

Manifesto: Afghan Women's Rights Are Not Negotiable

An Urgent Call to the Dutch Government and the European Commission

Why this manifesto?

What is happening to Afghan women today affects all of us. The destruction of their rights weakens the global fight for equality and women's rights.

For almost five years, Afghan women and girls have been systematically excluded from public life. Under Taliban rule, they have been stripped of their most basic rights, including the right to education, work, freedom of movement, and participation in society. This systematic oppression has taken away the future of millions of women and girls and sets a dangerous example for women's rights around the world.

Human rights are not political favors—they are universal rights that belong to every human being. When the international community accepts that women can be systematically deprived of these rights, it weakens the protection of women's rights everywhere. That is why the Netherlands and the European Union must not normalize, downplay, or indirectly legitimize these serious human rights violations.

The Taliban's institutionalized discrimination affects not only women and girls, but also other groups, including LGBTQI+ people. They face an increased risk of persecution, arbitrary detention, abuse, and violence. This systematic denial of fundamental rights requires a strong and consistent international response.

The crisis in Afghanistan goes beyond the systematic oppression of women and girls. The country is facing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Millions of people depend on emergency aid because of conflict, economic collapse, and recurring natural disasters. At the same time, attacks from Pakistan and the forced return of Afghans from neighboring countries are causing even more instability and human suffering.

Why now?

The recent invitation of a Taliban delegation to Brussels for talks sets a dangerous precedent. It creates the impression that diplomatic engagement is possible without holding the regime accountable for its systematic human rights violations. By repeatedly treating the Taliban as a legitimate negotiating partner, the international community gradually grants political legitimacy to a regime that denies women and girls their most basic rights.

This kind of normalization goes against the very values on which the European Union is founded. It is especially contradictory that the Netherlands is taking legal action against

Afghanistan under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for its systematic violations of women's rights, while at the European level discussions with the Taliban continue on cooperation and returns. This undermines the credibility of the European Union's human rights policy and sends the message that cooperation with this regime is ultimately acceptable.

The Responsibility of the Netherlands and the European Union

Under Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the European Union has a duty to actively promote and protect human rights, the rule of law, and human dignity in all of its external actions.

The Netherlands and the European Union therefore have a responsibility to actively oppose serious and systematic human rights violations, including gender apartheid, and to use every available diplomatic, political, and legal tool to help bring them to an end. A regime built on systematic oppression and the denial of fundamental rights must never receive political legitimacy or international recognition.

We refuse to accept a world in which women and girls are denied the right to live with dignity.

Our demands

We call on the Dutch Government and the European Union to reject every form of political cooperation, diplomatic engagement, and normalization of the Taliban. The systematic violation of human rights is not a side effect of Taliban rule, it is the foundation of the regime itself. A government built on gender apartheid, systematic oppression, and the denial of fundamental rights must never receive political legitimacy or international recognition.

We therefore call on the Dutch Government and the European Union to:

1. Stop the normalization of the Taliban

- a.** End all political and diplomatic contact with the Taliban.
- b.** Reject every attempt to normalize or legitimize the Taliban regime.

2. Put the rights of Afghan women first

- a.** Ensure that Afghan women, women's rights defenders, journalists, and civil society organizations are meaningfully involved in all policies and decisions concerning Afghanistan.
- b.** Protect Afghan women and girls who are at risk because of their work in human rights, education, journalism, or civil society.

3. Fight gender apartheid and ensure accountability

- a.** Support international efforts to document, investigate, and prosecute gender apartheid and other serious human rights violations.
- b.** Show international leadership by clearly condemning and actively fighting gender apartheid and all forms of oppression.

Our message

Women's rights are not a bargaining chip.

A regime built on gender apartheid, systematic oppression, and the denial of fundamental rights deserves neither political legitimacy nor international recognition.

The struggle of Afghan women is not a local issue. It concerns the very values on which the international legal order is built: human dignity, equality, and freedom.

We stand in solidarity with all women and girls who, despite enormous personal risks, continue to fight for freedom, education, dignity, and equality.

The Netherlands and the European Union must act in line with these values and defend the rights of Afghan women and girls without compromise.

Sign this manifesto

Stand up for women's rights.

Speak out against gender apartheid.

Sign this manifesto and show that the rights of Afghan women are not negotiable.