

# 4.4.2. Freedom of expression and assembly

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After the Taliban takeover, women staged peaceful protests1242 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.1243 Some women activists were detained and subjected to ill-treatment such as sexual violence and torture.1244 Consequently, the numbers of outdoor women protests decreased sharply and protesters turned to other alternatives,1245 such as indoor protests,1246 graffiti1247 and social media posts. 1248 By 2024, women protests were only occasionally reported.1249 During the reference period, women protested against the ban on medical training for women in December 2024 in several provinces.1250 According to Afghan media in exile, women retirees participated in protests demanding their pensions in Kabul City on 16 September 2025;1251 some of them were reportedly beaten by guards outside the de facto Pension Department.1252

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'.1253 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,1254 and that it only applies to situations of reciting the Quran and singing loudly.1255 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.1256

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.1257 Other sources also reported that in some provinces, women's voices have been banned from television and radio broadcasts.1258 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,1259 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.1260 Human Rights Watch also noted that de facto officials have detained media workers, *inter alia*, for violating prohibitions on broadcasting women's voices. 1261 Nevertheless, in some provinces, women's voices continue to be heard in radio programmes, and some women-run radio stations remain in operation.1262

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