



News Letter – Afghanistan

61st Session Human Rights Council

23-28.02.2026

A Message from the Delegation

Dear Excellencies,

On behalf of the Civil Society & Human Rights Network (CSHRN), Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+), and Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organization (ADDO), we are pleased to share our newsletter from Geneva, where our delegation participated in the 61st Session of the UN Human Rights Council.

As the human rights and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan continues to worsen, our delegation worked to ensure that the voices of Afghan women and human rights defenders are heard loud and clear on the international stage.

We urge the international community to remain committed to justice for Afghans and to avoid any normalization of the current de facto authorities that disregards human rights. We deeply appreciate your continued partnership and support.

With gratitude,

The CSHRN / HRD+ Delegation

100+ Organizations Co-signed the joint statement on the Criminal Procedure Code	3 Side Events Organized on Afghanistan during the 61st UNHRC session	12 Month Roadmap Advocacy plan for gender apartheid recognition	61 UNHRC Session Geneva, February–March 2026 – Afghanistan at center stage
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Key highlights from 61st UNHRC Session

CSHRN, HRD+, and ADDO remain dedicated to amplifying the voices of Afghan human rights defenders and women, advocating for justice and accountability at every level. In February 2026, our representatives actively engaged in high-level consultations, UN Human Rights Council sessions, and strategic side events in Geneva.

Our efforts focused on three core priorities:

- Addressing systematic violations of women's rights
- Promoting legal accountability for ongoing abuses
- Strengthening collaboration among Afghan civil society and international partners

HRD+ Consultation at the Swiss Mission in Geneva

On 23 February 2026, an HRD+ representative participated in a consultation organized by Women for Afghanistan (WFA) at the Swiss Mission in Geneva. Afghan civil society representatives and international stakeholders gathered to coordinate strategies addressing the systematic violations of women's rights in Afghanistan.

The HRD+ representative served as lead discussant in a working group on gender apartheid and engagement with the International Criminal Court (ICC). Participants developed a 12-month advocacy roadmap aimed at:

- Advancing international recognition of gender apartheid
- Preparing submissions related to violations under Article 7 of the Rome Statute (crimes against humanity)
- Strengthening coordination among Afghan civil society and international human rights mechanisms

Joint Statement on Afghanistan's Criminal Procedure Code

During the 61st UNHRC session, CSHRN/HRD+, supported by over 100 national and international organizations, released a joint statement warning that the proposed Criminal Procedure Code for Afghan courts would further deepen the human rights crisis in the country.

The statement was formally circulated among all UN member states and diplomatic missions. Afghan media widely covered the release, and the HRD+ spokesperson provided an exclusive interview with Afghanistan International on the code's implications.

Read more: [Full statement \(Dari, Pashto, English\)](#)

Interactive Dialogue: Afghanistan at the UN Human Rights Council

During the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, global leaders, UN officials, Afghan representatives, and civil society members gathered to discuss the worsening human rights and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan since the Taliban regained power in 2021.

Key issues raised during the dialogue included:

- Severe restrictions on women's access to education, employment, and public life.
- A deepening humanitarian crisis, millions living in poverty without adequate food, healthcare, or clean water.
- New legal rules expanding corporal punishment, the death penalty, and restrictions on freedom of expression.
- The long-term impact of barring women from studying medicine on maternal health and healthcare access



Afghan civil society representatives also shared personal testimonies. One young woman described how the closure of universities to women shattered her dream of becoming a doctor a reality shared by thousands of girls across the country.

The session concluded with a clear call from the international community for continued global attention, humanitarian support, and meaningful accountability for human rights violations, especially those affecting women and girls.

Afghan civil society representatives also shared personal experiences during the session. One young Afghan woman spoke about how the closure of universities to women disrupted her dream of becoming a doctor, reflecting the reality faced by thousands of girls across the country. These testimonies highlighted the emotional and social impact of the restrictions, as well as the resilience of Afghan women who continue to advocate for their rights.



Side Events on Afghanistan

People's Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan: A Step Toward Accountability

A side event on the People's Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan brought together human rights experts, civil society leaders, and international representatives to highlight ongoing efforts to document systematic violations of women's rights.



Side Event
at the 61st Session of the UN Human Rights Council

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL FOR WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN
Judgment, Accountability and Normalisation

Palais des Nations, Geneva | Thursday, 26 February 2026 |
14:00 – 15:00 CET | In-Person & Hybrid | CR:VIII
Refreshments will be provided.

Panelists:

- **Richard Bennett**
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan
- **Mariam Safi**
Executive Director of DROPS
- **Dr. Benafsha Yaqoobi**
Prosecutor of the People's Tribunal and Director of the Rahyab Initiative
- **M. Haroon Mutasem**
Consultant at Rawadari and Advisor to the People's Tribunal on the Rights of Women in Afghanistan
- **Mahmoda Sonia Eqbal**
Human Rights Advocate & Gender Equity Strategist
- **Sayed Abdullah Ahmadi**
Executive Director of ADDO and Steering committee member of HRD+

Moderator:

- **Fereshta Abbasi**
Afghanistan Researcher at Human Rights Watch

Organizer: ADDO

In partnership with: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PLUS, OMCT, SOS-Torture Network

Co-Sponsors: AIRDO, DROPS, FIDH, INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, FORUM-ASIA, دادگاه مردمی برای زنان افغانستان, د افغانستان د سولواوړه واکمني, PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL FOR WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN, RAWADARI, رواداري, راداري

The tribunal, initiated by a coalition of civil society organizations examined survivor testimonies, official decrees, and human rights reports. Findings revealed widespread violations including exclusion from public life, barriers to education and employment, and punishment for dissent.

Although not legally binding, the tribunal plays a crucial role in preserving evidence, raising global awareness, and supporting broader accountability efforts.

For watching the full side event use this link: [UN Event | Human Rights in Afghanistan | 26.02.2026](#)

A panel discussion brought together UN representatives, civil society leaders, and human rights experts to discuss the operationalization of the newly established IIMA. Established by the UN Human Rights Council in October 2025, the mechanism represents a historic step toward justice for victims of human rights violations in Afghanistan.

- Collecting, preserving, and analyzing evidence of human rights violations.
- Adopting a victim- and survivor-centered approach, with particular attention to gender-based crimes and crimes against children.
- Partnering with Afghan civil society to document abuses despite serious risks and limited resources.
- Investigating violations committed by all parties across different time periods



While the path to justice will be long, the establishment of the IIMA is a vital step toward breaking the cycle of impunity and preserving hope for truth, justice, and reparations.

A side event titled "A Victim and Survivor-Centered Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan" brought together diplomats, civil society representatives, and human rights experts to discuss how the IIMA can effectively engage victims and civil society organizations.

The creation of the IIMA by the UN Human Rights Council in October 2025 marked a historic step toward addressing serious human rights violations in Afghanistan, following years of advocacy by Afghan human rights defenders and organizations.

Drawing lessons from mechanisms for Syria and Myanmar, panelists highlighted the importance of building trust with affected communities, managing



expectations, and maintaining transparent communication. Strong civil society partnerships will be essential to document abuses and advance accountability.

Coordination and Networking

Coordination meeting ahead of the 61st UNHRC session

A coordination meeting jointly organized by CSHRN/HRD+ and OMCT brought together representatives from Afghan NGOs, civil society networks, WHRDs, and HRDs to prepare Afghan delegations for the 61st session.

Participants emphasized the importance of using the session's platforms to highlight the ongoing human rights crisis in Afghanistan, advocate for stronger international support for Afghan women and civil society, and call on the global community not to normalize the current de facto authorities. The meeting served as a critical space for aligning advocacy messages and strengthening collective action.

Focused Group Discussion: Normalization of The Taliban - Graduate Institute Geneva

OMCT, in collaboration with the Graduate Institute of Geneva, is conducting research on the growing normalization of the Taliban by parts of the international community. With the support of CSHRN/HRD+, a focused group discussion was organized to hear directly from Afghan human rights defenders present in Geneva.

Participants highlighted the potential risks of normalizing the current de facto authorities and stressed the importance of continued international support for human rights in Afghanistan. The discussion provided meaningful input from Afghan human rights defenders to inform ongoing research and broader international discussions on Afghanistan.

Joint Networking Dinner with Afghan Delegation and International Partners

A joint dinner organized by OMCT together with CSHRN/HRD+ brought together members of the Afghan delegation, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, representatives of international NGOs, diplomatic missions, and the Special Rapporteur of Denmark on human rights.

The gathering created an informal and welcoming space for Afghan human rights defenders to strengthen networks and engage directly with key international stakeholders, deepening dialogue on the challenges facing Afghan civil society and exploring ways to enhance international support for the protection of human rights in Afghanistan.

