



**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES



# **WORK MATTERS**

## **COLUMN**

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# Women's rights in Afghanistan

When Nesta sang “No woman, no cry” some interpreted his message as a chant for women’s resilience in the face of the struggles we are forced to endure. Unfortunately, we do in fact have to shed tears with the insane number of injustices that continue to plague us globally at the hands of men who have given themselves the title of being somehow, in some strange way, superior to us. Throughout life’s existence being a woman has oftentimes been looked down as a burden. Why? Because the society set up by men has deemed being a woman as such, burdensome. We women have repeatedly been instructed on how we ought to be, and what we are allowed to do. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, there seems to be some places globally that have the burning desire to silence women in their societies. The current situation in Afghanistan may sound like a horrible dystopian plot in a movie, but it is the reality of many women and girls today. The Taliban taking control of Afghanistan set the stage for further distress during the pandemic and since then, has continue to strip females of their basic human and inalienable rights.

I can safely say that a woman in Afghanistan can be compared to a ghost. A figure that may appear sometimes, not often seen and not heard. Just like that awful saying that they used to fill our heads with as children, “ladies must be seen and not heard,” The Taliban has implemented several irrational restrictions on their female population through their own version of Sharia Law - something that men love to do, which is take religion and twist it to their benefit. Can you imagine that women’s voices are not allowed to be heard in public spaces? Is it that the men want to hear other men speak so badly? The Taliban has gone as far as instructing that women can’t be seen through their windows. I read that the Taliban stated that spaces where women can be seen should be boarded up and new construction should not have windows that see into spaces where women operate/exist to prevent obscene acts. Is this to suggest that women should be locked away so sexual predators can be comfortable? As a woman in Kabul, every essence of your being is dictated

by men. Restrictions to education, jobs, healthcare and expression are just a few of the punishments employed by the Taliban. Apart from clothing options being restricted to only a Burka, women still cannot leave their homes without a male relative. How do you deny your women the most basic aspects of life? It is easier to oppress women to make life “better” for men than for men to have self-control and human decency. The situation is more than enough to break the spirits of women and take away their individuality and independence.

I suppose that in times of humanitarian crises we turn our attention to the states and institutions in the international system who we expect to act through intervention, foreign policy or other means. I understand that several international institutions have stood in solidarity with the women and girls in Afghanistan. However, is solidarity enough for these women and girls? What is standing in solidarity achieving? The efforts of states and institutions in the global arena thus far have not caused any major waves to assist with protecting the freedom of Afghan women.

Lamentably, but not surprisingly, the England Cricket Board’s refusal to boycott the Afghanistan match highlights the reality that the oppression of women is not as pressing of an issue as it should be. Sports over humanity. I am forced to believe that being neutral towards Afghanistan’s participation in cricket is a direct way of supporting Afghanistan and their vicious acts against their women. For me, there is no separation in this situation, especially when the Taliban has banned women from sport. As I see it, you cannot be on the fence or say you’re “not choosing sides.” There are no sides. The only Afghans that can truly enjoy sport are the men while women only have memories of what it was like to actively enjoy sports, among other activities. As a result, despite murmurs of the international system standing in solidarity with the Afghan women, the repercussions are few and far between for the Taliban.

Ultimately, the rights of women in Afghanistan have been completely eroded at the hands of men. The restrictions on women are becoming increasingly absurd, with no end in sight. While institutions have claimed to support women in Afghanistan, the evidence of international support is severely lacking. Despite efforts, a life where a woman can exist and live independently in Kabul remains a mere dream.

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