

Human Rights in Afghanistan: Past, Present, and Future

Seminar series with Murtaza Mohiqi
Visiting scholar at SPGI, University of Padova

April - May 2022
via del Santo 28, PD - and online, zoom link:
<https://unipd.zoom.us/j/84600475043>

Organized by:

Scholars at Risk at the University of Padova
SPGI Department, University of Padova
Elena Cornaro Center for gender studies, University of Padova

Recent afghan history has been marred by war crimes, transnational terrorism, drug cultivation, gender apartheid, and draconian religious extremism. The Taliban's previous stint in power, from 1996 to 2001, was marred by serious human rights violations, particularly with regard to women's and children's rights and members of ethnic minorities, in particular the Hazaras. With the fall of the Taliban (2001), and a new Constitution in place, there was significant potential to influence the customary laws and practices affecting the lives of girls and women throughout Afghanistan.

Article 22, which was unique in its clear recognition of principles of non-discrimination, perhaps offered the greatest potential for combating the injustices faced by women under customary law. Among the most notable accomplishments since 2001 was that women were performing jobs that were rarely held by women even before the Taliban came to power in 1996. Women were legally permitted to drive and, mainly in larger cities, they exercised that right regularly. Women constituted over one-third of the seats of the nationwide Community Development Councils. Afghan Shiite Minority appreciated the July 2009 enactment of a "Shiite Personal Status Law" that gave Afghan Shiites the same degree of recognition as the Sunni majority.

The Taliban are now in control of the country for the first time in twenty years leading everyone to wonder what their regime holds for the citizens of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan today face a profound humanitarian crisis that threatens the most basic of human rights.

The main goals of these seminars are to:

- Inform concerned actors at the local and international level about the human rights situation in Afghanistan
- Develop an analytical profile of priority human rights concerns based on a review of available data
- Propose concrete mechanisms to ensure the realisation of human rights in Afghanistan

The seminar will undertake an analysis of the existing factors that affect, positively or negatively, the realisation of human rights in Afghanistan, with particular emphasis on the rights to food, health, housing and education.

The seminars will (a) place the crisis in context, (b) present findings from available studies within a human rights framework, and (c) propose recommendations for reconstruction and development assistance.

Seminar 1

Wednesday April 6, 2022 – 17.30 – 18.45

aula Seminari I, ground floor, and online

History of Human Rights in Afghanistan

The session first explains the legal human rights and the Afghanistan context. It will be followed by the history of human rights in Afghanistan in five periods from the establishment of Afghanistan as an independent state to the present day.

Chair and discussant: Francesca Helm and Claudia Padovani (SPGI, UniPD)

Seminar 2

Wednesday April 20, 2022 - 17.30 – 18.45

aula Seminari II, third floor, and online

Freedom of Speech, Media and Assembly in Afghanistan

Freedom of speech has also been under attack in the Taliban's Islamic Emirate. There have been reports of journalists being threatened and attacked even though the Taliban have promised free press. Now, news stations operate under many strict restrictions and anchors have been replaced by the Taliban's and Imams, an Islamic leader. The purpose of this session is to examine the level of freedom of expression before and after the Taliban.

Chair and discussant: Giuseppe Acconcia (SPGI, UniPD)

Seminar 3

Wednesday May 4, 2022 - 17.30 – 18.45

aula Seminari II, third floor, and online

Afghan Women and Children Rights: A fragile hope

In this session, we will talk about the rights of women and children in Afghanistan and their future. A major setback to the country is the Taliban's violation of and restrictions being imposed on women's rights. The Taliban have not fundamentally changed since the last time they were in power. Women have been pushed out of their jobs, women are being advised to stay home so fighters do not mistreat them, schools reopened only for boys, women's rights activists and high-profile women are harassed and are hiding out of fear, female athletes are not allowed to participate in sports. With respect to education, according to UNICEF, out of 4.2 million Afghan children already out of school, 60% are girls.

Chair and discussant: Annalisa Oboe (Elena Cornaro Center, UniPD)

Seminar 4

aula Seminari II, third floor, and online

Wednesday May 18, 2022 - 17.30 – 18.45

The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations and Governmental Bodies in Supporting Human Rights

This session will introduce the role of national and international organizations in supporting human rights. Efforts by nongovernmental organizations and some governmental bodies to support legal aid and implement reforms have had significant impact in increasing access to justice for people particularly women, notably the 2009 Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) law.

Chair and discussant: Pietro de Perini (SPGI, UniPD)

Seminar 5

aula Seminari II, third floor, and online

Wednesday May 25, 2022 - 17.30 – 18.45

Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights

This session explores the human rights impacts of artificial intelligence ("AI") technologies. It highlights the risks that AI, machine learning, and related technologies may pose to human rights, while also recognizing the opportunities these technologies present to enhance the enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("UDHR").

Chair and discussant: Daniele Ruggiu (SPGI, UniPD)