

Women and the Taliban

Directions: Read the following description of restrictions on women under the Taliban. Consider how a widow would survive under Taliban rule. How would a widow with children provide for her family?

Some of the Restrictions Imposed by Taliban on Women in Afghanistan

The following list offers only an abbreviated glimpse of the hellish lives Afghan women are forced to lead under the Taliban, and cannot begin to reflect the depth of female deprivations and sufferings. Taliban treat women worse than they treat animals. In fact, even as Taliban declare the keeping of caged birds and animals illegal, they imprison Afghan women within the four walls of their own houses. Women have no importance in Taliban eyes unless they are occupied producing children, satisfying male sexual needs or attending to the drudgery of the daily housework. Jehadi fundamentalists such as Gulbaddin, Rabbani, Masood, Sayyaf, Khalili, Akbari, Mazari and their co-criminal Dostum have committed the most treacherous and filthy crimes against Afghan women. And as more areas come under Taliban control, even if the number of rapes and murders perpetrated against women falls, Taliban restrictions—comparable to those from the middle ages—will continue to kill the spirit of our people while depriving them of a humane existence. We consider Taliban more treacherous and ignorant than Jihadis. According to our people, “Jihadis were killing us with guns and swords but Taliban are killing us with cotton.”

Taliban restrictions and mistreatment of women include the:

1. Complete ban on women’s work outside the home, which also applies to female teachers, engineers and most professionals. Only a few female doctors and nurses are allowed to work in some hospitals in Kabul.
2. Complete ban on women’s activity outside the home unless accompanied by a *mahram* (close male relative such as a father, brother or husband).
3. Ban on women dealing with male shopkeepers.
4. Ban on women being treated by male doctors.
5. Ban on women studying at schools, universities or any other educational institutions. (Taliban have converted girls’ schools into religious seminaries.)
6. Requirement that women wear a long veal (Burqa), which covers them from head to toe.
7. Whipping, beating and verbal abuse of women not clothed in accordance with Taliban rules, or of women unaccompanied by a *mahram*.
8. Whipping of women in public for having uncovered ankles.
9. Public stoning of women accused of having sex outside marriage. (A number of lovers are stoned to death under this rule).
10. Ban on the use of cosmetics. (Many women with painted nails have had fingers cut off).
11. Ban on women talking or shaking hands with non-*mahram* males.
12. Ban on women laughing loudly. (No stranger should hear a woman’s voice).
13. Ban on women wearing high heel shoes, which would produce sound while walking. (A man must not hear a woman’s footsteps.)
14. Ban on women riding in a taxi without a *mahram*.
15. Ban on women’s presence in radio, television or public gatherings of any kind.
16. Ban on women playing sports or entering a sport center or club.

17. Ban on women riding bicycles or motorcycles, even with their *mahrms*.
18. Ban on women's wearing brightly colored clothes. In Taliban terms, these are "sexually attracting colors."
19. Ban on women gathering for festive occasions such as the Eids, or for any recreational purpose.
20. Ban on women washing clothes next to rivers or in a public place.
21. Modification of all place names including the word "women." For example, "women's garden" has been renamed "spring garden."
22. Ban on women appearing on the balconies of their apartments or houses.
23. Compulsory painting of all windows, so women cannot be seen from outside their homes.
24. Ban on male tailors taking women's measurements or sewing women's clothes.
25. Ban on female public baths.
26. Ban on males and females traveling on the same bus. Public buses have now been designated "males only" (or "females only").
27. Ban on flared (wide) pant-legs, even under a burqa.
28. Ban on the photographing or filming of women.
29. Ban on women's pictures printed in newspapers and books, or hung on the walls of houses and shops.

Apart from the above restrictions on women, the Taliban has:

1. Banned listening to music, not only for women but men as well.
2. Banned the watching of movies, television and videos, for everyone.
3. Banned celebrating the traditional new year (Nowroz) on March 21. The Taliban has proclaimed the holiday un-Islamic.
4. Disavowed Labor Day (May 1st), because it is deemed a "communist" holiday.
5. Ordered that all people with non-Islamic names change them to Islamic ones.
6. Forced haircuts upon Afghan youth.
7. Ordered that men wear Islamic clothes and a cap.
8. Ordered that men not shave or trim their beards, which should grow long enough to protrude from a fist clasped at the point of the chin.
9. Ordered that all people attend prayers in mosques five times daily.
10. Banned the keeping of pigeons and playing with the birds, describing it as un-Islamic. The violators will be imprisoned and the birds shall be killed. The kite flying has also been stopped.
11. Ordered all onlookers, while encouraging the sportsmen, to chant Allah-o-Akbar (God is great) and refrain from clapping.
12. Ban on certain games including kite flying which is "un-Islamic" according to Taliban.
13. Anyone who carries objectionable literature will be executed.
14. Anyone who converts from Islam to any other religion will be executed.
15. All boy students must wear turbans. They say "No turban, no education."
16. Non-Muslim minorities must [wear a] distinct badge or stitch a yellow clothe onto their dress to be differentiated from the majority Muslim population. Just like what Nazis did with Jews.
17. Banned the use of the Internet by both ordinary Afghans and foreigners.

And so on.....