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AFGHANISTAN: TALEBAN TAKE HUNDREDS OF CIVILIANS PRISONER

In the few days the Taleban have controlled Kabul, their armed militia have taken prisoner up to 1,000 civilians during house to house searches throughout the city, according to information received by Amnesty International.

The human rights organization is extremely concerned that the hundreds of people being held for allegedly sympathising with the ousted president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, are at risk of torture, ill-treatment or worse. Families of the victims, almost all young men, have no idea of their whereabouts.

“Despite statements from their leadership suggesting moderation, it is clear that Taleban guards are busily implementing a reign of terror in Kabul,” Amnesty International said. “Families are afraid to go out into the streets, afraid to answer their doors, and afraid that their loved ones will suffer the brutal consequence of being found ‘un-Islamic’ by the militia.”

“The families of those already taken prisoner are now suffering the agony of not knowing where their sons, brothers and fathers are, what has happened to them, or whether they are alive or dead. Many fear that the prisoners may be sent to clear minefields for the Taleban fighters in the Panjshir valley.”

Taleban guards have cordoned the city’s streets and entered homes searching for evidence of cooperation with the former administration. They have destroyed whatever they consider to be ‘un-Islamic’ – such as tape recorders, cassettes, magazines and toys. They have then taken away the young men of the family on suspicion of being collaborators.

Children playing in the street have also been physically assaulted by the guards. One eight-year-old victim was listening to a musical toy with friends in the alley outside his house. According to eye-witness reports given to Amnesty International: *‘Taleban guards suddenly appeared. They snatched the toy from the child and bashed it several times against the nearby wall until it was completely smashed. They then grabbed the boy by the arm and slapped him hard in the face several times.’*

Amnesty International repeated its concerns about the Taleban’s ill-treatment of women. In areas already under Taleban control, women are not allowed to work outside their homes or to leave their house without having a reason acceptable to the Taleban. Although some Taleban representatives have said that girls can be educated, they have stopped women teachers working and forced the closure of girls’ schools.

“Under the Taleban’s code, women have been ordered to give up their rights as citizens equal to men,” Amnesty International said. “Some women who have defied the Taleban’s orders have already been brutally beaten in public by guards wielding long chains.

“As the Taleban consolidate their control over Kabul and the rest of the country, those with influence over them must insist that they respect basic human rights.”

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