# We are appalled by the continued restrictions imposed on the women and girls of Afghanistan: UK statement at the UN Security Council

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**Statement by The Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister of State (Minister for Skills) and Minister of State (Minister for Women and Equalities) at the UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan.**

Colleagues, let me first begin by expressing the United Kingdom's deep concern at the intensification of the Taliban's repression.

We are appalled by the continued restrictions imposed on the women and girls of Afghanistan, including the ban preventing Afghan women from accessing UN spaces.

Millions are being systematically excluded from society.

As we heard from Afghan student, Sunbul Reha, in the opening session of the Commission on the Status of Women this morning, this is not an abstract concept. But a devastating infringement of women's rights, opportunities, and dreams.

And it cannot continue.
As we mark the beginning of the Commission on the Status of Women here at the UN, the United Kingdom stands in solidarity with the women and girls of Afghanistan, who deserve full, meaningful, and equal participation in all areas of life.
We are dismayed by the Taliban's new criminal procedures directive, which legitimises domestic violence, embeds religious discrimination, and targets women and minorities.

These oppressive measures must be rescinded.

As my Foreign Secretary has said, the rights of all Afghans must be protected.
Second, the United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the significant escalation in tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

We call for de-escalation and re-engagement in mediated dialogue.
Finally, the United Kingdom is a longstanding and major donor to Afghanistan, providing over $200 million this financial year for vital life-saving and basic services support to the country's most vulnerable people, especially women and girls.

We are therefore deeply dismayed by the Taliban's refusal to allow essential health and nutrition supplies over the border into Afghanistan.

This is having a severe impact on the delivery of aid. It is vital that these goods are allowed to enter

Afghanistan without obstruction and without delay.

22 million people across the country remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance.
Colleagues, progress in Afghanistan requires the Taliban to engage meaningfully in the UN process.

This is the path towards the goal which we collectively agreed in resolution 2721, of an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbours, fully reintegrated into the international community and meeting its international obligations.

The United Kingdom supports the efforts of UN leadership and UNAMA in this regard, and looks forward to continuing to work together with our international and regional partners to this end.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-are-appalled-by-the-continued-restrictions-imposed-on-the-women-and-girls-of-afghanistan-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council