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Taliban's Mandatory Burqa in Herat Assaults Women's Autonomy

Afghan Women Continue to Resist Forced Hijab



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The requirement of a burqa, a full-face and body covering, immediately affected access to health care: Médecins Sans Frontières ([Doctors Without Borders](#)) [observed a 28 percent drop](#) in urgent admissions during the first few days. The restriction has reportedly been [expanded](#) to all [government institutions](#) and women [teaching](#) in primary schools in the province.

These restrictions assault women's autonomy and violate their rights to freedom of movement, employment, and health services, among others.

In response, activist groups in [Herat](#), [Kabul](#), and in [exile](#) have staged [symbolic protests](#), setting their burqas on [fire](#). Some [danced](#) and recorded messages demanding [freedom](#), such as: "[We burn this not out of hatred, but for freedom. There is no power stronger than a woman's will for free life](#)"; "A woman's body is not a site for [playing] politics"; "[Your silence helps the Taliban](#)"; and "[I'm a woman, not a shadow, don't cover my voice.... Behind this garment is a woman who continues to dream!](#)"

Forced hijab is part of the Taliban's policy of controlling women's bodies to make women invisible. Afghan women and United Nations human rights experts have called this "[gender apartheid](#)."

The crackdown in Herat reflects a broader pattern. In May 2022, the Taliban [ordered](#) women throughout the country to wear burqas or black hijabs that cover their faces. *Mahram*, women's male guardians, were made liable for enforcing these rules, and women outside their homes were required to be accompanied by a mahram.

In August 2024, the Taliban [issued the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, a formal morality code](#) that prohibits women's voices from being [heard](#) outdoors. The Taliban's morality police have increasingly [arrested](#) and detained women for dress code violations.

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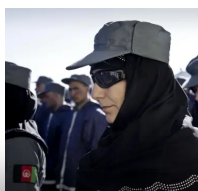


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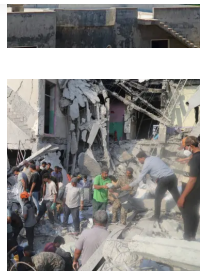
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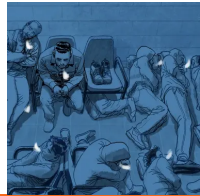
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