

OPEN LETTER TO EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT URSULA VON DER LEYEN

Brussels, 22 May 2026

EWL outraged by European Commission's invitation to meet the Taliban

The EWL, the largest European organisation with members throughout the European Union and beyond expresses its profound outrage at the reported invitation extended by the European Commission to the Taliban to Brussels the European capital of 'fundamental rights, freedoms and equality'.

This is taking place in the knowledge of how women and girls are denied their fundamental rights and freedoms in Afghanistan. The brutality of the regime towards women and girls constitutes persecution, as ruled by the [European Court of Justice in 2024](#). Women and girls are banned from education, from employment, from seeking health care, from travelling, from leaving their home without a male escort, from dressing as they wish, from looking out the window, from singing. In other words, from enjoying their fundamental human rights.

Thus, such a decision risks conferring legitimacy on a regime that is systematically violating the fundamental rights of women and girls and stands in direct contradiction to the European Union's core values of human rights, equality, and dignity.

The European Women's Lobby has consistently denounced the Taliban's actions as constituting gender apartheid — a system of governance that enforces segregation, exclusion, and subjugation of women and girls solely on the basis of their sex. This reality is marked by extreme forms of discrimination and violence that erase women from public and political life and deny them their fundamental human rights.

The EWL therefore calls on the European Commission to immediately withdraw this invitation. The European Union must stand firmly on the side of Afghan women and girls and uphold its commitments to human rights and gender equality. Any form of engagement must be strictly conditional on the full restoration of women's and girls' rights, including access to education, employment, freedom of movement, and participation in public life.

The EWL expects the European Commission to be the guardian of the treaties in which the univocal right to equality is enshrined. Such action is in full contradiction with a "Union of Equality".

At this critical moment, the European Union must demonstrate leadership and integrity by refusing to engage with a regime that enforces systemic gender oppression. The rights of women and girls are non-negotiable.

Therefore we call for action now!

In 2025, the EWL adopted a statement on sex segregation, discrimination and gender apartheid in Afghanistan in:

[EWL Statement on the Sex Segregation and Discrimination, and Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan - European Women's Lobby](#)