‘I lost consciousness': woman whipped by the Taliban over burqa without veil

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<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/apr/18/woman-whipped-by-the-taliban-over-burqa-without-veil-afghanistan>

One of four women who was recently subjected to a brutal public lashing by armed Taliban fighters in [Afghanistan](https://www.theguardian.com/world/afghanistan) has spoken about her experience, amid an increase of violent punishments given to those violating its strict interpretation of religious law.

Aziza, who like many other Afghan women only uses one name, was rounded up by the Taliban’s shadow police for being out of her house without her husband and not being fully veiled. She was beaten so badly she lost consciousness.

A resident of Afghanistan’s Sancharak district in Sar-i-pul – a northern province, where the Taliban has tried to impose strict sharia laws and restrict women’s mobility – Aziza spoke to the Guardian after the flogging last month.

Aziza said she was arrested by armed Taliban fighters after they entered a local market. She was wearing a burqa without mesh covering her face.

“Women in our area have no identity and they are considered incomplete without men. Sometimes men are not available and many women died in the remote areas as they were unable to reach hospital,” she said.

The increase in the lashings of women comes as the group officially tries to appear more inclusive of women, recently announcing it was including dozens of women in their peace talks [delegation](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/15/women-join-taliban-delegation-first-time-afghan-peace-talks).

The lashings, however, have evoked comparison with the group’s treatment of women during its previous rule, before it was toppled by the US-led invasion in 2001.

During the Taliban’s period of control in Afghanistan from 1996 until its fall, public executions and lashings were common. At that time, women faced serious discrimination. They were forced to wear an all-enveloping burqa, they were forbidden to leave their homes without an accompanying male relative, and girls’ education was banned.

Describing the incident, Aziza said: “There was a rush in the market when suddenly the Taliban came. Everyone tried to run away but I was unable to escape and they came and asked why I was not wearing a veil with a face mesh.”

She said she lost consciousness during the flogging and that no one came to help her.

“I am afraid of the Taliban now and feel they will be more violent against women. I am still unable to get over what happened.

“The Taliban teach us about our roles under sharia. They told us to serve our husbands with food and roles in the kitchen, and that you don’t have permission to go outside for shopping or to the doctor without a mahram[male guardian]. This is not the way to treat women.”

Campaigners and human rights organisations have repeatedly criticised the Kabul government for not protecting women’s legal rights.

Commenting on the increase of violent public assaults on women, Patricia Gossman, a [senior researcher on Afghanistan](https://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan) for Human Rights Watch, said:“Members of insurgent groups and pro-government militias have imposed cruel and arbitrary punishments on women for so-called moral crimes.

“These cruel and inhumane punishments violate international human rights law and have no place in Afghanistan.”