

Equal Education, in collaboration with the Malala Fund, stands against the prohibition of education for young girls under Taliban rule.

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Equal Education, together with the Malala Fund, notes with dismay the anniversary of the Taliban taking over power in Afghanistan and beginning to systematically restrict women and girls' fundamental rights, including the right to education. The war on education did not start with the Taliban; from colonial policies to the Bantu Education policy of Apartheid to the Taliban's restrictions on women and girls, there is a pattern in history of ruling elites using education as a tool of oppression.

In line with our resolution on international solidarity, Equal Education recently hosted Malala Yousafzai, together with the members of the Malala Fund, here in Johannesburg to bring awareness to this ongoing injustice. Equalisers got to reflect on the barriers young girls are facing in accessing quality education in Afghanistan. The engagement created an important space for young people to connect their own struggles to those of girls and young women fighting for their right to learn across the world. Key issues in the workshop were strengthening solidarity and aligning the global struggle for education with what is happening in South Africa. Malala's story of bravery and resilience was an empowerment to young equalisers who are high school members, committed to change in the education system.

Quote from an Equaliser, a Learner member at Equal Education.

"As we commemorate the 70 years of Women of South Africa who stood up for the rights of women. To the girls in Afghanistan who are being deprived of the strongest weapon ever, which is education, we as girls and Equalisers in South Africa stand behind you. To the activists and women who keep fighting each day for the right to education and freedom of women in Afghanistan, the world is behind you. Continue doing the great work that you do and fight against the Taliban," Emihle Tima, Equaliser, Grade 12 Learner.

Through political education, international solidarity can be achieved to confront the powerful anti-progressive forces who see some as less human than others. By building community power where we live, we start to form the bonds of solidarity rooted and led by the ground. From the little girl yearning for an education in Taliban-occupied Afghanistan, to the child going to a school with unsafe and inadequate infrastructure in a public school in South Africa, the fight for education must be led by young people, the very group that is often overlooked by those who are in power.

“We look to the South African community to yet again inspire the world with your courage and conviction” - Malala, August 2026

We call on schooling communities and progressive movements across South Africa and around the world to refuse the normalisation of educational inequality. We must organise, speak out and hold governments accountable for ensuring that every child can learn in safety and dignity. From the girl in Afghanistan yearning to return to her classroom, to the child in rural South Africa learning in an unsafe or under-resourced school, the message must be the same: no child is disposable, no child is less deserving, no child must be left behind, and no government has the right to abandon their potential.

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