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## POLICING MORALITY IN AFGHANISTAN

The Impact of the Taliban's Law on the Propagation of  
Virtue and Prevention of Vice

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17 March 2025

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 21 August 2024, almost exactly three years after the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, the de facto authorities published the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (PVPV Law). A sweeping piece of legislation, the PVPV Law both reinforced existing restrictions on human rights and introduced new ones that - if fully implemented - could affect virtually all aspects of Afghans' lives under the Taliban. The Law has been sharply criticised by human rights groups for introducing rules restricting a range of human rights, including the freedoms of expression, movement, access to education, and several others. Some of its provisions could either be directly or indirectly used to target certain groups, including along gender lines (affecting primarily women and girls, but also men and boys), as well as religious or ethnic minorities, or the LGBTQ+ community.

This investigation by Afghan Witness aims to provide an overview of how the PVPV Law has been implemented in practice in Afghanistan, drawing on open source research. The report mainly examines the human rights impact of the Law from when it was published until 31 January 2025, but also analyses how public communications by the Ministry of the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) have evolved since the Law was announced.

Since 21 August 2024, Afghan Witness recorded 130 alleged reports of human rights violations by MPVPV officials or other Taliban in the context of the Law's implementation through public sources. As an OSINT organisation, Afghan Witness has not been in a position to independently verify these claims - and it is likely that the actual number of violations are higher, given the limitations of OSINT research - but these public reports are nonetheless useful to understand trends since the Law's implementation. The majority of alleged violations affected women, including through increased restrictions on access to work and other public places, as well as through harassment, beatings and even arrests by PVPV officials for violating the Law's dress code and *mahram* (male chaperone) requirements. Men and boys, however, have also faced alleged gendered violations, including beatings or detention for violating provisions against "un-Islamic" clothing or hairstyles.

In addition, AW found that the PVPV Law's ban on broadcasting images of living beings has already had a profound impact on the Afghan media sector. The ban has been implemented in at least 16 of 34 provinces, leading to several TV stations - primarily local branches of the state broadcaster Radio Television Afghanistan - shutting down. These restrictions on the media appear to be gradually implemented throughout the country, possibly reflecting internal Taliban divisions over aspects of the Law.

There have also been several notable shifts in MPVPV's public communications since the Law was announced. AW analysed content on the Ministry's official social

media channels (X, formerly Twitter, and YouTube), and found a sharp increase in posts about arrests carried out by MPVPV officials. This appears to point to at least an increased effort by the MPVPV to better highlight its work and present it in a positive light. The Ministry has, notably, also recently established an official English-language X account, apparently with a view to international audiences. In addition, MPVPV has since August 2024 increasingly sought to present itself as a defender of “women’s rights” in Afghanistan. Posts mentioning women’s rights-related keywords have increased significantly on both X and YouTube since the Law was announced, often to highlight MPVPV interventions in cases of domestic violence, inheritance rights, or forced marriage. This is possibly a response to recent international accountability developments related to Afghanistan, in particular the ongoing legal processes at the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, both of which heavily focus on the Taliban’s unprecedented restrictions on the rights of women and girls.

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

This report builds on and complements other OSINT research carried out by AW on the human rights situation in Afghanistan since the Taliban’s return to power in August 2021. These include in-depth reporting on the Taliban justice sector, human rights violations - including extrajudicial executions - in Panjshir, and the implementation of corporal punishment. In particular, this investigation draws on AW’s previous work on gendered violations in Afghanistan, including on the overall situation facing women and girls on the third anniversary of the Taliban’s takeover, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) against politically engaged women, and restrictions facing young Afghan women active on Instagram.

Chapter 4 of this report contains background on the MPVPV and its work both before and after the Taliban’s return to power, as well as an overview of the key provisions of the Law. Chapter 5 looks at the Law’s human rights impact, with a particular focus on alleged gendered violations (against both women and men), as well as how the Law has affected other groups and the media sector. Chapter 6 examines MPVPV’s public communications, in particular on arrests and “women’s rights” since the Law was announced.

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## 3. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this report, AW collected data using open-source intelligence (OSINT) research techniques. Data was collected from public sources - primarily media outlets, social media channels, reports by human rights actors, and official

Taliban announcements - before being stored and categorised in separate spreadsheets. These contained data from public sources captured manually by AW researchers on reported human rights violations, as well as data from official MPVPV accounts on X and YouTube used in Chapter 6 on MPVPV communications, also collected manually by AW researchers.

To collect data on reported human rights violations, AW investigators monitored various public sources using relevant keywords in Farsi, Pashto and English (AW has carried out such monitoring since January 2022 for its regular Human Rights Violations tracker). AW then analysed relevant reports to determine if they were related to the PVPV Law's implementation, either directly or indirectly. The vast majority of incidents included in this report mentioned either the PVPV Law or MPVPV officials directly, although AW also included some incidents that analysts deemed likely to have taken place in the context of the Law's implementation even if it was not explicitly mentioned. Where possible, AW has also included details of which Taliban entities were involved in alleged violations, although this was not always clear from public reports.

It is important to stress that as an OSINT organisation, AW has not been in a position to independently verify the alleged human rights violations presented in this report, or to make legal determinations. Instead, AW is presenting *claims* of alleged violations captured through OSINT research. Furthermore, there are well-documented limitations to OSINT research, including algorithmic and human biases, which can lead to a tendency to prioritise urban areas with better telecommunications (a particular issue in a country like Afghanistan with limited Internet penetration), or to neglect of certain victim groups (such as the LGBTQ+ community or religious/ethnic minorities in Afghanistan), which might be more reluctant to share their experiences through public sources given the social stigma involved and the risk of reprisals. The actual number of human rights violations in Afghanistan is likely to be significantly higher than what can be captured through OSINT channels. As such, this report is not meant to present a definitive picture of the human rights situation in Afghanistan since the PVPV Law's publication. Rather, it aims to present an overview of trends and alleged incidents captured through OSINT channels, which AW believes is valuable for understanding the current situation in the country.

To capture data from official MPVPV social media channels, AW relied on manual data collection aided by Meltwater software, while the analysis was conducted manually using both qualitative and quantitative methods. AW investigators developed a list of keywords in Farsi, Pashto and English (22 for the arrest data and 18 on women's rights campaign) which were used to manually search content on the MPVPV YouTube and X accounts to identify relevant posts. Although this report focuses mainly on the timeframe 21 August 2024 to 31 January 2025, AW

investigators manually reviewed and analysed the content on the MPVPV X account dating back to November 2021, to further ensure accuracy.

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## 4. BACKGROUND: MPVPV AND THE PVPV LAW

### 4.1 AMR BIL-MARUF IN AFGHANISTAN BEFORE 2021

*Amr bil-maruf wa nahi an il-munkar* (“enjoining good and forbidding wrong”) is a tenant under Sharia law, holding the community of worshippers (“ummah”) responsible for upholding the good behaviour of all. In modern Islamic societies, various state or quasi-state bodies have been established under this concept, including in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan.

The concept of a state body responsible for upholding public morals and regulating behaviour under the *amr bil-maruf tenet* predates the Taliban in Afghanistan. King Nader Shah first introduced a Directorate of Ihtisab (accountability), also known as Amr bil-Maruf, in 1929, while the mujahideen government of Burhanuddin Rabbani set up a Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) during its years in power (1992-1996). When the Taliban first seized Kabul in 1996, it was this latter body that was inherited and expanded.

During the Taliban’s first period of governance (1996-2001), the MPVPV emerged as one of the most powerful state institutions, on a par with the Supreme Court. It was tasked with imposing the Supreme Leader’s decrees and furthering his personal power, as well as effectively transforming society along the Taliban’s interpretation of Islamic values. MPVPV imposed a range of strict regulations, including bans on music, visual media and depictions of living beings, as well as recreational activities like kite flying. Women suffered disproportionately and were subjected to strict dress codes, a ban on leaving the home without a male chaperone (*mahram*), and an almost complete lack of access to education or the labour market (except in healthcare). The MPVPV was also mandated to govern the Taliban internally, for instance by setting up provincial committees to expel those Taliban members who did not adhere to a ban on trimming or shaving their beards. Policies were enforced by MPVPV officials who were mandated to impose on-the-spot punishments, including beatings and lashings, turning the Ministry into “the most feared institution in the country.” The Taliban codified the MPVPV’s role and responsibilities in 2001 through an official Regulation and an accompanying annex (see below).

During the Taliban’s insurgency years (2001-2021), *amr bil-maruf* played a more limited role, although the institution was active in some areas where the group

maintained substantive territorial control, in particular from 2015/16. Levels of activity varied, however, and included both the establishment of formal commissions in some areas, as well as the ad hoc enforcement of “Sharia values” through individual fighters in others.

## 4.2 MPVPV SINCE THE TALIBAN’S RETURN TO POWER

The Taliban re-established the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) on 12 September 2021, at the same time as other initial cabinet appointments following the takeover.<sup>1</sup> The Taliban abolished the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in the same announcement and allowed MPVPV to take over its premises in Kabul. Its stated vision is to reform society to ensure the public adhered to values corresponding to the Taliban’s interpretation of Sharia law.

MPVPV’s work is centrally coordinated and implemented at a provincial level through Departments of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (DPVPV). It quickly emerged as one of the dominant Ministries under the Emirate, with a broad mandate to both set policy and to enforce instructions issued by the Supreme Leader, as well as to resolve complaints through advice and other means. MPVPV is also meant to serve as a body to receive complaints by the public against the de facto authorities, which are then resolved through mediation, investigation and referral. In practical terms, MPVPV officials – often wearing characteristic, white perahan tunban or “lab coats” – have implemented orders through advice, mediation, short-term detention or other means.

Prior to publication of the PVPV Law in August 2024, MPVPV had issued a range of instructions based on Taliban interpretation of Sharia – including through writing, media, social media, online channels, or sermons. These have touched on media restrictions, women’s movements / *mahram* requirements, and appearance rules) for both men and women. Human rights groups have stressed that PVPV edicts often violated international law and placed undue restrictions on the rights of Afghans, in particular women. These include sweeping restrictions on the rights to freedom of movement, expression, to work, or to access education and healthcare. In practice, PVPV officials have also reportedly carried out human rights violations in the course of their work, including through the use of excessive force or arbitrary detentions.

## 4.3 THE LAW ON THE PROPAGATION OF VIRTUE AND PREVENTION OF VICE

### Contents and provisions

The Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV Law) was first officially published in the Taliban Ministry of Justice’s Official Gazette on 21 August

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<sup>1</sup> Its full name is Ministry of Dawat wa Ershad Amr bil-Maruf wa Nahi al-Munkar, or Invitation and Guidance on Promoting Virtue and Preventing Vice

2024. It had, however, reportedly been approved by Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzadah the previous month, on 31 July 2024. On publication, the Law was harshly criticised by rights groups, with a group of UN experts saying it “institutionalises a system of discrimination and oppression amounting to crimes against humanity, including gender persecution.”

The Law consists of a preface and four chapters, with 35 articles in total. The first chapter contains various rules related to the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice, as well as “qualifications and attributes” that “enforcers” (*muhtasib*)<sup>2</sup> of the Law – the PVPV officials – should embody. The second chapter expands on the duties and responsibilities of PVPV officials, while the third chapter lists punishments they can administer. The final chapter contains miscellaneous rulings. The law states that it is based on Hanafi jurisprudence and applies to “all offices, public places and people residing in the territory of Afghanistan.”

The Law reinforces several already existing Taliban policies, while also expanding some concepts, and introducing new ones. Regarding women and girls, the Law makes it mandatory for women to cover their whole body and faces. It further reinforces *mahram* requirements, and bans women’s voices from being heard “in a song, a hymn, or a recital out loud in a gathering” (Article 13).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the law imposes dress and facial hair requirements on men, including bans on tight or revealing clothing, and on trimming one’s beard (Article 14).

A ban on images and videos of living beings is reiterated several times in the Law, including in the context of media broadcasts (Article 17), the storage of information on personal devices like computers or mobile phones (Article 22), and a ban on selling pictures of living beings (Article 18). Regarding the media, the Law further prohibits any content that denigrates Islam or Sharia law, or that is insulting to Muslims (Article 17). The Law furthermore contains provisions against several other “wrongful acts”, including use of alcohol or narcotics, failing to adhere to proper prayer provisions, or “disobeying one’s parents”. Several of these “wrongful acts” appear to open up for violations against certain identity groups, including the LGBTQ+ community (e.g. bans on “lesbianism” or other sexual acts) or religious minorities (e.g. bans on the celebration of Nowruz and the winter solstice festival Shab-e Yalda) (Article 22).

In terms of punishments, the Law outlines measures officials can take during enforcement (Article 24). These consist of seven “stages of punishment”, including “providing advice” or “admonishment”, fines, detention of up to three days in a “public prison”, or other punishments considered “appropriate”, which are not the exclusive prerogative of courts of law. The Law lacks specifics on criteria for when and for which violations different punishments apply. The vague formulation

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, AW uses “officials” to refer to staff of MPVPV, although other organisations have used “enforcers” or “ombudsmen”.

<sup>3</sup> For additional analysis on this Article and its implications, see past AW reporting [here](#).



appears to grant considerable leeway to PVPV officials in deciding appropriate punishments to administer. The Law, however, also contains rules on the behaviour of PVPV officials, as well as some limits on their powers of enforcement. Article 9, for example, stresses that officials must have a “sense of justice” and “kindness”, while Article 10 contains rules for officials carrying out their functions, including to avoid discriminatory behaviour, only use force “when there is no fear of any untoward incident taking place as a result of it”, and to avoid entering people's homes except in cases “when it is allowed.” Furthermore, Article 27 sets out rules on rights in detention.

## Implementation

As documented throughout this report, the PVPV has not been implemented uniformly throughout Afghanistan since it was first published. Instead, the Taliban appear to have implemented different provisions in different regions, possibly reflecting local norms or personalities of local Taliban officials. In October 2024, Mohammad Khalid Hanafi, the acting Minister of MPVPV, also stressed that the law would be implemented “gradually”.

The Taliban have, however, taken various formalised, institutional steps towards the Law's implementation. Since 17 August, Minister Hanafi has personally visited several provinces to emphasize the importance of the Law. MPVPV officials have further organised seminars and workshops in at least 20 provinces to enhance the capacity of local officials. The Supreme Leader further tasked provincial governors on 2 October with establishing committees consisting of representatives of different provincial departments, to ensure the Law's implementation. According to the MPVPV, the Ministry has deployed 4,500 officials (“enforcers”, *muhtasib*) throughout the country to “prevent immoral acts” as of October 2024.

In February 2025, various documents allegedly from the MPVPV were leaked by a hacking collective identified as “TalibLeaks”. Among these was a letter from the Supreme Leader, forwarded by the office of Minister of PVPV Hanafi, to all provinces, calling for the establishment of committees to implement the PVPV Law. The committees should meet every two weeks, and were to consist of representatives from provincial DPVPVs, provincial governor's offices, security forces, and various other state bodies.<sup>4</sup>

## Morality regulations under the previous Taliban regime

It is notable that the Taliban also introduced “morality” legislation during its previous rule (1996-2001), although with some key differences to the current PVPV

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<sup>4</sup> Full list: Provincial Directorates of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and Complaints Hearing, provincial Ulema Council, Haj and Religious Affairs, Court of Appeal, Office of Decrees and Directives, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, provincial Information and Culture and Intelligence Directors, Head of provincial Jihadi Madrassa, provincial military corps commander, provincial security chief and provincial mayor.

Law. The Taliban first published a PVPV Regulation in 2001, consisting of four chapters and 15 articles which cover a preface, definition of terms, the duties and responsibilities of officials, structure and activities of the MPVPV, as well as rules and their implementation.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, then-Supreme Leader Mullah Mohammad Omar issued a decree in February 2001 with 42 additional articles as an annex to the Regulation.

## Language and structure

The PVPV Regulation is a concise document using simple language fraught with grammatical and punctuation errors in both Dari and Pashto, unlike the comparatively more sophisticated PVPV Law. Notably, neither the Regulation nor its annex contain any references to religious texts, unlike the PVPV Law. The Regulation outlines different “forbidden acts” and corresponding punishments (primarily detention), unlike the PVPV Law that is vaguer on punishments for specific violations. For example, Article 4 of the Regulation stipulates a punishment of one-five days’ detention for drivers who transport women without a hijab, and one month’s detention for gambling.

The original Regulation sets out specific punishments for each act, rather than more general “stages of punishment” in the PVPV Law. The annex, however, added a series of steps that officials should take when punishing offences, similar to the “stages of punishment” in the new Law.

Notably, the original Regulation makes very few specific mentions of punishments for women, and does not contain rules related to the detention of women. Rather, it only mentions punishment for women’s male relatives and other men involved in wrongful acts that involve women. For example, Article 4 states, “Any woman who leaves her home with face bare, without a veil or a chadori, her house must be marked and necessary punishment should be given to her husband, or the woman must be threatened on the spot, taking their situation into account.” The article further states: “Whenever the aforementioned woman is seen in a vehicle while being transported, the driver must also be detained for one to five days, depending on the situation.” The annex, however, obliges PVPV officials to detain women for crimes including adultery.

The Regulation and its annex decree contain more detailed rules than the current PVPV Law. They, for example, contain detailed rules on the operations of markets, public baths, and transportation, as well as on public prayers, building construction, foreign nationals, *dhimmis*,<sup>6</sup> and national and foreign NGOs. For example, Article 26 of the annex requires *dhimmis* “to have a special mark on their

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<sup>5</sup> The Regulation and annex were both previously available on the Taliban Ministry of Justice website (<https://moj.gov.af/>) but have apparently been deleted. Both documents are on file with Afghan Witness.

<sup>6</sup> Non-muslims living under the protection of the Islamic law.

clothing and vehicles so that the officers can recognise them.” Hindu Afghans were also required to wear yellow badges, which the Taliban claimed was to prevent the detention of non-muslims by PVPV officials. Article 25 contains rulings concerning foreign nationals, including restrictions on interviewing Afghans and taking photographs of living beings. Additionally, it states that Muslim female foreigners will be deported if they travel to Afghanistan without a *mahram*.

The annex also established a hierarchy of punishments based on the offender's social status (Article 7). For example, “providing awareness” was the designated punishment for religious scholars, while Khans and Maleks (village elders and chiefs) should be subjected to either “awareness raising” or summons by PVPV officials. Detention, however, was reserved as a punishment for individuals of middle or lower social status, including the general public.

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## 5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT OF THE PVPV LAW

Since the PVPV Law's publication on 21 August 2024, AW has recorded a range of alleged human rights violations in the context of the Law's implementation through public sources (primarily media and social media channels). As noted above, AW has not been able to independently verify these claims, but present them here to provide an overview of the OSINT discourse on the effects of the Law. Between 21 August 2024 and 31 January 2025, AW recorded 130 reports of alleged violations as part of the Law's implementation, including restrictions on freedom of expression and other rights, workplace inspections targeting women, arbitrary arrests,<sup>7</sup> and intimidation.

Such incidents were reported in 30 out of 34 provinces, including Badakhshan, Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyan, Daikundi, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Herat, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, Laghman, Logar, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Nimruz, Paktia, Paktika, Panjshir, Sar-e Pol, Takhar, and Wardak. AW also recorded four nationwide directives (three related to the media and one to women, all detailed below) and one incident where the location was unclear. Most (84 of 130) of these reports mentioned the direct involvement of PVPV officials in carrying out reported violations, including from provincial PVPV Departments. Other Taliban actors reportedly involved in enforcing the PVPV Law included the provincial Departments of Information and Culture, local police, and

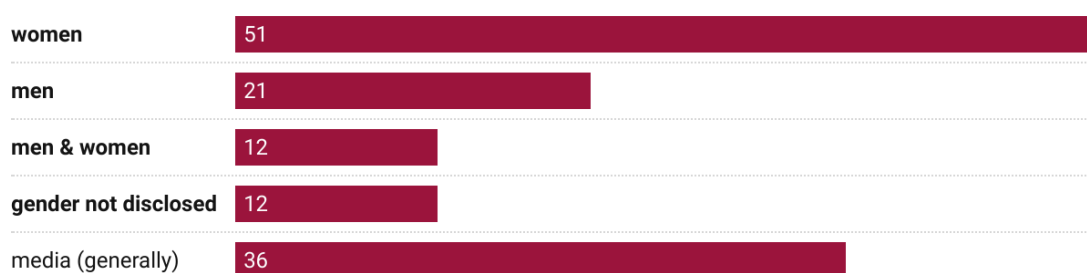
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<sup>7</sup> Arbitrary arrests were defined by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention as the deprivation of liberty, when a person is held without their free consent and without respect for applicable law and procedure, and not proportional to the aim sought, reasonable, and necessary. The understanding of arbitrariness is not to be equated with “against the law”, but must include elements of inappropriateness, injustice, lack of predictability, and due process of law.

provincial governors. Some of the reports also simply mentioned “Taliban” or “Taliban forces” without specifying further.

In terms of the gendered impact of the 130 reported violations, 51 affected primarily women and girls, 21 affected primarily men and boys, 12 incidents involved both female and male victims, while the gender was undisclosed in 10 incidents. In addition, AW recorded 36 incidents and restrictions targeting the media more generally (discussed further in section 5.4 below). The breakdown is illustrated in the chart below.

## Reported violations by gender

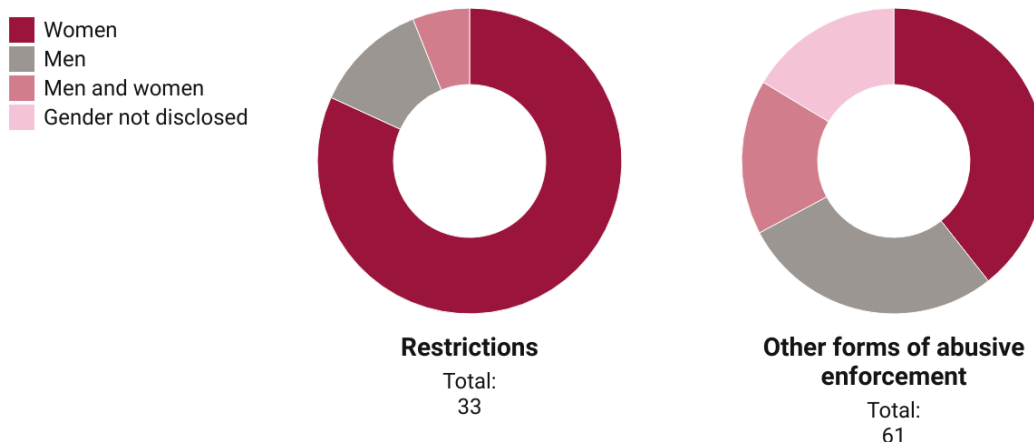


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*Figure 1: Chart illustrating the number of reported violations categorised by gender, recorded between 21 August 2024 and 31 January 2025.*

AW further divided violations into two main categories: 1) restrictions and 2) other forms of abusive enforcement. “Restrictions” include incidents where victims’ rights to freedom of movement or access to employment, healthcare or education, were violated. “Other forms of abusive enforcement” includes incidents involving a) arbitrary arrests; b) use of excessive force; and c) harassment and threats (including arbitrary fines). The chart below shows the gendered breakdown of alleged violations in the two categories (excluding the 36 violations generally targeting the media, which did not involve individual victims as such).

## Gender breakdown of the recorded violations



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Figure 2: Chart illustrating the number of reported human rights violations, categorised by gender.

In addition, AW recorded the reported arbitrary arrests of at least 172 individuals by Taliban officials in the implementation of the PVPV Law between 21 August 2024 and 31 January 2025. This included at least 47 men, at least 43 women, and 82 individuals whose gender was not disclosed. The number of arrested individuals exceeded the number of recorded alleged violations since some incidents involved the arrests of more than one person. For further analysis on arrests under the PVPV Law, see section 6.1 below.

### 5.1 GENDERED IMPACT: WOMEN AND GIRLS

Women and girls have reportedly faced extensive violations under the PVPV Law, including violence and arrests, fines, and intrusive “inspections” in both workplaces and public spaces. Some reports also highlighted social stigma and other forms of trauma faced by female victims. Of the 130 reported violations, 51 were incidents where women were the primary victims. These incidents occurred in 16 provinces: Kabul (13), Herat (9), Badakhshan (3), Kandahar (4), Bamyan (3), Badghis (2), Balkh (2), Ghazni (2), Baghlan (1), Daikundi (1), Farah (1), Ghor (1), Khost (1), Kunduz (1), Sar-e Pol (1), and Takhar (1). Additionally, two reports described incidents that took place in more than one province (one in Herat and Kabul, and one in Kabul and Badakhshan). The reports often mentioned multiple victims.

#### Relevant provisions in the Law

As noted above, the PVPV Law imposes a range of restrictions on the specific rights of women and girls. Article 13 consists of rules related to women’s appearance and dress code, stating that women must wear clothing “that covers a woman’s whole

body and face from non-mahrams; they must not be thin, short and tight”, in part “due to the fear of [male] temptation”. The article adds that it is “obligatory for Muslim and righteous women to cover themselves in front of non-believing or immoral women”, to avoid causing fitna.<sup>8</sup>

The article further declares women’s voices as “*awrah*” (forbidden), requiring them to be concealed including in songs, hymns, or in a recital during a gathering. It adds that a woman who leaves her home must “conceal her voice, and cover her face and body.” The article also forbids unrelated men to look at a woman’s body or face, and unrelated women to look at male strangers.

Additionally, Article 22 lists a number of other “wrongful acts”, some of which concern women and girls specifically, including failing to observe the hijab, women’s voices being heard outside the home, and same-sex sexual activity between women.<sup>9</sup> The article further requires PVPV officials to punish adultery “whether forced or consensual, whether hidden or in public”, but without defining these terms. Article 20 further tasks PVPV officials with preventing the transportation of any woman who is not appropriately covered or unaccompanied by a close male relative, and not to allow women to mingle with non-mahram men.

### **Restrictions: Freedom of movement and access to healthcare, education, workplaces, and humanitarian aid**

AW has recorded 27 reports of restrictions affecting women’s freedom of movement, as well as access to healthcare, education and the labour market, across eight provinces: Herat (7), Kabul (6), Kandahar (4), Balkh (3), Badakhshan (2), Badghis (2), Daikundi (1), Kunduz (1), and one nationwide.

In Kabul, women told Amu TV of “increased restrictions” by MPVPV officials already within a month of the Law’s implementation, in September 2024, including dress code inspections at checkpoints. In the same month, MPVPV further reportedly prohibited entry of women “without full hijab” at Kabul Airport.

Restrictions were also implemented within the education sector. In October 2024, the DPVPV in Badakhshan reportedly ordered female students in health institutes in the province to use “all-covering, black Arabic hijabs” and gloves instead of burqas. Meanwhile, in November 2024, Afghanistan International shared an alleged audio message from a teacher at the Bibi Sare High School for Girls in Kabul, claiming that the Ministry of Education had ordered female teachers to cover their faces and avoid coloured veils while teaching.

Women media workers have also faced restrictions under the Law. In September 2024, MPVPV officials in Daikundi reportedly visited local media outlets to inform

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<sup>8</sup> Social disorder or chaos, which can facilitate sin

<sup>9</sup> The practice of sexual abuse of minor, adolescent boys often involving sexual slavery.

female employees that they could no longer work in the media, per the new Law. The officials also reportedly warned outlets that they would be closed if they continued to employ female staff. Recently, in January 2025, the DPVPV in Herat allegedly banned female anchors from presenting news programmes in the province, calling it "provocative to men." In the same month, the Department of Information and Culture in Badghis reportedly banned the broadcast of women's voices on radio in the province during a meeting with media officials.

AW has furthermore recorded several claims of women in the healthcare sector facing restrictions under the new Law. In September 2024, The Ministry of Public Health officials in Kabul's PD 8 reportedly prevented 250 female vaccinators from participating in a house-to-house polio vaccination campaign, requiring them to give vaccines in a mosque instead of in homes, while observing strict dress codes and the mahram requirement.

"Intensified restrictions" within the healthcare sector were also reported in Kandahar. In September 2024, Afghanistan International reported that the Taliban's Dawah<sup>10</sup> and Guidance Department, at the Public Health Directorate, sent an official letter with 13 guidelines to healthcare centres imposing new restrictions on female healthcare workers (Figure 3 below). These impose strict gender segregation of staff and patients, while banning male staff from entering the women's ward (if they have to enter, they should be separated by a curtain). The letter also states that staff and patients "should not be naked" in healthcare centers, while imposing mahram requirements on female staff travelling to and from work or when attending trainings. It further bans women staff from wearing makeup and from using "smartphones" while on duty.

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<sup>10</sup> Refers to the act of inviting people to join Islam.



Figure 3: Letter reportedly issued by the Dawah and Guidance Department at the Public Health Directorate in Kandahar to all healthcare centres, outlining new restrictions for female health workers (source: [Afghanistan International](#)).

Authorities in Kandahar also reportedly ordered female healthcare workers to obtain a travel permit from the DPVPV to continue working. According to the Rights Monitor, authorities in January 2025 required female patients to travel with a *mahram* to seek medical care, including even during the transportation of deceased female patients. An MPVPV official was reportedly assigned to each health centre in the province to enforce the rule. In Badakhshan, authorities reportedly prohibited simultaneous visits of male and female patients at the provincial hospital.

AW has also recorded further restrictions on women's activities, women-run businesses, and even on women's access to humanitarian aid. In Herat City, Herat province, PVPV officials reportedly shut down women's art and handicraft workshops (October 2024) and women-only cafes (November 2024). In the same province, in October 2024, the Head of the DPVPV reportedly called on owners of "halls, hotels, restaurants, and juice shops" to refrain from mixing men and women, and to prohibit entry of women who do not follow dress codes set out in the Law. Similarly, Taliban authorities in Kandahar reportedly prohibited female artisans from participating in a three-day handicraft exhibition in January 2025, with male



relatives attending in their place. In the same month, PVPV officials in Balkh reportedly set a one-week deadline for female business owners to close down their businesses. In October 2024, Kabul Municipality reportedly banned the sale of women's undergarments in roadside shops, although AW could not determine if this was related to the PVPV Law.

The restrictions also affected women's access to humanitarian aid. In January 2025, the Taliban authorities in Herat and Kunduz provinces reportedly warned aid agencies not to biometrically register women to receive humanitarian aid. In Herat, Taliban officials reportedly ordered aid organisations to prepare a plan to ensure that men receive aid on behalf of their families instead of women.

The restrictions further affected women's ability to participate in religious events. Shortly following the publications of the Law, the Taliban Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs reportedly issued a letter to imams across the country, ordering them to implement the new Law, including by stressing its importance in sermons. A copy of the letter allegedly received in Badghis province, dated to 28 August 2024, was published by 8am Media. The letter states that it is forbidden to hear women's voices in public places and that women must completely cover their faces, warning of "severe penalties" for violations. Locals claimed that following the order, imams affiliated with the Taliban had been "preaching against women in a very harsh tone." Separately, authorities in Herat reportedly banned women across the province from participating in Shiite religious ceremonies in mosques, or joining ceremonies at the Shah Murtaza Alawi shrine to commemorate the birth of Imam Ali.

In Balkh, in September 2024, a resident sent a video to Afghanistan International saying the Taliban did not allow women to enter the Mausoleum of Imam Ali (also known as the Shrine of Hazrat Ali) in Mazar-e Sharif, although the Taliban had previously allowed women to enter on Mondays and Wednesdays.



Figure 4: Geolocation of the video showing Taliban not allowing the women to enter the Shrine of Hazrat Ali in Mazar-e-Sharif [36.710635, 67.110472] (source: Afghanistan International on X: [Google Earth](#)).

In the same month, a picture of an official document issued by the Herat DPVPV banning women from entering amusement parks in the province circulated online. The letter is dated 15 September 2024 and was signed by the provincial head of the PVPV committee, Alhaji Sheikh Noor Muhammad (Haqqani).



Figure 5: Order banning women from entering amusement parks in Balkh province (source: @Mukhtarwafayee on X).

### Other abusive enforcement: GBV, arbitrary arrests, and fines

In addition to the restrictions detailed above, AW recorded 24 incidents of other abusive enforcement of the Law between 21 August 2024 and 31 January 2025 in 12 provinces, including Kabul (7), Bamyan (3), Herat (2), Ghazni (2), Badakhshan (1), Baghlan (1), Ghor (1), Kandahar (1), Farah (1), Khost (1), Sar-e Pol (1), and Takhar (1). AW also recorded two reports which mentioned incidents in multiple provinces, namely in Kabul, Badakhshan, and Herat. The incidents often involved multiple victims. These abusive measures reportedly included arbitrary fines administered to women; abuse during arrests; gendered insults; mistreatment, torture, and

forced marriage in custody; threats and harassment; and physical assaults, including whipping.

On 31 August 2024, Amu TV shared a photo of a fine slip (Figure 6) reportedly issued by PVPV officers in Kabul against a female healthcare worker for not having a *mahram*. The image shows a fine of AFN 40 (GBP 0.43) issued by “The Roads Transport Deputy Ministry” and “Revenue collection tariff for terminals.” AmuTV claimed that similar fines had been imposed in Herat. AW could not verify the authenticity of the slip or the reason for the fine.

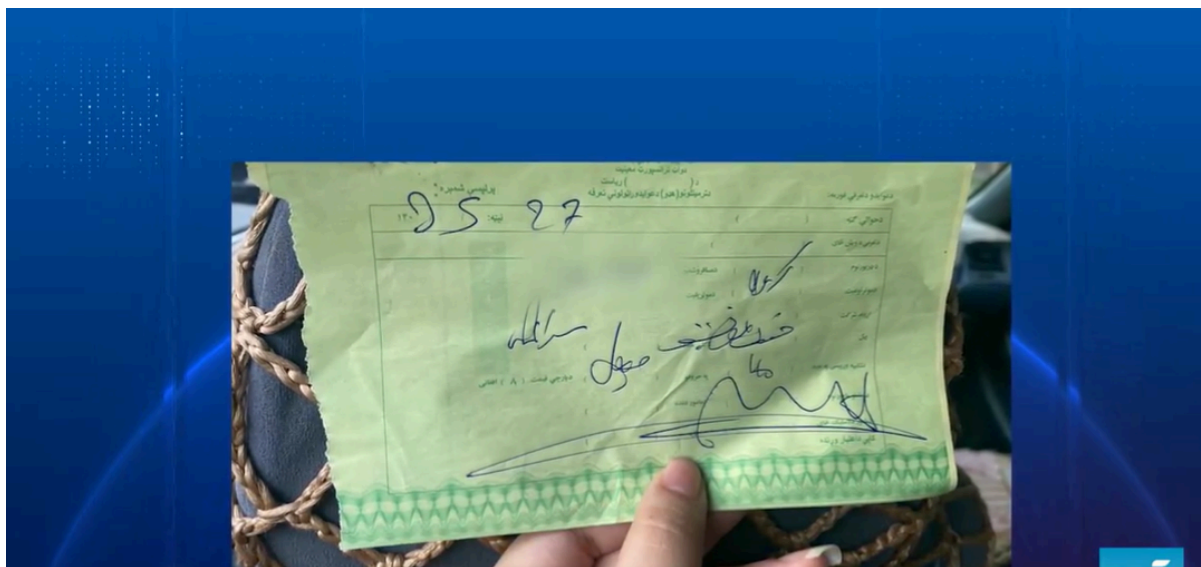


Figure 6: Image of alleged fine slip reportedly issued by the Taliban to a female healthcare worker in Kabul for not being accompanied by a *mahram* (source: Amu TV on X).

Incidents of reported arrests of women and girls by PVPV officials, some including physical violence and gendered insults, were recorded in Kabul (3), Ghazni (2), Khost (1), Takhar (1), and Sar-e Pol (1). One report mentioned harassment and arrests in Badakhshan and Kabul. In total, 38 women and girls were reportedly arrested during these incidents. (In addition, five further women were arrested in separate incidents along with men.)

In September 2024, according to Afghanistan International, a Taliban ombudsman in Sar-e Pol province “severely” assaulted and attempted to arrest two women for visiting a local market unaccompanied (they were later released following mediation). In the same month, Afghanistan Women News reported that MPVPV officers had detained six girls from a painting workshop PD 13 in Kabul, an area with a majority Hazara population, for wearing colourful clothes and white jeans.

Also in September 2024, Amu TV published a video of two women alleging increased inspections, harassment and arrests by PVPV officials in Badakhshan and Kabul. One woman alleged that PVPV officers detained and beat her for

travelling to work without a *mahram*, while they had also pulled the hair of her eight-year-old daughter. Another woman said she had been stopped by Taliban officials while she was out shopping, who told her not to come out of her house without a *mahram*.

Other claims of physical violence were reported in Bamyan (3), Badakhshan (1), and Farah (1). An alleged incident in Badakhshan involved particularly severe violence, as MPVPV officials had on 23 September 2024 allegedly whipped a pregnant woman in the capital Faizabad, resulting in her miscarrying.

In Bamyan, MPVPV officials reportedly beat a female student in an unidentified institute in the centre of the province on 8 October 2024, after they had entered a classroom to check if students adhered to dress code rules. One of the girls allegedly tried to hide in a bathroom since she was not wearing a burqa, but the PVPV officials followed her inside and beat her.

Incidents of harassment were reported in five provinces including Kabul (4), Herat (2), Baghlan (1), Kandahar (1), and Ghor (1). In September 2024, a number of women and girls interviewed by Rukhshana Media in Kabul alleged “constant harassment” by MPVPV officials, leading two of them to leave a sewing workshop. According to girls aged 13-17 quoted in the report, teachers at their underground classes had instructed them to wear burqas and bring a *mahram* to school, since Taliban officials “harass girls who are without a mahram and come to school following the girls”. The requirement reportedly forced one girl who lacked a *mahram* to stop attending classes.

A similar incident was shared in an audio message published by Afghanistan International in October 2024, in which a woman - who said she was the sole breadwinner in her family - claimed she was too afraid to attend her sewing workshop after the Taliban had stopped her to warn her about her lack of a *mahram*. In another voice message shared by Afghanistan International in October 2024, a woman working from home selling women’s clothes in Kabul claimed that following the publication of the PVPV Law, Taliban had begun harassing her customers, making her work difficult. Meanwhile, the Taliban in the Hazara-populated Lal wa Sarjangal district of Ghor reportedly threatened women, “especially widows”, with arrest and imprisonment if they worked outside the home. When residents in the district questioned these restrictions on women, MPVPV officials reportedly replied that “it is better for women to die out of hunger than to work outside the home”. In Baghlan, AmuTV reported in September 2024 that a woman had faced similar harassment by MPVPV officials, who had stopped and insulted her while she was travelling to work, and fined her driver for transporting an unaccompanied woman.

The harassment reportedly also impacted female healthcare workers. In Kabul, female healthcare employees reportedly told Rukhshana Media that MPVPV

officials were visiting their workplaces and inspecting their clothing and behaviour more often than before already by September 2024. In Kandahar, MPVPV officers also reportedly harassed families of female healthcare workers, making it increasingly difficult for women to continue their work. Most recently, in January 2025, Zan TV reported that MPVPV officials in Herat had threatened a female doctor with imprisonment due to how she was dressed, while they had confiscated and looked through the phone of another female health worker.

AW also recorded one claim of sexual violence. Rasc News Agency reported that, in January 2025, PVPV officials in Kabul arrested five people, including two girls, for alleged dress code violations, and later forcibly married one of the girls to a Taliban member (inside the MPVPV detention centre) and another one to a relative of a Taliban member.

In November 2024, Etilaatroz published an extended report alleging that MPVPV officials in Taloqan, Takhar had arrested women and girls who lack *mahrms* at newly established checkpoints. The report alleged that the officials used gendered insults during arrests and had later mistreated women in custody, including by insulting them. One woman claimed that PVPV officers arrested her for riding alone in a rickshaw with a male driver. The officers beat the male driver in front of her, and then briefly detained them at the MPVPV compound. A second woman claimed that PVPV officers arrested her while she was returning home from work in a rickshaw, and interrogated her in front of the people before detaining her in a room at the MPVPV compound, where an official threatened and insulted her. Although she was released, she claimed she has faced social stigma following her arrest. A religious scholar also claimed that his wife and children were reportedly arrested by PVPV officers on their way to a wedding for travelling without a *mahram*. According to the article, "dozens" have complained to the Provincial Governor about the mistreatment and arbitrary detention of women by MPVPV officers in Takhar.

## 5.2 GENDERED IMPACT: MEN AND BOYS

The PVPV Law also contains provisions affecting men and boys specifically, including restrictions on their physical appearance, dress codes and interactions with members of the opposite sex. Of the 130 reports of human rights violations between 21 August 2024 and 31 January 2025, 21 involved men and boys as the primary victims. They were recorded in 17 provinces, including Kabul (6), Herat (4), Logar (3), Ghor (3), Takhar (2), Badakhshan (2), Badghis (1), Balkh (1), Farah (1), Helmand (1), Jawzjan (1), Kandahar (1), Kapisa (1), Khost (1), Kunduz (1), Laghman (1), and Nangarhar (2). One incident was also recorded in an unknown location. The following section details alleged gendered violations targeting men and boys recorded by AW.



## Relevant provisions in the Law

The Law contains several provisions governing the behaviour of men specifically. Article 14 introduces restrictions on dress codes, stressing that men's bodies should be covered from their waist down below their knees, while men's clothes "should not be very tight, nor should certain parts of the body be apparent". The article also obliges men to wear clothes that conceal the required parts of the body while pursuing pastimes and exercise.

Article 22 further lists 26 "wrongful acts" banned under the Law, including some that appear to apply specifically to men, such as shaving one's beard "to less than the width of a fist", "un-Islamic" hairstyles, or wearing neckties and "other un-Islamic symbols."

Article 13 additionally specifies that it is forbidden for unrelated men to look at a woman's body or face. Furthermore, in December 2024, a decree from the Supreme Leader banned windows in residential buildings that overlook neighbouring homes, particularly those housing women, reportedly to preserve "privacy and protecting women from potential harm". While not included in the PVPV Law, it is notable that a similar provision on buildings was included in the PVPV Regulation issued during the Taliban's first rule (see section 4.3 above).

## Gendered violations related to male dress code and appearance rules

Almost half (10 of 21) of alleged human rights violations where men and boys were the primary victims related to dress code and appearance rules. These were recorded in Herat (3), Ghor (2), Balkh (1), Khost (1), Kunduz (1), Nangarhar (1), and Logar (1). In Balkh, Logar, Herat, and Ghor provinces, MPVPV officials reportedly threatened barbers, university professors, money changers, and civil servants due to their appearance or clothing. In October 2024 in Lal wa Sarjantal district of Ghor province, MPVPV officials reportedly threatened marketers with sexual assault and public humiliation if they shave their beards, allegedly saying, "we will hit you in the anus with a rifle butt and blacken your face and drag you around the market."

There were several reports of these restrictions being imposed in the education sector. In October 2024, the DPVPV in Herat reportedly issued "strict orders" prohibiting Herat University professors from shaving their beards and mandated daily attendance at congregational prayers, or risk detention. Professors were also allegedly instructed to report any non-compliant colleagues to the DPVPV. In November 2024, Etilaatroz reported that MPVPV officials had forced professors, staff, and students at Nangarhar University to wear hats and turbans, and not to cut their beards. MPVPV had reportedly communicated the demands in a letter to the University, while officials had also been present on campus on at least one occasion, preventing students not wearing hats from entering. In Herat, 8am Media reported that Taliban officials in September allegedly humiliated and

forcibly cut the hair of “at least” 15 students at Wazir Fateh Khan school in Guzara district.

In September 2024, a barber in Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh province claimed in an [audio message and video](#) published by Afghanistan International that the Taliban threatened barbers who provided “non-Islamic” hairstyles for beard trimmings with two-three days’ detention. A separate [video](#) shared by Afghanistan International in the same month reportedly showed Taliban officials in Kunduz province preventing men from entering a mosque if their beards were shorter than “the length of a fist.”

In [Khost](#), 8am Media claimed that “dozens of men” had been detained by MPVPV officials for trimming their beards. Similarly, [Afghanistan International](#) shared footage in September 2024 showing four men in the back of a car allegedly in Nangarhar claiming that they were humiliated, beaten, and detained by the Taliban officials for trimming their beards and dyeing their hair.

In December 2024, [Afghanistan International](#) reported that a group of Taliban clerics had entered a mosque in Sheberghan City, Jawzjan province and threatened violence against those who do not attend the mosque or do not grow a beard. According to a witness, the officials reportedly “physically dealt” with some worshipers.

### 5.3 GENDERED IMPACT: ALLEGED VIOLATIONS INVOLVING BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

AW also recorded 12 alleged human rights violations involving both women and men as the primary victims, which took place in Kabul (5), Badakhshan (2), Logar (2), Kandahar (1), Farah (1), and in one undisclosed location. This included eight arrests affecting a total of 30 individuals (21 men and nine women).

Most of these incidents related to rules on gender segregation or interactions between men and women in the PVPV Law, with individuals accused of having “[illicit relationships](#)” (3), “[illicit relations and moral corruption](#)” (1), “[extramarital affairs and promoting moral corruption](#)” (1), “[moral corruption](#)” (1), and “[promoting prostitution](#)” (1). One of the reports mentioned that the Taliban arrested a man and a woman after “[receiving public complaints](#)”, pointing to a broader atmosphere of surveillance.

One report provided a detailed description of one such alleged arrest. On 12 November 2024, Rukhshana Media reported that PVPV officials arrested a man and a woman from a restaurant in Qala-e Naw, Kabul, accusing them of having an “illicit relationship.” According to two eyewitnesses, the MPVPV officials insulted the girl, calling her a “whore,” and told her, “We have shed blood for our religion, and

you want to defame it?” The PVPV officers reportedly punched and kicked the man before dragging him into a vehicle along with the woman.

AW also recorded one incident alleging that a violation of the PVPV Law led to torture in detention and corporal punishment in public. In a video interview published on 21 November 2024 by Zan Times, a young woman claimed that Taliban officials detained her and her male cousin for visiting a market together in an unspecified location. She claimed she was held in detention for two months, when she was tortured as Taliban officials tied her hands behind her back and made other inmates walk on top of her and kick her. She claimed both she and her cousin were lashed 39 times in public after being sentenced by a Taliban court, and faced social stigma from the community after being released.

## 5.4 IMPACT ON MEDIA

The PVPV Law has apparently had an immediate impact on freedom of expression since being published, in particular by imposing additional restrictions on the media. Of the 130 alleged human rights violations related to the PVPV Law recorded between 21 August 2024 and 31 January 2025, 36 were violations against the media sector more broadly, including 36 categorised as “restrictions” and one incident of “other abusive enforcement.” The majority of these concerned the imposition of the ban on broadcasting images of living beings, as detailed below. As detailed in section 5.1 above, AW also recorded reports of alleged gendered violations against individual female media workers.

The Afghanistan Journalists Centre (AJC), in its annual report published in December 2024, stated that Taliban suppression of the media intensified during the year. This was in part due to the PVPV Law and the growing control over the media sector by MPVPV and the General Directorate of Intelligence. AJC also recorded 181 incidents of media and journalist rights violations in 2024, including 131 threats and 50 arrests. While the Taliban has an extensive track record of arresting, harassing and other violations against journalists since returning to power, AW was unable to identify other such violations specifically in the context of the PVPV Law’s implementation during the reporting period.

### Relevant provisions in the Law

Article 17 specifically outlines rules for “press and news organisations”. The Law stipulates that officials must prevent the media from publishing images of living beings, content that contradicts religion and Sharia, and content that insults or humiliates Muslims. Article 18 and further bans businesses from selling items with pictures of living beings or using such pictures in advertising, as well as “making pictures” of living beings on personal computers or mobile phones.



## Ban on images of living beings in the media

On 14 October 2024, Agence France Press (AFP) reported that MPVPV announced it would begin implementing a ban on media capturing and publishing images of living beings. MPVPV spokesperson Saiful Islam Khyber said the ban would be implemented gradually through “advice” and “convincing people” without “coercion.” Almost immediately, reports began to emerge of the Taliban enforcing the ban in several provinces. From October to January 2025, AW has documented how this ban has been implemented to varying degrees in 16 provinces. So far, however, as far as AW is aware the ban has yet to affect national private broadcasters, such as ToloTV or Ariana.

Reports from various media outlets and watchdog organisations indicate that the ban has led to the cessation of TV broadcasts by local branches of the state broadcaster Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) in at least seven provinces: Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan, Takhar, Nangarhar, Badghis and Panjshir. In addition, at least three private channels have reportedly closed down: in Takhar (2) and Helmand (1).

The gradual implementation of the ban, which has so far affected nearly half of the provinces of the country, could be due varying levels of support for the PVPV Law in different provinces. It is notable that, at the national level, several key Taliban figures, including Defence Minister Yaqub Mujahid, Interior Affairs Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani and two Deputy Prime Ministers - Mullah Bradar and Abdul Salam Hanafi - have reportedly opposed the ban. They reportedly view it as detrimental since it will tarnish the Taliban’s international image and harm the groups own communications efforts. It is also possible that the Taliban are deliberately rolling out aspects of the policy gradually, as the group has done in the past (for example, in the case of the ban on women working for UN agencies).

Province	Date of implementation of ban on showing living beings in media	Reported closures of TV channels (RTA or private)
Paktika	27.01.25	No closure reported
Nuristan	06.01.25	No closure reported (RTA does not operate locally)
Panjshir	01.01.25	RTA broadcasts radio programmes only
Kunar	21.11.24	No closure reported
Herat	17.11.24	No closure reported
Paktia	17.11.24	No closure reported
Nangarhar	13.11.24	RTA TV reportedly closed
Logar	25.10.24	No closure reported

Uruzgan	Unknown	RTA TV reportedly closed
Zabul	Unknown	RTA TV reportedly closed
Helmand	24.10.24	RTA TV and private Sabawoon TV reportedly closed
Daykundi	22.10.24	No closures reported
Badghis	22.10.24	RTA TV reportedly closed Private Oboor TV limited to one hour's programming weekly
Wardak	14.10.24	No closures reported
Takhar	13.10.24	RTA TV channel and private TV channels reportedly closed
Kandahar	28.10.24 (private TV channels given two-month deadline to switch to audio only) 19.02.24 (partial ban on filming meetings)	RTA TV reportedly closed

Table 1: Table showing the provincial implementation of the ban on media broadcasting images of living beings under the PVPV law until 31 January 2025.

On 14 October, Amu TV reported that the Taliban had banned photography and filming of living beings in **Takhar** province. It was also reported that the provincial RTA TV branch had closed, and that two private channels, Mah-e-Naw and Raihan TV, in the province had stopped broadcasting images of living beings (see Figure 7 below). Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) later reported that both channels had closed down.



Figure 7: Screenshots from broadcasts from two private TV channels in Takhar, including Mah-e-Naw on 17 October 2024 (left), and Raihan TV on 23 October 2024 (right) (sources: [Afghanistan International](#) and [Afghanistan International](#)).

AW previously reported that Mah-e-Naw had mostly stopped posting content containing images of living beings on its YouTube channel as of 28 October 2024. However, AW investigators noted that from 26 November onwards, the media outlet remained active on YouTube where it published content containing images of people, including Taliban officials and women.

On 23 October 2024, AFJC reported that in **Badghis** province, the Taliban Department of Information and Culture (DoIC) had officially communicated the ban to journalists via a joint WhatsApp group the previous day. Following the announcement, the state-run RTA broadcasts and the only private TV channel in the province, Oboor TV, were shut down. RSF, however, reported in December 2024 that Oboor was partially functioning, but with just a single hour of programming per week. According to RSF, the channel is barred from conducting interviews with local authorities or producing programmes outdoors, as well as from posting images of living beings on Facebook. AW noted that the channel had not shared any images or videos of people since 19 October 2024.

On 24 October 2024, the Afghan Women's News Agency reported that the Taliban committee charged with implementing the PVPV Law in **Daykundi** province ordered journalists there to refrain from taking pictures and videos.

On 24 October 2024, the Associated Press reported that the ban had spread to **Helmand** province, where officials from the provincial DoIC had banned all media from photographing and broadcasting living beings. Free Speech Hub, an Afghan media watchdog based in Canada, further reported on 25 December 2024 that RTA TV had closed down in Helmand. According to RSF, the private channel Sabawoon TV has also closed down by December 2024.

Free Speech Hub further reported that RTA TV had shut down in **Kandahar, Zabul** and **Uruzgan** provinces as well. In Kandahar, RTA reportedly halted its TV broadcasts already on 2 September 2024. Moreover, on 28 October 2024, 8am Media reported that senior Taliban officials had, in a meeting with media outlets, given private TV channels in Kandahar a two-month deadline to convert all of their content to audio (the report does not specify if the deadline had also been imposed on a national level). AW was unable to determine if the deadline had been enforced.

The Associated Press (on 15 October 2024) and Radio Azadi (on 14 October) reported that the ban had also been implemented in **Wardak** province, where journalists confirmed the ban had been issued by the local committee implementing the PVPV Law. On 25 October, AFJC also reported that there were "signs" that the ban was being implemented in Logar province. While the AFJC did not specify further, on 26 October, Etilaatroz reported that journalists in Logar had faced restrictions in the context of the Law's implementation. Furthermore, on 10 November 2024, Radio France International reported that Mullah Naem

Akhunddid, Taliban Provincial Governor in **Logar**, did not allow journalists to take pictures of him and other participants at a press conference.

On 13 November 2024, AJC reported that the local Taliban authorities in **Nangarhar** province had banned Taliban officials appearing on camera in interviews with the media. According to AJC, the Taliban's Deputy Governor for Nangarhar, Mawlawi Azizullah Mustafa, told provincial department heads and district governors that capturing and publishing photographs of living people is prohibited, per the PVPV Law. RTA's TV broadcasts in Nangarhar have reportedly also closed down.

On 17 November 2024, 8am Media reported that authorities in **Paktia** province announced a ban on photography in government offices, while the Taliban Provincial Governor instructed media to broadcast symbols and buildings instead of images of living beings. Also on 17 November 2024, Afghanistan International reported that the DPVPV in **Herat** banned media from taking photos and filming official and non-official state meetings.

Similarly, on 21 November 2024, Afghanistan International reported that the Taliban in **Kunar** province had banned the broadcast of images of living beings, and specifically ordered the only private TV channel in the province, Zala TV, to abstain from such broadcasts. Despite the ban, Zala TV has continued to publish online content featuring people.

The ban was reportedly implemented in three further provinces in January 2025. On 3 January 2025, Etilaatroz reported that the Department of PVPV in **Panjshir** banned the publication of images of living beings in the province. As a result, RTA is only broadcasting on radio in Panjshir, while official Taliban communication only featured images of places and buildings instead of living beings.

On 6 January 2025, the Department of PVPV in **Nuristan** province shared an image of the PVPV Law on X, announcing that the Head of the Department and the Provincial Governor had decided to ban images of living beings. On 27 January 2025, 8am Media and ZanTV also reported that the DoIC in Paktika announced the ban to journalists at a meeting, obliging them to refrain from taking images of living beings.

### **Other impacts on the media under the PVPV Law**

Since the announcement of the PVPV Law, AW has recorded several reported cases of the Taliban refusing to allow filming and photography due to the ban on images of living beings. Apart from the examples mentioned above, other instances include the Taliban governor of Ghor province, Mawlawi Hayatullah Mubarak, reportedly not allowing the media to take his picture on his inauguration day, as reported by Aamaj News on 18 November 2024. In the same province, in December 2024, the Taliban reportedly banned photography and video recordings at madrasa graduation ceremonies. Similarly, on 9 September 2024, 8am Media

reported that the Taliban Minister of PVPV Khalid Hanafi did not allow the media to film news conferences in Ghazni. On 19 October 2024, Amu TV reported that the Taliban's Minister for Higher Education Neda Mohammad Nadim did not allow photography at an event in Khost province. A similar incident was reported from Laghman province, where Hanafi did reportedly not allow journalists to take pictures or videos during a meeting.

The PVPV Law has reportedly also had broader impacts on the media sector, in particular TV broadcasters. According to 8am Media, the Ministry of Information and Culture has stopped issuing permits for new visual media outlets any longer, and has rejected requests from individuals seeking permits to establish new television stations, although the outlet did not specify when this began.

Furthermore, on 20 October 2024, Afghanistan International reported that the Taliban are planning to eventually close all RTA TV broadcasts across the country under the PVPV Law. The Taliban instead plans to rebrand RTA radio broadcasts as "Radio Sharia", which was the only media outlet allowed during the Taliban's first stint in power. On 25 December 2024, the Free Speech Hub further reported that sources from RTA had informed the organisation of the Taliban's continued attempts to turn the RTA into Radio Sharia, including by installing shortwave transmitters in Kabul and the provinces.

Furthermore, in December 2024 Afghanistan International reported that media in Kabul had been banned from broadcasting music, a ban previously only in effect in provinces outside the capital.

### **Effects on Taliban social media accounts**

While AW has not recorded any signs of widespread implementation of the ban on living images on social media channels, the ban appears to have at least partly affected the social media policies of some Taliban institutions.

AW analysed existing X accounts of RTA branches in provinces where the ban on living beings had reportedly been implemented: Kandahar, Wardak, Takhar, Badghis, Daykundi, Helmand, Nangarhar, Kunar, Paktia, Panjshir, Nuristan and Paktika. The analysis shows a mixed picture. In Kandahar, the RTA branch either did not post images of people or blurred their faces from 15 August 2024, but it did share posts by other RTA accounts where human faces are visible. RTA Badghis and Daykundi continue to post content, but without showing images of living beings. RTA Wardak appears to have stopped publishing content showing images of people from early January 2025 onwards. Similarly, RTA Panjshir appears to have drastically reduced content showing images of living beings from 1 January 2025 onwards, and stopped publishing the images altogether after 28 January.

Conversely, RTA Helmand and Takhar have resumed publishing content with images of living beings from late December 2024 onwards, having previously

stopped publishing such content following the Law's announcement in August 2024. RTA branches in Nangarhar, Paktia and Nuristan all continue to post content containing images of people, while RTA Kunar and Paktika both merely repost from the main RTA Pashto account which shows images of people.

In addition, MoPVPV has stopped posting videos containing people's faces on its YouTube channel since July 2024, as well as on its X account. A similar case is the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), which does not share images featuring people on its X account. Similarly, both the MoHE and the Ministry of Justice have removed photos of their respective ministers from their websites.

AW has not recorded any reports from public sources of the ban on photos and videos of living beings on mobile phones, computers, and other devices being enforced between August 2024 and January 2025. On 23 October 2024, however, Afghanistan International reported that Taliban officials in Kabul had harassed an electronics vendor because he sold movies and TV series, although it was unclear if this was related to the PVPV Law.

## 5.5 IMPACT ON MINORITIES, LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS, AND CHILDREN

### Relevant provisions in the Law

The PVPV Law contains several provisions that are either overtly discriminatory or that could be interpreted as such towards religious and ethnic minorities or other vulnerable groups. Article 6, for example, states that the Law is based on Hanafi jurisprudence and applies to “all offices, public places and people residing in the territory of Afghanistan.” Article 22 forbids Nikah Mu'tah, or temporary marriage, known as Sigheh in Farsi, where a couple gets married for a specified period of time; followers of Twelver Shia Islam predominantly implement this practice. The same article bans “fireworks night” and “other festivals” which have no Islamic foundation, but does not define them, leaving room for interpretation, while also banning crucifixes and “other un-Islamic symbols”.

Similarly, the Law contains several provisions that are overtly discriminatory towards LGBTQ+ individuals. Article 22, for example, bans both the practice of “sodomy” and “lesbianism”, as well as the creation “of a platform or circumstances conducive to [...] lesbianism [and] sodomy.”

Article 23 stresses that the Law applies without exception to minorities, asylum seekers, children and mentally ill people, and that officials are obliged to prevent them from the “perpetration of wrongful acts.” Regarding children, Article 26 states that children can be referred to courts of law for “repeatedly disobeying their

parents”, while Article 22 bans various activities that are associated with children’s games such as mardaki<sup>11</sup>, beday<sup>12</sup> gam, or playing with walnuts, and other gaming.

### **Alleged violations against minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and children**

The Taliban have, more broadly, imposed discriminatory measures against primarily the Shia community since returning to power, including by reportedly removing Shia teachings from curricula, seemingly arbitrary restrictions on the Shia religious festival Ashura, reportedly dispersing those who celebrated and using violence against them, arbitrary detentions, and mass dismissals targeting Shia. Despite the Law potentially opening up for violations against religious and ethnic minorities, however, AW has not recorded a particular rise in such incidents since August 2024.

Some of the incidents described in the sections above have, however, involved intersecting violations of women’s rights and minority rights. Furthermore, it is notable that in several of these alleged violations, it appears that women from ethnic minority groups may have been subjected to particularly severe treatment. For instance, AW recorded three cases of women and girls allegedly being beaten in Hazara-majority Bamyan provinces, as well as reported physical violence by MPVPV officials against women in Uzbek-majority Sar-e Pol and in the Tajik-majority capital of Badakhshan, Faizabad. AW did not record similar alleged incidents of violence in Pashtun-majority provinces, including in Kandahar where AW recorded five incidents overall. Similarly, out of incidents in Kabul, AW recorded three reported cases (two women and one man) of MPVPV officials using physical violence or gendered insults in public during arrests in areas with large ethnic minority populations: “Western Kabul”, Khair Khana, and Qala-e-Naw. While the sample size is currently too small to determine whether the PVPV Law is applied in a discriminatory way against ethnic and religious minorities, it is a subject that merits further research.

Similarly, despite the discriminatory provisions in the Law, AW did not record data from public sources of alleged violations against LGBTQ+ individuals. As noted in the methodology, however, this could be a reflection of the limits of OSINT research, as LGBTQ+ individuals are less likely to publicly report violations given social stigma and risk of reprisals. The LGBTQ+ community has long faced discrimination and marginalisation in Afghanistan, as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented in the past.

Although public reports often fail to mention the age of concerned individuals, AW recorded five alleged incidents of human rights violations involving children. Three of these incidents involved arrests of adults along with minors. In another incident, Taliban members in Badakhshan in October 2025 reportedly entered a wedding

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<sup>11</sup> A betting game played with stones or walnuts

<sup>12</sup> A game played with the bones of sheep and goats



party that was playing music and opened fire, injuring a 15-year-old girl and a 67-year-old man. As noted above, AW also recorded alleged violations affecting male students - such as the Taliban punishing students for un-Islamic dress in Herat or restriction on girls' access to education - but their ages were often not disclosed in public reporting.

## 5.6 PARTIAL BAN ON MUSIC

Since returning to power, the Taliban have in practice essentially outlawed non-religious music in public settings, while MPVPV officials have reportedly confiscated and burned instruments, and arrested musicians. While the PVPV Law does not impose a generalised ban on music, Article 20 forbids drivers from playing music in cars, and Article 22 bans the sound of music “emanating from any gathering or from the home”. AW has recorded six alleged human rights violations in the context of the Law’s provisions on music - including humiliating treatment and beatings - in Takhar (2), Herat (1), Kapisa (1), Helmand (1), and Laghman (1). These led to the arrests of at least 16 men and boys. All of the primary alleged victims in the incidents were male.

On 28 August 2024, Afghanistan International published an audio message and pictures of a man who claimed that Taliban officials had beaten him and his friend for listening to music in Herat City. The man also claimed that the Taliban had beaten his friend's brother with a rifle butt after he tried to intervene. In October 2024, 8am Media reported that Taliban members in Kapisa had reportedly arrested four young men and forcibly shaved their heads for listening to music, while firing at them when they tried to run away.

In November 2024, Zawia News shared footage of Taliban members reportedly “capturing and punishing” five men and boys belonging to a local music group in Musa Kala, Helmand, apparently because they had played in public at an event. The video shows the five musicians - at least three of whom appear to be children - with hands tied behind their backs and appearing visibly scared.

Meanwhile, one of the residents of Sheberghan City, Jawzjan province said in a video shared by Afghanistan International on X that a group of Taliban representatives came to the mosque and threatened people with violence and imprisonment for those who do not attend the mosque and do not grow a beard. According to him, the inspectors “physically dealt” with some worshipers.

## 5.7 WIDESPREAD FEAR, SURVEILLANCE, AND INVASION OF PRIVACY

Since the announcement of the PVPV law, many Afghans have reported experiencing a growing climate of fear, while taking steps to restrict their



movements to avoid arrest, harassment or other reprisals by MPVPV officials. In October 2024, Afghanistan International published a [video](#) reportedly showing PVPV officials patrolling the street in Kabul, with a resident claiming that the officials are "spreading fear and hatred" through such patrols, as they "violate the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens" and interfere in the "most private" aspects of their lives. Local sources in Kabul also told AW that they had become more mindful of their appearance and begun wearing more conservative clothing to avoid arrest.

Separately, Rukhshana Media [reported](#) in September 2024 that families in Kabul are no longer allowing female members to leave their homes - even to go to the market, work, or attend classes - due to fear of detention under the PVPV Law. The report also stressed the negative effects this had on girls' already deteriorating mental health.

There were also reports that the Taliban have strengthened surveillance measures to monitor the Law's implementation. In September 2024, [The Telegraph](#) and [Amu TV](#) claimed that the Taliban had hired women as "spies" to enforce the new law. The female "spies" reportedly are tasked with monitoring [Instagram](#) accounts and reporting cases of women posting photos with their faces uncovered.

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## 6. TRENDS IN MPVPV COMMUNICATIONS

This chapter discusses how MPVPV's public communications through social media channels has evolved since the announcement of the PVPV Law. In particular, it examines two notable trends: 1) a sharp increase in the number of arrests announced publicly by MPVPV; and, 2) an apparent effort by MPVPV to portray itself as a defender of "women's rights", possibly in response to developments in international accountability related to Afghanistan.

### 6.1 PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED ARRESTS

MPVPV regularly shares [updates](#) about its work on X in [Farsi](#) and [Pashto](#) - and more recently in [English](#) - including about its alleged interventions in specific cases and arrests carried out by its officials. This section examines [posts announcing arrests shared](#) on X between 1 January 2023 and 31 January 2025, in an attempt to assess the PVPV Law's effect on detention trends. Where relevant, the section compares numbers before (1 January 2023-20 August 2024) and after (21 August 2024-31 January 2025) the Law's implementation. The analysis shows that public announcements about arrests have increased significantly since the Law was published.

#### An increase in posts about arrests on MPVPV social media channels

Out of 70 posts on the MPVPV X account mentioning keywords related to arrests since 2023, more than half (42) were recorded after the announcement of the PVPV Law, between 21 August 2024 and 31 January 2025 (see Figure 8 below). The posts were in both Pashto (24 of 42) and Farsi (18 of 42).

### MPVPV posts mentioning arrests

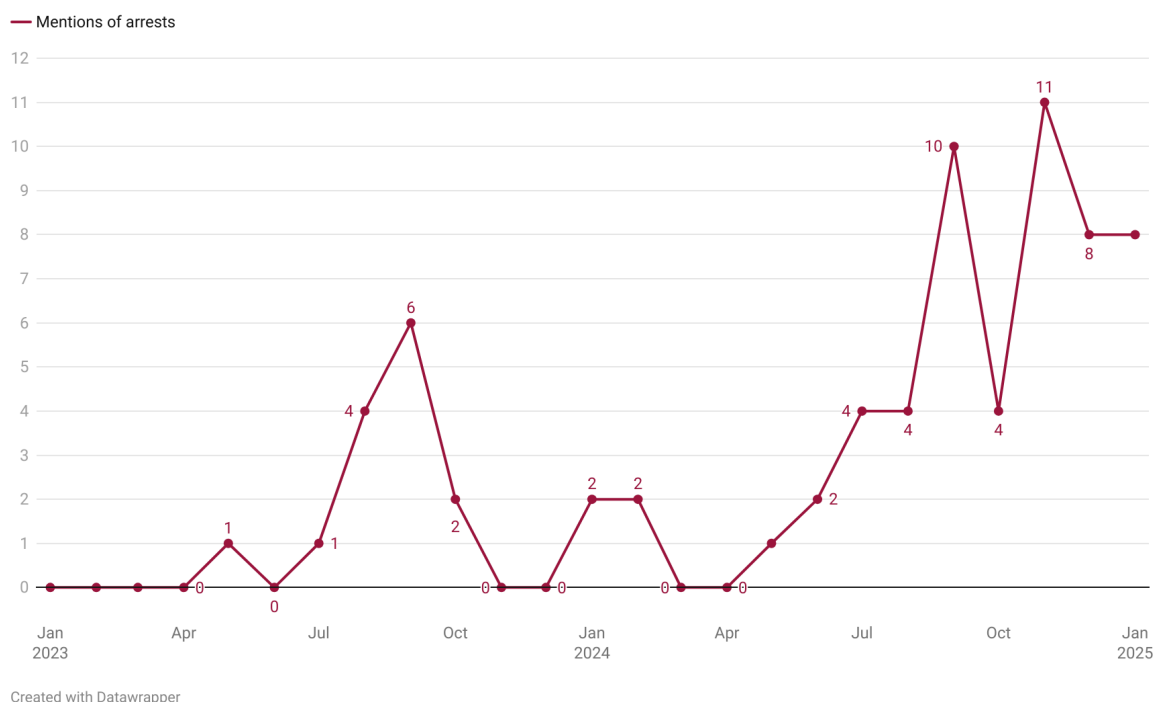


Figure 8: Monthly posts on the MPVPV X account between 1 January 2023 and 31 January 2025.

As seen in the graph above, peaks in posts about arrests were recorded immediately after the publication of the Law in September 2024 (10) and November 2024 (11).

### Number of arrested individuals

Out of 220 individuals MPVPV claimed to have arrested since 1 January 2023, 152 individuals were reportedly arrested between 21 August 2024 and 31 January 2025. This shows that more than two-thirds (152 of 220) of individuals MPVPV claims to have arrested since 2023 were arrested in the little more than five months since the Law was published, compared to just 68 in the 20-month period prior to that. In terms of monthly averages, MPVPV announced the arrests of 3.4 individuals per month on average before the Law's announcement, compared to 25.33 individuals on average per month after.



Figure 9: Visualised number of arrested individuals according to MPVPV X posts before (1 January 2023 - 20 August 2024) and after the PVPV Law's publication (21 August 2024 - 31 January 2025).

It is unclear if the increase in MPVPV social media posts about arrests reflects an actual increase in arrests since the Law's implementation, or merely an increased MPVPV effort to publicly communicate its work. AW, however, notes that the total number of arrested individuals based on MPVPV announcements (152) is roughly similar, but slightly lower, than the number of alleged arrested individuals AW recorded through public sources (172). As noted above, AW believes that the actual number of arrests are likely to be significantly higher than what can be captured from public sources. Indeed, on 20 August 2024, MPVPV claimed to have arrested more than 13,000 individuals just in the previous year.

### Locations of arrests

The officially announced arrests from 21 August 2024 were recorded in 20 out of 34 provinces in the country, including Baghlan, Balkh, Samangan, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Kabul, Daikundi, Kandahar, Kunar, Kunduz, Logar, Nimroz, Paktia, Paktika, Parwan, Sar-e-Pol, and Zabul. In addition, six posts mentioned multiple provinces at the same time without distinguishing how many individuals were arrested per province.

### Types of offences

AW analysed the offences allegedly committed by the individuals MPVPV claimed to have arrested before and after the implementation of the PVPV Law. AW divided the offences into four main categories: 1) moral offences, 2) criminal offences, 3) mixed moral and criminal offences, and 4) undetermined. Offences classified by AW as "moral" include: witchcraft, gambling, "illicit relations", "illicit relations and moral corruption", moral corruption, and "unfamiliar and superstitious actions".

Offences classified as criminal include: selling drugs, smuggling of human hair, “selling alcohol and drugs”, “drinking alcoholic beverages”, and “forcing an orphan girl into marriage”.

The chart below shows the breakdown of the number of individuals reportedly arrested for each offence in the period 21 August 2024 to 31 January 2025.

### MPVPV arrests: Quoted offences

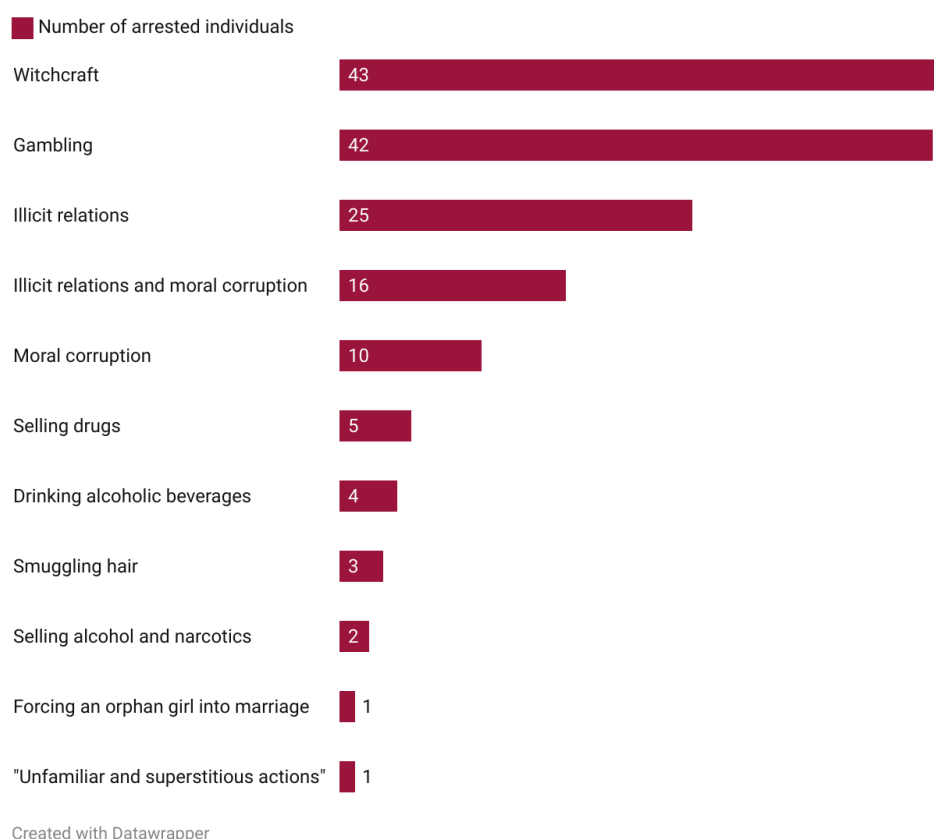


Figure 10: Number of arrested individuals per alleged offence according to the MPVPV X posts following the implementation of the PVPV law (21 August 2024 to 31 January 2025).

Most (136 of 152) of the individuals arrested by MPVPV official's since the Law's publication were accused of moral offences, mostly “witchcraft” (43) and gambling (42), followed by “illicit relations” (25), “illicit relations and moral corruption” (16), and “moral corruption” (10). Only 15 individuals were accused of criminal offences: selling drugs (5), drinking alcoholic beverages (4), selling both alcohol and drugs (2), smuggling human hair (3), and forcing an orphan into marriage (1). In one case, the post only mentioned that an individual in Paktika was accused of “unfamiliar and superstitious actions” without disclosing further details.

Trends in offences being punished by MPVPV officials appears to have stayed relatively consistent since the Law's publication. In the period 1 January 2023-20

August 2024, 50 of 68 arrested individuals were charged with moral offences. The full breakdown of offences prior to the Law's publication was: "witchcraft" (49), "selling drugs and moral corruption" (8), "moral corruption" (1), drug trafficking (6), "offering bribe" (2), hair smuggling (1), and theft (1).

It is noteworthy, however, that MPVPV has only announced arrests for certain offences since the Law's publication. These are: gambling (42 individuals arrested), illicit relations (25), "illicit relations and moral corruption" (16), drinking alcoholic beverages (4), "selling alcohol and narcotics" (2), and "forcing an orphan girl into marriage" (1), as well as the unspecified "unfamiliar and superstitious actions" (1).

### **Data gaps: Age, gender, and ethnicity**

The MPVPV X account did not regularly disclose the gender of arrested individuals in its posts. Only seven of the relevant posts from 1 January 2023 to 31 January 2025 mentioned women. Six of these posts specified the number of women arrested, while one post reported the arrest of five individuals accused of witchcraft in Parwan province in December 2024, stating that "most" of them were women, but without providing details.

The posts which did specify the number of arrested women, however, indicated that six out of seven women arrested since 1 January 2023 were arrested after the PVPV Law's publication. Other information about the identity of individuals, including age and ethnicity, were not disclosed in MPVPV's official posts.

## **6.2 "DEFENDING WOMEN'S RIGHTS"**

Since the PVPV Law's implementation, MPVPV has increasingly sought to portray itself as a defender of "women's rights" through its social media channels, including by highlighting interventions of alleged abuse against women. This section analyses posts about "women's rights" and related keywords on the MPVPV X and YouTube accounts, including analysis on the frequency and peaks of such posts, their thematic content, languages used, and some analysis of the broader context of the trend.

In October 2024, the MPVPV accounts on X (145,000 followers) and on YouTube (2,970 subscribers) began frequently sharing content including written updates, audio reports, and speeches, specifically pushing a narrative that the Ministry is taking measures to protect women's rights. These alleged measures included interventions to address domestic violence, forced marriage and inheritance rights. In one post, MPVPV also claimed to have intervened in a cases of rape.

The MPVPV YouTube account explicitly mentioned women's rights for the first time on 13 August 2024, through the Pashto audio recording of a speech by Mawlawi Mohammad Khalid Hanafi, Minister for PVPV, regarding the Supreme

Leader's decree granting "rights and freedom" to women along Sharia principles (see below). In the speech, Hanafi said that under the "corrupt" Republic government, women's rights and human rights were merely promoted "on paper", whereas the Islamic Emirate has ensured these in practice. Hanafi also said that under the Taliban, no one is allowed to marry a woman to compensate for a wrongdoing<sup>13</sup> or for a dowry, while criticising "foreigners with evil intentions" for wanting women to remove their hijabs. Following this, the YouTube account began regularly sharing audio updates on women's rights and promoting MPVPV measures, including resolutions of "women's rights cases". Similarly, the MPVPV account on X explicitly mentioned women's rights for the first time on 10 October 2024, sharing a written statement on the prevention of forced marriage and the decree on women's rights.

On 7 November 2024, MPVPV on X and YouTube posted an audio report in Pashto. The post, while admitting that women's rights are violated in Afghan society, claimed that over the past three years, the Taliban prevented 5,000 forced marriages and ensured inheritance for some 20,000 women, which they had previously been denied due to "unacceptable old traditions." In another X post, MPVPV appeared to associate these "traditions" with the Republic government and its international allies, stating, "(...) the traditions of the past 20 years have kept women away from their Sharia rights, such as the right to choose a spouse".

In January 2025, the MPVPV X account reposted content from an English-language account called "Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice", which had been created in December 2024. As of 21 January 2025, the account had shared 10 posts, with its first post focusing on measures taken by MPVPV to advance women's rights. On 28 January 2025, the official MPVPV account on X confirmed that the English-language account is an official account of the Ministry.

### Posting frequency on X and YouTube

The MPVPV account on X has posted regularly since it first became active in November 2021. However, using Meltwater, AW observed that the account's overall recent posting activity (between October 2023 and January 2025) appears to have peaked in October 2024, shortly after the publication of the PVPV law, as seen in the graph below.

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<sup>13</sup> For instance, to settle disputes ranging from debts to murder.

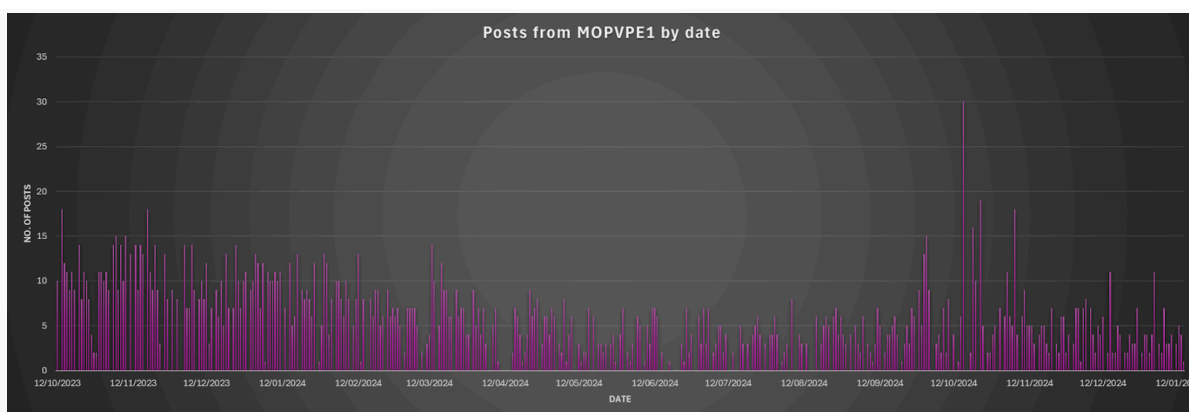


Figure 11: Posts shared by the MPVPV account by date from 12 October 2023 to 12 January 2024.

AW observed a similar trend regarding content mentioning women's rights on the YouTube account associated with the MPVPV. To verify this, AW used selected keywords in English, Pashto, and Dari to analyse content shared on the MPVPV accounts on X and YouTube, including keywords such as “women’s rights”, “women’s Sharia rights”, “women’s Islamic rights”, “domestic violence”, “inheritance”, and “forced marriage”. AW analysed posts from 1 January 2024 to 21 January 2025 to capture any trends before and after the Law's publication.

Figure 12 below illustrates the increase in content mentioning women’s rights-related keywords on MPVPV X and YouTube accounts during this time period. As illustrated by the graph, the vast majority of the content (72 of 75 instances) was shared after 1 October 2024, while only two mentions were recorded prior to August 2024, on 5 March 2024 on X and on 13 August 2024 on YouTube.

### Monthly frequency of posts discussing women's rights

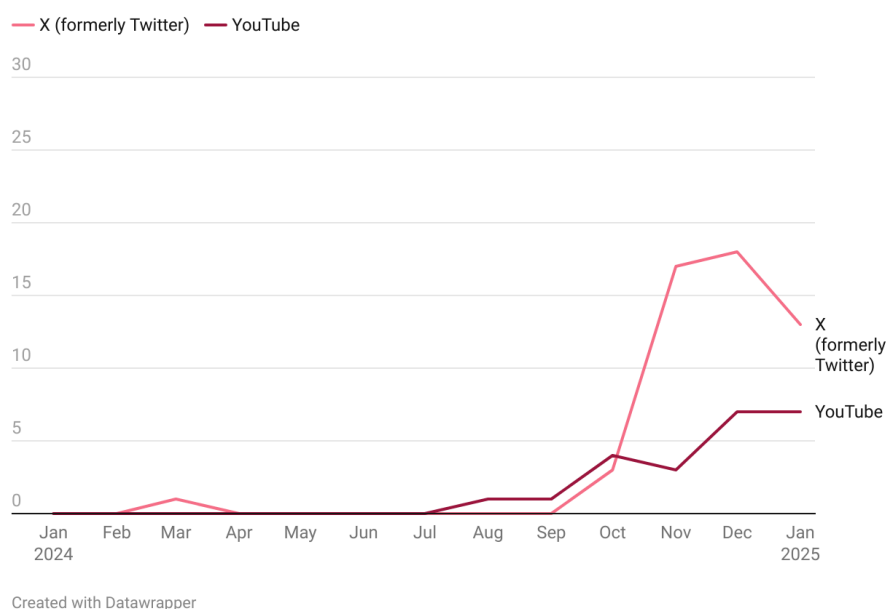


Figure 12: Monthly mentions of keywords related to women's rights in content shared by the MPVPV accounts on X and YouTube from 1 January 2024 to 21 January 2025 (source: AW analysis through Meltwater).

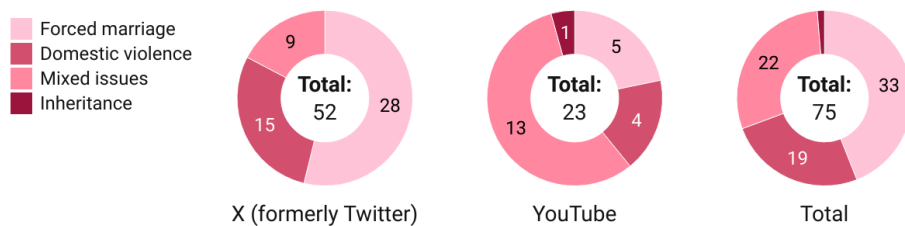
The X account included women's rights-related keywords 52 times in total, with most (50 of 52) shared after 1 October 2024. AW observed that before the PVPV Law implementation, the MPVPV account on X had shared only one post related to women's rights on 5 March 2024. The increase in posts on women's rights issues matched an overall spike in activity on the MPVPV account from October.

Meanwhile, MPVPV's YouTube account shared 23 videos with relevant keywords. As on the X account, these updates increased from October 2024 with a further spike noted from December: October (4), November (3), December (7), and January (7, until 21 January). Only two mentions were recorded between August (1) and September (1).

### Thematic breakdown

AW found that most content shared by MPVPV on X and YouTube from 1 January 2024 to 21 January 2025 focused on forced marriage (33 of 75 instances), followed by posts mentioning general women's rights issues (22 of 75), domestic violence (19), and inheritance rights (1). Detailed results can be seen in Figure 3 below.

#### Content breakdown by thematic focus



Created with Datawrapper

Figure 13: Content breakdown by thematic focus on the MPVPV YouTube and X accounts from 1 January 2024 to 21 January 2025.

Out of the 33 posts on the prevention of forced marriages, AW observed that four mentioned minors as victims, including two 12-year-old and two 13-year-old girls in Chazni, Samangan, Zabul, and Kunduz. One of the posts also mentioned that an orphan had been “rescued”, but did not disclose her age. Two posts mentioned other vulnerable female survivors, including an 18-year-old girl and a widow.

### Measures allegedly taken to protect women's rights

Measures allegedly taken by MPVPV to protect women's rights, per its YouTube and X posts, mostly consisted of “interventions” against forced marriages, domestic violence, and dowry/inheritance issues. MPVPV also encouraged people to submit complaints through a toll-free, 24-hour phone line.



Most posts did not detail how MPVPV had “resolved” cases, apart from stating that survivors were rescued. However, AW observed that some of the practices described raise concerns about the safety of those “rescued”. For instance, in November 2024, an audio post claimed that MPVPV officials in Ghazni province had returned a girl, who had fled home due to domestic violence, back to her family in Daikundi. MPVPV officials asked her family to “refrain from violence”, while the post claimed the measure was a “source of hope for the child victims of violence”, implying that the girl was a minor. The audio message was also shared in English.

Other posts describe how, in domestic violence cases, MPVPV officials limited themselves to extracting promises from abusive husbands to “remain committed” to providing survivors’ legal rights and refrain from such acts in the future, or calling both parties “to be fair” and “respect each other’s rights.” This echoes practice documented by other human rights actors, where MPVPV officials often offer “advice” first in interventions, before resorting to other judicial or punitive measures.

### **Background: International justice processes against the Taliban**

Apart from the PVPV Law, there are other possible reasons behind MPVPV’s surge in communications on “women’s rights”, notably related to international justice efforts on Afghanistan. In September 2024, Canada, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands brought a case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the Taliban’s violations of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This triggered a wave of responses from the Taliban authorities and their supporters, denying the allegations and highlighting women’s allegedly prominent roles in the Taliban system.

Similarly, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in November 2024 confirmed that his investigation on Afghanistan focused on the rights of women and girls under the Taliban. This was partly in response to a referral by six state parties, submitted to the Court on 28 November 2024, urging the prosecutor to prioritise the situation on women and girls. On 22 January 2024, the Prosecutor requested arrest warrants against two senior Taliban officials for gender persecution, including Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzadah. MPVPV’s focus on forced marriages and domestic violence also appears to be a response to vocal criticism by the UN and other rights actors on how Taliban policies have fueled such abuse.

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## 7. CONCLUSION

In the little more than six months since it was first published, the PVPV Law already appears to have had a significant impact on Afghan society. As noted above, MPVPV officials and other Taliban members have allegedly committed a range of human rights violations under the Law, further eroding already extremely limited personal freedoms in the Taliban's Afghanistan. While women and girls appear to have felt the most impact of the Law's implementation, other groups - including men and boys, and media workers - have reportedly also been subject to abuse. The Taliban have publicly stated that the Law will be "gradually implemented", and this is also evident from AW's research. The ban on broadcasting images of living beings, for example, has so far only been implemented in less than half of Afghan provinces, while other aspects of the Law have apparently yet to be implemented at all. The full extent of the impact of the Law will therefore likely only be known in the coming months and years, and merits further research and monitoring. It is likely, however, that violations under the Law will intensify as its implementation. The change in tone of MPVPV communications - in particular its apparent attempts to portray itself as a defender of "women's rights" in Afghanistan - is notable, and points to an effort to change public perceptions of the Ministry, possibly in response to increased pressure on the Taliban through developments at the ICC and the ICJ.