

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations



**LAWYERS FOR
LAWYERS**



**The Law Society
of England and Wales**

Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Item 2: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (oral update)

Date: 11 September 2023

Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 54th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), Lawyers for Lawyers, and the Law Society of England and Wales, NGOs in special consultative status

Afghanistan: Halt the widespread and systematic persecution of women and girls, including jurists and human rights defenders

Mr. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, Lawyers for Lawyers, and the Law Society of England and Wales thanks the Special Rapporteur for his ongoing work to raise alarm about the shocking "annihilation"¹ of rights of women and girls by Afghanistan's de facto authorities. We remain dismayed by the exclusion of Afghan women from the judiciary, the legal profession, and NGO offices, which deprives Afghan people of services of persons qualified to provide effective access to remedies for rights violations.

We join the Special Rapporteur's call for the restoration and protection of all rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, including:

- reversal of all edicts and policies that violate women's and girls' rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and participation in public affairs, and
- ensuring Afghan women's rights to participate fully as members of the legal profession and judiciary.

We call on Council members and observer States:

- to provide robust support for women human rights defenders and jurists, and

¹ OHCHR, Afghanistan: UN experts say 20 years of progress for women and girls' rights erased since Taliban takeover, 8 March 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/afghanistan-un-experts-say-20-years-progress-women-and-girls-rights-erased>.

- to support the Special Procedures' call for recognition that the de facto authorities' widespread, systematic, and profound violations against women and girls may rise to the level of the crime against humanity of gender persecution.²

Thank you.

² OHCHR, Afghanistan: UN human rights experts denounce idea of “reformed” Taliban, 14 August 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/08/afghanistan-un-human-rights-experts-denounce-idea-reformed-taliban>; OHCHR, Afghanistan: Latest Taliban treatment of women and girls may be crime against humanity, say UN experts, 25 November 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/11/afghanistan-latest-taliban-treatment-women-and-girls-may-be-crime-against>; Amnesty International, Afghanistan: The Taliban's war on women: The crime against humanity of gender persecution in Afghanistan, May 25, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/afghanistan-talibans-treatment-of-women-and-girls-should-be-investigated-as-the-crime-against-humanity-of-gender-persecution/>