

5th HUMAN RIGHTS FILM SERIES

AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED

Resource Page¹

In the past two decades, the people of Afghanistan have been bombarded with war, death, and destruction. When the Soviets invaded the country in the late 1970s, the country became a battleground for the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. At the time, the US financed a group of Afghan soldiers to battle the Soviet occupation. These soldiers, called *mujahedeens* or “freedom fighters” during the war, created a network of power and influence that they used to govern the country after the Soviets pulled out of Afghanistan in 1989. Many of these mujahedeens formed the Islamic group the Taliban, which eventually gained control of the country in 1992. The Taliban’s fundamentalist vision of Islam included curtailing the rights of women to education, labor, and to most social, economic, and political facets of life. Women were required to cover their bodies from head to toe, and were not allowed to leave their homes without a male chaperon. Thus, women were forced to quit their jobs as doctors or teachers, students were forced to quit their studies, and many women began suffering from severe depression. With the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and the removal of the Taliban from power, the economic, social, and political position for many Afghan women has improved. The country’s new constitution regards men and women as equals, women have been allowed back into the labor market, and the government no longer enforces the restrictive clothing requirements. The fundamentalist restrictions continue to exist, however, in rural areas. Local and international organizations continue to engage rural communities on the repressive effects of these traditional views. *To learn more about the issue and what you can do, please visit the following websites:*

Women’s Edge – www.womensedge.org/

This organization advocates international economic and human right policies that support women worldwide in ending poverty in their lives, communities and nations.

Karamah: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights - www.karamah.org/

The organization is comprised of Muslim women lawyers who dedicate their services to human rights violations against Muslim women in countries such as Afghanistan.

Tahirih Justice Center - www.tahirih.org/

This organization enables women and girls who face gender-based violence to access justice by advocating direct litigation, public policy advocacy, and education to ensure systematic change that will protect women and girls from violence.

Human Rights Watch - www.hrw.org

Human Rights Watch is an organization dedicated to defending human rights worldwide. They have a specific site focusing on human rights violations in Afghanistan.

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan- www.rawa.org

This organization is the oldest political and social organization of Afghan women struggling for peace, freedom, democracy, and women’s rights in the midst of Islamic fundamentalism.

Women’s Alliance for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan- www.wapha.org/peac.html

The organization promotes full restoration of Afghan women and girls’ human rights. It specifically focuses on educating people of the plight of the Afghan people and the restrictions of religious fundamentalism on women and children.

¹ Special thanks to Marie Bertrand for writing this resource page.