



Permanent Peoples' Tribunal requests European Union to withdraw the invitation of the Taliban

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The [Permanent Peoples' Tribunal](#) (PPT) expresses its profound concern at the European Union's decision to [invite](#) representatives of the Taliban to Brussels for discussions on the forced return of Afghan migrants. This move represents a dangerous step forward towards the normalization of a regime responsible for gender persecution. The Taliban's systematic, systemic and institutionalized discrimination against women amounts to gender persecution, widespread human rights violations, and the dismantling of every fundamental freedom for Afghan women and girls.

In its 55th session on Women of Afghanistan, convened at the request of [Rawadari](#), [HRD+](#), [AHRDO](#), and [DROPS](#), the independent panel of judges¹ found ten Taliban leaders, and the Taliban as a group, responsible for crimes against humanity of gender persecution under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute, as set out in the [judgement](#) made public in December 2025. In addition, the panel of judges held that the State of Afghanistan is in violation of its obligations emanating from the various UN human rights treaties, to which it remains a State Party. The judgement also notes that the situation in Afghanistan meets the constitutive elements of an apartheid-like system i.e. an institutionalized regime of segregation, exclusion, and domination.

As highlighted in the PPT proceedings and the judgement, the Taliban as the *de facto* governing authority, is the perpetrator of a coordinated, state-level campaign of gender persecution, carried out with the intent to erase women from public life and to restructure Afghan society around male supremacy. Evidence from survivors, witnesses, and international bodies reveals a coordinated campaign to exclude, silence, and control women, banning their education, barring them from work, erasing them from public life, enforcing a strict dress code, restricting access to healthcare, and punishing dissent. By requiring Afghan women always to be accompanied by a close male member of the family (*Mahram*), the Taliban has not only restricted their freedom of movement but also their access to health facilities and doctors. The Taliban have institutionalized the discrimination and repression of Afghan women and girls by issuing more than 100 binding edicts and decrees, and which is enforced through mechanisms that subjugate and control Afghan women and girls, individually and collectively. Additionally, the Taliban are systematically targeting Afghan women activists by using surveillance systems and

¹ Rashida Manjoo (South Africa), chair of the panel, Araceli García del Soto (Spain), Elisenda Calvet-Martínez (Spain), Emilio Ramírez Matos (Spain), Ghizal Haress (Afghanistan), Mai El-Sadany (Egypt/United States), Marina Forti (Italy) and Kalpana Sharma (India).

repressing those participating in protests. Afghan women and girls are detained and are often arbitrarily detained and subjected to torture, ill treatment, sexual violence while in custody and forced confessions. Afghan women and girls are also objects of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, suicide attacks, and stoned to death, putting at risk their right to life with human dignity.

The institutionalization of the Taliban's gender regime reflects broader patterns in which patriarchal authority becomes embedded in State structures. Under this system, women's subordination is framed as natural, culturally authentic, and religiously mandated, while male authority is positioned as the source of protection, moral guidance, and social order. Once the State adopts this worldview, it becomes enforced through law, administrative practice, and everyday governance, rather than merely through family or community norms. At the same time, restricting women's rights becomes a political project tied to claims of restoring national identity and defending cultural and religious values. Therefore, the Taliban's gender-based domination is not incidental, but systematic and structural, woven into the State's governing ideology, producing a system of institutionalized discrimination that targets women as a group and treats their exclusion as a necessary condition of social order. The consequences of the Taliban's systemic discrimination are profound and multidimensional, extending far beyond individual rights violations to reshape Afghanistan's social, economic, and political landscape.

There are numerous consequences of normalisation with the Taliban *de facto* authorities. Some of these include: first, the immediate political impact is that it will embolden the Taliban while simultaneously diminishing international leverage. When States overlook the Taliban's gender-based repression, they enable the group to demand and enforce gender segregation, not just domestically, but even within sovereign and democratic countries. Second, the normative and human rights impact of normalization is profound. It risks undermining the universality of women's rights by signalling that women's freedoms can once again be sacrificed for political convenience. Third, the effect on global norms and precedents is deeply troubling. It erodes the longstanding taboo against normalizing regimes of institutionalized oppression. It suggests that governments responsible for mass violations of women's and girls' rights can nonetheless enjoy international diplomatic and economic relations. Fourth, the consequences for accountability systems are severe. Normalization will weaken mechanisms such as the ICC and the ICJ that took the international community decades to build and that Afghan women have spent years struggling to secure. These structures were established precisely to prevent the kind of impunity the Taliban now enjoys. Finally, normalization will severely harm Afghan women and girls. When the international community chooses to accept the Taliban rather than support Afghan women, many will lose faith in human rights and international accountability, shifting from active resistance to mere survival. This shift erodes hope, weakens advocacy, and ultimately reinforces the Taliban's control over society, prolonging their oppressive rule.

While the EU does not recognize as the legitimate *de facto* authority of the Taliban, this invitation contradicts the EU's own stated human rights principles and contributes to the protection of authoritarian regimes when they align with EU interests. The EU has imposed [sanctions](#) on multiple Taliban leaders for their involvement in terrorism, human rights abuses, [violation of women's and girls' human rights](#), and threats to international peace and security. These sanctions remain in force precisely because the Taliban continues to perpetrate grave violations, including the persecution of women and girls.

Furthermore, the European Court of Justice has [ruled](#) that the Taliban's treatment of women constitutes persecution, underscoring the impossibility of guaranteeing the safety of any woman forcibly returned to Afghanistan. The International Criminal Court has issued [arrest warrants](#) for senior Taliban figures in connection with alleged crimes against humanity of persecution on gender grounds against women and girls.

Extending invitations for political dialogue and [“technical” cooperation](#) to individuals associated with such charges risks eroding the credibility of international justice mechanisms and sends a devastating message to Afghan victims seeking accountability. By engaging the Taliban in discussions on deportations, particularly of individuals who may face persecution, imprisonment, or death upon return, the EU risks becoming complicit in violations of international refugee law and the principle of *non-refoulement*.

We call on the European Union to:

1. Immediately withdraw the invitation extended to Taliban representatives and reaffirm its non-recognition of the Taliban's regime.
2. Halt all deportations to Afghanistan, given the well-documented risks to returnees, especially women, girls, and minorities.
3. Strengthen support for Afghan refugees and asylum seekers, ensuring that no individual is returned to a situation of persecution.
4. Uphold international law and human rights standards, including its own sanctions regime and the authority of the ICC.
5. Engage directly with Afghan civil society, women's organizations, and democratic actors, rather than with perpetrators of gender-based oppression.

The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal stands with the Afghan people, especially Afghan women and girls, who continue to resist the Taliban's brutality at extraordinary personal risk. We urge the European Union to stand with them as well, not with their oppressors.

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