



Dear Delegates,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2022 West Texas A&M Model United Nations Conference!

The following pages are designed to guide you in the research of the topics that will be debated in our committees for the 2022 session. Please note this guide only provides the basis for your investigation. It is your responsibility to find as much information necessary on the topics and how they relate to the country you represent. Such information should help you write your Position Paper, where you need to cite the references in the text and finally list all references in the Modern Language Association (MLA) format.

The more information and understanding you acquire on the topics, the more you will be able to influence the Resolution writing process through debates, formal and informal caucuses, and the WTMUNC experience as a whole. Please feel free to contact us if and when you face challenges in your research or formatting your Position Papers. We encourage you to learn all you can about your two topics first and then study your country with regard to the selected topics. Please remember that all committee members need to be well versed and ready to debate both the listed topics.

Enjoy researching and writing your Position Papers.

We look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

WTMUNC Secretariat Team

[cmacaulay@wtamu.edu](mailto:cmacaulay@wtamu.edu)



## United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

The United Nations Human Rights Council is among the newer organs of the United Nations, founded only in 2006.

The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) is comprised of 47 member states of the UN, elected by the General Assembly to specifically address issues related to the promotion and protection of Human Rights across the globe. The organization meets regularly in Geneva.

The HRC meets throughout the year, and discusses both ongoing issues of human rights as well as crises as they arise. As a smaller body, it is better able to quickly react to issues of importance throughout the globe, while still being representative of the global community.

Among the Human Rights Council's most important functions is its regular assessment of Human Rights for each individual UN member state, which occurs every 4.5 years. This comprehensive review makes strong recommendations for how each nation can improve its human rights situation, and ranges from issues of free speech or press to imprisonment and treatment of political prisoners.

Among the actions available to the Human Rights Council are special investigators or special rapporteurs, whose function is to act with UN mandate to investigate and expose human rights abuses in the member states. This can include conducting investigations, fact-finding missions, advocacy, public awareness, or technical cooperation with states or oppressed peoples.

States acting outside of accordance with the UN charter can then face recommendations of sanctions by the HRC, to be referred to the UN Security Council or General Assembly for further action.

The HRC has faced criticism for participation by states with less than stellar human rights records, and an increasing amount of effort has been spent to increase awareness and education on human rights throughout the globe.

## Topic Background

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In the country of Afghanistan, women's rights have been debated for more than 100 years. Women have seen great gains, only to see their rights reversed with new leadership in their government. As Afghanistan returns to a period of control by the Taliban, many fear women will lose all their rights of the past, yet again.(Bloomberg.com)

King Amanullah Khan ruled Afghanistan starting in 1919. He introduced a new constitution that sought to guarantee rights for women as well as the men. Some of the Constitutional provisions banned child marriage and polygamy was discouraged. The Constitution also narrowed the jurisdiction of religious leaders. Women were no longer required to wear the veil. His wife, Queen Soraya, who opened the first girl's school in Kabul, became a champion of women's education.(Bloomberg.com)

His successor, Mohammed Nadir Shah, repealed the most progressive policies, but the backlash was short-lived. His rule lasted only four years.

Zahir Shah, who ruled from 1933 to 1973 and was the last king of Afghanistan. He reintroduced the rights of Afghanistan women but with a much more cautious approach. In 1964, women helped draft a new constitution, which gave them the right to vote and allowed them to seek elected office. They got jobs, ran businesses, and entered politics. Tensions with traditionalists never went away, but women protested any attacks on their rights.(Bloomberg.com)

The Taliban, which formed in the early 1990s as a movement among pious youth, eventually gained the upper hand. They marched through the country promising peace and a modern government, but the reality was different under their rule from 1996 to 2001, especially for women. They were banned from school, work, speaking in public and even from leaving their homes unless escorted by a male, and they were forced to cover themselves in the burqa, a one-piece garment that covers the entire head and body. Penalties for violations included public lashings and death by stoning. The suicide rate among women rose. Their access to health care dropped because of the restrictions on their movements and a requirement to use women-only hospitals and wards. Women were excluded from political life, including all kinds of governance.(Bloomberg.com)

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001 after the Taliban refused to extradite al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden following his group's Sept. 11 attacks on the U.S. When bin Laden and the Taliban leadership fled, the U.S. mission morphed into a nation-building undertaking, with improving the lives of Afghan women and girls a central focus. The country's 2004 constitution contains specific provisions guaranteeing women's rights and quotas to ensure they're part of the political process. Girls and women joined the army and police forces, trained as surgeons, judges and prosecutors, and worked as journalists, translators, and television presenters.(Bloomberg.com)

Despite these advances, Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. Polls suggest that almost 90% of Afghan women experience abuse in their lifetimes. According

to the advocacy group Human Rights Watch, “The justice system largely ignored a 2009 law that makes 22 acts toward women criminal offenses, including rape, battery, forced marriage, preventing women from acquiring property, and banning a woman or girl from going to school or work. Reforms didn’t spread to rural areas, where they were often seen as un-Islamic and counter to traditions. The absence of an effective central government meant that in territory controlled by conservative military commanders and religious leaders, women’s rights continued to be severely curtailed. Cases of rape and sexual abuse by militia members were common in rural areas, human rights groups have reported. Women have faced restrictions on their movements and have been required to wear the burqa. Rights groups also say the practice of exchanging girls and young women to settle feuds or to repay debts continued in these areas, as have high rates of early and forced marriage.”(CFR.com)

The Fuller Project and *Foreign Policy* asked an Afghanistan woman her opinion on what life will be like after the withdrawal of American forces. She stated, “with the Taliban, women are not human. They only recognize men as human and treat women as possession of men. The U.S. withdrawal means we returned to 20 years ago. Now, women are marginalized. They are sent back home. Women can no longer work. They cannot be a singer. They cannot be an actress. They cannot participate in sports. Women cannot advocate for themselves. It is very sad for women who are left behind. It is very painful to return back to 20 years ago and live like our mothers and grandmothers under the Taliban. It is sad. Women have lost their hope. Their dreams are turned to a nightmare. We can no longer live as an active part of our society.” (Foreign Policy.com)

## Past International Action

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Afghanistan officially joined the United Nations on 19 November 1946 as the Kingdom of Afghanistan. As one of the UN's earliest members, Afghanistan has contributed to the work of the world body, including through its diverse and unique culture.

The Government of Afghanistan signed the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 14 August 1980, however, the conflicts in the country did not allow for the ratification of the Convention until 2003. Having in mind the violations of women human rights during the years of war, the Government of Afghanistan ratified CEDAW on March 5, 2003, without any reservations. (CEDAW)

With the Implementation of Constitutional Human Rights in Afghanistan in 2004, unfortunately, the international community and the UN have been generally ineffective in promoting human rights in Afghanistan. The UN has been non-committal because its main agency, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), wants to maintain a “light footprint” presence in Afghanistan. The international coalition, supplying security forces or reconstruction funds, has failed to take a pro-active role in addressing human rights issues. This policy of neutral disengagement must be reversed. The international coalition should take an active role in persuading Afghan governmental institutions to implement the human rights provisions of the Constitution and to respect human rights principles and promote them throughout the governmental system. Improving human rights is not merely about disbanding and disarming private militias, but also must include a program to replace them with police, military, and other state officials who are sensitized to human rights. Furthermore, it is within the criminal justice system where the Afghan government’s real-life commitment to the implementation and principles of human rights and signed international treaties will be challenged. (Human Rights Brief)

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated to the UN Security Council, “The Taliban must uphold the fundamental human rights of women and children.” He went on to say, “The international community must work to release frozen Afghan aid to prevent families from selling their babies to buy food. We urge the Taliban to seize this moment and garner international trust and goodwill by recognizing – and upholding – the basic human rights that belong to every girl and woman.”

## Possible Solutions

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Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said international aid agencies and donors “need to jump-start Afghanistan’s economy through increased liquidity,” including \$1.2bn from a World Bank-managed fund for Afghanistan’s reconstruction that has been frozen. Without action, lives will be lost, and despair and extremism will grow.”

Pressure for moderate Muslim countries to recognize the rights of women, may have a better effect on this change than Western nations. The Taliban has made overtures suggesting more openness to engagement with international actors and adherence to international norms compared to its previous period of rule, but it remains to be seen whether this is genuine.

## Guiding Questions

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1. How can the UN make concrete gains with the Taliban in encouraging the advancement in women’s rights?
2. What other Muslim nations could be persuaded to work with the Taliban to help the Taliban see the necessity of giving women back their rights?
3. Beyond a financial incentive, is there anything else to entice the Taliban to see women as equals in their society?

## Resources

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<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-18/the-up-and-down-history-of-afghan-women-s-rights-quicktake>

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/02/they-left-us-to-the-taliban/>

<https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Taliban>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/26/un-chief-calls-on-taliban-to-uphold-womens-rights>

<https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAW.C.AFG.1-2.pdf>

[https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1379&context=hrbrief#:~:text=Under%20Article%207%2C%20%E2%80%9Cthe%20state,forms%20of%20Discrimination%20Against%20Women%20\("\)\(https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1379&context=hrbrief#:~:text=Under%20Article%207%2C%20%E2%80%9Cthe%20state,forms%20of%20Discrimination%20Against%20Women%20\("\)](https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1379&context=hrbrief#:~:text=Under%20Article%207%2C%20%E2%80%9Cthe%20state,forms%20of%20Discrimination%20Against%20Women%20()