

# TIES WITH TALIBAN: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON WHY INDIA SHOULD STOP ENGAGING WITH THE REPRESSIVE REGIME

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In its latest outrageous decision, the Taliban regime has announced [a ban on female students studying in universities](#). The “cabinet” meeting decision is one in a series that wipes out the many societal gains since 2001, the last time the Taliban was in power. These decrees include banning Afghan schoolgirls from studying above grade six, job restrictions and a ban on women at gyms and public parks, with public floggings for those travelling without male relatives chaperoning them. In effect, a regime that is growing crueller and less rational by the day, wants about half the country’s population out of public sight. Making the decision publicly and officially is the regime’s way of thumbing its nose at the international community by reneging on promises made during the Doha talks, including establishing an “inclusive” government. The international community must now review its current policy towards the Taliban 2.0 regime. While no country recognises the Taliban officially, many openly engage with the regime leaders; more than a dozen, including India, have diplomatic missions. The Government has sought to explain its decision to go back into Afghanistan and to even meet with Ministers such as Sirajuddin Haqqani who were responsible for attacks and killings at Indian missions as pragmatic policy to ensure India’s security and the smooth delivery of aid. In fact, these policies have only made it more comfortable for the Taliban to continue to rule, while giving shelter to terrorist organisations, including those that target India. In addition, New Delhi’s decision to cancel all visas to Afghans, hurt female students seeking an education in India the most.

Instead of pleading helplessness, there is much that the global community can do, acknowledging that women’s rights are at the core of the issue with the Taliban, and not just a “desirable” outcome that is optional in Afghanistan’s future. It must curtail engagement with the Taliban, which depends on external assistance to run its government structures. Leading nations should also create platforms outside Afghanistan for non-Taliban Afghan leaders, particularly women who had been elected in the past, to regroup, organise and voice an alternative vision to the dark one the Taliban seems set at thrusting the country into. India, as a regional leader, must review its “hands-off” approach to the people of Afghanistan who have clearly suffered many deprivations in the past year. Lofty words at the United Nations Security Council and other international fora have done very little to alleviate those hardships, and even less to further India’s interests or goodwill amongst a people that it has historically been seen as a good friend to.

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