

Afghan Women's Rights A Defining Test of Global Commitment

Statement for International Women's Day and the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

March 8, 2026

The international community observes International Women's Day and convenes for the 70th session. The status of women and girls in Afghanistan is among the most pressing human rights issues of our time, which the Commission on the Status of Women has underlined. The systematic restrictions imposed on Afghan women and girls are not only a national crisis but also a true test of the world's commitment to gender equality, justice, and human dignity. For women and girls in Afghanistan, the fight for equality is no longer abstract.

It is a daily struggle for education, for the right to work, for freedom of movement, and for meaningful participation in public life. The loss of these basic rights puts the fabric of Afghan society in jeopardy in the social, economic, and political spheres. If half its population is not given the chance to contribute to its own future, a country cannot expect stability or growth.

More than 20 years ago, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, representing a global commitment to ensure that women are situated at the centre of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and recovery. The Women, Peace and Security agenda rests on four core pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. As these values recognize, women are not often perceived as enduring casualties of conflict, but rather as necessary actors shaping peace and reconstructing societies. But this bedrock in Afghanistan is now being eroded. Women and girls are confronted with broad constraints in education, opportunity for an education, employment, health care, civic life, and political participation. But these policies have consequences that spread well beyond individual rights. When girls are denied education, cultures lose generations of teachers, scientists, entrepreneurs, and leaders.

When women are shut out of economic life, it means families lose income, and communities lose resilience. When women are eliminated from the decision-making machinery, peace systems lose legitimacy and sustainability. The systemic marginalization of women in Afghanistan is also against the international norms as under obligations defined by the commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and according to the international commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the global commitment to sustainable development, the global community calls for the empowerment of all women and girls. Meeting these pledges will take a sustained commitment for the world.

A coordinated, international action is required to protect Afghan women and girls, which will take into account accountability, human rights, and inclusive development. Afghan women are required to be more than recipients of humanitarian assistance, but also to be at the forefront of shaping their country's future as leaders, advocates and as decision makers. To be credible, their participation must be an accepted part of the development road for any genuine path to stability and lasting peace. The four pillars of the Women, Peace and Security agenda remain crucial to international engagement. Facilitating participation means ensuring Afghan women are involved in real political dialogue, peacebuilding efforts, and development work.

It demands sustained effort to fight gender discriminatory, violent policies and to safeguard women's basic freedoms. Prevention must address structural inequalities that stand in the way of women receiving education, justice, and economic opportunity. It is imperative that women take a lead role in the relief and recovery of humanitarian and development approaches, acknowledging their necessity to play their support role in enabling community resilience.

The theme for this year of International Women's Day, Give and Gain, highlights the benefits of global solidarity. This will require sustained attention, resources, and political will from the international community to assist Afghan women and girls. In this sense, it is those women who fight for justice and equality, even against enormous odds, who have the strength, leadership, and resilience that the world requires. Empowering Afghan women is equally as much a moral imperative as it is a strategic investment for peace, stability, and sustainable development. Moreover, Afghan women cannot separate their problems from global inequalities. At the intersection of an interconnected world, marked by globalization and conflict, conflict-affected and developing countries bear the brunt of political and economic instability and exclusion. The burden of restrictive pressures falls most heavily on displaced and refugee Afghan women, who are subjected to the harshest immigration measures, uncertainty of legal status, and threat of enforced deportation.

They require an international approach: Protecting their rights requires it would not have to be confined within a country's geography. As the global community converges in the Commission on the Status of Women, it is high time the voices of Afghan women and girls form the centre of an international discussion, promoting issues relating to gender equality and peace. The courageous way they are standing up for education, for dignity, and for involvement still molds struggle for justice everywhere.

The future of all Afghan girls and women is tied deeply to the credibility of a global commitment to gender equality. So, their rights need to be protected, their voices must be heard, and their participation must be ensured.

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