

Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan:

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2025 UPDATE



United Nations
Assistance Mission in Afghanistan



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

About this update

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

Women's rights

Work

Since 7 September, the *de facto* authorities have prevented Afghan women (including UN staff, contractors and visitors) from entering United Nations premises across the country.

31 December marked the 115th day since any Afghan women were permitted to enter UN premises countrywide. UN Afghan female staff continue to work from home and through alternative working arrangements while advocacy to have the restrictions lifted is ongoing.

Education

On 14 November, the *de facto* National Examination Authority held the 2025 medical student graduation examinations.³ No women were permitted to take part in the examination. Women and girls have been banned from higher education since 20 December 2022 and from studying at medical institutes since 2 December 2024.

Burqa requirement in Herat

In May and September, the *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Herat undertook campaigns requiring women to wear *chadors* outside the home, briefly detaining a group of women deemed non-compliant and preventing

women not wearing *chadors* from accessing public transportation and markets.

In early November, in Herat, *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Vice inspectors in Herat city began requiring women to wear *burqas* in public. Women not wearing *burqas* were prevented from accessing hospitals, healthcare clinics, *de facto* government offices and wedding halls. On 9 November, the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice publicly rejected reports that women had been ordered to wear *burqas* stating: "restricting women to one particular type of dress code is completely incorrect."⁴ The requirement for women in Herat to wear a *burqa* was subsequently relaxed, however *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice officials continue to require women to wear *chadors* in public and prevent those without *chadors* from using public transport and attending clinics, hospitals, *de facto* government offices and other public places.

Restrictions on women's freedom of movement

In some provinces, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors prevented women from accessing public places. For example:

- On 3 October, in Herat city, a large group of *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors prevented women from entering the Friday women's bazaar at 64 Meter Road. The *de facto* inspectors reportedly fired their guns in the air to disperse the crowd.
- On 6 October, in Zabul province, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice officials stopped a group of women who were taking an early-morning walk

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

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

[3] Announcement shared on the website of the *de facto* National Examination Authority of Afghanistan (<https://nexa.gov.af/fa/news/details/35>).

[4] See 9 November interview with the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice on Radio and Television Afghanistan (RTA) Pashto: <https://x.com/rtapashto/status/1987601584432242874>.

for exercise and told them not to leave their homes for this purpose again.

- On 8 December, in Uruzgan province, Tirinkot city, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors, accompanied by *de facto* police, publicly instructed taxi and minibus drivers not to allow female passengers to travel in their vehicles without a *mahram*.
- On 27 December, in Kandahar city, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors visited a market and urged shopkeepers not to sell goods to women who were unaccompanied by a *mahram*.

Access to healthcare

In Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice officials continue to make unannounced visits to healthcare facilities. The purpose of their visits is to relay instructions that women without *mahrams*, including healthcare workers, should not be allowed access to hospitals or clinics, preventing women without *mahrams* from accessing healthcare and healthcare workers without *mahrams* from going to work.

Beauty salons operated by women

The *de facto* authorities continue to enforce the ban on beauty salons operated by women, with several incidents of arrest or threats of arrest of women operating beauty salons and/or their male relatives recorded during the period. The operation of women's beauty salons has been banned since 25 July 2023, through a letter issued by the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

Gender-based violence against women and girls

The *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice regularly publishes statistics regarding women's rights-related cases it claims to have resolved.⁵ The *de facto* Ministry claimed on its X account to have resolved 806 such cases between 3 October and 31 December. The cases included domestic violence, inheritance-related cases, non-payment of *mahr*,⁶ forced marriage, non-payment of alimony, divorce, facilitating marriages for couples and *ba'ad*.⁷ During the same period, UNAMA recorded numerous incidents of gender-based violence, including forced marriages, contrary to the women's rights decree of 3 December 2021 which proscribes forced marriage. For example, in one incident, a *de facto* court instructed *de facto* police to arrest a girl (under the age of 18) for refusing to enter a forced marriage. She remains in detention in the *de facto* provincial prison.

Cross-border incidents

Cross-border incidents resulting in civilian casualties during the period 1 October - 31 December 2025 are covered in the UNAMA paper "Cross-border civilian casualties in Afghanistan: October – December 2025".

Death penalty

On 16 October, in Badghis Province, Qala-e Naw city, in the sports stadium, the *de facto* authorities carried out a public execution of a man who had been convicted of murdering a woman and a man. A family member of the victim executed the man by gunshot.

On 2 December, in Khost province, Khost city, in the sports stadium, a man who had been convicted of murdering 13 members of the same family was publicly executed by the *de facto* authorities. A family member of the

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

[6] *Mahr* is a mandatory gift from a husband-to-be to his wife-to-be as part of the marriage contract.

[7] *Ba'ad* is the practice of giving a woman in restitution.

victim, reportedly a boy (under the age of 18), executed the man by gunshot. This was the twelfth judicially sanctioned public execution carried out in Afghanistan since 15 August 2021.

In both instances, *de facto* officials reportedly attempted to encourage the victims' families to pardon the perpetrators to avoid implementation of the death penalty. Hundreds of local residents and numerous senior *de facto* officials attended the executions.

The *de facto* Supreme Court stated on its X accounts that the decision to impose the death penalty in both cases had been reviewed by the Primary, Appeal and Supreme Courts and approved by the Taliban leader before being carried out.

Corporal punishment

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

Between 1 October and 31 December, UNAMA Human Rights documented judicial corporal punishment against at least 287 individuals (253 men, 30 women, three boys and one girl).

For example, on 17 November, in Zabul province, Qalat city, the *de facto* primary court publicly flogged 18 men and one woman between 10 and 39 times each, having convicted them of various crimes, including theft, adultery, homosexuality, and having unlawful relationships. They were also given prison sentences varying from 10 months to six years.

Former government officials and former ANDSF members

Between 1 October and 31 December, UNAMA Human Rights documented at least 28 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention and at least seven instances of torture and ill-

treatment of former government officials and former ANDSF members, in addition to at least 14 killings of former ANDSF members.

Among those subject to extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests and detentions were former government officials and former ANDSF members who had recently returned to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan. For example, on 9 December, in Parwan province, Jabel Seraj district, in Dobandi and Sangi Khail areas, two individuals with links to the former government were shot and killed by unknown perpetrators, in separate incidents. One of the men had been an official of the former Ministry of Interior. The other man was the cousin of a former Deputy Chief of Police. Both men had recently returned from Iran.

Freedom of expression

On 17 October, in Kabul city, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence ordered Shamshad Television to halt all its broadcasts, which included television, radio and social media activities. It resumed operations on 19 October. The *de facto* authorities did not provide an official reason for the suspension.

The implementation of the prohibition of images of living beings⁸ by the *de facto* authorities expanded, particularly impacting television stations. The prohibition is currently enforced to varying degrees across the country, affecting all media outlets in some provinces and only state-owned media outlets in others. New measures imposed during the reporting period include:

- In Balkh (9 September) and Paktya (18 November) provinces, images of humans and animals were prohibited on state broadcasting company RTA.
- On 5 October, in Herat province, Herat-based media outlets were prohibited from creating, broadcasting or publishing any images of humans and animals.

[8] See Article 17 of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

- Since 10 December, in Khost province, spokespersons of *de facto* Departments have refused to appear in video interviews with media.

In November, in Kunduz and Maidan Wardak⁹ provinces, *de facto* Department of Information and Culture officials met with authors, publishers, printing presses and booksellers to inform them that prior to publishing a book, authors and publishers must submit their draft to the Book Evaluation Commission of the *de facto* Ministry of Information and Culture for review. They were told that the Commission may ask the author to edit any content deemed to be against *Sharia*, Afghan culture or non-compliant with the rules of the *de facto* authorities. No bookstore is allowed to import or sell books prohibited by the *de facto* authorities.¹⁰

Arbitrary arrests and detentions of and threats to individuals accused of posting inappropriate content on social media were documented. For example, on 11 December, in Herat, the *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice detained a group of men for questioning. The men had posted videos of themselves on social media imitating characters from a British television series.¹¹

Since the 48-hour country-wide shutdown of fibre optic internet and telecommunication services between 29 September to 1 October,¹² some internet users have experienced restrictions on social media platforms (namely Facebook, TikTok and

Instagram). This affects entrepreneurs, including female entrepreneurs, who rely on social media platforms to promote and operate their online businesses.¹³ The restrictions are reportedly due to the installation of content filters by the *de facto* authorities,¹⁴ however, no public announcement regarding the application of filters has been made to date.

Propagation of virtue and prevention of vice

The *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, together with other *de facto* ministries, continued to implement the Law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, focusing on: men's beards, women's *hijab*, *mahram* requirements, prohibitions on music and images of living beings and the enforcement of mandatory congregational prayers.

For example:

- Between 1 October and 31 December 2025, UNAMA documented at least 520 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 50 incidents of ill-treatment of Afghan women and men carried out by *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice personnel, primarily related to trimmed beards/Western haircuts, playing or listening to music, and alleged violations of the *hijab* provision.
- On 19 November, the *de facto* Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs stated on

[9] See X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Information and Culture: <https://x.com/MolCAfghanistan/status/1992869104643100775>.

[10] On 9 September 2024, the *de facto* Minister of Education instructed its provincial departments to confiscate books deemed in contradiction to Hanafi jurisprudence. See X post of *de facto* Ministry of Education at: <https://x.com/MoEAfghanistan1/status/1832993820910534958>. Since then, several lists of prohibited books have been circulated by different *de facto* ministries to bookstores and libraries. The lists prohibit a wide range of topics such as insurance, banking, government, human rights and democracy, constitutional law, investigative journalists, books authored by women, history of Iran, as well as books published by Iranian publishers. On 25 August 2025, the *de facto* Ministry of Higher Education issued a list of 679 prohibited books and circulated it to education institutions.

[11] See the unofficial X account of the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice Spokesperson, available at: <https://x.com/SAiFKHAIbAR1718/status/1997664494479200722>.

[12] For more information regarding the impact of the country-wide shutdown of fibre optic internet and telecommunication services between 29 September to 1 October, see UNAMA briefing paper "Out of Reach: The impact of telecommunications shutdowns on the Afghan people", available here: <https://unama.unmissions.org/en/unama-human-rights-monitoring-and-reporting>.

[13] See UNAMA briefing paper "Out of Reach: The impact of telecommunications shutdowns on the Afghan people", p. 5, available here: <https://unama.unmissions.org/en/unama-human-rights-monitoring-and-reporting>.

[14] See BCC report: "Social media content restricted in Afghanistan, Taliban sources confirm" confirming restrictions with the *de facto* Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, available here: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgrq8d0jpdwo>.

its X account that during the Friday prayer on 21 November, imams across Afghanistan must discuss the shaving of beards as a major sin.¹⁵

- In December, in Nangarhar province, the *de facto* Department for the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice burned at least 657 musical instruments confiscated during inspections, as part of its enforcement on the prohibition of music.¹⁶

Administration of justice

Rights of detainees

On 5 November, the *de facto* Office of Prison Administration (OPA) announced it had signed an agreement with the *de facto* Ministry of Education to establish schools and madrasas in all prisons across the country and to expand opportunities for prisoners to receive religious, modern, and vocational education.¹⁷

On 25 November, the *de facto* Supreme Court announced that, based on its instructions, 3,204 eligible prisoners were granted amnesty, while 4,317 others received reductions in their prison terms.¹⁸ This followed announcements by the *de facto* OPA of the pardon and release of over 2,260 prisoners, who had completed two-thirds of their sentences, and sentence reductions for almost 2,600 other prisoners who had completed one-third of their sentences. Despite these efforts, as of start November, the *de facto* OPA reported that its prison population was between 30,000 and 32,000. Judicial efforts to release prisoners have not kept pace with arrest and detention rates.

Announcements by the de facto authorities concerning the administration of justice

On 1 November, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice announced the launch of a free telephone hotline for legal consultations. Citizens can reportedly access *Sharia*, legal, and judicial advice by calling 188 free of charge during official working hours.¹⁹

On 9 November, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice announced its finalization of the ministry's five-year plan based on Afghanistan's Five-Year National Development Strategy. The five-year plan aims to strengthen the rule of law in view of Islamic *Sharia* by taking measures which include: strengthening the legislative process and increasing access of suspects and accused, including indigent persons, to free legal aid.²⁰

On 19 November, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice announced that from 26 July to 19 November, its *de facto* Legal Aid Directorate had participated in 230 court sessions defending clients' *Sharia* and legal rights, followed up to 600 cases involving victims, suspects, and indigent defendants, provided 50 free legal consultations, and organized 540 legal awareness programs covering suspects' and defendants' rights, parenting, narcotics rulings, and preventing land usurpation.²¹

On 15 December, the *de facto* Supreme Court announced that between 26 June and 22 September 2025, its *de facto* General Directorate of Judicial Inspection, which ensures oversight of judges and judicial personnel, had received 179 complaints from litigants before the central and provincial courts, 137 of which were investigated by its judicial inspectors, while 42 cases remained under investigation. It announced efforts to increase public trust in the "Emirate" and its

[15] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs (<https://x.com/mohiaAfghan/status/1991108646051418272>).

[16] X account of the *de facto* Nangarhar Media Information Center (<https://x.com/nmic8/status/1998650883496882418>).

[17] X account of the *de facto* Office of Prison Administration, 5 November (https://x.com/opa_af/status/1986031323543416988).

[18] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court, 25 November (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1993270980504903827?s=20).

[19] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice, 1 November (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/1984567359185830132>).

[20] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice, 9 November (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/1987462638159454686?s=20>).

[21] X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice, 19 November (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/1991025355457769725?s=20>).

courts including: instructing court officials to address public complaints promptly and according to rules and collecting information from individuals who had appeared in the courts to evaluate their treatment by court officials.²² Prior to this, on 11 December, the *de facto* Supreme Court announced that its General Directorate of the Supreme Court Secretariat had handled 140 instances related to violations by judges in the same period.²³

On 18 December 2025, the *de facto* Supreme Court announced that on 26/6/1447 [17 December 2025], it conducted a nationwide examination to recruit hundreds of qualified and professional scholars (*Ulema*) for its courts.²⁴

By circular dated 7 January 2026, the *de facto* Supreme Court sent to all courts for implementation a newly endorsed Decree by the Taliban leader on “Criminal Rules of Courts” dated 5 January 2026, which criminalises numerous acts, and regulates the imposition of discretionary punishments. The Decree provides that the text will be published in the Official Gazette. UNAMA continues to monitor developments.²⁵

During the reporting period, the *de facto* Supreme Court issued 18 announcements highlighting the *de facto* courts’ role in mediating a total of 20 cases of killings in 12 provinces, including

cases of murder potentially involving *Qisas* (the death penalty), and unintentional killings.²⁶

[22] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court, 15 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2000515943961645485?s=20).
[23] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court, 11 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1999010523300467062?s=20).
[24] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court, 18 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2001512281562046831?s=20).
[25] *De facto* Supreme Court, 20 January 2026, Issue #123 of Mizan Gazette: https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2013584940881862848?s=20 and <https://t.co/Wwq5AGiVlf>.
[26] X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court: in Zabul, 5 October (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1974761597290627400), 11 October (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1976888235268984975), and 25 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2004076717212885002?s=20); in Kapisa, 14 October (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1978056125296566711?s=20), and 24 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2003720110071230826?s=20); in Ghazni, 16 October (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1978691578219704688?s=20), and 23 October (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1981282894883504557?s=20); in Paktika, 16 October (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1978725341355987355?s=20); in Faryab, 21 October (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1980562567371366852?s=20); in Uruzgan, 13 November (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1988893353316909513?s=20); in Kunar, 16 November (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1989948621933146189?s=20); in Panjshir, 20 November (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1991418526574506282?s=20); in Farah, 30 November (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1995063345741959256?s=20); in Kabul, 4 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1996479797346931080?s=20), 17 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2001194631032107260?s=20), and 31 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2006264905465487816?s=20); in Kandahar, 6 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/1997248942233547182?s=20); in Bamyan, 28 December (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2005150818165817847?s=20).

