



Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada  
Item 2: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Date: 26 February 2026  
Speaker: Rahima Toufan

**Oral Statement to the 61st Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), and the International Bar Association, NGOs in special consultative status**

**Afghanistan: The Taliban Penal Code and Systemic Gender-Based Repression**

Mr. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada and the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute deplore the further human rights deterioration in Afghanistan. We strongly condemn the recent Taliban penal framework, which codifies repression as a legal duty, institutionalizes gender-based discrimination and violence, and bans women and girls from education, employment, and any meaningful participation in public life.

We remain seriously concerned at the total disregard – in law and practice – of Afghanistan's international human rights obligations, coupled with the broad discretionary powers exercised without independent judicial oversight and failure to respect fair trial guarantees. This increases risks for civil society, including legal professionals, human rights defenders, and journalists, particularly women, who face intimidation, arbitrary detention, and torture. We are alarmed by insecurity faced by Afghan refugees stranded in neighboring States at risk of forced return.

We urge this Council to:

- Insist on coordinated action to ensure accountability for international crimes and serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law.
- Ensure full operationalisation, resourcing, and support for the Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan, including the Voluntary Trust Fund.

Thank you.