

## 4.4.2. Freedom of expression and assembly

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After the Taliban takeover, women staged peaceful protests<sup>1242</sup> against the restrictions imposed on their rights. The de facto security forces responded to some of these protests with force, intimidation, arrests, arbitrary detentions and ill-treatment.<sup>1243</sup> Some women activists were detained and subjected to ill-treatment such as sexual violence and torture.<sup>1244</sup> Consequently, the numbers of outdoor women protests decreased sharply and protesters turned to other alternatives,<sup>1245</sup> such as indoor protests,<sup>1246</sup> graffiti<sup>1247</sup> and social media posts.<sup>1248</sup> By 2024, women protests were only occasionally reported.<sup>1249</sup> During the reference period, women protested against the ban on medical training for women in December 2024 in several provinces.<sup>1250</sup> According to Afghan media in exile, women retirees participated in protests demanding their pensions in Kabul City on 16 September 2025;<sup>1251</sup> some of them were reportedly beaten by guards outside the de facto Pension Department.<sup>1252</sup>

In the ‘Morality law’, the sound of a woman’s voice ‘in a song, a hymn, or a recital out loud in a gathering’ is described as something that ‘should be concealed’ and as a ‘wrongful act’.<sup>1253</sup> The de facto MPVPV has later indicated that the law does not prohibit the voice of women ‘when it is necessary for them to speak’ such as during shopping,<sup>1254</sup> and that it only applies to situations of reciting the Quran and singing loudly.<sup>1255</sup> Regarding the impact of the provisions on women’s voices on the daily lives of women, Rahimi noted, in October 2025, that in some provinces, women would not appear in public or would not speak to men regardless of what the Taliban edicts may be. He stated that he is not aware of a strong push to stop women from appearing in public or engaging in everyday activities, such as shopping, where this was the norm before. For example, in Herat and in areas where it has been the norm for women to do the shopping, they have continued to do so as well as going out and about with their lives.<sup>1256</sup>

Rahimi however noted that the restriction on women’s voices had been enforced by bans on radio with female broadcasters, with efforts across the country to get rid of such channels. However, it varied depending on the province. In Kandahar Province, female radio broadcasters were not allowed, whereas TOLONews still had female reporters appearing on television with a mask.<sup>1257</sup> Other sources also reported that in some provinces, women’s voices have been banned from television and radio broadcasts.<sup>1258</sup> Moreover, UNAMA received reports about women’s radio stations in various provinces being told that they were not allowed to operate unless they had a license registered to a man,<sup>1259</sup> and persons interviewed by Rawadari indicated that the de facto authorities punish people who attempt to record and broadcast the voice of a woman or a girl.<sup>1260</sup> Human Rights Watch also noted that de facto officials have detained media workers, *inter alia*, for violating prohibitions on broadcasting women’s voices.<sup>1261</sup> Nevertheless, in some provinces, women’s voices continue to be heard in radio programmes, and some women-run radio stations remain in operation.<sup>1262</sup>

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