



ابتکار برین برای توسعه
Bareen Initiative for Development (BID)

“UN Report Exposes Taliban’s Systematic Erasure of Women: The New Divorce Decree and Deepening Gender Apartheid” Concept Note

Introduction

Afghanistan under Taliban rule is witnessing one of the most severe regressions in women’s rights in modern history. Recent UN statements and reports, particularly those addressing the Taliban’s Decree No. 18 (Principles of Separation of Spouses) issued on 14 May 2026, highlight a deliberate and accelerating process of identity erasure for Afghan women and girls. This decree, alongside broader restrictions, institutionalizes child marriage, severely limits women’s access to divorce, and entrenches systemic gender discrimination.

This webinar will examine these developments through the lens of the latest UN assessments, exploring how legal, social, and political mechanisms are stripping Afghan women of autonomy, visibility, and basic rights. It aims to amplify Afghan women’s voices and foster coordinated international response.

Rationale

The Taliban’s new divorce law (Decree No. 18) explicitly regulates separation for girls married before puberty, implicitly legitimizing child marriage and interpreting a girl’s silence at puberty as consent. It grants men unilateral divorce rights while imposing burdensome evidentiary and consent requirements on women, making escape from abusive or forced marriages nearly impossible.

This fits into a larger pattern documented in UN reports: the systematic erasure of women from public life, denial of education beyond primary level, restrictions on movement and work, and criminalization of women’s presence in society. UN Women and UNAMA describe these as steps toward “gender apartheid,” deepening humanitarian crises and denying women autonomy, opportunity, and justice.

As Afghanistan approaches five years under Taliban control, the international community risks normalizing this oppression. BID, as a development initiative committed to Afghan women’s empowerment, believes it is critical to spotlight these issues, bridge local realities with global advocacy, and prevent further entrenchment of discriminatory laws.

Objectives

- To present and analyze the findings of recent UN reports and statements on the Taliban’s Decree No. 18 and the broader situation of Afghan women.
- To highlight the intersection of legal erasure (divorce law and child marriage) with social and identity-based exclusion of Afghan women.
- To provide a platform for Afghan women’s voices, activists, and experts to share lived experiences and recommendations.
- To explore pathways for accountability, targeted advocacy, and support for Afghan women inside and outside the country.
- To mobilize international stakeholders for stronger, coordinated action against gender-based persecution in Afghanistan.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness among participants and wider audiences of the UN-documented erosion of Afghan women’s rights and the implications of the new divorce decree.



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- Strengthened networks and partnerships between Afghan civil society, international organizations, and policymakers for joint advocacy.
- Concrete recommendations and action points emerging from discussions, to be compiled into a post-webinar policy brief or statement by BID.
- Amplified calls for non-recognition of Taliban decrees that violate international human rights standards, with emphasis on protecting women's positive sovereignty and identity.
- Enhanced visibility for Afghan women's resistance and resilience, countering narratives of erasure.

Themes of Discussion

This webinar will focus on two closely interconnected main themes:

1. UN Reports

- Analysis of the latest reports and statements by UN Women and UNAMA on the situation of women's rights in Afghanistan.
- Examination of the concept of "gender apartheid" and the systematic erasure of women from public life.
- Assessment of the impact of restrictions on education, employment, movement, and social participation on the humanitarian and psychological well-being of Afghan women and girls.
- The role and challenges of the international community in responding to these reports.

2. Taliban Divorce Decree (Decree No. 18)

- Detailed review of the decree's content and its legal implications for child marriage and women's right to divorce.
- Analysis of how the decree legitimizes marriage before puberty and interprets a girl's silence as consent.
- Comparison between men's unilateral right to divorce and the heavy barriers faced by women seeking to escape forced or abusive marriages.
- The decree's impact on the security, health, and future of Afghan girls, and its connection to the broader pattern of gender-based repression.

Key Messages

The Taliban's new divorce law is not an isolated measure but part of a systematic campaign to erase Afghan women's identity, autonomy, and presence in society. UN reports clearly document this "gender apartheid" and the criminalization of women's public existence, urging the international community to firmly reject any normalization of these policies. Afghan women possess inherent rights under international law that cannot be subordinated to any regime's interpretation of sovereignty or culture. Protecting them demands concrete action — sustained advocacy, humanitarian support prioritizing women-led initiatives, and robust accountability mechanisms to prevent further regression. Silence or inaction only amounts to complicity in the ongoing victimization of half of Afghanistan's population.

Target Audience

- Policymakers and diplomats from regional and global countries.
- Researchers, academics, and students in international relations, political science, and regional studies.



- Security analysts and counterterrorism experts.
- Representatives of international and regional organizations.

Format

- Duration: 2 hours, comprising a keynote address, a moderated panel discussion, and an interactive Q&A session.
- Platform: Conducted via Zoom, with live streaming on the Bareen Initiative for Development's website and social media channels to ensure global accessibility.
- Moderation: Facilitated by senior experts from the Bareen Initiative for Development to ensure rigorous, inclusive, and constructive dialogue.

Call to Action

The Bareen Initiative for Development (BID) calls on stakeholders to engage in this critical dialogue to reassess past policies and chart a principled path forward for Afghanistan and the region. Through rigorous analysis, collaborative innovation, and a commitment to justice. This webinar will serve as a timely and powerful platform to reaffirm its commitment to Afghan women's rights, dignity, and future.