

Systematic Arrest of Women in Afghanistan; Taliban's Abuse of Power and Religion for Repression and Financial Extortion

23 July 2025

With deep concern and serious distress, we bring to the attention of the international community numerous documented reports of widespread, degrading, and organized arrests of women by the Taliban's so-called "Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV)."

These arrests are being carried out deliberately in densely populated and high-traffic areas of Kabul, including Shahr-e-Naw, Qala-e-Fathullah, Dasht-e-Barchi, Taimani, Pul-e-Surkh, Karte-3, Dehbori, and Macroryan. Women have primarily been arrested while commuting for basic needs such as shopping, visiting pharmacies, going to work, or attending educational institutions—even though many of them were fully covered in Islamic attire, including black chadors or niqabs, and dressed in accordance with the Taliban's own ideological standards.

Nevertheless, these women have been detained without any official documentation or formal charges, subjected to humiliation, and transferred to detention centres operated by the so-called PVPV.

According to reliable sources and verified testimonies:

- Detained women are forced to remain in custody for at least three days;
- Their release is conditioned upon payment of amounts ranging from 10,000 to 25,000 Afghanis by their families—illegally and informally collected as "fines" or "release fees";
- In several cases, their mobile phones and personal documents are confiscated, and families are pressured to pay additional sums to retrieve them;
- We have received reports that some women, upon release, have faced violence and abuse within their households.

These incidents represent widespread and systematic violations of human rights, human dignity, and fundamental principles of women's rights. They constitute clear examples of arbitrary detention, abuse of authority, and the instrumentalization of religious doctrine for purposes of financial extortion and social repression.

As a civil society organization, we emphasize that these actions are not only a grave threat to the individual and social freedoms of women, but they also exacerbate domestic violence, social exclusion, and public fear among women and families.

We urgently call on the international community to take immediate, practical, and concrete action:

1. Official and public condemnation of these actions by all international bodies advocating for human and women's rights;
2. Immediate dispatch of an independent fact-finding mission to investigate arbitrary detentions and associated cases of violence and extortion;
3. Effective diplomatic, media, and political pressure on the Taliban to halt these practices immediately;
4. Implementation of targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for the arrests, torture, and violations of women's rights;
5. Creation of emergency protection mechanisms, including the establishment of safe humanitarian corridors and evacuation pathways for women at risk.

We expect the international community to break the silence and take swift and decisive action to prevent further victimization of women.

Every day of delay is a heavy price paid in the lives, dignity, and honour of Afghan women.

We, as the collective conscience of Afghanistan's civil society, issue this warning:

If no action is taken today, then tomorrow, not only women's freedom, but their very place in Afghan society will vanish into complete darkness.

With respect,
Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+)