

My future belongs to me

I would like to share something that has been hidden in my heart. Before the Taliban, we had a simple life. Everyone was busy with their daily routines: teachers, students, tailors, beauticians, and many others. All of us could do things for ourselves, from earning money to getting an education and working. During that time, we also had the support Ministry of Women's Affairs. But now it is no longer the same.

Back then, if someone got married, the hotels were not expensive, and nobody charged extra money for themselves. But now everything has changed. They occupied our country. They took our country, took away our freedom and our education, and we have lost ourselves. I was never a silent or idle girl. I was busy with my lessons, waking up early every morning. Life was wonderful for me, and staying at home made me bored. All my goals were clear, but now I feel they are all gone.

When the Taliban came to our province, I was in the middle of school exams, my final exams to complete 12th grade. Our teacher gave us three exams in a day, while I had studied for only one subject. Then we faced the Kankor exam, which determines our future and where we can study. We were only allowed to choose neighboring provinces, no others. I passed that exam and was accepted into a university in my province - luckily. If I had been allowed to continue my studies, I would have finished by now and even found a job for myself. However, they closed everything and said it would only be for a short time. As we can see, universities and schools are still closed for girls.

Then they said all women should wear masks, and we accepted that, too. Some days ago, they started harassing girls over their hijabs, even beating them and saying they should stay away from boys. Before they came to our country, in universities and everywhere else, girls and boys were in the same classes, learning together like siblings. Now they want us to be enemies.

Last winter, when I was attending an English course, the Taliban came into our classroom. They asked our teacher who had given permission to reopen the course and why. Our teacher said it was their boss. The Taliban disagreed, and we were very afraid of what would happen. After they spoke with our teacher for a while, they allowed us to continue but took photos of us. After that day, one of them came back and stood outside our class, taking a video of the girls attending. He sent the video to our office, and out of fear the course was closed again.

We have had many bad days and experience, but still I want to stay strong, because no one can determine my future. My future is in my hands. It belongs to me.