KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

TOPIC – 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

When girls are denied classrooms, women are denied workplaces, and their voices are excluded from decisions, the issue is no longer just inequality; it is a systematic denial of fundamental human rights. Since August 2021, the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan have changed drastically due to severe restrictions affecting their education, employment, healthcare, freedom of movement and access to justice. More than 2.6 million girls have been denied secondary education. Behind this number are millions of young girls whose dreams and opportunities are being actively dismantled. The Kingdom of Bahrain believes that every woman and girl deserves the right to live with dignity, receive an education and take part in building her society. Bahrain recognises that women's empowerment is not simply about providing opportunities; it is the cornerstone of progress for families, communities and the country as a whole.

The situation in Afghanistan is therefore a matter of serious international concern. The Kingdom of Bahrain believes that Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community must be accompanied by meaningful progress in fulfilling its international obligations and protecting the fundamental rights of its people. Bahrain has expressed concern over restrictions imposed on Afghan women, particularly those affecting their education, employment and participation in public life. While Bahrain supports constructive, multilateral engagement through the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), dialogue should never become a reason to overlook the rights being denied.

Bahrain has also taken a clear position on this issue at the international level. During the United Nations Security Council meeting on Afghanistan on 8 June 2026, the Kingdom expressed concern over the continued restrictions affecting Afghan women and girls, called for the restoration of their rights to education and employment, and urged the lifting of restrictions preventing Afghan female UN staff from accessing their workplaces. Bahrain also reaffirmed its support for UNAMA and the continuation of international dialogue through the Doha Process.

The international community has also taken important steps through the Human Rights Council. In October 2025, the Council adopted Resolution 60/2, establishing an independent investigative mechanism to collect, preserve and analyse evidence of international crimes and the most serious violations of international law committed in Afghanistan, including those against women and girls. However, documenting violations is only one part of the process; ensuring accountability is equally vital. Bahrain supports stronger UN monitoring, the safe preservation of evidence and accountability through established international legal mechanisms. The recognition of gender apartheid as a distinct international crime deserves serious legal examination, while accountability under existing international law must continue wherever its requirements are met. Furthermore, female humanitarian workers must be able to perform their duties safely, Afghan women-led organisations must receive greater international support, and women must have unhindered access to healthcare and justice.

The way forward requires more than statements of concern. Girls must return to schools and universities, women must have the right to work, and Afghan women must be included as primary stakeholders in decisions concerning their future. The international community should introduce regular, benchmark-based reviews to measure progress, strengthen support for women-led initiatives and ensure that commitments lead to real change. International engagement should continue through cooperation and dialogue, accompanied by measurable progress in protecting human rights. Bahrain stands ready to support these efforts through multilateral cooperation and meaningful action. Because the real measure of a country's progress is not how far it moves forward, but whether all its people are allowed to move forward with it.

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