FAIRGAZE PRESENTS

FREEVOICE MUN 2.0

Online Edition

BACKGROUND GUIDE

United Nations Human Rights Council

UNHRC

AGENDA

Addressing the Institutionalization of Gender-Based Discrimination in Afghanistan: Examining the Recognition of "Gender Apartheid", Accountability Mechanisms and the International Community's Responsibility to Protect Fundamental Rights

4 November 2026 · Online

Open to students of Grade 6 and above

For the use of delegates only. This is not an official United Nations document.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to Use This Guide

This guide is written for delegates who may be attending a Model United Nations (MUN) conference for the very first time. You do not need any previous MUN experience to read it, understand it and do well in committee. Read it in order: Part I explains what an MUN is and how your committee works, Part II teaches the rules you will use on the day, Part III explains the agenda in depth, and Part IV shows you how to research and prepare.

- **Blue boxes** explain an idea in simple words.
- **Gold boxes** are practical tips for delegates.
- **Green boxes** contain key facts and figures you can quote in committee.
- **Red boxes** warn you about common mistakes.

Facts in this guide were checked against United Nations and other official sources available up to mid-2026. This agenda keeps changing, so always confirm the latest developments yourself before 4 November, and quote dated sources ("according to the October 2026 report of…") rather than live totals.

COMMITTEE AT A GLANCE

Item	Details
Conference	FairGaze FreeVoice MUN 2.0, Online Edition
Committee	United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
Agenda	Addressing the Institutionalization of Gender-Based Discrimination in Afghanistan: Examining the Recognition of "Gender Apartheid", Accountability Mechanisms and the International Community's Responsibility to Protect Fundamental Rights
Delegations	54 delegations allotted at the conference; each has one vote
Outcome	A resolution adopted by a simple majority of members present and voting
Date and format	Wednesday, 4 November 2026; one day of online committee sessions on a video-meeting platform. The meeting link and timings are shared in your committee's WhatsApp group.
Who can take part	Students of Grade 6 and above. Registration is free.

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It is our privilege to welcome you to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at FairGaze FreeVoice MUN 2.0. FreeVoice is built on a simple idea: every voice deserves to be heard. It is free, it is online and it is open to any student from Grade 6 upwards, wherever you live. Whether this is your tenth conference or your first, you belong here, and you will leave a more confident speaker and a sharper thinker.

Our agenda asks us to look at one of the most severe denials of women's rights anywhere in the world: Addressing the institutionalisation of gender-based discrimination in Afghanistan, examining the recognition of 'gender apartheid', accountability mechanisms and the international community's responsibility to protect fundamental rights. FreeVoice is about the right to be heard. In Afghanistan, millions of women and girls have lost that right by law.

Many of you are the same age as the Afghan girls who have been told they may not go back to school. As you research, remember that every country in this committee says it supports women's rights. They disagree about labels, about sovereignty, culture and religion, and about whether to isolate or engage the Taliban. Your job is to represent your country faithfully and still find language that protects the people this agenda is about.

This guide is your starting point, not your finishing line. It explains the rules of procedure, the history of the issue, the law that applies and the positions of different countries. Your task is to go further: to discover what your country believes, why it believes it, and what it would be willing to agree to. The best delegates are not those who speak the loudest, but those who listen carefully, negotiate in good faith and write solutions that others are willing to sign.

Remember that in committee you represent your allotted country, not your personal opinion. You may be asked to defend a position you personally disagree with. That is the real skill of diplomacy, and it is what makes MUN such a valuable experience. Keep your camera on, keep your notes close, and do not be afraid to raise your hand. We look forward to an informed, respectful and lively debate.

With warm regards,
The Executive Board
United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
FairGaze FreeVoice MUN 2.0

PART I

Understanding Model United Nations

What an MUN is, and how your committee works in the real world

1. What is a Model United Nations?

A Model United Nations is an educational simulation of the United Nations and other international bodies. Each student becomes a **delegate** who represents a country (called a **portfolio**) in a committee. Delegates research their country's views, give speeches, debate, form alliances, negotiate and finally write and vote on a **resolution**, the formal document in which the committee records what it has agreed, just as real diplomats do in New York, Geneva and Nairobi.

MUN conferences began in universities in the mid-twentieth century and are now held in schools across the world. In India they have become one of the most respected co-curricular activities, because they build skills that classrooms alone rarely develop: public speaking, research, negotiation, teamwork and clear formal writing.

Who is who in committee

Role	What they do
Delegate	Represents a country. Speaks, negotiates, drafts documents and votes according to that country's policy.
Executive Board (EB)	Chairs the committee: usually a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and a Rapporteur. They keep order, apply the rules, recognise speakers and evaluate delegates.
Secretariat	The FairGaze team that organises the whole conference: the meeting links, schedules, technical help and certificates.
Host / tech support	In this online edition, manages the meeting room: admitting delegates, muting and unmuting, breakout rooms and screen sharing.

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Think of MUN as a mini United Nations on your screen. You are not playing a character in a play; you are doing the real work of a diplomat: understanding a problem, speaking for your country and persuading others to agree on a solution.

2. The United Nations in Brief

The United Nations was founded on 24 October 1945, after the Second World War, when its Charter entered into force. Its purposes, set out in Article 1 of the Charter, are to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations, and to achieve international co-operation in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights. Today it has 193 Member States. The Charter created six principal organs:

Principal organ	In one line
General Assembly	Every Member State, one vote each; discusses any issue and makes recommendations.
Security Council	15 members, 5 of them permanent with a veto; the only organ whose decisions bind all States.

Principal organ	In one line
Economic and Social Council	Co-ordinates the UN's economic, social and environmental work and its agencies.
Trusteeship Council	Supervised territories on their way to independence; inactive since 1994.
International Court of Justice	The UN's court in The Hague; settles legal disputes between States.
Secretariat	The UN staff, led by the Secretary-General, who carry out the Organization's day-to-day work.

The Human Rights Council is not a principal organ. It is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, which elects its members and receives its reports. It works closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva.

3. The Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council was created by General Assembly resolution 60/251 of **15 March 2006**, replacing the Commission on Human Rights. It is the main UN intergovernmental body responsible for promoting and protecting all human rights around the world. It meets in Geneva for at least three regular sessions a year and can hold special sessions on urgent situations.

The Council has **47 members**, elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms and shared among the five regional groups. At FreeVoice MUN 2.0 the committee is larger, with 54 delegations, so that more students can take part.

The Council's main tools are **resolutions**, the **Universal Periodic Review** of every UN Member State, the **Special Procedures** (independent experts such as the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan), and **commissions of inquiry and investigative mechanisms** that collect evidence of serious violations.

What UNHRC can do	What UNHRC cannot do
Adopt resolutions that set standards and call on States to act	Make legally binding decisions or impose sanctions
Create or renew Special Rapporteur mandates	Recognise or de-recognise a government
Establish commissions of inquiry and investigative mechanisms to preserve evidence	Prosecute individuals (that is for the ICC or national courts)
Request reports from OHCHR, UN Women and the Secretary-General	Send troops or authorise the use of force
Recommend that the General Assembly or States develop new law, e.g. on gender apartheid	Create a new international crime on its own

DELEGATE TIP: STAY WITHIN THE MANDATE

Use verbs that fit a Human Rights Council text: 'condemns', 'calls upon the de facto authorities to', 'decides to establish an independent mechanism', 'requests the High Commissioner to report', 'recommends that the General Assembly consider'. Avoid 'sanctions', 'orders' or 'deploys'.

PART II

Rules of Procedure

How debate is run at FreeVoice MUN 2.0, online

Every MUN committee follows rules of procedure so that debate is fair and orderly. The rules below are those commonly used at school conferences in India, adapted for an online committee. The Executive Board may interpret or adjust them where needed, and its decision is final.

4. The Flow of Committee

Most committee sessions follow the order shown below. Do not worry about memorising it now: the Executive Board will guide the committee through each stage.



Figure 1. The usual flow of a UNHRC session, from roll call to the final vote.

5. Stages of Debate

5.1 Roll call

At the start of each session the Chair reads out the names of all countries. When your country is called, unmute and reply "Present" or "Present and Voting", then mute again. A delegate who says "Present and Voting" gives up the right to abstain on substantive votes and must vote either for or against. The roll call also establishes **quorum**, the minimum number of delegates needed for the committee to work.

5.2 Setting the agenda

UNHRC has a single agenda, so a delegate simply raises a motion to set the agenda to the topic in this guide. It passes by a simple majority.

5.3 General Speakers' List (GSL)

The GSL is the backbone of debate. Delegates who wish to speak are added to a list, and each speaks in turn for a set time, usually 60 to 90 seconds. Your first GSL speech is your **opening speech**: it presents your country's position. When no motion is on the floor, debate returns to the GSL. If time remains at the end of a GSL speech, the speaker must **yield** it:

Yield	What happens
Yield to the Chair	The remaining time goes back to the Executive Board. This is the most common yield.
Yield to another delegate	Another delegate uses the remaining time. They cannot yield it again.
Yield to Points of Information	Other delegates may ask the speaker questions about the speech, as many as the time allows.

5.4 Moderated caucus

A moderated caucus is a focused debate on one sub-topic, for example "Should 'gender apartheid' be recognised as a crime?". A delegate proposes it with a total time, a time per speaker and a topic. If the motion passes, the Chair calls on speakers one by one. Moderated caucuses keep debate specific and fast-moving.

5.5 Unmoderated caucus

During an unmoderated caucus, formal debate is suspended so that delegates can talk freely, form blocs and write working papers. Online, the Executive Board may open **breakout rooms**, or delegates may use the chat and shared documents as the Board directs. This is where most negotiation happens, so use it well: find allies, share ideas and draft clauses together.

EXAMPLE MOTIONS, EXACTLY AS YOU WOULD SAY THEM

- Moderated caucus: "The delegate of Mexico would like to raise a motion for a moderated caucus of 10 minutes, with 1 minute per speaker, on the topic 'Should 'gender apartheid' be recognised as a crime?'."
- Unmoderated caucus: "The delegate of Qatar would like to raise a motion for an unmoderated caucus of 15 minutes to begin drafting working papers."

6. Points and Motions

Points are requests a delegate makes to the Chair. **Motions** are proposals that the committee does something, and most are put to a vote. Online, use the **Raise Hand** button (or hold your placard up to the camera, if the Board asks for placards) and wait to be recognised before you unmute.

Point	When to use it	Can it interrupt a speaker?
Point of Personal Privilege	You cannot hear the speaker, your connection has dropped, or you are personally uncomfortable.	Yes, only if it concerns audibility
Point of Order	You believe the rules of procedure have been applied incorrectly.	No
Point of Parliamentary Inquiry	You have a question about the rules or about what is happening in committee.	No
Point of Information	You wish to ask another delegate a question about their speech.	No; only when the speaker yields to points

Motion	What it does	Vote needed
Set the agenda	Begins debate on the agenda topic	Simple majority
Moderated caucus	Focused debate on a sub-topic with set speaking time	Simple majority
Unmoderated caucus	Informal negotiation and drafting time	Simple majority
Extend the caucus	Adds time to the current caucus (usually not more than half the original time)	Simple majority
Introduce a working paper or draft resolution	Presents a document formally to the committee	Simple majority, at the Chair's discretion
Divide the question	Votes on operative clauses separately	Simple majority
Close debate	Ends debate and moves the committee into voting	Two-thirds majority
Suspend the meeting	Pauses committee for a break	Simple majority
Adjourn the meeting	Ends the session or the conference	Simple majority

6.1 Right of Reply

If a delegate's speech insults the national integrity of your country, you may send a written request for a Right of Reply to the Chair. If the Chair grants it, you may respond briefly. A Right of Reply to a Right of Reply is not allowed.

6.2 Chits

Chits are short written notes between delegates or to the Executive Board. In this online edition, chits are sent in the way the Board announces at the start of committee, usually as private messages in the meeting chat. All chits must be in English, relevant to committee and diplomatic in tone; the Board may read them and may count good chits towards your evaluation.

COMMON FIRST-TIMER MISTAKES

- Speaking in the first person ("I think"). Always use the third person: "The delegate of Kenya believes..."
- Giving your personal opinion instead of your country's policy.
- Unmuting or interrupting a speaker. Only a Point of Personal Privilege about audibility may interrupt.
- Leaving your camera off, or a display name that does not show your country.
- Quoting a figure without saying where it comes from and how recent it is.

7. Documents of Committee



Figure 2. The life of a resolution in committee.

7.1 Working papers

A working paper is an informal document that sets out a bloc's ideas. It has no fixed format and can include bullet points, tables or proposed clauses. Online, blocs usually write it together in a shared document and send it to the Executive Board, who may share it on screen.

7.2 Draft resolutions

A draft resolution is a formal document written in the format of a real resolution. It needs **sponsors** (the main authors, usually two to five countries, who must support the document) and **signatories** (countries that wish to see it debated but need not agree with all of it). The Executive Board sets the minimum number of signatories. Once approved by the Chair, it is introduced, read out and debated.

7.3 Amendments

An amendment adds, removes or changes an operative clause. A **friendly amendment** is accepted by all sponsors and is added without a vote. An **unfriendly amendment** is not supported by all sponsors and must be voted on. Preambulatory clauses cannot be amended.

7.4 Voting

Once debate is closed, no one may join or leave the meeting until voting ends. Each draft resolution is voted on in the order it was introduced. Delegates vote Yes, No or Abstain (unless they declared "Present and Voting"), by voice, by Raise Hand or by the poll tool the Board opens. As in the real Council, a draft passes with a **simple majority of members present and voting**; abstentions do not count as votes cast.

8. How to Write a Resolution

A resolution is one long sentence. It begins with the name of the committee, continues with **preambulatory clauses** that explain the background and reasons, and ends with **operative clauses** that say what the committee will actually do.

Part	Rules	Example
Heading	Committee, agenda, sponsors and signatories	Committee: UNHRC; Sponsors: ...; Signatories: ...
Preambulatory clauses	Begin with an italicised phrase; end with a comma; are not numbered; cannot be amended	Guided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,
Operative clauses	Begin with an underlined verb; are numbered; end with a semicolon; the last ends with a full stop	1. Calls upon the de facto authorities to reopen secondary schools to girls;

Preambulatory phrases	Operative phrases
Acknowledging, Affirming, Alarmed by, Aware of, Bearing in mind, Concerned by, Convinced, Deeply concerned, Determined, Emphasizing, Expressing concern, Fully aware, Guided by, Having considered, Mindful of, Noting with concern, Observing, Reaffirming, Recalling, Recognizing, Seeking, Stressing, Taking into account, Underlining, Welcoming	Affirms, Calls upon, Condemns, Decides, Deplores, Emphasizes, Encourages, Invites, Recommends, Requests the High Commissioner to, Stresses, Strongly urges, Supports, Takes note of, Urges, Welcomes

Sample clauses on our agenda

The clauses below show the style. They are examples only and do not represent any country's position.

Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Afghanistan is a party,

Gravely concerned by the systematic exclusion of women and girls from education, employment and public life in Afghanistan since August 2021,

Recalling Security Council resolution 2681 (2023) and the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan,

1. Calls upon the Taliban de facto authorities to immediately reverse all policies that discriminate against women and girls, including the bans on secondary and higher education;

2. Decides to establish an independent mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of serious violations of international law in Afghanistan;

3. Recommends that the General Assembly consider the inclusion of gender apartheid in a future convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity.

9. The Position Paper and Your Opening Speech

A **position paper** is a one-page summary of your country's views on the agenda. It shows the Executive Board that you have researched well. If the Organising Committee asks for position papers, it will share the format and deadline in your WhatsApp group. Even if it does not, writing one is the best way to prepare. A strong position paper has four short sections:

1. **Background:** the problem in two or three sentences, in your own words.
2. **International action:** what has already been done, with document names and years.

3. **Your country's policy:** how your country has voted and what it has said, with evidence.
4. **Proposed solutions:** two to four concrete ideas your country would support in a resolution.

A 90-second opening speech

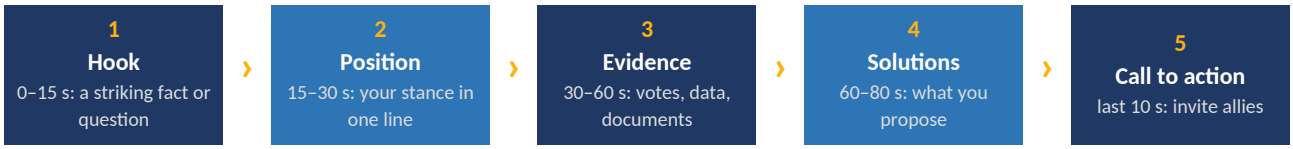


Figure 3. A simple structure for a strong first speech on the GSL.

10. Committee Etiquette, Online

Diplomacy depends on respect. The Executive Board evaluates not only what you say but how you say it.

- Address the Chair as "Honourable Chair" and other delegates as "the delegate of [country]".
- Set your display name to your country and name, for example "Mexico – Aarav", before you join.
- Keep your camera on and your microphone muted unless you have been recognised.
- Use Raise Hand (or your placard) to be recognised. Never speak over another delegate.
- Join ten minutes early from a quiet place with a charged device and a stable connection. If you drop out, rejoin at once and tell the Board in the chat.
- Never criticise another delegate personally. Disagree with a policy, not a person.
- Use formal English. Avoid slang, jokes about other countries and offensive language. Follow any dress code the Organising Committee shares.

Instead of saying...	Say...
"The Taliban are monsters."	"The delegate of Canada condemns in the strongest terms the policies of the de facto authorities that exclude women from public life."
"That makes no sense."	"Could the delegate clarify how engagement would bring about the reopening of schools?"
"Call it apartheid."	"The United Mexican States supports recognising gender apartheid in international law."
"Join our group."	"The delegation of Indonesia invites all like-minded delegations to work on a joint working paper."

Your day in committee

FreeVoice MUN 2.0 runs in a single day. The Executive Board decides the pace, but committees usually move through these stages. Exact timings are shared in your committee's WhatsApp group.

Session	What usually happens	Your goal
Session 1	Roll call, setting the agenda, opening speeches on the GSL, first moderated caucuses	Deliver a clear opening speech and note who agrees with you
Session 2	Moderated and unmoderated caucuses on sub-topics; blocs form and write working papers	Join or lead a bloc and contribute to a working paper
Session 3	Draft resolutions introduced and debated, amendments, closure of debate and voting	Defend your clauses and vote according to your country's policy

HOW DELEGATES ARE USUALLY EVALUATED

- **Research and knowledge:** accurate facts, correct use of documents and a clear understanding of the agenda.
- **Speeches and points:** clarity, structure, confidence and relevance on the GSL and in caucuses.
- **Diplomacy:** staying in your country's policy, building alliances and negotiating respectfully.
- **Documentation:** meaningful contributions to working papers, draft resolutions and amendments.
- **Participation and conduct:** active involvement through every session, punctuality and online etiquette.

PART III

Understanding the Agenda

Women's rights, accountability and the international response in Afghanistan

11. Introduction to the Agenda

Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in **August 2021**, they have issued more than 70 decrees, orders and instructions that restrict the lives of women and girls. Girls may not study beyond Grade 6. Women may not attend university, work for most employers including non-governmental organisations and the UN, travel long distances without a male relative, visit parks, gyms or beauty salons, or, under a 2024 'vice and virtue' law, let their voices be heard in public. Afghanistan is the only country in the world that bans girls from secondary school.

These rules are not scattered incidents. They are written into the system of government, enforced by a Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and designed to remove women from public life. That is what the agenda means by **institutionalisation**. UN experts, Afghan women's groups and many States argue that this amounts to **'gender apartheid'**: a system of institutionalised oppression and domination of one gender by another, comparable to the racial apartheid once practised in South Africa. Others say the term has no agreed legal meaning, or prefer to rely on the existing crime of **gender persecution**.

No State has recognised the Taliban as Afghanistan's government except the Russian Federation, which did so in July 2025, and the UN still seats representatives of the former Islamic Republic. Yet many States engage with the Taliban on security, migration, trade and aid. The Council must weigh three questions in its agenda: should 'gender apartheid' be recognised in law; which accountability mechanisms should be used or created; and what is the responsibility of the international community, under human rights law and the Responsibility to Protect, towards 14 million Afghan women and girls?

> **IN SIMPLE WORDS**
>
> In Afghanistan today, a girl can go to school only until she is about twelve. Women cannot go to university, work at most jobs or even speak loudly in public. These are not one-off cruelties but laws. This agenda asks what the world should call this system, how those responsible can be held to account, and what other countries must do to protect Afghan women's rights.

12. Key Terms Explained

Term	Meaning
Taliban / de facto authorities	The Islamist movement that ruled Afghanistan in 1996–2001 and again since August 2021. UN documents call them the 'de facto authorities' because they are not recognised as the legal government.
Gender-based discrimination	Treating people unequally because of their sex or gender, banned by CEDAW and the ICCPR.
Gender apartheid	A proposed term for a system of laws and institutions that oppresses and segregates one gender to maintain the dominance of another. Not yet a defined crime in any treaty.

Term	Meaning
Apartheid (crime)	Defined in the 1973 Apartheid Convention and the Rome Statute (Art. 7(2)(h)) as inhumane acts in an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression by one racial group over another.
Gender persecution	A crime against humanity under the Rome Statute (Art. 7(1)(h)): severe deprivation of fundamental rights because of gender. The ICC applied it to Afghanistan in 2025.
Accountability mechanism	Any body that investigates, records, judges or reports violations: courts, commissions of inquiry, special rapporteurs, evidence-gathering mechanisms.
Mahram	A close male relative whom the Taliban require to accompany women when travelling.
Responsibility to Protect (R2P)	The 2005 World Summit commitment that States must protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and that others should help or act when they fail.
Recognition	A State's formal acceptance of a government as the legitimate representative of a country.
Credentials	The UN's acceptance of who represents a State in the General Assembly, decided each year by the Credentials Committee.

13. How Discrimination Has Been Institutionalised

Area	Main restrictions (since 2021)
Education	Girls banned from secondary school (March 2022) and women from universities (December 2022); in 2024 women were barred from medical and nursing training.
Work	Women barred from most government jobs, from working for national and international NGOs (December 2022) and for the UN in Afghanistan (April 2023); beauty salons closed (2023). Female UN staff have been barred from UN premises.
Movement	Women may not travel more than about 72 km without a mahram; barred from parks, gyms, public baths and some shrines.
Dress and voice	Full face covering required in public (May 2022). The August 2024 Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice bans women's voices being heard in public and allows morality police to detain people.
Justice	The 2004 Constitution suspended; women judges and lawyers removed; specialised courts and shelters for violence against women closed; public floggings resumed.
Public life	No women in the cabinet; the Ministry of Women's Affairs abolished and replaced by the Vice and Virtue ministry; women's protests suppressed and activists detained.

The effects reach far beyond rights on paper. UN Women and UNESCO estimate that more than **1.4 million girls** are kept out of secondary school, rising every year. Without women doctors and nurses, and with women unable to see male doctors alone, maternal deaths are expected to rise. Women-headed households cannot earn money in a country where, according to the UN, more than half the population needs humanitarian aid. Reports of depression and suicide among young women have increased.

KEY FACTS

- Afghanistan is the **only country** in the world that bans girls from secondary and higher education (UNESCO).
- More than **1.4 million** girls are denied secondary education; around 2.5 million school-age girls are out of school in total (UNESCO, 2024).
- The Taliban had issued **more than 70** edicts restricting women by 2025 (UN Special Rapporteur).
- On **8 July 2025** the ICC issued arrest warrants for Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada and Chief Justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani for gender persecution.
- On **3 July 2025** the Russian Federation became the first State to formally recognise the Taliban government.

14. Historical Timeline

Year	Event
1979	CEDAW adopted; Afghanistan signs in 1980 and ratifies in 2003.
1996–2001	First Taliban rule: girls banned from school and women from work; the UN refuses to seat the Taliban.
2001–21	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; the 2004 Constitution guarantees equal rights; millions of girls go to school; women hold about a quarter of parliamentary seats.
2021	The Taliban take Kabul as international forces withdraw (August); the Council creates the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan (October, res. 48/1).
2022	Secondary schools stay closed to girls (March); face covering decree (May); women banned from universities and NGO work (Dec).
2023	Ban on women working for the UN; Security Council resolution 2681 condemns it. The Special Rapporteur and Working Group on discrimination against women report that the situation may amount to gender apartheid. Security Council resolution 2679 requests an independent assessment of international engagement.
2024	Vice and Virtue law (August). Germany, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands announce they will take Afghanistan to the ICJ under CEDAW. The UN-convened Doha meetings with the Taliban are held without Afghan women in the room.
2025	The ICC Prosecutor seeks (January) and judges issue (July) arrest warrants for gender persecution. Russia recognises the Taliban (July). The General Assembly's Sixth Committee continues work towards a convention on crimes against humanity, where proposals to add gender apartheid are discussed.
2026	Restrictions continue; the four-State legal action under CEDAW proceeds; the Council and the Security Council review UNAMA and the human rights situation. Check the latest developments before committee.

15. The International Legal Framework

Instrument	Relevance
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)	Equality in dignity and rights for all, without distinction of sex (Arts. 1, 2), and the right to education (Art. 26).
CEDAW (1979)	Afghanistan is a party. States must eliminate discrimination against women in law and practice, in education, work and public life. Article 29 allows disputes to be taken to the ICJ, the basis of the four-State action.
ICCPR and ICESCR (1966)	Afghanistan is a party to both: equal enjoyment of civil, political, economic and social rights, including education and work.
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	Afghanistan is a party: every child's right to education without discrimination.

Instrument	Relevance
Rome Statute of the ICC (1998)	Afghanistan is a party since 2003. Gender persecution and apartheid (racial only) are crimes against humanity. The ICC has jurisdiction over crimes in Afghanistan.
Apartheid Convention (1973)	Defines and criminalises racial apartheid; does not cover gender.
Draft Articles on Crimes against Humanity (ILC, 2019)	The basis for a future convention; States are debating whether to add gender apartheid.
2005 World Summit Outcome, paras. 138–139	The Responsibility to Protect populations from crimes against humanity, including gender persecution.

IN SIMPLE WORDS

A State's treaty promises do not disappear when its government changes. Afghanistan joined CEDAW and the other treaties, so those obligations still apply to whoever controls the country, even if no one recognises them as the government.

16. The United Nations and Multilateral Response

- **Human Rights Council**: resolutions on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan; the **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan** (Richard Bennett, since 2022) reports regularly; joint reports with the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.
- **Calls for an independent accountability mechanism**: many States and civil society groups urge the Council to create an independent, international mechanism to collect and preserve evidence, as it has done for Myanmar and Syria.
- **Security Council**: resolution 2681 (2023) condemned the ban on Afghan women working for the UN; the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (**UNAMA**) reports on human rights and is renewed each year; the 1988 sanctions regime lists Taliban individuals.
- **Doha process**: UN-convened meetings of special envoys, with Taliban participation from 2024, have been criticised for excluding Afghan women and for not putting women's rights at the centre.
- **ICC**: arrest warrants for two senior Taliban leaders for gender persecution (July 2025).
- **ICJ / CEDAW**: Germany, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands are pursuing a case against Afghanistan under CEDAW, supported by many other States.
- **UN Women, UNICEF, UNESCO and UNFPA** fund community-based and online education, health services and livelihoods for women where possible.

17. Case Studies

17.1 South Africa and the fight against racial apartheid

From 1948 South Africa's government built a legal system of racial segregation. The UN called apartheid a crime against humanity, the General Assembly adopted the Apartheid Convention in 1973, and States imposed sports, cultural and economic boycotts; the Security Council made an arms embargo mandatory in 1977 (res. 418). Supporters of the 'gender apartheid' term argue that naming the system was the first step towards ending it. Others note that the comparison is contested, including by some South Africans.

17.2 The ICC warrants for gender persecution

In July 2025 the ICC judges found reasonable grounds to believe that Akhundzada and Haqqani had committed the crime against humanity of persecution on gender grounds against girls, women and people who do not conform to the Taliban's gender norms. It was the first time anyone was charged with gender persecution as a standalone crime. But the accused remain in Afghanistan, and arrests depend on States' co-operation.

17.3 The CEDAW case

In September 2024, Germany, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands announced they would hold Afghanistan responsible under CEDAW, first by negotiation and, if that failed, at the International Court of Justice. More than 20 other States backed the initiative. A difficulty is who would represent Afghanistan before the Court, since the Taliban are not recognised. Delegates should check the current status.

17.4 Accountability mechanisms for Myanmar and Syria

In 2018 the Human Rights Council created the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, and in 2016 the General Assembly created a similar mechanism for Syria. Both collect, preserve and analyse evidence of serious crimes so that courts can use it later. They are models for the mechanism many States want for Afghanistan.

18. Key Issues for Debate

1. **Recognising gender apartheid.** Should the Council use the term, and should States add gender apartheid as a crime to the planned convention on crimes against humanity?
2. **An accountability mechanism.** Should the Council create an independent investigative mechanism for Afghanistan, as for Myanmar?
3. **Supporting existing processes.** How should States support the ICC warrants and the CEDAW case?
4. **Engagement or isolation.** Should States talk to the Taliban to win changes and deliver aid, or does engagement reward abuses? What conditions should apply to recognition?
5. **Aid and education.** How can humanitarian aid, online and community education and women's employment be supported without strengthening the restrictions?
6. **Women's participation.** How can Afghan women be included in every UN and international meeting on Afghanistan?
7. **Refugees and returnees.** How should neighbouring countries treat Afghan women and girls who have fled or are being returned?
8. **Culture, religion and sovereignty.** How should the Council respond to the argument that these rules reflect Afghan culture or religion? Many Muslim-majority States and scholars reject that claim.

19. Positions of Countries and Blocs

The positions below are broad tendencies to start your research, not fixed rules.

Group	Typical position
Afghanistan (UN seat held by the former Republic's representatives)	Its UN mission strongly condemns the Taliban's restrictions and supports accountability. The Executive Board will confirm whether the delegate represents the UN-seated mission or the de facto authorities.
Western States (Germany, Netherlands, Canada, Australia, UK, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, US)	Strongly condemn the restrictions; Germany, the Netherlands, Canada and Australia lead the CEDAW case; most support an accountability mechanism. Views on the term 'gender apartheid' vary; the US has focused on security and migration.
Latin America (Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Brazil, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Cuba)	Many champion feminist foreign policy and support recognising gender apartheid in the crimes against humanity convention; Mexico and Chile are active. Cuba and Bolivia emphasise non-interference.
Muslim-majority and OIC States (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Algeria)	Many say the bans contradict Islam and call for girls' education; Qatar hosts Taliban talks; Indonesia and the OIC have sent scholars' delegations; most prefer engagement and dialogue to the 'apartheid' label.

Group	Typical position
Neighbours and regional powers (Pakistan, China, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan)	Prioritise security, terrorism, trade and refugees; engage with the Taliban; call for inclusive government and women's education but avoid confrontational language. China and Russia oppose new pressure; Pakistan has tense relations with the Taliban over militant attacks.
African Group (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia, DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi)	Support women's rights and education; South Africa's own history makes its view on the 'apartheid' comparison important; several prefer to strengthen existing law.
Asia-Pacific and others (Japan, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Fiji, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine)	Japan and the Republic of Korea are major donors that support girls' education and accountability; others generally support UN statements while avoiding binding new steps.

20. Questions a Resolution Must Answer

1. How does the Council describe the situation, and does it recognise or call for further study of 'gender apartheid'?
2. What accountability mechanism will collect and preserve evidence, and how will it work with the ICC and the ICJ case?
3. What should States require from the de facto authorities before engagement or recognition?
4. How will education, health care, work and aid for women and girls be protected and funded?
5. How will Afghan women take part in all international processes on Afghanistan?
6. How will progress be monitored and reported back to the Council?

PART IV

Research and Preparation

How to turn this guide into a winning position

21. How to Research the Agenda

1. **Understand the agenda.** Read Part III twice. Write the agenda in your own words in one sentence.
2. **Find your country's position.** Search your country's foreign or commerce ministry website, its statements at the UN or other forum, and how it voted on the key documents named in this guide.
3. **Know your allies and opponents.** Look at which bloc your country belongs to (Section 19) and who voted the same way.
4. **Collect evidence.** Pick three to five facts with a source and a date. Quality beats quantity.
5. **Prepare solutions.** Write three or four operative clauses your country would support and that others could accept.
6. **Practise.** Time your opening speech aloud. Prepare answers to the two hardest questions someone could ask you.

A WORD ON SOURCES

Wikipedia, blogs and AI chatbots can help you start, but they are not evidence. Quote the UN document, the official statement or the report itself, and check every figure an AI tool gives you, because such tools often invent numbers and document symbols. The Executive Board may ask for your source.

22. Official Sources and Reference Pointers

Source	What you will find
ohchr.org (Afghanistan)	Reports of the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan and Council resolutions.
unama.unmissions.org	UNAMA's regular human rights updates and reports on women's rights.
unwomen.org and unesco.org	Data on girls' education and women's lives under the restrictions.
icc-cpi.int (Situation in Afghanistan)	The arrest warrants and Prosecutor's statements on gender persecution.
digitallibrary.un.org	Search UN documents such as A/HRC/53/21 and S/RES/2681 (2023).
Your government's foreign ministry	Statements on Afghanistan, recognition and the CEDAW initiative.

23. Countries in This Committee

These are the 54 delegations allotted in UNHRC at FreeVoice MUN 2.0. Some are not current members of the real Council; represent your country's real policy all the same.

Delegations			
Afghanistan	China	Ghana	Qatar
Algeria	Colombia	India	Republic of Korea
Armenia	Costa Rica	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia

Delegations			
Australia	Côte d'Ivoire	Iraq	South Africa
Azerbaijan	Cuba	Italy	Spain
Bahrain	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Japan	Sri Lanka
Bangladesh	Dominican Republic	Jordan	Switzerland
Bhutan	Ecuador	Kenya	Thailand
Bolivia	Egypt	Kuwait	Ukraine
Brazil	Ethiopia	Malaysia	United Kingdom
Burundi	Fiji	Mexico	United States
Cambodia	France	Netherlands	Viet Nam
Canada	Georgia	Nigeria	
Chile	Germany	Pakistan	

24. Glossary

Term	Meaning
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).
ICC	International Criminal Court, which tries individuals for crimes against humanity and war crimes.
ICJ	International Court of Justice, which settles disputes between States.
Edict	An official order issued by an authority, here by the Taliban leadership.
Bloc	A group of countries with similar positions that work together in committee.
Quorum	The minimum number of delegates who must be present for the committee to work.
Sponsor / signatory	Sponsors write a draft resolution; signatories only want it debated.

25. Delegate Research Worksheet

Fill this in before the conference and keep it open beside you in committee.

Question	Your notes
Has my country recognised or engaged with the Taliban? Does it have an embassy in Kabul?	
Has my country supported the CEDAW initiative, the ICC investigation or calls for an accountability mechanism?	
Has my country used, supported or rejected the term 'gender apartheid'?	

Question	Your notes
Three facts I will quote (with source and date)	
Two operative clauses I want in the resolution	
Countries I will approach first in an unmoderated caucus	

26. References and Further Reading

Documents are listed by their official title and symbol so you can find them in the UN Digital Library or on the organisation's website.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), Articles 1–3, 7, 10, 11 and 29.

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998), Article 7.

International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973).

International Law Commission, Draft articles on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity (2019).

2005 World Summit Outcome, General Assembly resolution 60/1, paragraphs 138–139.

Security Council resolution 2681 (2023) on the participation of women in Afghanistan.

Human Rights Council resolution 48/1 (2021) establishing the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, and later Council resolutions on Afghanistan.

Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan and Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, A/HRC/53/21 (2023).

International Criminal Court, Situation in Afghanistan: arrest warrants for Haibatullah Akhundzada and Abdul Hakim Haqqani (8 July 2025).

UNESCO, Afghanistan: girls' education data (latest edition).

We look forward to seeing you in committee on 4 November.

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