

4.4.7. Violence against women

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Gender-based violence is widespread in Afghanistan.1423 Even before the Taliban takeover there was a high prevalence of incidents of gender-based violence,1424 but the issue is reportedly on the rise.1425 Violence against women and girls takes place ‘inside and outside of their homes’,1426 in both the ‘public and private sphere’.1427 Specific groups of women are at higher risk of gender-based violence, including women headed-households, widows, girls forced into early marriage, internally displaced and returnees, women with disabilities, as well as religious, ethnic, sexual and gender minorities.1428 Even though the de facto authorities claimed to effectively combat violence against women,1429 UNAMA has recorded several incidents of gender-based violence against women and girls, including murders; so-called honour killings; child marriages; forced marriages; rape; domestic violence and suicides because of domestic violence.1430 UNAMA recorded cases where de facto officials intervened to prevent violence and forced marriages, however, it also documented cases in which de facto officials were accused of being perpetrators of forced marriage, enforcing forced marriages, and encouraging a victim to stay in a marriage in which she was physically abused.1431

The fear of social shame to be punished for ‘immoral’ behaviour of female family members led men towards repression and violence against women,1432 with honour killings increasing according to an anonymous source interviewed by ACCORD.1433 Afghan human rights lawyer Humaira Rasuli found in a research study that, among women exposed to domestic violence, 57 % were facing violence by husbands and other family members, while in 43 % of the cases, perpetrators also included unidentified people and de facto MPVPV enforcers in the streets, workplace, and other public places.1434 Because of a culture of silence and out of fear of being stigmatised, women survivors of sexual violence rarely report sexual abuse and rape.1435 Reportedly, several women who were detained have been subjected to sexual violence by the de facto authorities.1436 Former female detainees face social stigma,1437 rejection by their families and report continued harassment and intimidation, including by the Taliban.1438

Even though there are no official data,1439 sources noted that the prevalence of child, early and forced marriages has been high and on the rise.1440 Early and forced marriages of girls have reportedly increased since the Taliban takeover1441 due to factors such as the economic and humanitarian crisis, the lack of education and employment prospects, and families’ belief that securing a spouse for their daughters would protect them from being forced to marry a member of the Taliban.1442

Corporal punishments inflicted by de facto courts for both men and women have increased under Taliban rule,1443 including many cases related to *zina* (adultery or ‘running away from

home').[1444] Women and girls are disproportionally affected by the criminalisation of adultery as they are much more likely to be accused of *zina* (sex outside of marriage), often based on little or no evidence. Situations of women fleeing forced marriage or domestic violence and crimes of rape are frequently mischaracterised as adultery or other moral crimes.[1445]

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