

1.2.5. Actors of enforcement

1.2.5. Actors of enforcement

The de facto MPVPV is responsible for propagating virtue and preventing vice based on the de facto authorities' interpretation of *sharia*,[233] and has been enforcing instructions that regulate the private lives of Afghans.[234] It is an influential institution that reports directly to the Taliban Supreme Leader on important issues.[235] Although the de facto MPVPV in principle has more of a guiding role,[236] its enforcers (*muhtasibin*,) enjoy extensive powers, allowing them to move beyond advising the population[237] and detain individuals failing to comply[238] or issue extra-judicial punishment.[239] Enforcers may issue any punishment they consider appropriate as long as it is not 'the exclusive prerogative of a court of law'.[240] Enforcement is to follow a 'sliding scale',[241] where 'advise' should be the first response to a 'wrongful act'. Only if the act continues, enforcers may resort to more forceful means (e.g. threats, fines and detentions).[242] However, this has not always been followed in practice, with for example women failing to comply with the *hijab* decree being arrested as a first response. The de facto MPVPV also cooperates with the de facto GDI, whose mandate allows for further coercive measures.[243]

Following the launch of the 'Morality law', the de facto MPVPV deployed additional enforcers across Afghanistan,[244] claiming that they had deployed 4 500 enforcers by October 2024.[245] Meanwhile, UNAMA reported that 3 300 enforcers operated across 28 provinces as of January 2025, with an average of 118 inspectors per province. Numbers varied depending on the size of the province and its population. For example, Paktya and Paktika had 14 enforcers each, while approximately 540 enforcers were operating in Kabul Province.[246] Almost all enforcers are male,[247] and they commonly wear white long coats (*perahan tunban*).[248]

There have been continuous reports on de facto MPVPV enforcers using force, including verbal intimidation, arrests, harassment, and physical violence.[249] An Afghan analyst who regularly conducts field-based research in Afghanistan told the EUAA that enforcers at times also resort to 'financial damage', such as destroying mobile phones.[250] UNAMA reported on an 'apparent lack of accountability' of de facto MPVPV staff, despite a complaint's mechanism being in place.[251] In an article, Rahimi argued that the de facto government's 'desire to turn the MPVPV into a police force that ensures compliance with a strict code of conduct' had diluted several legal safeguards to 'keep the ministry consistent with other canonical rules on Islamic governance in protecting privacy, due process, jurisprudential plurality, and equal application of sharia for the ruler and the ruled'.[252]

Despite the relatively small number of de facto MPVPV enforcers,[253] many Afghans have adapted to restrictions[254] through self-regulation,[255] social pressure, and reportedly also

community surveillance by family members, religious leaders and neighbours.256 Such measures are reportedly taken to avoid confrontations with enforcers.257 Some women avoid going outside their home,258 due to the risk of being spoken to, insulted, or arrested by an unknow man in the capacity of a de facto MPVPV official, which has a strong deterrent effect, as it would be considered a grave dishonour,259 bringing shame on the woman's family and community260 and triggering rumours.261 Families also resorted to 'self-policing' their female family members,262 and some families as well as NGOs and businesses 'pre-emptively' placed restrictions on women, according to UN Women, 'even in the absence of formal decrees'.263

Men also restrict women relatives as they may be held accountable264 and face reprisals for the behaviour of female family members.265 As per a 2022 decree mandating women to cover their faces, failure to comply may lead to the closest male relative facing reprimands, imprisonment or job dismissal.266 As noted by an anonymous source interviewed by ACCORD, the de facto MPVPV usually 'advises' close male relatives, such as a husband, father or brother, but may also turn to cousins or brothers-in-law.267 Some men have also become more conservative,268 as restrictions have been 'embedding norms into everyday behaviour'.269

- 233

  UNAMA, De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, url, p. 6

- 234

  UN Human Rights Council, The situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 5 September 2025, url, para. 11; Clark, K., Co-director and Senior Analyst at the AAN, USCIRF [YouTube], Hearing on Religious Freedom Conditions in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan, 7 April 2025, url, 1:09:00–1:09:36

- 235

  Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, url; UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October-December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, url, p. 6

- 236

  Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, url, p. 9

- 237

  Rahimi, H., How the Taliban are Institutionalizing the Propagation of Virtue and Enjoinment of Vice in Afghanistan, Edinburgh University Press, 9 December 2024, url

- 238

  UNAMA, De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, url, p. 16; Afghanistan, de facto authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, url, art. 24

- 239

  Butt, J., A Force for Good, or Source of Coercion? An Islamic scholar reflect on the Emirate’s morality law, AAN, 21 April 2025, url

- 240

  Afghanistan, de facto authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, url, art. 24

- 241

  Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the Austrian, Norwegian and Swedish COI units.

- 242

  Afghanistan, de facto authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, url, art. 24

- 243

  Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, url, pp. 9, 17

- 244

  UNAMA, Report on the Implementation, Enforcement and Impact of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Afghanistan, April 2025, url, p. 3; AW, Policing Morality in Afghanistan, 17 March 2025, url, p. 8

- 245

  AW, Policing Morality in Afghanistan, 17 March 2025, url, p. 8

- 246

  UNAMA, Report on the Implementation, Enforcement and Impact of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Afghanistan, April 2025, url, pp. 3, 8

- 247

  UNAMA, Report on the Implementation, Enforcement and Impact of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Afghanistan, April 2025, url, p. 8

- 248

  AW, Policing Morality in Afghanistan, 17 March 2025, url, p. 6; BBC News, Afghanistan: Policing faces, bodies and beards on Kabul streets, 22 May 2022, url

- 249

UNAMA, De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, url, pp. 3, 16; AW, Policing Morality in Afghanistan, 17 March 2025, url, p. 8

- 250

  Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the Austrian, Norwegian and Swedish COI units.

- 251

  UNAMA, De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, url, p. 4

- 252

  Rahimi, H., How the Taliban are Institutionalizing the Propagation of Virtue and Enjoinment of Vice in Afghanistan, Edinburgh University Press, 9 December 2024, url

- 253

  Guardian (The), How ordinary men became unpaid Taliban enforcers in their own homes, 9 June 2025, url

- 254

  Clark, K., A year of Propagating Virtue and Preventing Vice: Enforcers and 'enforced' speak about the Emirate's morality law, AAN, 21 August 2025, url

- 255

  UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 20 February 2025, url, para. 15

- 256

  UN Human Rights Council, The situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 5 September 2025, url, para. 17

- 257

  UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 20 February 2025, url, para. 15; Clark, K., A year of Propagating Virtue and Preventing Vice: Enforcers and 'enforced' speak about the Emirate's morality law, AAN, 21 August 2025, url

- 258

  Clark, K., A year of Propagating Virtue and Preventing Vice: Enforcers and 'enforced' speak about the Emirate's morality law, AAN, 21 August 2025, url

- 259

Clark, K., A year of Propagating Virtue and Preventing Vice: Enforcers and ‘enforced’ speak about the Emirate’s morality law, AAN, 21 August 2025, url; Guardian (The), How ordinary men became unpaid Taliban enforcers in their own homes, 9 June 2025, url

- 260

  UN Women, Four Years of Taliban Rule: Afghan Women Resist as Restrictions Tighten, August 2025, url, p. 4

- 261

  Clark, K., A year of Propagating Virtue and Preventing Vice: Enforcers and ‘enforced’ speak about the Emirate’s morality law, AAN, 21 August 2025, url

- 262

  Clark, K., A year of Propagating Virtue and Preventing Vice: Enforcers and ‘enforced’ speak about the Emirate’s morality law, AAN, 21 August 2025, url; Guardian (The), How ordinary men became unpaid Taliban enforcers in their own homes, 9 June 2025, url

- 263

  UN Women, Four Years of Taliban Rule: Afghan Women Resist as Restrictions Tighten, August 2025, url, p. 4

- 264

  ACCORD, Afghanistan: Report on the impact of the Taliban’s information practices and legal policies, particularly on women and girls, February 2025, url, pp. 78–79; UN Women, Four Years of Taliban Rule: Afghan Women Resist as Restrictions Tighten, August 2025, url, p. 4; Guardian (The), How ordinary men became unpaid Taliban enforcers in their own homes, 9 June 2025, url

- 265

  UN Women, Four Years of Taliban Rule: Afghan Women Resist as Restrictions Tighten, August 2025, url, p. 4

- 266

  RFE/RL, Afghan Taliban Orders Women To Wear Burqa Coverings In Public, 7 May 2022, url

- 267

  This anonymous source has nearly two decades of working experience in Afghanistan, focusing on the health sector, service development, training, and capacity building. ACCORD, Afghanistan: Report on the impact of the Taliban’s information practices and legal policies, particularly on women and girls, February 2025, url, pp. 78–79

- 268

Clark, K., A year of Propagating Virtue and Preventing Vice: Enforcers and ‘enforced’ speak about the Emirate’s morality law, AAN, 21 August 2025, url

- 269

  UN Women, Four Years of Taliban Rule: Afghan Women Resist as Restrictions Tighten, August 2025, url, p. 4

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu