

# HUMAN RIGHTS, STATE REGULATION OF RELIGION, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Article



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## Taliban Discrimination against Women: Comprehensive Analysis of Main Factors

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**Abstract:** Gender discrimination and misogyny targeting women in Afghanistan have deep historical roots, yet the Taliban's imposition of systematic, organized, and violent oppression has exacerbated this issue significantly. This paper delves into the fundamental factors driving the Taliban's discriminatory practices against Afghan women. Employing a mixed-method approach combining both doctrinal and non-doctrinal legal research, data for this study were gathered from written sources and 12 in-depth interviews conducted with religious scholars, *Sharia* law faculty members, law school professors, and women's rights activists. Drawing from scholarly literature and interview insights, numerous factors underpin the Taliban's oppression of women and promotion of misogyny. This paper specifically examines four primary causal factors: the influence of madrasas on societal norms and educational resources, the imposition of regressive edicts by Taliban leadership, cultural determinants shaping gender dynamics, and the disparities between urban and rural contexts.

**Keywords:** Discrimination; Educational Resources; Cultural Factors; Pashtunwali

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## I. Introduction

Following the ousting of the Taliban regime by the United States and its allies in 2001, Afghanistan witnessed a remarkable surge in the enrollment rate of girls in primary schools, soaring from a previous negligible presence to an impressive 80 %.<sup>1</sup>

Significant advancements were made in Afghanistan over the past two decades following the overthrow of the Taliban regime. Infant mortality rates were halved, as reported by UNICEF,<sup>2</sup> and legislation was enacted to outlaw forced marriages. However, despite these notable strides, skepticism persists among observers regarding the extent of progress achieved by Afghan girls and women. The return of the Taliban to power in 2021 has posed a severe threat to these hard-won gains. With the Taliban's resurgence, schools catering to girls beyond the sixth grade and universities admitting female students were shuttered. Additionally, thousands of women lost their positions in both governmental and non-governmental organizations, relegating many to domestic spheres. This regression underscores the fragility of women's rights in Afghanistan amidst shifting political landscapes (Kayen, 2022, p. 24).

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, 2022. Const inaction: girls's education in Afghanistan, s.l.: UNICEF, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, 2018. Levels & Trends in Child Mortality, s.l.: UNICEF, p. 30.

The Taliban's actions following their return to power in 2021 included the dissolution of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, replacing it with the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. These moves effectively restricted women from participating in the workforce and imposed stringent limitations on their mobility, prohibiting women from undertaking long journeys without a male guardian (*Muharram*) both within and outside Afghanistan. The catalogue of transgressions against the rights of women and girls by the Taliban continues to expand, reflecting a disturbing trend of regression in gender equality and women's empowerment (Hadili, 2022).

The issue of women's rights in Afghanistan has been both sensitive and paramount, undergoing significant fluctuations throughout the 20th century to the present day. Changes in this domain have often encountered staunch opposition from Afghanistan's patriarchal and traditionalist society, manifesting in highly conservative movements or leveraging religious interpretations to mobilize public sentiment against reforms. Notably, the Taliban, during both their previous rule from 1996 to 2001 and their resurgence since August 2021, have conspicuously rejected the concept of women's rights.

This paper aims to analyze the principal factors driving the Taliban's systematic discrimination against women in Afghanistan. Discrimination against women, as delineated by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), encompasses any differentiation, exclusion, or restriction based on gender that undermines the recognition of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. Such discrimination aims to undermine the equality of women with men, irrespective of marital status, across all spheres of life, including political, economic, social, cultural, civil, and beyond.

In essence, this paper seeks to unravel the complex dynamics fueling the Taliban's discriminatory practices against Afghan women, shedding light on the multifaceted challenges impeding gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. UN Women Official Website. Available at: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm> [Accessed 24.11.2024].

This study employs a mixed-method approach, integrating both doctrinal and non-doctrinal legal research methodologies. Data collection involves gathering information from written sources as well as conducting 12 interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders, including religious scholars, *Sharia* law faculty professors, law school professors, and women's rights activists. To maintain confidentiality and respect the sensitivity of the topic under investigation, the identities of the interviewees are not disclosed; only the number of participants is referenced. This methodological framework ensures a comprehensive exploration of the factors underpinning the Taliban's discrimination against women in Afghanistan while safeguarding the anonymity and privacy of those contributing to the study.

## **II. Discrimination against Women in Afghanistan: A Historical Context**

Fundamentalism has existed in Afghanistan for many years under the shadow of warlords, mullahs, and their loyal disciples, and they have created their methods and interpretations of Islam (Kolhatkar, 2002, p. 13). In rural areas, women are seen as weak and pitiable beings (Farooqi, 2018, p. 106). On the other hand, unconscious fear of women is seen in folk beliefs and stories as emotional, cunning, unfaithful, dangerous, and lustful creatures many times more than a man (Noorzai, 2022, p. 2).

In Afghanistan, when the family's son becomes young, the woman must obey the son after the husband. This custom is prevalent in most Afghan families, and the closer we get from the cities to the village, the stronger this custom becomes. An Afghan woman grows up in a family where she is taught that she is less valuable than her brother is and she is forced to obey him. Living in such an environment has caused violence against women to be institutionalized in families and society, and misogyny has become the identity of women and society (Arjang, 2020).

This does not mean there have been no attempts to improve women's status in Afghanistan. After the independence of Afghanistan in 1919, women's rights were important for King *Amanullah* and the

royal family, and for this reason, in addition to controversial issues such as the introduction of the hijab, he also paid attention to women's fundamental rights such as the education and development of women's talents. *Amanullah* established a high school for girls in 1922 and in 1926, he sent a few female students to Turkey to continue their education (Kia, 2019, p. 25).

With the fall of *Amanullah* in January 1929, the protection of power and law was removed from Afghan women, and this process continued until the third decade of Mohammad Zahir Shah's rule. In the fourth decade of Mohammad Zahir Shah's rule — which is known as the decade of democracy due to the approval of the new constitution in 1964, the freedom of parties and the press, and the prohibition of the royal family from interfering in power — the improvement of women's status accelerated, and the protection of women by law and power increased even more. In 1966, Afghanistan joined the United Nations Covenant on Political Rights during Prime Minister Noor Ahmad Etemadi (Naji, 2021).

With the gaining of power of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan in 1978, the support for women increased, and the revolutionary leaders legalized the women rights and legal equality of men and women by issuing a decree; the education of women became mandatory, and even old illiterate women were required to participate in special literacy classes (Ahmad, 2006, pp. 28–29).

With the fall of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in 1992, *Mujahideen groups* (Islamist Guerrillas) entered Kabul. The *Mujaheddin* government (Islamic State of Afghanistan) was a concrete example of a government in haste because, after three months, they got involved in civil wars and did not get a chance to announce and apply a specific policy toward women. The successive street wars made women stay home, and almost the majority of the educated citizens of Afghanistan fled the country (Kabeer et al., 2011, p. 6). It should be noted that after the occupation of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union in 1979, the Americans supported the Islamist groups in the 1980s (Gibbs, 2006, p. 254) and facilitated the invasion of fundamentalist Islamists from all over the Middle East into Afghanistan (Grau, 2004, p. 139).

The presence of extremist Islamists strengthened the spirit of misogyny in Afghanistan. Especially with the formation of the Taliban, restrictions on women increased. During the first period of their rule in 1996–2001, the Taliban seriously restricted women's rights and carried out various types of violence against women (Drumbl, 2004, p. 354). With the fall of the Taliban emirate in 2001, under the shadow of the Islamic Republic and the 2004 Constitution, it became favorable for women (Grenfell, 2004, p. 23). The 2004 Constitution required the state to uphold international human rights norms, but it also included some Islamic provisions that represent the perspectives of both human rights organizations and Islamic Groups. Protective or women-specific provisions were created to uphold women's rights (Shah, 2005, p. 244).

The Afghan government, with the support of the international community, was able to take measures to build capacity and support women. The government made significant achievements in the legislative sector and with practical measures, one of which was the formalization of the dignity and rights of Afghan women. Women entering society and playing their roles, such as entering government offices, allowed them to display their capacity and ability (Khavari and Simber, 2022, pp. 150–156).

The US-led multinational occupation of Afghanistan ended in mid-2021 with the imposition of a regime that completely subjugated and isolated the Afghan people. With the arrival of Taliban in Kabul, the republic and democracy half-term ended. Women were quickly excluded from society and replaced by a male-dominated Taliban government. Despite the pressures of the international community and domestic opposition, it applies discriminatory and violent policies against women (Sahill, 2023).

### **II.1. Women's rights under the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban**

Following the resurgence of the Taliban regime on 15 August 2021, the paramount leader of the Taliban issued a directive nullifying the existing legal framework in Afghanistan, thereby mandating the enforcement of Sharia laws by the personnel of the Islamic Emirate

(Kadir and Nurhaliza, 2023, p. 3). The leader of the Taliban articulated that the legislative constructs established during the republic period (2001–2021) were deemed as human-derived, influenced by the populace's volition, and hence rendered obsolete. Emphasizing the exclusive application of Sharia principles within the Taliban's Islamic Emirate, he underscored the exclusion of popular will in legal matters. The annulment of substantive and procedural legal frameworks lays the groundwork for a broad interpretation of Sharia regulations by the Taliban authorities (Rahimi, 2022, p. 8).

Since assuming control of Afghanistan for the second time, the Taliban has primarily promulgated directives and edicts focusing on the imposition of constraints upon women.<sup>4</sup> Over twenty such directives have been issued, often without prior notification or consultation. Notably, the Taliban's measures targeting women encompass four principal domains: exclusion from political participation, limitations on presence or engagement in public spheres, proscription of ongoing education, and curtailment of employment opportunities. These restrictions represent fundamental encroachments upon women's rights, despite the Taliban's assurances of governing with greater leniency compared to their prior tenure in power.<sup>5</sup>

## II.2. Women's Rights in International Documents

The evolution of international documents pertaining to women's rights delineates three distinct epochs, each encapsulating varied perspectives on women's rights and societal positioning. The initial period, denoted as the "supportive period," depicts women as a demographic either unable or discouraged from partaking in certain endeavors, relegated to subordinate roles. Following this, the "separate group" era emerges, characterizing women as a distinct cohort necessitating specialized attention and advocacy due to perceived injustices. Termed the "reformation" phase, it advocates for legal amendments aimed at

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<sup>4</sup> UN, 2023. Afghanistan: Human rights "in a state of collapse," warns Türk. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/09/1140637> [Accessed 24.11.2024].

<sup>5</sup> ACAPS, 2023. Update on Taliban decrees and directives affecting the humanitarian response, s.l.: ACAPS.

addressing gender disparities. Lastly, the “period of non-discrimination” emerges, advocating for a gender-neutral approach wherein women and men are regarded impartially. Norms within this phase repudiate the notion of women as a distinct subgroup, advocating instead for gender equality and equitable treatment across genders.<sup>6</sup>

International documents reflecting this perspective address certain women-specific issues while overtly rejecting sexual discrimination or disparate treatment based on gender. A notable example of this evolutionary trajectory is evident in the Charter of the United Nations. Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter underscore this ethos, emphasizing the promotion of universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination based on sex. Furthermore, provisions such as Art. 13, 62, and 76 establish diverse institutions, including the Economic and Social Council, aimed at fostering gender equality and advancing women’s rights within the framework of international cooperation and development. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and other international documents emphasize the equal rights of human beings (both women and men), and the member countries of the conventions are committed to implementing its provisions in the laws. Articles 1 and 2 of the UDHR emphasize that all human beings are born free, they are equal in terms of dignity and rights, and enjoy all the rights and freedoms listed in the declaration.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout history, concerted efforts and initiatives have been undertaken to secure women’s attainment of individual and civil rights, underscored by the enactment of laws, treaties, and covenants that undermined the significance of this endeavor. Among these, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) holds a paramount position, serving as a benchmark for adjudicators in member states regarding the entitlements afforded

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<sup>6</sup> OHCHR, 2014. Women’s Rights are Human Rights, New York and Geneva: Nunited Nations Publications, pp. 1–7.

<sup>7</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UNO official website. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> [Accessed 24.11.2024].



to women. Ratified by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 September 1979, this Convention conveys a central message advocating for the absolute equality of men and women, advocating for the eradication of all distinctions across legal, political, and social realms, save for instances of “affirmative action” aimed at redressing historical imbalances and fostering gender parity. The primary objective of CEDAW is to eradicate all forms of gender-based discrimination, thereby fostering a more equitable and inclusive society. Afghanistan has signed and ratified the ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, and other human rights conventions. Hence, as a signatory to these conventions, the Taliban are obligated to adhere to women’s human rights standards. However, the Taliban’s ideology starkly contrasts with the principles outlined in international documents pertaining to human rights.

### **III. Key Causes of Discrimination against Women by the Taliban**

Discrimination against women and entrenched misogyny in Afghanistan have historical roots, yet the Taliban’s approach to gender inequality exhibits systematic, organized, and often violent manifestations, exerting a profound and detrimental impact on women’s lives (Burhani, 2020, p. 212).

One of the most contentious topics surrounding the Taliban in contemporary discourse pertains to their stance on women and their corresponding conduct towards them. The Taliban’s perception of women, which informs their political and social interactions with women, is entrenched in an antiquated mindset. Despite drawing from traditional sources, this perspective has lost relevance and efficacy over centuries and has largely become obsolete. The global consensus, spanning across diverse religious and governmental frameworks, has embraced the notion of women’s participation in modern society, relegating the Taliban’s viewpoint to the margins of mainstream discourse (Mohaq, 2022).

The treatment of women by the Taliban in Afghanistan is widely regarded as shocking, unacceptable, and in direct contravention of

established international agreements. There are four primary rationales underlying the Taliban's discriminatory practices against women.

Firstly, they relegate women solely to their physical attributes, viewing them merely as vessels for fulfilling men's sexual desires. Consequently, women are confined to domestic roles and expected to cater to men's needs within the confines of the home.

Secondly, the Taliban's pervasive illiteracy contributes to their perception of women as devoid of intellectual capabilities. This lack of education leads to a dismissal of women's cognitive faculties and further perpetuates gender-based discrimination.

Thirdly, the Taliban's adherence to a traditional interpretation of religion fosters misogynistic attitudes. Their narrow understanding of religious doctrines, coupled with a dearth of exposure to scientific principles, engenders discriminatory practices against women.

Lastly, there are political motives driving the Taliban's discriminatory policies against women. Leaders within the Taliban espouse a deliberate policy of gender discrimination, viewing misogyny as integral to their political agenda. They capitalize on entrenched gender norms within Afghan society and cultivate misogyny as a means of garnering support, particularly in rural areas where traditional values hold sway (Interviewee 1, 2022).

The second interviewee also delineated four distinct factors contributing to the Taliban's predisposition towards discrimination against women, encompassing social, political, religious, and intelligence dimensions.

Firstly, the Interviewee underscored the upbringing of Taliban members within misogynistic familial and societal milieus, which imprint deep-seated gender biases.

Secondly, the political rationale posits that the Taliban seek to secure widespread acceptance among rural populations by delineating stark contrasts between their governance model and previous regimes. Discriminatory policies against women serve as a means to reinforce this divergence.

Thirdly, the Taliban's adherence to traditional interpretations of religious doctrine perpetuates gender-based discrimination. Their

conservative readings of religious texts reinforce patriarchal norms and serve as a legitimizing framework for discriminatory practices.

Lastly, the intelligence factor alludes to the limited exposure of Taliban members to diverse perspectives and educational opportunities. This lack of intellectual engagement contributes to narrow-minded views regarding gender roles and reinforces discriminatory attitudes towards women (Interviewee 2, 2022).

Another interviewee elucidated that the Taliban's discriminatory practices against women are grounded in their adherence to Pashtun custom, known as *Pashtunwali*, and a subsequent interpretation of religious texts dating back to the second century. This reliance on *Pashtunwali* and the interpretive frameworks established over centuries has entrenched gender-based discrimination and misogyny within Taliban ideology and societal norms. These traditional customs and interpretations serve as foundational pillars shaping the Taliban's attitudes towards women, perpetuating discriminatory practices and reinforcing patriarchal structures within Afghan society (Interviewee 10, 2022).

Drawing from academic sources and interviews, it becomes evident that there are numerous factors contributing to the Taliban's discrimination against women and perpetuation of misogyny. However, this paper seeks to delve into the examination of four fundamental causes underlying these phenomena.

### **III.1. Educational Resources, Madrasas Environment**

One of the repercussions stemming from the Soviet intervention and subsequent occupation of Afghanistan was the emergence of resistance against Soviet forces and their allied government in the country. Notably, this period witnessed a significant surge in the emphasis on religious education, leading to the ascension of religious scholars, or Mullahs, to positions of considerable influence. Formerly occupying lower rungs within the societal hierarchy, these religious figures found themselves elevated to prominent roles. The heightened social standing accorded to religious scholars prompted families to increasingly enroll their children in religious schools, reflecting the shifting societal dynamics and the

growing importance attributed to religious education during this period of conflict and upheaval (*Madrasa*) (Muzda, 2024, pp. 31–32).

Afghan Islamist Jihadi groups, operating from bases in Pakistan, undertook the establishment of numerous Madrasas during this period, with financial support flowing in from Arab and Western nations (Khan and Waqar, 2021, p. 271).

Within the Madrasas, children were raised in environments characterized by masculine norms, often experiencing minimal interaction with their families. Under the tutelage of their teachers, known as “Mullahs,” they imbibed values centered around obedience and reverence. The atmosphere within these religious institutions fostered a sense of uniformity among students, with young Taliban members becoming accustomed to such regimented conditions (Barfield, 2010, p. 255). Women were systematically barred from accessing Madrasas, reflecting the deeply entrenched gender disparities within Taliban-controlled territories. Educated and urban women were viewed with suspicion, perceived as threats to the prevailing social order. Throughout the Taliban regime, women were systematically deprived of their fundamental rights, relegated to subservient roles and denied opportunities for education and participation in public life (Muzda, 2004, p. 33).

It is important to acknowledge that prior to their rise, certain Afghans had already undergone religious education in Pakistani Madrasas. Among these, the Madrasas associated with Jamiat Ulema Islam boasted greater resources and prestige. Consequently, the Afghan Taliban exhibited a keen interest in enrolling in such institutions. These Madrasas played a pivotal role in supplanting the divisive influence of politics masquerading as religious ideology within the minds of the Afghan Taliban, shaping their worldview and ideological orientation (Rahman, 2013, p. 2).

Indeed, it is evident that beyond the family unit, the social environment and educational institutions wield considerable influence over the development of individuals’ personalities. These external factors contribute significantly to shaping individuals’ beliefs, values, and behaviors, ultimately playing a pivotal role in shaping their identity and worldview (White and Wafa, 2011, p. 57). Books and educational

content serve as powerful tools in shaping students' behavior and beliefs. Within the curriculum taught in Madrasas, women are often portrayed as inherently inferior to men, perpetuating the ethos of misogyny and undermining the value of women in society. This messaging, ingrained in educational materials, reinforces gender-based discrimination and contributes to the marginalization of women within these educational setting (Burhani, 2020, pp. 216–217). In his treatise on women's education, the leader of the Taliban's Supreme Court asserts that religious teachings dictate that women should remain confined to their homes and refrain from venturing outside. According to his interpretation of religious sources, women's educational pursuits should be limited to subjects pertaining exclusively to religion. This viewpoint reflects the Taliban's conservative stance on women's roles and education, advocating for a narrow scope of learning that reinforces traditional gender norms and the relegation of women to domestic spheres (Haqani, 2021, pp. 276–279).

Moreover, textbooks utilized in Afghan religious schools have remained largely unchanged for centuries, lacking revisions or updates to address the evolving needs of subsequent generations and contemporary demands. These outdated educational materials fail to meet the requisite standards of efficiency and relevance, falling short of aligning with the advancements of the scientific realm. The traditional educational system in Afghanistan exhibits inflexibility, demonstrating a reluctance to engage with external influences and vehemently resisting any form of educational innovation. This entrenched conservatism impedes progress and hinders the integration of Afghan education into the broader global landscape (Azghari, 2011, p. 190).

The Taliban espouse a distinct interpretation of religious doctrine, characterized by an extreme and stringent adherence to religious rules. This interpretation diverges significantly from mainstream interpretations and is marked by an uncompromising and rigid approach to religious principles (Borchgrevink and Kristian, 2010, p. 3). For instance, the decrees issued by Taliban leaders concerning women's rights predominantly focus on issues related to marriage and inheritance rights. However, other crucial aspects of women's rights, such as access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and

participation in public life, have received inadequate attention. This selective approach underscores the Taliban's narrow interpretation of women's rights, which fails to address the broader spectrum of fundamental rights and freedoms essential for women's empowerment and full participation in society.<sup>8</sup>

One of the reasons behind the Taliban's discrimination against women can be attributed to their stringent interpretation of religion and their particular understanding of Islamic principles. This rigid interpretation leads them to enforce oppressive measures against women, grounded in their interpretation of religious doctrines.

Additionally, the low literacy rates among the Taliban and their limited understanding of both religion and contemporary knowledge stem from the environment in which they were raised. Growing up in environments that prioritize traditional interpretations of religion over formal education, Taliban members often lack exposure to diverse perspectives and critical thinking skills. This limited educational background contributes to their narrow worldview and reinforces discriminatory attitudes towards women (3, 6, 8, 9, and 11). As one of the interviewees claimed (a women's rights activist), "The Taliban's misogyny is deeply rooted in their interpretation of a conservative form of Islam, shaping rigid gender roles within their ideology."

Women are often viewed through a narrow lens, limiting their roles to traditional domestic spheres. The strict enforcement of these beliefs, coupled with a hierarchical structure, consolidates their discriminatory policies. To address misogyny within the Taliban, a multifaceted approach is essential. Engaging with religious scholars to foster a more inclusive interpretation of Islam, promoting religious tolerance, and advocating for women's rights within Islamic principles are crucial steps. This requires a nuanced strategy to encourage internal reflection and change within the Taliban" (Interviewee 12).

Furthermore, the *Deobandi School* founded in northern India in 1867 and later spreading to Pakistan, played a significant role in shaping the ideological underpinnings of groups like the Taliban.

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<sup>8</sup> BBC Persian, (2021). The order of the Taliban leader was issued on "women's rights." BBC website. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-59505030> [Accessed 24.11.2024].

Initially established with the aim of resisting Western cultural influences and promoting *Hanafi* beliefs, the *Deobandi* movement fostered a conservative interpretation of Islam that has influenced the worldview of many Taliban members. The teachings and ethos of the *Deobandi School* have contributed to the Taliban's strict adherence to traditional religious principles and their resistance to Western values, further perpetuating their discriminatory attitudes towards women (Nelson, 2021, p. 5).

Originally, *Deobandiyyah* emerged as an educational movement centered on the discussion of *Hanafi* jurisprudence and *Matridi* theology. However, over time, it has evolved into a dominant discourse and trend within the world of Hanafi Islam, garnering followers across the globe. Today, it is perceived as a revered authority to be followed unquestioningly. Darul Uloom "Haqqania" situated in the northwest of Pakistan was established approximately fifty years ago in the city of Akora Khattak in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. This institution serves as a bastion for the propagation of *Deobandi School's* ideology. Its renown extends beyond religious and jurisprudential debates, as it has become intricately entwined with regional and international affairs, particularly those of South Asia and Afghanistan. "The Haqqani network, as a political-military group that operates mostly in Afghanistan, is among the trained groups of this Darul Uloom." Darul Uloom Haqqanieh is the training place for Taliban and the Taliban receive ideological and intellectual training here. The atmosphere of this school is free of modern science and modern needs. The only educational material that is more important is the discussion of Salafism and reference to "Salaf Saleh," hadithism and opposition to intellectual sciences (Mousavi, 2022). Consequently, the Madrasa environment and the curriculum imparted within these institutions contribute to the cultivation of misogynistic attitudes and discriminatory behaviors among Taliban students.

### III.2. Mandatory Orders of the Taliban Leader

The directives and decrees issued by the Taliban leader hold absolute authority and are deemed obligatory for all members. Within Taliban ideology, the leader is referred to as Amir al-Momineen, equating his

authority with that of the righteous caliphs. The power vested in the Taliban leader emanates from two primary sources: religious doctrine and cultural tradition. According to Taliban ideology, adherence to the leader's commands is considered mandatory, with any defiance perceived as a transgression against religious principles (Burhani, 2020, p. 221).

During their formative period, the Taliban solidified their ideological foundation by convening approximately two thousand religious scholars (Maulvis) from across Afghanistan to pledge allegiance to Mullah Omar, the first leader of the Taliban, in Kandahar. This allegiance marked a commitment to follow their emir's directives unconditionally.

Subsequently, the Taliban leader implemented stringent measures curtailing women's rights across various spheres through executive orders. These decrees resulted in the denial of women's access to education, employment, and freedom of movement, thereby severely restricting their participation in societal affairs (Telesetsky, 1998, p. 296).

Indeed, with the passage of time and the benefit of hindsight, the political maneuvers and actions of the Taliban over the last two years can be analyzed more comprehensively.<sup>9</sup> The group's leadership council decided on policy over most of their insurgency by a clandestine consensus unknown to their combatants. Although the emir was usually given the last word in propaganda and philosophy, military considerations largely shaped the movement's choices. However, after August 2021, the *Amir* progressively started to assert a more comprehensive definition of his authority.<sup>10</sup> The ruling on girls' schools in March 2022 marked his comeback to the forefront of the Taliban. From that point on, his meddling in the day-to-day operations of ministries grew steadily (Watkins, 2023).

Since 15 August 2021, the Taliban has issued more than anything recommendations and decrees regarding the imposition of restrictions on women. More than 20 orders have been issued, and restrictions have

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<sup>9</sup> ICG, 2023. Taliban Restrictions on Women's Rights Deepen Afghanistan's Crisis, Brussels: International Crisis Group. P. 3.

<sup>10</sup> ICG, 2023. Taliban Restrictions on Women's Rights Deepen Afghanistan's Crisis, Brussels: International Crisis Group. P. 12.



been imposed without prior orders or recommendations. The Taliban's actions against women include four main areas: exclusion from politics, restriction of presence or activity in public space, prohibition of continued education, and restriction of the right to work.<sup>11</sup>

One of the factors contributing to the misogyny of the Taliban and their discriminatory treatment of women is rooted in their interpretation of religious obligations. On one hand, they cite the religious mandate to "enjoin good and forbid evil," which they interpret as justification for imposing strict codes of conduct, particularly regarding women's behavior. On the other hand, their obedience to the orders of the Amirul Mu'min, or leader of the faithful, reinforces their commitment to upholding traditional gender roles and restricting women's rights in accordance with their ideological framework (Interviewee 6).

### III.3. Cultural Factors including Pashtunwali

A significant influence shaping the worldview of the Taliban and their treatment of women is *Pashtunwali*, the traditional code of conduct followed by the Pashtun tribes. As the majority of Taliban members hail from Pashtun backgrounds, their adherence to *Pashtunwali* norms deeply influences their attitudes and behaviors towards women. *Pashtunwali*, with its emphasis on such concepts as honor, hospitality, and *purdah* (segregation of sexes), reinforces traditional gender roles and expectations, contributing to the marginalization and subjugation of women within Taliban-controlled territories (Doalat Abadi et al., 2019, p. 87).

The cultural fabric of Pashtun society is significantly shaped by the renowned *Pashtunwali* tradition, which is subsequently influenced by Islamic teachings. *Pashtunwali* encompasses a broad spectrum of behavioral norms and human relations that govern the lives of Pashtuns, including those within the Taliban. Various interpretations exist regarding the nature of *Pashtunwali*; while some regard it as customary law predating formal governance structures, others perceive it as both

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<sup>11</sup> BBC News, (2023). 20 orders of the Taliban that have systematically restricted women. BBC website. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cyokld42xexo> [Accessed 10 5 2023].

an ideology and customary law. This multifaceted understanding underscores the complex interplay between cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and societal norms within Pashtun communities, exerting a profound influence on the attitudes and actions of groups like the Taliban (Mir Ali and Mohsini, 2018, p. 193).

Indeed, some scholars have characterized *Pashtunwali* as the embodiment of the principles that define a true Pashtun. According to this perspective, being a genuine Pashtun necessitates adherence to the values and ideals encapsulated within *Pashtunwali*. Thus, living and acting in accordance with these ideals is considered essential for a Pashtun to be deemed virtuous and honorable within their community. *Pashtunwali* serves as a guiding framework that shapes the conduct and identity of Pashtuns, emphasizing the importance of upholding traditional customs and values in both personal and communal life (Mir Ali and Mohsini, 2018, p. 194). The main principles of *Pashtunwali* are: *Melmastyā* (hospitality), *Badal* (revenge), *Nanwatay* (providing asylum), *Tarboorwali* (agnatic rivalry), *Siyali* (competition within an extended family), *Nang* (honor), *Namus* (the chastity of women) and *Jirga* (council of the elders) (Khan et al., 2019, p. 266).

*Namus* and *Nang* are two main elements of *Pashtunwali*. Considering the position of women in the tribal society, the veil and honor are mandatory components of Pashtun, which are related to the honor of the family, especially women. Hijab or curtain is often used as a border and separates the space between men and women. According to *Pashtunwali*, sexual dignity and the general behavior of women are very important elements for a man's honor. Girls and women whom a *Pashtun* man is responsible for should always act according to Pashtun social traditions. As mentioned, the Taliban have been greatly influenced by the *Pashtunwali*. Although in some cases *Pashtunwali* and Sharia law are different (Marsden, 1998, p. 86). For example, according to Sharia law, the proof of adultery requires the presence of four righteous witnesses (Quran, Surah Nisa, verses 15–16), while in *Pashtunwali*, the existence of a rumor is enough to prove this case because, according to this law, the honor of the family is much more important than observing the moral and customary situation (Marsden, 1998, p. 86). With the effectiveness of the *Pashtunwali*, the Taliban are very strict with women.

Women should stay away from strange men and be accompanied by a *mahram* (Marsden, 1998, p. 86).

As the former head of the Supreme Court of the Taliban in his book states that the education of girls with boys contradicts Sharia law, he addresses the Afghan fathers and asks them what rational and religious justification allow them to let their daughters to be with boys in schools or universities and the boys look at their daughter's beauty and enjoy. He added that mixed education is a blind imitation of Westerners and is against the honor and dignity of Afghans and Muslims (Haqani, 2021, p. 281).

Indeed, such perspectives highlight the significant influence of *Pashtunwali* on the Taliban's ideology and policies, particularly regarding women's rights. Following their resurgence to power, the Taliban have adhered steadfastly to traditional practices, including their approach to women's rights, mirroring policies from their previous tenure. *Pashtunwali* emphasizes the notion that the protection of society is intricately linked to the safeguarding of women, and societal honor is contingent upon the honor of women. Within the Taliban's patriarchal system, women are viewed as the custodians of men's honor, and their behavior is expected to uphold and preserve this honor. Consequently, the Taliban's policies regarding women are shaped by a patriarchal worldview that prioritizes the perceived honor of men above the rights and autonomy of women (Burhani, 2020, p. 213).

The social background of the Taliban plays a significant role in fostering their misogynistic attitudes. Many Taliban members hail from Pashtun communities, where the cultural norms of *Pashtunwali* contribute to the perpetuation of misogyny. Additionally, Afghan villages, where the Taliban draw much of their support, tend to be traditional and patriarchal in nature, further reinforcing gender-based discrimination.

Moreover, the influence of intelligence services, particularly those of neighboring countries, exacerbates the volatile situation in Afghanistan. These intelligence agencies may exploit the unrest within Afghanistan to further their own agendas, potentially exacerbating existing social tensions and contributing to the perpetuation of misogyny and discrimination against women (Interviewee 4).

It is absolutely crucial to acknowledge that the prevailing culture in Afghan society is deeply patriarchal. Patriarchy, characterized by the concentration of physical and economic power in the hands of men, shapes societal norms and influences the treatment of women. Historically, men have been the primary beneficiaries of power and privilege, leading to the marginalization and subjugation of women. This entrenched patriarchal system has influenced the education and empowerment of women, often in ways that align with men's interests and perpetuate gender disparities.

Indeed, the Taliban phenomenon cannot be divorced from the broader cultural context of Afghanistan. While foreign influences may have played a role in their formation, they are ultimately a product of Afghan society and are shaped by its cultural norms and values. As such, the patriarchal culture inherent in Afghan society undoubtedly influences the Taliban's attitudes and actions towards women, further exacerbating gender inequality and discrimination (Kolhatkar, 2002, p. 13).

Misogyny has become deeply entrenched in our culture, permeating societal attitudes to such an extent that the notion of a woman holding leadership positions is still met with skepticism and resistance. Examples from previous governments in Ghor and Daikundi provinces underscore this pervasive bias. In Daikundi, protests erupted over the appointment of a woman as governor, with some individuals questioning the suitability of a woman for such a role. Similarly, religious scholars in Ghor expressed their disapproval of the appointment of Sima Jovindeh as governor through a formal resolution.

Moreover, even when women are nominated for prominent positions, they often face significant obstacles and opposition. Anisa Rasouli, the first woman nominated to the Supreme Court of Afghanistan, encountered opposition in the House of Representatives, highlighting the systemic barriers women face in ascending to positions of authority and leadership. These instances underscore the urgent need to challenge and dismantle the institutionalized misogyny that continues to hinder women's participation in governance and leadership roles in Afghanistan (Rahimi, 2015).

#### **IV. Difference between Urban and Rural Living Standards**

According to statistics from Afghanistan's Central Bureau of Statistics, there is a notable disparity in living standards between urban and rural areas. The data reveals that a significant majority, approximately 71.3 percent of the population resides in rural areas, where access to basic amenities and services may be limited. In contrast, approximately 24 percent of the population resides in urban centers, where infrastructure and resources tend to be more readily available. Additionally, a small percentage, approximately 4.7 percent, are nomads, whose living conditions may vary depending on their mobility and access to resources. This urban-rural divide underscores the socioeconomic disparities prevalent within Afghan society, with rural populations often facing greater challenges in accessing essential services and opportunities for socioeconomic advancement (Azad, 2019).

The disparity between urban centers and rural villages in Afghanistan is indeed significant and has been a source of numerous challenges throughout the country's history. This divergence in development, infrastructure, and access to essential services has contributed to social, economic, and political inequalities, exacerbating tensions and perpetuating disparities across various facets of Afghan society. These disparities have posed significant obstacles to efforts aimed at fostering national unity, economic growth, and social cohesion, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to address the urban-rural divide and promote equitable development across the country (Kargar, 2021).

After the Bonn Agreement of 2001, the government concentrated all welfare-economic-security facilities in the cities without having a precise sociological analysis of the social context of Afghanistan, and the villages, which include 70 percent of the population of Afghanistan, remain far away from all security welfare facilities. A point that was and is the main challenge of Afghanistan (Nadim, 2021).

Women's rights in Afghanistan have often been likened to a conflict between centralized state elites and Islamic scholars living in rural erases (Kandiyoti, 2007, p. 173). As noted, the Taliban predominantly originate from rural areas of Afghanistan, where there exists a pervasive

sense of skepticism towards urban environments. Many rural residents hold the belief that urban settings foster irreligion and secularism, a sentiment that gained traction following the 1978 coup. This suspicion extends to individuals educated in secular schools, viewed with distrust by those from rural backgrounds.

Moreover, the absence of girls' schools in rural villages further underscores the conservative attitudes prevalent in these areas. When the Taliban transition to urban centers, they carry with them the same rural mindset, which influences their perception of urban values. Consequently, there is a concerted effort to impose rural norms and values onto urban environments, reflecting a resistance to embracing urbanization and modernization.

This inclination to revert urban areas to a village-like setting reflects a broader trend among rural populations in Afghanistan, highlighting the enduring influence of traditional values and the challenges associated with reconciling rural and urban lifestyles (Muzda, 2004, p. 109). The religious ideology of the Taliban was a combination of *Salafi* and *Pashtunwali* Islam. Their religious interpretations were often specific and tended to cover local customs in the framework of religion (Barfield, 2010, p. 261).

During the initial tenure of the Taliban government, their Foreign Minister conveyed to the United Nations delegation that they were bound by certain obligations to their military personnel. This included the stipulation of preventing women from engaging in work or pursuing education. The minister suggested that altering this policy would prompt military personnel to return to their villages. This statement underscores the Taliban's prioritization of maintaining the loyalty of their fighters over advancing women's rights, demonstrating their entrenched commitment to conservative gender norms and the subjugation of women within Afghan society (Muzda, 2004, p. 110).

During the Taliban's second term in government, the Minister of Education articulated that there existed reluctance among communities in remote areas to send girls aged 16 and above to school. In the interview, he further elaborated that this reluctance stems not from an aversion to education for girls *per se*, but rather from concerns regarding their mobility outside the home. He emphasized that Afghan culture

places significant importance on preserving the modesty and honor of women, leading to sensitivity surrounding their movement beyond the confines of the household. This statement highlights deeply ingrained cultural norms that shape attitudes towards women's education and mobility within Afghan society, underscoring the complexities inherent in promoting gender equality in such contexts (Kawa, 2022).

The statements made by the Taliban Minister of Education have been widely criticized and deemed as insulting to the people of Afghanistan by a significant portion of the population. Many view these remarks as dismissive of the aspirations and rights of Afghan girls and women, and as perpetuating harmful stereotypes about their role and place in society. The suggestion that communities in remote areas are opposed to girls' education based solely on concerns about their mobility overlooks the multifaceted reasons behind barriers to education for girls, including systemic inequalities and cultural biases.

Moreover, the implication that Afghan culture inherently restricts the education and mobility of girls is seen as an oversimplification and misrepresentation of Afghan society, which has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. Such statements not only undermine efforts to promote gender equality and education but also reinforce harmful stereotypes that further marginalize women and girls. As a result, there has been widespread condemnation of these views, with calls for greater respect for the rights and dignity of all Afghans, regardless of gender.<sup>12</sup>

The assertion by the Taliban Minister of Education that the education process in Afghanistan over the past two decades did not align with the principles and culture of Islam and the Afghan people has sparked considerable controversy and disagreement. Many within Afghanistan and the international community have strongly refuted this claim, arguing that education initiatives during this period aimed to expand access to education for all Afghans, including girls and women, and promote inclusive and modern curricula that are in line with international standards.

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<sup>12</sup> Radio Azadir website, (2022). Afghans disagree with the statements of the Taliban's Acting Ministry of Education regarding girls' schools. [Mokhaleft Afghan ha ba Ezeharat Sarparest Vazart Moaref Talban dar Moord Makatab Dokhtaran] Available at: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/32031561.html> (In Farsi) [Accessed 24.11.2024].

Moreover, the suggestion that the education system under the Taliban's previous rule is more aligned with Islamic principles and Afghan culture is contested by many, given the Taliban's history of imposing strict and narrow interpretations of Islamic teachings and restricting access to education, particularly for women and girls.

Overall, the Minister of Education's remarks reflect the Taliban's efforts to justify their policies and actions by invoking religious and cultural rhetoric, but they are met with skepticism and criticism from those who advocate for inclusive and equitable education for all Afghans.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the speeches made by Taliban officials underscore the influence of rural or village culture on their policies and attitudes towards women. The Taliban's adherence to conservative cultural norms, often rooted in rural or traditional values, significantly shapes their approach to governance and social policies, particularly concerning women's rights and roles in society. This adherence to rural culture manifests in their emphasis on gender segregation, strict dress codes, and limitations on women's mobility and participation in public life.

The statements made by Taliban officials reflect their efforts to justify and uphold these policies by framing them within the context of cultural and religious norms. However, these policies are often at odds with the principles of gender equality and human rights, leading to criticism and opposition from both within Afghanistan and the international community.

Overall, the speeches of Taliban officials highlight the ongoing tension between traditional cultural practices and modern aspirations for gender equality and social progress in Afghan society.

After 2001, numerous programs were implemented with the aim of establishing new and democratic structures and organizations to foster collective action in villages across Afghanistan. These initiatives sought to promote community participation, governance transparency, and the empowerment of local populations. Key objectives included

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<sup>13</sup> News, Shafqana, 2022. Taliban Minister of Education: People do not want to send their daughters to school. [Vazir Moaref Talban: Mardam Nemi Khahand Dokhtaran Khod ra bah Mokteb Befrestand.] Available at: <https://af.shafaqna.com/FA/535786> (In Farsi) [Accessed 24.11.2024].



strengthening local governance mechanisms, enhancing civic engagement, and promoting grassroots development initiatives.

Through these programs, efforts were made to establish democratic village councils, known as *shuras*, and community-based organizations that could facilitate decision-making processes at the local level. Additionally, capacity-building activities aimed to empower villagers with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively in local governance structures and take ownership of development projects in their communities.

These post-2001 programs represented a concerted effort to decentralize governance, promote participatory democracy, and empower communities to address their own needs and priorities. While challenges persisted, particularly in regions affected by conflict and insecurity, these initiatives played a crucial role in laying the foundation for grassroots development and inclusive governance in Afghanistan (Pain and Stuge, 2015, p. 2).

Indeed, the lack of security in rural areas significantly hindered the success of programs aimed at fostering democratic structures and collective action in villages. Rural life in Afghanistan is deeply rooted in tradition, with a strong emphasis on preserving cultural heritage and adhering to traditional practices passed down through generations. In contrast, urban life is characterized by cultural innovation and diversity, reflecting the influence of modernization and urbanization.

The differences between urban and rural life extend to various aspects of daily life, including behavior, speech, clothing, and cultural norms. These disparities often result in conflicting perceptions and attitudes between urban and rural populations, leading to negative stereotypes and tensions between the two groups.

The Taliban, predominantly hailing from rural backgrounds, are influenced by traditional values and customs, which shape their policies and attitudes towards women. Their opposition to urban culture, perceived as a departure from traditional values, further exacerbates their adherence to conservative gender norms and contributes to misogyny and discrimination against women.

Overall, the complex interplay between urban and rural cultures in Afghanistan underscores the challenges of promoting social cohesion

and inclusive governance in a diverse and divided society. Efforts to address these disparities must take into account the cultural, social, and economic factors that shape attitudes and behaviors in both urban and rural areas (Interviewees 8, 9, and 10).

During the author's visit to a village under Taliban control in 2020, the author observed firsthand the prevalence of misogyny, particularly evident in mosque education. This observation leads us to believe that mosque education serves as a primary factor in shaping the minds of children and society towards adopting misogynistic attitudes. The teachings and narratives propagated in mosque education often reinforce gender stereotypes and perpetuate traditional notions of women's inferiority.

An interviewee described that an important factor contributing to discrimination against women in Afghanistan, and subsequently among the Taliban, is the commodification and objectification of women. In our village, women are often viewed as men's property, treated as objects to be acquired or obtained. This dehumanizing perspective decreases women's position as a subject in society.

The regularization of such arrogances not only continues gender discrimination and inequality but also similarly raises a culture of control of Afghan men over women's bodies and lives. This mindset provides an opportunity for the systematic suppression of women, reinforces discriminatory beliefs and behaviors in our society and provides the ground for the growth of extremist groups such as the Taliban. Identifying the root causes of misogyny requires challenging patriarchal norms and promoting gender equality through education, support, and social participation will be beneficial over time (7 Interviewees).

## **V. Conclusion and Recommendations**

To conclude, this research substantiates that the Taliban's prejudice against women is caused by several factors. The four variables this study looked at are especially significant among them. Through analysis, this study has shown the main conclusion.

First, the *Madrasas* and *Madrassa* curricula where the Taliban were trained have played an important role in the formation of discriminatory

attitudes of this group against women. The educational content of these *Madrasas* is based on conservative interpretations of Islam, which severely limits the role of women and deprives them of many social and individual rights. The textbooks of *Madrasas* have not only helped promote discriminatory views but have also allowed the Taliban to use these views as the ideological basis of their policies and actions against women. In general, the training of the Taliban in such environments has strengthened restrictive attitudes towards women. This factor is one of the most important elements in understanding and analyzing the Taliban's behavior towards women and shows how education and ideology can become a powerful tool to justify and apply discrimination.

Second, the mandatory orders of the Taliban leader have played a significant role in strengthening and stabilizing misogynistic thoughts among the Taliban. The leader's orders are considered as the ideological and political basis of the Taliban's behavior against women. These orders give legitimacy to the Taliban to apply these thoughts in the country. With these orders, the Taliban leadership suppresses any changes and attitudes in favor of women's rights and institutionalizes discrimination against women as an integral part of the Taliban's identity and performance. Additionally, the Taliban leader's coercive orders serve as a powerful control tool through which the leadership can maintain the group's ideological cohesion and severely repress any dissent or deviation from the misogynist ideology. These orders send the message to Taliban members that following misogynistic views is not only necessary but also a religious and ideological duty. Consequently, these orders not only reinforce misogynistic thoughts among the Taliban but also turn them into a tool to control and suppress women in society.

Third, Afghanistan's cultural factors, especially *Pashtunwali*, have had a deep effect on the formation and strengthening of misogynistic thoughts among the Taliban. *Pashtunwali*, as an unwritten cultural code and values, plays a vital role in the social and cultural structure of Pashtun-inhabited areas. This culture, which emphasizes concepts such as "honor" and "zealousness," introduces women as the bearers of honor and prestige of the family and tribe, and considers any behavior or freedom outside the traditional framework as a threat to these values. This conservative view of the role of women has encouraged the Taliban

to impose restrictions on the rights and freedoms of women. The Taliban relies on the *Pashtunwali*. These restrictions are not only a religious duty, but also a way of preserving tribal culture and traditions justify. Correspondingly, *Pashtunwali* strengthens patriarchal relations and confirms their legitimacy. Thus, it provides a context for the Taliban to build their misogynistic ideology on a stronger foundation. Hence, this culture acts not only as an independent cultural force but also as a key factor in the Taliban's ideology, which ultimately leads to further limitation of women in Afghanistan.

Fourth, the difference between urban and rural life in Afghanistan has profound effects on the formation of the Taliban discrimination against women. In Afghanistan villages, people are strongly loyal to tribal traditions and values, and social changes take place slowly. Traditions in rural areas have limited the role of women. The men of the family strictly control their social and personal freedoms. This situation makes the misogynistic ideology of the Taliban easily fit into the local culture and gain more acceptance. From this point of view, rural life by protecting traditional values and strengthening patriarchal structures provides a suitable ground for the acceptance and expansion of Taliban's misogynistic thoughts. In contrast, urban life creates a different environment with greater access to education, media, and broader social interactions. As centers of social change and progress, cities usually have more open and modern views of women's rights and roles. These differences make the Taliban's misogynistic thoughts face more resistance in urban environments. Recognizing these differences, the Taliban usually try to exert tighter control over urban areas and suppress any women's movement or activity that conflicts with their ideology. This harsher treatment of women in urban areas reflects the threat that the Taliban feel in the face of more open and egalitarian views in urban settings, which in turn leads to the reinforcement of a misogynist ideology in response to these threats.

Consequently, it can be argued that to improve the situation of women in Afghanistan and to counter the misogynistic thoughts of the Taliban, continuous and persistent efforts are necessary. The international community, human rights activists, and Afghan civil society should all take measured steps with complete patience toward the formation

of extensive reforms in the four key areas of the school curriculum: political and religious leadership, culture, and the difference between rural and urban areas. The first step in creating a legitimate cooperative system is to reform the country's education system, to revise *Madrassa* curricula and undertake serious reforms in this field. The promotion of school curricula and religious schools should be arranged. As a result they promote the values of gender equality, human rights, and women's participation in society. These programs should specifically emphasize the importance of women's role in social and economic development and avoid educational content that reinforces discriminatory views. It is very important to train teachers to work with a specific purpose in this field and to develop educational leaders who emphasize these values. In addition, providing girls with more access to education in rural areas through scholarships and support programs can help change attitudes in these areas.

Finally, focusing on strengthening urban communities as leading foci of social transformations can play an essential role in fighting against misogynistic ideas and supporting women's rights in the leadership of government and culture, highlighting the necessity of creating dialogue and cooperation between religious and political leaders and reformers. Religious and traditional leaders who have great influence in local communities should be encouraged to offer interpretations of Islam that are more compatible with women's rights and aim to challenge extremist interpretations. Promoting a culture of dialogue and interaction between urban and rural communities can also help change attitudes. Creating cultural, economic, and educational exchange programs between these communities can help resolve cultural differences and enable the acceptance of human rights ideas.

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