

Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them

**Statement of Lawyers Rights Watch Canada:
Uphold the rule of law in Afghanistan**

Immediate release

August 17, 2021 - Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) deplores the Taliban's unlawful takeover of Afghanistan by force. LRWC is alarmed and deeply disturbed by [reports](#) of human rights violations around the country. We are concerned about reports of restrictions on freedoms of women, including judges, lawyers, and human rights defenders.

LRWC calls upon all States to urgently insist and ensure that Afghanistan respect its international human rights law obligations. States must take swift action to advocate and ensure the safety of civilians in Afghanistan, including judges, lawyers, legal academics, law students, journalists and other human rights defenders reported to be at grave risk as a result of their work to uphold internationally protected human rights and the rule of law.

Statements by Taliban leaders that they intend to uphold rights are unconvincing, as they have hedged this commitment with a proviso that women's rights will be subject to Islamic law. The Taliban has promised media independence but said that journalists "should not work against national values." These [statements](#) do not conform to Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights treaties to respect and enable freedom of expression, including the right to publish information and opinions about issues of public interest.

Foreign governments should give priority to ensuring safe passage and asylum to all those who are likely to be targeted by the Taliban because of their work to uphold human rights and the rule of law. These protection measures must also be extended to family members.

LRWC is a committee of Canadian lawyers and other human rights defenders who promote human rights and the international rule of law by providing advocacy internationally for the protection of human rights defenders in danger. LRWC was granted Special Consultative Status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2005. LRWC is volunteer-run and is funded solely by its members and other donors.

Founded in 2000, LRWC has long deplored the actions of States that have [unlawfully](#) participated in or supported the lengthy armed conflict in Afghanistan, including the unlawful transfer, detention and [torture](#) of combatants, alleged war crimes and the [vilification, threats, and attacks](#) against those upholding the international law duty to hold suspected perpetrators of international crimes to account.

Further information:

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