

Policy Brief presentation: EU meeting with the European External Action Service

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On 3 July 2025, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI), in cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS), organized a policy briefing event at the EEAS headquarters in Brussels. With the presence of EEAS representatives Deren Derya (Head of Division) and Paola Pampolini (Deputy Managing Director, Asia Pacific), the event brought together EU officials, RWI Afghan scholars, and human rights experts to present and discuss policy briefs on pressing human rights issues in Afghanistan. Richard Bennett, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, joined as visiting professor at RWI and mentor to the fellows in their research.

The morning session focused on a presentation to the EEAS Afghanistan Division, with participation from other relevant EU institutions, including the EU Delegation in Kabul, the Human Rights Division, and the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI). Helena Olsson, Director of RWI's Afghanistan Programme, together with Richard Bennett, introduced the session, and RWI Research Fellows presented their policy briefs covering important key human rights concerns, and summarizing findings of one-year long research projects conducted at RWI in 2024.

Latifa Jafari Alavi - *Breaking Barriers: Tackling Intersectional Discrimination in Maternal Healthcare in Afghanistan* (<https://rwi.lu.se/staff/latifa-jafari-alavi/>)



Maternal healthcare in Afghanistan is facing a catastrophic breakdown. A woman's chance of surviving pregnancy depends on who she is, her ethnicity, class, disability status, age, sexual orientation, or gender identity, rather than on her medical needs. This brief reveals how structural collapse, discriminatory laws, and social norms converge to create a gender justice and human rights emergency.

Read the full report: <https://rwi.lu.se/publications/intersectionality-and-human-rights-ensuring-access-to-maternal-health-in-afghanistan/>



Hamid Formuli - *Beyond Crisis of Exclusion and a Rights-Based Path Forward: Afghan and International Responsibilities* (<https://rwi.lu.se/staff/hamid-a-formuli/>)

Afghanistan is currently governed by a highly exclusionary regime dominated by the Taliban, which systematically sidelines women, minorities, and those outside its inner circle. Research based on surveys and interviews reveals that symbolic representation does not reflect the population's aspirations. Genuine inclusivity requires rights-based, meritocratic participation, constitutional reform, and equitable power and resource sharing.



Read the full report: <https://rwi.lu.se/publications/leaving-many-behind-examining-the-state-of-inclusivity-and-non-discrimination-in-afghanistan/>

Maliha Shirzay - *Unseen and Undaunted: Uzbek Women Educators Confront Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan* (<https://rwi.lu.se/staff/maliha-shirzay/>)



Today, many Uzbek women continue to teach in secret under extremely challenging conditions, particularly in remote provinces. They face severe economic hardship, psychological stress, and social isolation, yet receive little to no support from NGOs or local authorities. Their unpaid educational work and quiet determination represent a powerful but largely overlooked form of resistance to gender apartheid.

Read the full report: <https://rwi.lu.se/publications/pioneering-uzbek-women-in-educational-process-in-afghanistan-an-intersectional-exploration-of-uzbek-womens-historical-struggles/>



Mitra Tanomand - *After the Collapse of Women's Shelters in Afghanistan: A Call to Global Policymakers, Afghan Women's Rights NGOs, UN Agencies and Aid Actors* (<https://rwi.lu.se/staff/mitra-tanomand/>)

The collapse of women's shelters in Afghanistan is not just a logistical breakdown; it is a structural and ethical failure with life-threatening consequences. Rebuilding protection systems for women and girls must begin now, discreetly, locally, and based on survivor agency and frontline trust.



Read the full report: <https://rwi.lu.se/publications/unveiling-the-post-2021-realities-within-womens-protection-centres-in-afghanistan-navigating-challenges-amid-socio-political-shifts/>

The presentations were followed by an interactive discussion with EEAS officials. The afternoon session continued with a presentation to Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) representatives, including Charlotte Adriaen (Head of Unit for Central Asia and Afghanistan), Thais Leray (Head of Afghanistan Sector), and Olivia Teigland (Desk Officer). Alongside the four policy briefs presented in the morning, Humaira Rasuli, also an RWI 2024 fellow, contributed to an online presentation of her own brief.

Humaira Rasuli - *Justice Denied: Afghan Women's Struggle for Legal Protection under the Taliban* (<https://rwi.lu.se/staff/humaira-rasuli/>)



Unless access to justice is restored, Afghan women will remain trapped in cycles of violence and oppression, with dire consequences for the country's peace and development. Thus, there is an urgent need for international support to address the systematic gender-based discrimination in Afghanistan.

Read the full report: <https://rwi.lu.se/publications/highlighting-afghan-womens-experiences-of-violence-and-access-to-justice/>



Bringing together RWI 2024 fellows and relevant European actors in Brussels, this event provided an important platform for Afghan experts to present research-based policy recommendations and for EU institutions to engage in dialogue on how to support the protection and promotion of human rights in Afghanistan. By highlighting the complex realities of human rights in Afghanistan, particularly in relation to gender, ethnicity and access to justice, the constructive exchanges underscored the importance of dialogue, collaboration, reaffirming the value of academic-practitioner partnerships in shaping impactful international responses.

Part of the strategic dissemination to policy stakeholders of research, this mission contributed the RWI Afghanistan programme 2024-2026 aims to better-informed strategies and initiatives to promote and protect human rights in Afghanistan, with the long-term objective of strengthening conditions for inclusive governance, peace, and respect for human rights and gender equality in the country.



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