

295 Kabul

"This is the end of life for women," declared a 12th-grade student after the Taliban retook the city of Kabul in August 2021, threatening to wipe away a generation of educational freedom. She had hoped to become a surgeon, but Shariah rules now limit girls' education in Afghanistan. Women who, for the last 20 years, influenced education policy, studied medicine, law, and business, and worked as professionals, are now forbidden to even attend the weekly Taliban meetings where such decisions are made.

Though, as of early 2022, details are informal or unavailable, it appears that the Taliban is only permitting girls to return to school for grades 1-6, and then they must be strictly segregated by gender and taught by women. Given Afghanistan's extreme teacher shortage, and the draconian rules for females of all ages, girls in higher grades have little hope of continuing their education. And if they are allowed to return to the classroom, they may be required to wear the niqab, a full body covering that exposes only the eyes.

This figure's garment has been burned, chipped, and blown away. Determined, she carries a book in one hand and a primitive agricultural implement in the other, suggesting the near-futility of her hopes and dreams.