

Taliban bans contraception calling use a 'western conspiracy'

This was first reported in the Afghan women's website [Rukhshana](#) last week and taken up by western newspapers such as the [Mail](#) and the [Guardian](#) yesterday and today

The Taliban have quietly stopped contraceptives from being sold to women in Kabul and Balkh provinces, ordering pharmacies and drug store centers to no longer stock them, according to sources in these provinces.

Drug sellers in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif have confirmed to Rukhshana Media that their Taliban officials have ordered them not to sell any pills, ampoules, or medicines used as a contraceptive. They say it's "haram" or forbidden under Sharia law.

The Taliban's Ministry of Public Health has not issued any official pronouncements on this issue.

Rukhshana Media has also spoken with some women who have say midwives have refused to provide contraceptives where they previously would have. The unofficial ban has doubled the price of available contraceptives, but there is no regulation of the drugs as they are sold secretly on the black market and the Taliban is not tracking their import.

Some drug wholesalers in Kabul city confirmed to Rukhshana Media that the Taliban has stopped importing these drugs and other related equipment. This has also pushed the price higher on the black market. A secret dealer in Kabul city, who did not want to be named, says the Taliban banned all types of contraceptives 20 days ago. "Currently, any type of drug that women use for contraception are prohibited," he says.

“Although they did not tell us a specific reason, but the [the Taliban] said it is not permissible and it is forbidden.” “About fifteen days ago, four Taliban forces came dressed in white clothes and told us that we no longer have the right to sell these drugs,” he added. “They also confiscated some of the medicines we had.”

Huria Wakil*, 33, is a midwife in Mazar-e-Sharif. She says the Taliban visited their clinic three weeks ago to tell them to stop providing contraception. “They recited a few verses of the Holy Quran, but unfortunately, none of them had a logical reason. When I said, why shouldn’t we be injecting it? They said, it is haram.”

A veteran midwife, who did not want to be named, said she had been threatened several times. She said she was told by a Taliban commander: “You are not allowed to go outside and promote the western concept of controlling population and this is unnecessary work.”

For Zainab, 17, who was married two years ago in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, the ban on contraceptives was a shock when she was told by her midwife last week. Zainab, who has an 18-month-old daughter, is worried. “I was secretly using contraceptives to avoid immediate pregnancy. I want to raise my daughter well with proper health and education facilities but it shattered my dreams when the midwife last week informed me that she had no contraceptive pills and injections to offer me,” she said. “I left education to get married and I don’t want my daughter’s fate to be the same as mine. I seek a different future for my daughter. The last hope to plan my life has ended,” said Zainab.

According to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2022 report, Afghanistan has had the highest maternal mortality rate in Asia. . . From a medical point of view, frequent childbearing can pose a greater risk to women’s mortality. “Women do not take into account the interval between each

birth, which ideally is at least three years,” Dr. Anita, one of the obstetrician-gynecologists at the Abu Ali Sinaye Balkhi seminary hospital in Balkh. “This itself contributes to maternal deaths during childbirth.”

Another midwife, who fled Kabul after death threats from the Taliban, is in daily contact with her colleagues who have remained. “The contraceptive ban would drastically affect the already deteriorating reproductive health situation in the country,” she said. “I fear the gains we made in the past decade would be lost after this move.”

Taliban fighters patrolling in the streets in Kabul told sources that “contraceptive use and family planning is a western agenda”.

However Ustad Faridoon, a Taliban official based in Kandahar, told the Guardian he did not support a total ban. “Contraceptive use is sometimes medically necessary for maternal health. It is permissible in the Sharia to use contraceptive methods if there is a risk to the mother’s life. Therefore, a complete ban on contraceptives is not right.”

Some reproductive rights experts in Afghanistan contacted by the Guardian were not willing to comment due to security concerns.

Note:*these names are pseudonyms for security reasons