

Summary Fact sheet, July 2025:

ICC Arrest Warrants for Taliban Leaders for Gender Persecution

On July 8, 2025, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for the Taliban's supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, and its Chief Justice, Abdul Hakim Haqqani for crimes against humanity, including **gender persecution** against women, girls and LGBTQI+ people. This document summarizes a [fact sheet](#) for human rights advocates. It explains 1) what gender persecution is, 2) what the ICC is and what the ICC warrants applications mean, and 3) how people can support accountability and justice for rights violations and grave crimes in Afghanistan.

The Crime Against Humanity of Gender Persecution

What is the crime against humanity of gender persecution?

Gender persecution is an international criminal law charge available to hold perpetrators responsible for grave rights violations and violence committed on the grounds of gender during conflicts and other atrocities. Longstanding misogyny and homophobia leave women, girls and LGBTQI+ people especially vulnerable to gender persecution.

What does gender persecution look like in Afghanistan?

All parties to the decades-long conflict in Afghanistan—whether US-led personnel, former Afghan forces, the Taliban or other militias—have committed acts that can amount to gender persecution. Since seizing power in 2021, the Taliban have severely deprived women and girls' fundamental rights, including to movement, education, and work. They enforce these rights deprivations via arbitrary arrest, torture and other alleged crimes against those who stand up for women's rights. The Taliban also deprive LGBTQI+ people's rights, including to expression, and subject those they suspect of being LGBTQI+ to detention, sexual violence and other torture. Those who suffer this torture, arbitrary arrest, etc., and those denied their rights to movement, education, expression, and work are all victims of gender persecution. These gender persecution victims have a right to meaningful participation in decision-making on Afghanistan's future—a right recently affirmed under UN Security Council Resolution 2467.

ICC Warrants Applications for Taliban leaders

What do the warrants applications mean for gender justice in Afghanistan and globally?

Crimes based on gender, particularly against women, girls and LGBTQI+ people have long occurred during conflict and atrocities but are rarely prosecuted. The applications for warrants for Akhundzada and Haqqani represent the first time the ICC is seeking to hold accountable perpetrators of crimes committed against people because of their LGBTQI+

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status. They are also a recognition that denying women and girls' fundamental rights to education, movement, and more, can amount to crimes against humanity.

What is the International Criminal Court (ICC)?

The ICC was established in 2002 by the 1998 Rome Statute. It prosecutes individuals for international crimes, namely genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression. Afghanistan acceded to the Rome Statute in 2003.

What effect do these ICC arrest warrants have on Taliban leadership?

All States Parties to the Rome Statute are required to enforce the arrest warrants against Akhundzada and Haqqani, should they travel to their territory. While it is unlikely that the Taliban leaders will travel outside Afghanistan, warrants can still exert pressure on the Taliban in the context of diplomatic relations.

Can the ICC Prosecutor pursue other alleged perpetrators?

Akhundzada and Haqqani are not the only individuals the ICC can investigate in relation to Afghanistan. The ICC could pursue justice for alleged crimes by other actors in the conflict in Afghanistan.

International Response and Solidarity

How can governments and intergovernmental bodies support victims?

If they enter their territory, states parties to the Rome Statute must detain the Taliban leaders named in the warrants and transfer them to the Hague. They should apply diplomatic pressure on the Taliban to push for accountability and an end to rights violations. States can support UN investigations of crimes and rights violations in Afghanistan. They can offer asylum and humanitarian pathways to those fleeing gender persecution and resource CSOs to support victims. They must ensure women, girls, and LGBTQI+ peoples' meaningful participation in decision-making on Afghanistan's future.

How can civil society organizations (CSOs) support victims?

Civil society organizations (CSOs) can document rights violations and crimes in Afghanistan, utilizing best practices that protect victims' wellbeing and maintain the viability of evidence. They can also provide necessary services for Afghan victims, and advocate with them for their rights.

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