

Joint Statement: Call for Action on Accountability for Afghanistan on the International Day for Criminal Justice

17 July 2026

Today, on the International Day for Criminal Justice, we, Afghan and international human rights and civil society organizations, remind the global community that international law is only as strong as its enforcement. As we approach the fifth year of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on August 15, the international response to Afghanistan stands at a critical, defining crossroads. Five years of gradual normalization of human rights abuses and a failure to enforce accountability have emboldened the Taliban, [compounding the systemic oppression of Afghanistan's women and girls](#). Today, we call for an immediate and coordinated revival of [international legal accountability](#) to shatter the culture of impunity that shields the architects of the world's most severe women's rights crisis.

The current crisis in Afghanistan did not emerge in a vacuum; it is the direct result of decades of entrenched, unaddressed impunity, where successive cycles of conflict and violations by multiple actors have left generations of victims without truth or redress. For the women, girls, and all diverse communities of Afghanistan, international accountability is not an abstract legal concept; it is the litmus test for our trust in the international order and the global human rights architecture. [The systematic erasure of women from public life](#)—ban on education beyond sixth grade, severe restrictions on employment, freedom of movement, and expression—demands comprehensive justice. The Taliban's oppressive policies directly violate Afghanistan's binding obligations under international law, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Furthermore, this widespread and systematic campaign of abuse amounts to the crime against humanity of gender persecution—a grave offense for which the International Criminal Court (ICC) has already issued arrest warrants against two Taliban leaders.

We must explicitly clarify that accountability does not equal isolation. Demanding justice does not mean closing the doors to communication or halting vital humanitarian assistance. Rather, it means pursuing principled engagement—a framework in which any engagement with the Taliban is strictly conditioned on demonstrable improvements in human rights, especially the rights of women and girls. This framework demands full compliance with international legal obligations, alongside the meaningful, safe, and effective participation of the Afghan people—particularly women, girls, victims, survivors, human rights defenders, and marginalized communities.

To dismantle the Taliban's institutionalized system of oppression, the international community must deploy an ["all-tools" approach](#), utilizing every available mechanism simultaneously to achieve justice.

We urge the UN Member States and the broader international community to act swiftly on the following recommendations that the Afghan civil society has repeatedly shared,

and they have been reinforced in the [Judgment](#) of the historic People's Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan:

- **Expedite ICC Investigation and Enforce Arrest Warrants:** We welcome the historic step taken by the ICC in [issuing arrest warrants](#) for Taliban Supreme Leader Haibatullah Akhundzada and Chief Justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani for crimes against humanity, specifically persecution on the grounds of gender and other crimes in 2025. However, warrants have limited impact without enforcement. We call on the ICC Prosecutor and State Parties to maintain momentum, ensure transparency regarding next steps, and pursue the arrest not only of these individuals but also of other responsible senior leaders. The ICC also has an obligation towards all the victims in its [investigation mandate on Afghanistan](#) and must expand the scope of the investigation beyond the Taliban. For instance, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) forces have claimed responsibility for scores of unlawful attacks on Hazara-Shia communities and religious minorities, killing and injuring thousands. In addition to pursuing cases against Taliban and ISKP members, the ICC prosecutor should move to bring cases for alleged crimes committed by all actors, including former Afghan security forces and international troops.
- **Urgent Action and Transparency from CEDAW States Parties:** We acknowledge the vital [legal initiative](#) led by Australia, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands to hold Afghanistan accountable under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As this process moves forward, we urge these states to transition swiftly from procedural dispute phases to concrete legal action. Furthermore, we demand transparency regarding the progress of this case and call for the institutionalization of ongoing, safe, and survivor-centered consultations with Afghan civil society, legal experts, and survivors to ensure their lived experiences directly shape the legal strategy.
- **Fully Resource the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan (IIMA):** We welcome the establishment of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan in October 2025. The IIMA must be immediately and completely operationalized, fully resourced, and its independence fiercely protected. Recognizing that true justice requires addressing the root causes of the crisis, the [IIMA's comprehensive mandate](#) must be supported to investigate all past and ongoing serious violations by all actors, ensuring justice for all victims of Afghanistan's long history of conflict. The mechanism must be embedded with gender and child expertise and maintain safe, sustained, and institutionalized pathways for survivor engagement.
- **Fund and Protect Local Civil Society Documentation:** International accountability mechanisms rely on the courageous, vital work of Afghan civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and documentation networks operating both inside the country and in exile. We call on international donors to provide flexible, long-term financial and political support directly to frontline actors inside Afghanistan and in exile. Documenting violations is a prerequisite for justice; the international community must actively protect Afghan human rights defenders and ensure their documentation safely feeds into international accountability pathways.
- **Codify Gender Apartheid:** We urge UN Member States to explicitly recognize and codify "gender apartheid" as a crime against humanity within the draft

Crimes Against Humanity Treaty. Acknowledging the situation in Afghanistan by its true name is vital to establishing a comprehensive global legal remedy.

- **Provide Critical Political and Financial Support to the Special Rapporteur:** We express our deepest gratitude to the [UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan](#), Mr. Richard Bennett, and his mandate, which remains an indispensable lifeline for independent monitoring, reporting, and documentation. We urge UN Member States to maximize the Special Rapporteur's impact by providing unyielding political backing and robust financial resources for the mandate.
- **Initiate Structural Investigations into the Situation in Afghanistan and Prosecute International Crimes:** We urge national prosecutorial bodies worldwide to launch investigations into the atrocities committed in Afghanistan under the principle of universal jurisdiction. In this context, collaboration with Afghan civil society organizations involved in documentation is essential.

We cannot allow short-term political interests to dictate the future of Afghanistan, pushing survivors toward despair and forcing the world into forgetting. Five years into this crisis, and as the world marks this International Day for Criminal Justice, the erosion of faith in the international order must be met with immediate, concrete legal and political action. The women of Afghanistan and the civil society continue to resist; world leaders, UN bodies, and international tribunals must now find the political courage to stand with them.

Current Signatories

Expert Working Group on the Potential cases(s) for Afghanistan at the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

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Global Women's Justice Network

Rights Monitor Media

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Women Organization for Rights, Dignity and Speech (WORDS)

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Women For Afghanistan (WFA)

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End Gender Apartheid Campaign

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The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)
Hami, Women Empowerment Organization
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