



THE PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UN NEW YORK



Canada Feminist Forum for Afghanistan



WOMEN'S REGIONAL NETWORK
AFGHANISTAN • PAKISTAN • INDIA

UN 68th Commission on the Status of Women Official Side Event

Crimes Against Humanity in Afghanistan with a Gender Lens: Strengthening Global Coordination

**12th March 2024, 10:00-11:15 a.m EST
CONFERENCE ROOM 1, UN SECRETARIAT BUILDING**

Event Overview:

Since the Taliban's seizure of power in 2021 women and girls in Afghanistan have been subject to ever more repressive limits on their rights and freedoms, with more than 100 edicts specifically targeting their right to move freely, assemble publicly, access healthcare, education, work or leisure activities. Observers, legal experts and activists agree the current regime in the country amounts to a system of gender apartheid. The Women's Regional Network has recently documented Afghan women's experiences both within Afghanistan and for those displaced in Pakistan and India, reaching over 1000 Afghan respondents. The [research findings](#) document rare ground-level systematized data on gender apartheid and provide targeted recommendations for diverse stakeholders.

Existing international legal frameworks are ill-equipped to address gender-based human rights violations of this nature and scale, and there is both the need and opportunity for a review of policy to address this. While the Apartheid Convention is an international legal mechanism that exists to criminalize systemic discrimination on the basis of race, and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women recognizes sex or gender based discrimination as a violation of international law, they currently tend to function in isolation from one another. It is clear that a more robust and comprehensive approach is required.

This timely discussion will build on both the rich data compiled in the research reports and on key advocacy opportunities including upcoming UN debates on the Draft Crimes Against Humanity Convention. The event poses an urgent call for coordinated global action to bring key stakeholders around a coordinated movement for the codification of gender apartheid as a crime against humanity within international legal frameworks.

Speakers and Draft Agenda:

1. ***Opening Remarks***
2. ***Panel Discussion***
 - a. Yalda Royan, Women's Regional Network Afghanistan Report Author
 - b. Saba Gul Khattak, Women's Regional Network Pakistan Report Author
 - c. Najla Ayoubi, Every Woman Treaty Chief of Global Coalition
 - d. Zarqa Yaftali, Director of Women and Children Legal Research Foundation
3. ***Open Q&A***
4. ***Closing Remarks***

Goals:

This event will form one component of a wider advocacy campaign to promote coordination among actors engaged on the issue of gender apartheid. The campaign will map and track existing initiatives and seek to identify shared goals, messaging, resources, and strategies related to the work to codify and officially recognize gender apartheid. Recognition from the international community, UN member states and within the UN system could be a crucial first step in building codification and accountability mechanisms to counter the systemic oppression women in Afghanistan continue to face and lead to the potential for prosecution of perpetrators at the International Criminal Court.

The UNCSW official side event will be an initial step towards identifying stakeholders from among UN member states, policy makers, legal experts and activist networks, with the goal of establishing a global working group to coordinate and steer the work forward at a critical time of review for the draft Crimes Against Humanity Treaty.