

Shaharzad Akbar

Chairperson for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

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Remarks to the Human Rights Council 48 Session

Madame President, Your Excellencies,

This Council has been watching the situation deteriorate in Afghanistan for months, and so far has done nothing in response. You have watched as civilian casualties increased in 2021. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission called on you when a horrific attack on school girls in May this year took at least 85 lives away. You watched Taliban advances and all that came with it: extrajudicial killings, restrictions on women's rights, freedom of expression. You saw reports of the torture of journalists by Taliban last week and reports of abuses in Kandahar and now Panjshir. You know children are going hungry. You heard the all-male so called interim cabinet announced, women sent home from their positions.

As an Afghan woman let me tell you: if you just keep watching and do not act, Afghans will be convinced that the Council doesn't think universal human rights apply to them, that Afghan women have fewer rights than other women in the world, Afghan blood has less value & the torture of Afghan journalists is business as usual for this council.

I will not apologize for my anger; we have tried everything else. We have pleaded with you & demanded your action. We have lost colleagues, we are at grave risk of losing an institution and its independence & we have lost our rights.

Please act now. Establish a strong monitoring mechanism to act as a deterrent and to tell Afghans that you care about their lives, their rights, their future & accountability for the injustice they are suffering. We will continue to resist, join us in this struggle!

Thank you

