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AFGHANISTAN: GRAVE ABUSES BY THE TALEBAN IN THE NAME OF RELIGION

World governments meeting in New York in UN sponsored talks on Afghanistan must halt the human rights abuses inflicted by all warring factions on the Afghan people, Amnesty International said.

“These are the same governments that have fuelled the conflict in Afghanistan for years through support for their favoured factions,” Amnesty International said. “The time has come for them to clean up the human rights catastrophe they have helped create.”

In a major report released today, Amnesty International documented human rights abuses by the Taleban, the militia that now controls two thirds of the country and the seat and machinery of government.

“Like the other factions before them, the Taleban have brought a new layer of suffering to the people of Afghanistan,” Amnesty International said.

The Amnesty International document, *Afghanistan: Grave abuses in the name of religion*, details reports of indiscriminate killings, arbitrary and unacknowledged detention of civilians, physical restrictions on women for reasons of their gender, the beating and ill-treatment of women, children and detainees, deliberate and arbitrary killings, amputations, stoning and executions.

“As the Taleban consolidate their hold on the Government of Afghanistan, and seek recognition from the international community, they must be reminded of the responsibilities and obligations that come with this in the field of human rights.”

Scores of women have been beaten in the streets by the Taleban guards for not wearing a *burqa* or for exposing their ankles, while dozens of men have been beaten to force them to attend Friday prayers in the mosque. Thousands of women physically restricted to their homes under Taleban edicts fear physical assault by the Taleban guards if they leave home without a reason acceptable to them.

On 14 July 1996 in the city of Farah, a Taleban guard shot at a woman named Turpeki for appearing in public. She was taking her toddler with acute diarrhoea to a doctor when the Taleban guard called her. She knew she was going to be beaten, so she began to run. The guard fired several rounds of Kalashnikov at her. Turpeki’s family who complained to the Taleban leaders were simply told that it had been the woman’s fault.

In October, a man was killed in Kabul, reportedly for not attending prayers at the mosque. Taleban guards who came to question him said he had to die. They took him to the street, called him *Kafir* (godless), threw him on the ground and shot him dead.

Scores of people have been killed deliberately and arbitrarily on suspicion of anti-Taleban activity. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees has been routine, with some prisoners being held in metal containers for months. Dozens of people have been subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishments, such as amputation and stoning, ordered by the Taleban courts. Over a dozen people are believed to have been 'executed'.

Amnesty International reiterated its call for the Taleban and other warring factions to end the cycle of abuse and rebuild respect for human rights in Afghanistan. The organisation urged the international community to ensure that the warring factions receive no military equipment or training that could be used to abuse human rights.

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