

Web posted Thursday, July 9, 1998

Newest Taliban edict bans television

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) -- Television is corrupting Afghan society, and anyone caught with one will be punished, the hard-line Taliban government announced Wednesday.

The latest edict of the Taliban, which imposed a harsh brand of Islamic law when it took control of the capital of Kabul in 1996, bans televisions, videocassette recorders, videos and satellite dishes.

"These video recorders and television are the cause of corruption in this society," said Mohammed Qalamuddin, deputy head of the Taliban's Religious Ministry. The ban was announced on Radio Shariat.

Qalamuddin said owners have 15 days to get rid of their television sets. Then religious police, bearded men with automatic rifles, will conduct spot searches and smash any television they find.

Anyone who defies the ban will be punished in line with Islamic law, although Qalamuddin didn't specify what that might be.

The Taliban shut down Afghanistan's only television station in 1996. But a ban against videocassettes has not been strictly enforced. Some homes also have satellite dishes.

The strictures put into place by the Taliban, which controls 85 percent of the country and is fighting for the rest, are not limited to television viewing.

Women are banned from working and girls may not go to school. Men are beaten if they trim their beards. They are forced to pray in mosques.

Most forms of light entertainment and music other than religious music are outlawed. Another edict encourages people to paint their first floor windows black so the women inside cannot be seen from the outside.

Women must wear the all-enveloping burqua. Anyone defying the rule is publicly beaten.