

Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan:

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2026 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 1 July to 30 September 2026,¹ is based on monitoring by the UNAMA Human Rights Service conducted in accordance with its mandate from the UN Security Council.²

Women's rights

Education

September marked five years since girls were barred from formal education beyond grade six.³

In a media interview published on 25 August, Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities, stated regarding women and girl's education: "...there are problems and considerations from Sharia perspective. We need to have a unified view of scholars on this issue from Sharia point of view. If all scholars don't reach to an agreement on this, then we cannot put the system in conflict with the mosques."⁴

Enforcement of the hijab instruction

Throughout July, August and September, UNAMA Human Rights documented more than 50 instances⁵ of *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors arresting, detaining and cautioning women accused of violating the *de facto* authorities' *hijab* instruction.⁶ The majority of arrests took place in Herat – where the *chador* continues to be the required form of

Islamic *hijab*⁷ – and Kabul, with one arrest also documented in Badakhshan Province. For example:

- *De facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors arrested a 13-year-old girl and detained her overnight related to her compliance with the *hijab* instruction.⁸ She was released the following day when her father collected her.
- On 10 July, in Herat city, Juma bazaar, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors arrested a group of ten women who were not wearing *chadors*. They were taken to the *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice offices where they were held until their guardians and area representatives came to provide guarantees the women would comply with the *hijab* instructions in the future.
- *De facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors approached a family shopping in a market and briefly detained the father because his 12-year-old daughter was not wearing a *burqa*. The man was released following mediation by bystanders. The inspectors instructed the man to buy his daughter a *burqa*.⁹

In other instances, women were verbally cautioned and/or threatened with arrest if they did not comply with the *hijab* instruction.

¹ All dates referenced refer to 2026, unless otherwise specified.

² United Nations Security Council Resolution 2822 (2026).

³ The *de facto* authorities initially closed schools to girls above sixth grade in September 2021 and on 23 March 2022, announced that girls' schools above sixth grade would remain closed. Women and girls have been banned from attending higher education since December 2022.

⁴ YouTube account of Elum TV (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crj61ma_CYA).

⁵ UNAMA, *UNAMA expresses Concern over De Facto Authority Arrests of Afghan Women and Girls* (8 October 2026). At: <https://unama.unmissions.org/en/press-releases/unama-expresses-concern-over-de-facto-authority-arrests-of-afghan-women-and-girls>.

⁶ Website of the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (<https://mopvpe.gov.af/ps/%DA%A9%DA%93%D9%86%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87>); X account of the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (<https://x.com/MOPVPE/status/1522882293718818816?s=20&t=sshqCD9cwGCRkJbt8HL3LQ>); Decree of the Amir al Momineen regarding the enforcement of law on promotion of virtue and prevention of vice (Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice), Consecutive No. 1452, Ratified: 1446/1/3 Hijri, 1403/04/19 Solar year (09 July 2024), Article 13.

⁷ UNAMA, *Enforcement of the hijab requirement in Herat city* (28 July 2026). At: <https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2026-07/ENGLISH%20-%20Annex%20A%20-%20Hijab%20enforcement%20in%20Herat.pdf>.

⁸ Location withheld for protection reasons.

⁹ Location withheld for protection reasons.

De facto Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors told one woman they would beat her if she came to the market again without a *burqa* and/or a *mahram*. At a large gathering in Farah city on 2 July, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors encouraged the all-male participants to ensure that women wear proper *hijab*, are accompanied by *mahrams* when visiting the bazaar and using public transport, and to not visit the *bazaar* in the evening.

On 27 September, the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, Saif-ul-Islam Khaibar, reportedly confirmed the detention of women and girls in Herat and Kabul in connection with the *hijab* requirement, stating in an interview with Amu TV: ‘Not observing *hijab* is itself a very serious crime...*Hijab* is a religious obligation, and the laws in force in Afghanistan also state that a Muslim woman must observe *hijab*. She must be covered from the hair on her head to the nails of her feet.’¹⁰

In a second media interview, with Deutsch Welle, also on 27 September, the spokesperson further stated: ‘A woman who does not observe *hijab* and is arrested, is a criminal. Because they are aware of and have been informed about [it], and everyone believes that *hijab* is the order of Islam. When they do not observe it, they are criminals.’¹¹

Freedom of movement

UNAMA Human Rights documented instances of *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors preventing women from entering health clinics and shops because they did not have a *mahram*. For example:

- On 8 August, in Parwan province, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors stopped two women from entering a health facility because they were not accompanied by a *mahram*.
- On 17 August, in Helmand Province, *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice inspectors stopped a woman from entering a market because she did not have a *mahram*.

The *de facto* authorities also made public pronouncements in which they called for wives to stay at home, obey and serve their husbands.

- On 6 August, the *de facto* Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs published the sermon for the Friday 7 August 2026 prayer for imams across the country.¹² The sermon stated that wives should obey their husbands, stay at home and not go out without their husbands’ permission, and that wives’ service to their husbands is a mandatory requirement of Islam.
- On 16 August, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice shared on its X account the ‘Preacher’s Curriculum’¹³ which states: ‘the husband is the ruler of the wife, and the wife is obliged to keep her husband happy’.¹⁴ It also mandates preachers to ‘order men that they should force the women under their guardianship to observe *Hijab* when encountering non-mahram.’

¹⁰ Website of Amu TV (<https://amu.tv/253229/>).

¹¹ Deutsche Welle, *Taliban: Women who do not wear hijab are ‘criminals’* (27 September 2026). At: p.dw.com/p/5NSox.

¹² X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs (<https://x.com/mohiaAfghan/status/2085230505587343749?s=20>).

¹³ X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2088871503664177593?s=20>).

¹⁴ Preacher’s Curriculum, Official Gazette No (1495), dated 4 July 2026, Chapter 2, page 82.

Employment

In a media interview with the BBC published on 16 August, Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities, commented on women's right to work, stating: "it is not the right of a woman to work in an office; a woman's right within the framework of Sharia is to have her dignity protected. Currently women work in various departments (hospitals, education, police, passport, and airports) wherever it is necessary and Sharia considers it necessary".¹⁵

Access to UN premises

7 September marked one year since the *de facto* authorities prevented Afghan women from accessing United Nations premises countrywide, including UN female national staff.

Cross-border incidents

Since 1 October 2025 up to 30 September, 512 civilians have been killed and 1,236 injured due to cross-border incidents.

Between 1 July and 30 September, cross-border incidents resulted in 33 civilian casualties (13 killed, 20 injured).

- On 9 July, at around 10am, in Nangarhar province, Durbaba district, Gagra Birgoray area, shrapnel from an artillery round, fired by Pakistani military forces in clashes with the *de facto* security forces of Afghanistan, injured a civilian man in the area.
- On 21 September, at around 3.30am, in Kunar province, Nurgal district, Pattan area, Pakistani military forces carried out an airstrike which struck a house. Three civilians were killed (a woman, a man and a 16-year-old girl) and four injured (a woman, two men and a four-year old boy).

- On 27 September, in Paktika province, Barmal district, Angor Ada area, Pakistani military forces shot at a group of three men who were travelling home on foot. One of the men was killed.
- On the night of 30 September/1 October, in Kunar province, Shiltan district, Chawgam valley area, an airstrike carried out by Pakistani military forces struck a house, killing six civilians (three girls, two boys and a man) and injuring three others (two women and a girl).
- On the night of 30 September/1 October, in Helmand province, Garmsir district, Safar area, an airstrike carried out by Pakistani military forces struck residential buildings, killing at least four civilians (two girls, a boy and a woman) and injuring 12 others (seven girls, four boys and a woman).

UNAMA Human Rights also documented four civilians injured from the detonation of pressure plate improvised explosive devices (PPIED) planted along the border.

- On 6 August, in Kunar province, Dangam district, Benshahi area, a 16-year-old boy who was grazing livestock stepped on a PPIED and was injured.
- On 23 August, in Kunar province, Dangam district, Lar Sure Kamar area, a ten-year-old boy was injured when a cow grazing in the area stepped on a PPIED, causing it to detonate and strike the boy.
- On 28 August, in Kunar province, Marawara district, Barawlo area, a man who was grazing livestock was injured when he stepped on a PPIED.
- On 3 September, in Kunar province, Marawara district, Terko Obo area, a 16-year-old boy who was grazing

¹⁵ YouTube account of BBC Pashto (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=05fFSkM-vr3XHuk-&v=9JVTLYoD4zM&feature=youtu.be>).

livestock stepped on a PPIED and was injured.

Former government officials and former ANDSF members

Between 1 July and 30 September, UNAMA Human Rights documented at least 14 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention and at least four killings of former ANDSF members.

Former government officials and former ANDSF members who return to Afghanistan are at risk of human rights violations after their return, despite the general amnesty announced by the *de facto* authorities in August 2021. For example:

- On 9 July in Paktika province, a man affiliated with the former government was shot and killed by unknown armed men. He had returned to Afghanistan from Iran around three weeks earlier.
- On 18 July, in Khost province, a former Khost Protection Force member was shot and killed by unidentified armed men while picnicking with his family. He had returned to Afghanistan from the United States ten days earlier.
- On 28 July, in Kabul, *de facto* GDI arrested a former ANP member and vocal critic of the *de facto* authorities at Kabul International Airport. The man was returning from overseas. The reasons for his arrest are unknown.

Corporal punishment

The *de facto* Supreme Court stopped publicly announcing corporal punishment on its social media account and website on 22 April.

Between 1 July and 30 September, UNAMA

Human Rights documented judicial corporal punishment against 28 individuals (22 men, six women). For example, on 4 August, in Ghazni province, Jaghuri district, the *de facto* Primary Court lashed four men and one woman between 36 and 39 times each. They had been convicted of different offences, including theft and extramarital relationships. The punishment was carried out in the presence of *de facto* officials and judges and members of the public. Observers were prohibited from photographing or videoing the punishment.

Poppy eradication campaigns in Badakhshan

The *de facto* authorities continued their campaign against poppy cultivation in Badakhshan province.¹⁶ On 1 August, in Yaftal district, Bazar-e-Etifaq area, *de facto* Ministry of Interior special forces attempted to arrest a man accused of transporting poppy. The man escaped, after which the *de facto* Ministry of Interior special forces attempted to search his mother. This angered residents, who staged a protest.

The protest became violent, and the *de facto* special forces opened fire on residents, killing two men and injuring eight others, as well as one woman. Unidentified persons reportedly shot and killed two *de facto* special forces officers.

Freedom of the media

On 2 August, the *de facto* Ministry of Information and Culture instructed media representatives to cover the commemoration of the 15 August 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and to prepare programs on the achievements of the *de facto* authorities and on the “injustices and atrocities” committed during the Republic era.¹⁷

Several media outlets were suspended between 1 July and 30 September,

¹⁶ See also: UNAMA, *Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2026*, 28 July 2026. At: <https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2026-07/ENGLISH%20-%20Update%20on%20human%20rights%20in%20Afghanistan%20-%20April-June%202026.pdf>.

¹⁷ X account of *de facto* Ministry of Information and Culture (<https://x.com/MolCAfghanistan/status/2083898459870921115>).

sometimes without being clearly informed of the reason. There is also no clear procedure for media outlets to appeal suspensions.

- On 27 July, in Kabul city, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice suspended Radio Eslah due to the name of the station (Eslah was a political group during the Republic period). The station remains suspended.
- On 26 August, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence suspended Lapis Media Centre, allegedly due to its affiliation with overseas-based media outlets.
- On 6 September, in Kabul city, the *de facto* authorities suspended Shia-owned Rah-e-Farda TV. Earlier in 2026, *de facto* Ministry of Information and Culture suspended Rah-e-Farda TV between 28 February to 21 June because the network head had publicly stated that Pakistan's military action against Afghan civilians was justified and condemned the retaliatory operations of the *de facto* authorities against Pakistan.¹⁸
- Tamadon TV has been suspended since 23 June and resumed operations through an online platform from abroad.

Journalists and media workers continue to face arbitrary arrests in the course of their work. On 5 August, in Badakhshan province, *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence arrested a journalist over his criticism of the *de facto* authorities' discriminatory treatment of the residents of Badakhshan province. He was released on 6 August. Another journalist arrested on 24 July 2025 remains in the custody of the *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence without a court conviction.

Incidents related to institutions affiliated with the Shia community

Throughout September, UNAMA Human Rights documented a series of incidents in which employees of institutions affiliated with the Shia community were arrested and the institutions forced to close. The arrests and the closure of these institutions were reportedly carried out because they were occupying land the *de facto* authorities claimed to own.

- On 5 September, in Kabul city, Darul-Aman Road, *de facto* Ministry of Justice personnel accompanied by *de facto* security forces arrested 28 male staff of the Shia-affiliated Khatam Al-Nabiyyin University, an institution affiliated with the Shia community. Four teachers were released on the same day, while 24 others were released on 8 and 9 September. On 16 September, in Kabul city, *de facto* Ministry of Higher Education revoked the operating license of Khatam Al-Nabiyyin University in Kabul and its branch in Ghazni province. Speaking to the media, the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry of Higher Education stated that the university's license was revoked due to its "continued violations of applicable regulations and its failure to implement corrective measures despite several discussions and warnings from the Ministry."¹⁹

¹⁸ X account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry of Information and Culture (https://x.com/K_Ghufran_415/status/2027818729963196566).

¹⁹ X account of Voice of Hindukush (Pashto) (https://x.com/HG_42_9/status/2100176761359356314?s=20).

- Between 6 and 9 September, UNAMA Human Rights documented the detention of at least another six individuals in relation to the incident at the Khatam Al-Nabiyyin University. They were reportedly detained because they had criticized or protested the *de facto* authorities' actions regarding the university and detained for periods ranging from several hours to seven days.
- On 19 September, in Kabul city, Qala-e Nazir area, *de facto* Ministry of Justice detained six staff members at the Al Anbiya Madrassa and cultural complex. They were released on the same day. The *de facto* Ministry of Justice evicted the remaining students and closed the Al Anbiya Madrassa.
- On 27 September, in different parts of western Kabul city, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice closed seven establishments that primarily serve the Shia community: a medical clinic, two educational institutions, a sports club, two madrasas and a mosque.

Propagation of virtue and prevention of vice

Between 1 July and 30 September, UNAMA Human Rights documented at least 443 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 97 incidents of ill-treatment of Afghan women and men by *de facto* Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice personnel, mainly related to alleged violations of the *hijab* instruction (for women), trimmed beards/"Western" haircuts (for men), failure to attend congregational prayers at the mosque, and playing or listening to music.

Article 24(1)(6) of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of

Vice states that an individual who commits a vice may receive up to three days of detention. UNAMA Human Rights documented some cases in which individuals accused of violating provisions of the Law received sentences longer than the three-day sentence prescribed.

- On 17 August, in Paktika province, Yosufkhail District, Aliabad Bazaar, *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice detained two barbers for one month. They were accused of trimming beards and providing Western haircuts to clients.
- On 21 August, in Nangarhar province, Rodat district, Hisar Shahee Bazaar area, *de facto* Department for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice suspended approximately 100 shops. The reason for the suspension was shopkeepers failed to attend congregational prayers.

Police Law

On 22 August 2026, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice published the Police Law in Official Gazette No. 1496.²⁰ The law outlines the duties of police officers including maintaining security, treatment of detainees during arrest and detention, procedures for dealing with juvenile offenders and prevention of narcotics, kidnapping and human trafficking. Police powers on the use of force and equipment, including weapons, are also defined in the law. Of note:

- Article 2(6) defines a crime as any violation arising from an act that has been ordered or prohibited by the Taliban leadership in matters relating to security and public order.

²⁰ X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2091064772011958558?s=20>).

- Article 16 states that a child under seven years old who commits a crime will not be punished but will be referred to court if the offence causes financial loss or damage; and that a child aged seven or older, who has not yet reached puberty, should be handed over to a parent/guardian, provided the child's reform can reasonably be ensured through such placement. The child would otherwise be handed over to the Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre.
- Article 14(2) states that no person is permitted to beat a detainee or accused person with a stick, whip, cable, or by any other means, or otherwise subject them to torture, "without a judicial order from a competent court". Article 14(3) further specifies that police officers do not have the right to punish prisoners in prisons, whether political or criminal prisoners, without a final court judgment.
- Article 41 empowers security officials to "correct an accused person" through a variety of means, including: admonishing or advising them using harsh language; compelling them to repent; threatening them with capital punishment (for persons accused of "serious crimes").
- Articles 37, 38 and 39 empower police officers to use force – including water cannons, weapons and explosives – "when necessary"; "to ensure security and public order"; "during armed conflict" and "during rebellion and the commission of armed crimes against security".

- Article 50 prohibits any form of demonstration. On 2 September, the spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities stated: "[...] demonstration have no place in Islamic law because demonstration belongs to those societies where separate laws are enforced or for example there is democracy or republics, there could be room for that. In the Islamic system, if there is a proper criticism, it should be referred to the relevant institutions. But loss of people's time and property, and chaos and disorder should be prevented."²¹

Rights of detainees

On 27 August, the *de facto* Supreme Court announced that, based on orders from the Taliban leader and the guidance of the chief justice of the *de facto* Supreme Court, 4,249 prisoners had been released from prisons and another 4,050 persons received sentence reductions on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of their takeover on 15 August 2021.²² On the same day, the deputy spokesperson for the *de facto* Supreme Court announced that over the past five years, a total of 16,468 prisoners were granted amnesty and 11,159 others were granted reductions in their prison terms.²³

Announcements by the *de facto* authorities on the administration of justice

On 20 July, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice announced during a leadership council meeting, that the *de facto* Minister of Justice stressed the need to expedite the legislative process, emphasizing the importance of careful drafting and review of legislative documents and ensuring they are based on Sharia and reliable Islamic jurisprudential sources.²⁴ The *de facto* authorities had announced they would conduct a review of laws passed by the

²¹ YouTube video of GMIC Afghanistan (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVxcbkjin-J8>).

²² X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2092953762725794251?s=20).

²³ X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court Deputy Spokesperson (<https://x.com/Mansoorh321/status/2092839895215526230?s=20>).

²⁴ X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2079149505656627474?s=20>).

Government of Afghanistan to assess their compliance with Sharia and have not publicly commented on the progress of this review.

On 5 August, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice announced that, between 17 June and 16 July 2026, its Legal Aid Directorate had participated in 109 court hearings, followed up on 355 cases, provided 52 free legal consultations and organized 41 legal awareness sessions in Kabul.²⁵

On 26 September, the *de facto* Supreme Court published an interview with its Director of Correspondence on the role and responsibilities of the Court's Petitions Department, in which he said that petitions for pardons and sentence reductions in criminal matters would be assessed based

on the sentence imposed and time already served as well as the prisoner's conduct, rehabilitation and health condition.²⁶

On 29 September, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice published the Statute of the Council of Scholars [*Ulema*] in Official Gazette No. 1500. The Statute provides that councils may monitor the performance of relevant officials and institutions (Article 6) and follow up on complaints about courts, with a view to facilitating complaints resolution (Article 12).²⁷

During the reporting period, the *de facto* Supreme Court issued 25 announcements highlighting the *de facto* courts' role in mediating a total of 31 cases of killings in 12 provinces, including cases of murder potentially involving *qisas* (the death penalty), and unintentional killings.²⁸

²⁵ X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2084875008636248533?s=20>; <https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2084872318682333255?s=20>).

²⁶ X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/status/2103785276275413037?s=20).

²⁷ X account of the *de facto* Ministry of Justice (<https://x.com/MojAfghanistan/status/2104875980070260944?s=20>).

²⁸ Various announcements on the X account of the *de facto* Supreme Court (https://x.com/SupremeCourt_af/).