

**United Nations Human Rights Council**  
**61<sup>st</sup> Regular Session**  
**Agenda Item 2**  
**General Debate**

The ICJ concurs with the High Commissioner's concerns about attacks on the rule of law and independent legal professionals, and about the outrageous levels of gender-based violence especially affecting women and girls. In particular, the ICJ wishes to highlight the situations in Afghanistan and Guatemala.

In Afghanistan, the systematic gender-based persecution of women, girls, men, boys and LGBTQI+ persons driven by the Taliban regime continues unabated. Since August 2021, discriminatory decrees and restrictive practices – now entrenched in the Taliban's new Criminal Procedure Code – have reduced women, girls and LGBTQI+ persons to second class status under the law, while penalizing men and boys if they do not comply with the new rules. The ICJ urges Member States to ensure adequate political and financial support to the IIM-A so human rights violations and abuses amounting to crimes under international law are properly investigated, documented and preserved for accountability purposes.

In Guatemala, democratic processes under the rule of law have been frustrated by the corruption and political interference that corruption and political interference undermine key State institutions, particularly the justice system. As concurrent selection processes for the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and the Attorney General proceed in 2026, there is a real risk of co-optation, and illegitimate use of judicial processes.

Human rights defenders, journalists, independent authorities carrying out the administration of justice, and Indigenous authorities continue to face undue criminal liability, including on terrorism charges. While a new policy for the protection of human rights defenders was adopted in 2025, an effective implementation mechanism remains to be created.

International monitoring and effective support for judicial independence and civic space, including by the OHCHR, must continue.

Thank you.

Statement delivered by: Samuel Fiske For more information, contact: Sandra Epal-Ratjen – ICJ International Advocacy Director – Sandra.epal@icj.org
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