

HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM BANGLADESH (HRFB)

Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) expresses grave concern about the Human Rights Situation of Afghanistan and urges not to overthrow the years-long achievements

[Dhaka, 14 September 2021] Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB), a network of 20 human rights organisations in Bangladesh, one of the SAARC countries, is extremely concerned about the ongoing violations and infringement of rights of the civilians of Afghanistan especially women and girls, aid workers, social and cultural activists, human rights defenders, and journalists, etc. The Forum expresses its solidarity with the civilians of Afghanistan and believes that every Afghan citizen should be able to enjoy their rights in full conformity with human rights principles. The Forum further expresses its solidarity with and strongly supports the protests of Afghan women and urges the international community to do the same.

Since the removal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, the Taliban has assured that women and girls would enjoy equal rights, albeit within the framework of Islam under their rule. Unfortunately, the recent activities of the Taliban do not reflect the same. The current limitations and restrictions are slowly overshadowing Afghan women's advancement and achievements in the past 20 years. Where they previously gave the impression to be inclusive in their decision and protect the rights of minorities, their recent actions clearly contradict the principles of inclusivity and equality. The ruling government placed restrictions on women to refrain from leaving their homes; women's right to work and access to education is under serious threat. History dictates that their interpretation of the application of Islamic Shariah Law on the rules and regulations centering on women's participation in the political sphere are vague, restrictive, and repressive, and in apparent disregard to the principles of international human rights law. This is reflected in the recently formed 'zero' women-represented government that will govern Afghanistan in the coming years. The civic space is near absent in the ruling of the Taliban. Besides, the ongoing allegations against the Taliban of attacking women and girls, including academics, human rights activists and defenders, journalists, and religious minorities, have created a sense of fear and uncertainty within them. Moreover, the citizens who were fleeing the country from violence were further restricted from leaving their homes.

In this backdrop, the Forum urges **the United Nations (UN) and the international community for taking immediate actions and creating pressure on the Afghan Government to-**

- protect the rights of Afghan women, children, and minorities, and ensure their security and safety;
- protect the rights of members of religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities and other disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of the Afghan society;
- ensure equality, diversity, and human rights of all Afghan citizens;

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- allow all the women to retain their current government jobs and refrain from terminating them;
- refrain using any violence against women, children, and minorities and take immediate actions against the perpetrators;
- include women and members of minorities within the political, social, and economic spheres to participate and engage at all levels of decision making;
- guarantee and protect the rights of women human rights defenders and activists, particularly in relation to freedom from violence and persecution, and freedom of expression;
- ensure that all Afghan children have full and equal access to education, irrespective of gender and are able to enjoy a safe learning environment;
- ensure compliance with the international human rights law/standards and international humanitarian law.

The UN and international community must also work to-

- ensure the safety of civilians across the country in accordance with international humanitarian law and do their utmost to facilitate safe passage and provide basic necessities to those fleeing from violence;
- establish a mechanism to monitor and report on the situation of Afghanistan and have regular dialogues with the Taliban to ensure compliance with international human rights standards and accountability if otherwise happens;
- intensify efforts for humanitarian assistance and use such assistance as leverage to persuade the Taliban to ensure the fundamental rights of the people of Afghanistan, especially women, children, minorities, media, and civil society.

LIST OF SIGNATORIES [IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER]

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