

HRD+ Statement

7th of June 2026

In light of the escalating restrictions against women in Herat Province, multiple reports of the detention of women and girls based on their manner of dress, and the widespread concerns expressed by citizens, educators, and civil society activists regarding the consequences of these measures, Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+) once again expresses its deep concern over the state of women's rights and fundamental freedoms in Afghanistan.

Recently, citizens of Herat addressed an open letter to the Governor of Herat, emphasizing the religious, cultural, and historical values of the province while expressing concern about the imposition of extreme restrictions on women and girls. In their letter, they referred to Islamic teachings, including the hadith, *"The blood, property, and honour of every Muslim are sacred to another Muslim,"* as well as Quranic verses concerning justice, benevolence, and human dignity. They stressed that safeguarding the dignity, reputation, and rights of citizens is among the fundamental responsibilities of those in authority and that any social policy should be based on justice, moderation, respect for human dignity, and consideration of the cultural and historical characteristics of society.

The citizens of Herat also expressed concern regarding the compulsory imposition of a specific form of dress on women, the arbitrary enforcement of regulations, the lack of transparency in the implementation of restrictions, and the potential for creating social divisions. They called for any regulations to be applied fairly, transparently, and in accordance with the law throughout the country. They further emphasized that the women of Herat have always been an inseparable part of the province's cultural, intellectual, and social identity and warned that increasing restrictions could negatively affect their social, educational, economic, and cultural participation.

HRD+ is also deeply concerned by reports that announcements issued by the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice have been read in Herat's congregational mosques. These announcements reportedly threatened women with detention and imprisonment if they left their homes without wearing a full burqa. The use of religious platforms to communicate governmental threats and restrict women's rights not only contributes to an atmosphere of fear and discrimination but is also incompatible with the principles of human dignity, fundamental freedoms, and equal participation of citizens in public life.

In this regard, Human Rights Defenders Plus recall the multiple documented reports concerning the detention of more than 70 women and girls in Herat City by the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. According to these reports, women and girls were detained during their daily activities, including shopping for household necessities, solely because of their clothing and were transferred to detention facilities. These reports have raised serious concerns regarding freedom of movement, the psychological security of families,

women's social participation, the lack of transparency surrounding the detention process, and the potential violation of other fundamental rights.

HRD+ emphasizes that human dignity, fundamental freedoms, equality before the law, and protection from arbitrary detention are among the fundamental rights of every human being. The compulsory imposition of a specific form of dress, threats of detention against women, restrictions on their presence in public life, and the use of administrative or religious mechanisms to exert pressure on women are inconsistent with universal human rights principles and the fundamental values of justice and human dignity.

We call on the de facto authorities in Afghanistan to:

- Immediately cease the detention of women and girls based on their manner of dress;
- Unconditionally release all women and girls who have been detained;
- Refrain from imposing any arbitrary or discriminatory restrictions against women; and
- Ensure transparency and accountability in all executive and enforcement measures.

We also call on the UN Special Procedures, Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, UN Women, UNAMA, the European Union, and all relevant international institutions to:

- Conduct an urgent and independent assessment of the situation of women in Herat and other provinces of Afghanistan;
- Document and report cases of detention and violations of women's rights; and
- Take effective measures to prevent the expansion of these restrictions and ensure accountability for those responsible for human rights violations.

Human Rights Defenders Plus believes that the future of peace, stability, and development in Afghanistan depends on respect for the rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens, particularly women and girls. Any policy based on discrimination, coercion, and repression not only violates the fundamental rights of citizens but also undermines public trust, social cohesion, and the future of the country.

Respectfully,

Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+)