

# WEEKLY ANALYSIS

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## BANNING FEMALE STUDENTS FROM EDUCATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.

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## BANNING FEMALE STUDENTS FROM EDUCATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

### INTRODUCTION

On 20th Dec 2022, the Ministry of Higher Education issued a letter with the approval of the Cabinet of the Islamic Emirate banning female students from attending universities which triggered widespread reactions at national and international levels.

Sheikh Al-Hadith Nada Mohammad Nadim, Acting Minister of Higher Education of the Islamic Emirate explained that : "There were vices in the education system, and the officials promised that these problems would be addressed, but they are not resolved. Our Government is Islamic , therefore,our our environment must also be Islamic". He added: " considering the religious requirements and opinions of Muslim nation, we were forced to postpone female students attending university until further notice." recently, the Acting Minister of Vice and Virtue, Khaled Hanafi, divided education into religious and modern stating that modern science is permissible (Mubah). While majority of Islamic scholars believe that the learning of modern education, especially the one that society needs and contributes to society's progress, is a collective duty (Fardh Kifaya).

Regarding this issue, some Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and many personalities, associations, unions and activists in the field of Islamic Da'wah outside of Afghanistan have reacted and called this decision of the Islamic Emirate contrary to the Islamic principles and values. The statements of Sheikh Al-Azhar, Dr. Muhammad Tayyeb, International Union of Muslim Scholars, Muslim World League, and many trustworthy scholars of the Islamic world can be pointed out as an example condemning this decision.

Before making this decision, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan banned female students from attending secondary schools on the first day of schools opening inauguration and promised that they would soon open the gates of the schools to female students. But after more than a year, no decision has been taken in this regard. This edict is issued while about 200,000 of students in the country are girls. In addition, after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, about 40% of private universities in the country have collapsed due to financial problems.



This article explains the status of education under the shadow of the Islamic Emirate, the reasons for the legitimacy of women's education from the perspective of Islam, why are universities closed to female students and its consequences.

## HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER THE SHADOW OF ISLAMIC EMIRATE IN AFGHANISTAN

As members of the Islamic Emirate are educated in religious schools and most of them have access to reading and writing. In spite of that since the beginning of their ruling, their belief in education in modern form, especially girls' education is ambiguous. It is reported that in the first three years of Taliban government in 1999, the rate of female students attending schools decreased to 7%, and during the 5 years of their first ruling period, including higher education, girls were not allowed to study above the sixth grade. They publicly say that they are not against girls' education. But either in the years 1996 to 2001 and now, the gates of universities are closed to girls. With the fall of the Republic of Afghanistan and the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, in entrance (kankor) examination for 2022 (1401) the number of male and female participants decreased to 106 thousands from 180 thousand participants out of which 80 thousands were girls in kankor examination for 2021 (1400). It shows that a decrease of 41% happened in the level of participants in kankor examination after coming Taliban came to power.

According to the latest statistics, the number of students in 40 public universities and 140 private universities of the country reached 500 thousand students, of which nearly 200 thousands are female. If female students are not allowed to attend universities, another 40% reduction in the number of students will occur.

On the other hand, this edict not only leaves the destiny of thousands of female students at different levels of education (bachelor, master and doctorate) in uncertainty, but it caused hundreds of male students and dozens of professors to strike, resign and refrain from attending universities. This decision also justifies the claim that 200 professors quit their jobs according to statistics, and it seems that this type of decisions will lead the educational situation in the country back as it was in the 1990s.

## LEGITIMACY OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAM

Women are integral in human societies who have always been victims of extremism. As previously in 2004, the French government enacted a law that prohibited girls wearing hijab from attending universities but now the Acting Minister of Higher Education of the Islamic Emirate is banning girls from attending universities because of less attention for observing hijab. Why they have banned female students attending universities? the Islamic Emirate has not provided any valid Shariah based evidence that explores this decision is made in consensus with



Islamic Shariah. According to the statements of some officials of the Islamic Emirate, their own understanding and interpreting the Sharia texts can be known as a major factor in preventing female students from studying. As the Acting Minister of Vice and Virtue divided education into religious and modern science and explained that the acquisition of modern education is permissible, while based on the reliable book of Hanafi jurisprudence (Rad al-Mukhtar), those sciences and techniques that are needed in life is obligatory as much as sufficient for society. The majority of jurists also agree on the obligation of modern sciences that contribute to the progress of society apart from meeting the needs.

In addition to this, Islam addresses women as equal to men in various areas of life, such as worship, transactions, possessions, and equality in determining the duty and responsibility of ordering virtues and forbidding vice. For the reform of individual, family and society, Islam has encouraged women to get education and has made no difference between men and women in seeking knowledge.

In the first verses of the holy Quran, Almighty Allah has addressed humanity with the word (Iqra) and has always encouraged humans to teach and learn, read and write, and acquire knowledge. Almighty Allah has given superiority to the people of knowledge over those who are not. On the one hand, Almighty Allah explores knowledge as an instrument of introducing and knowing himself to humanity and on the other hand, His Almighty introduces knowledge as a way of reaching the highest levels of his service with the blessed verse . (إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ . Translation: Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants are those who have knowledge.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) beside stating that the acquisition of knowledge is obligatory for Muslim men and women also considered the scholars to be the inheritors of the prophets. He has sometimes compared the virtue of the scholars to the superiority of the sun in relation to other stars and sometimes to his virtue as compared to common people. Almighty Allah gives good news that angels and people of the heavens and the earth, even ants in their nest and fish in the depths of the sea, send greetings to those who have knowledge and teach people goodness. In all these cases, women are beside men and no exception has been made.

Nowadays, some people are trying to prove the prohibition of women's education by referring to this hadith: " لا تنزلوهن الغرف ولا تعلموهن الكتابة و علموهن المغزل وسورة النور " Translation: Put the women in the lofts and don't teach them to write, but teach them spinning and Surah Noor. Most of the hadith scholars, including Ibn Udi, Ibn Juzi, Ibn Hajar, Muhammad Ibn Tahir Al-Maqdisi, Ibn Al-Adeem, Allama Sheikh Asafi, etc. state that this Hadith is fake and reject attribution of this hadith to the Holy Prophet of Islam. They believe that this hadith is fake, weak, without authenticity, considering some of its narrators, state that attribution of this Hadith to the Prophet of Islam, is not proven and listed it as a fake hadith.



As it is narrated that Shafa Adavi, one of the daughters of the Adi tribe, knew how to write. And she was teaching the girls to write during the time of Arab ignorance. Hazrat Hafsa, may God be pleased with her, she was learning writing from her before marrying the Holy Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace. Even after marriage she asked Shafa to keep teaching till her manuscript (handwriting) got beautiful and she did the same. In fact, learning to read and write was necessary for those who were interested in narrating hadith of the Holy Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace; Women also were part of this practice. There are many narrations explore that Muslim women throughout history were very interested in religious research, especially in the narration of noble hadiths. Allama Ibn Hajar in his book *Fi Tamiyeh al-Sahab* has mentioned the biography of 1543 female Hadith narrators and said about them: "أنهن ثقات عالمات؛" They are knowledgeable and reliable (women) regarding narrating Hadith.

The activity of Muslim women is not only limited to religious education and narration of hadith, but they also had access to poetry, literature, calligraphy, medicine, and nursery. Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqah, may God be pleased with her, was not only superior and skilled in the religious knowledge and narration of hadith, but she also had access to Arab customs and genealogy, medicine and poetry. As Hisham bin Arwah narrates from his father that he said: I have not seen anyone more knowledgeable in jurisprudence, medicine and poetry than Ayesha, when asked him how did she know these all? answered. "When the Holy Prophet, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, got sick, Arab and non-Arab doctors were coming to treat him in this way she was learning ."

In fact, the history of literature is full of Muslim women who were skilled in poetry and literature as Imam Suyuti mentioned 37 women poets in his book (*Nuzha al-Jalsa fi Ash'ar al-Nisa*), and Imam al-Isfahani named in his book (*Al-Aghani*) the women who played important role in political fields and supported their desired parties, especially during the dispute between Hazrat Ali Karamullah Wajeh and Hazrat Muawiya, may God be pleased with him.

Considering the above points, it is clear that there is no Sharia evidence in Islamic guidance that prohibits women from studying and getting education and the history of Islam has not mentioned a single case in which women were prohibited from studying. Islamic jurists have not yet presented any evidence with a valid shariah reference that prohibits the women from education. Rather, Islam has encouraged women to acquire diverse knowledge, useful literature, and different cultures. Maintaining the dignity of women is another duty that must be protected not only during education, but in all areas of life.

## WHY ARE UNIVERSITIES CLOSED TO GIRLS?

The Islamic Emirate has repeatedly assured that there is no opposition from their side to women's education. The Acting Minister of Higher Education after national and international



criticism explained that the gates of the universities are closed because "There were vices in the education system, and the officials promised that these problems would be resolved, but so far they are not addressed, as now we have Islamic governments so it is required that environment also must be Islamic. Further he explains that staying female students in hostels is against Afghan and Islamic values, the non-observance of full hijab by female students and their participation in fields that are not suitable and conducive to their honor and dignity are among the prominent reasons for the implementation of this edict. These issues are pointed out by the acting Minister of Higher Education while at the beginning of the Islamic Emirate, not only the classes of female students were separated from the boys, but their timing was also different. In some universities, girls attended their classes in the morning and boys in the afternoon. And in some other universities their attending days were different. Some private universities, like Mora University only female students are studying from the beginning. Other universities, such as Salam University, Dawat University, etc., also had separate classes for their female students where coeducation didn't exist

On the other hand, credit hours of subject named Islamic culture increased from one credit hour per week to four credit hours in a week, and the girls were dressed in the Islamic hijab, except a few female students who did not wear the full hijab properly due to ignorance or negligence. Also, separate hostels were planned for girls, which did not involve mingling with boys. On the other hand, in the educational centers for girls up to the twelfth grade, not only there was no coeducation system, but their teachers were also female except in few schools.

If curriculum is one of the reasons for preventing girls from studying, it is not expected that the issues in curriculum are to the extent that make gates of universities close to girls. Revising or reforming of curriculum is a long-term process which requires special facilities and dedicated team that cannot be addressed in a few months. Furthermore, since the beginning of coming Islamic Emirate, the Ministry of Higher Education instructed to the head of the curriculum department to start working on revising of curriculum and this process is still ongoing. Finally, the current curriculum is not arranged in such a way that it seems to misdirect and take students out of Islam. If this curriculum is compared with the curriculum of other Islamic countries, it has considerable advantages and more Islamic. The current curriculum in schools and universities, like many other fields, needs to be revised, which is a natural process but it never requires postponement and closure in the educational process.

## **NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES**

The dignity of human beings (man and woman) is one of the basic, fundamental and precious guidelines of Islam, and there is no disagreement among scholars about it. Both men



and women are addressed by Allah through the first message descending (Iqra). Learning knowledge is obligatory on both men and women. The history of Islamic civilization is a proof as it is mentioned shortly hereby.

Depriving women from education and knowledge, even if it is for a short period of time, will push the caravan of life back for a long time and prevent human society from development. This decision, which shocked all intellectuals of Islamic and non-Islamic countries will definitely have severe consequences in and out of the country as some of which will be mentioned:

### **NATIONAL CONSEQUENCES**

- Banning female students from education with different statements of members of Islamic Emirate reflected in medias shows that there is no consensus of opinion among members of Islamic Emirate, this will lead to arising an atmosphere of mistrust, which will become more challenging for the emirate at this period of time.
- This decision against the public opinion and has shocked everyone and has increased the atmosphere of mistrust between Islamic Emirate and nation which led to widen the circle of despair among people.
- This decision increases the possibility of migrations; Many will seek legal and illegal ways to get out of the country to pave the way for the education of their children.
- This decision will cause the positive activities of Islamic Emirate to be ignored in all fields. corruption and defaults of the previous government will be justified in a way.
- This position will not only stop girls from education, but it will destroy the motivation of learning and acquiring knowledge among all classes of boys, parents, professors and teachers who are involved in this process.
- This decision can have worse social effects in the long run as it will lead to an increasing graph of crime, ignorance, illiteracy, superstitions, violations in society .
- This decision will be recorded in history as an action that has no background in the history of Islam and no Shariah, historical or logical justification. And from any point of view, it will arise no any virtue for the human society, especially the Afghan society, and as long as this decision lasts, its negative impacts will increase.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES**

- This decision was viewed with doubt by those Islamic scholars and Islamic academic institutions who had expressed great satisfaction and showed a positive attitude at the beginning of the coming Islamic Emirate. After issuing this edict, they presented recommendations for benevolence to the authorities of the Islamic Emirate. Undoubtedly, if Islamic Emirate keep



standing on their position, that will lead to decreasing the support of Islamic scholars and international Islamic unions with the effect that they have on the support of Muslims around the world. Failure of representatives of the International Union of Muslim Scholar to meet with leader of Islamic Emirate and their announcement about this issue is clear evidence of negatively affecting of their support from Islamic Emirate.

- This decision caused reactions of Islamic countries. They issued declarations requesting Islamic Emirate to step back. Undoubtedly, this decision will have a negative impact on relations and support of Islamic countries. Especially when the Organization of Islamic Conference has announced its meeting regarding this issue.
- This decision can increase political isolation and further delay the process of recognition of Islamic Emirate.
- This decision will impose a negative impact on humanitarian assistance of the international community in Afghanistan. while looking to broken economic situation and cold winter, Afghan people severely need support and cooperation of international community
- This decision opened the gate which is not in good for the future of the country in any way; by prohibiting girls from studying, Islamic Emirate will cause western countries and institutions open their gates to attract Afghan girls, which undoubtedly provided them with the opportunity of "fishing out of muddy water".
- This decision will affect negatively the diplomacy of the Islamic Emirate to establish good relations, increasing assurance of the international community and making opportunities for the recognition of their government.

## CONCLUSION

The facts derived from the Quranic verses and prophetic hadiths, and opinions of reliable scholars of the Islamic Ummah throughout history and looking to the current reality of the Islamic world, does not only allow prohibition of women from education but there are many cases which encourage Muslims to learn and educate without distinguishing sexuality . considering the above issues, the following suggestions are pointed to get out of the current situation:

1. The contemporary scholars of the Islamic Ummah consider the education of women in today's era a serious individual, family and social need. Specially for Afghan society therefore. there should be no delay in opening the gates of education. this issue will expand the circle of problems in our society and will affect deterioration of security, increasing migration, poverty and unemployment that make the current situation worse.



2. The current situation is in conflict with the wishes of the majority of the Afghans therefore majority of people have raised their voices and ask from Taliban to provide a safe environment and education opportunities for women, it is therefore required from the Islamic Emirate to provide a suitable environment and facilities in the light of Sharia rules.
3. Scholars of the country and associations in Islamic countries have also presented their recommendations and have suggested several solutions to this problem therefore it is required from the Islamic Emirate that in the light of these suggestions speed up the reopening process, and not allow such cases to deteriorate situations in the country.
4. The Islamic Emirate should take serious steps to normalize its relations with other countries and try to strengthen the existing relations. the policies and behaviors that weaken relations with international community should be removed from the scope of individual expectations and beliefs. rather than making a decision that adds problem to problems Islamic Emirate should try to make decisions in the light of Islamic values and opinions of reliable scholars, considering the jurisprudence of priorities and the principle of consultation till the current problems and challenges are resolved.
5. In the current situation which the country is in a political isolation and Afghans are suffering from many economic problems; Tolerance and soft behaviors should be considered in their policy making procedure. Decisions and positions should be taken in a more deliberate manner so as not to add to the current problems.
6. In addition to the right of education for women, working opportunities should also be explored in the light of Islamic Sharia, so that a large segment of the society who are employed in government, private and international institutions can continue their work in a safe and secure environment.
7. The economic situation of many families in urban is designed in a way that family members (men and women) cooperating with each other in meeting their economic needs, removing women from the working will cause many problems to the households. Therefore, there is an urgent need to establish working policy in accordance with Islamic Sharia and presence of women in working environment, that is not logical that inappropriate conditions prevent women from working.
8. In order to prevent arising of an atmosphere of pessimism, mistrust and fleeing from the country, the Islamic Emirate in light of Islamic shariah, opinions of Islamic scholars and people's urgent need for education should announce the reopening date of schools and universities. During this period try to make a suitable atmosphere, Organize the teaching curriculum and other related matters.



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#### Contact Us:

Email: [info@csrskabul.com](mailto:info@csrskabul.com) - [csrskabul@gmail.com](mailto:csrskabul@gmail.com)

Website: [www.csrskabul.com](http://www.csrskabul.com) - [www.csrskabul.net](http://www.csrskabul.net)

Phone: +93798649007

