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**FIVE YEARS OF TALIBAN OPPRESSION, REPRESSION AND
PERVASIVE IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND
GIRLS**

Media Statement by the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal

The takeover of Afghanistan on the 15 August 2021 by the Taliban has resulted in an institutionalised system of oppression and repression which particularly and disproportionately affects and impacts the public and private lives of women and girls. Through numerous edicts and decrees, the Taliban have deprived them of core fundamental human rights. The enforcement of the edicts and decrees is undertaken through violent mechanisms and tools, including arbitrary detention, imprisonment, torture and other inhumane acts, rape and sexual violence, and enforced disappearances. The violation of international human rights law, humanitarian law, criminal law and customary law has impacted, among others, the right to equality, dignity and the prohibition of discrimination on numerous grounds including sex and gender.

The Peoples' Tribunal for the Women of Afghanistan, in its [judgement](#) issued in the Hague on the 11 December 2025, concluded that the Taliban's policies and actions constitute Crimes Against Humanity, particularly the crime of Gender Persecution as defined under Article 7 of the Rome Statute, which governs the International Criminal Court. In addition, the Tribunal's judgement concluded that Afghanistan, under the *de facto* control of the Taliban, has deprived women and girls of their fundamental rights as reflected in the numerous binding international human rights treaties to which Afghanistan is a State Party. Furthermore, the judgement acknowledged that the situation in Afghanistan

meets the constitutive elements of an apartheid-like system, i.e. an institutionalised regime of discrimination, segregation, exclusion and domination based on the grounds of sex and gender.

The erosion of trust in the realisation of international accountability by Member States of the United Nations and relevant mechanisms and structures has led to widespread concerns. For example, in [a civil society joint statement](#) on the 17 July 2026, it was noted that international legal accountability is needed to ‘shatter the culture of impunity that shields the architects of the world’s most severe women’s rights crisis’. Furthermore, the statement asserts that ‘international accountability is not an abstract legal concept; it is the litmus test for trust in the international order and the global human rights architecture.’

The need for international institutions and mechanisms, and Member States to move beyond rhetorical statements, to meaningful action, is crucial in the quest for transformative change, justice and accountability, and the promotion and protection of human rights of women and girls. The applicability of principles of *erga omnes*, *erga omnes partes* and *jus cogens* govern the framing of State obligations. *Erga omnes* means ‘towards everyone’ and it refers to obligations that a State owes to the international community as a whole. *Erga omnes partes* refers to obligations that a State Party to a treaty owes to all other State Parties to that treaty. *Jus cogens* refers to norms that are legally applicable to all States, and no derogation is permitted as such norms are regarded as obligations inherently owed to the international community as a whole. Due to the violations being perpetuated by the *de facto* Taliban authorities in Afghanistan, it is crucial that there is urgent utilisation of the abovementioned principles to articulate and implement State responsibility of the international community as a whole, including States Parties to relevant human rights treaties.

Failure at the domestic level in the promotion and protection of human rights, and the prevention of violations, requires action by the international community to uphold responsibilities linked to the abovementioned principles which govern the framing of State obligations. Unfortunately, many States are moving towards diplomatic engagement with the Taliban, despite the regime’s systematic repression and oppression of women and girls. These developments risk emboldening the regime while diminishing international leverage to demand meaningful change. Crucially, such engagement risks undermining the universality of women’s rights, thereby weakening the integrity of international

law and mechanisms, including accountability mechanisms that were created to prevent impunity for crimes against humanity.

The Panel of Judges reiterates the importance of implementing the recommendations emanating from the Tribunal's Judgement, and also from numerous United Nations accountability mechanisms.

About the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal

The [Permanent Peoples' Tribunal](#) (PPT) is an international opinion tribunal established in Bologna in 1979, following the adoption of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples (1976). Over the course of 57 sessions, it has examined serious human rights violations, crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, as well as more recently economic, ecological and systemic crimes. The Tribunal is based at the Lelio and Lisli Basso Foundation in Rome, Italy.

The Tribunal held its 55th session in Madrid from 8–10 October 2025, at the request of four human rights organisations - [Rawadari](#), [Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organisation \(AHRDO\)](#), [Organisation for Policy Research and Development Studies \(DROPS\)](#), and [Human Rights Defender Plus \(HRD+\)](#) - to examine the crime against humanity of gender persecution in light of the de facto Taliban authorities' systematic violations of Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law.

The Panel of Judges was chaired by Rashida Manjoo (South Africa) and included Elisenda Calvet-Martínez (Spain), Mai El-Sadany (Egypt/United States), Marina Forti (Italy), Araceli García del Soto (Spain), Ghizal Haress (Afghanistan), Emilio Ramírez Matos (Spain), and Kalpana Sharma (India).