Taliban leader says women will be stoned to death in public

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<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/03/25/taliban-leader-akhundzada-women-stoned-death-afghanistan/>

The Taliban’s Supreme Leader has vowed to start stoning women to death in public as he declared the fight against Western democracy will continue.

“You say it’s a violation of women’s rights when [we stone them to death](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/women-and-girls/woman-has-sentenced-death-stoning-should-outraged/),” said Mullah [Hibatullah Akhundzada](https://search.yahoo.com/search?p=Hibatullah%20Akhundzada) in a voice message, aired on state television over the weekend, addressing Western officials.

“But we will soon implement the punishment for adultery. We will flog women in public. We will stone them to death in public,” he declared in his harshest comments since [taking over Kabul in August 2021](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2021/07/25/haibatullah-akhundzada-talibans-ghost-leader-quietly-biding/).

“These are all against your democracy but we will continue doing it. We both say we defend human rights – we do it as God’s representative and you as the devil’s.”

Afghanistan’s state TV, now under Taliban control, broadcasts voice messages purporting to be from Akhundzada, who has never been seen in public aside from a few old portraits.

He is believed to be based in southern Kandahar, the stronghold of the Taliban.

Despite promising a more moderate government, the Taliban quickly returned to [harsh public punishments](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2021/09/07/taliban-will-chop-hands-thieves-harsh-punishments-return/) like public executions and floggings, similar to those from their previous rule in the late 1990s.

The United Nations has strongly criticised the Taliban and has called on the country’s rulers to halt such practices.

In his voice message, Akhundzada said that the women’s rights that the international community had been advocating for were against the Taliban’s [harsh interpretation of Islamic Sharia.](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/terror-and-security/sharia-law-returns-afghanistan-taliban-confirms-public-whippings/)

“Do women want the rights that Westerners are talking about? They are against Sharia and clerics’ opinions, the clerics who toppled Western democracy,” he said.

“I told the Mujahedin that we tell the Westerners that we fought against you for 20 years and we will fight 20 and even more years against you,” he said, emphasising the need for resilience in opposing women’s rights among Taliban foot soldiers.

“It did not finish [when you left]. It does not mean we would now just sit and drink tea. We will bring Sharia to this land,” he added. “It did finish after we took over Kabul. No, we will now bring Sharia into action.”

**Women ‘living in prison’**

His remarks have incited outrage among Afghans, with some calling on the international community to increase pressure on the Taliban.

“The money that they receive from the international community as humanitarian aid is just feeding them against women,” Tala, a former civil servant, told The Telegraph from the capital Kabul.

“As a woman, I don’t feel safe and secure in Afghanistan. Each morning starts with a barrage of notices and orders imposing restrictions and stringent rules on women, stripping away even the smallest joys and extinguishing hope for a brighter future,” she added.

“We, the women, [are living in prison](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/women-and-girls/taliban-rolling-back-rights-afghan-women-girls-32-areas-say/),” Tala said, “And the Taliban are making it smaller for us every passing day.”