

# Violation of womens rights under the taliban sociology essay



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Afghanistan has an unfortunately long history of human rights violation. During the Soviet Invasion from 1979 to 1989, the country suffered from cruel mass killings, refugee outflow, tortures, and landmines. When the Soviet fell in 1992, the country was taken over by warring factions who caused almost a total destruction of the Kabul, Afghanistan's capital. In 1994, a group called Taliban emerged above the others. Taliban literally means 'students of Muslim religious studies'. The group asserts that they will be putting peace and order by enforcing a strict Islamic edict. Due to the absence of an efficient judicial system, Afghan authorities adopted Taliban's interpretation of the Islamic law, Shari'a.

The moment Taliban took control over Afghanistan, it already engaged in war with Afghan women. The Taliban's extreme fundamentalist interpretation of the Shari'a prevented women from studying, being involved in activist movements, and even from appearing in society altogether. In short, the Taliban's fundamentalist interpretation of the Shari'a nearly denied Afghan women their existence. If these rules are violated, women would suffer serious beatings and can even be killed. Under a system where detestation of women is almost legal, incidence of rape and domestic violence became rampant.

Afghanistan is mainly known because of war so many had probably assumed that Afghan women has never experienced freedom and autonomy.

However, as early as the 1920's, there have already been movements initiated by Afghan women. In the 1970's, Afghan had access to high degrees of education and some even held positions. Before Taliban took over Afghanistan, the women were nurtured by the law and their rights in the <https://assignbuster.com/violation-of-womens-rights-under-the-taliban-sociology-essay/>

society are significantly improving. Under the Communist regime, women enjoyed the right to vote and gender equality was a provision under the constitution. As Afghanistan slowly became democratic, there was also an increasing room for acceptance for women. Women played an important role in the development of the country. In the 1970s, women comprised a significant part of the legislative body, the teachers, doctors, and government workers. They were also active in various relief efforts until the Taliban banned them from working. The Afghan women represented an enormous talent resource which played a significant role in the revival of Afghanistan after the Taliban period.

There is a great disconnect between what Islam stands for and what the Taliban has interpreted it to be. Islam has always placed the rights of women and children in high regard. In the Shari'a there are specific stipulations on the rights of woman. Provisions for marriage, divorce and owning a property are carefully detailed. The Taliban's version of Islam is something that is not recognized by the rest of the Muslims. Despite their claim that what they were doing benefitted women, the reality was that the Taliban have degraded women to the very bottom of the society, overlooked their health, and took away from them their right to learn and even practice their religion. What Taliban claimed has nothing to do with what most Muslims believe and with what Islam teaches.

The time when Afghanistan was under the Taliban is considered to be one of the worst violations of human rights. The Taliban had overpowered almost all sectors of the Afghan society and stripped them of their basic rights.

However, what the Taliban had done to the Afghan women is still the most  
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upsetting. Women were prisoners in their own homes and they did not have access to education and health care. Children did not even have the basic liberty of playing.

The takeover of Taliban marked two decades of political instability and war in Afghanistan. Many have hoped that they will bring peace to the country. This faith flew the moment they imposed an oppressive execution of the Shari'a. The war against Afghan women began by closing down universities and by banning all women from working. Many were forced to abandon their jobs. A very strict dress code was imposed and women were forbidden from going around the city. The Taliban also committed unforgivable acts of rape, forced marriage, and kidnappings. Many families were forced to send their daughters away to keep them from the Taliban.

During those times, there were almost no opportunities for the Afghan women. They could work on very limited and discrete situations. This is despite the fact that the women have significantly contributed to the development of the Afghan society. Because of the civil war, many women lost their husbands and relatives. Because they were not allowed to work, they have no means of livelihood. Most women were forced to sell their belongings, resorted to begging or even sold their bodies just to keep their families alive.

#### Restrictions in Health and Education

The right to education is acknowledged in international laws and instruments. Denying a woman to study could also mean denying her of a good future. This right did not hold during the Taliban regime. All women  
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were denied of education. Home schooling was allowed to a minimal extent but it was very limited. Women were forbidden from entering the Kabul University. In essence, the Taliban's policy on women's education contained all forms of knowledge and instead propagated ignorance. By imposing such actions, the Taliban ensured that women will go down deeper into poverty and will not have the ability to contribute to society.

Women had also very limited access to medical services. Hence, many Afghan women were in danger of getting sick. Women's access to medical services was met with difficulty. If a woman got sick and needed to be taken to a hospital, she has to be checked fully clothed. Because of this, many were wrongly diagnosed and treated. The limited access to health care and services caused an increase in the mortality rates. Under the Taliban regime, Afghanistan had the second highest cases of death during childbirth. The lack of access to medical care also translated into a high mortality rate for the children. To this day, Afghanistan remains to have one of the highest incidences of infant death.

Further degrading the health situation, the Taliban destroyed educational materials and anything that contributed to the awareness of the people. The end product is a society that suffered from illiteracy and with no access even to the most basic health needs. As a way of keeping women in their homes, the Taliban had ordered that windows of houses should be painted. In this manner, people outside the house will not see who is inside. These caused severe depression amongst the women and some even committed suicide.

#### Restriction in Movement

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The Taliban have strictly enforced a dress code particularly in urban area. Women were required to cover themselves with burqa, a garment that hides a woman's body from head to toe. Some burqa can be so thick that its wearer can encounter difficulty in breath. In the code imposed, women were only allowed to see through a very small mesh. The limited vision restricted their movement and brought dangers to them in many forms.

Afghan women have already worn burqa even before the Taliban took control. However, just the like the rest of the Muslims of the world, it was worn as matter of personal choice. The Taliban have enforced it strictly so that anyone who violated the code had to pay fines or even suffer beatings. An accidental exposure of the feet can prove to be very dangerous. There were also no exceptions to the code. Even women who were severely sick and those who were too young have to wear the burqa. What could have been piece of clothing that represents the pride of Muslims turned into something that imprisons them.

The burqa did only cause physical burden to the Afghan women but also money problems. Burqa can be costly and the economic situation prevented most women from affording one. There have been instances when a whole neighborhood had to share a single burqa. Women had to wait for their turn to wear the burqa before they can get out of their house. Women with disability were forced to stay home if they don't have the ability to wear their burqa properly.

The dress code does not touch the aspect of clothing but also other forms of adornment. Women were forbidden from using make-up and other colorful

accessories. White socks were banned and women were not allowed to wear shoes that would make in any noise. Despite following the dress code, there were still more rules that prevented women from moving around freely. They were only allowed to roam around if they were escorted by male relatives. If not, they could be beaten. Women were also forbidden from taking taxis with escorts. Both taxi driver and passenger would suffer punishment. There were special buses for women but these buses had their windows covered by thick curtains so the people on the street will not be also to see the passengers. If a woman is caught with a man, she can suffer lashes in front of many people. If a woman is married, she can be stoned to death. This is Taliban's version of executing justice.

### Abuse of Human Rights

The Taliban have claimed that what they were doing was a means of sustaining a society where women were safe and have dignity. However, in reality this was not the case. Dignity has been the very first thing that has been taken away from them. Women were forced by the circumstances to be rendered almost useless. Young girls did not have access to any form of schooling and health care. In some way, the Taliban have also taken away their childhood because they banned from playing with dolls and other toys.

The Shari'a promoted equal opportunities for both men and women to learn. It also stipulated their rights to work and perform their duties in the society. The Taliban's impositions violated many of the standards of human rights. Among these rights violates are the right to work, freedom of expression, right to health care, right to assembly, and many others. The amount of

violation experienced by the Afghan women had been so extensive it almost become threatening for most of them. Different Muslim societies have varying regards on the role of women in the society but nonetheless Islam recognizes that women should be respected and treated properly. The Taliban saw nothing of that.

The turmoil in Afghanistan has not only affected the country but also its neighbors as well. Millions of Afghans have been displaced to neighboring countries such as Iran and Pakistan. Majority of the refugees are children and women.

### Post-Taliban Afghanistan

The Taliban regime brought about an Afghanistan that is shaped by extreme practices, some which even violate the very laws of Islam. Taliban has claimed their impositions as mere interpretations of the Shar'ia but when carefully examined, they have used Shari'a as a means to repress women, restrict their freedom and abuse their rights. The long years of conflict and abuse have destroyed both Afghan men and women. The fear that developed among the people has significantly prevented efforts in advocating for respect for human rights.

After the fall of Taliban in 2001, hope rose among the Afghans and other sectors that the plight of the women in the country would gradually improve. In December 2001, the Bonn Agreement was established with the goal of restoring Afghanistan. Then secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said that true restoration of Afghanistan cannot be achieved without addressing the situation of the Afghan women. The interim government of Afghanistan  
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also pledged to alleviate the violations that Afghan women had suffered under the hands of Taliban.

The Bom Agreement sparked international efforts to help Afghanistan to rise from the slums that Taliban has brought it into. Focus was especially given to women and children. A lot of efforts that would enable them to live again freely and securely have been initiated.

One of the most important realizations in this case is that the issue of women rights has been ignored for very long time. One of the most important focuses of the post-Taliban period is that women are an integral part of society and they are important in the policy-making process. Since then, there have been many pledges that promise to improve the situation of Afghan women. Several years after the agreement was passed, the question is whether there have any changes in the lives of the Afghan women.

There have been improvements in the treatment of Afghan women and the advancement of their rights. Several laws that promote gender equality have been passed. There have also been groups that actively advocates respect for women rights. The improvements made were considerable and if coupled with the proper support, it can mobilize greater movements for the advancement of women's rights.

However, there are several factors that prevent Afghanistan from completely moving forward. Despite the fact the substantial amount of help has been extended to Afghanistan, it is still among the poorest nations in the world. Its socio-economic indicators are also disturbing. Society still remains to be

unstable and there are still cases of women discrimination. Crimes are <https://assignbuster.com/violation-of-womens-rights-under-the-taliban-sociology-essay/>

rampant and there are resistances to community development. These factors among others have hindered proper implementation of health care and other services.

Another problem is the inherent resistance of the Afghan women to empower themselves. This can be issue of lack of support or because the discrimination they have suffered from the Taliban have already been deeply engraved in their minds that they have already treated it as the norm. Under the Taliban, violence has already made up majority of their lives.

Conflicts that constantly plagued Afghanistan had also made indirect and directs effects on Afghan women. Apart from death and injury, women had become very afraid because of warfare, constant displacements, destruction of belongings, and limited access to basic human needs. These have prevented from easily reaching out to humanitarian efforts.

For most members of the Afghan society, the chance to enjoy their rights has been very limited. Because women have been deprived of education, they are not even aware of their rights. There are many things to learn from the case of Afghan women. Today, many women still remain powerless. They are constantly at the mercy of the society they belong to and they are treated as a commodity rather than as a human being. This is the very challenge that women are facing. Until violence against women has not been eliminated, peace in Afghanistan cannot be totally achieved.

Conclusion

It is necessary to break way from the formal definition of human rights and to look at the Taliban's declaration of divine injunction itself. To not question such a contention is a violation itself of the rights of the Afghanistan women. The naïve tolerance of Taliban's assertion of Islam led them to believe that their version of Islam is authentic to a certain extent that even some of their allies abandoned them. By failing to question Taliban's claim, the protection of women has been placed totally outside a reference, Islam, which should have been actually theirs to claim.

Taliban's way of describing its rules as a mere interpretation of Islam is indicative of the more complex reality about the translation and execution of religious teachings, their inclusion in local practices, and the exploitation that results in trying to aver power. Despite repetitive references to Shari'a, the various prohibitions set by the Taliban do not in any way pertain to the absolute word of God but only to their political interests in their effort to assert themselves in Afghan society.

In tackling Taliban's way of silencing its detractors by elevating respect for culture and religion, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are many ways of interpreting Islam. There is no definite body that claims to have the authority to disseminate laws that are applicable to all Muslims. Instead, different parts of the world have developed their laws based on their own interpretations of the Shari'a. In history, there have been disputes among the Muslims. The most notable is the separation of the Shi'a and Sunni after the death of Mohammed. But apart from the broad division, there still exists smaller unit of sects, traditions, and schools of thought.

Therefore, the Shari'a is not a rigid and unchallenged set of laws. Just like other body of regulations, it includes an array of standards and beliefs that will enable its followers to bend these principles into the needs of a situation. And though there are views that the Shari'a contains the 'complete code of life', in reality the lives of Muslims are not only shaped by these laws but also by culture and also personal choices. This is not only true for the Afghan society but also for the rest of the Muslims in the world.

The strict rules imposed by the Taliban are not the proper interpretation of the divine words contained in the Qur'an. It can be also deemed unfair to the Afghan people, both men and women, to raise the issue of Islam law versus human rights. It should not be the law of Islam but rather the worldly resolutions of the Taliban which favor military and personal power over the welfare of the women that should be criticized against the principles of universal human rights.