/HRC/60/L.9 by consensus, establishing the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan (IIM-A). The resolution was co-sponsored by a broad cross-regional group of Member States, reflecting the international community's shared commitment to accountability.



ENHANCED INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON THE REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE OHCHR COUNTRY REPORT

Pursuant to Council Resolution 60/2, which extended the mandate of Special Rapporteur for one year and requested him to present a report on the situation of human rights of women and girls to the Council at its sixty-first session, the Human Rights Council held an Enhanced Interactive Dialogue (EID) on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. In the same resolution, the Council also requested OHCHR to present a report on victims' and survivors' perspectives on justice and redress during the enhanced interactive dialogue. The dialogue thus served as a platform for the Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett's Report [A/HRC/61/63](#), which focused on women's and girls' right to health in Afghanistan. It also served as the platform for the [A/HRC/61/54](#) - Situation of human rights in Afghanistan - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which presented a comprehensive report covering the period 1 August 2025 to 31 January 2026.

Special Rapporteur Report

Pursuant to HRC Resolution 60/2, the Special Rapporteur was tasked with reporting on the situation of girls with an intersectional approach. The Special Rapporteur focused his reporting on the right to health for women and girls after consultation with women human rights defenders of Afghanistan, civil society, and other stakeholders. He conducted focus groups and interviews with 137 people of Afghanistan across 29 provinces, including health workers, civil society actors, and healthcare users. He received 17 submissions in response to a public call. The report draws on an independent Bishnaw survey of 8,085 women across 33 provinces conducted in November–December 2025 and focus groups with 469 women in 28 provinces.

Mr. Bennett focused on how gender inequality is a central determinant of health. Patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, and unequal power relations shape household decision-making, deprioritize women's health, and delay care. Only an estimated 4.1 million of approximately 15 million women have reliable access to healthcare. Taliban restrictions on women's movement, including the mahram requirement and dress codes, limit access to healthcare for both patients and health workers. Implementation varies by province, but denials are common. In November 2025, authorities in Herat barred female patients and staff from hospitals for non-compliance, causing a 28 percent drop in admissions.

Healthcare is one of the few sectors where women are permitted to work, but exemptions are inconsistently applied. In December 2022, women were banned from NGO employment with limited exemptions, restricting health monitoring, field visits, training, and outreach. In September 2025, women of Afghanistan were banned from entering UN premises. In December 2024, women were prohibited from attending medical and health training institutions. Clinical programs closed, and women were barred from exit examinations. Women comprise 27 percent of non-specialized physicians, 18 percent of specialized physicians, and



29 percent of nurses. Many hospital and health directorate management roles are held by individuals without health-sector training, while corruption persists.

Structural barriers further diminish health outcomes. Girls' education beyond grade six has been suspended, women's employment is restricted, and participation in public life curtailed. Marginalized groups, including rural women, low-income households, and women with disabilities, face cumulative barriers. Around 33 percent of the population lives in underserved areas. Although public health is free in principle, households fund approximately 75 percent of total health expenditure under the Islamic Republic, a figure estimated to have risen since Taliban control. Older women face pronounced exclusion; in the Bishnaw survey, 46 percent of women over 60 reported being unable to reach a health facility when needed.

Dependence on donor funding has intensified the crisis. Under the Islamic Republic, 75 percent of public health funding came from international donors. Since the demise of USAID in 2025, humanitarian aid has largely replaced long-term development support for public health. The 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan estimate 21.9 million people require humanitarian assistance, including 14.4 million in health. Domestic pharmaceutical production is minimal and cross-border disruptions affect supply chains.

The Special Rapporteur's legal analysis draws on Afghanistan's obligations under ICESCR (art. 2), ICESCR General Comments No. 14 and 22, CEDAW (arts. 2 and 12), and CRC (arts. 12 and 14). As a state party to the ICESCR, Afghanistan must progressively realize the right to health to the maximum of available resources, but with immediate obligations to ensure non-discrimination, prioritize marginalized groups, and allocate health resources equitably. Core obligations include reproductive, maternal, and child healthcare; education and access to information; and training health personnel on health and human rights. Afghanistan must respect, protect, and fulfil sexual and reproductive health rights, enabling autonomous decisions free from coercion, discrimination, or violence. Treaties including CEDAW, CRC, and ICRPD reinforce duties to protect the health of women, children, and other at-risk groups, including access to maternal health, counselling, family planning, and rural healthcare services. Although not mentioned, the CEDAW Committee is working on an addendum to CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24 on women's right to health, which applies here.

The Special Rapporteur concludes that the severe, intentional deprivation of women and girls' rights constitutes a crime against humanity, particularly persecution on gender grounds, and reflects a system of gender apartheid. He recommends that the Taliban immediately lift bans on education and medical training for women and girls, remove restrictions on movement and employment, ensure access to comprehensive health services, revoke discriminatory laws, increase transparency and public health funding, expand rural primary healthcare, and cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms.

For the international community, the SR urges avoiding normalization of the Taliban, sustaining humanitarian and development funding, fully financing the 2026 response plan, supporting women-led NGOs, expanding education and training opportunities, strengthening accountability through the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan (IIM-A) and the International Criminal Court (ICC), recognizing gender apartheid as a crime against



humanity, and investigating violations of the right to health and gender-based and reproductive violence.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Report

The OHCHR report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 60/2, requesting OHCHR to present a comprehensive report to the Council at its sixty first session. It provides an update for the period from 1 August 2025 to 31 January 2026, also reflecting victims' and survivors' perspectives on justice and redress for human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan. Given the short timeframe between the sixtieth and sixty-first sessions, a comprehensive consultation seeking victims' and survivors' perspectives for the purpose of this report was not possible. The report's primary categories include: the de facto authorities' "law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice;" the rights of women and girls; freedom of expression; the use of the death penalty and corporal punishment; the administration of justice; cross border incidents; former government officials and former security force members; and an update on the establishment of a comprehensive mechanism, including victims' and survivors' perspectives on justice and redress. It concludes with conclusions and recommendations to the de facto authorities and Member States and the international community.

The report documents a severe and worsening human rights situation driven by economic collapse, restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities, and declining international assistance. In 2026, approximately 21.9 million people, about 45 percent of the population, are projected to require humanitarian assistance due to overlapping pressures including poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, climate-driven drought, natural disasters, and large-scale population returns. Nearly three million people of Afghanistan returned to the country in 2025, many without assets, employment prospects, or access to services, placing additional strain on already limited humanitarian capacity. Continued reductions in international financial assistance and the ongoing freeze on state assets of Afghanistan further deepen economic precarity across the country.

The continued enforcement of restrictive policies and practices by the de facto authorities, particularly the so-called 2024 "Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice," undermines the political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights of the population, especially women and girls. The report spends significant ink discussing the so-called law and its discriminatory impacts on women and girls. Worsening the situation for women and girls, in January 2026 the de facto Supreme Court instituted a new code which purports to regulate one of three categories of crimes under Islamic law, namely the implementation of discretionary punishments by de facto primary court judges. The decree criminalizes a wide range of conduct and introduces penalties that are inconsistent with international human rights law, including expanding the scope of the death penalty, legitimising violence against women and children, and restricting freedom of religion and expression by criminalizing criticism of the Taliban leadership and its policies. The report documents that since 7 September 2025, de



facto security forces have prevented women of Afghanistan, including United Nations staff, contractors and visitors, from entering United Nations premises across the country.

The de facto authorities threaten fundamental freedoms and human rights from all angles. Freedom of expression in Afghanistan remains heavily restricted, as the de facto authorities continue to monitor and control media, social media, publishing, and education. Journalists and media workers faced arbitrary arrest, detention, and suspensions of outlets. Media outlets cannot broadcast or publish any content which the de facto authorities consider contrary to the culture of Afghanistan, their interpretation of Sharia law, and national interest. Music, drama, and political talks are prohibited. Pre-recorded talk shows are required to be vetted and edited by the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture. Women journalists faced additional barriers to participation.

A nationwide 48-hour telecommunications shutdown between 29 September and 1 October 2025 disrupted healthcare, banking, aviation, and humanitarian operations, and restrictions were later reported on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. Censorship extends to publishing and education, with authors required to submit manuscripts for approval. The de facto authorities removed 51 subjects from school curricula alongside 18 higher-education topics, including several related to women's studies.

Since August 2021, the de facto authorities have carried out 12 public executions, with methods such as stoning. During the reporting period, two Qisās public executions took place in Badghis and Khost provinces, carried out by family members of the victims, while the de facto authorities continue to impose judicial corporal punishments publicly on a weekly basis, often alongside prison sentences.

Meanwhile, citizens face threats from various fronts. Between October and December 2025, UNAMA documented 70 civilian deaths and 478 injuries in Afghanistan caused by Pakistani military forces, with most casualties occurring during heightened cross-border clashes from 10 to 17 October, far exceeding annual figures from previous years. Former government officials and former National Defence and Security Force members returning from Iran and Pakistan face risks of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and detentions.

The report canvassed the Human Rights Council Resolution 60/2 establishment of the IIM-A. The IIM-A is mandated to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyse evidence of international crimes and other serious violations of international law committed in Afghanistan, including those that may amount to violations and abuses of international human rights law, particularly against women and girls. The IIM-A will prepare case files for fair and independent criminal proceedings before competent national, regional or international courts or tribunals that have, or may in the future have, jurisdiction over such crimes, in accordance with international law.

The report then pivoted to other pathways for victim redress, mainly the “People’s Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan” hearings held in Madrid in October 2025. On 11 December 2025, the Tribunal issued a symbolic judgment, finding ten de facto authorities and the Taliban movement guilty of crimes against humanity, including gender persecution, torture, arbitrary

detention, and gender apartheid. The tribunal urged the international community to support accountability and codify gender apartheid as an international crime.

The report concluded by making recommendations. For the de facto authorities, OHCHR renewed its call on the de facto authorities to fully comply with Afghanistan's international human rights obligations; immediately rescind discriminatory decrees; ensure women and girls' access to education, healthcare, employment, and civic participation; halt executions and corporal punishment; restore a credible national human rights institution; respect freedom of expression and the media; and engage with victims on accountability, truth, justice, and reparation. OHCHR urged Member States and the international community to insist the de facto authorities immediately respect human rights, support humanitarian assistance and victims' participation, prosecute alleged perpetrators under universal or extraterritorial jurisdiction, ensure accountability for their own personnel, halt forced returns and protect refugees, support broad-based sensitization of the meaning of victims' rights among all affected victims' group, raise awareness of victims' rights, provide material support to CSOs and victims, and fund and support the IIM-A.

The Panel

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk

Mr. Volker Türk started his statement by discussing the Taliban edicts, whether formally issued or via de facto legal statements, which contravene Afghanistan's international legal obligations. He condemned the new so-called criminal code which extends offenses that carry the death penalty, allows corporal punishment, and legitimizes violence against women and children. Women and girls face extreme gender-based oppression, which Mr. Türk labelled gender apartheid. He made various key requests to the de facto authorities: reverse the exclusion of women and girls, recall all edicts on education, stop obstructing UN operations and allow women access to UN premises, impose a complete moratorium on executions and corporal punishment, end arbitrary arrests and detentions, ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all in need, and remove restrictions on media and censorship. He emphasized operationalizing the IIM-A and fully supported codifying gender apartheid in the new crimes against humanity treaty. He also noted that the Doha process provides an opportunity to reintegrate Afghanistan into the international community, while ensuring anti-narcotics and private sector policies do not exacerbate harm.





Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett

In his oral update to the Human Rights Council, Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett presented his new report on the right to health for women and girls. He said that under Taliban rule, Afghanistan faces a profound and escalating health and human rights crisis. Decades of conflict, poverty, underinvestment, and aid cuts left the health system fragile, and the Taliban's gender-oppressive policies prevent women and girls from accessing essential services. Minority and marginalized communities face additional barriers. Mr. Bennett highlighted alarming developments, including new Criminal Rules of Courts, decrees on separation of spouses and preachers, rising public floggings, extrajudicial killings of former officials, and restrictions on UN premises for women. Meanwhile, millions of refugees from Afghanistan continue to live in uncertainty and insecurity and remain at risk of refoulement. He stressed that restoring the rights and dignity of women and girls and operationalizing the IIM-A are essential for the people of Afghanistan to thrive and shape the future they deserve.



Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Mr. Nasir Ahmad Andisha

Ambassador Andisha expressed his sincere appreciation to OHCHR for its continued engagement and documentation of the deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan and to Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett for his powerful and intersectional account of how the systematic dismantling of women's rights has directly precipitated a collapse of access to healthcare. He then acknowledged the courage of Afghanistan's women, men, children, health workers, survivors and civil society members who risked their safety to share their testimonies. He stressed, with unmistakable clarity, that Afghanistan is witnessing the deliberate entrenchment of a system of repression that is dismantling the very foundations upon which human dignity and human existence depend. The de facto authorities have extinguished fundamental freedoms through arbitrary arrests, pervasive surveillance, censorship, criminalisation of dissent, public executions and corporal punishments. Women are increasingly and systematically denied access to education, employment, essential services, and participation in public life. The situation is worsened by forced returns, economic collapse, and restricted access to humanitarian and critical services, which compound their suffering.

Gender oppression and the deprivation of health converge reveal the devastating reality of gender apartheid.



Ms. Suriya Dalil

Ms. Suriya Dalil, a prominent physician, diplomat, and former Minister of Public Health (2010–2014) from Afghanistan, highlighted that women and girls in Afghanistan face severe barriers to healthcare. Movement restrictions, limits on health workers, and the ban on medical education threaten both current and future generations. She recounted how one woman doctor warned that a health system cannot survive if half of its workforce is excluded. Ms. Dalil outlined three avenues for action: first, keep Afghanistan on the international agenda and amplify the voices of women and girls, pressing the Taliban to restore fundamental rights, freedom of movement, and repeal repressive laws; second, deliver people-centred humanitarian assistance by supporting civil society, keeping clinics open, enabling women health workers, providing alternative learning pathways, and assisting returning families; and third, pursue targeted measures and individualized accountability through sanctions, asset freezes, and fully operationalizing the IIM-A. She called for codifying gender apartheid in international law.



Ms. Lima Khoshal

Ms. Lima Khoshal spoke as a woman of Afghanistan whose medical education was interrupted under the Taliban regime. She spoke on the right to health in Afghanistan but also the right education, and the crisis created when that right is denied. From a young age, she dreamed of becoming a doctor and believed that education was the path to service. After the Taliban returned, universities closed to women. Eventually all medical education for women was banned, not because of lack of ability or commitment, but simply because of their gender. This denial of education for women and girls has caused serious mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression, pushing some girls into early marriage or isolation. Limiting the healthcare worker base weakens Afghanistan's health system by increasing maternal mortality, reducing vaccination rates, and eroding trust in healthcare. She implored that when girls learn, societies become healthier, stronger, and more resilient. Ms. Khoshal called on the international community to stand with the women and girls of Afghanistan through sustained funding, diplomatic pressure, and support for education, emphasizing that investing in girls' education is an investment in public health, resilient communities, and the future of Afghanistan. She spoke directly to the girls of Afghanistan to remind them of their strength, bravery, and dreams.



Statements by States

Member States expressed strong concern regarding the systematic exclusion of women and girls from public life and reiterated the need for strengthened international engagement to address the country's grave human rights and humanitarian situation.

Australia

Australia, speaking on behalf of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, expressed grave concern over the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, highlighting the Taliban's systematic oppression of women, girls, and minorities. They deplored the Taliban's sustained efforts to erase women and girls from public life and restrict their fundamental freedoms. Nearly 22 million people of Afghanistan urgently need humanitarian assistance, with women and girls disproportionately affected. The new Criminal Procedural Regulations and the law on Prevention of Vice normalize family violence, entrench discrimination, and undermine due process, violating Afghanistan's obligations under international law. They reiterated their call for human rights to be upheld in accordance with Afghanistan's obligations under international



law. The statement called on the Special Rapporteur to ensure that humanitarian support effectively reaches the most oppressed people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls.

European Union

The EU strongly condemned the ongoing, widespread, and systematic human rights violations and abuses by the Taliban, emphasizing that their systemic violations of women's and girls' rights may amount to gender persecution. The EU highlighted that the Taliban's repressive policies flagrantly disregard Afghanistan's international obligations and severely undermine the right to health and dignity of women and girls, particularly through the prohibition of education for female medical staff. The EU called for the protection of minorities and demanded unhindered humanitarian access. The EU demanded women's access to work and ability to deliver assistance across the country. The EU stressed that victims and survivors deserve accountability and welcomed OHCHR's efforts to operationalize the IIM-A. The EU stated that only a political process led by the people of Afghanistan that is inclusive of all, with the equal and meaningful participation of women, can ensure sustainable peace, stability, and prosperity.

Belgium

Belgium, speaking on behalf of the Benelux countries, aligned with the EU and emphasized that the situation in Afghanistan constitutes gender persecution, noting that it is the only country in the world where secondary education is prohibited for girls and women. The delegation highlighted the resulting impacts on maternal mortality and reproductive violence and stressed the urgent need to operationalize the IIM-A. Belgium also asked Mr. Bennett how existing data could be meaningfully used by the new mechanism.

Nordic-Baltic Countries

Denmark delivered a statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic states of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden. They expressed deep concern about the worsening human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly the institutionalized discrimination and oppression targeting women and girls, children, opposition members, media, and minorities. They highlighted that Decree no. 12, if enforced, could expand Taliban discretion in criminal verdicts, undermine due process, legalize arbitrary detention, broaden crimes punishable by death, allow punishment based on social status and religion, legalize corporal punishment by non-judicial actors, and impose severe penalties for opposition. Many of these measures conflict with Afghanistan's international obligations, and the group called on the de facto authorities to reverse policies, decrees, and practices that violate human rights and endanger the country's future.

OIC Group

Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the OIC, expressed deep concern about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, particularly the restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities, including the ban on education for women and girls, which violate fundamental rights and contradict Islamic teachings. The delegation also highlighted the discrimination faced by ethnic and religious minorities and condemned terrorist activities, including attacks against neighbouring countries. They stated such attacks undermine the rights of the people of



Afghanistan, both inside the country and beyond. Pakistan reiterated the OIC's firm solidarity with the people of Afghanistan.

Austria

Austria aligned with the EU statement. Austria was alarmed by the Taliban's new criminal procedure code, which creates different classes of rights and legalizes domestic violence that does not cause severe injury, while criminalizing women who seek refuge from abuse. Austria was also deeply concerned that the Taliban's systemic restrictions, including the ban on women attending medical school and limits on access to health services, were worsening the health crisis and leaving women vulnerable to preventable disease and death. Austria called on the de facto authorities to comply with Afghanistan's international human rights obligations, uphold non-discrimination and the rule of law, and asked the Special Rapporteur to assess the criminal procedure code from both human rights and Sharia law perspectives.

Italy

Italy expressed deep concern over the profound health crisis in Afghanistan and the impact of the new criminal procedure code, which marginalizes certain groups and treats people differently based on status. The delegation noted the creation of special categories of free and enslaved persons, raising serious concerns under international criminal law, including the prohibition of slavery. Italy emphasized the urgent need to safeguard the right to health for women and girls and asked what concrete steps the international community should take to ensure their access to healthcare.

Malaysia

Malaysia expressed concern over the human rights situation in Afghanistan, highlighting the systematic restrictions on women and girls, particularly their limited access to healthcare and medical education, which threatens the functioning of the healthcare system. Malaysia emphasized that the right to health is closely linked to other fundamental rights, including education, work, freedom of movement, and participation in society, and that without these, women and girls cannot access basic services or live with dignity. Malaysia reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the people of Afghanistan through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, providing technical cooperation and capacity-building initiatives.

South Africa

South Africa commemorated the 70th Anniversary of the 1956 Women's March, which challenged both the system of apartheid and patriarchy. South Africa emphasized the urgent human rights crisis facing women and girls in Afghanistan, noting that misogynistic policies systematically deny them fundamental freedoms, including the right to health. South Africa stressed that these policies form part of an institutionalised system of gender discrimination, oppression, and domination that is widespread and systematic and may constitute a crime against humanity of gender persecution. The delegation stressed the need to hold perpetrators accountable and called for the IIM-A to receive full resources to fulfil its mandate.

Spain

Spain joined the EU Statement and strongly condemned the systematic and institutionalized exclusion of women and girls from public and social life. Spain demanded the revocation of



all decrees that curtail their rights, including the new so-called penal code. Spain emphasized that it will not normalize gender oppression and will continue to promote accountability through support for international mechanisms against impunity and by exploring available legal avenues, including initiatives before the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. Spain recalled the “HearUs” Conference held in Madrid in December 2025, with broad participation of women from Afghanistan. Spain reaffirmed its commitment to stand with women of Afghanistan, supporting without delay the IIM-A, and called for determined action to ensure the dignity and rights of the people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls. Spain committed to supporting the IIM-A.

Statements by IGOs and NGOs

International and civil society organisations overwhelmingly echoed the Special Rapporteur's and OHCHR's reports and the Ambassador's call for action, as well as the urgent need for recognition of gender crimes, humanitarian assistance, and operationalization of the investigative mechanism.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International highlighted Afghanistan's worsening human rights and humanitarian crisis. Countries, including Iran and Pakistan, continue to forcibly return refugees, violating non-refoulement. The Special Rapporteur's report highlights the Taliban's systematic deprivation of women's and girls' rights, increased restrictions on religious minorities, and the silencing of human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, and former government members through arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, unlawful detention, and killings. The Taliban's decrees violate Afghanistan's international obligations, and as donor aid declines, 21.9 million people, nearly half the population, depend on international assistance. Amnesty International called upon the UN to accelerate the operationalization of the IIM-A and ensure it receives the resources to collect, preserve, and analyse evidence of past and ongoing crimes.

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Forum Asia reported that the Taliban have intensified violence and oppression, codifying discrimination based on social status, gender, and religion in the January criminal procedure code, which legitimizes slavery and mandates executions for dissenters. They noted that over the past four years, the Taliban have refused to lift bans on women's education and employment or end the criminalization of gender identity, speech, and movement, calling for this system to be recognized as gender apartheid under international law. Forum Asia highlighted arbitrary arrests of journalists, forced evictions, land confiscation, and persecution of minority groups, including Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Tajiks, and Ismailis, with some actions bearing hallmarks of genocide. Arbitrary arrest and detention of journalists Mahdi Ansari, Hamid Farhadi, and Nazira Rashidi for alleged propaganda against the Taliban rule is emblematic of the repression of independent media and civil society. They welcomed the IIM-



A as a crucial step toward accountability but stressed it requires full political and financial support and cannot replace efforts to prevent normalization of Taliban oppression

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch highlighted the Taliban's new so-called criminal procedure code, which deepens repression and discrimination by defining Muslims exclusively as adherents of the Hanafi jurisprudence, labelling other religious groups, including Shia, as heretics, and recognizing only "excessive" beating as domestic violence, leaving survivors of other abuse without protection. Human Rights Watch called on UN member states to listen to women and girls of Afghanistan, centre their voices, and take urgent action to protect their rights and ensure accountability for gender persecution. Human Rights Watch emphasized fully operationalizing and resourcing the IIM-A and urged states to recognize gender apartheid as a crime against humanity, support ICC prosecutions, pursue CEDAW accountability at the ICJ, and use universal jurisdiction where appropriate.

Interfaith International

Interfaith International expressed deep alarm at the systematic erosion of women's and girls' rights in Afghanistan. Discrimination is dismantling fundamental freedoms, including education, employment, health care, and public participation. From an interfaith perspective, no religion justifies denying dignity or equality. Marginalization undermines the society of Afghanistan. Interfaith International stressed the importance of accountability. Interfaith International called upon the international community to sustain strong monitoring and reporting mechanisms; ensure that women from Afghanistan have voices that remain central in all diplomatic and humanitarian engagement; and support initiatives that protect women human rights defenders, including those operating in exile. The rights of women and girls are universal, indivisible, and non-derogable.

MADRE Inc.

MADRE Inc., through Morteza Akbary, highlighted that Taliban policies in Afghanistan systematically restrict women's and girls' access to healthcare by banning medical education, imposing movement restrictions, and interfering with sexual and reproductive health services, resulting in rising maternal mortality. They called for the immediate lifting of all restrictions on women's and girls' education, work, and freedom of movement, including the ban on medical training; the provision of full access to quality, gender-responsive, and non-discriminatory health services, including sexual and reproductive health services; and the full support and operationalization of the IIM-A to address systematic violations, including reproductive and gender-based crimes.

UN Women

UN Women highlighted that after nearly five years of Taliban rule, isolated restrictions in Afghanistan have solidified into a system of institutionalized gender inequality. Protective institutions, like the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, have been dismantled. Nationwide consultations conducted by UN Women, together with IOM and UNAMA, show that women are nearly four times less likely than men to access formal justice, and 57 percent say their access has worsened in the past year. Even informal mechanisms, which have long been the primary avenue for resolving



disputes, are closing to women. Only 25 percent of women report having access, compared to 71 percent of men. UN Women called upon the international community to act with clarity and principle, emphasizing that protection for women, sustained support to women-led organisations, and continued monitoring and accountability are essential to any meaningful path toward justice and redress.

Concluding Statements

Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan

Mr. Bennett once more deplored the profound human rights concerns regarding Decree 12, the new so-called Criminal Rules of Courts, noting its lack of due process protections and the establishment of a social hierarchy based on gender. Mr. Bennett emphasized that humanitarian aid must be informed by direct consultation with the people of Afghanistan to understand their needs and local realities. Donors should commit to long-term, flexible funding with rigorous monitoring and documentation. Aid should prioritize actors from Afghanistan who have the knowledge, trust, and presence to reach communities under difficult conditions. Accountability is a shared responsibility of the international community, which must prioritize protecting victims over politics and avoid recognizing the Taliban. He called for the prompt operationalization of the IIM-A.

The Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to UNOG

In his closing remarks, Ambassador Andisha called call upon the international community to ensure full political, technical and financial support for the IIM-A so that violations are documented and preserved and perpetrators are held accountable; sustain and expand humanitarian and health funding in a manner that ensures direct, safe and equitable access for women, girls and marginalised communities, as well as prevent further collapse of essential services; and maintain the international engagement that prioritises the restoration of fundamental human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls to education, mobility, participation, and access to healthcare.

VI. Afghanistan's Engagement with Thematic Special Procedures

During the 61st Session of the Human Rights Council, Afghanistan actively engaged in thematic discussions and interactive dialogues, highlighting the country's deepening human rights crisis under the de facto authorities and calling for urgent international accountability. Across all interventions, Afghanistan reiterated the need for tangible global support for the people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls, who continue to face systematic persecution.

During the 61st Session of the Human Rights Council, the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan engaged across several interactive dialogues, general debates and side events, drawing attention to the continued deterioration of human rights in Afghanistan while situating these developments within a broader global and multilateral context.

Across its interventions, the Mission maintained a consistent focus on the systemic nature of violations under the de facto authorities; the disproportionate impact on women and girls; and the urgent need for accountability, inclusive governance, and sustained international engagement.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUES

Interactive Dialogue with the SR on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Afghanistan expressed support for the survivor-led Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and stressed that it helps reveal the deeply gendered and systematic nature of torture in Afghanistan. Afghanistan condemned the Taliban's widespread use of torture, arbitrary detention, intimidation, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, coerced confessions, and denial of legal safeguards, particularly against women and girls, former officials, journalists, human rights defenders, minorities, and other marginalised groups. Afghanistan warned that the new so-called criminal code increases the risk of torture by prioritising confession and testimony as the main basis for guilt, undermining due process and disproportionately harming women and girls, and called for secure, meaningful, and gender-responsive consultation with victims and survivors inside Afghanistan and in exile.





Interactive Dialogue with the SR on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Afghanistan expressed serious concern regarding the situation of freedom of religion or belief, noting that religious life is increasingly governed through a centralised and coercive system that enforces a single interpretation while marginalising others. The statement highlighted the vulnerability of religious and ethnic minority communities, including Hazara Shia, Ismaili, Sufi, Sikh, Hindu and Christian groups, who face discrimination, insecurity, and reported attacks. Afghanistan further noted that many non-Sunni groups are compelled to practise their faith discreetly due to fear of reprisals, forced conversion, or violence. Reference was made to the so-called criminal code and the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV) framework, which enable the enforcement of restrictive interpretations of morality and expose individuals to arbitrary detention and punishment without due process.

The Mission observed that restrictions on freedom of religion or belief form part of broader structures of control that reinforce gender inequality, social exclusion, and the shrinking of civic space. The intervention concluded by inviting the Special Rapporteur to reflect on practical measures to strengthen safeguards, including ensuring inclusive participation in religious life for women and girls.

Interactive Dialogue with the SR on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders

In her last address to the Council, Madame Special Rapporteur Ms. Mary Lawlor presented a report that highlighted, among other issues, the situation of human rights defenders in Afghanistan. She drew particular attention to the challenges faced by women-led, non-governmental organizations, underscoring the conditions of gender apartheid under which they operate. She noted that, especially in the wake of funding cuts, these organizations are working under severe psychological pressure, driven by deprivation, violence, discrimination, and ongoing social crisis.

The Permanent Mission of Afghanistan welcomed Ms. Lawlor's report on human rights defenders while expressing concern that global budget reductions are undermining the work of defenders and the broader human rights ecosystem. It highlighted that, in Afghanistan, Taliban policies continue to persecute human rights defenders, particularly women-led NGOs, and that the systematic portrayal of defenders as collaborators with foreign entities further obstructs their work and responsibilities. The Mission stressed that defending human rights is a response to serious injustice rather than a choice, urged the international community to provide unconditional support and protection to defenders, and called for international human rights mechanisms to remain meaningful platforms for advancing their work, while commending the Special Rapporteur's continued advocacy for defenders in Afghanistan and beyond.

Interactive Dialogue with the SR on Cultural Rights

Afghanistan welcomed the Special Rapporteur's focus on cultural rights in nature conservation and stressed that the country's natural heritage is inseparable from its cultural diversity. Afghanistan expressed concern that environmental governance has become increasingly



centralized under the de facto authorities, with decisions on land and natural resources made without meaningful consultation with affected communities. Afghanistan condemned illegal gold mining activities along the Afghanistan–Tajikistan border, reportedly supported by the Taliban, for endangering local communities. Afghanistan highlighted that ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, and women are disproportionately affected by exclusion from environmental decision-making, and stressed that sustainable conservation requires inclusive participation, non-discrimination, and respect for cultural practices in line with international human rights obligations.

Interactive Dialogue with the SR on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Afghanistan welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur and drew attention to the situation of persons with disabilities, noting that Afghanistan has one of the largest populations of persons with disabilities globally, largely as a consequence of decades of armed conflict and the continued presence of explosive remnants of war. The statement highlighted that, despite Afghanistan's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, significant barriers persist in the enjoyment of rights. The Mission noted that restrictions on employment and economic participation have had a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities, particularly in light of broader limitations affecting access to livelihoods.

Afghanistan raised concerns regarding access to healthcare and rehabilitation services, which remain heavily reliant on non-governmental organisations operating under financial constraints. The limited availability of services, particularly in rural areas, continues to affect access to essential support, including physical and mental rehabilitation. The intervention further emphasised the heightened vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities, who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that limit their participation in public and social life. Afghanistan also noted the lack of reliable data on persons with disabilities, underscoring the importance of strengthening data collection systems to inform targeted responses. The Mission called for continued international support to ensure the provision of essential services and to address the needs of persons with disabilities across the country.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Enjoyment of a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment

Afghanistan welcomed the Special Rapporteur's report and highlighted the close relationship between environmental protection and human security. The statement noted that Afghanistan remains among the countries most vulnerable to climate change and is facing increasingly severe environmental pressures, including prolonged drought, declining precipitation and worsening water scarcity. These conditions were described as contributing to growing challenges in access to water, sanitation and safe drinking water, with direct implications for public health and living conditions. The Mission also raised concerns regarding unregulated resource extraction, including reported gold mining activities, which poses risks to local communities and the environment.

The intervention noted that these impacts are not evenly distributed. Women and girls, who are often responsible for water collection, face disproportionate burdens, while restrictions on their



participation in public life exclude them from decision-making processes related to water management and environmental planning. Afghanistan stressed that environmental stability, water security, and public health are closely interconnected and underscored the importance of transparency, inclusive governance, and meaningful participation in addressing environmental challenges in line with international human rights obligations.

Interactive Dialogue with the SR on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children

Afghanistan's statement highlighted that the ongoing and deeply concerning sale, sexual exploitation, and abuse of children in Afghanistan is driven by socio-economic hardship, institutional collapse, and weakened protection systems. Harmful practices such as early marriage, often used by financially struggling families and bacha bazi, expose young girls and boys to abuse and sexual violence. The situation is further worsened by stigma, fear, repression, and a failing justice system, which together allow these abuses to continue with impunity and increasingly resemble conditions of systemic exploitation akin to slavery.

Interactive Dialogue with the SRSG on Violence against Children

Afghanistan welcomed the Special Representative's annual report, particularly its focus on child-sensitive reporting mechanisms and youth-led initiatives, while expressing grave concern over the recent killing and injury of children due to escalating hostilities with Pakistan. The statement highlighted the severe and distinct vulnerabilities faced by children in Afghanistan: girls are disproportionately affected by early and forced marriage, domestic abuse, and sexual violence, exacerbated by the ban on education, while boys face risks including recruitment into armed conflict and exploitation. Both girls and boys are exposed to hazardous labour and violence in the home. Afghanistan further warned that the current legal framework, including provisions in the so-called criminal code that tolerate corporal punishment unless severe injury occurs, entrenches discrimination and increases the risk of gender-based violence and denial of justice. The dismantling of protective institutions by the de facto authorities risks perpetuating cycles of abuse and impunity, underscoring the urgent need to integrate a child-rights perspective and engage children and youth-led initiatives in the operationalization of the IIM-A.

Interactive Dialogue with the SRSG for Children and Armed conflict

Afghanistan thanked the Special Representative and expressed deep concern over ongoing grave violations against children, particularly the denial of humanitarian access, which is leaving many children without healthcare, education, protection, and life-saving assistance. Afghanistan highlighted that restrictions on humanitarian operations, including limits on the movement of female national staff, are worsening the situation, welcomed UNAMA's efforts to demilitarize schools and reintegrate children formerly associated with armed groups, and raised concern over recent killings and injuries of children in escalating hostilities, calling for sustained international attention to protection, humanitarian access, and accountability.



Interactive Dialogue with the SR on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism

Afghanistan thanked the Special Rapporteur and stressed that counterterrorism must be narrowly and precisely defined, warning that in Afghanistan broadly worded laws and edicts are being used in the name of security and public order to justify arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, censorship, surveillance, restrictions on public life and services, and the exclusion of women and girls. Afghanistan highlighted the lack of rule-of-law safeguards, the vulnerability of journalists, civil society, minorities, and civilians to coercive enforcement, the impact of restrictions on women in UN operations, and expressed concern over recent cross-border hostilities that killed civilians, including children and women, and displaced thousands beyond humanitarian reach.

Interactive Dialogue with the SR on the SR on the Right to Privacy

Afghanistan welcomed the Special Rapporteur's report on the right to privacy, while warning that this right has sharply deteriorated under Taliban rule. The statement highlighted the widespread use of surveillance of communications and social media to suppress dissent and target women, journalists, human rights defenders, and minorities, leaving individuals highly vulnerable to arbitrary interference with their personal data. It stressed that online spaces, once critical for activism and visibility, particularly for women, now expose users to reprisals and further marginalization. Citing concerns raised by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Afghanistan underscored that mass surveillance places individuals and their families at risk of persecution and called for stronger safeguards, enhanced monitoring of digital surveillance, and protections for activists of Afghanistan, including those abroad.

Interactive Dialogue with the SR on Minority Issues

Afghanistan welcomed the Special Rapporteur's report and emphasized its strong relevance to the situation in the country, particularly regarding systemic patterns of discrimination and marginalization faced by minorities. The statement highlighted the continued targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, especially Hazara and Shia communities, under Taliban rule, including violence, forced displacement, and exclusion from public life. Afghanistan expressed particular concern over the PVPV law, which entrenches intolerance and restricts pluralism, undermining peaceful coexistence and Afghanistan's human rights obligations. Stressing that stability and justice cannot be achieved while minorities are persecuted or silenced, Afghanistan called on the de facto authorities to repeal discriminatory measures and ensure the protection and equal rights of all individuals.



PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND ANNUAL DEBATES/MEETINGS

Annual Full-Day Meeting on the Rights of the Child

Panel 1: Afghanistan welcomed the panel's focus on children in armed conflict and warned that under Taliban rule, children face growing risks from violence, exploitation, child labour, child marriage, recruitment into armed groups, and conflict-related deaths. Afghanistan condemned the reported recruitment of child soldiers and militarization of schools; stressed that girls are especially vulnerable to forced marriage, abuse, and sexual violence; and expressed concern over recent Taliban-Pakistan violence affecting civilians, especially children and women.

Panel 2: Afghanistan welcomed the panel's focus on recovery and reintegration for children affected by armed conflict and stressed that, since 2021, children from Afghanistan have faced violence, recruitment, displacement, and severe psychological trauma. Afghanistan welcomed the new IIM-A; called for children's participation in accountability processes to be meaningful, ethical, and trauma-informed; and urged long-term, gender- and age-sensitive support, including psychosocial care, education, and community-based reintegration, while stressing that children associated with armed groups must be treated primarily as victims.

Item 4: Joint Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Fact-finding Mission on Iran

Afghanistan addressed the Joint Dialogue with a focus on recent developments related to escalating hostilities and their human impact. The statement expressed deep concern regarding acts of aggression and their consequences, including civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure such as schools and medical facilities. The Mission emphasised that disputes between States must be resolved through meaningful negotiation and peaceful dialogue, in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter. It reiterated that the use of force cannot provide a sustainable solution to political disagreements.

Afghanistan further stressed the importance of full respect for international humanitarian law, highlighting the obligation to protect civilians and civilian objects at all times. The statement underlined that the suffering of civilians must remain central to international responses and must not be overshadowed by political considerations. The intervention also acknowledged broader human rights concerns outlined in the report, including restrictions on fundamental freedoms and the vulnerability of women, minorities, and nationals of Afghanistan in Iran. It concluded with a call for restraint, accountability, and renewed commitment to diplomacy.

GENERAL DEBATES

Item 2 General Debate: Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Afghanistan's statement highlighted sweeping restrictions on education, employment, movement, and access to justice, as well as the newly imposed criminal code, which normalizes



violence by limiting accountability for gender-based abuse and removing key fair trial guarantees such as access to counsel and the right to silence, while permitting corporal punishment and discriminatory practices. Afghanistan stressed that these measures are not in conformity with Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law, including CEDAW, the ICCPR, the Convention against Torture, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Against the backdrop of escalating cross-border hostilities further worsening the humanitarian situation, Afghanistan called on Member States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to denounce the so-called criminal code and condemn the violence.

Item 3 General Debate: Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development

In its statement under Item 3, Afghanistan provided a human-centred account of the evolving situation in the country, emphasising the cumulative impact of sustained restrictions on the daily lives of the population. The intervention noted that more than four years after the Taliban's return to power, opportunities for education, employment and participation in public life have been progressively reduced. Emphasis was placed on the situation of women and girls, who continue to face systematic exclusion from public life. The statement highlighted that this exclusion not only constitutes a violation of fundamental rights but also carries long-term consequences for the future of the society of Afghanistan.

The Mission also drew attention to the broader context of humanitarian and environmental pressures, including economic hardship, drought and water scarcity, which are increasing vulnerability across communities. Ethnic and religious minorities were identified as facing heightened risks, including discrimination and restrictions on cultural and religious expression. The statement reaffirmed the importance of the work of the Special Rapporteur and United Nations mechanisms in ensuring that the realities faced by the people of Afghanistan continue to be documented and brought to the attention of the international community.

Item 4 General Debate: Human Rights Situations that Require the Council's Attention

Afghanistan expressed concern about the global rise in conflicts and called on all UN Member States to uphold the principles of the UN Charter. Afghanistan further pointed to widespread human rights violations under Taliban rule, compounded by escalating cross-border strikes, increasing risks to civilians. Emphasizing the urgency, Afghanistan called for sustained international attention and support for new monitoring mechanisms to document and preserve evidence of international crimes. It urged Member States to provide adequate funding to ensure accountability. During the General Debate, several countries including Australia, Austria, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom called for renewed commitment to protecting the people of Afghanistan, especially for women and girls enduring human rights violations in the country.



Item 5 General Debate: Human Rights Bodies and Mechanisms

Afghanistan highlighted the deepening human rights crisis in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, marked by the dismantling of legal and institutional systems and the expansion of repression, including arbitrary detention, torture, surveillance, and widespread restrictions on fundamental freedoms. Afghanistan underscored the severe impact on vulnerable groups: women and girls remain excluded from education, employment, and public life; children face deprivation and risks of exploitation; and minorities, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and those in poverty are subject to discrimination and persecution. The statement also strongly condemned recent Pakistani airstrikes in Afghanistan, including a deadly attack in Kabul on 16 March 2026, raising serious concerns under international humanitarian law, particularly regarding the protection of civilians. Against the backdrop of a worsening humanitarian crisis, Afghanistan called for sustained international scrutiny and urged the IIM-A and Member States to ensure continued monitoring, documentation, and adequate resourcing to support accountability efforts.

Item 7 General Debate: Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories

Afghanistan expressed support for the rights of the Palestinian people and condemned ongoing human rights violations against them, including in East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan. Afghanistan highlighted the grave consequences of illegal occupation, settler violence, and displacement, stressing that these undermine Palestinians' right to self-determination and violate their dignity. Afghanistan urged member states to uphold human dignity and freedom, ensure accountability, and stand firmly against violations of international law.

Item 8 General Debate: Follow-up to and Implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Afghanistan reaffirmed its commitment to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and its principles, including the universal, indivisible, and interdependent nature of all human rights. The statement situated this commitment within a broader global context marked by increasing instability and conflict, noting the continued human cost of violence, including civilian casualties and damage to essential infrastructure. In this context, Afghanistan emphasised the importance of upholding international law, including international humanitarian law and ensuring the protection of civilians.

The Mission also raised concern regarding developments that risk weakening the multilateral system, including reductions in humanitarian and development funding and growing pressures on international institutions. Afghanistan noted that these trends have direct consequences for vulnerable populations and undermine collective efforts to promote and protect human rights. Reflecting on the situation in Afghanistan, the statement highlighted that the denial of fundamental rights, particularly for women and girls, illustrates the consequences of failing to



uphold the principles enshrined in the Vienna Declaration. The intervention concluded by emphasising the importance of strengthened multilateral cooperation, sustained support for international mechanisms and renewed commitment to translating human rights principles into concrete action.

SECRETARY-GENERAL ORAL UPDATE ON AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan welcomed the Assistant Secretary-General's update and the progress made in operationalizing the IIM-A, commending the Secretariat and OHCHR for advancing the Terms of Reference through inclusive consultations despite challenging financial and political conditions.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ilze Brands Kehris Presentation of the Secretary-General's Oral Update on Afghanistan

Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ilze Brands Kehris updated the Human Rights Council on the operationalization of the Independent Investigative Mechanism on Afghanistan on behalf of the Secretary General. The mechanism was established in October 2025 to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyse evidence of international crimes and other serious violations of international law. OHCHR has played a central role in preparing the Mechanism, including leading consultations that informed the drafting of its Terms of Reference, which are currently under consideration by the Secretary-General. These consultations involved the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, investigative mechanisms on Syria and Myanmar, UN Women, international NGOs, and civil society organizations from Afghanistan. The responses emphasized a gender- and age-sensitive, victim- and survivor-centred approach, alongside strong safeguards on confidentiality, data protection, secure reporting channels, and cooperation with civil society. The Terms of Reference also define the Mechanism's scope of work and guiding principles, while preserving flexibility for it to determine its investigative priorities and methodologies.

Although the General Assembly approved the Mechanism's 2026 budget in December 2025, only 20 percent of the allocated funds, USD 337,300, has been released so far, creating significant liquidity constraints and requiring phased implementation. Initial recruitment will prioritize leadership and core technical staff, including investigators, legal analysts, and evidence-management specialists, to establish investigative methodologies and secure documentation systems. Preparations are also well advanced for a dedicated Trust Fund to receive voluntary contributions from Member States, which will be essential for enabling the Mechanism to operate at the scale required by its mandate. Civil society organizations from Afghanistan expressed strong support and readiness to engage during consultations, reflecting high expectations for the Mechanism. OHCHR confirmed it will continue working with the UN Secretariat to support its rapid operationalization.

Permanent Mission of Afghanistan Remarks

The Mission described the establishment of the mechanism as a critical step toward addressing entrenched impunity and restoring hope for accountability. However, the Permanent Missions stressed that the Mechanism's credibility will depend on its ability to operate at the scale required by its mandate, which has no temporal limitation and must comprehensively document crimes across time, actors, and structures. The Mission raised concerns about liquidity constraints, with a call for the rapid operationalization of the Trust Fund and increased voluntary contributions, while emphasizing that funding gaps must not sideline sexual and gender-based crimes or other systematically overlooked violations.

Afghanistan highlighted that staffing will be critical to the Mechanism's effectiveness, calling for leadership with proven expertise in international crimes, including gender persecution, and for personnel with linguistic (Dari/Pashto) and contextual knowledge to ensure accurate and nuanced documentation. Afghanistan also stressed that accountability efforts must be informed by victims' and survivors' experiences, requiring early and sustained consultation, as well as secure and practical engagement with civil society actors both inside Afghanistan and in exile, many of whom operate under serious risk. Concluding, Afghanistan emphasized that the testimonies and efforts of women, survivors, and civil society must translate into tangible justice outcomes, urging Member States to provide full support to the Mechanism.





VII. HRC61 Side Events on Afghanistan

Human Rights in Afghanistan's People's Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan

During the 61st Session, the Mission attended a side event dedicated to the human rights situation in Afghanistan, bringing together United Nations experts, Member States, and civil society representatives to assess current developments and ongoing challenges. The discussion reflected a shared concern regarding the continued deterioration of human rights under the de facto authorities, with particular emphasis on the systematic restrictions imposed on women and girls. Participants noted that these measures form part of a broader framework of policies that limit access to education, employment and participation in public life.

Sayed Abdullah Ahmadi, a civil society advocate, supported accountability and dignity for women of Afghanistan, calling for initiatives that ensure their voices are heard in justice processes. Haroon Mutasem of the Peoples' Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan explained that the tribunal was created to address gaps where formal accountability mechanisms are unable or unwilling to act, operating in parallel with international legal pathways. He emphasized that it is a people-led and people-owned process designed to document testimony, amplify women's voices, and shape international conscience, while not creating false expectations due to its non-binding nature.

Dr. Banefsha Yaqoobi, a human rights advocate from Afghanistan, outlined the tribunal's evidentiary basis, including survivor testimonies, official decrees, and human rights reports. She said the evidence shows widespread and systematic gender persecution, including exclusion, enforced fear, and intersectional harms. Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, stressed the importance of centring survivors in justice processes. He said initiatives led by the people of Afghanistan strengthen accountability for gender persecution and clarify responsibility for crimes committed under the de facto authorities.

Mahmooda Sonia Eqbal of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute highlighted the importance of preserving and legally analysing evidence from the tribunal. She urged accountability mechanisms, including ICC-related processes, to use existing civil society findings rather than duplicating investigative work. Maryam Safi, co-organizer of the Peoples' Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan, described the tribunal as a response to institutional silence and delays in formal justice mechanisms. She explained that hearings in Madrid in October 2025 included testimony from 24 witnesses and extensive written and audio submissions, all showing consistent patterns of institutionalized repression, and stressed that the Taliban's refusal to respond reinforced the tribunal's function as a truth-bearing and accountability-building mechanism that transforms testimony into advocacy tools at national, regional, and international levels.

Operationalising the International Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan (IIM-A)

This side event on Afghanistan, hosted by MADRE Inc. on 27 February 2026, focused on the



newly established IIM-A, particularly on ensuring it is survivor- and victim-centred. Moderated by Artemis Akbary of the Gender Persecution Working Group, the event brought together experts from the OHCHR Human Rights Inquiries Branch, Human Rights Watch, the Hamra Network, and HRD+, alongside Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett to discuss practical recommendations and how the mechanism can address gaps in documentation and accountability. Panellists stressed that monitoring and reporting alone are insufficient, and the IIM-A is essential for preserving evidence, preparing for future prosecutions, amplifying women's voices, and maintaining international attention on abuses, including gender-based crimes and violations against children.

Beatriz Balbin of OHCHR Human Rights Inquiries Branch explained that while the IIM-A will be fully independent, OHCHR is supporting its operationalization, including drafting terms of reference, consulting with legal offices and civil society, and incorporating lessons from other accountability mechanisms. The mechanism will adopt a survivor- and gender-centred approach, with strict confidentiality and data protection standards. Initial funding, only 20 percent of the approved 2026 budget, requires careful prioritization, phased implementation, and the creation of a trust fund for donor contributions.

Dr. Huma Sayed emphasized the need for a survivor- and victim-centred approach that prioritizes gender-based violence and child-specific crimes. The mechanism must be inclusive and ensure meaningful representation across ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. She warned against creating hierarchies among victims or attempting to meet every individual expectation and instead called for trauma-informed approaches and child-friendly interviewing standards. She also stressed the importance of future accountability pathways, including the use of universal jurisdiction and models such as Syria, while ensuring comprehensive engagement with all victims without exclusion. Fareshta Abbasi called for a comprehensive mandate covering all crimes, perpetrators, and time periods, with no double standards. She highlighted gender persecution and crimes against humanity as central concerns, including ongoing documentation by the UN, civil society, and Human Rights Watch of abuses in Afghanistan. She stressed the need for strong gender expertise, close cooperation with CSOs, and reliance on existing documentation structures, noting Afghanistan's worsening gender rights situation and the outstanding ICC arrest warrants.

Sayed Hussain Anosh condemned the escalating conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan and highlighted the continued work of human rights defenders from Afghanistan despite severe constraints, including internet instability and electricity shortages. He warned against normalizing impunity and emphasized that isolation undermines accountability. He emphasized the importance of secure and accessible communication channels, direct financial support, training on documentation standards, structured dialogue, and protection from retaliation. He further stressed that sustained partnerships and technical support of local CSOs are essential for effectiveness. Dr. Timor Sharan of the Hamra Network stressed that the mechanism must engage a diverse range of civil society actors, both inside Afghanistan and in exile, through intersectional inclusion and careful mapping of civil society to avoid exacerbating existing challenges. He called for maximum openness and transparency, while ensuring confidentiality protections, earmarked funding for civil society engagement, and strong leadership with proven expertise in investigations and prosecutions of serious



international crimes. He further emphasized attention to gender-based persecution, sexual and gender-based violence, and intersecting forms of discrimination, along with demonstrated experience working with victims and civil society organizations.

Ensuring a Victim- and Survivor-Centered Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan: The Importance of Collaboration with Civil Society

The side event on “Ensuring a Victim and Survivor-Centered Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan” held on 27 February 2026 focused on the importance of collaboration with civil society in designing and operationalizing an effective investigative mechanism. The event was organized by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan, the Center for Dialogue and Progress – Geneva (CDP-G), and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), with cosponsorship from the Permanent Missions of Austria, Belgium, Iceland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Spain, and the Center for Human Rights Advocacy (CHRA). Opening remarks by Ambassador Andisha expressed condolences to victims, called for cessation of violence, and emphasized the role of a group of experts in advising on the mechanism’s operationalization. Lessons learned from Syria and Myanmar were underscored as a foundation for building a mechanism that is inclusive, accountable, and centered on victims and survivors.

Panellists emphasized the practicalities of implementing such a mechanism. Ms. Jarvis from IIM-Syria highlighted the peace-justice nexus and the importance of victim-centered approaches, stressing outreach beyond the Lausanne platform to reach a broader spectrum of civil society organizations (CSOs) and underrepresented regions. Ms. Thembele Segoete noted the necessity of transparency with CSOs and voluntary engagement with witnesses, emphasizing adherence to established terms of reference with victims before formal engagement and regular consultations. Abdul Ghani, representing Syrian CSOs, highlighted years of prior documentation and the importance of formal data sharing, centring ordinary victims in reporting, and ensuring their well-being and access to resources. Dr. Huma Sayed underlined trauma-informed approaches and long-term sustainability, while the Center for Human Rights Advocacy and OHCHR discussed timelines, trust fund arrangements, and the confidential selection process for the mechanism’s leadership.

The event also featured a short video from victims that reinforced principles of informed consent, psychological support, and attention to gender-based violence. Panellists emphasized intentional inclusion, transparency, and voluntary cooperation in engaging witnesses. Dr. Sayed noted the importance of advocacy and ongoing documentation by diaspora and civil society actors, while Ms. Jarvis and Ms. Segoete stressed the need for a gender-inclusive and participatory design. Overall, the discussion highlighted the necessity of building a mechanism that is survivor-centered, systematically engaged with CSOs, and capable of ensuring accountability while fostering long-term justice and peace in Afghanistan.



Putting Child-Rights Expertise at the Heart of Accountability Mechanisms

This event was co-hosted by OHCHR with the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the UN & other International Organizations in Geneva and the Permanent Mission of Uruguay, and co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations, the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UN Women, Justice Rapid Response, and the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

This side event underscored the need to systematically integrate child rights into international accountability efforts. Participants stressed that, despite established frameworks such as the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) mandate and the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, a lack of political will remains the primary barrier to addressing violations against children. Speakers highlighted the Human Rights Council's key role in embedding dedicated child rights expertise within investigative mandates, including Commissions of Inquiry and Fact-Finding Missions, and emphasized that such integration must be treated as a structural and non-negotiable component across contexts, including Afghanistan.

Discussions focused on ensuring that accountability mechanisms are child-sensitive, guaranteeing effective investigations, access to justice, and remedies while enabling the safe and meaningful participation of children. Interventions emphasized that children are rights-holders whose perspectives are essential to fully documenting violations. Testimonies illustrated the human impact of conflict and the importance of recognition, while experts called for systematic documentation, disaggregated data, and specialized expertise from the outset. Evidence from contexts such as Syria demonstrated that without a child-centered approach, critical patterns of violations including recruitment, detention, and sexual violence remain underreported or inadequately addressed.

Ambassador Andisha highlighted the particular relevance of these discussions for Afghanistan, stressing the importance of close cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the urgent need to protect the right to education for both girls and boys under Taliban rule. He emphasized that advancing accountability, including through the operationalization of the IIM-A, will require significant political commitment, technical capacity, and sustained advocacy. Crucially, he underscored that placing children's rights at the center of accountability mechanisms must not be treated as a secondary or niche issue, but as a central pillar of international efforts to ensure justice and protection.



VIII. Relevance to Advocacy in Afghanistan

The 61st Session reinforced the continued relevance of Afghanistan within the Human Rights Council's agenda and highlighted the importance of sustained international engagement across thematic and country-specific discussions. The Mission's interventions demonstrated a consistent effort to link developments in Afghanistan to broader international legal frameworks, including international humanitarian law and the Vienna Declaration. This approach strengthens ongoing advocacy by situating Afghanistan's human rights situation within shared international responsibilities. At the same time, the session underscored persistent challenges, including resource constraints affecting UN mechanisms, reduced humanitarian funding, and the need for stronger coordination among Member States. These dynamics highlight the importance of maintaining momentum toward accountability and ensuring that the rights and voices of the people of Afghanistan remain central to international efforts.

Women's and girls' rights remain the central advocacy priority.

The Taliban's policies amount to a systematic regime of exclusion from education, employment, health care, movement, and public life, making gender oppression the defining human rights issue in Afghanistan.

Accountability advocacy should focus on fully operationalizing the IIM-A.

Repeated calls across statements and side events stressed that the IIM-A needs sustained political, technical, and financial support to document crimes and prepare pathways to justice.

Gender persecution and the codification of gender apartheid are increasingly recognized internationally.

This gives advocacy a strong legal and political frame for pushing states, UN mechanisms, and accountability actors to treat violations against women and girls of Afghanistan as serious international crimes.

The new Taliban legal framework and Afghanistan's international obligation.

The so-called criminal procedure code and the PVPV framework institutionalize discrimination, weaken due process, normalize violence against women and children, and contradict Afghanistan's obligations under CEDAW, ICCPR, CAT, and CRC.

Child rights need to be mainstreamed in all advocacy and accountability work.

Children in Afghanistan face child marriage, recruitment, sexual exploitation, violence, and denial of education. Speakers stressed that child-sensitive documentation and child participation must be built into the IIM-A from the outset.

Minority protection is a major advocacy entry point.

Hazara, Shia, and other ethnic and religious minorities face discrimination, forced displacement, insecurity, and exclusion, making minority rights an essential part of advocacy on accountability and non-discrimination.



Civic space, media freedom, and digital surveillance require stronger attention.

Arbitrary detention, censorship, telecommunications shutdowns, and surveillance of journalists, defenders, and activists show that advocacy must also address shrinking civic space and protection for voices of Afghanistan inside and outside the country.

Humanitarian advocacy cannot be separated from human rights advocacy.

The report shows that aid cuts, forced returns, food insecurity, and collapsing health services are interacting with Taliban repression, especially harming women, girls, returnees, and marginalized communities.

Civil society and survivor engagement are critical to credible advocacy.

Across the side events and statements, women, survivors, youth, and civil society from Afghanistan were presented not just as beneficiaries but as essential partners whose testimonies, priorities, and protection must shape accountability efforts.

Sustained multilateral pressure is necessary to keep Afghanistan on the agenda and prevent the normalisation of violence against Afghanistan's women and girls.

The Human Rights Council remains one of the key platforms for advocacy, coalition-building, and normative pressure, so continued engagement with Member States, Special Procedures, OHCHR, and cross-regional allies is essential.



IX. Useful Links & Resources

UN Web TV

Full video recordings of all Council meetings, statements, and side events
<https://webtv.un.org/en>

UN Human Rights Council: 61st Session Overview

Official session page with all documents, agendas, resolutions, and daily updates
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session60/regular-session>

HRC Extranet

For final versions of all statements, draft resolutions, and procedural updates
<https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/Pages/default.aspx>

Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan

Mandate information, past and current reports
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-afghanistan>

For further details or access to additional documents, please contact the Permanent Mission or consult the UN Human Rights Council Extranet.



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