

Taliban crushes lives of women, new report finds

Afghans describe crackdown on rights: Child marriages, bans from school, torture.



THE TALIBAN’S “policies form a system of repression that discriminates against women and girls in almost every aspect of their lives,” Amnesty International says. Above, women shop in a Kabul bazaar last year. (Marcus Yam Los Angeles Times)

associated press

ISLAMABAD — The lives of Afghan women and girls are being destroyed by a “suffocating” crackdown by the Taliban since [it took power](#) nearly a year ago, Amnesty International said in a report released Wednesday.

After the group captured the capital, Kabul, in August 2021 and ousted the internationally backed government, the Taliban presented itself as having moderated since its first time in power, in the 1990s. Initially, [Taliban officials spoke of](#) allowing women to continue to work and girls to continue their education.

Instead, they formed an [all-male government](#) stacked with veterans of [the group’s hard-line rule](#) that has banned girls from attending school from seventh grade, [imposed all-covering dress](#) that leaves only the eyes visible and [restricted women’s access to work](#).

Amnesty said the Taliban has also decimated protections for those facing domestic violence, detained women and girls for minor violations and contributed to a surge in child marriages. The report also documented the torture and abuse of women arrested by the Taliban for [protesting against restrictions](#).

“Taken together, these policies form a system of repression that discriminates against women and girls in almost every aspect of their lives,” the report said. “This suffocating crackdown against Afghanistan’s female population is increasing day by day.”

The group’s researchers visited Afghanistan in March as part of a nine-month investigation conducted from September 2021 to June 2022. They interviewed 90 women and 11 girls, between 14 and 74 years old, across Afghanistan.

Among them were women detained for protesting who described torture at the hands of Taliban guards, including beatings and threats of death.

One woman told Amnesty that guards beat her and other women on the breasts and between the legs, “so that we couldn’t show the world.” She said one told her, “I can kill you right now, and no one would say anything.”

A university student who was detained said she was electrically shocked on her shoulder, face, neck and elsewhere. One Taliban member, she said, held a gun at her and told her, “I will kill you, and no one will be able to find your body.”

The report said rates of child, early and [forced marriage in Afghanistan](#) are surging under Taliban rule. The increase, Amnesty said, is fueled by [Afghanistan’s economic and humanitarian crisis](#) and the lack of education and job prospects for women and girls. The report documented cases of forced marriages of women and girls to Taliban members — under pressure by the Taliban member or by the women’s families.

One woman from a central province of Afghanistan told Amnesty that she was compelled to marry off her 13-year-old daughter to a 30-year-old neighbor in exchange for 60,000 Afghanis (about \$658). She said she felt relieved because her daughter “won’t be hungry anymore.”

She said she was considering the same for her 10-year-old daughter but was holding off in hopes the girl could get an education and eventually secure a job to support the family. “Of course, if they don’t open the school, I will have to marry her off,” she added.

The Taliban seized Kabul as U.S. and NATO forces were withdrawing from Afghanistan, ending a nearly 20-year war against the Taliban’s insurgency. The world has refused to recognize the Taliban’s rule, demanding it respect human rights and show tolerance for other groups.

The U.S. and its allies have cut off billions in development funds that kept the government afloat and has [frozen billions in Afghan national assets](#).

This sent the already shattered economy into free fall, increasing poverty dramatically and creating one of the world’s [worst humanitarian crises](#). Millions, [struggling to feed their families](#), are kept alive by a massive U.N.-led relief effort.

Amnesty called on the international community to take action to protect Afghan women and girls.

“Less than one year after the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, their draconian policies are depriving millions of women and girls of their right to lead safe, free and fulfilling lives,” said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty secretary general.

“If the international community fails to act, it will be abandoning women and girls in Afghanistan, and undermining human rights everywhere,” she said.