

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 27, 2022

His Excellency  
Mr. Antonio Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
760 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Guterres:

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the Taliban continues to commit grave human rights abuses against the Afghan people and has launched an assault on Afghan women's fundamental human rights. A broad coalition of Afghan women leaders are urging the United Nations to use its leverage to increase pressure on the Taliban for its failure to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls. We urge you to heed their calls for the United Nations to take targeted measures to hold the Taliban accountable. Furthermore, we urge you to ensure the UN response in Afghanistan protects and advances the human rights of women and girls now under attack.

Specifically, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) should halt international travel for the Taliban by reimposing the travel ban under the 1988 UN sanctions regime for all members of Taliban leadership. While Afghan women can barely travel outside their own homes due to recent Taliban edicts, Taliban leadership are allowed to travel freely due to an exemption put in place in 2019 to permit certain leaders to participate in the now defunct peace talks. The UN travel exemption has failed to produce meaningful dialogue with the Taliban nor spur them to take concrete actions to demonstrate their respect for the human rights and freedoms of the Afghan people. Moreover, Taliban leaders have misused the exemption, traveling to Beijing and Moscow in efforts to establish diplomatic ties. Despite this, the UNSC voted last month to once again roll over the travel ban exemptions for 13 Taliban leaders, only reinstating the travel ban on two Ministers of Education following the Taliban's refusal to open secondary schools for girls. The Taliban must face consequences for their repressive actions, and we urge you ahead of the UNSC's consideration of these exemptions in August to advocate for the travel ban to be reinstated for all Taliban leaders unless there are immediate and dramatic improvements in respect for the human rights of women and girls.

Additionally, we urge you to work to ensure the Taliban does not receive a seat at the United Nations when the UN Credentials Committee meets this September to determine diplomatic representation for Afghanistan. The vote on credentials will occur one year after the Taliban violently overthrew the democratically-elected government of Afghanistan. The United Nations must remain steadfast in denying the illegitimate Taliban authorities the international recognition they so desperately seek, especially as they continue to abuse the human rights of Afghans.

We are concerned about reports that some UN agencies have made concessions at a local level with the *de facto* Taliban authorities to proceed with relief delivery without women present, undermining the principled approach that is required to ensure all Afghan people, regardless of gender, can access the humanitarian aid they need to survive. Therefore, we also call on you to ensure that UN efforts in

Afghanistan protect and empower women and girls. The new Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) must depart from her predecessor's approach and elevate the importance of women's human rights and empowerment within its mandate, including by hiring more Afghan women and ensuring they are a part of political dialogue and negotiations. In addition, we urge you to ensure that UN humanitarian agencies operating in Afghanistan maintain a principled approach to aid delivery that includes demonstrable evidence that female aid workers are working in existing programs in every sector and region, and that Afghan women and girls are able to equitably access humanitarian aid.

We must not stand by as the Taliban seeks to erase the human rights of Afghan women and girls. In this moment, the United Nations has an opportunity to take meaningful actions that will send a clear, unequivocal message to the world that its member nations will defend the human rights of Afghans, particularly women and girls. The United Nations is uniquely positioned to influence the Taliban, without harming ordinary Afghans, and we urge you to use the tools already available to do so. We strongly urge the United Nations to prioritize and advance the human rights of women and girls through all aspects of its work in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,



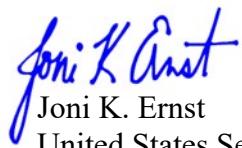
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

cc

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