



WORLD ANTI EXTREMISM  
**NETWORK**  
BUILDING A FREE WORLD

# UNCENSORED WATCH

Defending Freedom, Challenging Extremism and Authoritarianism

Issue 11 | November 2025



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*Defending Freedom, Challenging Extremism and Authoritarianism*

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## **SECTION - 1**

Welcome to Uncensored Watch - A Project of  
World Anti-Extremism Network



**Welcome to Uncensored Watch - A Project of World  
Anti-Extremism Network**

Dear Readers,

At times, it feels like the world is shifting by the hour. New crises emerge, old conflicts resurface, and daily headlines remind us just how fragile freedom can be. Yet amid this uncertainty, there is something that continues to give us hope: people who refuse to give up. People who choose dialogue over division, democracy over despair, and who believe that tomorrow can still be freer than today.

That spirit defined the Toronto Democracy Forum 2025. It was more than a conference; it was a gathering of minds and voices committed to ideas, action, and the future we are shaping together.

In this edition of Uncensored Watch, we share reflections on the challenges shaping our world, highlights from the Forum, and an invitation to continue this conversation with us in Toronto this November. This issue is not just about staying informed; it's about being part of the story. Read, reflect, and carry these conversations forward, because democracy survives only when people like us actively choose to live it.

Until Next Month!

The Uncensored Watch Team

## A Moment Worth Celebrating: Reflections from the Toronto Democracy Forum 2025

The highlight of the year for all of us at WAEN was the Toronto Democracy Forum 2025. Over the span of two days, more than 120 participants from over 20 countries came together in Toronto; scholars, activists, researchers, and students from South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, North America, and beyond. At a time when authoritarianism and religious radicalism are testing societies worldwide, this gathering felt both timely and deeply necessary. What made the Forum truly special was not just its scale, but the spirit behind it. From keynotes and panel discussions to research presentations, group dialogues, cultural performances, and moments of remembrance, every session reflected a shared commitment to dignity, freedom, and civil resistance. The impact of the Forum went beyond conversations. It strengthened global connections, shed light on everyday acts of courage, and reminded us that resistance does not always begin with grand gestures, but with people coming together, listening to one another, and choosing not to look away. We are proud of what was built and equally humbled by the trust, and determination every participant brought with them. We are excited to share the full story of the Toronto Democracy Forum with you. Read the complete report [here](#).



## Brad Lips, CEO of Atlas Network, Named Recipient of the 2025 Linda Whetstone Award for Freedom and Human Rights

The Linda Whetstone Award, an annual award by WAEN presented during the Toronto Democracy Forum, is granted to individuals demonstrating exceptional commitment to human dignity, liberty, and the global effort to confront extremism and authoritarianism. This year, Brad Lips is the recipient of the 2025 award for Freedom and Human Rights.



As CEO of Atlas Network, Brad has strengthened civil society organizations worldwide, supporting partners in environments affected by authoritarian control and extremist ideologies. His writings, including *Liberalism and the Free Society* (2021), provide principled arguments and data for rights-based governance and human dignity, equipping communities to resist coercion and uphold freedoms. He has also served in key global institutions advancing liberty, from Afghanistan to Iran, across Africa, and beyond. WAEN President Professor Ahrar Ramizpoor said: “Brad’s consistent support strengthened freedom movements in ways that truly matter.”



Brad received the award from Jonathan Miller (Board), Ahrar Ramizpoor (President), and Khalid Ramizy (CEO). This recognition is truly well-deserved for his decades of leadership in defending freedom and human rights.





## SECTION - 2

Global Crisis in Focus

## Syria: Fresh Fighting in Manbij Threatens Peace and Civilian Safety

On August 2, 2025, the Syrian Ministry of Defence accused the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) of firing rockets at a military position in the countryside of Manbij, northern Syria. The attack injured four army personnel and three civilians. State media said the army responded with “precise strikes” and was targeting the sources of fire near civilian villages. The SDF denied starting the attack. In their statement, they said they were answering an “unprovoked artillery assault” on civilian-populated areas by factions linked to the Syrian government, with more than ten shells hitting those areas. They did not report any casualties.

This clash comes just months after the SDF signed a [deal in March](#) with Syria’s new interim government led by President [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#) to integrate into state institutions. The SDF has run a semi-autonomous region in northeastern Syria since 2015, and the deal was seen as a major step toward ending years of division. But deep disagreements remain: the SDF wants to join the army as a single bloc, while Damascus insists fighters must join individually.

Both sides say they remain committed to the ceasefire, but incidents like this raise serious doubts. Civilians are already being harmed, and strikes on villages, if confirmed, would be violations of international law.

This matters because the collapse of such political agreements can quickly fuel instability. If there is no transparent investigation and no accountability, mistrust will grow, and extremist groups could exploit the chaos to return. Protecting civilians, upholding justice, and keeping peace efforts alive is the only way to stop Syria from sliding back into full-scale war.



*Photo by Emad El Byed on Unsplash*



*Photo by Ethan Wilkinson on Unsplash*

## UK: Largest Mass Arrest in a Decade Raises Free Speech Concerns

On August 10, London saw its largest number of arrests in a single day in 10 years, as police detained 474 people during a protest in Parliament Square. The demonstration, organised by Defend Our Juries, was held in support of the banned group Palestine Action.

According to the Metropolitan Police, 466 people were arrested for showing support for the group, five for assaults on officers, two for public order offences, and one for a racially aggravated offence. The protest was the first major gathering since the UK government [proscribed Palestine Action in July](#) under the [Terrorism Act 2000](#), making public support or membership punishable by up to 14 years in prison. On this day, hundreds of protesters seated in the square unveiled signs reading “I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action”. Officers then moved through the crowd, arresting participants one by one. An 89-year-old woman was among those detained. Those who gave their details were released on bail with conditions not to attend future Palestine Action protests, while others were taken into custody.

Many protesters avoided speaking to the media, but one, who wished to remain anonymous, told the BBC: “If they ban Palestine Action, what other group is next? Until we’re just no longer allowed to protest anything. That’s the opposite of democracy.”

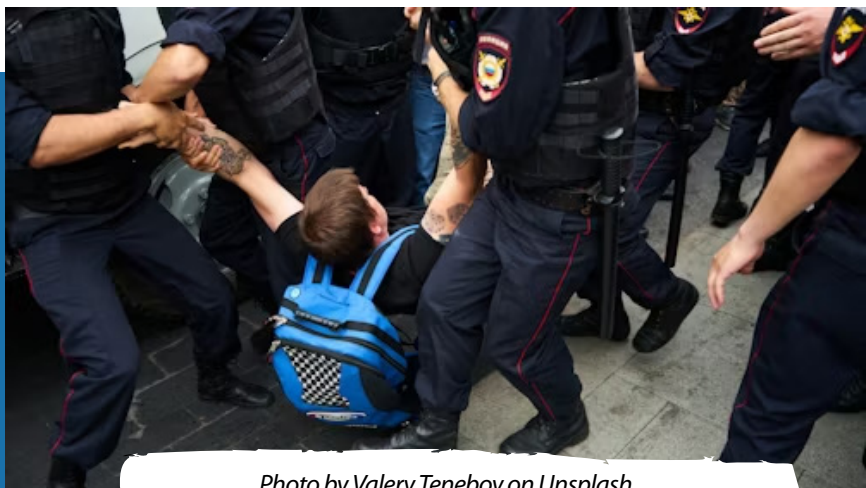
Rights groups like Amnesty International described the mass arrests as “deeply concerning,” emphasizing that peaceful protesters were treated as criminals under terrorism laws originally designed for armed militant groups. Security expert Lizzie Dearden told the BBC the laws were “not designed for a group of this nature or a group of this size.” She explained that when the Terrorism Act was drafted in the late 1990s, it targeted groups like the IRA and al-Qaeda, armed



militant organizations operating mainly abroad. “So the law is being applied in a completely new way,” she said. Before this day’s protest, [more than 200 people](#) had already been arrested across the UK for similar reasons since the ban was introduced.

The use of counter-terrorism legislation against peaceful demonstrators poses a significant threat to fundamental freedoms. When laws designed to target violent militant groups are applied to ordinary citizens engaged in non-violent dissent, the boundary between safeguarding security and restricting free speech becomes dangerously thin. Freedom of expression and the right to protest are essential pillars of any democracy. They allow citizens to hold authorities accountable and to voice opposition without fear of punishment. Criminalizing peaceful acts of solidarity or criticism risks creating a chilling effect, where people remain silent out of fear of prosecution. Such an atmosphere undermines democratic participation and weakens trust in state institutions. Security is undoubtedly a core responsibility of government, but it must be balanced with civil liberties. Overextending counter-terrorism laws into the sphere of protest not only dilutes their original purpose but also erodes the very democratic values they are meant to protect. True democratic resilience lies not in silencing dissent but in protecting space for it, even when the message is uncomfortable for those in power.

## Lebanon Moves to Disarm Hezbollah Amid Growing Security Concerns



*Photo by Valery Teneboy on Unsplash*

Lebanon’s government has announced plans to disarm Hezbollah by the end of 2025, aiming to bring all weapons under state control. This move comes after heavy pressure from the United States and follows a devastating war with Israel that killed more than 4,000 people and forced a ceasefire last November.

Hezbollah, a powerful armed group with deep influence in Lebanon, has long resisted disarmament. Hezbollah’s arms have long been a deeply contentious issue in Lebanon. Past attempts to interfere with its weapons or military infrastructure have sparked [internal conflicts](#) and tensions within the country. This history makes the government’s current push to disarm Hezbollah especially delicate and risky, as it could trigger political unrest or even violence. The group called the government’s decision a “grave sin” and said it would [ignore the plan](#), claiming it serves Israel’s interests. However, unlike in the past, Hezbollah has so far avoided military action in response, possibly because the recent war weakened its forces. This disarmament effort is important because having weapons outside government control fuels conflict and instability, putting civilians at risk and undermining Lebanon’s sovereignty. The government’s challenge is



to balance the need for security with the risk of political crisis or violence if Hezbollah refuses to cooperate.



Iran, [Hezbollah's main backer](#), has expressed support for the group and dismissed the disarmament efforts. But Lebanon's leaders have condemned Iran's interference, emphasizing the country's right to make its own decisions. The situation remains uncertain. The Lebanese government has approved objectives aligned with a US plan to limit weapons to the state, but whether Hezbollah will give up its arms is unclear. Some Lebanese politicians believe the state must have full control over weapons to protect the country and its people.

When armed groups hold on to weapons outside the control of the state, it leaves ordinary people caught between competing powers. Instead of relying on their government for safety, civilians live with uncertainty, never knowing when political tensions could turn into violence. Disarming such groups is not just about collecting weapons; it is about giving citizens the chance to live under one authority that can be held accountable, and restoring a sense of trust that the state alone is responsible for protecting its people. But taking away weapons from a group that has been deeply rooted in society for decades is never simple. Challenging their authority risks stirring anger, dividing communities, and even sparking violence. That's why disarmament is not only a security decision but also a delicate political and social process. External pressure and foreign involvement add another layer of complexity.

This issue matters to anyone who cares about peace, justice, and human rights. Armed groups outside government control often contribute to violence and suffering. Lebanon's effort to disarm Hezbollah, if successful, could help prevent future conflicts and protect civilians. But if it fails, the risks of renewed violence and political instability will grow, threatening the rights and safety of all Lebanese people.

## RSF Attacks Kill 89 in Darfur Amid Worsening Humanitarian Crisis



violence occurred between [11 and 20 August](#) in the besieged provincial capital, el-Fasher, and nearby displacement camps, including Abu Shouk. Among the dead were civilians from the Zaghawa and Berti tribes, and at least 16 appear to have been executed, according to the UN. The attacks are part of a [wider power struggle](#) that has gripped Sudan since April 2023, when army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo turned the country into a battlefield. Tens of thousands have died, millions have been displaced, and some families have been forced to eat grass to survive. RSF attacks have repeatedly targeted civilian areas, including camps that were once home to hundreds of thousands of displaced people. Beyond the immediate loss of life, these assaults highlight a growing pattern of ethnically motivated violence and violations of international law. By striking civilians and essential infrastructure, the RSF is deepening Sudan's humanitarian crisis, while also eroding the protections meant to shield non-combatants in war. The public health situation is dire. Cholera outbreaks have spread across all 18 states, with nearly 49,000 cases and over 1,000 deaths reported this year. Food shortages, malnutrition, and lack of medical access have compounded the suffering, particularly in el-Fasher and the surrounding camps.

The violence in Darfur underscores how prolonged armed conflict can destroy not only human life but also essential services, such as healthcare, food distribution, and sanitation, leaving millions vulnerable to disease, malnutrition, and displacement. Beyond the immediate humanitarian impact, these attacks reflect deeper patterns of authoritarian control and extremism, where armed groups exploit power vacuums to suppress communities and enforce obedience through fear. Civilians are often targeted because of their ethnicity, political affiliation, or perceived loyalty, representing a severe violation of basic freedoms and human rights. The systematic nature of these abuses shows how extremism and authoritarian behavior thrive in conflict zones, further eroding societal structures and the rule of law. Without sustained international attention and coordinated aid, the crisis risks spiraling even further, entrenching cycles of violence, oppression, and deprivation, and leaving ordinary people trapped under regimes that disregard their fundamental rights.

## Sudan Army Accused of Torturing Detainees to Death Amid Civil War

Sudan's ongoing civil conflict has reached a new level of brutality, with reports that the army and security forces are torturing civilians to death in Khartoum. The Emergency Lawyers group, a prominent Sudanese human rights organization, said it has documented hundreds of arrests in the capital since the army recaptured the city from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in March. In the worst cases, detainees were found dead with evidence of severe torture. Many detainees were reportedly taken at random to large detention centers, where they faced inhumane conditions and trials that fell short of basic standards of justice. Survivors and witnesses described arbitrary detention, abuse, and executions, echoing patterns that were common during former president Omar al-Bashir's rule. Both the army and RSF have been implicated in these violations. The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan confirmed in March that both sides have engaged in widespread arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, and ill-treatment of prisoners. The humanitarian impact has been catastrophic: over 12 million people have been displaced, famine has been declared in parts of the country, and the war has triggered a severe cholera outbreak, with nearly 100,000 cases and over 2,400 deaths reported in the past year.

The torture and killings in Khartoum are symptomatic of a broader collapse in governance, human rights protection, and accountability in Sudan. For civilians, the war has meant exposure to arbitrary violence, the breakdown of legal safeguards, and near-total impunity for perpetrators. The use of torture and extrajudicial executions underscores a systemic failure to uphold the most basic human rights, including the right to life, security, and freedom from cruel treatment. The presence of military forces that should protect civilians has

instead contributed to fear, trauma, and social instability. Arbitrary arrests, inhumane detention, and the targeting of vulnerable populations highlight a pattern of authoritarian complacency: state actors consolidating power while neglecting obligations to citizens. Entire communities are deprived of safety, dignity, and meaningful participation in decisions affecting their lives.



*Photo by Moein Rezaalizade on Unsplash*



Addressing this crisis requires urgent action. The Sudanese authorities must investigate and prosecute those responsible for torture and extrajudicial killings. Detention facilities and security forces must be reformed to eliminate abuse, improve accountability, and prioritize civilian protection. International actors, including the UN, the African Union, and donor nations, must move beyond statements, providing humanitarian aid, independent monitoring, and pressure for reforms. Human rights must be central to any ceasefire or peace negotiations, ensuring that civilian protection is a prerequisite, not an afterthought. Without such measures, Sudan's path to peace remains perilous, and its citizens continue to pay the heaviest price.

## Pakistan's Military Operation in Balochistan Highlights Regional Fault Lines

On [August 8, 2025](#), Pakistan's military announced that its forces had killed [33 fighters](#) who attempted to cross from Afghanistan into Balochistan's Zhob district. The operation was described as precise, with weapons and explosives recovered during the clash. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif praised the security forces for their efforts, calling it a successful attempt to foil infiltration. The military also alleged that the fighters were "Indian-sponsored separatists," though no evidence was provided to support the claim. Balochistan has long been a hotspot of violence, where separatist movements and Taliban-linked militancy intersect, making it one of the country's most unstable regions. This incident reflects the layered challenges facing Pakistan and the wider region. At its core, the Baloch conflict is driven by deep grievances over resource distribution, political exclusion, and human rights violations. Extremist groups often exploit these grievances, presenting themselves as defenders of local rights while perpetuating cycles of violence. Addressing only the militant side of the conflict without resolving these underlying causes risks prolonging instability.

The situation also highlights how extremist movements become entangled in regional rivalries. Pakistan's unsubstantiated claims of Indian backing illustrate how proxy politics complicate already fragile situations. The constant blame game between Pakistan and India risks obscuring the local realities of communities in Balochistan, who remain trapped between militant violence on one hand and state repression on the other. Sustainable peace in the region cannot be achieved if these rivalries continue to dominate the narrative. Another critical aspect is the cross-border dimension. Pakistan has repeatedly accused the Taliban government in Afghanistan of turning a blind eye to fighters who find sanctuary

*Photo by Thomas Ashlock on Unsplash*





near the border. Whether or not Kabul is complicit, the reality is that extremist networks operate transnationally, creating challenges that no single country can solve alone. This underscores the importance of regional cooperation on intelligence-sharing, border management, and deradicalization programs, areas often neglected due to political distrust among neighboring states. Finally, the government's decision to suspend mobile internet across parts of Balochistan reveals how counterterrorism measures can slip into authoritarian tendencies. While intended as a security precaution, blanket shutdowns erode civil liberties and fuel public resentment, further alienating communities that already feel marginalized. Heavy-handed approaches often backfire, creating the very conditions that allow extremism to grow.

In short, the events in Zhob are more than just a tactical military success. They expose the ongoing cycle in which extremism, regional rivalries, and authoritarian responses feed into one another, perpetuating instability in Balochistan and across the wider region. Sustainable solutions require not only security measures but also political, social, and economic reforms that address the grievances at the heart of the conflict.

## Censorship in Kashmir: Literature Under Siege

In Indian-administered Kashmir, authorities have [banned 25 books](#) written by well-known authors, journalists, and scholars. The government claims these works promote “violence” and “secessionism,” but critics argue the ban is really about silencing independent voices. Among the banned works are *Colonizing Kashmir* by Hafsa Kanjwal, *A Dismantled State* by Anuradha Bhasin, and writings by Arundhati Roy, AG Noorani, and others. These books explore Kashmir's political history, human rights violations, and the reality of life after the removal of [Ar 370](#) in 2019. The move came alongside police raids on bookstores in Srinagar, where many of the banned titles were seized, even as the government was holding a state-sponsored book festival to promote reading. For many Kashmiris, this feels like an attempt to erase memory and control the narrative, especially since these books represent critical scholarship on rights abuses, political repression, and Kashmir's struggle for self-determination.

*Photo by Gama. Films on Unsplash*



This ban is more than censorship. It is a systematic attempt to control knowledge and memory in a conflict-torn region. Silencing works that document human rights violations and political betrayals is not just about restricting reading; it is about erasing collective memory and reshaping how history is remembered. The timing, alongside a government book festival, highlights the hypocrisy of regimes: promoting literature that aligns with their narrative while criminalizing voices that challenge it. Culture, in this sense, becomes a propaganda tool. Targeting writers, journalists, and scholars also undermines academic freedom and freedom of expression, creating a chilling effect that forces many into self-censorship. Over time, this robs not only Kashmiris but also the global community of truthful, nuanced perspectives on the region. Policies like this can also fuel alienation and radicalization. When peaceful outlets for critique are blocked, frustration often seeks other, more destructive paths. Far from creating stability, censorship risks deepening distrust and reinforcing cycles of conflict. Ultimately, the ban is not about books; it is about monopolizing truth. By deciding what people can or cannot read, the state asserts power over memory and identity. Yet history shows that suppressed voices often find new ways to survive, through oral traditions, hidden archives, or underground networks. The written word may be seized, but the struggle for narrative freedom continues.

## Violence Erupts in Ladakh as Statehood Protests Turn Deadly: A Tragic Blow to Democratic Rights

On [September 24, 2025](#), protests in Ladakh, India, turned violent as people demanding statehood and greater autonomy clashed with the police. The protesters want Ladakh to become a full-fledged state with its own elected government and protection for its tribal lands under India's [Sixth Schedule](#) of the Constitution.

The violence broke out in Leh, the main city of Ladakh, after youth groups called for a shutdown. Protesters set a police and paramilitary vehicle and the office of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on fire. In response, police used tear gas and batons to disperse the crowd, injuring many people. Some of the injured are said to be in critical condition. While officials have not confirmed any deaths, Sonam Wangchuk, a well-known Ladakhi activist who had been on a hunger strike for two weeks, said that three to five people may have been killed by police gunfire. Authorities have since banned gatherings of more than five people in the area to control the situation. The protests are part of a wider movement that began after Ladakh lost its autonomy in 2019,



Photo by Michael Dziedzic on Unsplash

when the Indian government separated it from Jammu and Kashmir and made it a union territory directly controlled by New Delhi. Locals fear this move has left them without a voice in decisions about their land and resources. After hearing about the violence, Wangchuk ended his hunger strike and appealed for calm, saying that violence would only harm their cause and urged the youth to stay peaceful.



*Photo on Unsplash by Ariungoo Batzorig*

The violence in Ladakh, whether by protesters or the authorities, is deeply condemnable. The right to peaceful protest is a fundamental human right guaranteed under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution, which upholds the freedom of speech, expression, and peaceful assembly. When either side resorts to violence, whether it is protesters setting property ablaze or the police using excessive force and gunfire, it undermines the very essence of democracy. The use of force to silence voices seeking representation reflects an authoritarian tendency that goes against India's democratic and constitutional values. The people of Ladakh are not demanding separation; they are asking for their rightful say in decisions that affect their land, culture, and livelihoods, something protected under democratic and human rights frameworks, including Article 21, which ensures the right to life and liberty.

Such violent escalations serve no purpose other than deepening distrust and inflicting pain on both sides. The loss of lives in a struggle for political recognition highlights how state power can easily slip into oppression when dialogue is replaced with force. Violence, regardless of who starts it, only erodes the moral strength of a legitimate cause. The people's right to self-determination within a democratic setup must be respected, but it must also be pursued through peaceful and lawful means. Taking or losing life for a political demand goes against natural and human rights principles, which hold life as sacred and non-negotiable. If India wishes to remain true to its democratic and human rights commitments, it must choose dialogue over suppression and ensure that the people of Ladakh are given both a voice and dignity in how their region is governed.





## Deadly Blasts in Pakistan's Tirah Valley Spark Demands for Truth and Accountability

On September 23, 2025, at least [24 people](#), including women and children, were killed in a series of explosions in the Tirah Valley area of Khyber district, located in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The blasts happened early Monday, and reports about what caused them remain unclear. Local police said that the explosions occurred when bomb-making materials stored at a compound run by the [Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan \(TTP\)](#) accidentally went off, killing both fighters and civilians.

However, opposition politicians and local officials have accused the Pakistani military of carrying out air strikes during a counterterrorism operation in the region. They claim that the attack destroyed homes and killed innocent people. The government and military have not yet released any official statement about the incident. Lawmakers from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, led by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan, strongly condemned the attack, calling it "an assault on unarmed civilians."

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) also expressed deep concern over the loss of civilian lives and called for an immediate and independent investigation. The HRCP reminded the government that protecting the lives of all citizens is a constitutional duty, and urged authorities to hold those responsible accountable and compensate the affected families.





*Photo by Duncan Kidd on Unsplash*

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The tragic incident in Tirah Valley highlights a grave violation of basic human rights, particularly the right to life and security, which are guaranteed under Article 9 of Pakistan's Constitution and Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When civilians, including women and children, lose their lives in military or militant actions, it reflects a severe breakdown of accountability and state responsibility. Whether the explosions were caused by militants' explosives or by military air strikes, the lack of transparency only deepens mistrust between the people and the authorities. Every citizen has the right to know the truth, and the state has a duty to ensure justice through an impartial and transparent investigation.

If it is proven that the security forces, who are meant to protect citizens, were involved in operations that caused civilian deaths, it would represent not only a breach of trust but also a violation of international humanitarian law, which forbids attacks on non-combatants. In such cases, accountability must not be avoided under the pretext of national security. Justice demands that those responsible, regardless of rank or authority, be held answerable. True security cannot exist where the protectors themselves become the source of fear. Ensuring transparency, compensating affected families, and reaffirming the sanctity of civilian life are essential steps toward rebuilding public confidence and upholding Pakistan's commitment to human rights and democratic accountability.

## Taliban Bans Books by Female Authors, Deepening Afghanistan's Educational and Human Rights Crisis

On September 19, 2025, Afghanistan's [Taliban-run government announced](#) plans to remove all books written by women from university curricula. The move is part of a new educational decree banning books that are considered "against Islamic Sharia" or "in conflict with Taliban policies." A member of the Taliban's textbook review committee confirmed to BBC Afghan that at least 679 books have been blacklisted, covering topics such as human rights, women's rights, constitutional law, Western political thought, and Islamic political movements.

The directive was signed by Ziaur Rahman Aryoubi, the Taliban's deputy higher education minister, and sent to universities last month. It instructs institutions to replace the banned books with course materials that "[do not conflict with Islam](#)." This decision follows a broader crackdown on education under Taliban rule since they returned to power in August 2021. The group has already [banned girls](#) from studying beyond grade six, fired professors critical of their ideology, and removed 18 academic subjects, including six related to women's studies. Another 201 courses are currently under review. The ban has also extended to books by Iranian authors and publishers, reportedly to prevent "[Iranian influence](#)" in Afghanistan's education system. Critics say this large-scale censorship will cripple the already fragile higher education sector, as universities struggle to replace hundreds of key texts. Former Deputy Minister of Justice Zakia Adeli, whose own book *Political Terminology and International Relations* was banned, condemned the move, saying it reflects the Taliban's "misogynistic mindset" and their ongoing efforts to erase women's voices from public life.

This decision represents a stark example of authoritarianism and systematic discrimination, directly violating basic human rights, particularly the right to education, freedom of thought, and gender equality. By erasing female authors from academic spaces, the Taliban is not only silencing women's intellectual contributions but also attempting to control how the next generation thinks and learns. This suppression stands in direct violation of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to education, and Article 19, which protects freedom of expression and access to information. Such actions are characteristic of authoritarian regimes, where education becomes a tool of control rather than enlightenment. The Taliban's claim that these bans are in line with Islamic Sharia contradicts centuries of Islamic tradition that values scholarship by both men and women. Historically, Islam has celebrated female scholars and educators. The continued exclusion of women from education and academia not only isolates Afghanistan from the global community but also deepens the country's social and intellectual decline. What is urgently needed is international pressure and collective advocacy to protect the rights of Afghan women and preserve educational freedom. A nation cannot progress when half its population is silenced, and knowledge itself is censored.





Photo by Gabriela on Unsplash

## Taliban Imposes Nationwide Internet Blackout, Deepening Afghanistan's Digital Isolation and Human Rights Crisis

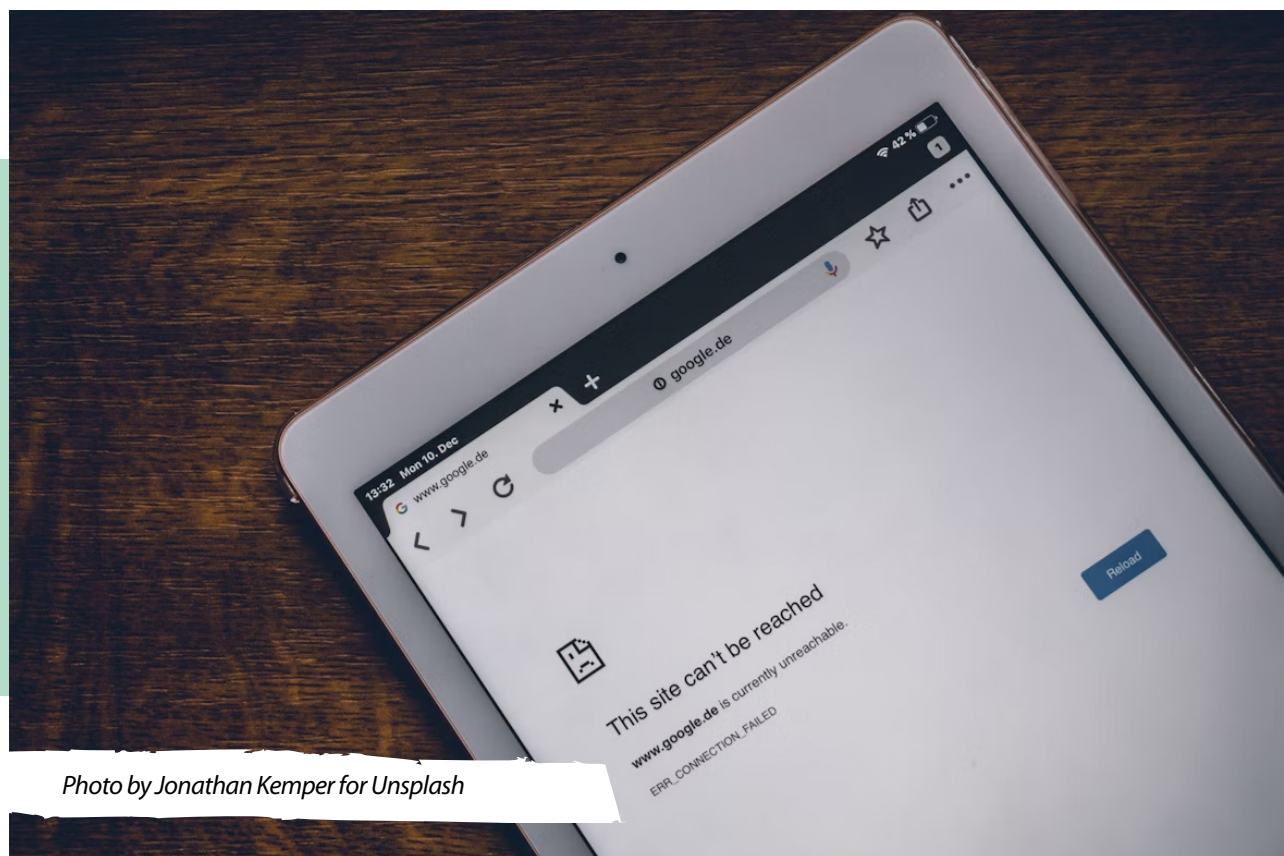
Another disturbing act in the wake of Taliban authoritarianism is their recent [nationwide internet shutdown](#) across Afghanistan. After banning books authored by women, the Taliban have now cut off the very tool that connected Afghans, especially women and girls, to education, work, and the outside world. Starting in mid-September 2025, the Taliban first blocked fiber optic internet in northern provinces, then extended the shutdown to Kabul, and finally the entire country by the end of the month. Officials claimed the ban was imposed to prevent "[immoral behavior](#)," but in reality, it has silenced millions and deepened the country's isolation.

The shutdown has paralyzed education, healthcare, business, and media across Afghanistan. [Flights](#) were canceled, humanitarian operations were disrupted, and journalists were unable to communicate or report on the situation. For many Afghan women and girls, the internet has become their only means of [attending online classes](#), running small businesses, or connecting with the world. Now, even that fragile space of freedom is gone. Human Rights Watch reported that women students who had been taking virtual university courses could no longer attend, and online educators lost contact with most of their students.

The Taliban's justification of "immorality" reflects a deeper pattern of using religion and morality as tools to suppress women and control society. Just as they previously closed girls' schools,

banned women from working in NGOs, and prohibited female authors' books, the internet shutdown extends that repression into the digital realm. For the Taliban, the internet represents a threat; it gives Afghan citizens a voice, exposes their abuses, and connects women to a global community of support.

The Taliban's internet blackout is not just a technical restriction; it is a violation of basic human rights. Access to information, education, and communication are essential components of freedom and dignity. Cutting off the internet undermines the right to education, the right to work, and the right to freedom of expression, all protected under international human rights law. The shutdown has also crippled humanitarian coordination and left millions of Afghans in a communication vacuum, worsening an already severe humanitarian crisis. This act demonstrates how authoritarian regimes weaponize technology to tighten control over society. The Taliban's actions reveal not a moral agenda, but a deliberate attempt to silence resistance, especially from women. The global community must treat this as a systematic attack on human rights and demand immediate restoration of internet access. International pressure, digital support initiatives, and alternative communication channels are essential to help Afghans stay connected and continue resisting this digital isolation. If the Taliban are allowed to continue unchecked, Afghanistan risks sinking further into an era where truth, education, and even communication become privileges instead of rights.



*Photo by Jonathan Kemper for Unsplash*

## Nepal's Gen Z Uprising: Youth-Led Protests Challenge Corruption, Censorship, and Authoritarian Governance

The “Gen Z” protests erupted in Nepal on September 8–9, 2025, led predominantly by [young people and students](#) who are part of Generation Z, a demographic symbolizing a more connected, socially aware, and digitally active population. The movement was initially triggered by anger over corruption, economic inequality, and the government’s ban on 26 social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X. The ban, announced in early September 2025, was justified by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli’s [government as an attempt to curb](#) “misinformation, fraud, and hate speech.” However, it was widely viewed as an authoritarian move to silence dissent and restrict the youth’s voice. The protest was organized by a non-profit group called Hami Nepal (“We are Nepal”), which secured permission for a peaceful demonstration in Kathmandu’s Maitighar area on September 8, 2025. Thousands of young protesters, including high school and university students, participated.

What began as a peaceful demonstration quickly escalated into one of Nepal’s deadliest political confrontations in decades. On September 9, 2025, protesters attempted to storm the Parliament complex in New Baneshwor, Kathmandu, as frustration grew against systemic corruption and the opulent lifestyles of Nepal’s political elites and their families, often referred to by protesters as [“nepo kids”](#) (a term highlighting nepotism and inherited privilege). Security forces responded with live ammunition, rubber bullets, tear gas, and water cannons, resulting in 19 deaths (17 in Kathmandu and 2 in Itahari) and hundreds of injuries, with estimates ranging from 100 to 400. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) condemned the “unnecessary and disproportionate use of force”, calling for a prompt and transparent investigation into the killings. In the aftermath, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli expressed sorrow over the deaths and announced the formation of an investigation panel. However, public anger intensified.



*Photo by Jonathan Kemper for Unsplash*



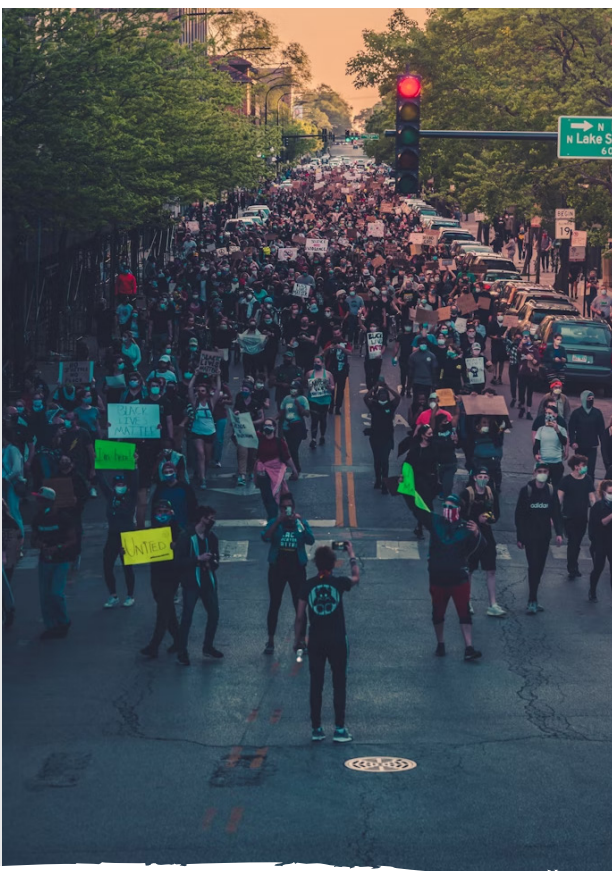
By the evening of September 9, Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak resigned, taking moral responsibility for the violence. The following day, September 10, 2025, [Prime Minister Oli himself resigned](#) amid mounting pressure and ongoing street protests.

Despite the government's resignation and the lifting of the social media ban, protesters continued to demand: Mass resignations of parliamentarians, a full investigation into the killings, the dissolution of Parliament, and new national elections. Protesters set fire to the Parliament complex, Singha Durbar government offices, and homes of top politicians. Several ministers had to be airlifted from besieged residences, and media outlets, including the Kantipur Media Group, also suffered attacks amid the chaos.

The protests earned the title "Gen Z movement" because of the dominant participation of Nepal's younger generation, born after 1997. This group, educated, digitally savvy, and globally connected, used social media to mobilize, organize protests, and expose corruption and inequality in real time. For Gen Z, the social media ban was not merely about online platforms; it represented a broader suppression of free expression and democratic rights. Their movement symbolizes youth frustration with entrenched political elites, corruption, and lack of opportunities in a country where youth unemployment and emigration remain high. It was the largest youth-led political uprising since the abolition of the monarchy in 2008. It reflected deep-rooted anger over corruption, economic disparity, and elite privilege. It exposed authoritarian tendencies within the government, including attempts to control information and silence dissent. It signaled a new political consciousness among Nepal's younger population, demanding accountability, transparency, and equality. In broader terms, the protests

highlighted how digital repression can spark physical resistance, turning a policy on social media control into a nationwide movement for systemic reform.

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of the monarchy in 2008. It reflected deep-rooted anger over corruption, economic disparity, and elite privilege. It exposed authoritarian tendencies within the government, including attempts to control information and silence dissent. It signaled a new political consciousness among Nepal's younger population, demanding accountability, transparency, and equality. In broader terms, the protests highlighted how digital repression can spark physical resistance, turning a policy on social media control into a nationwide movement for systemic reform. The protests peaked between September 8–10, 2025. Although the government lifted the social media ban on September 10 and the prime minister resigned the same day, the unrest continued sporadically in several cities. By mid-September 2025, a relative calm returned after the army was deployed, curfews were enforced, and dialogue was initiated between protest leaders and interim authorities. However, the movement did not officially “end”; it transitioned into a long-term call for political reform. Organizers like Sudan Gurung and Anil Baniya declared that the fight would continue until the parliament was dissolved. The “Gen Z” protests in Nepal underscored a growing crisis of governance and accountability in the country. The government’s decision to ban social media — a primary platform for civic participation and expression — reflected a deep mistrust between the state and its citizens, especially the youth. By restricting digital freedom instead of addressing public grievances, the state demonstrated a failure of democratic governance and a tendency toward authoritarian control.

The violent response to peaceful demonstrations revealed the absence of institutional transparency, civilian oversight, and respect for fundamental rights. The use of force against unarmed protesters contradicted Nepal’s constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and access to information, all cornerstones of good governance. For Nepal to rebuild public trust, meaningful governance reforms are essential. This includes ensuring accountable leadership, independent investigations into state violence, and stronger safeguards for civil liberties. The government must also create mechanisms that engage youth in policymaking, as they represent both the largest demographic and the most politically disillusioned group. Ultimately, the Gen Z movement was not only a protest against a social media ban; it was a demand for a new political culture rooted in transparency, meritocracy, and inclusive governance. Nepal’s future stability will depend on whether its leaders recognize this moment as a call for genuine reform rather than a temporary political crisis, and new elections are held.

## Institutionalized Neglect: Female Prisoners' Rights Violated in Iran

Between September 16 and 25, three women, Soudabeh Asadi, Jamile Azizi, and political prisoner Somayeh Rashidi, passed away due to denial of medical treatment in Tehran's women's prison, Qarchak, infamous for its dreadful conditions. [According to Human Rights Watch](#), these incidents shed light on Iran's continued violation of prisoners' rights to life and its systemic use of medical negligence as a tool of repression and torture. Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at HRW, described the prisons in Iran, especially Qarchak, as a place of "torment and death".

Shahre-e-Rey prison facility, commonly known as Qarchak, is disreputed for its unhygienic conditions, extreme overcongestion, and lack of proper medical treatment. The severity of its situation is often reflected in hunger strikes demonstrated by prisoners. Among those affected was Rashida, who had been imprisoned for writing slogans for a protest in Tehran and later was declared dead due to delayed hospitalisation, as confirmed by hospital reports.

Her death was not an isolated event; it followed the demise of two other female prisoners, Asadi and Azizi, both victims of the prison's clinic's negligence. Despite repeatedly reporting intense chest pain, Azizi was deliberately denied relocation to an external hospital, eventually meeting her fate with a heart attack. These three deaths mark a recent development in the prolonged, institutionalised policy of denying basic healthcare to female prisoners as a means to stifle dissent and inflict punishment.

A report published in April 2022 by Amnesty International documented the deaths of both male and female prisoners across 30 prisons in Iran since 2010, citing the denial of adequate health care as the primary cause. Many incidents involving prisoners from underrepresented communities go unreported, while the evident fear of retaliation by authorities prevents families from seeking justice for their loved ones in prison.

On October 9, women prisoners were transferred to Evin prison from Qarchak, which human rights groups have described as being in deplorable condition due to a lack of basic amenities after extensive destruction caused by Israeli airstrikes on June 23. While other prisoners have been moved to Evin, Akbari Monfared, who has been imprisoned for 15 years, continues to be held in Qarchak in a deliberate effort to punish her, on allegations of "[enmity against God](#)".

International law requires states to ensure unbiased and transparent investigations into unlawful deaths in custody. However, the Iranian government has long acted without accountability, failing to carry out investigations into such cases. Moreover, in several instances, they have refused involvement in deliberately withholding access to proper medical care or even blamed the deaths on suicide or abuse of substances.





*Photo by Amir Arabshahi on Unsplash*

Under the Mandela rule, it is the responsibility of the state to provide adequate medical care to all prisoners. However, the plight of these female prisoners reveals that Iran is not only stripping them of their basic human rights but also contributing to their untimely deaths. This has become a calculated tool of repression used to silence dissenting voices, particularly women.

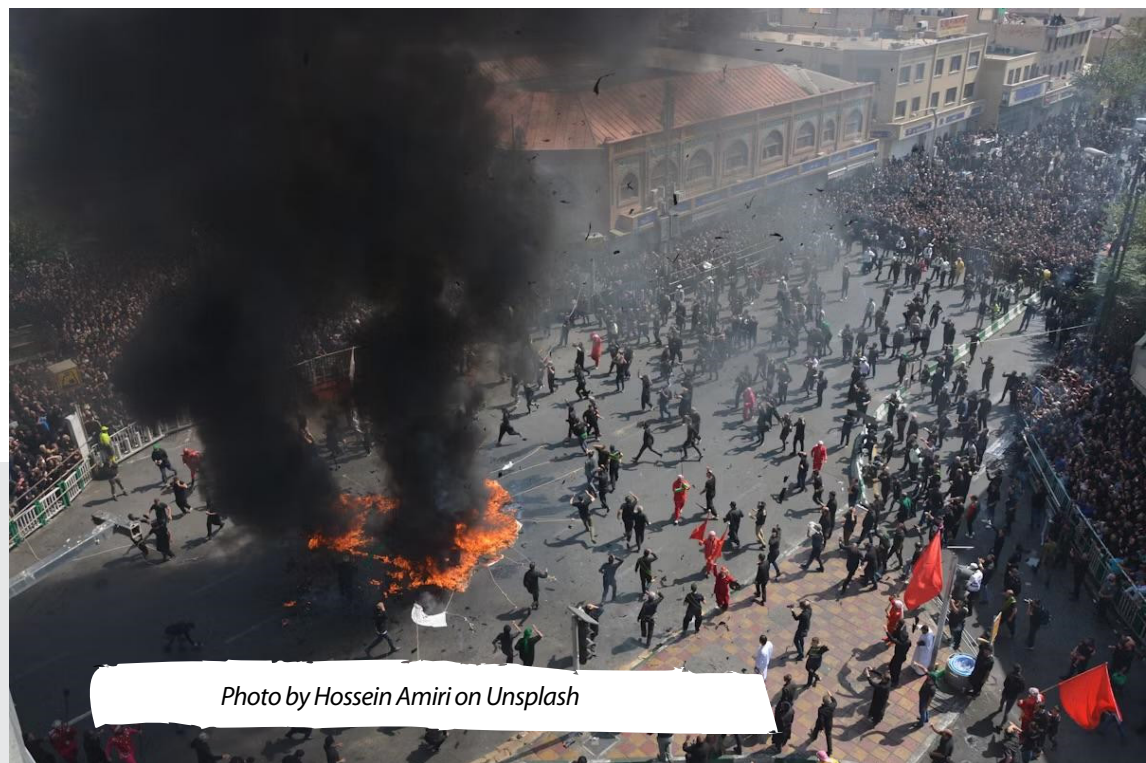
Prisoners, despite their convictions, remain human beings and should not be subjected to such inhumane treatment. This institutional practice of medical neglect as a form of punishment goes to show how religious extremism and political control have overshadowed compassion to the point of blatantly disregarding the sanctity of human life. Furthermore, such practices risk reinforcing negative perceptions internationally and could inadvertently fuel prejudice against Muslims. The international community must therefore engage Iran in sustained diplomatic dialogue and pressure to uphold its human rights obligations and ensure all prisoners are treated with the dignity and care they deserve.

## Youth-Led Protests and State Response in Morocco: Demands for Equity, Accountability, and Reform

Youth-led protests in Morocco have been met with resistance by the government, leading to deaths and widespread arrests, reported by Human Rights Watch. The protests took place on September 27, 2025, by GenZ 212, a youth movement taking to the streets of Morocco to increase the government expenditure on education, healthcare, and to put an end to corruption. It was organised using platforms, including [Instagram, TikTok, and Discord](#).

The police retaliated with lethal force, resulting in the deaths of three people, leaving dozens injured. Approximately 1,000 protesters were arrested, with criminal cases filed against 270, including 39 children. Some remain detained, and courts have issued prison sentences and fines. Human Rights Watch verified two videos posted on social media, showing security forces vans driving into protesters on the night of September 30, in Oujda, including one case in which a [man was smashed into a wall](#) and then drove away. The lethal force against the protesters was justified by the government, claiming that the demonstrators had used stones and knives.

Growing discontent over the inadequate health care system, exacerbated by recent deaths of pregnant women in an Agadir hospital, has prompted protests. This frustration has intensified as the government gears up to expend around US\$5 billion into preparations for the 2025 Africa



*Photo by Hossein Amiri on Unsplash*

Cup of Nations and the 2030 FIFA World Cup, prompting slogans such as “No World Cup, [health comes first](#)” and “We want hospitals, not football stadiums” were chanted during the demonstrations.

The GenZ212 movement, echoing similar youth-led protests in countries such as Madagascar, Indonesia, and Kenya, reflects deep-rooted grievances over high unemployment, poor-quality public education, limited health services, and a fragile social safety net.

In 2022, Morocco spent only 2.3 percent of its GDP on healthcare, less than half the World Health Organisation’s recommended minimum of 5 percent. While the educational expenditure reached the recommended target in 2023, still less than 20 percent of adolescents achieved the minimum math and reading skills

In a speech, Morocco’s King emphasized employment opportunities and improvements in health and education as national priorities but made no mention of the protests or how the government intended to address the concerns raised. Human Rights Watch, however, emphasized the need for Morocco to adopt a rights-based approach that ensures fair distribution of resources and guarantees access to essential services such as health care, education, and social protection, along with decent wages for workers. These principles align with Morocco’s 2011 constitution, which upholds citizens’ rights to health, education, housing, and employment. The organization also pointed to international human rights obligations that require governments to protect freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. It further recalled United Nations standards, which stress that law enforcement must prioritize nonviolent methods and use force only when strictly necessary to protect life.

According to Salah, associate Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, “young people in Morocco are making very clear-cut demands for better health care, better education, and an [end to corruption](#).” Her statement draws attention to the contradiction between Morocco’s overspending on sports infrastructure and its chronic neglect of public welfare. This contrast reflects a broader pattern of governance that prioritizes international visibility over domestic equity. The protests, therefore, can be interpreted as a demand for genuine social reform and accountability rather than isolated expressions of discontent. Suppressing such calls through repression or crackdown not only undermines the right to peaceful dissent but also weakens the broader principle of freedom of expression that is essential for a just and democratic society.



## After the 27th Amendment, Who Really Runs Pakistan?

*Photo by Amir Arabshahi on Unsplash*



On [November 13<sup>th</sup>](#), Pakistan enacted its 27th Constitutional Amendment, a reform that fundamentally reshaped the nation's military command and judicial system, marking one of the most consequential shifts in the country's constitutional history. The cabinet approved it on 8 November, it was introduced in the Senate on 10 November, and the National Assembly ratified it with a two-thirds majority on [12 November](#), despite loud protests from opposition groups aligned with Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), the party of imprisoned former prime minister Imran Khan.

At the core of the amendment was a dramatic restructuring of military authority. It created the new constitutional post of Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), a role assumed by the sitting army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir. This move consolidated strategic command over the army, navy, and air force under one office, while abolishing the former role of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. The reforms granted five-star generals, a rank held only by Asim Munir, lifetime immunity from criminal prosecution and permanent retention of rank and privileges. Furthermore, the CDF's removal was made exceptionally difficult, requiring a two-thirds parliamentary vote, a higher threshold than that needed to remove an elected prime minister. These changes formalized the army chief's supremacy, shielding the military's top echelon from accountability and cementing a "hybrid" governance model where uniformed authority outweighed democratic institutions.

*Photo by Wesley Tingey on Unsplash*

The amendment also brought a profound transformation in the judiciary. It established a Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), empowered to handle constitutional disputes and override the Supreme Court's jurisdiction in such matters. The composition of this new court was initially determined by the president on the prime minister's advice, with future appointments controlled by a commission where judges were in a minority. Concurrently, the Supreme Court was reduced primarily to an appellate body, and high court judges could be transferred without their consent. These provisions triggered rare public dissent from sitting Supreme Court justices; two senior judges resigned in protest, condemning the amendment as a "grave assault" on constitutional democracy. Legal fraternities and human rights commissions echoed these concerns, viewing the changes as a political maneuver to subordinate the judiciary to executive and legislative control.

The government had defended the reforms as necessary for modernization, arguing that a permanent constitutional court would streamline litigation and that unified military command would clarify oversight. However, constitutional lawyers, civil society, and the opposition contended the true effect was to insulate the ruling structure from judicial scrutiny, particularly during a period of intense political tension and cases involving the opposition PTI party.

While the international reaction remained largely muted, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights did criticize the amendment for subjugating the judiciary and undermining accountability, a charge Pakistan dismissed. Domestically, though protests were initially contained, the move risked fuelling deeper public disquiet and potentially converging with violent insurgencies in Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Fears also persisted that a future amendment could alter the federal revenue-sharing structure, further destabilizing smaller provinces.

The 27th Amendment pushes Pakistan further down an authoritarian path by placing unprecedented power in the hands of the military and weakening the courts meant to keep that power in check. With the army chief now protected and strengthened in ways no elected leader is, ordinary citizens are left with fewer democratic safeguards. It signals a future where decisions are made by a small circle of powerful actors, while the public's voice matters less and less.

## Guinea-Bissau Military Coup: Power Grab Amid Election Chaos Sparks International Condemnation

Guinea-Bissau's latest coup unfolded against a backdrop of deep political fragility, contested elections, and long-standing tensions between civilian leaders and the military. The presidential election had already turned volatile when both incumbent [Umaro Sissoco Embalo](#) and his rival Fernando Dias declared victory before the results were released, fuelling suspicion that the presidency was attempting to influence or delay the count. The military's swift intervention, followed by the appointment of Embalo loyalist Ilidio Vieira Te as prime minister, has raised widespread doubts about whether this was a genuine coup against corruption or a carefully managed "ceremonial coup" designed to preserve Embalo's influence behind the scenes. Ordinary citizens, accustomed to decades of instability, have responded with quiet resignation, prioritizing daily survival over political mobilization as security forces detain opposition figures and restrict media freedom. International bodies, including the African Union, ECOWAS, the UN and the EU, have condemned the takeover, isolating the country diplomatically and calling for a rapid return to constitutional rule. In the short term, Guinea-Bissau faces heightened

uncertainty, weakened institutions and the risk of further authoritarian consolidation; in the long term, without meaningful reforms, the country is likely to remain trapped in a recurring cycle of elite power struggles, military interference and fragile democratic transitions.

The coup in Guinea-Bissau poses a direct threat to democratic governance and may mark a shift toward authoritarianism. By seizing power during a contested election and appointing loyalists to key positions, the military bypassed constitutional norms and undermined the legitimacy of electoral processes. Arbitrary detentions of opposition figures, intimidation of media, and centralization of authority suggest a consolidation of power that weakens institutional checks and suppresses political competition. Even if framed as a stabilizing measure, the actions signal a move toward personalized, unchecked rule, increasing the risk of a military-backed authoritarian regime where dissent is silenced and democratic norms are eroded

## Taliban's Burqa Mandate in Herat: Oppression, Resistance, and the Fight for Women's Rights

In Herat, Afghanistan, the Taliban have imposed a [strict rule](#) requiring women, including doctors, patients, and healthcare workers, to wear a full-body burqa to enter hospitals and government offices. On November 10, 2025, female surgeon Shabnam Fazli was [detained](#) for several hours for not wearing a burqa. The policy has led to a sharp decline in hospital admissions, with urgent cases dropping by [28%](#) according to Doctors Without Borders. The burqa mandate has also extended to female teachers in primary schools.

In response, Afghan women and activists, both inside the country and abroad, have protested by burning burqas and publicly voicing their [demands for freedom](#). These measures reflect the Taliban's broader strategy to control women's bodies, limit their visibility in public life, and enforce strict gender segregation. Past policies, including the 2024 morality law and requirements for women to be accompanied by male guardians, show a consistent effort to isolate and marginalize women.

The situation in Herat highlights how control over women's bodies becomes a tool to enforce wider social and political power. Restricting women's choices not only undermines their dignity but also isolates them from essential services and opportunities, deepening inequality and vulnerability. Despite these oppressive measures, Afghan women's resistance reflects extraordinary courage and resilience. Their protests, symbolic acts, and defiant voices show that even in the face of systemic oppression, the human desire for freedom cannot be erased. These acts are more than resistance, they are a claim to basic humanity and a demand for recognition and dignity.

The international community's role is crucial. Supporting Afghan women is not just about politics; it is about affirming human rights, justice, and the fundamental principle that no one should live in fear for asserting their autonomy. Without tangible support and accountability measures, the cycle of marginalization and invisibility is likely to continue, eroding hope and opportunity for generations of women.





Photo by Amir Arabshahi on Unsplash

## Death in Custody: Germany's Deportation Policy Under Scrutiny as Tajik Rights Abuses Persist

A 29-year-old Tajik man, Saidazam Rahmonov, who had been living in Germany since 2019, [died in prison](#) in Tajikistan under suspicious circumstances. He had traveled to Tajikistan in June 2025 to renew documents for his German visa. While Tajik authorities claimed he committed suicide, his family reported signs of torture and beatings on his body. Rahmonov's death is part of a broader pattern of human rights abuses against Tajiks who return or are deported from Germany, including activists like Abdullohi Shamsiddin and Dilmurod Ergashev, who have received long prison sentences after deportation. Germany's deportations, sometimes relying solely on assurances from Tajikistan about human rights protections, are in tension with international law, which prohibits sending individuals to countries where they face the risk of torture. Rahmonov's case has sparked calls for Germany to reassess its legal and diplomatic approach to [Tajikistan](#). Rahmonov's death shines a harsh light on the human cost of authoritarianism and diplomatic shortcuts. When governments prioritize bureaucratic expedience over human rights, real lives are at stake. In this case, a young man who had built a life in Germany lost his life, possibly to torture, while authorities in both countries treated him as a case number rather than a human being. It underscores how vulnerable individuals become when caught between the rigid machinery of authoritarian states and the procedural decisions of foreign governments. The broader pattern of deportations and imprisonment reveals a disturbing willingness to compromise human dignity for convenience or political alignment. Activists returning to Tajikistan, or deported from Germany, face arbitrary detention, harsh prison conditions, and torture. Germany's reliance on the Tajik government's assurances illustrates a failure to critically assess the real risks these individuals face, raising serious ethical and legal questions. This situation is a wake-up call about the responsibility of governments to protect human rights, even when dealing with authoritarian regimes. Rahmonov's death should push Germany and other countries to reconsider policies that expose people to violence and persecution, and to ensure that international law is not sidelined for the sake of expedience. Beyond legal obligations, it is about valuing human life and the basic right to live free from fear and harm.



Photo by Jason Leung on Unsplash



## UAE Political Prisoner Dies After Years of Torture and Arbitrary Detention

Ali Abdullah Fath Ali al-Khaja, a 59-year-old political prisoner in the [United Arab Emirates](#), died on November 19, 2025, after spending over 13 years in imprisonment marked by alleged torture, medical neglect, and solitary confinement. He had been arrested in August 2012 during a crackdown on political dissent and was sentenced to 10 years in prison in an unfair mass trial of political dissidents known as the ["UAE94."](#) Despite completing his sentence in 2022, authorities continued to detain him under vague counterterrorism laws. Al-Khaja was reportedly not informed of his father's death until 10 days after it occurred, and no independent autopsy has been conducted following his own death. Human rights groups have called for a transparent investigation and accountability for his prolonged mistreatment.

Ali al-Khaja's death is a stark reminder of how unchecked state power can destroy lives. Thirteen years of imprisonment, prolonged isolation, and torture stripped him not only of freedom but of dignity, safety, and family connections. Being denied even basic information about his father's death highlights the dehumanizing nature of arbitrary detention. His case illustrates how legal systems can be manipulated to silence dissent, turning laws meant to protect society into tools of oppression.

This tragedy also reflects a broader pattern of repression in the UAE, where political prisoners and dissenters face unfair trials, indefinite detention, and systemic abuse. The use of vaguely defined counterterrorism laws to extend imprisonment after sentences end creates a climate of fear and insecurity. For the international community, al-Khaja's death underscores the urgent need for accountability, independent investigations, and protection for remaining prisoners of conscience.

Most importantly, al-Khaja's story is about human suffering and resilience. Behind the statistics and laws are people whose basic rights are ignored, whose voices are silenced, and whose families are left in pain. His death calls on governments, human rights organizations, and global citizens to demand justice, not just for him, but for all those still imprisoned under similar conditions.



*Photo by Harry Shelton on Unsplash*





## **SECTION - 3**

Multimedia Update: Voices Against Authoritarianism

## Toronto Democracy Forum 2025 | Toronto Democracy Forum

The world is in need of healing, and it begins with defending freedom. This November 16 - 17, we will gather in Toronto to explore how civil resistance can stand firm against authoritarianism and religious radicalism. From keynote speeches to powerful breakout sessions, we'll come together to share ideas, build partnerships, and strengthen the global defense of freedom and human rights.

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### Toronto Democracy Forum 2025

*Healing the World by Defending Freedom &  
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## Write-ups by International Human Rights Certificate Program Participants

We are also pleased to announce the publication of write-ups by the International Human Rights Certificate program graduates, highlighting their perspectives on various human rights violations and authoritarianism in their regions.

### The Deterioration of Human Rights in Shifting Global Power by Sowieba Abedi

What happens to human rights when global powers retreat from international responsibility? Can institutions like the United Nations still ensure justice when authoritarianism rises and populism reshapes democracies? As the world becomes increasingly multipolar, are human rights becoming the casualty of geopolitics?

These are not just rhetorical questions; they reflect the urgent dilemmas we face in today's global order.



You can explore the answers and a critical analysis of these questions in a newly published [write-up by Sowieba Abedi](#), a graduate of the International Human Rights Certificate Program, now available on our website.



# Scholarly Podcast: New Episode is Live

## Tech in Authoritarian Regimes

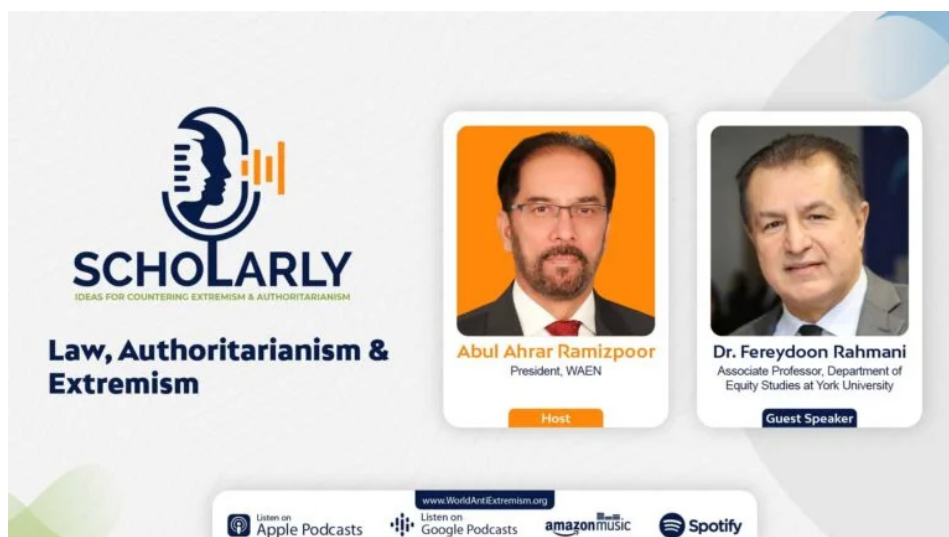
Authoritarian regimes are no longer relying only on force; they are weaponizing technology to control what people see, hear, and even think. From censorship and firewalls to sophisticated propaganda, the digital space has become a battlefield where power is contested. Technology companies stand at a crossroads, balancing profit and politics, while civil society struggles to preserve democratic freedoms. But can authoritarian control truly dominate a world that is more connected than ever? What role should tech companies play when human rights are at stake? And is civil society strong enough to resist the growing tide of digital repression? These are the questions explored in the latest episode of Scholarly Podcast with Kyle Matthews, Executive Director of the Montreal Institute for Global Security (MIGS), in a thought-provoking discussion hosted by WAEN President Abu Ahrar Ramizpoor.



## Law, Authoritarianism & Extremism

Authoritarian regimes often twist laws to serve power, not people. They justify repression in the name of security, silence critics under legal cover, and dismantle freedoms that laws should protect. These realities shape the daily lives of millions living under authoritarianism and extremism.

Dr. Fereydoon Rahmani, in our latest scholarly podcast with WAEN, has unpacked these dynamics in detail.





## SECTION - 4:

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