



STOP GENDER APARTHEID IN AFGHANISTAN

A Project of the Feminist Majority Foundation

“If this was happening to any other class of people around the world, there would be a tremendous outcry. We must make sure these same standards are applied when it is women and girls who are brutally treated.”

- Eleanor Smeal, President, Feminist Majority Foundation

On September 27, 1996, the extremist Taliban militia seized control of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and violently plunged Afghanistan into a brutal state of gender apartheid in which women and girls have been stripped of their most basic human rights. Denied education, work, and freedom of movement, Afghan women are living under virtual house arrest.

Gender Apartheid - The Elimination of Women’s Rights

When they took control in 1996, the Taliban initially imposed strict edicts that:

- ◆ Banished women from the work force
- ◆ Closed schools to girls in cities and expelled women from universities
- ◆ Prohibited women from leaving their homes unless accompanied by a close male relative
- ◆ Ordered the publicly visible windows of women’s houses painted black and forced women to wear the burqa – which completely shrouds the body, leaving only a small mesh-covered opening through which to see
- ◆ Denied women and girls admittance to most hospitals and from being examined by male physicians while prohibiting most female doctors and nurses from working

Women have been brutally beaten, publicly flogged, and killed for violating Taliban decrees. Even after international condemnation, the Taliban has made only slight changes. Some say it is progress that a few women doctors and nurses are working. That in Kabul and other cities a few home schools for girls operate – although only clandestinely – and women who conduct home schools could be risking their lives or a severe beating. And that some hospitals have segregated wards for women. But the overall reality of the tragic plight of Afghan women and girls has remained virtually unchanged.

Gender Apartheid - The Reality for Afghan Women and Girls

- ◆ A woman who defied Taliban orders by running a home school for girls was killed in front of her family and friends.
- ◆ A woman caught trying to flee Afghanistan with a man not related to her was stoned to death for adultery.
- ◆ An elderly woman was brutally beaten with a metal cable until her leg was broken because her ankle was accidentally showing from underneath her burqa.
- ◆ Women have died of curable ailments because male doctors were not allowed to treat them.
- ◆ Two women accused of prostitution were publicly hung.

Gender Apartheid - Contrary to Afghan Culture and Islam

The Taliban has justified these abuses of women and girls in the name of religion and culture. To the contrary, the Taliban’s gender apartheid decrees are foreign to the religion, the culture, and the people of Afghanistan. Prior to the Taliban’s takeover, over half of the students and 60% of the teachers at Kabul University were women, and 70% of schoolteachers, 50% of civilian government workers, and 40% of health care workers in Kabul were women. The Taliban’s gender apartheid decrees have been denounced by Islamic scholars and groups around the world.

The Taliban – The Record of Human Rights Violations

In addition to denying basic human rights to over half of its population through its practice of gender apartheid, the Taliban has moved to cleanse areas under its control of all ethnicities and religions that differ from its own. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented Taliban massacres of hundreds of civilians. Only after

an international outcry did the Taliban back down from another edict requiring non-muslims to wear yellow badges, reminiscent of the Third Reich that required Jews to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothing, but their persecution of religious groups continues.

The Taliban – Who Supports Them

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980's the United States through a CIA covert operation based in Pakistan supplied billions of dollars to support insurgent militia forces called the mujahideen (soldiers of god). Following the Soviets' withdrawal in 1989, factions of the mujahideen fell into a civil war and, in 1994, the Taliban emerged as a dominant force.

Pakistan has been the primary source of support to the Taliban supplying military aid and personnel; financial support has also been provided by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which along with Pakistan comprise the only nations in the world that recognize the Taliban. Osama bin Laden has provided substantial financial resources, equipment and highly trained fighters for the Taliban regime's war against the Afghan people. Additionally, Afghanistan is the one of the world's two largest producers of opium and a major drug-processing center. But perhaps the biggest potential for financial support lies in the petroleum industry. International oil interests are in fierce competition to build pipelines through Afghanistan to link Caspian Sea oil and gas reserves to Central and South Asian markets

The Humanitarian Crisis

Millions of people in Afghanistan are in the most desperate poverty imaginable. Added to the Taliban's barbaric rule, the region is suffering under the most severe drought in decades and military incursions continue to displace hundreds of thousands of Afghans. Afghan refugees, who comprise the largest refugee population in the world today, are facing insurmountable odds. In Pakistan, 2 million Afghans live in refugee camps and another 1.5 million live in villages and cities. An additional 1.5 million refugees live in Iran. Almost all neighboring countries have now closed their borders to Afghan refugees. A ship with hundreds of Afghan refugees rescued by the crew of a Norwegian ship became an international pariah as the government of Australia refused assistance while the ship, crowded with many ill and starving refugees, sat within view of residents of Australia's Christmas Island.

The Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid

In 1997, The Feminist Majority launched the Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan to urge the US government and the U.N. to do everything in their power to restore the human rights of Afghan women and girls. Chaired by Mavis Leno, the Feminist Majority Foundation's campaign has brought together more than 200 leading human rights and women's organizations to condemn the Taliban's human rights abuses against women and girls and to put pressure on the U.S. and U.N. to do everything in their power to end gender apartheid in Afghanistan. The Campaign has been successful in increasing public awareness about the plight of women and girls in Afghanistan, preventing U.S. and U.N. recognition of the Taliban, increasing the admission of Afghan women and girls as refugees, increasing humanitarian aid to the region and pressuring UNOCAL, a California oil company to abandon its plans for an Afghan oil and gas pipeline which would have benefited the Taliban financially.

In the fall of 2000, the Campaign initiated the Back to School Campaign to focus the nation's attention on the fact that Afghan women and girls are not allowed to go to school. Through this effort 631 action teams comprised of local women's groups, girl scout troops, book clubs, churches, synagogues, school groups of all ages, colleges and universities, are:

- Adopting Afghan girls' schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan by exchanging letters, drawings and photographs
- with them and raising funds to support the schools.
- Recruiting scholarships at U.S. colleges and universities for Afghan women refugees
- Circulating petitions urging the U.S and the U.N to increase education, health, and humanitarian aid for Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and those living as refugees in Pakistan, and to help restore the human rights of Afghan women and girls.

Because of the current situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we decided to broaden the mission of the Back to School Campaign. Action Teams to Help Afghan Women will address not only the educational opportunities for Afghan women and girls, but also their health needs and the escalating humanitarian crisis.

Join the Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid & Help Restore Afghan Women's Human Rights
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West Coast Office: 8105 West Third Street, Los Angeles, CA 90048

STOP GENDER APARTHEID IN AFGHANISTAN

UNITED NATIONS PETITION

To: U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and U.N. Assistant Secretary General Angela King:

The link between the liberation of Afghan women and girls from the terrorist Taliban militia and preservation of democracy and freedom in America and worldwide has never been clearer.

We, the undersigned, deplore the Taliban's brutal decrees and gender apartheid in Afghanistan. Under the Taliban militia's rule, women and girls have been stripped of their most basic human rights. The Taliban has prohibited women and girls from working, going to school, and leaving their homes without a close male relative, and have severely limited their access to health care. We urge you to do everything in your power to restore women's human rights. Finally, we urge all countries and the United Nations to provide more funding for NGO humanitarian, health, and education programs for Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and refugees in Pakistan, Iran and India and to accept more female Afghan refugees and their families fleeing gender apartheid.

NAME	ADDRESS	E-MAIL	SIGNATURE

CIRCULATE AMONG YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COLLEAGUES. SEND COMPLETED PETITIONS TO:
FEMINIST MAJORITY FOUNDATION • 1600 WILSON BLVD., SUITE 801 • ARLINGTON, VA 22209

STOP GENDER APARTHEID IN AFGHANISTAN

GOVERNMENT PETITION

To: _____ (Names of Government Officials)

We, the undersigned, deplore the Taliban's brutal decrees and gender apartheid in Afghanistan. The link between the liberation of Afghan women and girls from the terrorist Taliban militia and freedom worldwide has never been clearer. As the world cannot forget the horrific events of September 11, 2001, please do not forget Afghan women and girls-- the first victims of the Taliban.

We urge you to do everything in your power to help Afghan women and girls, who have been held hostage by the brutal Taliban militia and must be freed. We must make sure that innocent people, especially women and girls, are not further victimized and sacrificed. We must help ensure that Afghan women's rights are restored and women are at the center of the rebuilding of the country. Finally, I urge all countries and the United Nations to fund more food and humanitarian assistance for displaced Afghan women and children and the women and children who comprise 75% of the Afghan refugees who have fled to Pakistan.

NAME	ADDRESS	E-MAIL	SIGNATURE

CIRCULATE AMONG YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COLLEAGUES. SEND COMPLETED PETITIONS TO YOUR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS