



## AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES

ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

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The Australian Association of Women Judges stands with the women and girls of Afghanistan in their calls for support to protect their human rights, including to education.

Australia is now home to 17 women judges from Afghanistan and their families, who are devastated by what is happening in their country. In the late 1990s, when the Taliban was in power for the first time, some of those judges were girls and could not attend school. Others, who were already Judges, were removed from office, but worked tirelessly to provide education for Afghan girls and women, whether in Afghanistan or as refugees in countries such as Pakistan.

When the Taliban again came to power in 2021, its leaders said it would honour the human rights of women within the bounds of Islamic law. Yet Afghanistan is the only Islamic country in the world that forbids half its population from attending education institutions. The legacy will be an immeasurable loss to the people and economy of that nation, not just the women and girls whose hopes for equal participation in public life have been so cruelly dismissed. It will also put the health and welfare of women and girls at risk because women will not be trained as health professionals which is essential for the treatment of women under the current regime in Afghanistan.

The AAWJ is working with our Afghan colleagues to promote their interests and those of the women and girls in Afghanistan. Our members are inspired by the determination of the Afghan women judges in Australia to do what they can to encourage their countrywomen, even while struggling with their own trauma and the difficulties in forging a new life here.

We are in awe of the bravery of the women and girls, and the men and boys, of Afghanistan who are risking their lives to protest this decree. The least we can do is to give them our public support and encouragement, and to use our influence, personal and institutional, to restore equal rights for the women and girls of Afghanistan.

The Taliban's leaders promised to honour the human rights of women. They should be held to that promise.

***Fleur Kingham***  
***President***  
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