



National Fairgaze Model United Nations 2023

Background Guide



United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Agenda: Deliberation upon the status of women in Afghanistan post-Taliban takeover

Message From the Executive Board

Greetings Delegates, Firstly, let me, on behalf of the executive board, begin by welcoming you to the National Fairgaze MUN 2023. For many, this MUN may be a return to the immersive environment and excitement of a Model United Nations conference. For most, it may be the first conference they attend. Either way, I assure you that this Executive Board and the Secretariat have, and are going to, work tirelessly to ensure an exceptional experience.

This background guide is more important than I can express through words. I must stress, therefore, that it is read in its entirety and is understood deeply. I recognize that most delegates at most conferences tend not to read background guides or pay much heed to them. I, myself, have found myself part of that group more times than not. This background guide, however, is not by any means conventional in its content or its purpose. In terms of content, It has very little factual information about the agenda, this guide however raises more questions and thoughts than answers and facts.

I fully appreciate that the demands I have made in this letter may be hard to comprehend exactly and that several discussions in this guide may be challenging to interpret and think about critically. I place a high premium on the understanding of the discussions in the background guide and of the agenda on a critical and intellectual level and would expect to see this in the committee. Therefore, I would strongly urge and recommend you to write to me or the Chairperson, as many times as required with as many substantive questions you may have or discussions you would want to have regarding the agenda's content both in and beyond the Background Guide.

I look forward to seeing you at the conference. As a conclusive repetition, please read every word of this guide carefully and reach out regarding anything that comes to mind.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Introduction to the Committee

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by [ECOSOC resolution 11\(II\) of 21 June 1946](#). The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission adopts [multi-year programmes of work](#) to appraise progress and make further recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action. These recommendations take the form of negotiated agreed conclusions on a priority theme. The Commission also contributes to the follow-up to the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Introduction to the Agenda

In 2002, after years of being denied their rights under the previous Taliban regime, Afghan women celebrated International Women's Day full of hope. The day was observed in Afghanistan and at UN Headquarters with the theme 'Afghan women today: Realities and Opportunities' and commitments were made to support our Afghan sisters in rebuilding their lives and be full partners in the post-conflict reconstruction of the country. On that day the international community said that the plight of Afghan women had been "an affront to all standards of dignity, equality and humanity." It stressed that world support for reasserting their rights should go beyond expressions of solidarity.

Despite challenges, Afghan women and girls made steady advances towards fulfilling their human rights. However, the situation has significantly regressed to the pre-2002 period, and women are denied their fundamental rights and freedoms including the rights to education, to work, to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, freedom of movement, and freedom from fear and want and from discrimination.

Now, over two decades later, girls in Afghanistan have been banned from secondary school and women from tertiary education. Women and girls have been banned from entering amusement parks, public baths, gyms, and sports clubs for four months. Women have been banned from working in NGO offices. Since the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in August 2021, women have been wholly excluded from public office and the judiciary. Today, Afghanistan's women and girls are required to adhere to a strict dress code and are not

permitted to travel more than 75 km without a mahram. They are compelled to stay at home.

All over the country, women report feeling invisible, isolated, suffocated, and living in prison-like conditions. Many are unable to have their basic needs met without access to employment or aid, including access to medical healthcare and psychological support in particular for victims of violence, including sexual violence. It's a sobering reminder of how swiftly and aggressively women's and girls' rights can be taken away.

Taliban background and issues:

On September 7, 2021, the Taliban announced a "caretaker government" to rule Afghanistan. The announcement came weeks after the Taliban, a Sunni Islamist extremist movement that ruled most of Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, retook effective control of the country with the collapse of the U.S.-backed former Afghan government and its security forces amid the U.S. military departure. The Taliban, now in their third decade of existence, began as an armed group that emerged in the 1990s out of Afghanistan's civil war. By 1996, they had come to rule most of the country. In 2001, U.S., international, and Afghan forces deposed them, and the group soon began what would become a nearly twenty-year insurgency. In 2021, they again control Afghanistan, arguably to a greater extent than they did in the 1990s. The Taliban's background may be instructive for understanding the group's renewed rule in 2021. Afghan forces officially assumed full responsibility for security nationwide at the beginning of 2015, though they were still reliant on U.S. air power, training, and logistical support to sustain their operations.²⁶ The year 2015 was a time of transition for the Taliban as

well: the group admitted its founder Mullah Mohammad Omar had died in 2013 and announced Mullah Akhtar Mansour as the group's new leader, amid reports of contention among Taliban's leaders about the succession.²⁷ Reported internal dissent did not have an apparent effect on the Taliban's military capabilities, with the group capturing the northern provincial capital of Kunduz for two weeks in September-October 2015, their first seizure of a major urban area since 2001.

Impact of Taliban's return to power

Since taking control of the city of Ghazni on August 12, 2021, days before entering Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, the Taliban have imposed rights-violating policies that have created huge barriers to women's and girls' health and education, curtailed freedom of movement, expression, and association, and deprived many of earned income. Afghanistan's rapidly escalating humanitarian crises exacerbate the abuses. Following the Taliban takeover, millions of dollars in lost income, spiking prices, aid cut-offs, a liquidity crisis, and cash shortages triggered by former donor countries, especially the United States, have deprived much of the population of access to food, water, shelter, and health care. The Taliban have banned women and girls from secondary and higher education, and altered curricula to focus more on religious studies. They dictate what women must wear, how they should travel, workplace segregation by sex, and even what kind of cell phones women should have. They enforce these rules through intimidation and inspections. Upon returning to power in 2021, the Taliban installed one of the world's most regressive governments, especially

concerning women's rights. The new regime in Kabul started imposing even stricter rules on women in the final weeks of 2022, with a pair of heavy-handed rulings banning them from studying in universities and working for NGOs. In response, many aid organizations paused their operations, sparking fears of greater misery as horrified Western donors threatened to cut aid and impose further isolation on Afghanistan's beleaguered economy. It is vital to de-escalate the standoff between the Taliban and the outside world for the sake of preventing a downward spiral that would exacerbate the woes of Afghans. Donors are justifiably frustrated, but they should stay focused on the aspirations and welfare of Afghans. They should fund humanitarian appeals, help aid agencies uphold their principles, take steps to address the deeper problems underpinning the country's socio-economic disaster, and channel efforts at social change into long-term projects.

Conclusion

I hope that this background guide, though not conventional in nature in terms of a general background guide, has been an interesting and thought-provoking read. The purpose of this background guide was not a factual introduction. It was an intellectual introduction. Discussions at Model UNs are often reduced to dry debates and disagreements about the status quo. Model UNs, however, must aim to not debate the status quo but to formulate a universal future. To do so, it is imperative to think about the agenda not from a factual perspective but intellectually.