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Statement by Rainbow Afghanistan Organization on the Repression of Women, Protesters, and the LGBTQI+ Community in Afghanistan and Concerns over the European Union's Normalization of the Taliban

12.Jun 2026

As the Taliban continue their repressive and discriminatory policies against women and the LGBTQI+ community in Afghanistan, recent reports indicate that dozens of women have been arbitrarily detained in recent days under the pretext of violating dress code regulations. Public protests in response to these arrests have been violently suppressed. Reports describe Taliban forces opening fire on protesters, the killing and injuring of civilians, and the deepening climate of fear and repression across Afghanistan.

We view these events as part of a systematic policy aimed at erasing women from public life, silencing civil society, and exerting total control over people's bodies, identities, freedoms, and everyday existence in Afghanistan.

Today, Afghan women are not only fighting for individual rights; they are resisting for human dignity, freedom, the right to education, the right to work, the right to participate in society, and the right to live without fear. Rainbow Afghanistan Organization stands in solidarity with women protesters, victims' families, detainees, and all those resisting violence and oppression.

At the same time, LGBTQI+ people in Afghanistan remain among the most vulnerable targets of this system of repression. LGBTQI+ women, trans people, queer individuals, gay, bisexual, and other members of the community face intersecting forms of violence, threats, social exclusion, arbitrary detention, forced marriage, torture, domestic abuse, and complete denial of protection and justice. Many are forced into hiding, while their experiences and existence continue to be erased or ignored in dominant narratives about Afghanistan.

This erasure must end.

No discussion about Afghanistan's future, human rights, justice, or gender apartheid can be complete without recognizing the realities and experiences of LGBTQI+ Afghans. The LGBTQI+ community in Afghanistan is part of the country's civil society and part of the broader struggle for freedom, equality, and human dignity.

We also express our deep concern regarding the European Union's decision to invite Taliban representatives to Brussels. These discussions have reportedly been framed around migration and the return of Afghan refugees from Europe to Afghanistan. In practice, however, such engagement risks contributing to the political normalization and legitimization of a regime that continues to systematically violate the rights of women, LGBTQI+ people, and the wider Afghan population.

At a time when women are being detained and violently repressed in the streets of Afghanistan, and LGBTQI+ individuals are living under constant fear of persecution, violence, arbitrary arrest, torture, and deadly punishment, inviting the Taliban to Brussels for political and migration-related talks—without meaningful accountability for widespread human rights violations—is deeply alarming and damaging to the trust of victims and Afghanistan's civil society.

We call on the European Union, the United Nations, democratic governments, and the international community to:

1. Take a clear and public stance against the detention of women, the violent suppression of protesters, and ongoing human rights violations in Afghanistan;
2. Increase pressure on the Taliban to release detainees and end systematic violence and repression;
3. Refrain from normalizing political relations with the Taliban in the absence of accountability and genuine respect for human rights;
4. Engage directly with Afghan civil society, women-led organizations, Afghan LGBTQI+ organizations, and democratic actors rather than legitimizing the perpetrators of gender-based oppression;
5. Strengthen protection for Afghan refugees and asylum seekers and ensure that no individual is returned to conditions of persecution, abuse, or serious harm;
6. Uphold international law and human rights standards, including commitments to international justice and accountability mechanisms.

Rainbow Afghanistan Organization believes that the struggle for women's freedom and the struggle for LGBTQI+ rights are not separate causes. Both are part of a shared resistance against systematic oppression, exclusion, and control over human lives.

At this critical moment, silence in the face of repression is not neutrality. We stand with all those fighting for freedom, equality, human dignity, and a just future for Afghanistan — including women, protesters, civil society actors, and LGBTQI+ Afghans.

The voices of LGBTQI+ people in Afghanistan must be heard.

Rainbow Afghanistan Organization

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