

RENMUN VII

Peace in Permanence



March 5-6, 2022

Chair Report

Chair Introduction

Hi everyone! My name is Shraddha Rajesh and I am currently a Year 12 student at Renaissance College Hong Kong. Women's rights and gender equality are issues that are extremely close to my heart and the reason I applied to chair this committee.

Hi delegates! My name is Charmaine Wu and I will be serving you as your Deputy Chair for CSW this year. I am currently a Form 4/Year 11 student studying at Diocesan Girls' School and I've been involved in MUN for three years now.

Although CSW is a beginners' council, we hope that novice delegates are willing to step out of their comfort zones in discussing with delegates and sparking debates during the conference. Delegates are expected to read through the chair reports and conduct extensive research based on their country's stance to better prepare the two topics. We look forward to witnessing 2 full days of engaging debates and creative solutions, and wish you all the best of luck during your preparation! Should you have any enquiries about the topic or procedures, feel free to reach out to either of us!

Warm regards,

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Addressing the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

Lasting over two decades, the war in Afghanistan, also known as the Afghan-Taliban Conflict, resulted in Afghan women and girls facing gender-based discrimination and violence, especially in areas under Taliban control, where their rights were violated with impunity. Violent “punishments” were meted out for perceived transgressions of the armed group’s interpretation of Islamic law.

The country not only ranks among the least favourable on the Gender Inequality Index, but the literacy rate for women is also among the lowest in the world. Violence against women and girls is rife and the majority are banned from going to work and receiving proper education.

In August 2021, the Taliban militant group seized Afghanistan, leading to the fall of the internationally recognised government, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. In the 1990s, the Taliban was notorious for its strict interpretation of Islamic law that fostered gender-based discrimination and the brutal treatment of women and girls in the country. However, the Taliban group has recently promised to respect women’s rights to work and education, albeit within an Islamic framework that they have not yet defined.

Uncertainty prevails as to what kind of government the Taliban will establish, in particular, their treatment of women and girls. This is a critical question for both international players currently holding Afghanistan’s reserves and the aid agencies pausing projects and funding. Not only will this lead to another humanitarian catastrophe, but women and girls will only be placed in a more difficult and dire position than before. How will foreign powers play a role in negotiating with the Taliban on securing women’s rights? Is the Taliban making promises to protect women’s rights only to be recognised by the international community? What will the future of Afghan women look like under Taliban’s takeover?

Key Terms

Term	Definition
The Taliban	a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist political movement and military organization in Afghanistan. It is one of the entities claiming to be the legitimate government of Afghanistan, alongside the internationally recognized Islamic Republic of Afghanistan which has recently fallen in August 2021. It has been internationally

	condemned for its harsh Islamic rule in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, resulting in the brutal treatment of women and girls in particular. The Taliban takeover of the country in late August 2021 could potentially turn Afghanistan into a terrorist safe haven as the group is believed to maintain ties with al-Qaeda.
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	An internationally recognised government was established in late 2001 after the United States invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban group. It helped secure women's rights and improved the overall situation for Afghan women during the 2000s, however, those living in rural parts of the country still faced severe discrimination and human rights violations. In August 2021, the government fell with the Afghan president Ashraf Ghani fleeing the country.
<i>Sharia</i> or Islamic Law	A religious law that forms part of the Islamic tradition. It remains controversial as to whether Islamic criminal law is compatible with universal human rights.
Forced marriages	A kind of marriage that takes place without the consent of one or both people in the marriage or against one's will.
Honour killings	The murder of an individual, who can be an outsider or a member of a family, by someone who sees the individual as dishonouring the family. In Afghanistan, the vast majority of cases involve murders of women for eloping with men and committing adultery, and most are committed with impunity.
De facto leader	One who has assumed authority of a country or region regardless of whether by lawful or legitimate means.

Background Information

Women in Afghanistan have been disproportionately affected by decades of economic and political instability. To understand the reason for Afghan women and girls specifically to face such barriers for their rights to be safeguarded, a basic background knowledge of the two-decade-long Afghan-Taliban conflict will help answer the question.

Taliban's previous strict Islamic rule

In the period before the Soviet occupation and the subsequent years of war, women in Afghanistan used to possess both rights to educational opportunities and access to career opportunities. With the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1979 and the subsequent rise of the Mujahideen, which led to the rise of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in the early 1990s, conditions worsened not only for the nation but for women in particular who were coerced back into traditional gender roles under Islamic rule. This culture of discrimination was further exacerbated by the rise of the Taliban, in which women and girls, in particular, were subjected to continuous discrimination, and severe restrictions in access to education, health care and employment. These restrictions were, and continue to be, enacted through several methods, including the forced marriage of women and girls and the denial of basic education to young girls. Occurrences of honour killings are widespread, notably in rural areas, and often go unreported due to cultural factors.

Taliban's fall in 2001 and improvement of the situation for women

In 2001, however, the UN authorized the United States to overthrow the Taliban and hopes were renewed for a positive reemergence of equal rights for women. In the 2000s, the new government attempted to bring into realization of these goals through the drafting and initiation of various resolutions and action plans to empower the women of Afghanistan, one of which is the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2003. However, Gender Concerns International and other organizations have remarked that in spite of the government's good intentions, the implementation of the CEDAW policies leave much to be desired given that the Taliban began to regain its influence in several Afghan regions. Moreover, because of the ongoing Afghan-Taliban Conflict, there is an acute lack of both freedom and support for women's organizations to operate effectively, leading to an obvious deterioration of women's rights in the country.

Rise of the Taliban and its total control in August 2021

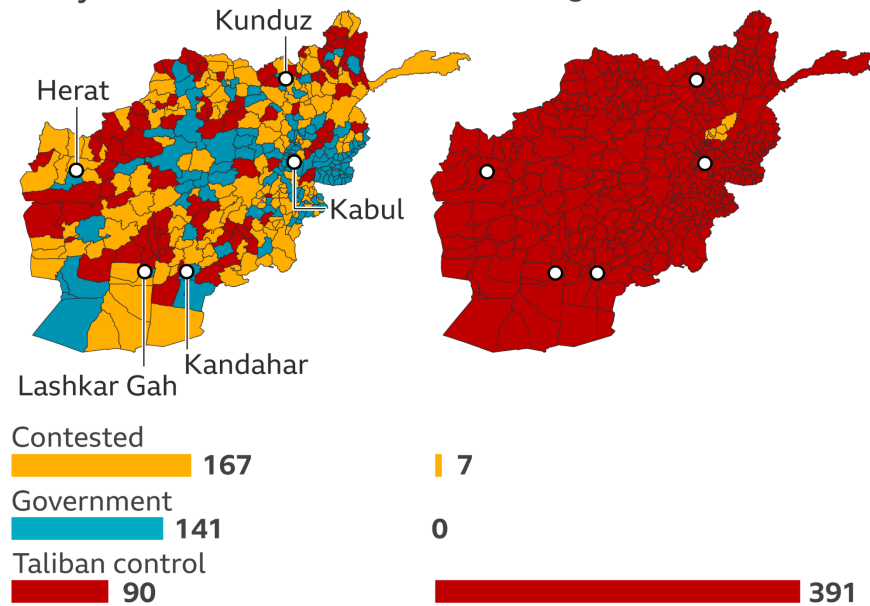
To further exacerbate the status quo, in the summer of 2021, the Taliban ramped up attacks, threatening government-controlled urban areas and seizing several border crossings. In August, the Taliban quickly captured more than ten provincial capitals, including Kabul, one of the major urban areas under government control. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, leading to the collapse of the Afghan government. The speed of the Afghan government's collapse not only worsened an already dire humanitarian crisis, but the goals of safeguarding Afghan women rights also became more uncertain and hopeless than ever before.

Taliban now control nearly all of the country

Militants made huge gains in just over a month of fighting

9 July

16 August



*Contested is where fighting is ongoing or strong Taliban presence

Source: BBC Research. Districts according to 2005 government boundaries



Potential Clashes

Taliban's previous enforcement of their interpretation of Islamic law

Afghanistan possesses a cultural legacy of conservatism characterized by a strong division of gender roles. Political, economic, and social decision-making has been traditionally male-dominated. In the latter part of the 20th century, women were making steps forward, being granted the right to both employment and education. The Taliban's rise to power in 1996, however, reversed much of this progress and exacerbated the plight of Afghan women.

Education: The Taliban prevented girls and women from attending school, banned women from working jobs except for healthcare, and required that women be accompanied by a male relative and wear a burqa at all times when in public. If women broke certain rules, they were publicly whipped or executed. The Taliban also dismantled Afghanistan's co-educational system, transforming many of its former state-run girls' schools into all-male institutions in 1996. Women's literacy rates across the country fell to some of the lowest in the world, 13 per cent in urban areas and three to four per cent in rural districts.

Employment: The Taliban also banned all women from working in public places, with employment in the health sector only limited to needy widows with no other means of support. Most widows were generally unskilled with no education and did not qualify for positions in this sector, forcing some into begging or prostitution.

Religious police: Most Afghan women quietly submitted to the Taliban's strictures in fear of the consequences often brutally enforced by the Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice. Religious police regularly beat women as punishment for a broad spectrum of violations: exposing ankles, being outside without a male relative, laughing loudly, wearing shoes that made noise when walking, or wearing the wrong type of burkha. These penalties were often meted out on the spot without a right to be heard or any due process.

In 2021 with the Taliban regaining total control under the collapse of the Afghan government, the group recently promised freedom of expression, women's rights and amnesty to officials who worked under the previous government of President Ashraf Ghani. A large number of secondary schools for girls are still not operational, though the Taliban has said it is working to open them. It remains unclear what the bounds specifically meant or how they differed from the strict interpretation of the law imposed by the Taliban militant group from 1996 to 2001, which has been internationally condemned. Scepticism, therefore, remains on the Taliban's promises and willingness to safeguard Afghan women's rights as de facto rulers of Afghanistan.

Taliban's decree on women's rights

On December 3 2021, the Taliban released a so-called 'decree in women's rights' under immense international pressure, which sets out the rules governing marriage and property for women, clearly stating a ban on forced marriage of women in Afghanistan and that widows have a share in their husbands' property. This is a clear move that is meant to address one of the criterias the international community considers a precondition to recognising the new government. The Taliban claims that it has also ordered Afghan courts to treat women fairly, especially widows seeking inheritance as next of kin, and asked government ministers to spread awareness of women's rights across the population.

However, it failed to include or mention women's access to education or work and was thus immediately panned by Afghan women and the international community. The decree also did not mention a minimum age for marriage, which previously was set at 16 years old, and did not detail how the new law would be implemented in a country where impoverished rural families often see marrying off their daughters as one of the few options available to make ends meet.

Some remain to believe that the Taliban was uninterested in upholding the basic freedoms for the millions of Afghan women and girls, yet it can still be seen as a bold step for the Taliban to come up with such a decree in comparison to its previous brutal Islamic rule of the nation. Nevertheless, whether the seemingly ambiguous decree would impact Afghan women's lives still remains a question for the international community when the basic rights mentioned are already enshrined under Islamic law.

Under-reported cases and widespread impunity

Violence against women and girls in Afghanistan remained chronically under-reported, with women often fearing reprisals and lacking confidence in the authorities if they came forward. According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), more than 100 cases of murder were reported during the year. Where these cases were reported, there was a persistent failure to investigate them. In some cases, victims of violence came under pressure from their communities or state officials to withdraw their complaints, or “mediation” was used to resolve complaints beyond the protection of the law. As a result, there was widespread impunity for the perpetrators of beatings, killings, torture and other ill-treatment, and corporal punishments.

Traditional beliefs and discriminatory customs

In Afghanistan, violence against women and girls can be seen as a by-product of traditional beliefs, discriminatory customs and mindsets with regards to gender norms in society, weak rule of law and decades of armed conflict with the Taliban. Traditional gender roles of women staying at home, and men outside of the household earning a living are firmly entrenched in Afghan society, particularly in rural communities. The lack of education and public awareness to alter these mindsets greatly affect the legislation and policy-making processes, and their interpretation by individuals and authorities.

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Involvement with the Issue
Afghanistan	Its previous government, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was supported by Western powers financially and militarily to push forward gender equality and safeguard women's rights. Recently, it collapsed under the Taliban's attack in Kabul. Afghanistan has also lost support from several major countries, for example, the withdrawal of troops from

	<p>the US, Germany and Canada. With Taliban being the de facto leader of the nation, its priority would be to adhere with their Islamic extremist beliefs, however, it also called on the international community to recognise its government's legitimacy by showing a certain degree of willingness in securing women's rights. It remains fairly open to negotiations and forming diplomatic relationships with countries that are neutral like China, Russia and Iran.</p> <p>*Take note that Afghanistan is currently represented at the UN by Ghulam Isaczai, an appointee of the former democratic government, which crumbled under the Taliban's advance. To allow engaging debates to take place, the chairs have deceived that the delegation of Afghanistan will be represented by the Taliban in this conference.</p>
The United States	<p>The United States has been playing a crucial role in aiding the Afghan security forces against the Taliban during the two-decade-long conflict. However, with the US withdrawing all its troops and consequently leading to the Taliban's takeover in August, the country froze \$9 billion USD in Afghan foreign reserves held in New York and the World Bank, making all central-bank assets the Afghan government have in the United States unavailable to the Taliban. With the Taliban facing an impending financial crunch as a result, the United States will play a vital role in pressuring the Taliban not only financially, but at a decision-making level as to how the Taliban will treat women and girls under their newly established government.</p>
Pakistan	<p>Pakistan, which neighbours Afghanistan, generally favored a Taliban victory in Afghanistan although Pakistan itself denies having any ties with the Taliban. It has been a major source of financial and logistical support for the Taliban. The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency has supported the Taliban from its inception with money, training, and weaponry. The ISI also maintains strong ties with the Pakistan-based Haqqani network, a militant group that</p>

	works closely with the Taliban.
The United Kingdom	The United Kingdom, one of the United States strongest allies, remains firm in demanding women's rights in Afghanistan. British officials have been holding talks with the Taliban in October this year covering various issues, one of which being the rights of women and girls.
Qatar	Qatar currently takes a neutral and balanced position and has longstanding ties with the Taliban. Its main interest is to cement its position as a regional mediator. It has previously facilitated intra-Afghan talks and allowed the Taliban to open an office in Doha for negotiations to take place.
UAE	Since the fall of Kabul in August 2021, the UAE has flown more than 250 tons of humanitarian aid into Afghanistan and has opened its airports to more than five thousand Afghan refugees. It has been actively assisting with evacuation and humanitarian efforts, and may play a crucial role in assisting more Afghan women and girls to be evacuated in the future under Taliban's rule.
China	Although the Chinese government is unlikely to stir up religious terrorism or support gender-based violence towards Afghan women, it holds a neutral stance and will seek to work with the Taliban as a mediator of the situation.

Possible Solutions

Although the situation at hand mostly concerns women and girls in Afghanistan, the global community plays a crucial role in depending on how the Taliban will take over the nation, and whether the Taliban's shocking abuses against women in the 1990s will happen again. Not only is the entire nation torn apart with the collapse of the Afghan government, but the two-decades-long Afghan-Taliban war has also increased the country's need of foreign and international assistance. With that, it is apparent that only through international cooperation and collective pressure on the Taliban will Afghan women be able to find a voice and advocate for their rights under the extremist group's rule in the future. To remediate the situation, there are three vital facets for solutions that delegates may consider:

Sanctions and Freezing assets

About 80 per cent of the Afghan government's budget comes from donors, and thus blocking the Taliban's access to assets from the previous government will not only halt the Taliban from rapidly operating a new government system, but it also act as a tool to pressure the Taliban into securing women's rights to education and work and abide by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that Afghanistan has ratified in 2003, including to "pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women." However, further sanctions may lead to another humanitarian catastrophe in the nation and put the lives of Afghan women and girls at risk. Delegates must strike a balance to ensure smooth delivery of humanitarian aid and maintain the regular operation of aid agencies, at the same time pressuring the Taliban into productive negotiations on Afghan women's rights.

Supporting non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Given the uncertainty of the situation at hand, supporting non-governmental organizations or expanding existing projects on women's education, healthcare, etc. are great short-term solutions to adopt. Previously, girls' education has been provided through home schools, often run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Shuhada and the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan are examples of women-led organizations running women's and girls' education programs, while CARE International and the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan support a large number of home schools across Afghanistan. These NGOs and programs supporting women's rights and empowerment can be further expanded to cover various aspects such as sexual education, healthcare and job opportunities.

Conducting monitoring work

Monitoring work and frequent in-depth investigations in Afghan regions will be the key to ensuring women's rights in Afghanistan are fully secured and protected. The international community should continue to seek commitments from the Taliban in respecting the rights of women and girls by ensuring full monitoring of education such as the proportion of women and girls among students disaggregated by province, or on women's employment in various workplaces. Furthermore, existing legal systems and specialized courts for women are likely to be disregarded entirely or even dismantled without international pressure. Monitoring work on Taliban's commitments to ensure justice for women and girls will also be needed to ensure they have access to social services or legal aid when facing gender-based violence.

Past Actions

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Government of Afghanistan signed this convention on 14 August 1980, however, the conflicts in the country did not allow for the ratification of the Convention until 2003. Having in mind the violations of women human rights during the years of war, it soon ratified CEDAW on March 5, 2003, without any reservations.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission was established pursuant to the Bonn Agreement (5 December 2001) and on the basis of Article 58 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Women's Rights Unit (WRU) under AIHRC has focused its effort on the following areas:

Leadership: WRU provides expertise and advice to enrich national and international women's rights programs in the country through issuing media statements and press releases, holding press conferences, presenting recommendations to the relevant national and international actors, and organizing public events.

Education: WRU institutionalized women's rights in schools, universities, teacher training institutes, and military training centers by holding workshops, and supporting the Government and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for the protection and promotion of women's rights

Advocacy: WRU participates in the law-making process through the provision of legislative reviews and comments, presents statements and comments on reports submitted to the UN Human Rights Council and other UN bodies concerning Afghan women's rights.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

UNAMA supports Afghan institutions and civil society to enhance women's meaningful contributions in Afghanistan's political and security transitions, including the peacebuilding agenda. "In Search of Justice for Crimes of Violence Against Women and Girls," which is a report done by UNAMA, examines the response of the justice system and the redress provided to survivors in reported cases of violence against women and girls in the period between September 2018 and February 2020.

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children has monitored the situation of Afghan refugees and internally displaced women and girls for the past decade. The Women's Commission's Technical Advisor has spent the past two years travelling to camps and remote villages in Afghanistan to evaluate and improve the conditions facing women and girls. Based on discussions with Afghan women and

their communities, the Technical Advisor makes recommendations to the international community regarding ways to improve protection and assistance. The Technical Advisor also supports Afghan women's organizations, providing advice and training to help women leaders to play a greater role in aid operations, including planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Guiding Questions

- Will the Taliban take over Afghanistan again with its strict interpretation of Islamic law? How will the international community be able to play a role in pressuring the Taliban to protect women's rights under the operation of a possibly new government?
- What are the incentives for the Taliban to abide by existing conventions and conduct negotiations with other nations on the protection of women's rights?
- Could there be a better solution than recognising the Taliban as a legitimate government of Afghanistan for which women's rights may not be fully guaranteed?
- What effect will sanctioning the Taliban have on the current humanitarian crisis, particularly on women and girls?
- What are the long-term solutions ensuring the Taliban's full commitment to secure women's rights in education and the workplace?

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