

# **King's Christian Collegiate Model**

## **United Nations**

### **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**



## **Delegate Guide**

February 25-26 2022

Tom Sun

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

It is my honour to welcome you to the eighth annual King's MUN Conference: Voices of the Voiceless. Since the debut of the King's MUN conference in 2013, we have striven to create a conference that enables students to push past their comfort zones, connect with their peers, and learn more about the world around them.

Model United Nations (MUN) is a youth simulation of the United Nations where students have the chance to debate the world's greatest issues, problem-solve, and produce creative resolutions with their peers. Throughout my MUN journey, I have developed my critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, and communication skills, which have transferred into many different avenues of my life and which I attribute to many of my successes in high school.

We are living in a time where certain people groups are marginalized and discriminated against based on prejudice and unjust systems. At King's MUN we strive to lift the songs of those who are oppressed and listen to the stories and experiences of those whose mouths have been sealed for far too long. This year, the theme of the King's MUN conference is Voices of the Voiceless. I hope you take this to heart both during the conference and as you move forward into your future.

These past few years have, without a doubt, been ones of hardship and challenge. The COVID-19 Pandemic has built many barriers not only between countries but within countries, communities, and families. At King's MUN we acknowledge the past to live actively in the present but look to the future with hope. One thing the COVID-19 Pandemic has not taken away is our creativity and will to connect to one another. With a range of committees branching from tutorial to advanced, and real to fictional, delegates with all levels of experience have an opportunity to collaborate with peers and grow as young leaders and changemakers at King's MUN, despite the current predicaments.

Once again, I am extremely excited to greet each and every one of you at the eighth annual King's MUN conference. Myself and the King's MUN Secretariat look forward to seeing you on Friday, February 25th and Saturday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Sincerely,

Arianna Mastrolonardo

Secretary-General, 2022

King's MUN

## Committee Origins

The UNHRC was created on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in the United Nations General Assembly with Resolution 60/251<sup>1</sup>. The Council is formed by 47 elected member states with seat quotas for each UN regional group<sup>2</sup>. Member status is limited to three-year terms, with a maximum of two consecutive terms<sup>3</sup>. The UNHRC also assesses the human rights records of UN member states through the Universal Periodic Review<sup>4</sup>. Replacing its predecessor, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, it focuses on improving human rights universally<sup>5</sup>. It was responsible for promoting respect for human rights through education, investigation, cooperation, and legal actions<sup>6</sup>. The organization functions mainly through dialogue and intervention, regularly hosting sessions that allow reviews of human rights violations and activities, and discourses on resolutions to issues at hand. The UNHRC also employs special procedures to keep states accountable in case of human rights violations<sup>7</sup>. Experts are appointed special procedures mandate holders who are sent to regions to study, investigate and communicate said rights issues, also responsible for annual reports to the council<sup>8</sup>. The organization's headquarters is stationed in Geneva.

After the devastating Second World War came to an end in September 1945, an inevitable global refugee crisis emerged. The United Nations General Assembly, created in October, put forward an already existing group called the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) to manage the crisis. The group took the responsibility of relief and repatriation in several European and Middle Eastern countries. However, its efforts were negligible due to its lack of prestige, management, and efficient personnel; the group ceased operations in 1947. Then, the UN founded a temporary group called the International Refugee Organization (IRO) that took over UNRRA's responsibility for the crisis. Most notably, the group recognized "refugee" as a legitimate individual status as well as the right to flee a country from persecution or fear of persecution. The community

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<sup>1</sup> "UN Human Rights Council." *UN Human Rights Council - The International Justice Resource Center*, The International Justice Resource Center (IJRC), 24 Jan. 2018, <https://ijrcenter.org/un-human-rights-council/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "UN Human Rights Council: History & Overview." *History & Overview of the UN Human Rights Council*, Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-the-un-human-rights-council>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council." *Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council - International Justice Resource Center*, The International Justice Resource Center, 11 Oct. 2020, <https://ijrcenter.org/un-special-procedures/>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

assisted refugees in Europe and Asia; providing maintenance for refugees in camps, reestablishment orientations and legal protection. In 1950, the UN General Assembly officially identified the IRO as a new permanent organization, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

UNHCR's basis of operations was introduced in the 1951 Refugee Convention where 149 state parties gave the definition, outlined the rights and legal obligations of refugees. Non-refoulment was the core principle, which declares states should oblige to not forcefully return a refugee to a country that significantly threatens their life or freedom. It is now a part of international law. Within the three-year mandate, the UNHCR successfully assisted millions of refugees displaced from the Second World War to resettle and re-establish. In 1954, a Nobel Peace Prize was awarded for the committee's ground-breaking work and commitment. From here, UNHCR expanded their focus globally to countries in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa. In the 21st century, the UNHCR works in 132 countries to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, internally displaced people and stateless people.

## **Topic 1: Protecting Women's Rights in Afghanistan**

The modern history of Women's rights in Afghanistan first started to erode when the Soviet Union launched their invasion in 1979, along with the following civil war<sup>9</sup>. The Taliban who rose to prominence in the 90s originally proposed modernization in governance later began a different method of rule. Between 1996 and 2001, they have restricted the freedoms of women by dictating their attire and enforcing strict rules that limit women's mobility (Alexander)<sup>10</sup>. The American presence in Afghanistan in 2001 removed the Taliban's doings, and successfully advanced women's rights (Alexander)<sup>11</sup>. Many government positions and jobs in the nations have been taken up by women, and education has become much more prevalent to girls. However, such progress has been taken down with the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. In August 2021, the group became the dominant government after Kabul collapsed. It has caused many uncertainties regarding

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<sup>9</sup> "Taliban Release Media Guidelines, Ban Shows with Female Actors." *Taliban Release Media Guidelines, Ban Shows with Female Actors* | Reuters, Reuters, 23 Nov. 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/taliban-release-media-guidelines-ban-shows-with-female-actors-2021-11-23/>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

women's rights as the Taliban proclaimed to be committed to the issue, but failed to mention its policies on certain topics such as education.

Currently, women's freedom of expression is threatened. In 2021, with the arrival of the Taliban government, women have had many fewer opportunities to express their opinions through protesting. In September, many women participated in and organized protests for their rights and freedoms but were shut down with violence. Taliban security has taken it to severe multitudes by shooting at crowds and warning against any protestation, including journalists reporting on them<sup>12</sup>. This negatively changes the freedom of speech of women in Afghanistan. The Taliban's restrictions on women's media directly contradict their claims of respect for freedom of expression. Television shows are banned if they include female actors. Guidelines require female news reporters to wear Islamic hijabs<sup>13</sup>. These strict rules undermine freedoms as they not only directly prevent women from expressing themselves in the media, it also is used as an image of intimidation towards women. It hinders their incentive to overcome the fear of the Taliban to express themselves in the future. Furthermore, the lack of freedom in expression women has can create many harmful social effects. As women's previous positions in government like lawmakers and judges have been taken over, the work to improve women's rights in the country will be further slowed. There may be less lobbying for change in discriminatory policies, less attention and effort towards women's rights issues.

Women are in fact allowed to receive education but with severe restrictions. They are required to be segregated from men in school, causing shortages of staff, which essentially affects the quality of learning<sup>14</sup>. In addition, parents fear sending their daughters to school with armed military on the streets<sup>15</sup>. The value of female education has also decreased as the Taliban's limits on women in work have significantly affected the opportunities available. It discourages parents from sending their daughters to school. Regional differences in policies also play a part in the challenges towards education equality. Schools are mostly open to

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<sup>12</sup> "Afghans Protest, Fearing Curbs on Women's Rights, Free Speech." *Afghans Protest, Fearing Curbs on Women's Rights, Free Speech* | Gallery News | Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, 8 Sept. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2021/9/8/photos-afghans-protest-fearing-curbs-on-women-rights-free-speech>.

<sup>13</sup> "Taliban Release Media Guidelines, Ban Shows with Female Actors." *Taliban Release Media Guidelines, Ban Shows with Female Actors* | Reuters, Reuters, 23 Nov. 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/taliban-release-media-guidelines-ban-shows-with-female-actors-2021-11-23/>.

<sup>14</sup> Tanis, Fatma, and Hannah Bloch. "What the Taliban Really Want from the World, in Their Own Words." *Taliban Spokesman Says Women 'Women Must Have the Rights to Education and Work'* | NPR, NPR, 15 Dec. 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/15/1064001076/taliban-afghanistan-girls-education-womens-rights>.

<sup>15</sup> Goldbaum, Christina, and Kiana Hayeri. "Taliban Allow Girls to Return to Some High Schools, but with Big Caveats." *Taliban Allow Girls to Return to Some High Schools, but with Big Caveats* - The New York Times, The New York Times, 27 Oct. 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/27/world/asia/afghan-girls-school-taliban.html>.

northern Afghan residents, excluding women in the south<sup>16</sup>. This compromises women's education to the mass. It would decrease literacy rates, impeding women from getting jobs to be financially independent. It may easily subject some to abuse and exploitation, at home and in vulnerable occupation with undesirable working conditions<sup>17</sup>.

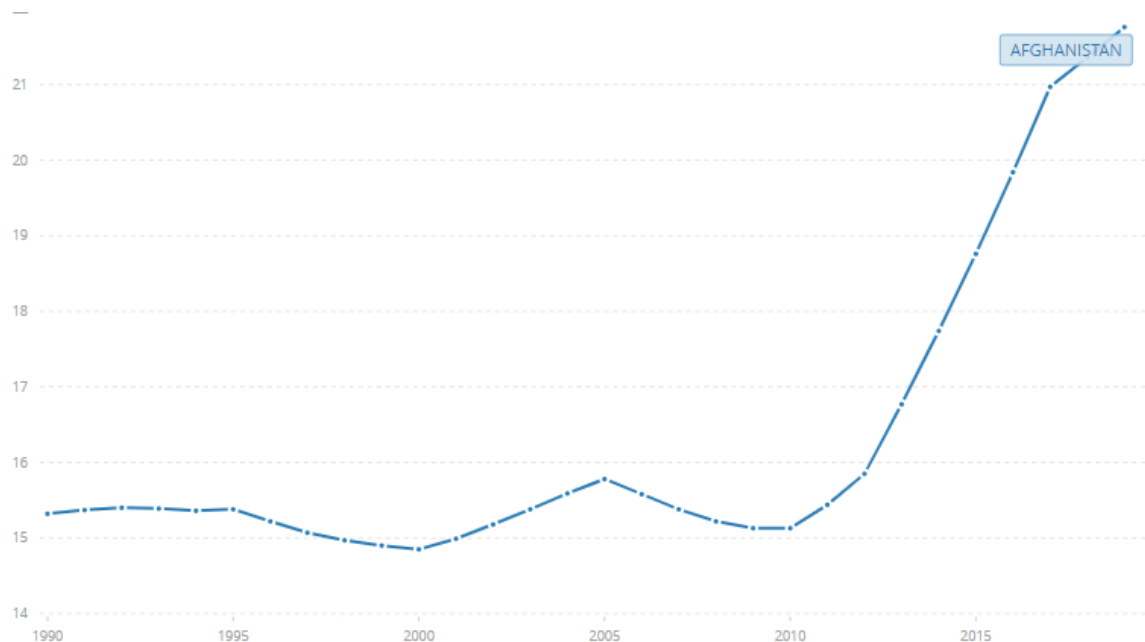


Figure 1<sup>18</sup>. The rate of women's participation in the workforce has been growing exponentially since its low point during the Taliban's first rule thru the 1990s.

In September 2021, the Taliban ordered women have been ordered to stay home from their jobs<sup>19</sup>. Currently, there has been no mention as to if the stay-at-home order for women is still maintained. Nevertheless, many women are out of work indefinitely. The uncertainties that the new government has presented are restraining the working rights of women. Despite the fact that there have not been new restrictions, many are fearful of the consequences of breaching the guidelines. The fear is creating social matters beyond working rights, it also perpetuates the infringement of the right to life and bodily integrity. Out of work women have lost their financial source, shifting their livelihoods and well beings. They once again may

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Fike, Rosemarie. *Impact of Economic Freedom and Women's Well-Being*, Fraser Institute, 2018, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/>.

<sup>18</sup> International Labour Organization. "Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (% of Female Population Ages 15+) (Modeled ILO Estimate) - Afghanistan." *Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (% of Female Population Ages 15+) (Modeled ILO Estimate) - Afghanistan | Data*, World Bank Group, 15 June 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?end=2019&locations=IN&start=1990&view=chart>.

<sup>19</sup> Franklin, Jonathan. "Female Government Workers in Kabul Told to Stay Home in Latest Taliban Rule." *Taliban Tell Female City Workers to Stay Home In Kabul: NPR*, NPR, 19 Sept. 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/19/1038685721/female-workers-kabul-stay-home-taliban-rule>.

have to fully depend on the men in their lives; their husbands to sustain a living. It may pose dangers for some as domestic violence is still prevalent in Afghanistan. Women with abusive spouses may be subject to more mental and physical abuse as they are forced to stay at home. It potentially marks another downfall in women's freedoms in the country.

The Taliban has put several new policies in place in an attempt to improve women's rights in Afghanistan. The reclusive Taliban chief, Hibatullah Akhunzada announced on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 that marriages by coercion are prohibited; meaning no woman shall be married by force<sup>20</sup>. Specifically for widows, Taliban leadership has stated that they seek to treat widowed women fairly in terms of receiving an inheritance and their treatment after the death of a spouse. Typically, women would be married off to another relative of their previous husbands, and are not considered for inheritance. The group states that they have ordered courts to deal with matters justly<sup>21</sup>. In regards to the international community's concerns with women's education rights, it has also been stated that the new government respects such rights. The violations at hand are explained to be due to discrepancies of regional cultures<sup>22</sup>. The government has opened private universities and secondary schools to women and has claimed to continually work towards a solution. Spokesperson of Taliban's political office say that women are permitted to work in departments of the government, as well as in private industries like the media<sup>23</sup>. They pointed out that relocations and evacuations of educated Afghan peoples by the West are draining the nation of resources; scientists, doctors, and bankers to build a new system.

However, despite the positives, there are many issues on a local level. The Taliban claim to be fully supportive of the human rights progress in the nation but their efforts and speech show ambiguity. Firstly, the standards of new treatment towards women in the event of a spouse's death are communicated vaguely. There was no definition of the expectations of "fair" treatment. Moreover, the explanation of differences in the enforcement of guidelines may also reveal the inconsistency of governance. Not to mention that although some measures have been put in place to ensure equality for women, the reality of their operation may not be ideal. Many women are still barred from secondary and higher education directly and indirectly. Along with the Taliban's actions contradicting their claims of respect for women's freedom of expression and working rights. Restrictions to women's media and

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<sup>20</sup> "Taliban Bans Forced Marriage of Women in Afghanistan." *Taliban Bans Forced Marriage of Women in Afghanistan* | *Taliban News* | *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 3 Dec. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/3/taliban-bans-forced-marriage-calls-for-equal-rights-for-women>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Refer to Note 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

social involvement hamper their abilities to prevent severe rights infringement in the future. Women in Afghanistan have lost the medium of work, and thereby independence to avoid dangerous living situations. The group's seemingly reformist decree on women's rights did little to improve the circumstances.

Even as the Taliban declare to have an agenda to root out unfair treatment towards women, it does not have the mechanisms to do so. It dissolved Afghanistan's Women's Affairs Ministry in September<sup>24</sup>. The department runs programs that promote the advancement of women's rights.

## Conclusion

Following the domination of the Taliban, there are many nuances to the issues of women's rights violations in Afghanistan. UNHRC as a department of the United Nations seeks to reach a resolution that aligns with the principles of the related Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 5 aims at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls<sup>25</sup>. Women in Afghanistan have been subjected to many different kinds of maltreatment, including suppression, abuse, and exploitation. The Taliban's involvement complicated the matter as their governance is unorganized, causing much ambiguity in the country's new policies. Several issues must be mitigated as SDG 5 states; violence and harmful practices against women such as forced marriages, and restrictions on working rights in public life, including political or economic sectors<sup>26</sup>. SDG 5 also asserts the importance to increase equality of opportunity<sup>27</sup>. The matters of limits on freedom of expression, and education rights fall into this criterion. In addition, the UNHRC targets to conclude on the validity of the Taliban's claims of better women's rights. It may determine if the Taliban takes control of women's rights affairs which could result in the HRC withdrawing involvement.

## Questions to consider:

- Should the international community delegate the task to uphold women's rights in Afghanistan to the Taliban?

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<sup>24</sup> "Taliban Replaces Ministry for Women with 'Guidance' Ministry." *Taliban Replaces Ministry for Women with 'Guidance' Ministry | Women's Rights News | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 18 Sept. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/18/taliban-replace-ministry-for-women-with-guidance-ministry>.

<sup>25</sup> *Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, United Nations, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



- What is the standard of rights? Who determines them? How to determine them?
- Is there a need to evaluate the progress of improvement in women's rights? How to evaluate them?
- If the standards are not met, what should be done?

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## Topic 2: The Issue of Recognizing the Taliban as a Legitimate Government

After 20 years of fighting in Afghanistan between the Taliban and the U.S.-backed interim government, the country is again under complete control by the Taliban. A key factor for the swift takeover was the swift withdrawal of U.S. troops. In February 2019, the U.S. and Taliban signed a peace agreement for a ceasefire, withdrawal efforts begin in 2020 under the Trump administration and was completed on July 5, 2021, under the Biden administration. Just a month later, on Aug. 15, 2021, the Afghanistan government collapsed and the Taliban took over Kabul. In previous Taliban governance from 1995 to 2001, their extreme interpretations of the Shari'a law were enforced. It restricted women's rights in all aspects of their lives and imposed disproportionate sentences on criminals.

Along with the Taliban's take over, Afghanistan has fallen into calamity. The US has frozen \$9.5 billion worth of Afghan assets, other international communities and donors have also stopped development funding. As a country heavily dependent on foreign aid and funding, Afghanistan's economy is collapsing fast. Its currency is worth around \$0.0095 with a high chance of dropping more. People have lost their jobs and prices are high. Combined with food shortages, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is growing. The UN World Food Program estimates, 22.8 millions of Afghanistan's 38 million people already face acute food shortages. Malnutrition among children, infants and pregnant women is increasing. Today, over 300,000 Afghans have fled or are in the process of fleeing the country, adding a major refugee crisis emerged on the board. The Taliban is pushing for international recognition from countries. They have stated the differences from before; allowing women to some degree of education and rights based on Islam. The Taliban hope their changes would gain international approval and allow access to the frozen assets and continue the funding.

Delegates should consider the targets of SDGs and whether or not the Taliban has done enough to be recognized. SDG 5: Gender equality is the most urgent topic. The previous Taliban government was known for banning women's rights and making 1 of laws restricting women. The current Taliban government has promised a change and has made some decisions,

though not on the topic of education or employment yet. On December 3rd, the Taliban issued a decree on the ban of forced marriage. This gave women the right to consent and partner choice. It meets the aim of target 5.3: Eliminate forced marriage. Although the announcement is a step towards the Taliban's promise, it is still uncertain how the government will implement



the rule, and to what degree. Targets that the international community wishes to be addressed are 5.1: End discrimination against women and girls, 5.5: Ensure full participation in leadership and decision making, and 5.C: Adopt and strengthen policies and enforce legislation for gender equality. For SDG 5.5, so far, the Taliban has not officially announced women's involvement in the government sectors. The majority of the previous women MPs and politicians have fled the country. Relating to gender equality is SDG 4.5: Eliminate all discrimination in education. The Taliban has publicly announced that women and girls would be allowed to attend school, however, their actions are currently inconsistent. In some provinces, girls can only study to grade 12, unless they pursue a medical career. Other provinces have completely banned females from education. Some universities allow female students but they have to be separated from the male.



SDG 16 is critical in the Taliban's development. This goal aims to establish peace, justice and strong institutions. During the Taliban's previous governance, tribal interpretations of Shari'a law were used to prescribe extreme public punishments. So far the Taliban has not issued an official statement on how the justice system will work, however, their actions seem to suggest a return of the previous system. On November 22, Taliban fighters stormed Afghanistan's Independent Bar Association (AIBA) after issuing a decree putting the organization under the control of the Taliban's Justice Ministry. The decree announced that all lawyers must receive a new licence from the Taliban Justice Ministry in order to continue working under the ministry's supervision. SDG targets: 16.1, 16.3, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.A, 16.B would all challenge the Taliban regime. These targets would potentially clash with Taliban ideology and what is possible under their conservative traditions. Relating to appropriate laws and policies, SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities would also challenge the Taliban. This target calls for eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices. Delegates would have to consider the appropriate amount and extent of the Taliban's laws and whether it would benefit the citizens.



### Questions delegates should consider for SDG 5:

- Should the Taliban be recognized for what they've committed so far?
- The previous Taliban government made promises but postponed many. How much time should the Taliban have to implement their promises?

### **Questions delegates should consider for SDG 16:**

- How would your country ensure the Taliban's justice system is fair?
- The Taliban wants to preserve their religious traditions and requests for understanding for their conservative approach. How would your country respond to this request?

### **Here are Start Here videos to further your understanding:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiDbX1CZCac>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUe07ldSWes>

[youtube.com/watch?v=ecUchA2NsB8&am...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecUchA2NsB8&am...)

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