

4.4. Women and girls

4.4.1. General situation under Taliban rule

Several edicts, decrees and declarations have been issued restricting women's and girls' rights since the Taliban takeover, including limitations on their freedom of movement, expression and behaviour, as well as their access to education, employment, healthcare, justice, and social protection.1224 The de facto government has held the position that they do protect women's and girls' rights, but in line with *sharia* and Afghan societal norms.1225 Afghan women activists abroad have meanwhile been engaged in a campaign on referring to the situation in Afghanistan as 'gender apartheid'.1226 In July 2025, the ICC issued arrest warrants for the Taliban Supreme Leader and the de facto Chief Justice on charges of 'crime against humanity of persecution on gender grounds' against Afghan women and girls.1227

During the initial phase after the Taliban takeover, the enforcement of directives and restrictions on women and girls was not consistent,1228 however a more complex and systematic enforcement model has reportedly taken hold, limiting the variance that existed across the country.1229 Meanwhile, however, regional inconsistencies and variations still exist,1230 although restrictions increased with the 'Morality law', enhancing a culture of fear.1231 Based on interviews on-the-ground, the AAN found that enforcers were sometimes going above and beyond issued restrictions, and many women have been 'self-policing',1232 and 'self-censoring or restricting their behaviour pre-emptively'.1233 Some sources suggest that policies were less strictly enforced in urban areas, and that women had found ways to adapt and navigate over the years.1234 However, as reported by the AAN enforcement, it may sometimes be harsher in urban areas, such as Kabul City, as in more traditional rural areas there are fewer enforcers that show greater respect for the population, and might be hesitant to challenge local women's behaviour fearing bad reactions from their male relatives.1235

The enforcement of restrictions targeting women and girls has reportedly increasingly expanded from the de facto authorities to local community and family members.1236 Men may be held accountable for the behaviour of female family members and thus have an incentive to ensure that none of their family members are found committing offences.1237 In several instances recorded by the UN, male family members or community elders had to give guarantees of future good behaviour for detained or arrested women,1238 especially for protesters and women accused of failure to observe *hijab* requirements.1239 More information on the enforcement of instructions on dress codes and gender segregation is available in section 1.2.7. Enforcement of selected restrictions on personal freedoms.

A compilation of national decrees and instructions issued by the de facto authorities since the Taliban takeover is available in Annex 3: Lists of decrees and instructions. During the reference period of this report the de facto government issued the following instructions:

- a ban on women attending medical classes, including programs in midwifery and nursing (2 December 2024);1240

- a ban on windows overlooking neighbours' courtyards, kitchens, wells and other areas used by women in newly constructed buildings (28 December 2024).1241

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