



The Rise and Fall of Women Rights in Afghanistan

NARGIS NEHAN 

RESEARCH



ABSTRACT

The struggle for women's rights in Afghanistan stretches back to the nineteenth century. The movement has waxed and waned, but advances have almost always been followed by retreats. The collapse of Afghan government is due to a wide variety of factors. Of these, the equality and growing prominence of Afghan women has been negligible, yet it is likely that women will pay the highest price for this collapse. In this essay I will discuss the rise and fall of women's rights in Afghanistan before and after 9/11, highlighting the social reforms, their positive and negative impacts and the role of state and non-state actors in supporting and/or reversing women's rights.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Nargis Nehan

Founder of EQUALITY for
Peace & Democracy and
board member of Afghanistan
Institute of Civil Society, AF
nargis.nehan@gmail.com

GUEST EDITOR:

Michael Cox

Emeritus Professor of
International Relations and
Founding Director of LSE
IDEAS, UK
m.e.cox@lse.ac.uk

KEYWORDS:

Conflict; Discrimination;
Development; Religious
Hardliners; Activism

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Nehan N. The Rise and Fall of
Women Rights in Afghanistan.
LSE Public Policy Review. 2022;
2(3): 6, pp. 1–10. DOI: [https://
doi.org/10.31389/lseppr.59](https://doi.org/10.31389/lseppr.59)

The struggle for women's rights in Afghanistan stretches back to the nineteenth century. Afghanistan society is deeply conservative, religious and patriarchal, and it has been a risky struggle for those pursuing women's rights. The movement has waxed and waned, but advances have almost always been followed by retreats. Social reforms for women liberation were among the reasons for sending Amanullah into exile in the 1929 and demolishing both the Communist and Republic regimes.

When an empire rises, another one falls. With these empires their social, cultural, and economic policies also come and go, especially when there are not strong and independent public institutions to keep the state running despite the political changes. Women's movement in Afghanistan has been fluctuating throughout the history depending on who is ruling the country. While some governments acknowledged and strengthened position of women in Afghan society by introducing different social reforms, the others suppressed them by reversing the reforms. These social reforms for strengthening position of women were introduced by Amanullah, Zahir Shah, and the communist regime while they were reversed by Habibullah, Mujahidden and Taliban.

Post 9/11, after intervention of the US and allies in Afghanistan, the era of gender and minorities' apartheid, social injustice, suppression, intimidation, and totalitarian diminished to some extent while republic, equality, liberty, and democracy rose and opened many opportunities for Afghan women. These bold social reforms were not easy; they cost both the Afghan people and the international community thousands of lives and trillions in treasure. However, after being captured by the Taliban on August 15, 2021, Afghanistan is once again ruled by the regressive Islamic Emirate regime and Afghan women are once again imprisoned to homes with their rights impinged and the economic stability undermined.

Such rapid progress made by Afghan women in the last two decades makes it reasonable to claim that it was a revolutionary movement. Whether enrolment of girls in schools and universities, women's employment in civil service positions, women's participation in politics, entrepreneurship in business, or advocacy in civil society and media, the opportunities for women multiplied with women asking not only for their rights, but also for holding the government accountable and demanding better services for citizens. Women's participation in public life kept blossoming as demonstrated by Afghan women's progressive participation and leadership in different fields across the country. The international community prioritized women empowerment while fighting terrorism in Afghanistan. Right from the beginning, they supported activists' demand for women to participate in all affairs of the country. This included asserting women's rights at the Bonn Conference and in the adoption of the new constitution [1], which acknowledged women as equal citizens for the first time. This was not an entirely smooth process, however. The Afghan government, while broadly supportive of women's rights, was also using women's rights as a bargaining chip with the international community whenever they had to. The women's rights activists were sincerely and tirelessly struggling for women's rights by scrutinizing government policies, parliament decisions, and holding them to account.

Women's presence in public life, their economic empowerment and strong leadership inspired and encouraged many families to allow their girls to not only study but also to work and take part in development of their country. However, not all were as welcoming of this progress as it proved to be irritating and worrisome for fundamentalists and extremely conservative groups. The more women progressed and participated in the country's affairs, the more these hardliner groups opposed women's rights and mobilized people against it. At the beginning of the western intervention, these groups were not prominent. However, the focus of assistance on Kabul and provincial capitals, the insecurity, corruption, and support of regional countries for extremism and insurgency in Afghanistan strengthened and expanded these groups gradually made them visible and bold. They began publicly criticizing women's rights and empowerment in Afghanistan as an urban and elite centric movement without any connection with rural, 'ordinary' women. They portrayed women's rights in Afghanistan as a western-imposed agenda with no domestic popularity undermining Afghanistan's Islamic and traditional values.

The collapse of Afghan government is due to a wide variety of factors. Of these, the equality and growing prominence of Afghan women has been negligible, yet it is likely that women will

pay the highest price for this collapse. In this essay I will discuss the rise and fall of women's rights in Afghanistan before and after 9/11, highlighting the social reforms, their positive and negative impacts, and the role of state and non-state actors in supporting and/or reversing women's rights. With new technology connecting all citizens of the global village closer than ever, I will also highlight the impact of gender apartheid, extremism, and fundamentalism in Afghanistan on other countries especially in the region.

BEFORE 9/11

The struggle for women's rights started long before 9/11, always involving tensions between liberal and conservative groups, urban and rural population, and Afghanistan's religious and conservative groups and the outside world [2]. The first sovereign to take a genuine interest in the rights of women in Afghanistan was Amanullah Khan, who ruled as emir from 1919 to 1926 and as king from 1926 until 1929, when he abdicated. He was inspired by the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey. He crafted a new constitution [3] for Afghanistan that guaranteed civil rights for all, both men and women. He outlawed strict traditional dress codes, and his wife, Queen Soraya set the example by removing her own veil. New schools were opened for both boys and girls, even in rural areas; forced marriages were outlawed; and he endeavored to end the practice of polygamy. Queen Soraya even began Afghanistan's first women's journal, *Ershad-e Niswan* ('Guidance for Women'), which advocated for gender equality. While these reforms earned Amanullah Khan the reputation of a forward-thinking reformist king abroad, they provoked the conservative groups at home, who began mobilizing people against his government, resulting in his abdication and exile [4].

Khan was briefly succeeded by Habibullah Kalikani, but it was Nadir Shah who next meaningfully ruled Afghanistan. His reign saw a return to traditional values. He closed girls' schools, veiled women again and reversed many other reforms. The vacillation between liberal and conservative reigns continued and this backlash did not last long as Nadir Shah was assassinated in 1933, four years after his coronation. He was succeeded by his liberal-minded son, Zahir Shah, who was the longest, and last, king of Afghanistan. Over the course of his reign, many of Amanullah Khan's initiatives were gradually implemented. His government re-opened girls' schools, funded a new university, and instituted a new constitution in the 1950s, introducing a democratic framework and granting Afghan women the right to vote [5]. In urban areas, women attended colleges, took jobs outside their homes, ran businesses, and even ventured into politics. During the communist government, further social reforms were introduced making education for girls compulsory and implementing a minimum age for girls to marry. These reforms once again provoked conservative rebellions and different factions organized a nationwide resistance with the support of Pakistan and the US. These factions first fought the government and later fought among themselves. During the civil war there was little in terms of the rule of law: men died in large numbers, widows were reduced to begging, rape was commonplace, and suicide among despondent women became ever more frequent.

With the formation of Islamic Emirate in the 1990s, the Taliban introduced hugely regressive policies. They outlawed girls' access to education after the age of eight [6], forbade women from working, forced women to cover their entire bodies, including their faces, when in public, forbade women from seeking treatment from a male doctor unless accompanied by a male family member, and forbade women from speaking loudly in public [7, 8]. They banned women voices from the radio and made it illegal to display any image of women, either in public or at home. Following 9/11, America and its allies intervened in Afghanistan and, besides fighting terrorism, they also vowed to support and liberate Afghan women.

As is overwhelmingly evident, the movement for women's rights has been a contentious and risky endeavour, being used as one of the causes for fall of governments. While the Islamic and conservative groups have ostensibly based their opposition to women's rights in Islamic religion, in reality women liberation simply conflicts with the country's conservative tradition, one that deeply values female modesty and chastity. It is very hard for the patriarchal society of Afghanistan to let women be empowered, to allow them exercise their rights and to become independent. Despite all these resistances and social conflicts, women's liberation could prevail if armed extremism and radicalism was not supported by Pakistan and Iran in Afghanistan. Both Iran and Pakistan do not see Afghanistan stability in their benefit. Since four decades,

both neighboring countries have been waging war in Afghanistan. During resistance against Soviet Union occupation, both Iran and Pakistan were the main sources of support for armed resistance in Afghanistan.

POST 9/11

The presence of the international community in Afghanistan meant that real progress could be made in advancing women's rights. The genuine and tireless efforts of Afghan women's movement would not have succeeded without the strong financial and political support of the international community. Being largely dependent on international donors' financial support, the newly established interim administration, transitional government, and republic governments of Afghanistan had no choice but to meet their demands, which required women's rights to be recognized. Furthermore, in order to gain favour with the US and European embassies, all the male politicians seemed supportive of women's rights, and none of them challenged the demands of women's rights activists.

In 2004 a new constitution was adopted. It allocated 25% of parliamentary and provincial council seats to women, as well as 30% of civil service positions. It also bound Afghanistan to respect and implement all international conventions on women's rights, such as UNSCR 1325 and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Alongside this, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was created as the main body responsible for women's rights and empowerment. The Elimination of Violence Against Women Law (EVAW) [9], National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) [10], and the National Action Plans (NAP) [11] for implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 were adopted. Women were appointed as ministers, advisors, deputy ministers, provincial governors, and head of the Human Rights Commission. A number of funding schemes were launched for the execution of policies in support of women's rights and to promote women's participation in civil society, in the media, culture, and sport, and in the private sector. Countless projects were designed and implemented to provide short- and long-term capacity-building training for women in different fields, raise citizens' awareness of women's rights, provide shelter for victims of domestic violence and support women entrepreneurs to start small to medium size businesses.

After the Taliban was defeated in 2001 and due to the strong presence of international community, the conservative elements of society like the Taliban retreated and did not oppose any of these reforms. Supporters of conservative policies understood much of the people's frustration with the Taliban. Under their governance, little had been achieved other than the imposition of regressive rules and the isolation of Afghanistan by engaging in drug trafficking, providing safe havens for terrorists, as well as persecuting women and minorities.

At the macro level, a huge number of gains were quickly made after the western intervention. At the operational level while all the international donors were trying to support Afghan women, there were significant hurdles. It was challenging for the international community to work with women who could not speak English, exchange emails, write concepts and proposals and present Afghan women's voice in international platforms. However, this was ameliorated by the fact that a significant number of Afghan men and women from the diaspora who were raised and educated abroad returned home. They joined the UN agencies, international organizations, private firms, and government institutions. While the international donors considered them as Afghans who could speak fluent English and knew how to engage with the international partners, they were difficult for native Afghans to accept, as they were often too modern for the highly conservative Afghan society. Conservative Afghans were concerned that the diaspora were bringing western culture in Afghanistan and that they would influence Afghan women. For them, these Afghan diaspora were a model of liberty and women's rights, and believed they were trying to impose western values on Afghan society.

Elections proved to be the main source of all crises and fragmentation in Afghanistan after the western intervention in 2001. Right from the first election, the candidates made deals with local commanders, warlords, drug lords, and religious lords who had money and controlled banks of voters. In exchange, such groups demanded seats in the cabinet, in parliament, on the provincial council, and on the judicial bench. After every election, such groups were capturing more political space strengthening their network and base.

More often than not, these groups favoured conservative stances. Besides corruption, misuse of power, intimidating communities, committing different crimes, some of them also began opening religious Centers of Excellence and Madrassas all around the country with the support of regional countries. The curricula for these institutions came from Iran and Pakistan and promulgated highly conservative values among young boys and girls, with some institutions even collaborating with the Taliban and Dayesh.

President Hamid Karzai was put in place by the US and its allies. However, he was a deeply conservative politician who was not supportive of civil society, free media, and women's rights as he did not want to be seen as a western puppet. Consequently, he rarely opted for any policy reform that would irritate the conservatives and hardliners. Instead he threw all the blame on the international community just to win the sympathy of these groups.

The real clash between women's rights activists and conservative groups began in 2009. This was when Parliament passed the Shia Personal Status Act [12], allowing a husband to starve his wife if she refuses to have sex. Women's rights activists gathered in front of Parliament to protest against the law, and were met by a force of Shia clergymen, who came out in support of the law [13, 14]. International human rights organizations and donors also pressured President Karzai; however, in order to win the election, Karzai took the side of fundamentalists and hardliners. After a few months, Parliament proposed to reduce the women's quota share in the provincial councils from 25% to 20%. This intensified the conflict between women's rights activists and conservative groups. In 2010 the National Consultative Jirga was organized by the government to endorse formation of High Peace Council (HPC) with the mandate to begin negotiations with the Taliban for a political settlement. Originally, the government announced that 10% of the delegates would be women which was criticized as insufficient by women's rights activists. The US Foreign Secretary, Hillary Clinton, called President Karzai and asked for greater female participation in the Jirga – this was increased to 28%. Such participation and leadership in the Jirga was remarkable, particularly given that in several committees, women were elected as heads and in the rest as deputy heads. The expectation was that not being directly engaged in conflict, Afghan women as neutral group, would be supported to play influential role in the peace process.

However, this participation did not lead to greater female participation in the HPC. The government appointed 64 male and only 4 female members, the latter who were from different political groups. But this time, when the proportion of female members was criticised, the government did not respond as effectively, included only one more woman from civil society in the HPC. Little information was provided to the women members about the peace talks, with the women intentionally kept in the dark. Female participation, not only in the peace talks, but in all affairs of the country was becoming quite tokenistic, despite all the struggles of the activists. The international community also began to give into gender conservatism in Afghanistan. Although Afghanistan was a signatory of UNSCR 1325, the international community avoided holding the government into account for implementation.

As time passed, the fundamentalists and hardliners were becoming bolder, vocally and publicly criticizing women's rights as being a western product imposed upon Afghanistan. Their access to power and resources kept strengthening their position while women's rights activists had no access to power, networks or resources. Instead, the women's rights activists used donors' leverage to pressure the government to meet their demands. As outlined above, this paid off on many occasions and helped empowering Afghan women within society and strengthening their role in Afghan politics. Nevertheless, conservative groups increasingly tried to weaken and defame women's rights activists in Afghan society to reduce their influence, fomenting division between urban and rural women, between educated and uneducated classes and sometimes simply criticizing activists for being dependent on international community, calling them 'The Embassy Women'.

In 2014, Ashraf Ghani became Afghanistan's president. He had a background at the World Bank and at John Hopkins University, and so he knew what the international community would be looking for. In part thanks to his reformist image, with Ghani promising social, political, and economic reforms, he drew a large number of voters among women and youth. After the inauguration of the National Unity Government, his wife opened the Office of the First Lady to serve Afghan women and children. He increased female members of the HPC by

introducing a number of strong and vocal women's rights activists. He appointed women in the cabinet positions in heavily male-dominated sectors such as mining and communication and required all the ministries to have at least one woman as deputy minister. Furthermore, he supported the formation of the Afghan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries and gave 5% preference to Afghan women-owned companies bidding for public contracts. He also nominated a woman as a member of the High Council of the Supreme Court, which was furiously rejected by the conservative groups in Parliament.

Benefits were not only seen in government during this period: 3G internet and affordable Chinese smartphones enabled thousands of Afghan girls across the country to access social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and update themselves not only about Afghanistan but about world politics. The private TV channels allowed girls and families to watch Indian, Turkish, and Western serials and become familiar with culture and traditions in other countries. Alongside this, access to education had significantly increased in both urban and rural Afghanistan, and private courses allowed girls to learn English and engage with the world. All these changes in such a short period of time (2014 to 2019) were revolutionary. The young Afghan generation could see the peaceful life that people in other countries were enjoying while Afghanistan was drowning in conflict, politics, and corruption.

Given all these advances, many question, how the government collapsed. How did the Taliban so quickly recapture the nation? Why did the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) not fight the Taliban? Why did the civil society and media not defend the republic and women's rights?

While all these developments were transforming Afghan society with high speed, the conservative and fundamental groups were also equally and aggressively resisting these changes. They had thousands of boys and hundreds of girls graduated from their Madrasahs and Centers of Excellence who were against all these changes and were asking for Islamic government. They had control over most of mosques where Mullahs began speaking against democracy and women's rights during Friday prayers. They were questioning the political will of the government highlighting the little progress to combat corruption, nepotism, injustice, and insecurity, exploiting the public's frustration and provoking them against the western puppet government.

Women's rights activists who were small in numbers and busy fighting on many fronts could not build the necessary strong connections with their constituencies, especially in the rural provinces, as it required structure and resources that they did not have. Unlike politicians who were rallying thousands of their constituencies in demonstrations to showcase their public support and pressure the government for their demands, the women's rights activists were not able to rally people for women issues. This is mainly because of their lack of access to resources and networks as well as because women's rights were not important for men to rally for. The women's rights activists had only one leverage which was the consistent and firm support of the international community which they were always using to pressure the government for their demands however this leverage was not effective in connecting women with their constituencies and institutionalizing their leadership.

In the battle between fundamentalism and modernism, women were often on the winning side until the Peace Deal [15] was signed between the Taliban and the US Special Representative in Doha, agreeing on full withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. While signing of the deal and release of 5,000 prisoners [16] brought Taliban to formal negotiation with the republic team, they never engaged in negotiations with good faith. They showed one face during the peace talks in Doha and another as their military committee launched offensive attacks around the country, capturing district after district. As many political analysts observed, after the peace deal, Ashraf Ghani became insecure, trusting no one except few of his loyalists who kept isolating him from politicians, civil society, women groups, and others. His position was further weakened, as after the 2019 election many cases of organized corruption and impunity by these loyalists began surfacing in mainstream social media and showed them requiring money for contracts, appointments, and meetings in advance in Dubai, Turkey, and other countries [17]. As most of these loyalists were young technocrats coming from abroad, they had no connection with communities in Afghanistan and were not feeling any accountability towards the public.

Suddenly a few former government officials, who had run for 2019 parliamentary election with the expectation that palace will support them in getting to parliament but were not supported went to the media and complained about sexual harassment of women by high level officials [18]. This was the time when the 'Me Too' campaign was trending in western countries, and women in several eastern countries also began to join the campaign. In Afghanistan, several women with anonymous identities gave interviews and complaints about sexual harassment [19]. While women groups in the system and in civil society advocated for investigation of these allegations, no action was taken by the government as some men from close circle of the president were part of it.

Witnessing the systematic corruption, impunity, and discrimination by the close circle of the president on one hand and hearing about rapid advancement of Taliban, which many believed was supported by the US on the other hand, increased anxiety and frustration of people. The elders, religious leaders, civil society, and media all had no confidence in the system and stopped defending the republic against the Taliban's forces. The ANSF were not supported and allowed to fight the Taliban as most of the provincial and district governors, police chiefs, and generals who were from the same ethnicity as the Taliban began to make deals with the Taliban and Taliban were peacefully capturing province after province.

The sudden capture of all territory including Kabul was a shock, even for the Taliban. It took them several weeks to announce their all-Mullahs interim government, most of whom were in the international sanctions list, having no woman and representatives of other ethnicities and ideologies [20]. They demolished the Ministry of Women's Affairs and replaced it with the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in the same building [21].

Soon girls were banned from going to schools and universities and women were banned from work [22]. More than 3,000 small- to medium-size women-owned business, majority of the women's rights organizations and media outlets were closed. They have instructed doctors not to receive any female patients without male company and taxi drivers not to give a ride to any woman with no male company or wearing non-Islamic outfits. They even restricted women in some provinces from going to all women-run Hamaams.

When the US fully withdrew on 15 August, it once again shook the social fabric of Afghanistan and opened another phase of struggles and challenges for the women's movement. While almost all the prominent women's rights activists, journalists, and politicians were evacuated by different countries, several new young women groups emerged protesting for their rights to food, work, and freedom. The Taliban cannot prevent these protests although they have opened fire, detained and tortured activists, and used pepper spray against them [23]. In the month of January 2022 several activists were abducted and detained by the Taliban [24]. In the same month, Norway hosted the 'Oslo Talks' where the Taliban met some civil society and political activists. Attending activists at the conference were mostly exiled senior women who were wearing conservative clothes and delivering highly diplomatic statements. However the young representative of the women protestors who traveled from Kabul to attend the talk, confronted the Taliban, spoke about their intimidation, target disappearing, killings, and atrocities, and demanded for activists to be released [25]. Some other senior activists rejected participating in the talk, claiming that the Taliban could not be trusted based on their unfaithful engagement in Doha peace talks [26]. The resilience, confidence and determination of Afghan women for their rights make them the only peaceful force uprising against the Taliban and challenging their policies. No one could predict these uprisings, and everyone is in awe of these courageous women taking life-threatening risks, demanding their rights and using social media effectively for engaging people, and reporting atrocities suffered by women and other vulnerable groups. These are clear expressions of the new Afghanistan where the Afghan women will not put up with the regressive policies of Taliban. They are willing to give up their lives but not their rights.

CONCLUSION

The women's movement in Afghanistan cannot be isolated from the tumultuous politics of the country. Afghanistan has become the ground for regional and international proxy wars. The wage of jihad against Russia reengineered the political fabric of Afghanistan allowing

regional countries interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Iran and Pakistan, the two immediate neighboring countries of Afghanistan, do not see Afghanistan's stability or prosperity as in their benefit. Both countries seek to have a weak government in Kabul in order to keep Afghanistan under their control. They have both been promoting extremism and fundamentalism in Afghanistan for decades and continue to do so. Thousands of Afghan boys have been receiving training in their Madrassas inculcating the most regressive form of Sharia. They want to restore the Islamic Emirate and implement Sharia law. The Taliban 2.0 includes much more hardliners who are against development, modernization, and even technology.

Four decades of conflict have made the already male-dominated and conservative Afghan society even more masculine. Much of society does not see women as human beings but as a commodity to use for pleasure, forming families and as pride to protect. Many Afghan women have been tirelessly fighting for their basic rights during all these times. At times this journey has been fulfilling, when there are progressive governments in Kabul supporting the movement, but as soon as the progressive governments are toppled by the conservatives and hardliners, Afghan women are back to square one.

Women's rights is so politicized in Afghanistan that changes in the regimes are directly impacting women's access to their very basic rights such as education and work. Everyone was expecting that Afghan women will accept all regressive policies of the Taliban and will not challenge them. However as witnessed by media coverage, Afghan women are standing firmly for their rights and continue protesting. This validates that all the awareness raising and advocacy trainings, educations, and scholarships for Afghan women have paid off very well by making them fully aware of their rights, boosting their confidence and resilience, and guiding them in how to protest for their rights. Being the only nonviolent group confronting the Taliban right now, demanding their rights, building alliances with feminist groups outside Afghanistan, and pressuring the international community, Afghan women have the potential of becoming a prominent and powerful force in Afghanistan who, despite all challenges, will stand not only for their rights but also for the rights of minorities, for liberty, and for democracy [27].

The history of Afghanistan demonstrates that for the women's movement to rise and continue, making women aware of their rights and equipping them with the right skills to demand those rights is a prerequisite. Furthermore, having progressive governments who can adopt a legal framework and social reforms for women's advancement in different fields makes women's struggle smoother and multiplies the impact of their empowerment in the society.

Today the conflict between the Taliban and the Afghan women is the conflict of extremism and modernism. What will happen in Afghanistan today will set the precedent for the Islamic countries and the world. If the world supports Afghan women obtaining their rights as equal citizens, this will send a clear message to all extremists and fundamentalists that the west is standing with its allies for its values. If the international community gives in to Taliban pressures and let them suppress Afghan women, prevent civic activities, and prohibit women from exercising many of their rights, a clear message will signal to the extremists that they can impose their ideologies on millions of unarmed people, just by capturing states and taking citizens as hostages.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR AFFILIATION

Nargis Nehan  orcid.org/0000-0002-7722-2950

Founder of EQUALITY for Peace & Democracy and board member of Afghanistan Institute of Civil Society, AF

1. **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.** *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*, 2004. Available from: <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf>
2. **Levi S.** *The Long, Long Struggle for Women's Rights in Afghanistan*, 2009. Available from: https://origins.osu.edu/article/long-long-struggle-women-s-rights-afghanistan?language_content_entity=en.
3. دولت عليه افغانستان، نظامنامه اساسی، Available from: <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/lscd/2002341382/2002341382.pdf>
4. **Chua A.** 'The Promise and Failure of King Amanullah's Modernisation Program in Afghanistan', *ANU Undergraduate Research Journal*, Vol. 5, 2014. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22459/AURJ.05.2013.04>
5. 'Afghanistan's Constitution of 1964'. Available from: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Afghanistan_1964.pdf?lang=en
6. **Fratu M.** 'What was life like under Taliban rule in the 1990s?' [Internet] 18 August 2021. Available from: <https://coffeordie.com/taliban-rule-life/>
7. **Skaine R.** *The Women of Afghanistan Under the Taliban* – Available from: https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=it&lr=&id=MuxDAwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT9&dq=taliban+treatment+of+women&ots=4ivqtB8sbv&sig=k1HlqOvBLXVAyVhSZeU6q_QMQe0&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=taliban%20treatment%20of%20women&f=false
8. **Emadi H, Repression R.** *Women in Afghanistan* – Available from: <https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=it&lr=&id=CPVZo2FF5fkC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Repression,+Resistance,+and+Women+in+Afghanistan+Di+Hafizullah+Emadi&ots=1IP13UKR6m&sig=fm1AVoEpxG6jv1RpLZOU9VD4VHY#v=onepage&q=Repression%2C%20Resistance%2C%20and%20Women%20in%20Afghanistan%20Di%20Hafizullah%20Emadi&f=false>
9. **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.** *Law on Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW)*, Ministry of Justice, 2009. Available from: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5486d1a34.pdf>
10. **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.** *National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan 2007-2017*, 2007. Available from: <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/vaw/full%20text/asia/national%20action%20plan%20for%20the%20women%20of%20afghanistan/national%20action%20plan%20for%20the%20women%20of%20afghanistan%202007%20to%202017.pdf?vs=2627>
11. **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.** *Afghanistan's National Action Plan o UNSCR 1325- Women Peace and Security*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Human Rights and Women's International Affairs, 2015. Available from: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/wps-afghanistan_national_action_plan_1325_0.pdf
12. **United States Agency for International Development (USAID).** *English Translation, Shiite Personal Status Law*, 2009. Available from: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4a24ed5b2.pdf>
13. **Boone J.** *Afghanistan's women find their voice*, *The Guardian* [Internet] 18 April 2009. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/18/afghanistan-womens-rights-politicians>
14. "Women protesting at 'pro-rape' law attacked by Afghan men". *The Independent*, 16 April 2009. Available from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/women-protesting-at-prorape-law-attacked-by-afghan-men-1669296.html>
15. **United States Department of State.** *Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan*, 29 February 2020. Available from: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Agreement-For-Bringing-Peace-to-Afghanistan-02.29.20.pdf>
16. 'Afghanistan to Release Last Taliban Prisoners, Removing Final Hurdle to Talks' – *New York Times*, 9 August 2020. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/09/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-prisoners-peace-talks.html>
17. **Karimi Q.** *Why Ghani failed Afghanistan: Culture of corruption, mismanagement and disrespect*, *South Asia Monitor* [Internet] 2 December 2021. Available from: <https://www.southasiamonitor.org/spotlight/why-ghani-failed-afghanistan-culture-corruption-mismanagement-and-disrespect>
18. Ariana News, «جنسی گیری بھرہ» اتھامات، 27 May 2019. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6Wc_Cjx3dQ
19. **Limaye Y.** *The sex scandal at the heart of the Afghan government*. *BBC News* [Internet] 11 July 2019. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48882226>
20. **Lister T, Mackintosh E.** *The sex scandal at the heart of the Afghan government*. *CNN* [Internet] 9 July 2021. Available from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/07/asia/taliban-government-announcement-intl/index.html>.
21. 'Afghanistan: Taliban morality police replace women's ministry' *BBC News* [Internet] 17 September 2021. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58600231>.
22. *Taliban Ban Girls from Secondary Schools in Afghanistan*. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/17/taliban-ban-girls-from-secondary-education-in-afghanistan>.
23. **Limaye Y, Thapar A.** *Afghanistan: Women beaten for demanding their rights*, *BBC News* [Internet] 8 September 2021. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58491747>.

24. UNAMA Requires Information from Taliban about the Missing Activists. Available from: https://twitter.com/UNAMAnews/status/1489208975170146304?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1489208975170146304%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rte.ie%2Fnews%2Fworld%2F2022%2F0204%2F1277718-afghanistan-missing%2F.
25. 'Afghan Women Activists meet Taliban in Oslo' Afghanistan Times [Internet] 25 January 2022. Available from: <https://www.afghanistantimes.af/afghan-women-activists-meet-taliban-in-oslo/>.
26. Talks on Afghanistan in Oslo. Available from: https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/talks_oslo/id2897938/.
27. 'Freedom House, Afghan and International NGOs Launch the Afghanistan Human Rights Coordination Mechanism' Freedom House [Internet] 27 January 2022. Available from: <https://freedomhouse.org/article/freedom-house-afghan-and-international-ngos-launch-afghanistan-human-rights-coordination>.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Nehan N. The Rise and Fall of Women Rights in Afghanistan. *LSE Public Policy Review*. 2022; 2(3): 6, pp. 1–10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31389/lseppr.59>

Submitted: 01 February 2022

Accepted: 16 March 2022

Published: 02 May 2022

COPYRIGHT:

© 2022 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

LSE Public Policy Review is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by LSE Press.