



Afghanistan Targeting of Individuals

Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals

Country of Origin Information Report

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It must be noted that the review carried out by the mentioned departments contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of the EUAA.





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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2019). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

‘Refugee’, ‘risk’ and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither the EUAA, nor any person acting on its behalf, may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 30 June 2022. Events taking place after this date are not included in this report, except for some clarifying information on the outcomes of a grand assembly that took place in Kabul City on 30 June 2022–2 July 2022. For more information on the reference period of this report, see the [Introduction](#).



Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
AFN	Afghan Afghani (currency)
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghanistan National Army
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Forces
COI	Country of Origin Information
GDI	General Directorate of Intelligence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, non-binary, Intersex and Queer
<i>madrassa</i>	Islamic religious school
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MPVPV	Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice
<i>mullah</i>	Islamic religious clerk
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRF	National Resistance Front
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights





Term	Definition
<i>Pashtunwali</i>	traditional social, cultural, and quasi-legal code regulating the Pashtun way of life
<i>sharia</i>	the religious law of Islam; Islamic canonical law
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan





Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide information relevant for international protection status determination. The report contains information on targeting of individuals in Afghanistan.

The reference period is 1 December 2021–30 June 2022, and the report is partly to be viewed as a continuation of the [EASO COI report: Afghanistan – Country Focus \(January 2022\)](#). Sections covering education personnel and forced recruitment were not covered in this preceding report. Therefore, these sections have reference periods starting on the date of the Taliban takeover of power in Afghanistan (15 August 2021). The background chapters also contain information from before the reference period.

Methodology

This report was jointly drafted and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries¹ mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. The report was drafted and reviewed in line with the EASO COI Report Methodology (2019)² and the EASO COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2019).³

Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference were defined by EUAA and were based on inputs on information needs from country of origin information (COI) and policy experts in EU+ countries within the framework of a Country Guidance development on Afghanistan. The terms of reference are available in [Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#).

Collecting information

In accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology, the content of this report relies on a range of different open-source material, as well as interviews and email contacts with oral sources. Information was mainly gathered from public COI reports of national migration administrations, media reports, research articles, reports by international organisations, and international non-governmental organisations.

Quality control

The report was peer reviewed by COI specialists from EU+ countries mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section, and internally by EUAA. All comments made by reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft. Some information was added after the peer review during the finalisation of the report. The two main reports from which information has been added includes the first report released by United

¹ EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland.

² EUAA, EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, June 2019, [url](#)

³ EUAA, EASO Writing and Referencing Guide for EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, June 2019, [url](#)



Nation's Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) since the Taliban takeover, covering human rights in Afghanistan during the period 15 August 2021–15 June 2022⁴, and a report by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) based on a fact-finding mission to Islamabad, Pakistan, in March and April 2022.⁵

Sources

In accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology oral sources were interviewed and contacted via email to fill in gaps in available written information. Material from interviews with oral sources for the [EASO COI report: Afghanistan – Country Focus \(January 2022\)](#) was also used for this report. Some sources were anonymised upon their own request. Sixteen oral sources were consulted in total and included experts based both in Afghanistan and abroad. They hold a variety of specialisations, such as in human rights, Islamic law, anthropology, and armed groups. All sources are outlined in [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

The local Afghan media outlet Hasht-e Subh is used as a source in the report, although a shift in the reporting tone was noted during the drafting exercise which became more critical of the Taliban, especially on events taking place in Panjsher Province. Due to difficulties assessing the reliability of this source, case-by-case assessments have been made on the inclusion of reports from Hasht-e Subh. Particular care has been taken on topics related to resistance groups involving Panjsher Province, and the Taliban's interactions with the local population of this area as well as with Tajiks in general. Reporting from Hasht-e Subh was often uncorroborated. Efforts to corroborate the information have been made but were not always possible.

Structure and use of the report

The purpose of the background chapter of the report is to give a contextual understanding of the general population's situation in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. It contains information on the political context, the functioning of the *de facto* state administration, and the implemented Islamic law (*sharia*). The chapter also contains information on the Taliban's perception of persons leaving Afghanistan, mainly to Western countries, and the treatment of those trying to leave and those returning from abroad. The background is followed by 12 chapters, each covering the situation of a specific group or profile of interest for this report.

Terminology

This report mainly focuses on targeting acts by the Taliban and other armed groups towards certain profiles. The chapters covering gender-based targeting, targeting of LGBTIQ persons, and partly the chapter on targeting of ethnic and religious groups, also include information on societal targeting. It should be noted that the perpetrator of some acts is difficult to identify, and that the motives behind some acts are unclear. For those reasons, an act's connection to

⁴ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#)

⁵ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#)



a certain group or profile is often difficult to determine based on available information. Furthermore, some individuals may be targeted for a range of reasons and by multiple actors. This is particularly challenging in the Afghan context, where diverse and overlapping identities permeate society along, for instance, religious, ethnic, tribal and/or linguistic lines.

In this report the Afghan authorities operating under the Taliban (since August 2021) are described as the *de facto* authorities, as the announced state or interim government have not been internationally recognised. For readability, specific ministries or ministers operating under the Taliban are referred to as, for example, the ‘Taliban Ministry of Interior’ or the ‘Taliban Minister of Foreign Affairs’. Persons working within lower-level authorities, who have been appointed by the Taliban or have returned to work since the takeover are not routinely referred to *de facto* state employees or Taliban officials, but efforts had been made to give clear context in which capacity these persons are working.

The administration of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, that collapsed amid the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021, is either referred to by its official name or as ‘the previous government’. In cases where the reports refer to the previous government of the Taliban of the 1990’s, this is indicated in the text.

Footnoted citations for documents published by Afghan authorities (typically previously cited as ‘Afghanistan’) are aligned with this terminology. This is to ensure a clear distinction between publications made by the previous elected Afghan government and publications published under the current *de facto* authorities.

Research limitations

Due to the Taliban takeover in August 2021, research limitations during the drafting of this report were observed. These challenges included: reduced and restricted media coverage, closing of local media outlets and fleeing of journalists, censorship, political interference from the Taliban in the work of journalists, threats and violence toward media workers and outlets, and difficulties verifying source/information reliability and corroborating information, especially from social media sources.⁶ Efforts have been made to locate reliable and corroborated information where possible given the limits.

⁶ RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#); Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan, Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 8; HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Threatening Provincial Media, 7 March 2022, [url](#)



Map



Map No. 3958 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS
June 2011

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

Map 1. Afghanistan⁷

⁷ UN, Afghanistan, Map No. 3958 Rev. 7, June 2011, [url](#)



1. Background: Situation of the general population under Taliban rule

1.1. Political context

When US and international forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021, Taliban forces advanced and gradually took control of more territory. In the first weeks of August 2021, most provincial capitals fell to the Taliban, and on 15 August 2021 their forces entered the capital Kabul.⁸ The Afghan government collapsed⁹, and President Ashraf Ghani and other key officials fled the country.¹⁰ The Taliban declared the war to be over and reinstated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).¹¹ In the meantime, first Vice President Amrullah Saleh relocated to Panjsher Province and declared himself ‘caretaker President’.¹² Resistance forces (the National Resistance Front (NRF)) held out for a few weeks in the province before the Taliban claimed to have defeated them on 6 September 2021.¹³ The Taliban claimed control of the entire territory of Afghanistan.¹⁴ No other actor reportedly exercised territorial control by June 2022¹⁵, or constitute an existential threat to the Taliban’s authority.¹⁶

1.1.1. Political and military opposition

Political entities opposing the Taliban are fragmented and mainly situated abroad.¹⁷ The evacuations of thousands of Afghans in August 2021¹⁸ included many who might have joined or led civilian or military resistance.¹⁹ Armed actors occasionally targeted the Taliban, mainly with small arms, hand grenades or improvised explosive devices (IEDs), but there were no territorial areas where military or political opposition could base itself.²⁰

In April 2022, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reported on an uncoordinated offensive by factions of the previous government in several provinces, similar to the Taliban’s

⁸ EASO, Afghanistan: Security situation update, September 2021, [url](#), p. 11

⁹ Murtazashvili, J. B., The Collapse of Afghanistan, Journal of Democracy, Vol. 33, Issue 1, January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰ WSJ, High-Ranking Afghan Officials Escaped to Luxury Homes Abroad, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹ EASO, Afghanistan: Security situation update, September 2021, [url](#), p. 11

¹² LWJ, After fall of Kabul, resistance to Taliban emerges in Panjshir, 18 August 2021, [url](#); Amrullah Saleh [Twitter], posted on: 17 August 2021, [url](#)

¹³ EUAA, Afghanistan: Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 58; LWJ, Taliban completes conquest of Afghanistan after seizing Panjshir, 6 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴ VOA, Taliban order Afghan media to use group’s official name, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵ LWJ, FDD’s Long War Journal, Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan, 28 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶ Saul, B., Recognition and the Taliban’s international Legal Status, ICCT, 15 December 2021, [url](#); Marty, F., J., Vive la Résistance in Afghanistan?, Swiss Institute for Global Affairs, 7 April 2022, [url](#); Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkeshetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), p. 27

¹⁷ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 11

¹⁸ Reuters, Factbox: Evacuations from Afghanistan by country, 30 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹ Clark, K., Afghanistan’s conflict in 2021 (2), 30 December 2021, [url](#)

²⁰ Clark, K., Afghanistan’s conflict in 2021 (2), 30 December 2021, [url](#); Marty, F., J., Vive la Résistance in Afghanistan?, Swiss Institute for Global Affairs, 7 April 2022, [url](#)



annual ‘spring offensive’ during their time as an insurgency.²¹ Voice of America (VOA) reported on a half-dozen resistance groups announcing their existence, vowing to fight alongside NRF,²² while UNAMA reported on a dozen armed groups opposing the Taliban as of 15 June 2022.²³ The resistance groups however lacked unity and coordination.²⁴ The Taliban reportedly considered the resistance ‘small and insignificant’²⁵, but nevertheless conducted search operations of private residents and deployed forces to the border provinces Badakhshan, Badghis, and Farah, to counter the resistance according to some sources.²⁶

On 17 May 2022, several exiled Afghan politicians met in Ankara, Turkey, and formed a supreme council of ‘National Resistance for the Salvation of Afghanistan’.²⁷ The meeting-host was Abdul Rasheed Dostum²⁸, warlord and leader of the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan.²⁹ The participants included representatives of Afghan political parties (People’s Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan and Hezb-e Wahdat), and top officials of the former government (the former vice president, finance minister, and speaker of parliament, as well as a representative for the former Minister of Foreign Affairs). A joint statement read that political and military action would be taken against the Taliban, although ‘an enduring peace via politics’ was to prefer.³⁰ The council met with the US Special Representative for Afghanistan in Istanbul, Turkey, at the end of May 2022.³¹

There were reportedly lineages within the Taliban movement based on ethnic, regional, and tribal affiliation, as well as military and policy lines. Some of the reported factions were the Haqqani network, networks from the south, and rifts between more pragmatic and conservative entities.³² In December 2021, Afghanistan analyst Kate Clark stated that some rivalry and in-fighting had occurred, although Clark described the Taliban as ‘relatively united’.³³ The UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team also noticed some tensions but called the Taliban largely cohesive and unified.³⁴ There were also reports on Taliban members of Uzbek ethnicity being dissatisfied with the mainly Pashtun leadership in

²¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Faces Rising Armed Resistance From Former Government Factions, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

²² VOA, Afghan Fighting Season Ushers in New Anti-Taliban Groups, 28 April 2022, [url](#)

²³ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 17

²⁴ VOA, Afghan Fighting Season Ushers in New Anti-Taliban Groups, 28 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Faces Rising Armed Resistance From Former Government Factions, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁶ Ariana News, IEA says resistance happening only on internet, 11 March 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), Taliban Search Operation Echoes Resented U.S. Tactics, 2 March 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Says New Troops Near Central Asian Borders Will Bring Stability. The Neighbours Are Not So Sure, 16 February 2022, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Tracking Conflict WorldWide, Afghanistan, June 2022, [url](#)

²⁷ Khaama Press, Ankara Gathering of Political Figures, 19 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁸ TOLONews, Statement Released from Afghan Politicians at Turkey Meeting, 19 May 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Ankara Gathering of Political Figures, 19 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁹ HRW, Paying for the Taliban's Crimes, 2002, [url](#)

³⁰ TOLONews, Statement Released from Afghan Politicians at Turkey Meeting, 19 May 2022, [url](#)

³¹ Khaama Press, Thomas West Meets with the Representatives of Afghan Political Parties in Turkey, 30 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Thomas West Meets Afghan Politicians, Civil Society in Istanbul, 30 May 2022, [url](#)

³² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Unprecedented Differences: Rifts Within The Taliban Come Out In The Open, 2 June 2022, [url](#); Clark, K., Afghanistan’s conflict in 2021 (2), 30 December 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 26 May 2022, [url](#), pp. 6, 8

³³ Clark, K., Afghanistan’s conflict in 2021 (2), 30 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁴ UN Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 26 May 2022, [url](#), pp. 6, 8



Kabul³⁵, especially after some Uzbek commanders were excluded for alleged crimes.³⁶ According to an Afghan journalist interviewed by RFE/RL, the rifts within the Taliban were ‘merely differences of opinion’ and did not amount to factional infighting.³⁷ As reported by an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Kabul, interviewed by the Swedish Migration Agency’s Unit for Migration Analysis on 16 March 2022, there were no splinter groups fighting the main Taliban movement with armed means³⁸ but in June 2022, an influential Hazara member, Mehdi Mujahid, took up arms against the Taliban.³⁹ Mujahid left the Taliban⁴⁰ and based himself in Balkhab District, Sar-e Pul Province.⁴¹ The Taliban sent forces to the area and there were reportedly clashes. RFE/RL reported that the fighting appeared to have calmed as of 28 June 2022, and Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid, also Taliban Deputy Minister of Culture and Information, claimed on social media that the situation had ‘returned to normal’ in Balkhab.⁴²

On 30 June 2022, the Taliban organised a major gathering with up to 3 000 participants in Kabul.⁴³ Taliban representatives claimed to have invited two clerics and one tribal elder from each of Afghanistan’s provinces⁴⁴ to discuss national unity, security, stabilisation and other issues.⁴⁵ Key officials of the former government were reportedly not invited.⁴⁶ After the gathering, a resolution with 11 principles was released, including a principle defining armed opposition against the current government as ‘rebellion’.⁴⁷

UNAMA’s monitoring indicated a ‘clear pattern’ regarding targeting taking place on 15 August 2021–15 June 2022 and identified individuals accused of affiliation with armed groups as one of the groups having been ‘particularly at risk of experiencing human rights violations’.⁴⁸ The Taliban launched operations against the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) which impacted Salafist communities⁴⁹ and operations against resistance forces impacting, *inter alia*, Tajik communities.⁵⁰ For more information, see sections [6.6.6. Salafists](#) and [6.5 Tajiks](#).

³⁵ Times (The), Commander’s arrest exposes ethnic splits in Taliban, 14 January 2022, [url](#); Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), p. 26

³⁶ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), p. 26

³⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Unprecedented Differences: Rifts Within The Taliban Come Out In The Open, 2 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁸ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), p. 25

³⁹ Hasht-e Subh, Fierce Fighting Rages Between Taliban and Local Forces Led by Mawlawi Mehdi in Balkhab, 23 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Deploys Troops to Arrest Mawlawi Mehdi, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 13 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹ Hasht-e Subh, Fierce Fighting Rages Between Taliban and Local Forces Led by Mawlawi Mehdi in Balkhab, 23 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Deploys Troops to Arrest Mawlawi Mehdi, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Atrocities Reported In Crackdown On Rebel Hazara Commander, 1 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴³ TOLONews, Clerics’ Gathering to Be Held on Thursday: Hanafi, 29 June 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA to hold Grand Assembly in Kabul, 28 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Says Govt is Obligated to Consider Clerics’ Opinions, 30 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵ TOLONews, Clerics’ Gathering to Be Held on Thursday: Hanafi, 29 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶ TOLONews, Afghan Politicians Call for Inclusivity at Clerics’ Gathering, 30 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Ariana News, Afghan scholars issue 11-point resolution after 3-day mass gathering in Kabul, 2 July 2022, [url](#);

TOLONews, Islamic Clerics’ Gathering Issues 11-Point Resolution, 2 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 13

⁴⁹ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

⁵⁰ BBC News, Afghan resistance attack Taliban, sparking reprisals in Panjshir, 16 May, [url](#)



1.1.2. Government formation

The Taliban announced an interim government on 7 September 2021.⁵¹ Additional rounds of senior appointments followed in September and October 2021⁵², in December 2021⁵³, and in February 2022.⁵⁴ The announced interim government included many members who served in the Taliban's previous administration of the 1990s⁵⁵ and who were part of the leadership council during the years of insurgency.⁵⁶ Several were on the UN Security Council's sanctions list.⁵⁷ The appointed were exclusively Taliban members and exclusively men.⁵⁸ Most were Pashtuns and clericals⁵⁹ although a few appointees had a non-Pashtun ethnic background (Hazaras, Tajiks and Uzbeks).⁶⁰ For more information on ethnic representation in the *de facto* administration, see section [6.2. Representation in the de facto](#) government.

Appointments were also made to security and government structures on national and sub-national levels.⁶¹ The first female senior appointment was made on 1 February 2022, when a woman was appointed director of a maternity hospital in Kabul.⁶²

Some sources described the appointments to government positions as a way of distributing power within the Taliban movement as well as rewarding cadres.⁶³ Appointments to state institutions were also reportedly used to address internal tensions.⁶⁴ Timor Sharan, an Afghan academic scholar and associate fellow at the think-tank LSE Ideas, stated that the Taliban Ministry of Interior faced difficulties appointing people to thousands of positions as they were 'occupied by the key political networks along tribal lines, political lines, [and] religious lines'.⁶⁵

1.1.3. Recognition and international relations

Many stakeholders in the international community called for an 'inclusive' government as a requisite for recognition, as well as respect for human rights, women's rights, and making counterterrorism efforts.⁶⁶ Some of the stakeholders making such calls included the EU⁶⁷, the

⁵¹ BBC News, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵² van Bijlert, M., The Taleban's Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵³ Khaama Press, A none-Taliban figure, Abdul Latif Nazari appointed as Deputy Minister of economy, 25 December 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴ TOLONews, New Civil, Military Appointments Announced, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁵ BBC News, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 63

⁵⁷ UN Security Council, Haqqani network, n.d., [url](#); UN Security Council, Mohammad Hassan Akhund, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁸ Guardian (The), Taliban name all-male Afghan cabinet including minister wanted by FBI, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹ van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban's new government, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰ New International (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to 'make' it inclusive, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 3

⁶² Ariana News, IEA makes first senior female appointment, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶³ Clark, K., Afghanistan's conflict in 2021 (2), AAN, 30 December 2021, [url](#); Vox, What the Taliban's new government reveals about how they will rule, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 4

⁶⁵ NAC, The Taliban's Oslo Visit: Now What? [Online video], 22 February 2022, [url](#), 1:31.00–1:31.40

⁶⁶ Saul, B., Recognition and the Taliban's international Legal Status, ICCT, 15 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷ EEAS, Afghanistan: Statement by the Spokesperson on the appointment by the Taliban of a *de facto* interim government, 9 September 2021, [url](#)



UN Security Council⁶⁸, the US⁶⁹, Iran⁷⁰, Pakistan⁷¹, China⁷², and Russia⁷³. Calls were repeated in joint statements after intra-state meetings on the situation in Afghanistan.⁷⁴

The Taliban repeatedly stated that the preconditions of inclusiveness had been fulfilled, that human rights and women's rights were respected⁷⁵, and that Afghan soil did not pose a threat to any country and denied any presence of foreign terrorists.⁷⁶ The Taliban Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, stated in January 2022 that the government included 'all Afghan ethnic groups', and questioned the international community for not providing any definition or example of an 'inclusive government'.⁷⁷ The EU special envoy to Afghanistan, Tomas Niklasson, reacted on social media by stating that 'all adult Afghan men and women' should define inclusiveness through transparent processes.⁷⁸ Iran and Russia called for political and ethnic inclusiveness⁷⁹, but the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, later stated, in April 2022, that different ethnic groups had been included. He emphasised instead the issue with all appointed being Taliban members.⁸⁰ In June 2022, Germany's foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, stated that there was no room for recognition, and referred to girls' being excluded from education, women being excluded from public life, and dissenting voices being suppressed.⁸¹ The Taliban dismissed reports on human rights violations as false and stressed that the situation had improved compared to the conflict years.⁸² They also said that the rights of all Afghans, including women, were protected 'under Islamic laws and principles'.⁸³

Uzbek and Pakistani representatives stated that they could not recognise the Taliban 'alone', apart from the international community.⁸⁴ Russia's special envoy stated in mid-June 2022, that there were prospects for recognition⁸⁵, but later that week, the presidential spokesman said that recognising the *de facto* administration was not on Russia's current agenda.⁸⁶

As of 30 June 2022, no state had yet formally recognised the IEA or its interim government.⁸⁷

⁶⁸ UN News, Security Council Press Statement on Afghanistan, 16 August 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹ Al Jazeera, US lays out conditions for recognising a new Afghan gov't, 16 August 2021, [url](#); Dawn, US to recognise Taliban only if they respect basic rights, says Blinken, 16 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰ TOLONews, Iranian President Calls for Inclusive Govt in Afghanistan, 13 May 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹ VOA, Pakistan PM Stresses Inclusivity in Government in Talks With Taliban, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷² TOLONews, China Calls for Inclusive Government in Afghanistan, 25 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷³ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Must Ensure Inclusiveness: Kabulov, 18 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Pakistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Joint Statement of the Third Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 31 March 2022, [url](#); USDOS, U.S.-Europe Joint Statement on Afghanistan, 27 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵ TOLONews, Kabul Urges Islamic Countries to Recognize Afghan Govt, 19 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶ TOLONews, EU, Central Asian Envoys Call for Inclusive Govt in Afghanistan, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷ TOLONews, Intl Community Yet to Define Inclusive Govt: Islamic Emirate, 27 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Tomas Niklasson [Twitter], posted on: 27 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹ TOLONews, Iranian President Calls for Inclusive Govt Afghanistan, 13 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Must Ensure Inclusiveness: Kabulov, 18 December 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁰ TOLONews, Lavrov: We Want to Work Towards Full Diplomatic Recognition, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹ Reuters, Germany won't recognise Taliban as dire Afghan conditions persist, 7 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸² TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Denies Claims in HRW Report on Afghanistan, 14 January 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, News Agency (The), Taliban Denies US Report over Violation of Human Rights, 15 April 2022, [url](#)

⁸³ TOLONews, Recognition Requires Respect for Human Rights: UN Chief, 22 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴ TOLONews, Uzbekistan Will Not Recognize Islamic Emirate Alone: Envoy, 6 May 2022, [url](#); Le Figaro, «Nous voulons que la reconnaissance du gouvernement taliban soit une démarche collective», 14 February 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵ TASS, Russia to decide whether to recognize Taliban regardless of others, 14 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Ariana News, IEA's recognition not on Russia's current agenda: Kremlin, 16 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷ VOA, Taliban Hold Islamic Scholars' Huddle to Show Strength, Legitimacy, 20 June 2022, [url](#)



In March 2022, researcher Aaron Y. Zelin at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy stated that 34 countries had ‘shown some level of engagement’ with the Taliban and described this ‘*de facto* recognition’ as ‘an accepted reality’.⁸⁸ During the reference period of this report [1 December 2021–30 June 2022] visits received by the Taliban in Kabul included delegations from Turkey, Qatar⁸⁹, Turkmenistan⁹⁰, Kazakhstan⁹¹, Uzbekistan⁹², Pakistan⁹³, Russia, China⁹⁴, India⁹⁵ and several UN institutions.⁹⁶ Taliban delegations paid visits to Iran⁹⁷, Turkmenistan⁹⁸, and Norway. The meeting in Norway was held with the EU special envoy and delegates from the US, UK, Norway, Germany, Italy, France and Qatar as well as Afghan civil society members.⁹⁹ The Taliban also met delegations of Gulf countries¹⁰⁰ and the US abroad.¹⁰¹

Diplomatic missions of the former government, representing the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, continued operating after the Taliban takeover. Many missions did not align with the *de facto* administration and operated independently, despite financial pressure.¹⁰² New envoys representing the Taliban government were introduced in some countries¹⁰³, which was called a “silent recognition” by Taliban officials.¹⁰⁴ Such accreditations were made in China, Pakistan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Iran.¹⁰⁵ Afghan media reported on accreditations in Qatar¹⁰⁶ and Kazakhstan¹⁰⁷, but the information could not be corroborated. Moreover, a Taliban official told VOA that the embassies in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia had started following instructions.¹⁰⁸

Some countries kept their Kabul embassies open during the Taliban takeover, including China, Pakistan, Russia, Iran, Qatar¹⁰⁹, Turkey¹¹⁰, and Kazakhstan.¹¹¹ Some states resumed diplomatic

⁸⁸ Washington Institute (The), Turkey Calls for Recognition of the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹ TOLONews, Turkey, Qatar Delegation Arrives in Kabul, 23 December 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁰ Ariana News, IEA deputy PM Hanafi meets Turkmenistan deputy FM, discusses TAPI Project, 9 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹¹ TOLONews, Kazakhstan Delegation in Kabul to Discuss Trade, 25 December 2021, [url](#)

⁹² VOA, Uzbekistan Seeks to Engage Taliban Without Alienating West, 4 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Senior Delegation from Uzbekistan Visits Afghanistan, 20 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹³ TOLONews, Pakistan NSA Arrives in Kabul for Talks with Islamic Emirate, 29 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁴ AP, China’s foreign minister makes surprise stop in Afghanistan, 25 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁵ Reuters, Indian officials meet Taliban in Kabul in first visit since U.S. exit, 2 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶ UN, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet visits Kabul, Afghanistan, 11 March 2022, [url](#); AP, UN refugee chief in Kabul to say Afghans are not forgotten, 15 March 2022, [url](#); UN, Facing critical human rights challenges, Afghanistan at a crossroads, 26 May 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷ TOLONews, Delegates Leave Kabul for Tehran, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸ TOLONews, Muttuqi Discusses Major Projects with Turkmen Officials, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹ Al Jazeera, Taliban, Western officials meeting in Oslo to discuss Afghanistan, 24 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Meets With Envoys of 7 Nations, EU in Oslo, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Meets Envoys of Gulf States in Doha: FM, 14 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ TOLONews, Thomas West Meets Afghan Politicians, Civil Society in Istanbul, 30 May 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Afghan acting FM heads to Doha for talks with US, 29 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰² AFP, Afghan diplomats under pressure from Taliban regime, 14 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰³ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Calls on Foreign Countries to Accept New Envoys, 18 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 22

¹⁰⁵ Khaama Press, Kabul Optimistic about Formal Recognition amid Heightened Situation, 27 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ Ariana News, Iran accredits Afghan diplomats appointed by IEA, 25 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ TOLONews, Kabul Faces Criticism for Not Yet Gaining Intl Recognition, 2 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ VOA, Russia Latest Country to Establish Diplomatic Ties With Taliban, 9 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ WSJ, Who Are the Taliban and What’s Next for Afghanistan?, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ AA, Turkish Embassy in Kabul continues operations: Foreign minister, [url](#)

¹¹¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Resettlement Of Afghanistan’s Ethnic Kazakhs To Kazakhstan, 28 December 2021, [url](#)



activities after closing their missions, including Saudi Arabia¹¹², Indonesia¹¹³, the United Arab Emirates (UAE)¹¹⁴, and India.¹¹⁵ US interests were represented by a special section at the embassy of Qatar.¹¹⁶ In January 2022, the then European Commission foreign affairs spokesman, Peter Stano, stated that the EU would re-establish ‘minimal’ physical presence for humanitarian purposes.¹¹⁷ In March 2022, Khaama Press reported that 15 countries and the EU had opened their diplomatic missions in Kabul and met with the Taliban authorities.¹¹⁸ The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also reopened its office in Kabul.¹¹⁹ Within the UN system a Special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan was established for the first time since 2005¹²⁰, and UNAMA’s mandate was renewed until 17 March 2023.¹²¹

Besides calling for recognition, the Taliban called for the release of the Afghan central bank’s assets.¹²² Nearly USD 9.5 billion [around EUR 9.08 billion] were frozen by the US after the takeover.¹²³ China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and international aid groups echoed this call.¹²⁴

Taliban forces reportedly clashed with some neighbouring states’ security forces¹²⁵ including with Pakistani security forces¹²⁶, which caused tensions between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani government.¹²⁷ Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) also claimed responsibility for attacks against Pakistani security forces. The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) presented data of 45 attacks in December 2021, 42 in January 2022, and 22 in February 2022.¹²⁸ On 21 April 2022, Pakistan carried out airstrikes inside Afghanistan against suspected TTP localities, killing civilians in the provinces Khost and Kunar.¹²⁹ The Taliban pledged to prevent TTP attacks, and mediated talks between Pakistan and TTP in Kabul.¹³⁰

¹¹² TOLONews, Govt Praises Return of Saudis to Consulate in Kabul, 1 December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³ Jakarta Post (The), Indonesia reinstates embassy in Kabul, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ Daily Pakistan, UAE reopens embassy in Afghanistan after power change in Kabul, 22 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ Hindustan Times, Why India needs to be on the ground in Kabul, 29 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ Hill (The), Qatar to formally represent US interests in Afghanistan, 11 December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, EU Says It Will Establish Minimal Presence In Afghanistan, 21 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Khaama Press, Several embassies handed over to IEA, Taliban closer to full recognition, 23 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 25

¹²⁰ OHCHR, Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹²¹ UNAMA, UNAMA Political Mission Mandate Renewal to 17 March 2023, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²² France 24, Taliban warn will reconsider policy towards US if assets not freed, 14 February 2022, [url](#)

¹²³ Al Jazeera, US freezes Afghan central bank’s assets of \$9.5bn, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 68

¹²⁵ Al Jazeera, Iran and Taliban forces clash in border area, 1 December 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Turkmen Border Guards Skirmish With Taliban, 4 January 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁶ Reuters, Fresh clashes on Pakistan-Afghanistan border kill two, wound several, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Mir, A., Pakistan’s Twin Taliban Problem, USIP, 4 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁸ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 72

¹²⁹ New York Times (The), Death Toll From Pakistani Airstrike Rises to 45, Afghan Officials Say, 17 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁰ AP, Pakistan sends 50-member team to Kabul to discuss cease-fire, 1 June 2022, [url](#)



1.1.4. Functioning of the state

(a) Governance and legal framework

The Taliban did not clearly indicate how they intended to govern or structure the state.¹³¹ One fundamental aim of their armed struggle was to establish a ‘true’ Islamic system¹³², and after the takeover Taliban officials referred to *sharia* as the legal system that they were going to enforce.¹³³ According to the Taliban’s interpretation of *sharia*, their first rule of the 1990’s was never ‘vanquished but went into abeyance’ as reported by United States Institute for Peace (USIP). The same source stated that the Taliban tried to ‘form and formalise their governing structure’, calling the situation ‘dynamic and fluid’.¹³⁴ According to an anonymous international organisation, consulted by the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre Landinfo in February and March 2022, all decisions required consensus in the Taliban Cabinet, leaving the Taliban ministers with limited power. The source further explained that the decision-making structure based on consensus, combined with strong internal opposites, to a large extent resulted in ‘paralysis of action’ and slow progress.¹³⁵ The United Nation’s Secretary General (UNSG) called the decision-making ‘opaque’ and described the implementation as oftentimes inconsistent.¹³⁶ Moreover, religious clerks (*mullahs*) were appointed to some positions for which they lacked proper education and professional experience¹³⁷, in a time when Afghanistan faced significant financial and humanitarian crises.¹³⁸ Different factions within the Taliban movement also impacted the decision-making, which some observers say was evident when the Taliban turned back on repeated pledges to reopen high schools for girls on 24 March 2022.¹³⁹

The Taliban reportedly had committed to review the laws of the previous administration’s constitution to oversee its compliance with *sharia*.¹⁴⁰ Awaiting this review, a ‘legal vacuum’ emerged according to the UNSG¹⁴¹, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human

¹³¹ Lombardi, C. B. and March, A. F., *Afghani Taliban Views on Legitimate Islamic Governance*, USIP, February 2022, [url](#), p. 4; Smith, G., *A Short Visit to the Taliban’s Tense and Quiet Capital*, International Crisis Group, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹³² Lombardi, C. B. and March, A. F., *Afghani Taliban Views on Legitimate Islamic Governance*, USIP, February 2022, [url](#), p. 7

¹³³ Rahimi, H. *What the Taliban may be getting wrong about Islamic governance*, Al Jazeera, 24 August 2021, [url](#); WSJ, *Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security*, 20 October 2021, [url](#); CNN, *Taliban’s religious police instructed to be more moderate*, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Lombardi, C. B. and March, A. F., *Afghani Taliban Views on Legitimate Islamic Governance*, USIP, February 2022, [url](#), pp. 4, 8

¹³⁵ Norway, Landinfo, *Afghanistan, Taliban regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen*, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 7

¹³⁶ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 63

¹³⁷ Clark, K., *Afghanistan’s conflict in 2021 (2)*, AAN, 30 December 2021, [url](#); EUAA, *Afghanistan: Country focus*, January 2022, [url](#), p. 14; Denmark, DIS, *Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population*, June 2022, [url](#), p. 9

¹³⁸ Byrd, W., *How to Mitigate Afghanistan’s Economic and Humanitarian Crises*, 4 January 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, *Unprecedented Differences: Rifts Within The Taliban Come Out In The Open*, USIP, 2 June 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, *Taliban’s Dramatic U-Turn On Reopening Girls’ Schools Reflects Internal Divisions*, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 10; AP, *Taliban raised on war bring a heavy hand to security role*, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 6



Rights (OHCHR) also stressed the unclarity regarding the applicable legal framework.¹⁴² UNAMA reported that the review was still ongoing by 15 June 2022.¹⁴³ According to the United States Department of State (USDOS), the Taliban conveyed that the laws of the former government were in effect unless they violated *sharia*.¹⁴⁴ The legal instructions issued by the Taliban were in the form of decrees and general guidance¹⁴⁵ that were enforced unevenly.¹⁴⁶ In November 2021, an Afghan human rights expert told EUAA that the lack of clarity regarding the prevailing legal order was one of the most prominent factors of life in Afghanistan after the takeover.¹⁴⁷ Other sources described difficulties in getting clear directions on which rules applied to the current situation, as Taliban spokespersons stated different things on the same issues.¹⁴⁸ The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), interviewed by DIS in Islamabad on 18 March 2022, stated that the lack of experience within the *de facto* administration was one reason to varying rules and conditions across Afghanistan. A representative of an anonymous international organisation, also interviewed by DIS on 29 March 2022, stated that it oftentimes was unclear which entity constituted a specific authority.¹⁴⁹

The Taliban released announcements through a variety of channels, including on private social media accounts of Taliban officials and in various state media.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the Afghan media community raised concerns of slow and limited access to information¹⁵¹ and difficulties for journalists to get to interview Taliban officials.¹⁵²

By 1 June 2022, the Taliban had not formally enacted a constitution.¹⁵³

(b) Policy implementation

The Taliban have been described as a decentralised and flexible movement, which was successful during the insurgency, but it caused inefficiency in their governance after the takeover.¹⁵⁴ Policy implementation differed across the country and was dependent on local contexts and local stakeholders.¹⁵⁵ An international analyst told EUAA that Taliban fighters seemed to obey their immediate commanders, although they were supposed to be under a chain of command. The ‘higher up’ and ‘further away’ a superior was, the harder it got to effect

¹⁴² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁴³ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 35

¹⁴⁴ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁴⁵ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 6

¹⁴⁶ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁴⁷ Afghan human rights expert, digital interview, 11 November 2021

¹⁴⁸ Göteborgsregionen, Temadag om Afghanistan [Online video], 18 Mars 2022, [url](#), 04:51:00–04:51:45; New Lines Maazine, Is This the Future of Taliban Rule?, 13 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁵⁰ van Bijlert, M., The Taleban’s Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

¹⁵¹ TOLONews, Media: Islamic Emirate Spokespersons Not Providing Information, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵² TOLONews, Media Survey: Lack of Official Interviews Major Obstacle, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵³ Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ van Bijlert, M., The Taleban’s Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); Vox, What the Taliban’s new government reveals about how they will rule, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ Afghan human rights expert, digital interview, 11 November 2021; Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022; Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 9



change at local level.¹⁵⁶ An international organisation told DIS on 29 March 2022 that influential individuals sometimes had more authority and impact on local level than the relevant ministry.¹⁵⁷ In February 2022, Afghanistan analyst Timor Sharan described the Taliban state structure as ‘exceptionally’ fragile and claimed that no actual policies on key issues were implemented on the ground – officials rather implemented their personal opinions.¹⁵⁸

Anonymous sources (an international organisation, a journalist, and an international humanitarian organisation) interviewed by DIS in March and April 2022, stated that the enforcement of new rules often depended on individual Taliban soldiers and their personal views. The journalist also said that this extended beyond issued rules and edicts, and that personal views could be implemented on various issues.¹⁵⁹ The Taliban Minister of Interior, Sirajuddin Haqqani, explained to CNN that the government was in a ‘preliminary phase’, and as the Taliban assumed power when ‘everything had almost collapsed’ they were yet, as of May 2022, to bring the situation back to normal.¹⁶⁰

(c) State structures

The Taliban used the previous government’s state structures but abolished some ministries (including the ministries for parliamentary affairs and peace, and independent election management bodies). The Taliban Ministry of Justice abolished the departments of political parties, commissions overseeing human rights and the implementation of the constitution, and the secretariats of the former Parliament’s upper and lower house.¹⁶¹ No appointments were made to the former Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA)¹⁶², but no formal decision was taken to abolish it.¹⁶³

After the takeover, the Taliban re-established the ‘Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice’ (MPVPV) [for more information, see section [1.3. Implemented sharia and cultural norms in everyday life](#)]¹⁶⁴, and established an intelligence service called the ‘General Directorate of Intelligence’ (GDI)¹⁶⁵. The Taliban also decided to re-establish *Ulema* councils in all provinces. According to Ariana News these Taliban councils were composed by religious scholars and elders with the mandate to oversee the functioning of the local government, advise on good governance, and handle legal disputes.¹⁶⁶

The Taliban also started building an armed force and claimed that it would include security personnel of the former government.¹⁶⁷ For information about the *de facto* forces and the

¹⁵⁶ International analyst, digital interview, 17 March 2022

¹⁵⁷ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁵⁸ NAC, The Taliban’s Oslo Visit: Now What? [Online video], 22 February 2022, [url](#), 01:02:00–01:02:15

¹⁵⁹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), pp. 9–10

¹⁶⁰ CNN, Afghanistan: Top Taliban leader makes more promises on women's rights [Online video], 19 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15

June 2022, [url](#), para. 4; TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Dissolves 5 Inactive Institutions, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶² Al Jazeera, Taliban replaces ministry for women with guidance ministry, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶³ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 7

¹⁶⁴ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁶⁵ AP, Taliban raised on war bring a heavy hand to security role, 1 February 2022, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan: Taliban must immediately stop arbitrary arrests of journalists, civil society activists, former government officials and those who dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁶⁶ Ariana News, Ulema Council established over Takhar provincial government, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ Al Jazeera, Taliban to create Afghanistan grand army with old regime troops, 22 February 2022, [url](#)



inclusion and exclusion of former security personnel, see sections [2.3. Recruitment of former ANDSF members by Taliban forces or other armed groups](#) and [13.1. Recruitment to the Taliban](#).

Public servants of the previous administration were asked to return to work in August 2021¹⁶⁸, but many were already evacuated, and some did not resume despite the amnesty or due to non-payment of salaries.¹⁶⁹ Several sources interviewed by DIS in Islamabad in March and April 2022 stated that civil servants of the former government had resumed work, including in the provinces ‘below a certain rank’.¹⁷⁰ In May 2022, International Crisis Group analysts stated that the Taliban had largely kept the civilian workforce of the former government.¹⁷¹

The Taliban collected revenues, including through customs and taxation. Demonstrated revenue collections in September–November 2021 exceeded AFN 27 billion [around EUR 290 million].¹⁷² The Taliban presented their first annual budget in May 2022, aiming to have the entire budget (AFN 231.4 billion¹⁷³ [around EUR 2.5 billion]) funded by revenues, without foreign contribution.¹⁷⁴ Analysts described the collected revenues as considerable and noted the crackdown on corruption as one success factor.¹⁷⁵ Afghan public services did, however, depend heavily on foreign aid before the takeover¹⁷⁶, which continued, for instance, by funding salaries of employees in the public sector.¹⁷⁷

(d) Judiciary

According to OHCHR, the Taliban gradually sought to ‘resume the functioning of a country-wide justice system and courts under Islamic law’. Taliban appointments were made to the Taliban Ministry of Justice, the Taliban Supreme Court, their primary and appeal courts, and the Taliban Attorney General’s Office.¹⁷⁸ 69 provincial *de facto* judges were appointed to all provinces except Panjsher in December 2021.¹⁷⁹ *De facto* judges were reportedly appointed in Panjsher in February 2022.¹⁸⁰ 58 judicial workers were appointed across *de facto* provincial and district courts in April 2022, replacing former government personnel.¹⁸¹ The appointed *de*

¹⁶⁸ Al Jazeera, Taliban announces amnesty, reaches out women, 17 August 2021, [url](#); AA, Taliban notify Gov’t servants to return to jobs, 21 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#); AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁷¹ International Crisis Group, Taliban rule in Afghanistan [Podcast], 6 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 10

¹⁷³ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 6

¹⁷⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, One Certainty For Afghans: The Taliban And Taxes, 16 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ Byrd, W., Taliban Are Collecting Revenue — But How Are They Spending It?, USIP, 2 February 2022, [url](#); Economist (The), The Taliban government has proved surprisingly good at raising money, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Terpstra, N., The new Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Conversation (The), 6 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ Byrd, W., Taliban Are Collecting Revenue — But How Are They Spending It?, USIP, 2 February 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, SAO audits financials of 300 government institutions, 8 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 60

¹⁷⁹ TOLONews, Supreme Court Appoints 69 Provincial Judges, 16 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ Bakhtar News Agency, برخی از رییسان محکمه استئناف و شهرى پنجشیر معرفی شدند, [Some of the head of Panjshir’s appeals court were introduced], 17 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 10



facto judges were mainly religious scholars.¹⁸² Afghanistan's Independent Bar Association was placed under the Taliban Ministry of Justice in November 2021, which deprived the institution of its independent role.¹⁸³

Under Taliban rule Afghanistan's justice system lacked an official constitution and official laws.¹⁸⁴ No official judicial system was announced, and according to USDOS, *de facto* courts held sessions in some areas during which it was unclear 'what system of law, procedures, and sentencing guidelines' were used.¹⁸⁵ UNAMA described the administration of justice in the provinces as 'decentralised' and reported that it often was done in consultation with religious scholars, elders and local communities. Moreover, the justice sector applied pre-existing laws, *sharia*, and new Taliban directives, according to the same source, which led to 'a lack of clarity regarding the applicable legal framework on both procedure and substance'. *De facto* judges were reportedly 'empowered to lead their own investigations, without awaiting casefiles from Prosecution offices'.¹⁸⁶ *De facto* judges and police officers told media that the basis of their judgements and actions was *sharia*.¹⁸⁷ According to the Associated Press (AP), *de facto* judges worked with little transparency.¹⁸⁸ UNSG reported on structural, resource, and capacity constraints within the justice system, causing delays in *de facto* court proceedings, and increased detention numbers.¹⁸⁹

According to UNAMA, a Taliban military court was established to have jurisdiction over Taliban security personnel, and members of the Taliban ministries of defence and interior, and the Taliban GDI.¹⁹⁰ There were, however, reports of civilians being tried in this court.¹⁹¹

(e) Law enforcement and misconduct by Taliban fighters

The Taliban reportedly trained new police officers, and in March 2022 around 377 persons graduated from police training according to AP. Women were among the graduates, but their share was unclear.¹⁹² On 5 June 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Interior claimed that 35 000 'forces' had been trained in the past six months.¹⁹³

Persons serving in the *de facto* security institutions initially lacked uniforms, which made them difficult for the public to distinguish from persons with criminal intentions.¹⁹⁴ In April 2022, the

¹⁸² Rahimi, H., Afghanistan's laws and legal institutions under the Taliban, Melbourne Asia Review, 6 June 2022, [url](#); UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 35

¹⁸³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Judge, Jury, And Executioner, 1 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁸⁶ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 35

¹⁸⁷ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan's justice system altered under the Taliban [Online video], 6 October 2021, [url](#); VICE News, Life in the Taliban's Afghanistan [Online video], 13 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ AP, Taliban raised on war bring a heavy hand to security role, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 10

¹⁹⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 35

¹⁹¹ Khaama Press, Taliban Tries Seven Kidnappers and Others in Military Court, 13 April 2022, [url](#); RSF, Afghanistan : Afghan journalist tried by military court, sentenced to one year in prison, 11 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹² AP, Taliban official wanted by U.S. makes rare public appearance, 5 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹³ TOLONews, 2,000 Detained for Various Crimes in Past Month in Kabul, 5 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ TOLONews, Security Forces to Get New Uniforms Next Month, 17 April 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Kabul Residents Demand Security Forces be Given Uniforms, 11 June 2022, [url](#)



Taliban Ministry of Interior announced that uniforms would be provided to *de facto* police forces in different phases, first in Kabul and Kandahar and then in the other provinces.¹⁹⁵ The same type of uniform was to be provided to the *de facto* police officers and the *de facto* security forces¹⁹⁶, and there were only slight changes from the uniform of the previous government's security forces.¹⁹⁷ According to Ariana News the new uniforms were dark blue and were decorated with the Taliban flag, instead of the grey-blue uniform with the Afghan tri-colour of the former government.¹⁹⁸ According to Afghan media outlet Bakhtar News Agency the distribution process had started by 8 June 2022, as 20 000 uniforms had already been distributed and another 80 000 would be distributed in the coming two weeks.¹⁹⁹ On 9 June 2022, a visiting journalist noted that many of those manning checkpoints or patrolling in Kabul City wore uniforms.²⁰⁰ On 24 June 2022, Bakhtar News Agency cited Taliban officials claiming that all Kabul *de facto* police personnel had obtained new uniforms and instructing everyone on duty to wear uniform.²⁰¹

Bakhtar News Agency further reported on Taliban security forces arresting alleged criminals across the country. According to information from Taliban security officials commenting on individual cases, people were arrested for alleged crimes involving, *inter alia*, narcotics, robberies, and abductions.²⁰² In several instances Taliban security officials claimed that the cases had been referred to the judiciary for further processing²⁰³ and that suspects had confessed during the initial investigation.²⁰⁴ On 5 June 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Interior

¹⁹⁵ TOLONews, Security Forces to Get New Uniforms Next Month, 17 April 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Mol Identifies Announces Police Uniform, 8 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Kabul Residents Demand Security Forces be Given Uniforms, 11 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ TOLONews, Mol Identifies Announces Police Uniform, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ TOLONews, Security Forces to Receive Newly Designed Standard Uniform, 20 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ Ariana News, Police ordered to wear new uniforms at all Kabul checkpoints, 16 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ Bakhtar News Agency, ANP New Uniforms Distribution Process Starts, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ NPR, NPR travels to Afghanistan for the 1st time since the Taliban took over, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁰¹ Bakhtar News Agency [Twitter], posted on: 24 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁰² Bakhtar News Agency, 8 People Arrested on Suspicion of Drug Trafficking in Baghlan, 23 May 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Two Drug Smugglers Arrested in Laghman, 15 May 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Two Drug Dealers Arrested in Parwan, 9 May 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Police Arrested 16 Criminal in Herat, 4 May 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, 5 People Arrested Carrying More than 1,200kg Of Drugs in Kunduz, 7 April 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Band of drug smugglers arrested in Balkh, 27 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Police Arrested 3 Men on Suspicion of Robbery, 30 April 2020, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Many Arrested for Criminal Offenses in Kandahar Lately, 25 April 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Band of Robbers arrested by Police in Herat, 3 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Two people arrested in suspicion of abductions, 6 April 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, 128 Arrested On-Charge of Crimes in Nangarhar, 21 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁰³ Bakhtar News Agency, 25 Arrested in Mol Operation, 17 June 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Police Arrested 3 Abductors in Khost, 13 June 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Band of drug smugglers arrested in Balkh, 27 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, 128 Arrested On-Charge of Crimes in Nangarhar, 21 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ Bakhtar News Agency, Robbery in Paktia, 3 Women Arrested On-charge, 4 June 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Drug Dealers' Gang Decomposed in Herat, 14 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Nangarhar Police Arrested 5 In-Charge of Robbery, 27 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Three Fugitive Thieves Arrested in Herat-Kabul, 26 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Helmand Police Arrested 8 Criminals, 26 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Two Drug Smugglers Arrested in Laghman, 15 May 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, 5 People Arrested Carrying More than 1,200kg Of Drugs in Kunduz, 7 April 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Nangarhar Police Arrested 5 In-Charge of Robbery, 27 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Kunduz Police Arrest Two Men on Suspicion of Robbery, 10 April 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Many Arrested for Criminal Offenses in Kandahar Lately, 25 April 2022, [url](#)



stated that 2 000 people had been arrested in Kabul City the past month due to various crimes, and that some of them had been referred to the judiciary.²⁰⁵

According to AP criminal suspects, as of 1 February 2022, were increasingly brought to *de facto* courts²⁰⁶, but an anonymous international organisation told Landinfo in February and March 2022 that people arrested for alleged crimes were imprisoned without any investigation or judgement. Even in cases of relatively serious crimes, there were no investigations because the *de facto* police lacked resources and competence. The source further stated that people appointed to leading positions within the *de facto* police and *de facto* prosecuting authorities did not have knowledge about investigative methods.²⁰⁷ The lack of competence in civilian policing and prosecuting crime was echoed by anonymous sources interviewed by EUAA, the Swedish Migration Agency's Unit for Migration Analysis, and DIS in March 2022.²⁰⁸ There was also a lack of reading and writing skills within the *de facto* security institutions.²⁰⁹

According to AP, the Taliban were trying to 'keep discipline over thousands of young fighters' who were 'bringing heavy-handed methods of war into their new roles as security forces'. During the first months after the takeover this included low-level commanders implementing punishments for alleged crimes, 'such as publicly humiliating thieves'.²¹⁰ In October 2021, the Taliban created a 'Commission for the Purification of the ranks' after reported abuse by Taliban members.²¹¹ According to USDOS, similar Taliban commissions were also formed at provincial and local level and excluded 'corrupt members'. USDOS noted that there was little information available on the working methods of these Taliban commissions and their outcomes.²¹² On 21 February 2022, Taliban officials stated around 4 500 Taliban members had been expelled from the *de facto* security forces.²¹³ Patricia Gossman, Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, stated that she thought that many of the cases handled by the Taliban commission were related to theft and corruption, and not to the reported killings of persons affiliated with the security forces of the former government. The Taliban claimed that they had disciplined Taliban members but had not responded when Human Rights Watch asked for specific cases. Human Rights Watch had not seen any cases of disciplinary measures within the Taliban as of 12 May 2022.²¹⁴ During a graduation ceremony of new *de facto* police officers in March 2022, the Taliban Minister of Interior reportedly acknowledged that some misconduct occurred among Taliban fighters transitioning from fighting a war to policing. Haqqani also stated that these individuals were undergoing training.²¹⁵

²⁰⁵ Bakhtar News Agency, 2,000 Detained for Various Crimes in Past Month in Kabul, 5 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ AP, Taliban raised on war bring a heavy hand to security role, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Taliban regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 13

²⁰⁸ International analyst in Afghanistan, digital meeting, 17 March 2022; Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktovertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 23, 43; Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 9

²⁰⁹ AP, Taliban raised on war bring a heavy hand to security role, 1 February 2022, [url](#); Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Taliban regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 11

²¹⁰ AP, Taliban raised on war bring a heavy hand to security role, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

²¹¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 59

²¹² USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 3

²¹³ TOLONews, Reform Commission Expels Around 4,500 Members of Security Forces, 21 February 2022, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 4,350 undesired persons expelled from forces ranks, 21 February 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁴ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

²¹⁵ AP, Taliban official wanted by U.S. makes rare public appearance, 5 March 2022, [url](#)



Taliban forces have repeatedly been urged by senior Taliban officials and the Taliban MPVPV to respect people's privacy, avoid harassment as well as ethnic and language discrimination.²¹⁶ Calls have also been made on Taliban fighters to avoid launching unauthorised operations and house searches.²¹⁷ The Taliban Minister of Interior also called on the *de facto* security forces to release people who had not committed crimes from prisons in Kabul districts.²¹⁸ Taliban fighters were also repeatedly urged to respect the general amnesty of persons who served the former government²¹⁹ which was announced directly after the takeover.²²⁰ There were reports about the killing and ill-treatment of former members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) and government personnel, as well as their family members.²²¹ For more information, see sections [2. Persons affiliated with security institutions of the former government](#) and [4. Public officials and servants of the former government](#).

According to OHCHR, a directive from the Taliban Ministry of Interior called on the *de facto* security forces in late February 2022, to 'perform their duties in the presence of lawyers and in broad daylight', and 'refrain from harassing, insulting, and beating suspects'.²²² According to Bakhtar News, the Taliban Police Chief in Samangan Province told the *de facto* security forces that they did not have the right to beat suspects or criminals and should bring arrested persons to *de facto* courts.²²³

In February 2022, the Taliban initiated large-scale search campaigns of private residents across Afghanistan. The communicated purpose was to arrest criminals and to confiscate weapons.²²⁴ Some residents claimed that homes were searched to find persons affiliated with the former government²²⁵, and some claimed to be targeted because of their ethnicity.²²⁶ The Taliban stated that the search operations had led to the confiscation of light and heavy weapons, armoured vehicles and tons of explosives²²⁷ and the arrest of several kidnappers, ISKP members and thieves.²²⁸ The operations also generated reports of misconduct²²⁹, and

²¹⁶ Ariana News, IEA orders forces to respect people's privacy, 7 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Calls for Unity, 15 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader: Avoid Ethnic and Racial Discrimination, 18 April 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Minister Orders Police to Stop Unauthorized Operations, 18 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Mawlawi Akhundzada: General Amnesty Must Be Respected, 30 December 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Ministry of Vice and Virtue Urges Troops to Obey Orders, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁷ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Forces Ordered to Respect Privacy of Citizens, 13 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Minister Orders Police to Stop Unauthorized Operations, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁸ TOLONews, Minister Orders Police to Stop Unauthorized Operations, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁹ Ariana News, IEA's supreme leader calls on officials to adhere to amnesty orders, 30 December 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Issues Message for Eid, 29 April 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 25

²²⁰ France 24, Taliban declares general amnesty for Afghan government officials, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

²²¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 25

²²² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 27

²²³ Bakhtar News Agency, No Police Officer Has the Right to Beat Suspects, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

²²⁴ Washington Post (The), Taliban launches sweeping raids across Kabul, 27 February 2022, [url](#); VICE News, Taliban Fighters Are Conducting Door-to-Door House Searches, 3 March 2022, [url](#)

²²⁵ DW, Taliban conduct sweeping house-to-house searches [Online video], 16 March 2022, [url](#); VOA, Taliban Defend Door-to-door Searches in Kabul, Bar Future Evacuations of Afghans, 27 February 2022, [url](#)

²²⁶ VICE News, Taliban Fighters Are Conducting Door-to-Door House Searches, 3 March 2022, [url](#)

²²⁷ VOA, Taliban Defend Door-to-door Searches in Kabul, Bar Future Evacuations of Afghans, 27 February 2022, [url](#)

²²⁸ AP, Taliban official says dozens of criminals arrested in sweeps, 27 February 2022, [url](#)

²²⁹ Nikkei Asia, Clearing operations' bring fresh wave of restrictions on Afghans, 26 March 2022, [url](#)



footage circulated on social media showing Taliban fighters kicking in doors, and households left with furniture and goods scattered around.²³⁰

In the reporting period 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, UNAMA recorded at least 118 instances of excessive use of force by the *de facto* authorities. Most cases concerned the shooting of civilians failing to stop at checkpoints. The *de facto* authorities also wounded people in attempts to control crowds and during law enforcement operations.²³¹ UNAMA reported that the Taliban had issued a directive on the use of force by Taliban security officials.²³² The Taliban Ministry of Interior instructed the *de facto* security forces to take precautions in their interactions with the civilian population, including not firing against anyone while patrolling ‘unless you are attacked and need to defend yourself’. UNAMA however continued to receive reports, after these instructions were issued, of civilian deaths and injuries following excessive use of force by *de facto* security institutions.²³³ On 23 February 2022, after repeated firings at checkpoints due to miscommunication with drivers, the Taliban Ministry of Interior called on *de facto* police units and *de facto* security commanders in Kabul City and the districts to ‘employ professionals’, and the ministry reportedly set up a special unit to monitor checkpoints.²³⁴ According to OHCHR, the ministry also called on Taliban fighters to refrain from firing at civilians at checkpoints.²³⁵

(f) Prison conditions

Sources reported that prisons were operative again, following the takeover.²³⁶ According to UNAMA, the Taliban had taken over the administration of 41 prisons across Afghanistan and in early August 2021 they managed a prison population of around 33 000 detainees and prisoners. UNAMA reported that this number ‘progressively increase[d]’ as people were being held in detention pending investigation or trial, and as prisons were being used as facilities to hold drug addicts. Following releases in the first four months of 2022, the Taliban Office of Prison Administration, however, claimed that the total detained population did not exceed 10 000 people. UNAMA reported that as of 19 June 2022, the overall prison population was 9 621 persons of which 75 % were pre-trial detainees. The detained included both men and women although men made up the vast majority.²³⁷ UNAMA did not specify on which statistics they based these prison figures, and it was not possible to corroborate them.

UNAMA reported that the Taliban issued a ‘Code of Conduct on system reform relating to prisoners’ instructing Taliban security officials that ‘common-law’ criminals should not be held for more than three days, after which their case needed to be handed over to a *de facto* court. However, the instructions also allowed for suspects to be held for one month or more if ordered by a *de facto* court.²³⁸ In January 2022, the Taliban issued guidance that detainees

²³⁰ VICE News, Taliban Fighters Are Conducting Door-to-Door House Searches, 3 March 2022, [url](#)

²³¹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 18

²³² UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 3

²³³ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 18

²³⁴ TOLONews, Mol to Kabul Police: Professionals Must Run Checkpoints, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

²³⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 27

²³⁶ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Talibans regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 13;

UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 35

²³⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 35–36

²³⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 36 [footnote 75]



should be treated in accordance with *sharia*²³⁹, and established a Taliban commission to inspect prisons and detention centres, and to make sure innocent prisoners were released.²⁴⁰ A number of detained persons were reportedly released in various locations.²⁴¹ OHCHR reported that some decisions seemed to derive from this guidance while other releases were due to decisions of local *de facto* authorities.²⁴² In the period January–May 2022, UNAMA documented the release of 2 383 persons from prisons across the country and mentioned a decree by the Taliban supreme leader on the festivity Eid-ul-Fitr ‘per which prisoners and detainees of little risk or with little time left to serve were also released.’²⁴³ In January 2022, Ariana News reported that Taliban officials had urged members not to send people to prison without a court order.²⁴⁴ In a reportage by VICE News, three imprisoned men were briefly interviewed in a jail in Wardak Province. One man was reportedly imprisoned to pressure his family to accept a court decision in his sister’s divorce case. He was released a few days later without charges.²⁴⁵

According to OHCHR, the prison conditions in Afghanistan were below international standards before the Taliban takeover, and because of a general lack of funds the conditions worsened under Taliban rule. OHCHR reported on scarcity of food, medical care, clothing and heating.²⁴⁶ The aforementioned ‘Code of Conduct on system reform relating to prisoners’ reportedly outlined obligations aligning with the minimum standards of the Mandela Rules²⁴⁷ on food, accommodation, health and procedural safeguards, according to UNAMA.²⁴⁸ Nonetheless, prisons continued to face challenges related to overcrowding and lack of resources.²⁴⁹ According to an anonymous international source interviewed by Landinfo, there was no money to feed prisoners, so most were quickly released. The prisoner’s family could also be asked to provide food, but if they did not have the means (e.g., because of poverty) the prisoner was released. The source had further seen reports of victims being asked to provide food for the perpetrator for an arrest to be made. Suspected ISKP affiliates were not released according to the source.²⁵⁰ UNAMA also reported on some prison’s reliance on external support to provide inmates with food ‘for an adequate diet’, and the lack of hygiene materials, medical care, clothing and accommodation.²⁵¹ In February 2022, Sky News reported on life conditions in the main prison in Herat City. The prison was described as ‘crammed full’ with around 40 men in each cell, and many had not been tried by a *de facto* court. One detainee claimed that many inmates were former government workers, imprisoned without trial nor

²³⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 30

²⁴⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 30; Ariana News, IEA’s cabinet says innocent prisoners to be released as soon as possible, 4 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁴¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 30; Ariana News, Over 30 prisoners released from Takhar jail, 13 January 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Prison review board releases 50 innocent prisoners in Kandahar, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁴² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 30

²⁴³ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 36

²⁴⁴ Ariana News, Over 30 prisoners released from Takhar jail, 13 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ VICE News, Life in the Taliban’s Afghanistan [Online video], 13 February 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 29

²⁴⁷ UN General Assembly, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2015, 8 January 2016, [url](#)

²⁴⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 37

²⁴⁹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 35–36; Sky News, Afghanistan: Inside prison where children as young as 12 are held and female governor has vanished, 7 February 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Talibans regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 13

²⁵¹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 37–38



evidence. Children from 12 years of age were also reportedly imprisoned.²⁵² UNAMA also reported on children being held in provincial prisons, sometimes alongside adults. UNAMA further reported that as of May 2022, juveniles were held in provincial prisons in Balkh, Baghlan, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Kunar, Kunduz, Laghman, Nanagarhar, Paktya, Parwan, Sar-i-Pul and Takhar.²⁵³

The Taliban's 'Code of Conduct on system reform relating to prisoners' reportedly prohibited the use of torture 'at any point throughout arrest, transfer or detention' and provided punishments for those resorting to torture.²⁵⁴ Cases of detainees subjected to torture in detention or prison included a person who was brother to a former police commander. He claimed to have been detained in February 2022, and tortured for a week in the 3rd Police District in Khost City.²⁵⁵ On 14 March 2022, Afghan media outlet TOLONews reported that four newly released members of a family in Paghman District, Kabul Province, had been tortured in prison by electrical shocks, hangings, and beatings.²⁵⁶ UNAMA recorded different forms of torture and ill-treatment by the Taliban GDI against detainees, and the most common methods included 'kicking, punching and slapping, beatings with cables and pipes, and the use of mobile electric shock devices'.²⁵⁷

Since the takeover, Taliban fighters have rounded up drug addicts across Afghanistan and brought them to clinics or prisons to receive treatment. They used force, sometimes with whips and gun barrels, and the ensuing treatment lacked methadone and oftentimes counselling.²⁵⁸ On 5 June 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Interior claimed that 27 000 drug addicts had been taken to health facilities for treatment since the takeover.²⁵⁹ Reports on provinces where drug addicts were imprisoned included Kandahar²⁶⁰, Farah (more than 2 000 addicts had been 'successfully treated' as of April 2022 according to the Taliban)²⁶¹, and Herat (more than 1 200 drug addicts had been imprisoned as April 2022).²⁶² In Balkh Province, as of May 2022, more than 3 000 persons had received medical treatment at addiction treatment centres according to a Taliban official.²⁶³

(g) Corporal and capital punishments

According the USDOS reporting on the situation in Afghanistan in 2021, there were no reports of Taliban representatives issuing punishments related to *sharia* since the takeover.²⁶⁴ In

²⁵² Sky News, Afghanistan: Inside prison where children as young as 12 are held and female governor has vanished, 7 February 2022, [url](#)

²⁵³ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 37

²⁵⁴ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 37

²⁵⁵ TOLONews, Brother of Former Police Commander Says He Was Tortured in Khost, 21 February 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ TOLONews, 4 Members of Paghman Family Freed By Security Forces, 14 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 19

²⁵⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Scared Straight: Taliban Treats Drug Addicts With A Heavy Dose Of Prison, 4 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁹ Bakhtar News Agency, 2,000 People Arrested Over Past Month in Kabul: MoI, 5 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Says Afghan Prison Offers Treatment For Drug Users, 4 January 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA turns Kandahar Prison into treatment center for drug addicts, 25 December 2021, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Hundreds of Addicts Received Medical Treatment in Kandahar, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁶¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Scared Straight: Taliban Treats Drug Addicts With A Heavy Dose Of Prison, 4 April 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Thousands of Addicts Received Medical Treatments in Farah, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁶² TOLONews, Over 1,200 Drug Addicts Being Treated at Herat Prison, 20 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁶³ Bakhtar News Agency, Many Addicts Returns Home After Receiving Medical Treatment, 6 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁴ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 1



November 2021, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported that *de facto* judges avoided issuing harsh punishments to avoid losing support among the population.²⁶⁵ After the takeover there were, however, reports of Taliban fighters subjecting civilians to violence, for instance whipping alleged thieves.²⁶⁶ UNAMA recorded cases of corporal punishments of individuals accused of *zina* after the takeover, some followed ‘a judicial decision or other quasi-judicial process’.²⁶⁷ As of June 2022, UNAMA had recorded extrajudicial killings of five women and two men accused of extramarital relationships, and at least 30 instances of ‘cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishments’ including public flogging, beatings and verbal abuse of persons failing to comply with issued directives on behavioural norms.²⁶⁸

According to one local media report from October 2021, the Taliban publicly lashed a young unmarried couple in Firozkoh, Ghor Province, for riding a motorbike together. They were whipped 29 times each and were forced to marry.²⁶⁹ According to Hasht-e Subh four people were stoned to death in Uruzgan Province in December 2021. Taliban fighters had arrested four people accused of rape.²⁷⁰ According to UNAMA, a woman and her in-law were lashed in January 2022 in Badakhshan Province. The woman had reported the man for sexual assault but was arrested with him. They were sentenced to around 40 lashes each and were ordered by a *de facto* court to marry.²⁷¹ It has not been possible to corroborate these cases.

On 14 February 2022, a man and a woman accused of *zina* were stoned to death in Nusay District, Badakhshan Province, according to UNAMA. The Taliban District Governor reportedly made the decision of stoning.²⁷² It has not been possible to corroborate this case. On 20 February 2022, a woman and a man were stoned to death for alleged adultery in Badakhshan Province on order by a district judge.²⁷³ On 21 February 2022, a man accused of adultery was whipped in public in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province.²⁷⁴ According to UNAMA, the case was brought before a Taliban commission with officials from the Taliban MPVPV, the Taliban ministries for justice, and information and culture, and the Taliban provincial governor. They reportedly sentenced the man and supervised the flogging.²⁷⁵ According to Rukhshana Media, an Afghan women’s media organisation, the involved woman was detained by the Taliban MPVPV.²⁷⁶

On 1 April 2022, a woman, her nephew, and a male colleague riding a car together were reportedly stopped at a checkpoint in Mazar-e Sharif by officials of the Taliban MPVPV and the *de facto* police. They were interrogated and arrested as the woman and her colleague were not related or married. The following day, their dead and mutilated bodies were found, but the

²⁶⁵ RFI, Justice delayed as Taliban build their legal system in Afghanistan, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁶ Metro, Taliban return to brutal ways as they whip and torment thief, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 17

²⁶⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 34

²⁶⁹ Rukhshana Media, Taliban publicly lashes couple in central Ghor province, 26 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ Hasht-e Subh, Four People Stoned to Death in Urozgan Over Rape Accusation, 7 December 2021, [url](#)

²⁷¹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 17

²⁷² UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 17

²⁷³ Rukhshana Media, A woman and a man were stoned to death in Badakhshan, 20 February 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Publicly Flogs Afghan Man Accused Of Adultery, 22 February 2022, [url](#); UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 17

²⁷⁵ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 17

²⁷⁶ Rukhshana Media, A man was lashed in public in Uruzgan, 22 February 2022, [url](#)



nephew was returned to his family ‘unharméd’.²⁷⁷ It has not been possible to corroborate this information.

In April 2022, seven men were flogged and sentenced to imprisonment by the Taliban Supreme Court, *inter alia* for drinking alcohol.²⁷⁸ According to Khaama Press this was the first time *hudud*²⁷⁹ was applied since the Taliban takeover²⁸⁰, and a Taliban Supreme Court official confirmed to AFP that it was the first time a *de facto* court issued flogging as a punishment.²⁸¹ In June 2022, Hasth-e Subh reported on a man being arrested by the Taliban’s intelligence service and lashed 29 times for harassing a girl.²⁸² It has not been possible to corroborate this case.

1.2. Reactions to opposition and criticism

1.2.1. Expressed opposition and criticism

The Taliban authorities arrested and detained individuals who made peaceful expressions of opinion or dissent.²⁸³ Civil society actors were reportedly subjected to killings, enforced disappearances, incommunicado detentions, attacks, harassment, threats and arrests.²⁸⁴ Victims of such reprisals included activists, journalists and members of academia.²⁸⁵ Victims and their family members were discouraged to engage with media, and many were afraid to talk about their experiences.²⁸⁶ According to UNAMA, Taliban made efforts to ‘stifle debate, curb dissent and limit the fundamental rights and freedoms of Afghans’.²⁸⁷

Among those detained was Din Mohammad Azimi, former politician and member of the former Independent Electoral Commission. Azimi was detained in January 2022, on accusations of maintaining relations with former politicians opposing the Taliban according to his nephew.²⁸⁸ In December 2021, the former director of Afghan media outlet Pajhwok Afghan News, Khaja Khalil Fitri, was detained by the Taliban intelligence department. A relative stated that the

²⁷⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 17

²⁷⁸ AFP, Grim Reminder of Taliban Past: Seven Afghan Men Flogged on ‘First Such’ Supreme Court Order, 20 April 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Criminal Flogged in Taliban’s Supreme Court, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁹ Fixed punishment for ‘crimes against God’. See: RFE/RL/Gandhara, Public Executions, Floggings Inevitable Under Taliban Court Rulings, Says Scholar, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ Khaama Press, Criminal Flogged in Taliban’s Supreme Court, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁸¹ AFP, Grim Reminder of Taliban Past: Seven Afghan Men Flogged on ‘First Such’ Supreme Court Order, 20 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁸² Hasht-e Subh, [یک جوان در غور به اتهام مزاحمت به یک دختر زده شد](#) [A young man in Ghor was lashed for the crime of harassment of a girl], 20 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁸³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 44

²⁸⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 52

²⁸⁵ AI, Afghanistan: The Taliban must immediately release Professor Faizullah Jalal, 10 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁶ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban must immediately stop arbitrary arrests of journalists, civil society activists, former government officials and those who dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 3; Sharharzad Akbar, email, June 2022

²⁸⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 3

²⁸⁸ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban must immediately stop arbitrary arrests of journalists, civil society activists, former government officials and those who dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), pp. 2–3



ground for the arrest was unclear, but that he had ‘heard’ from Taliban authorities in Balkh Province that Fitri was accused of a political crime. Fitri was released in January 2022.²⁸⁹

A representative of an anonymous international organisation in Afghanistan told DIS on 29 March 2022 that there were ‘several examples of individuals belonging to the well-educated class and members of the intelligentsia being targeted’.²⁹⁰ An anonymous international humanitarian organisation told DIS that some of the well-educated class and members of the intelligentsia remained in detention by 31 March 2022. The same source stated that some awaited trials, and that they were charged with promoting values not in line with *sharia* or violating ‘the principle of the Quran’. The source also mentioned people being killed or being under house arrest.²⁹¹ Cases that received media attention included university professor Faizullah Jalal who was arrested on 8 January 2022. An unnamed source told TOLONews that Jalal was interrogated by the Taliban’s intelligence service in Kabul.²⁹² Jalal is a prominent professor of political science and law at Kabul University, and is married to the former Minister of Women Affairs. He is also a well-known, outspoken critic of successive Afghan regimes²⁹³ and had previously openly criticised the Taliban government, including on television.²⁹⁴ A Taliban spokesperson confirmed Jalal’s arrest by Taliban intelligence, due to statements on social media that were against the Taliban government, and that ‘spread bigotry’. The spokesperson also accused Jalal of having connections with groups and bands disrupting security.²⁹⁵ The series of social media statements in question turned out not to be Jalal’s,²⁹⁶ his family claimed that the account was fake, and Jalal was released on 11 January 2022.²⁹⁷ According the RFE/RL, reporting in March 2022, Jalal had stayed silent since his release²⁹⁸ but, according to Khaama Press, he gave an early interview to Radio Free Afghanistan in which he said that he had been ‘well treated’, ‘did not feel as being in prison during his detention’ and that most Taliban members at the detention facility were ‘educated’ and ‘behaved with him very well’, and that he ‘felt like being a guest’ [neither this information nor these statements’ validity could be corroborated].²⁹⁹ Another university professor, Sayed Baqir Mohseni, disappeared on 4 March 2022, days after accusing the Taliban of ‘stifling free speech’ on television. Mohseni was released two days later and told media that he had been kept at an unknown location by intelligence officials but had been ‘treated well’.³⁰⁰ In June

²⁸⁹ AFJC, AFJC welcomes the release of former Pajhwok managing director in Mazar-e-Sharif, 9 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁰ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 32

²⁹¹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 32

²⁹² TOLONews, Professor, Analyst Faizullah Jalal Arrested In Kabul, 8 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁹³ WSJ, Taliban Detain Prominent Critic, Intensifying Crackdown on Dissent in Afghanistan, 9 January 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Calls for release of Kabul University professor detained by Taliban, 10 January 2022, [url](#); AP, Taliban arrest popular Afghan professor critical of govt, 9 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁴ Al Jazeera, Taliban releases prominent Afghan professor from custody: Family, 11 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁵ TOLONews, Detention of Professor Faizullah Jalal Sparks Reactions, 9 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁶ WSJ, Taliban Detain Prominent Critic, Intensifying Crackdown on Dissent in Afghanistan, 9 January 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Calls for release of Kabul University professor detained by Taliban, 10 January 2022, [url](#); AP, Taliban arrest popular Afghan professor critical of govt, 9 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁷ DW, Taliban release prominent Afghan academic Faizullah Jalal | News, 11 January 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan-Canadian Aid Worker Reappears After Weeks In Taliban Detention, 9 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁹ Khaama Press, I didn’t feel like being in prison while in Taliban’s detention: Afghan university professor, 12 January 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan-Canadian Aid Worker Reappears After Weeks In Taliban Detention, 9 March 2022, [url](#)



2022, the Taliban Minister of Higher Education ordered a professor from Kunar University to apologise after posting content on social media seemingly critical of the Taliban.³⁰¹

Four activists were detained on 18 January 2022 after trying to organise a protest against the Pakistani national security adviser's visit to Kabul.³⁰² One activist, Azeem Azeemi, announced the intention to protest on social media, and an anonymous source interviewed by Amnesty International claimed that he was arrested right before the protest's start. The three other activists were detained when trying to get Azeemi released according to the same source.³⁰³ One local media report stated that the Taliban GDI arrested Azeemi, and a spokesperson said that Azeemi had confessed that he wanted to stage an illegal demonstration for the purpose of fleeing to the West, and to disrupt national security under the dictate of the former administration.³⁰⁴ As of 15 June 2022, Azeemi's whereabouts remained unknown.³⁰⁵

An Afghan human rights activist from southern Afghanistan told EUAA on 2 December 2021 that her relative had recently been murdered after questioning the Taliban's ability to feed the people on social media.³⁰⁶ Arrests following criticism on social media included Nadima Noor, a female comedian and aid worker. Noor was arrested in February 2022 for unclear reasons, but she had uploaded satirical videos on social media, sometimes critical of the Taliban.³⁰⁷ A few days before, Noor uploaded a video in which she 'admonished' heavily armed young Taliban fighters.³⁰⁸ Noor was released on 9 March 2022 without charges.³⁰⁹ In May 2022, journalist Khalid Qaderi was reportedly sentenced to imprisonment by the Taliban military court after criticising the Taliban on social media.³¹⁰ This was denied by Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid, who stated that the case had been processed by a *de facto* civil court in Herat and that Qader had been sentenced for criminal misconduct. Mujahid further stated that the case was unrelated to Qader's journalistic work.³¹¹ According to UNAMA two civil society activists were also involved and were sentenced to two years imprisonment.³¹²

1.2.2. Demonstrations and protests

Peaceful protests took place across Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, and focused on issues such as women's rights, economic sanctions, unpaid salaries, and the distribution of humanitarian assistance.³¹³ On 8 September 2021, the Taliban issued an instruction prohibiting unauthorised assemblies.³¹⁴ Taliban forces used force to disperse some crowds, including by

³⁰¹ Mohsin Amin [Twitter], posted on: 4 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁰² VOA, Taliban Detain Human Rights Activists Planning Protest of Pakistan Official's Visit, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

³⁰³ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban must immediately stop arbitrary arrests of journalists, civil society activists, former government officials and those who dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ RFE/RL/Radio Azadi, کابل ته د پاکستان د ملي امنيت سلاکار د سفر معترض لا هم د طالبانو په بند کې دی [Protestor of the Pakistan National Security Adviser's visit to Kabul is still in Taliban's Detention], 18 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 25

³⁰⁶ Afghan human rights activist, digital interview, 2 December 2021

³⁰⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan-Canadian Aid Worker Reappears After Weeks In Taliban Detention, 9 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁸ Tesha De Waday [Facebook], posted on: 9 February 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan-Canadian Aid Worker Reappears After Weeks In Taliban Detention, 9 March 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁰ RSF, Afghanistan : Afghan journalist tried by military court, sentenced to one year in prison, 11 May 2022, [url](#)

³¹¹ VOA, Taliban Court Sentences Afghan Journalist to Prison, 12 May 2022, [url](#)

³¹² UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 28

³¹³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 49

³¹⁴ OHCHR, Press briefing notes on Afghanistan, 10 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), As Taliban Crush Dissent, New Leaders Face Cascading Challenges, 8 September 2021, [url](#)



using live ammunition, electroshock weapons, tear gas, whips, and beatings.³¹⁵ Some protesters were subjected to arbitrary detention, house-raids, ill-treatment and torture.³¹⁶ According to OHCHR, protests coordinated with the *de facto* authorities on endorsed issues ‘did not face restrictions’.³¹⁷ After raised concerns over women activists disappearing in January 2022, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP that the *de facto* authorities had the right to arrest and detain dissidents and did not allow illegal activities. He also stated that no one should ‘cause turmoil’ since it ‘disrupts peace and order’, and that other countries would arrest ‘such people’ in similar situations.³¹⁸

Especially protests on women’s rights were met with violence or intimidation by the Taliban.³¹⁹ Despite the prohibition of unsanctioned rallies, women protested almost daily in the first weeks after the takeover, but as women protesters were met with violence from the Taliban on several occasions such protests waned.³²⁰ Many resorted to organising smaller protests in private homes, sharing videos on social media³²¹ and writing messages on walls around Kabul City during night-time.³²² According to ACLED data, reported by SIGAR, women protests made up the majority of protests in the first quarter of 2022. After peaking in January 2022, they declined in the two following months. SIGAR connected this decline to the Taliban’s use of pepper spray during a protest and arrests of protesters at home.³²³ Demonstrations continued, but additional women activists were arrested, the ‘ringleaders’ according to RFE/RL. They were kept in custody while the Taliban denied their detentions.³²⁴ On 21 February 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Interior released a video of several detained women ‘confessing’ that they had been encouraged by women abroad to protest against the Taliban. A Taliban spokesperson repeated this message and stated that the protesters regretted their actions, and that there was ‘no threat to their lives’ at the moment.³²⁵ In an interview with CNN, the Taliban Minister of Interior repeated that women protests were provoked ‘from outside’.³²⁶ For more information on these arrests, see section [8. Human rights defenders and activists](#).

Throughout the reference period, protests occurred in Kabul City with women protesters demonstrating for women’s right to education, work, and political representation.³²⁷ For more information on such demonstrations, see section [5.2.4. Freedom of expression and assembly](#).

³¹⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 49; AI, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 49

³¹⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 49

³¹⁸ AFP, Taliban warn against dissent, women’s rights activism, 22 January 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 49; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 9

³²⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Kabul Women Stage Rare Protest For Jobs, Food, And Freedom, 16 December 2021, [url](#)

³²¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women Move Protests To Social Media To Evade Violent Taliban Response, 7 December 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Safe Spaces: After Taliban Crackdown, Afghan Women Take Their Protests Home, 7 December 2021, [url](#)

³²² TOLONews, Kabul Women Write Protest Slogans on City Walls at Night, 10 January 2022, [url](#)

³²³ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 73–74

³²⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Dozens Rally In Kabul To Protest Taliban Ban On Girls Attending School, 26 March 2022, [url](#)

³²⁵ TOLONews, Mol-Detained Female Protesters in Video Claim Outside Influence, 21 February 2022, [url](#)

³²⁶ CNN, Top Taliban leader makes more promises on women’s rights, 19 May 2022, [url](#)

³²⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Kabul Women Stage Rare Protest For Jobs, Food, And Freedom, 16 December 2021; TOLONews, Kabul Protesters Call for Inclusive Govt, 6 December 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Women in Kabul Demand



Women activists and university teachers were able to gather on international women's day (8 March 2022) in Kabul City to call on the Taliban not to ignore basic women's rights.³²⁸ On 31 March 2022, dozens of civil society activists gathered for a two-day event in Kabul City to discuss women's right to employment and education.³²⁹ According to TOLONews, more than 283 representatives of civil society, Islamic scholars, tribal elders, and war victim families participated. The Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture said they welcomed the gathering and asked the participants to cooperate with the *de facto* government.³³⁰ On 21 April 2022, civil society groups, political parties and ethnic councils held a press conference in Kabul, calling for secondary education for girls and demanding an explanation of the decision to not reopen the schools.³³¹ On 15 June 2022, the Taliban deputy Prime Minister, Abdul Kabir, reportedly received civil society members from all of Afghanistan's provinces.³³²

Other demonstrations included employees of the former government staging protests in Kabul City over unpaid salaries, including employees of Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan Hospital, the former ministries of urban development and land³³³ and public works³³⁴, and the former Supreme Court³³⁵ as well as employees of the organisation Women for Afghan Women.³³⁶ Retired government employees and veterans protested over unpaid pensions³³⁷, as well as former judicial workers who also called on the Taliban to let them resume work.³³⁸ On 2 March 2022, such a demonstration was reportedly 'disturbed' by Taliban forces.³³⁹ On 20 March 2022, former judges held a press conference during which they repeated their demands and claimed that around 2 000 former magistrates were part of a suit against the *de facto* government. RFE/RL cited the German news agency DPA stating that the Taliban allowed the news conference on the condition that they did not 'complain directly about the Taliban'.³⁴⁰

There were also reports on occasional demonstrations on other issues, including residents protesting in Panjsher Province on 26 December 2021, over the killing of a resident by Taliban fighters. The Taliban head of the provincial security department confirmed the death and stated that it was due to misinformation. According to him, the protest ended after local Taliban officials talked to the protesters.³⁴¹ Another demonstration occurred after the arrest of an Uzbek Taliban commander in Maymana City, Faryab Province, on 13 January 2022.³⁴² Hast-

Govt Jobs, Representation, 12 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Women in Kabul Call for Right to Work, End of Restrictions, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

³²⁸ TOLONews, Afghan Women Call for Basic Rights and Govt, Social Inclusion, 8 March 2022, [url](#)

³²⁹ TOLONews, Activists Meet to Discuss Current Situation, Women's Rights, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

³³⁰ TOLONews, Civil Society Gathering Calls for Trust-Building, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

³³¹ TOLONews, Activists, Political Parties Demand Reopening of Girls' Schools, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

³³² Bakhtar News Agency, Sapadar Hosted Country's Civil Society Activists, 16 June 2022, [url](#)

³³³ TOLONews, Govt Employees Protest Unpaid Wage in Kabul, 18 December 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Workers at the Urban Development Ministry Demand to Be Paid, 5 February 2022, [url](#)

³³⁴ TOLONews, Public Works Employees Hold Protest Over Unpaid Salaries, 27 February 2022, [url](#)

³³⁵ TOLONews, Supreme Court Employees Protest Over Unpaid Salaries, 28 December 2021, [url](#)

³³⁶ TOLONews, Employees of Women's Outreach Organization Demand Unpaid Salaries, 16 April 2022, [url](#)

³³⁷ TOLONews, Afghan Govt Retirees, Veterans Call for Pensions to Be Paid, 31 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Veterans, Govt Retirees Set Protest, Demand Pensions, 11 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Govt Retirees, Veterans Hold Protest to Demand Pensions, 16 June 2022, [url](#)

³³⁸ TOLONews, Former Govt Judges Hold Protest to Demand Salaries, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

³³⁹ TOLONews, Former Judges Hold Protest Over Their Uncertain Fate, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Hundreds Of Fired Afghan Judges Demand Jobs, Pay From Taliban, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁴¹ TOLONews, Panjshir Residents Protest Killing of Innocent Youth, 26 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁴² National (The), Taliban faces internal battles in northern province, 13 January 2022, [url](#)



e Subh reported on ‘hundreds’ participating³⁴³ but a local reporter told the National that the protests had been quelled the same evening.³⁴⁴ On 22 April 2022, the Taliban violently dispersed a crowd calling for increased security for Shia Hazaras following an ISKP attack against education centres in West Kabul.³⁴⁵

In April 2022, social media footage of Afghans being ill-treated in Iran caused several protests.³⁴⁶ Protests in Herat were dispersed by the *de facto* security forces firing warning shots, after the Iranian consulate in Herat had been attacked by protesters.³⁴⁷ UNAMA reported that 26 persons were detained in Herat before staging a protest in support of Iran.³⁴⁸

1.3. Implemented *sharia* and cultural norms in everyday life

1.3.1. General implementation and the nature of restrictions

The Taliban MPVPV is mandated to enforce the Taliban’s interpretation of *sharia*.³⁴⁹ According to UNAMA the mandate consists of ‘a mix of policy setting, advice, monitoring, complaints management, and enforcement authority on a range of issues’.³⁵⁰ An international organisation told Landinfo in March and April 2022 that there was little concrete information about how the ministry operated.³⁵¹ Ministry inspectors wear gown-like white uniforms³⁵² and, according to Sabawoon Samim, political analyst and guest author of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), it consists of three directorates. The first directorate has staff in each police district and provides advice to individuals at checkpoints, as well as at ceremonies, shops and other public places. The second directorate provides ‘amnesty’ or ‘pardon’ cards to former government officials and is tasked with ensuring their safety. The third directorate is a military unit that monitors the Taliban’s own ranks and addresses complaints against members.³⁵³ An international analyst told EUAA that the ministry has formal roles in education, mentoring and training of the military.³⁵⁴

According to Samim, the ministry is not fully operational, and its staffing is incomplete. In June 2022, some provinces lacked directors and other provinces lacked staff. In many areas Taliban commanders and other officials still intervened ‘in matters of behaviour and dress’. Moreover, the ministry was stronger and more organised in the cities stated Samim.³⁵⁵ The

³⁴³ Hasht-e Subh, The End of Unrest in Faryab: Taliban Fails to Quell Protests, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ National (The), Taliban faces internal battles in northern province, 13 January 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 25

³⁴⁶ France 24, Afghans protest after videos allegedly show Iranians beating refugees, 11 April 2022, [url](#); DW, Alleged Iranian abuses of refugees spark protests across Afghanistan, 15 April 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁷ Al Jazeera, Iran summons Afghan envoy after diplomatic mission attacks, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 25

³⁴⁹ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³⁵⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#)

³⁵¹ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Taliban regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 13

³⁵² Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Policing faces, bodies and beards on Kabul streets, 22 May 2022, [url](#)

³⁵³ Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁵⁴ International analyst, digital meeting, 17 March 2022

³⁵⁵ Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#)



international analyst also mentioned staffing issues, and said that the ministry is authorised to recruit 15 000 persons, but could not reach this number since they could not afford it.³⁵⁶

The Taliban stated that decrees issued by the Taliban MPVPV were only recommendations, but they were enforced in many areas, sometimes violently.³⁵⁷ In an interview to CNN, the Taliban Minister of Interior said that *hijab* is not compulsory, and that the Taliban do not force women to wear it, but solely advise and preach. But he also said that wearing it is ‘an Islamic order that everyone should implement’.³⁵⁸

There were guidelines for ministry staff to make recommendations and not to use force.³⁵⁹ These guidelines, however, set different stages for how to respond to prohibited acts, which included the use of force.³⁶⁰ According to Samim, the Taliban acting minister, Sheikh Muhammad Khalid Hanafi, is ‘less conservative’ and ministry staff members suggested that he aims to recruit individuals well-trained in *sharia* and enforcing it by advising or ‘gentle cajoling’. This is a ‘softer’ approach than in the ministry’s previous versions, but Samim also emphasised different views within the ministry and the Taliban in general on how some restrictions shall be implemented. Regional norms continued to impact attitudes ‘significantly’, according to Samim, who mentioned southern Afghanistan as an area where social norms have changed less in the past 20 years, in contrast to parts of eastern, south-eastern, central and northern Afghanistan.³⁶¹

The UNSG reported in June 2022 that the Taliban MPVPV had increased the enforcement of a wide range of directives related to extramarital relationships, dress code, attendance at prayers and music. As of 15 June 2022, UNAMA had recorded at least 30 instances of ‘cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishments’ including public flogging, beatings and verbal abuse of persons failing to comply with issued rules and directives since the takeover.³⁶² For information on corporal and capital punishments, see section 1.1.4(g) [Corporal and capital punishments](#).

USDOS reported that apostasy is a crime defined by *sharia* and includes conversion and proselytising to convince individuals to convert from Islam. According to USDOS, ‘appropriate’ punishments for apostates in Sunni Hanafi jurisprudence are beheading for men and life imprisonment for women, ‘unless the individual repents’. Property may also be confiscated and apostates can be prevented from inheriting property. Blasphemy was reportedly also a capital crime according to Sunni Hanafi jurisprudence and could include ‘anti-Islamic writings or speech’.³⁶³ According to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), apostasy is punishable by death according to the Taliban’s interpretation of *sharia*. The same source stated that Afghans converting to Christianity were considered apostates and faced

³⁵⁶ International analyst, digital meeting, 17 March 2022

³⁵⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#); UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

³⁵⁸ CNN, Top Taliban leader makes more promises on women's rights [Online video], 19 May 2022, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Taliban's regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 13

³⁶⁰ Guardian (The), We don't want people to be in a panic, says chief of Taliban morality police, 19 September 2021, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Vice Handbook Abusive, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁶¹ Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁶² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 34

³⁶³ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#)



‘ostracization and the threat of honour killings by family and village members’.³⁶⁴ On 7 June 2022, social media influencer Ajmal Haqiqi and three colleagues were arrested by the Taliban GDI³⁶⁵ for ‘insulting Islam’ in a recent video on the video-sharing site YouTube in which Haqiqi laughs while his colleague recites Koranic verses in a comical voice. They later appeared in a confession video, released by the Taliban, wearing handcuffs, prison uniforms and with bruises. Haqiqi apologised for ‘insulting’ the Koran and said that his channel promoted ‘moral corruption’ and was supported by the former government.³⁶⁶ The video had been criticised by religious scholars and other YouTubers, and two days before the arrest Haqiqi apologised in another video.³⁶⁷ On 29 June 2022, one of the four was reportedly released.³⁶⁸

1.3.2. Restrictions issued at national level

At national level the following restrictions were reportedly issued:

In September 2021, gender segregation was imposed at private universities. A decree by the Taliban Ministry of Education instructed classes to be divided at least by a curtain, and women to be taught by female teachers, or in the lack thereof, elderly men with ‘good character’.³⁶⁹

In November 2021, the Taliban issued media restrictions, which barred women from appearing in television dramas, soap operas and entertainment shows. Women news presenters “must” wear headscarves when appearing on screen, and men “must” wear proper clothes according to the guidelines. The guidelines did not define “proper clothes”.³⁷⁰

On 26 December 2021, the Taliban MPVPV issued instructions saying that women travelling more than 72 km should not be offered transport unless accompanied by a close male relative. Vehicle drivers were also instructed to refrain from playing music in their cars, and not to pick up female passengers without a *hijab* covering their hair.³⁷¹ According to RFE/RL, the ministry erected checkpoints in Kabul to inspect taxi drivers’ compliance with the orders not to pick up unaccompanied women³⁷², and buses were also controlled according to RFE/RL’s Radio Azadi.³⁷³

³⁶⁴ USCIRF, Afghanistan, April 2022, [url](#), p. 13

³⁶⁵ Reportedly, After Traditional Media, Taliban Launches War On New Age Media and Its Users In A Bid To Curb Freedom Of Expression, 7 June 2022, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan: The Taliban must immediately release YouTuber Ajmal Haqiqi and his colleagues, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Video Confession Of Popular Afghan YouTuber Prompts Outrage, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁷ Reportedly, After Traditional Media, Taliban Launches War On New Age Media and Its Users In A Bid To Curb Freedom Of Expression, 7 June 2022, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan: The Taliban must immediately release YouTuber Ajmal Haqiqi and his colleagues, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁸ RFE/RL/Radio Azadi, استخبارات طالبان غلام سخی را از بند رها کرد [Taliban Intelligence released Ghulam Sakhi from prison], 29 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Resurrects Gender Segregation In Public Offices, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁷⁰ CNN, Taliban bans women from solo, long-distance road trips, 29 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁷¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women Banned From Making Trips Unless Escorted, 26 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁷² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

³⁷³ RFE/RL/Radio Azadi, Is He Your Husband? Why The Taliban Is Restricting Women’s Travel, 1 April 2022, [url](#)



In March 2022, the Taliban Health Ministry was ordered to gender-segregate employees by separating male and female offices. The instruction also read that female patients without *hijab* should be denied healthcare, according to RFE/RL.³⁷⁴

In March 2022, foreign drama series were prohibited.³⁷⁵

On 27 March 2022, the Taliban MPVPV reportedly issued an instruction to airlines not to let women board without a male chaperone. Women were reportedly denied boarding.³⁷⁶ According to AFP, the instruction was directed to the two Afghan airlines Ariana and Kam Air and concerned both domestic and international flights.³⁷⁷ UNAMA reported that travel agencies had been instructed 'not to sell plane tickets to women without a guardian'.³⁷⁸ On 8 May 2022, AP reported that women arrived unaccompanied at Kabul International Airport, and boarded small buses alone.³⁷⁹

On 3 April 2022, the *de facto* government issued a decree banning poppy cultivation, a plant which is, *inter alia*, used to produce opium. The decree reads that crops should be burned, and farmers punished under *sharia*. It further banned the production, use or transportation of other illicit drugs.³⁸⁰ According to TOLONews, this included alcoholic beverages, heroin, 'Tablet L', and hashish.³⁸¹ On 6 June 2022, Bakhtar News Agency reported that several hectares of poppy fields had been destroyed in Kajaki District, Helmand Province.³⁸² On 27 June 2022, Ariana News cited Taliban officials claiming that around 2 000 hectares of poppy fields had been destroyed in Herat Province during the past months.³⁸³

On 15 April 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Education recommended female teachers to wear *hijab* and called on male students and teachers not to wear ties.³⁸⁴

On 21 April 2022, the *de facto* government instructed the Taliban Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to restrict access to the social media platform TikTok and the online game PlayerUnknown's Battleground, and to close channels with 'immoral programs'.³⁸⁵

On 7 May 2022, the Taliban's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, issued a decree instructing women to cover their faces. The decree read that failure to comply would result in the woman's father or closest male relative facing reprimands, imprisonment or being fired from his employment³⁸⁶, and that women should not leave their homes unless 'necessary'.³⁸⁷ According to UNAMA, the instruction specified that women government employees could be

³⁷⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Resurrects Gender Segregation In Public Offices, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁷⁵ TOLONews, TOLONews Presenter Freed After Night in Detention, 18 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁷⁶ Independent (The), Taliban ban Afghan women from flying without male chaperone, 28 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁷⁷ France 24, Taliban ban Afghan women flying alone in latest setback on rights, 28 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁷⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 22

³⁷⁹ AP, Afghanistan's Taliban order women to cover up head to toe, 8 May 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghanistan's Taliban Issues Ban On Opium Poppy Cultivation, 3 April 2022, [url](#)

³⁸¹ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Announces Ban on Poppy Cultivation, 3 April 2022, [url](#)

³⁸² Bakhtar News Agency, A Large Area of Poppy Fields Eradicated in Helmand, 20 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁸³ Ariana News, 2,000 hectares of land cleared of poppies in Herat: officials, 27 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ TOLONews, MoE: Male Students, Teachers Should Not Wear Ties, 15 April 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Bans TikTok, Popular Video Game in Afghanistan, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Taliban Orders Women To Wear Burqa Coverings In Public, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁷ AP, Afghanistan's Taliban order women to cover up head to toe, 8 May 2022, [url](#)



dismissed if failing to comply.³⁸⁸ Bakhtar News Agency reported that the decree indicated that any garment covering a woman's body was considered a *hijab*, as long as it was not too tight or too thin to reveal body parts.³⁸⁹

On 19 May 2022, the Taliban ordered all female television presenters to cover their faces while presenting.³⁹⁰ According to TOLONews, the verdict was issued to all media outlets, and when sharing the information with MOBY group (the largest media company in Afghanistan that also runs TOLONews³⁹¹), the Taliban MPVPV stated that the decision was 'final' and 'not up for discussion'.³⁹² Many female television presenters initially defied the order, but on 22 May 2022 they all wore veils disclosing nothing but their eyes.³⁹³ For more information on women's dress codes, see sections [5.1.2. Dress codes and behavioural norms](#) and [5.2.5. Implemented dress codes and behavioural norms](#).

According to RFE/RL, reporting on 17 June 2022, the Taliban allowed body building but ordered athletes to cover 'abdominal muscles and limbs with loose-fitting garments'.³⁹⁴

1.3.3. Provincial and local variations

The enforcement of issued restrictions varied across Afghanistan.³⁹⁵ Local Taliban officials enforced decrees on gender segregation, dress codes, men's beards, unaccompanied women, music³⁹⁶ and attendance at prayers.³⁹⁷ According to UNAMA the interpretation of the ministry's broad mandate varied 'greatly' between different provinces and noted an increase in issued instructions. Furthermore, the instructions seemed to be 'purposefully vague' according to UNAMA.³⁹⁸ An international analyst told EUAA in March 2022, that some local branches of the Taliban MPVPV had enforced regulations more extensively than envisaged by the ministry in Kabul.³⁹⁹ An anonymous international NGO, consulted by the Swedish Migration Agency's Unit for Migration Analysis in March and April 2022, described Takhar Province and Badakhshan Province as examples of areas in which the ministry had enforced their rules in a particularly violent way. The same source stated that the requirement for women to be accompanied by a male chaperone had been strictly implemented in Mazar-e Sharif, and that women were beaten if they did not abide to this rule.⁴⁰⁰ In Mazar-e Sharif, public bathhouses

³⁸⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

³⁸⁹ Bakhtar News Agency, Islamic Emirate Stressed for Islamic Hijab in the Country, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Reportedly Issues Order Requiring Female TV Presenters To Cover, 19 May 2022, [url](#)

³⁹¹ OSAR, Afghanistan: Profils à risqué, 31 October 2021, [url](#) p. 17

³⁹² TOLONews [Twitter], posted on: 19 May 2022, [url](#)

³⁹³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Free Her Face: Male Afghan Journalists Don Masks, Express Solidarity With Female Colleagues, 25 May 2022, [url](#); AP, Taliban enforcing face-cover order for female TV anchors, 22 May 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Bodybuilders Fear Taliban Restrictions, 17 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁵ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2; Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 23–24

³⁹⁶ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³⁹⁷ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 34

³⁹⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 22

³⁹⁹ International analyst, digital interview, 17 March 2022

⁴⁰⁰ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 23–24



were also shut for women.⁴⁰¹ The international NGO stated that women in cities such as Mazar-e Sharif and Herat, as well as in some Hazara dominated areas, experienced greater differences in their lives in comparison to their situation before the takeover. In more conservative cities and rural areas there were fewer notable changes as wearing *burqa* and being accompanied by a *mahram* (a close male relative) were required already before the takeover.⁴⁰² An Afghan human rights activist, interviewed by the EUAA on 2 December 2021, stated that the dress code in southern Afghanistan and Kandahar was ‘the least of the problems’ after the Taliban takeover, as many had already worn black *hijab* covering ‘from head to toe’ before. Instead, the source stressed the Taliban’s closure of girls’ schools, barring women from work and not accepting Afghan women in public spaces.⁴⁰³ Samim also stated that society in southern Afghanistan saw ‘much less change’ during the past two decades as regards social norms, in contrast to eastern, south-eastern, central and northern Afghanistan. According to Samim, Taliban members from the eastern, south-eastern, and northern areas showed greater acceptance for changes in local norms.⁴⁰⁴

In Kabul City, the demand for traditional clothing for men and women increased after the takeover⁴⁰⁵ and many women initially did not dare to go outside.⁴⁰⁶ In later reports from 2022, women had reportedly returned to the streets although they were fewer in numbers, and more of them dressed conservatively.⁴⁰⁷ Some men reportedly still trimmed their beards⁴⁰⁸ and wore Western-style clothes, although the Taliban advised men not to wear such attire.⁴⁰⁹ Men with such appearance were also fewer in numbers than before the takeover.⁴¹⁰ According to an anonymous Afghan analyst and an anonymous international organisation, consulted in February and March 2022 by Landinfo, there were women both with and without *burqa* in Kabul City. The sources were not aware of any crackdowns on women’s clothing by the Taliban MPVPV, but noted that the situation could be different in rural areas.⁴¹¹ According to freelance journalists Hizbullah Khan, the Taliban stopped women with coloured scarves from entering a university in Kabul on 18 May 2022, saying it was ‘not allowed’.⁴¹² Women residing in Kabul told Rukhshana Media in May 2022 that the Taliban MPVPV interrogated, mistreated and harassed women on the streets. One woman claimed to have been lashed twice on her back for sitting in the front seat of a taxi, another woman claimed that the Taliban had cut her 12-year-old cousin’s hair as it was not fully covered. A third woman claimed to have been

⁴⁰¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, *Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing*, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰² Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, *Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande*, 29 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 23–24

⁴⁰³ Afghan human rights activist, digital meeting, 2 December 2021

⁴⁰⁴ Samim, S., *Policing Public Morality*, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁵ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Hijab, turban prices soar in Kabul with Taliban’s return*, 22 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁶ Washington Post (The), *Taliban faces a new hurdle in Afghanistan: Protecting public from Islamic State*, 18 October 2021, [url](#); AFP, *Anxiety and fear for women in Taliban stronghold*, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, *Taliban Rule in Afghanistan* [Podcast], 6 May 2022, [url](#); International analyst, digital interview, 17 March 2022; NPR, *NPR travels to Afghanistan for the 1st time since the Taliban took over*, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁸ AP, *Six months of Taliban: Afghans safer, poorer, less hopeful*, 15 August 2022, [url](#); International analyst, digital interview, 17 March 2022; International Crisis Group, *Taliban Rule in Afghanistan* [Podcast], 6 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, *Afghan Bodybuilders Fear Taliban Restrictions*, 17 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁰ International Crisis Group, *Taliban Rule in Afghanistan* [Podcast], 6 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹¹ Norway, Landinfo, *Afghanistan, Taliban regime – situasjonen etter maktövertakelsen*, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 13

⁴¹² Hizbullah Khan [Twitter], posted on: 18 May 2022, [url](#)



threatened with flogging for wearing short and bright coloured clothing.⁴¹³ These cases could not be corroborated.

Citizens celebrated Valentine's Day on 14 February 2022 in Kabul City. Taliban fighters reportedly marched through the streets but did not stop Valentine's sales, although shopkeepers were asked to keep a low profile.⁴¹⁴ Nonetheless, there were instances of Taliban fighters popping balloons, ransacking flower shops and closing celebration venues.⁴¹⁵ According to AP, the Taliban also detained young men selling heart-shaped flowers.⁴¹⁶

In Kabul, all venues with rides and games were instructed to gender-segregate men and women by separate opening days. There were no exceptions for families.⁴¹⁷ According to TOLONews, who referred to a spokesman of Kabul municipality, a government decision called on the municipality to remove all photos of women from signboards in shops and business centres.⁴¹⁸ In parts of Kabul, the Taliban reportedly fined residents not attending congregational prayers at mosques. A Kabul resident told RFE/RL that clerics had been ordered to take roll calls and report persons who failed to show up at the mosques.⁴¹⁹ According to one media report there were also restrictions on men's shaving in Kabul City.⁴²⁰

In Herat City, shop owners were ordered to remove the heads of mannequins in December 2021, as they were considered 'idols' and thus 'un-Islamic'. Some shopkeepers complied with the orders and sawed off the heads of their mannequins.⁴²¹ The Taliban order on women to cover their faces on 7 May 2022 did not impact the way women dressed in Herat City significantly, according to women interviewed by the AAN. The same sources stated that the Taliban MPVPV was not active around the city.⁴²²

In Helmand Province, Taliban officials reportedly banned barbers from shaving or cutting beards in late September 2021, and warned that those violating the rule would be punished.⁴²³ According to Wall Street Journal (WSJ), the Taliban authorities in Kabul 'overruled' decisions in Helmand on cutting hair and shaving beards.⁴²⁴ UNAMA recorded cases of physical punishment of individuals not attending prayers, including the beating of shopkeepers in Lashkar Gah City, Helmand Province.⁴²⁵ According to UNAMA officials of the Taliban MPVPV verbally abused a group of unaccompanied women shopping at a bazar in Lashkar Gah City, Helmand Province, in April 2022. Male shopkeepers were beaten for allowing the women to

⁴¹³ Rukhshana Media, Women face verbal and physical abuse in the streets by the Taliban's religious police, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁴ News International (The), Here's how Afghanistan celebrated first Valentine's Day under Taliban rule, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁵ Fuller Project (The), Dating in the time of the Taliban, 4 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁶ AP, Six months of Taliban: Afghans safer, poorer, less hopeful, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Gender-Segregates Kabul Fun Parks, Compounding Cutoffs For Girls And Women, 27 March 2022, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Days of Public Park Visits Determined, 27 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁸ TOLONews, Kabul Municipality Forbids Images of Women on Advertising, 21 December 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴²⁰ BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban ban Helmand barbers from trimming beards, 26 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴²¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴²² Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴²³ BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban ban Helmand barbers from trimming beards, 26 September 2021, [url](#); Bilal Sarwary, [Twitter], posted on: 26 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴²⁴ WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴²⁵ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 17



enter their stores without a *mahram*, and the *de facto* police arrested 12 male shopkeepers. The shopkeepers were later released.⁴²⁶

In Badakhshan Province, UNAMA recorded the beating of a group of university students not attending prayers in Faizabad in April 2022.⁴²⁷ UNAMA also reported on restrictions on trimming beards in the province.⁴²⁸

In Takhar Province, the Taliban reportedly fined residents for not attending congregational prayers. RFE/RL reported that locals had witnessed arrests or beatings of repeat offenders.⁴²⁹ According to one media report there were also restrictions on shaving.⁴³⁰ According to UNAMA, officials of the Taliban MPVPV verbally abused three women at a bazar in Taloqan City for leaving their homes without a *mahram*.⁴³¹

In Uruzgan Province, the Taliban banned shaving beards and trimming hair in late September 2021, and barbers were ordered to halt their work.⁴³² In January 2022, male employees of Taliban officials in the province were reportedly ordered to stop trimming and wear a turban at work.⁴³³ There were also reports on similar restrictions in the provinces Ghor⁴³⁴ and Kapisa⁴³⁵.

In Jawzjan, small bank loans were reportedly regulated. Private banks using usury and interest by giving small loans were stopped from lending, according to Bakhtar News Agency.⁴³⁶

In Bamyan Province, the local Taliban in Kahmard District, issued a directive in March 2022 that women could not visit health centres without a *mahram*, according to the Fuller Project. The source claimed that similar restrictions emerged ‘all over’ Afghanistan. In Ghazni, a midwife stated that the Taliban had prevented doctors from examining women without a *mahram* since November 2021. In one instance two unaccompanied women coming to the clinic with a sick child had been forced outside and beaten with rifle butts by the Taliban.⁴³⁷

(a) Music and musicians

The Taliban did not officially ban music after the takeover but disapproved of it at weddings and other public events.⁴³⁸ On 26 December 2021, the Taliban MPVPV instructed vehicle drivers to refrain from playing music in their cars.⁴³⁹ According to OHCHR, reporting in March 2022, the Taliban showed ‘intolerance’ for music and art, which spread an ‘atmosphere of fear’. The same source reported on intimidations, violence and threats forcing musicians and

⁴²⁶ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

⁴²⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 17

⁴²⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

⁴²⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁰ TOLONews, Taliban: Some Restrictions in Provinces Not Official, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴³¹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

⁴³² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴³³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Regional Taliban Officials Ban Beard Trimming, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁴ Hast-e Subh Daily, Taliban Banned Beard Shaving in Ghor, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴³⁵ TOLONews, Taliban: Some Restrictions in Provinces Not Official, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴³⁶ Bakhtar News Agency, Bank Loans Regulate Based on Islamic Values in Jawzjan, 5 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁷ Fuller Project (The), The Taliban are harming Afghan women’s health, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁸ CNN, Three wedding guests reportedly shot dead in Afghanistan, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴³⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women Banned From Making Trips Unless Escorted, 26 December 2021, [url](#)



artists to go into hiding or flee the country.⁴⁴⁰ According to Samim, most forms of music had been banned in Andar District, Ghazni Province, but the traditional drum *duhool* was permitted again after the Taliban district governor and Taliban police chief were replaced. In Khost Province, a local radio station continued to play music.⁴⁴¹

A representative of an anonymous international organisation, interviewed by DIS on 29 March 2022, stated that some musicians had been physically attacked, publicly humiliated, arrested and got their instruments destroyed. Sporadic instances occurred across all of Afghanistan, both in conservative and more liberal communities.⁴⁴² Cases reported in media included the humiliation of local musicians in Zazai Aryub District, Paktia Province, in January 2022.⁴⁴³ Taliban fighters burned the musicians' instruments and members of the Taliban MPVPV had reportedly shaved their heads. According to RFE/RL, the musicians appeared to have been beaten.⁴⁴⁴ Hasht-e Subh reported on house searches and 'crackdowns' on artists in Kapisa Province by the Taliban in March 2022. Representatives of the local department of the Taliban MPVPV was cited as saying that playing music was 'strongly forbidden' and considered a crime. The ministry's local director, Jamaluddin Mazhari, was quoted saying that artists singing in the province would be 'dealt with harshly'. Local artists stated that both their financial and security concerns had 'multiplied' since the Taliban takeover. One of them told Hasht-e Subh that he fled to Iran amid the takeover, fearing to be killed. In March 2022, he had recently returned and was worried about the 'artistic productions' in Afghanistan, as artists were told to change career. The same source reported on 'soldiers' opening fire on a convoy of wedding cars playing music in Shigal District, Kunar Province, killing the groom's brother, and of a young man being killed for listening to music in Badakhshan Province.⁴⁴⁵

1.4. Crackdowns on ISKP and suspected affiliates

The Taliban launched operations to restrain ISKP⁴⁴⁶, and killings were mainly reported from Nangarhar Province in October and November 2021⁴⁴⁷. OHCHR reported on three additional extrajudicial killings of suspected Islamic State (IS) affiliates in the second week of February 2022. According to the same source, many cases involved enforced disappearances, torture, and ill-treatment by the Taliban.⁴⁴⁸ In the reporting period 15 August 2021–15 June 2022 UNAMA recorded 59 extrajudicial killings, 22 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 7 incidents of torture and ill-treatment of accused ISKP affiliates. All incidents were carried out by the Taliban, and most took place in Chaparhar District and Jalalabad City, Nangarhar Province. Records of such abuses in October and November 2021 followed a similar pattern: the victims' bodies were found one or two days after they were arrested by the Taliban, often beheaded and dismembered, and 'sometimes hanging from trees'. The incidents provided as examples by UNAMA included a tribal elder who was arrested by the Taliban at a mosque, allegedly for

⁴⁴⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 47

⁴⁴¹ Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴² Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 33

⁴⁴³ Abdulhaq Omeri [Twitter], 15 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Outrage Stoked By Video Of Taliban Humiliating Musicians, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁵ Hasht-e Subh, Playing Music Is Fiercely Forbidden, 6 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁶ Express Tribune (The), No place for ISIS in Afghanistan, say Taliban, 9 December 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 26

⁴⁴⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 26



ISKP affiliation. His body was found one day after, severely mutilated.⁴⁴⁹ According to Ariana News, reporting on 6 February 2022, at least 50 ISKP fighters in Nangarhar had surrendered to the Taliban after mediation with tribal elders. The same source reported that over 500 ISKP members had surrendered to the Taliban since the takeover.⁴⁵⁰ According to Human Rights Watch's Patricia Gossman, whole Salafist communities in the provinces Kunar and Nangarhar were subjected to night raids, and detentions of men and sometimes boys, even if they had nothing to do with ISKP. Although not having precise numbers, many ended up as victims of summary executions or were forcibly disappeared.⁴⁵¹ An anonymous organisation, interviewed by the Finnish and Swedish migration services for this report on 31 May 2022, human rights violations against individuals accused of ISKP affiliation still occurred in Nangarhar, although the frequency was less than the previous year. The organisation still received reports, as of 31 May 2022, about persons being detained for a few days, and then being killed, because they were accused of links to the ISKP.⁴⁵² For information on Salafists, see section [6.6.6. Salafists](#).

1.5. Leaving and returning to Afghanistan

1.5.1. Taliban attitudes and public statements

Sources interviewed in November 2021 described a negative narrative among Taliban members, and in parts of Afghan society, regarding Afghans who leave Afghanistan.⁴⁵³ According to an Afghan human rights expert, people leaving were seen as lacking Islamic values or being on the run from things they had done. On the other hand, the source noted, the Taliban prioritised passports for labourers working abroad, indicating that they might understand the economic aspect, although they are also aware of the fact that many abroad disagree with them.⁴⁵⁴ An Afghan law professor described two narratives of the Taliban on persons leaving Afghanistan to live in Western countries. In one narrative people fled due to poverty and it had nothing to do with fearing the Taliban, but they were attracted by the economically better life in the West. The other narrative was about the elites that left, they were not seen as 'Afghans', but as corrupt 'puppets' of the 'occupation', and as opposed to the population. They were considered to lack 'roots' in Afghanistan, so as soon as 'the foreigners' left, they took this group with them. This narrative could also include, for example, activists, media workers and intellectuals, and not only former government officials. According to the source, these narratives also existed among the general population, as there was an anger towards the previous government and elites due to corruption and failures.⁴⁵⁵

The Afghan law professor further stated that the Taliban often said that a 'good Muslim' would not leave and that many who left for the West were not 'good enough Muslims'. They could

⁴⁴⁹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁴⁵⁰ Ariana News, Dozens of Daesh militants surrender to IEA in Nangarhar: Officials, 6 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵¹ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

⁴⁵² Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

⁴⁵³ Afghan human rights expert, digital interview, 11 November 2021; Afghan law professor, digital interview, 9 November 2021; Chiovenda, A. (Dr.) and Kerr Chiovenda, M. (Dr.), professors at Zayed university, digital interview, 9 November 2021

⁴⁵⁴ Afghan human rights expert, digital interview, 11 November 2021

⁴⁵⁵ Afghan law professor, digital interview, 9 November 2021



further state that people might leave out of poverty, but if anyone is unhappy with the situation it is due to a weakness of those people's faith and so they do not want to live under Islamic rule.⁴⁵⁶ Dr. Andrea Chiovenda and Dr. Melissa Kerr Chiovenda, anthropologists at Zayed University, described a similar narrative of people wanting to leave not being 'the right kind of person' and not perceived as 'good Muslims'. However, they separated the tradition of Pashtun men going abroad for periods to work, which is an old tradition, from people who go abroad and stay in non-Muslim countries – which is not 'the right way to do it'. They further stated that in rural Pashtun areas a person wanting to leave for Europe or the US would in general be perceived with suspicion, and also persons having Western contacts.⁴⁵⁷ An independent analyst stated that he had seen a social media post from a prominent Taliban social media influencer that people who left for the West, did so because they were Western-minded and did not like an Islamic system. The analyst had, however, not seen anything in the Taliban statements that a person seeking asylum in the West should be prosecuted, but added that the Taliban were sceptical of the West.⁴⁵⁸ In a report based on interviews with Afghans returning to Afghanistan from Sweden before the Taliban takeover in 2021, the researchers noted several accounts of a stigma of being returned, and a common perception that a person must have committed a crime to be deported, or that people returning from Europe were 'loaded with money'. Out of fear of being harassed or robbed, some did not disclose that they were returnees. Another perception was that 'returnees could be contaminated with Western ideas and values', undermining the Islamic faith and generating mistrust.⁴⁵⁹

Taliban officials repeatedly called on Afghans to return to Afghanistan⁴⁶⁰, including former politicians⁴⁶¹, military and civil leaders⁴⁶², university lecturers⁴⁶³, businessmen and investors.⁴⁶⁴ Taliban senior officials further called on the thousands of Afghans who fled after the takeover to return⁴⁶⁵, as well as all Afghans living abroad⁴⁶⁶ and former opponents to the Taliban.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Afghan law professor, digital interview, 9 November 2021

⁴⁵⁷ Chiovenda, A. (Dr.) and Kerr Chiovenda, M. (Dr.), professors at Zayed University, digital interview, 9 November 2021

⁴⁵⁸ Independent Afghan Analyst, digital interview, 8 November 2021

⁴⁵⁹ Vera-Larrucea, C. and Malm Lindberg, H., Return to Afghanistan: The perils of returning to unstable and insecure countries, Migration Policy Practice, Vol. XI, No. 4, December 2021 – April 2022, [url](#), p. 45

⁴⁶⁰ Bakhtar News Agency, Delawar Called on All Afghan Political Figures to Return Home, 21 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan UN Mission Announces It Will Host Gathering, 14 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Anas Haqqani Calls on Unqualified Officials to Step Down, 27 December 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, At Hajj Ceremony, Official Calls for Brotherly Intl Relations, 12 June 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Defense ministry urges Afghan military students abroad to return home, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶¹ TOLONews, Minister of Repatriation Calls for Political Leaders to Return, 31 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶² TOLONews, Ex-Military, Civil Leaders Should Return, Says Corps Commander, 5 January 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Defense ministry urges Afghan military students abroad to return home, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶³ TOLONews, MoHE Urges Professors to Return to Afghanistan, 10 February 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA urges Afghan professors in exile to return home, 11 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁴ Ariana News, IEA urge Afghan businessmen, investors abroad to return home, 18 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁵ AP, Taliban official wanted by U.S. makes rare public appearance, 5 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Issues Message for Eid, 29 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁷ TOLONews, Mullah Hanafi Calls for Unity Among Afghans, 26 April 2022, [url](#)



In March 2022⁴⁶⁸, The Taliban established a ‘Commission for the Return and Communications with Former Afghan Officials and Political Figures’ which started operating in May 2022.⁴⁶⁹ In a list of 15 articles⁴⁷⁰, it ensured that those returning would ‘have their legitimate demands met’, and presented a procedure which, *inter alia*, provided short-term accommodation for political figures and former military personnel.⁴⁷¹ Article 2 on the list reportedly stated that the Taliban commission could collect information about those who left Afghanistan before or after the Taliban takeover, or remained in the country but opposed the Taliban government.⁴⁷² The head of the Taliban commission stated in May 2022 that the Taliban government would provide safety to returning government officials.⁴⁷³ This was repeated by the Taliban commission in June 2022⁴⁷⁴ as well as by the Taliban Foreign Minister.⁴⁷⁵

On 8 December 2021, the Taliban supreme leader issued a statement in which he addressed difficulties facing persons who left Afghanistan. According to TOLONews, he stated that these persons’ ‘beliefs ethics, and ways of thinking’, were jeopardized ‘based on some biased programs’ and that they were obliged ‘to create scandals against Islam and the Islamic System’ to receive asylum.⁴⁷⁶ On 27 February 2022, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated that persons leaving Afghanistan had ‘no excuse’ and that the Taliban were preventing them from leaving. On 1 March 2022, Mujahid clarified on social media that he had meant that persons with legal documents and invitations could travel from and return to Afghanistan. On the same day, the Taliban deputy Minister for Refugees and Repatriations, however, stated that it was not ‘appropriate’ for Western nations to facilitate Afghans’ departure by inviting them and promising asylum. The Taliban deputy minister called this an ‘interference’ with international law and stated that the Taliban condemned it.⁴⁷⁷

During an interview with AP in December 2021, the Taliban Minister of Foreign Affairs insisted that poverty and the dream of a better life, not fear, drove thousands of Afghans to try to get evacuated in August 2021.⁴⁷⁸ In late May 2022, a number of Afghan asylum seekers protested outside UNHCR’s office in Islamabad, Pakistan. According to Bakhtar News Agency, the Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement calling the protesters ‘economic asylum seekers’⁴⁷⁹ According to Ariana News, the ministry stated that many of the protesters had lived in Pakistan for years and ‘used the opportunity to try to get asylum in Western

⁴⁶⁸ Arab News, Former government officials return to Kabul at Taliban invitation, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ TOLONews, Political Figures in Country Ask for Kabul’s Engagement, 23 May 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA approves working process to bring exiled Afghan politicians home, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ Khaama Press, The Taliban Drafts a 15-Article Bill for the Return of the Afghan Political And Military Figures, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ TOLONews, Political Figures in Country Ask for Kabul’s Engagement, 23 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷² Afghan Analyst [Twitter], posted on: 21 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷³ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Pledges Safety for Returning Afghans, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁴ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Reiterates Pledge of Safety for Returning Afghans, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁵ TOLONews, Muttaqi at Gathering Recounts Achievements of Islamic Emirate, 4 June 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA commits to ensuring safety of ex-officials who return to Afghanistan: Muttaqi, 21 June 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁶ TOLONews, Fears, Needs of Fleeing Afghans Must Be Addressed: Akhundzada, 8 December 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Rows Back Comments Saying Afghans Barred From Leaving, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁸ NPR, Taliban seek ties with U.S. and other ex-foes, Afghan foreign minister says, 13 December 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁹ Bakhtar News Agency, No Citizen Live Is in Danger in Afghanistan: MoF, 25 May 2022, [url](#)



countries'.⁴⁸⁰ On 30 December 2021, Akhundzada released a decree instructing Taliban members to encourage Afghans not to flee the country.⁴⁸¹

1.5.2. Treatment of persons trying to leave and returnees

Between 1 December 2021–30 April 2022, IOM documented an average monthly outflow of approximately 424 000 individuals from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran. In the same period the average monthly inflow to Afghanistan from the same countries was approximately 357 000 individuals. In May 2022, the flows were lower, with around 255 000 individuals leaving for Pakistan or Iran, and 292 000 returning from these countries.⁴⁸² According to accounts of human smugglers, reported by Der Spiegel, more than 3 000 persons arrived daily in Nimruz Province, bordering Iran and Pakistan, 'on their way to the West'.⁴⁸³ The Taliban Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations claimed that 700 000 had returned since the takeover by 20 June 2022.⁴⁸⁴ In April 2022, the ministry told media that they had received thousands of Afghans forcibly deported from Iran during the past months.⁴⁸⁵ There were also reports of forced deportations from Turkey.⁴⁸⁶ According to media reports, Turkey repatriated over 18 000 Afghans to Afghanistan between 27 January and early June 2022.⁴⁸⁷

According to SIGAR, who refers to information obtained from USDOS, the Taliban did not systematically restrict migration at overland crossings, although vehicles were regularly checked and at times stopped at checkpoints. After announcing that Afghans would not be permitted to leave Afghanistan unless their destinations were known, the Taliban appeared to stop Afghans trying to flee abroad by road, according to SIGAR. On the main highway from Kabul to Pakistan the Taliban reportedly stopped all cars at numerous checkpoints, and 'sometimes pulled aside families with suitcases'.⁴⁸⁸ According to the Pakistani newspaper Dawn, some national and international NGOs still made evacuation efforts in January 2022, but the Taliban increasingly interfered. On 24 January 2022, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid posted on social media that 40 individuals had been arrested when trying to leave Afghanistan 'illegally' by air from Mazar-e Sharif. Most had been released, but some women awaited male relatives to collect them.⁴⁸⁹ In February 2022, Hasht-e Subh claimed that the Taliban had ordered border forces to prevent American and NATO collaborators from leaving the country.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁰ Ariana News, IEA assures Afghan protesters in Pakistan they will be safe at home, 25 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸¹ Ariana News, IEA's supreme leader calls on officials to adhere to amnesty orders, 30 December 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸² IOM, Movement in and out of Afghanistan, 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸³ Der Spiegel, The Last Way Out of Afghanistan, 13 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ Ariana News, IEA marks World Refugee Day, calls for Afghan migrants to be treated fairly, 21 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁵ Bakhtar News Agency, Thousands of other Refugees Headed Back Home from Iran, 18 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁶ AMASO [Twitter], posted on: 27 June 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Turkey Departs 136 Undocumented Afghan Migrants to the Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan, 25 June 2022, [url](#); AMASO [Twitter], posted on: 11 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁷ Media Line (The), Turkey Has Deported 18,256 Migrants to Afghanistan Since January, 9 June 2022, [url](#);

Xinhuanet, Turkey repatriates more than 18,000 migrants back to Afghanistan, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁸ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 87

⁴⁸⁹ Dawn, Taliban detain 40 people trying to illegally leave Afghanistan by air, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁰ Hasht-e Subh, US, NATO's In-Country Employees Cannot Leave Afghanistan, Says Taliban's Interior Ministry, 28 February 2022, [url](#)



On 18 January 2022, Azeem Azeemi and three other activists were detained after trying to organise a protest against the Pakistani national security adviser's visit to Kabul.⁴⁹¹ One local media report cited a spokesperson of the Taliban GDI saying that Azeemi had confessed the intention to stage an illegal demonstration for the purpose of fleeing to the West, and to disrupt national security under the dictate of the former government.⁴⁹²

Several officials linked to the former government returned, but all did not leave Afghanistan amid the Taliban takeover but several years ago.⁴⁹³ The returned persons included a former ambassador, who told AP that he had encountered 'no rancour' from the Taliban⁴⁹⁴, and the former Minister of Education who returned from Turkey.⁴⁹⁵ He has previously been accused of corruption and embezzling international aid.⁴⁹⁶ Other returned figures were the former Minister of State for Peace and later Special Representative for Peace under Ashraf Ghani⁴⁹⁷, the former deputy Minister of Transport⁴⁹⁸, the former police chief of Qaisar District (Faryab Province)⁴⁹⁹, five Afghan air force pilots⁵⁰⁰, academics⁵⁰¹, the former mayor of Wardak Province⁵⁰², the former Minister of Religious Affairs, the former police cooperative head⁵⁰³ and the former Senate's second deputy and a former president's adviser.⁵⁰⁴ On 6 March 2022, TOLONews reported on Afghan experts returning to Kabul from 'overseas' to participate in a conference to discuss ways of countering the crises in Afghanistan. The participating women experts called on the Taliban to reopen the former MoWA and other women's institutions.⁵⁰⁵ The *de facto* authorities in Uruzgan Province claimed that as of May 2022, among the Islamic Republic personalities who had returned to Afghanistan, were several ANDSF officials ('heads of police stations, districts' police chiefs and head of the intelligence').⁵⁰⁶ According to the Taliban's return commission, 150 former government officials and political figures had returned as of 26 June 2022.⁵⁰⁷ It has not been possible to corroborate this figure.

In April 2022, the speaker of the former government's senate returned after a visit to the UAE and explained to TOLONews that he had met with political figures and former government officials. Upon his return the former speaker called on the Taliban to engage in dialogue with their opponents.⁵⁰⁸ In June 2022, Abdullah Abdullah, the former chairman of the High Council

⁴⁹¹ VOA, Taliban Detain Human Rights Activists Planning Protest of Pakistan Official's Visit, 19 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹² RFE/RL/Radio Azadi, 18, اېل ته د پاکستان د ملي امنیت سلاکار د سفر معترض لا هم د طالبانو په بند کې دی, [Protestor of the Pakistan National Security Adviser's visit to Kabul is still in Taliban's Detention], March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹³ TOLONews, Ex-Deputy Minister of Transport Returns to Kabul, 5 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁴ AP, Six months of Taliban: Afghans safer, poorer, less hopeful, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁵ Bakhtar News Agency, Farooq Wardak, Former Minister of Education Head Back Home, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁶ Khaama Press, Former Minister of Education aka Founder of "Ghost Schools" Returns to Afghanistan, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁷ TOLONews, Ghani's Special Envoy for Peace Returns to Kabul, 13 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁸ TOLONews, Ex-Deputy Minister of Transport Returns to Kabul, 5 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁹ TOLONews, Kabul Should Create Inclusive Govt: Qaisari, 26 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁰ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Welcomes Return of Afghan Pilots, 6 February 2022, [url](#)

Ariana News, Pilot who fled to the United States returns home to Afghanistan, 19 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰¹ Ariana News, Afghan academics living abroad for years return home, 30 May 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰² TOLONews, Former Mayor Zarifa Ghafari Returns to Afghanistan, 27 February 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰³ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former religious affairs minister also returns home, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁴ TOLONews, Habibullah Ahmadzai, Ex-Ghani Adviser, Returns to Country, 29 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁵ TOLONews, Afghan Experts Return From Abroad to Help Avert Crisis, 6 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, Return of ex-officials to Uruzgan accelerated, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁷ TOLONews, Kabul Should Create Inclusive Govt: Qaisari, 26 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁸ TOLONews, Muslimyar: Islamic Emirate Must Talk With Opponents, 2 April 2022, [url](#)



for National Reconciliation, returned to Kabul after a month's visit to India.⁵⁰⁹ Former president Hamid Karzai was, however, stopped from travelling to the UAE in May 2022.⁵¹⁰

Ariana News reported on the first Afghan evacuee deported back to Afghanistan on 13 February 2022 from the US. This person reportedly had a criminal record.⁵¹¹ The Middle East Eye reported on commercial flights going from Istanbul to Kabul in June 2022, carrying 'a mix of families from nearby European nations visiting family, businesspeople, NGO workers returning from quick R&R trips abroad' and deportees. One of the travellers had lived in the UK for the past 10 years and returned to visit his birth family.⁵¹²

An anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan stated that sometimes people were targeted when they returned to Afghanistan, but the source did not see any clear connections simply to the fact that these individuals had left the country. Rather it seemed to be connected to their 'original status', such as leaving because they were affiliated with the former government, particular fears related to their ethnic background or some other reasons. If a person belonged to one of these categories, their risk was independent of the fact that they had left the country, as they would be targeted by the Taliban anyway.⁵¹³ Similarly, a representative of DACAAR noted, during an interview with DIS on 18 March 2022, that 'it was not his impression that Afghans returning from the West would be subject to targeting by the Taliban, unless it was a result of a personal dispute or vendetta.'⁵¹⁴

⁵⁰⁹ TOLONews, Abdullah Returns to Country After 43-Day Personal Visit to India, 11 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹⁰ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former President Karzai stopped from travelling to UAE, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹¹ Ariana News, US departs first Afghan back to Afghanistan, 1 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹² MEE, On an Istanbul-Kabul flight, refugees and emigres prepare to see a new Afghanistan, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹³ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

⁵¹⁴ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 38



2. Persons affiliated with security institutions of the former government

2.1. General situation under Taliban rule

On 17 August 2021, the Taliban announced a general amnesty for all government workers, asking them ‘to restart [their] routine life with full confidence’.⁵¹⁵ Thereafter, several Taliban officials – up to the Taliban supreme leader and the Taliban Minister of Interior – publicly called on fighters to abide by the amnesty. The latter added that he had met with former officials of the Islamic Republic and assured them that they would not be harmed, ‘unless they commit a crime’.⁵¹⁶ The Taliban Minister of Defence, Mohammad Yaqoob, also reminded Taliban fighters that they were ‘not allowed to take revenge or settle personal scores’.⁵¹⁷ In May 2022, the head of the Taliban’s return commission⁵¹⁸ reiterated that the general amnesty was granted to those ‘involved in the war for 20 years’.⁵¹⁹ Taliban authorities in Uruzgan Province claimed that, as of May 2022, among the Islamic Republic figures who had returned to Afghanistan, were several ANDSF officials (‘heads of police stations, districts’ police chiefs and head of the intelligence’).⁵²⁰ For more information on returning individuals, see section 1.5.2. Treatment of persons trying to leave and returnees.

According to Iranian Radio Zamaneh, in early 2022, the Taliban consulted religious scholars on the treatment to be reserved for former Islamic Republic officials guilty of corruption. The clerics reportedly answered that the general amnesty could not apply to them and that they would have to be prosecuted and punished. Since the term ‘corruption’ was not precisely defined, Hasht-e Subh read it as a way to ‘harass, persecute and physically eliminate’ civilian and military servants of the former government.⁵²¹

Nevertheless, several substantial reports claimed that, on the ground, this amnesty was not systematically enforced nor fully respected by the Taliban. First, in terms of timeline, Human Rights Watch and USIP’s senior expert Andrew H. Watkins underlined that a rise in targeted killings of military and civilian former government personnel had been observed as early as mid-2020. During summer 2021, the Taliban committed killings of ANDSF members who had surrendered or were detained – notably in Malistan, Ghazni Province, and Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province.⁵²² Nine members of the ANDSF of Hazara ethnicity were killed while

⁵¹⁵ France 24, Taliban declares general amnesty for Afghan government officials, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, Respect amnesty for ex-officials: Taliban chief, 30 December 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Sarajudin Haqqani asks Taliban commanders not to seek revenge on previous officers, 19 January 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹⁷ New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#), 07:58–08:23

⁵¹⁸ For more information on this commission and persons returning to Afghanistan, see sections 1.5 and 4.3.

⁵¹⁹ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Pledges Safety for Returning Afghans, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁰ Pajhwok Afghan News, Return of ex-officials to Uruzgan accelerated, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

⁵²¹ Radio Zamaneh, افغانستان پيشين نظاميان کشتن برای دینی جواز صدور [Issuing a religious license to kill former Afghan soldiers], 17 January 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, The Taliban Justify the Persecution of Former Security Officers by Seeking a Religious Permission, 26 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵²² HRW, Afghanistan, Events of 2021, n.d., [url](#)



fleeing or surrendering to the Taliban, ‘execution-style’, in Daykundi province, on 30 August 2021.⁵²³ Human Rights Watch separated the immediate aftermath of the Taliban takeover in August 2021 – characterised by ‘more opportunistic killings’ – from the following period, when such killings ‘[appeared] to have become more deliberate’. In the later period, the *de facto* authorities had gained access to more informants and information regarding their targets.⁵²⁴ In December 2021, journalist Bilal Sarwary noted a ‘growing’ countrywide trend of former ANDSF members being abducted from their homes and later found dead.⁵²⁵ Human Rights Watch’s Patricia Gossman analysed the arrests and killings as ‘a combination of revenge-seeking in the aftermath of war, Taliban intolerance of any dissent or criticism, and the group’s control of more territory, leaving those under threat fewer places to hide’.⁵²⁶

Research conducted by Human Rights Watch indicated that, in the period 15 August–30 October 2021, more than 100 former security forces members (encompassing military, police, intelligence units and militias) had been summarily executed or forcibly disappeared across four provinces (Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar and Kunduz), after surrendering or being apprehended by Taliban forces. Relatives of former ANDSF personnel were also reportedly targeted.⁵²⁷ The Taliban’s elite forces, or ‘Red units’, were thought to be tasked with searching for former ANDSF personnel during night raids.⁵²⁸ In an interview with EUAA, Gossman reckoned that former ANDSF members were the primary target of Taliban violence.⁵²⁹ UNAMA indicated a ‘clear pattern’ with regards to targeting taking place 15 August 2021–15 June 2022 and identified former ANDSF members as one of the groups having been ‘particularly at risk of experiencing human rights violations’. UNAMA recorded human rights violations against former ANDSF and government officials throughout their reporting period, which included 160 extrajudicial killings (including 10 women), 178 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 23 incommunicado detentions, and 56 instances of torture and ill-treatment. All these instances were carried out by the *de facto* authorities and occurred in almost all parts of Afghanistan.⁵³⁰ In an earlier report from March 2022, OHCHR and UNAMA demonstrated figures of the killing of more than 130 former ANDSF members, government personnel and their family members. More than 100 of these events were attributed to the Taliban and their affiliates, and OHCHR expressed concern about a continuing practice of ‘arrest, incommunicado detention and alleged torture and ill-treatment’ of former ANDSF members, government personnel and suspected affiliates.⁵³¹ An international organisation, interviewed by DIS in April 2022, pointed out that the time for these killings was unclear as well as if the trend was increasing or decreasing.⁵³² Lastly, in a documentary released in April 2022, the New York Times stated that

⁵²³ AI, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#); AI, Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men – new investigation, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁴ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#); Watkins, A. H., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁵ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 19 December 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁶ Washington Post (The), Taliban wages campaign of targeted killings against former members of Afghan security forces, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁷ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#), p. 1

⁵²⁸ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#), p. 10

⁵²⁹ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

⁵³⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 13–14

⁵³¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 25, 31

⁵³² Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 14



during the first semester of Taliban rule, it had documented the killing or enforced disappearance of 490 former government officials and members of the ANDSF across the country. Many other killings likely occurred but remained unverified, due to the victims' relatives often being too afraid of retribution to speak out. The New York Times concluded that despite their denials, the Taliban were 'on a campaign of revenge killings'.⁵³³ Afghanistan expert Michael Semple and Hasht-e Subh echoed this conclusion, the latter deeming the Taliban's general amnesty as 'a cover for the violations of human rights that the group has been committing so far' and 'a lie and trap for the security forces and former government affiliates'.⁵³⁴

Watkins noted that the extent of this wave of extrajudicial searches, detentions and killings was 'impossible to measure' and varied 'widely from one area to the next'.⁵³⁵ Anonymous sources interviewed by EUAA, the Swedish Migration Agency's Unit for Migration Analysis and Landinfo respectively, concurred that it was difficult to see a general pattern, an Afghan law professor described it as 'scattered'.⁵³⁶ A human rights expert claimed in November 2021 that the targeting and killing of former ANDSF members seemed more prevalent in southern, south-eastern and eastern Afghanistan.⁵³⁷ The representative of an international organisation in Afghanistan, cited by DIS, listed the same regions and added Kabul.⁵³⁸ Most of the killings compiled by the New York Times in an April 2022 documentary took place in north-eastern province Baghlan (86 – due to the presence of many members of the former special forces there), and the provinces Farah (27), Nangarhar (17), Helmand (14), Badakhshan (13), Daykundi (12) and Balkh (11). Provinces most affected by enforced disappearances included Kandahar (114), Uruzgan (28), Badakhshan (14) and Kabul (14).⁵³⁹ From October 2021 and onwards, UNAMA noted that the targeting of former ANDSF members generally focused on individuals rather than groups and that killings often were carried out like quick executions. Furthermore, arbitrary arrests and detentions appeared to be 'widespread', according to UNAMA's assessment.⁵⁴⁰

Anonymous sources consulted by the Swedish Migration Agency's Unit for Migration Analysis in March-April 2022 remarked that it was difficult to determine whether extrajudicial executions and abductions were driven by local revenge motives or approved by the Taliban government. One of them thought that attacks against former government affiliates were primarily the result of local Taliban initiatives, since they were 'sporadic' and not a systematic 'hunt'.⁵⁴¹ US Defence Intelligence Agency pointed to 'localized small-scale reprisal killings,

⁵³³ New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵³⁴ Hasht-e Subh, Widespread Violations of General Amnesty – Former Soldiers Are Not Safe, 16 April 2022, [url](#); Feroz, E., Ein Jahr unter den Taliban, Republik.ch, 21 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵³⁵ Watkins, A. H., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁶ EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 47; Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistans regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 21; Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktovertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), p. 19

⁵³⁷ EUAA, Afghanistan – <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/d24264f7-1208-3646-bb25-8f13e3514bb5/EN.pdf> country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 47

⁵³⁸ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁵³⁹ New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁵⁴¹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis. Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktovertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), p. 19



violence, and intimidation’ as well.⁵⁴² This view was seemingly shared by other analysts such as journalist Franz J. Marty⁵⁴³ and Quincy Institute of Responsible Statecraft’s Anatol Lieven, who ‘expected far more revenge killings’.⁵⁴⁴ An Afghan law professor interviewed by EUAA also reasoned that, if the Taliban were to go after and punish anyone who worked against them, the number of targeted attacks would be significantly higher than the records in November 2021.⁵⁴⁵ In November 2021, Watkins deemed the pattern of targeting specific individuals ‘as-yet indiscernible’, but he added that based on anecdotal evidence, ‘efforts were made to track former special forces, commando, and intelligence personnel’.⁵⁴⁶ In contrast, Habib Khan, founder of Afghan Peace Watch, an NGO collaborating with ACLED to monitor political violence, affirmed that ‘the Taliban [were] systemically targeting’ ANDSF personnel.⁵⁴⁷ In April 2022, journalist Lynne O’Donnell, in an interview conducted by DIS, observed that ‘people who had worked in any capacity for the former government [were] targeted, detained, kept in secret prisons, beaten, tortured and in some cases killed’.⁵⁴⁸ Last, Human Rights Watch expressed similar concerns over revenge killings ‘becoming the basis for a deliberate policy to seek out and execute targeted former government’s security officials and others’. Based on ‘increasing evidence’, Human Rights Watch wrote, these killings were ‘carried out by senior Taliban leadership at the district or provincial level’ and the Taliban’s intelligence.⁵⁴⁹ While acknowledging that some of the former ANDSF members’ executions may be the consequence of private conflicts, the New York Times denounced ‘the Taliban’s revenge campaign’ as ‘deliberate’, ‘widespread’ and ‘ongoing’, forcing many former security personnel to remain in hiding.⁵⁵⁰

According to an anonymous international source, interviewed by Landinfo in February 2022, ethnicity, local communities, as well as economic and social position played an important role in an individual’s vulnerability.⁵⁵¹ An Afghan law professor told EUAA that there was a pattern of local and tribal rivalry, as some tribes aligned with either the Taliban or the former government. After the takeover, previous dynamics have changed, which has aggravated some ethnic tensions as a predominantly Pashtun group is in power. Such local conflicts played a part in the revenge killings, because the local Taliban could take advantage of their power to carry out revenge.⁵⁵² An international humanitarian organisation, interviewed by DIS, concurred that the targeting depended ‘on the individual’s employer, their position as well as on other types of background affiliation’.⁵⁵³ Watkins too remarked that some of the documented summary executions had taken place ‘in areas where intra-tribal animosities,

⁵⁴² SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 79. Additional information on reprisals against former ANDSF and government employees obtained by SIGAR were classified (p. 75)

⁵⁴³ Marty, F. J., Vive la Résistance in Afghanistan?, Swiss Institute for Global Affairs, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁴ AP, Taliban raised on war bring a heavy hand to security role, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁵ EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 47

⁵⁴⁶ Watkins, A. H., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁷ SkyNews, Afghanistan: The Taliban had promised amnesty for all - but they are responsible for most violence against civilians, 16 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁸ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 81

⁵⁴⁹ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#), pp. 2, 4

⁵⁵⁰ New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁵¹ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Talibans regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 23

⁵⁵² EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 48

⁵⁵³ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 14



land/water disputes, ethnic tensions, and track records of violence and vengeance have spanned four decades of war'.⁵⁵⁴ Consulted by the Swedish Migration Agency's Unit for Migration Analysis, an anonymous international NGO and an Afghan human rights activist pointed out that the Taliban had more systematically targeted former government members affiliated with a certain tribe considered to be pro-Islamic Republic. Such communities included the Tani tribe in Khost Province and the Achakzai tribe in Kandahar Province, whose members were respectively recruited to the Khost Protection Force (KPF) and the former police forces.⁵⁵⁵ Another source interviewed by Landinfo, also singled out Khost Province as an area where targeted attacks against former security personnel were somewhat more systematic, but did not mention a tribal dimension.⁵⁵⁶ A human rights activist interviewed by EUAA in December 2021 suggested regional variations, reckoning that in the southern provinces Kandahar, Zabul, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Helmand, most acts were 'structural' as they had the provincial leaderships' blessing. The activist further stated that individual fighters would not act on their own as they risked their life for the *jihad* and obeying the supreme leader. Thus, a fighter would not act alone, but 'it has come from a leader'.⁵⁵⁷

Retaliation could often be traced back to private disputes linked to the unfolding of the armed conflict at a local level. In such situations, the trigger was not the formal position, rank or profile of the individuals involved, but their relationships.⁵⁵⁸ Sources consulted by DIS also stressed the importance of 'personal grudges and previous disputes' in targeting incidents. In such cases, 'one's previous occupation could be used against the person in question if they have a dispute with a Taliban-member'. A journalist added that an ANDSF member could be targeted because of his 'deeds rather than his rank'.⁵⁵⁹

In a September 2021 report, AAN's Martine van Bijlert noted that 'as in previous regime changes, there will be room for relationships and expediency to trump revenge and accountability. This outsized influence of relationships and personal grudges makes it difficult to determine or understand who is in real danger and who might be all right'.⁵⁶⁰ In that regard, among the ANDSF members subjected to summary executions by the Taliban, Human Rights Watch identified 'lower-level[] security force members who were less well-known or lacked the protection of tribal leaders, especially in the south'.⁵⁶¹ Referring specifically to Kandahar province, Patricia Gossman further explained to EUAA that, right after the takeover, the Taliban had executed many lower-ranked ANP figures, while occasionally releasing senior officials (probably, she added, after warning them not to carry on with any other resistance activities). She assessed that these killings were the result of Taliban calculations, based upon local context: they may have thought that in some cases going after prominent figures would have excessive consequences in terms of local political dynamics and generate instability.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁴ Watkins, A. H., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁵ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 19–20

⁵⁵⁶ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Talibans regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 21

⁵⁵⁷ Afghan human rights activist, digital interview, 2 December 2021

⁵⁵⁸ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Talibans regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 22

⁵⁵⁹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), pp. 15–16

⁵⁶⁰ van Bijlert, M., The Moment in Between: After the Americans, before the new regime, AAN, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶¹ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You. Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶² Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022



A well-informed journalist cited by DIS also singled out ‘mid- and low-level officers’ among the most targeted ANDSF elements. He shared the same reasoning as Gossman and noted that, in addition, these lower-ranked officers were prone to accept bribes.⁵⁶³ A representative for an anonymous international organisation, consulted by Landinfo in February and March 2022, stated that higher-ranking ANDSF members were most vulnerable, while foot soldiers ‘probably’ could be forgiven more easily.⁵⁶⁴ According to UNAMA individuals on ‘differing level of affiliation to the former government’ fell victim to targeting acts, ‘from senior officials to drivers, bodyguards and relatives.’⁵⁶⁵ UNAMA further stated that it was ‘evident’ that individuals that did not hold senior roles within the ANDSF were also targeted, such as former pro-government militia members and relatives.⁵⁶⁶

The Taliban have denied any systematic screening policy and attributed the killings and disappearances to ‘rogue commanders’⁵⁶⁷ or to some ‘miscreants and notorious former soldiers’ within Taliban units.⁵⁶⁸ Reacting to findings of Human Rights Watch in their November 2021 report ‘No Forgiveness for People like you’⁵⁶⁹, the *de facto* authorities assured that they had arrested individuals not for ‘past deeds, but [because] they [were] engaged in new criminal activities... [and] create problems and plots against the *de facto* administration, [and] keep contacts with notorious individuals who fled the country’.⁵⁷⁰

In November 2021, the *de facto* government set up a Taliban commission to purge ‘people of bad character’ who had joined their ranks and were detrimental to the group’s reputation.⁵⁷¹ A similar announcement was made in September 2021.⁵⁷² On 21 February 2022, Taliban officials stated that the Taliban commission had expelled around 4 500 Taliban members from the *de facto* security forces.⁵⁷³ However, in May 2022, Gossman told EUAA that she thought that the cases handled by the Taliban commission were related to theft and corruption, and not to the reported killings of persons affiliated with the former security forces.⁵⁷⁴ In addition, Dr. Andrea Chiovenda, adjunct assistant professor of anthropology at Zayed University, reckoned that the Taliban could not enforce the amnesty⁵⁷⁵, which Watkins echoed by remarking that ‘there is really nothing to check [the fighters’] behaviour’, fuelled by protracted grievances towards the former administration, perceived as abusive and corrupt. Watkins noted that the Taliban were reluctant to acknowledge the extent of these incidents and unwilling or unable to reform the militant mind-set of their fighters who, by default, ‘hunt down, seek out and eliminate the

⁵⁶³ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁶⁴ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Taliban regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 21

⁵⁶⁵ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 13–14

⁵⁶⁶ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁵⁶⁷ AFP, Taliban reject claims of summary killings of ex-security forces, 5 December 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁸ Reuters, Afghan Taliban defence minister orders crackdown on abuses, 24 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁹ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You. Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁰ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷¹ Reuters, Taliban to purge people of bad character from ranks, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷² HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷³ TOLONews, Reform Commission Expels Around 4,500 Members of Security Forces, 21 February 2022, [url](#);

Pajhwok Afghan News, 4,350 undesired persons expelled from forces ranks, 21 February 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁴ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

⁵⁷⁵ EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 47



enemy'.⁵⁷⁶ This view was shared by an Afghan law professor who told EUAA that he 'absolutely believed' that the Taliban systematically targeted people perceived as potential threats. Among them, he singled out intelligence officials or elite forces of the previous administration who could potentially join anti-Taliban movements.⁵⁷⁷ In December 2021, Bilal Sarwary attributed a 'growing trend' of destroying the graves of former ANDSF members to the 'younger generation of Taliban [fighters]'.⁵⁷⁸

The Christian Science Monitor (CSM) conjectured that the *de facto* authorities may condone these acts to appease fighters eager to get revenge and booty, in the midst of an economic crisis and a volatile situation where other militant groups could recruit frustrated Taliban fighters. The article noted that 'going after senior district and provincial personalities [stymied] the chances of organized resistance'.⁵⁷⁹

The New York Times wrote that '[Taliban] lower-rank commanders and foot soldiers' were thought to be responsible for the majority of the executions and disappearances.⁵⁸⁰ In that regard, a senior security official told AAN that he was wary of the rank-and-file fighters, not of the leadership.⁵⁸¹ According to an Afghan human rights expert interviewed by EUAA, the Taliban fighters, now victorious, felt like they were 'entitled' to commit such killings.⁵⁸²

Michael Kugelman, Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center, stressed that the Taliban were 'probably' not responsible for all the documented killings and harassment of former personnel of the Islamic Republic.⁵⁸³ Afghans interviewed in late 2021 by AAN remarked that 'ordinary people, former government officials, old rivals – often used the chaos or the cover of the Taliban to settle scores or grab what they could'.⁵⁸⁴

Anecdotal evidence collected by AAN suggest that in Jaghori District, Ghazni Province, the local religious authorities were able to convince the Taliban to stop searching houses looking for former government officials in the midst of the takeover, as it would prompt resistance among the population.⁵⁸⁵ The Washington Post yet noted that the involvement of local informal *de facto* authorities was not always enough to obtain the release of prisoners – in the example given, the Taliban refused to free a former senior police commander as he was 'accused of arresting and torturing Taliban fighters'.⁵⁸⁶ Moreover, in Helmand Province, a

⁵⁷⁶ CSM, The Taliban won. So why, and who, are they still fighting?, 2 December 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁷ EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 47

⁵⁷⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, The Taliban Wages War Against Its Dead Rivals, 29 December 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁹ CSM, The Taliban won. So why, and who, are they still fighting?, 2 December 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁰ New York Times (The), Dozens of Former Afghan Security Forces Dead or Missing Under Taliban, Report Says, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸¹ van Bijlert, M., The Moment in Between: After the Americans, before the new regime, AAN, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸² EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 48

⁵⁸³ Le Figaro, En Afghanistan, les talibans incapables de faire régner l'ordre et la justice, 9 January 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁴ van Bijlert, M., Afghanistan's Conflict in 2021 (1), AAN, 28 December 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁵ van Bijlert, M., Afghanistan's Conflict in 2021 (1): The Taleban's sweeping offensive as told by people on the ground, AAN, 28 December 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁶ Washington Post (The), Taliban wages campaign of targeted killings against former members of Afghan security forces, 30 November 2021, [url](#)



former ANDSF commander surrendered to the Taliban on 15 August 2021, and was later taken away by the Taliban's intelligence service, even though his nephew was a Taliban fighter.⁵⁸⁷

In January 2022, based on unspecified Afghan media sources, Rukhshana Media warned that Pakistani security forces had been 'hunting down' former security agents of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in Pakistan. Several of them were said to have disappeared after they entered the country, while others were reportedly detained incommunicado. Some of their relatives have seemingly been arrested too.⁵⁸⁸

Last, as regards ANDSF members' relatives, sources consulted by DIS stated that they were 'generally not a target' but that it depended on the specific occupation of their relative and on the existence of anterior, unresolved conflict with the Taliban. Journalist Lynne O'Donnell affirmed that some Taliban fighters shot relatives or neighbours of the individual whom they were tracking down.⁵⁸⁹ On the other hand, UNAMA stated that it was 'evident' that individuals that did not hold senior roles within the ANDSF were also targeted, including relatives.⁵⁹⁰

2.2. Taliban capabilities in identifying their targets

Human Rights Watch stressed that it was easier for the Taliban to track down former Islamic Republic agents in smaller villages and towns, where 'residents tend to know each other within communities and established neighbourhoods'. In their report from November 2021 they pointed out that many killings had been ordered by lower-ranked commanders, who often were aware of local political dynamics.⁵⁹¹ As soon as August 2021, the *de facto* authorities took action to expand their informants' network, prompting district officials, moneychangers, students and heads of mosques to provide them with names of ANDSF members and former government employees.⁵⁹² A journalist interviewed by DIS stressed the 'systematic effort' made by the Taliban to obtain information, more particularly on Kabul residents (professional occupation, affiliations, etc.).⁵⁹³

Furthermore, after they had taken over certain provinces, the Taliban demanded former security personnel to register with them to obtain an 'amnesty letter' and hand over their weapons.⁵⁹⁴ According to AAN analyst Sabawoon Samim, one of the three directorates of the MPVPV was tasked with providing these amnesty cards to officials of the former government

⁵⁸⁷ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁸ Rukhshana Media, These women were looked down on when they worked in the army. Now they've been abandoned in a "dungeon", 17 January 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 22

⁵⁹⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁵⁹¹ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#), p. 10

⁵⁹² New York Times (The), Hunted by the Taliban, U.S.-Allied Afghan Forces Are in Hiding, 19 August 2021, [url](#); Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 28 December 2021, [url](#); Le Figaro, En Afghanistan, le règne des talibans, entre exécutions et pauvreté, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁹³ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁵⁹⁴ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, 30 November 2021, [url](#), p. 2



and ensuring their safety.⁵⁹⁵ Yet, some reports suggest that these registrations were used as a lure to identify officials of the previous government – and potentially detain and summarily execute them, sometimes weeks after they collected the protection letter. Moreover, the Taliban resorted to threats and abuses against relatives of former security forces members who had gone into hiding, to learn about their whereabouts.⁵⁹⁶ While the Washington Post cited examples where former soldiers had applied for amnesty and not been harmed or threatened, one of them (in Kunduz Province) said that the Taliban occasionally showed up at his house ‘to check again for weapons or government cars’, describing these visits as a form of harassment and as ‘unnerving’.⁵⁹⁷ Conversely, the Taliban reportedly detained people who had not registered with them out of fear of reprisal or ignorance of the process.⁵⁹⁸

In March 2022, Human Rights Watch expressed concern over databases that the *de facto* authorities could access, as some contained ‘sensitive biometric data’ such as iris scans, fingerprints, photographs, addresses, names of relatives. Human Rights Watch notably listed the *e-tazkera*⁵⁹⁹ database, which has been compiling private information on Afghan citizens since 2010, the payroll system of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) and databases funded and/or built by Western donors and international institutions.⁶⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch’s Patricia Gossman told EUAA that there were no evidence that the Taliban actually use these databases.⁶⁰¹ However, a former NDS collaborator and engineer told French newspaper *Le Figaro* that the Taliban had ordered him to fix a tracking and listening system which he had sabotaged to prevent them from using it. He was detained for refusing to comply.⁶⁰²

From February 2022 onwards, the *de facto* authorities launched a wide-ranging search operation throughout several areas of Kabul and other provinces, officially to improve security. Anecdotal information from residents suggested that some homes were searched to find persons affiliated with the former government.⁶⁰³ According to SIGAR and Hasht-e Subh, such individuals had been arrested as well as former government officials.⁶⁰⁴ Hasht-e Subh reported on such search operations taking place in Daykundi Province.⁶⁰⁵ Sources interviewed

⁵⁹⁵ Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁶ Washington Post (The), Taliban wages campaign of targeted killings against former members of Afghan security forces, 1 December 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them, [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#), 08:30–10:00; Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁵⁹⁷ Washington Post (The), Taliban wages campaign of targeted killings against former members of Afghan security forces, 1 December 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them, [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#), 08:30–10:00

⁵⁹⁸ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, 30 November 2021, [url](#), p. 2; Washington Post (The), Taliban wages campaign of targeted killings against former members of Afghan security forces, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁹ The *tazkera* is the main identification document in Afghanistan. Under the Islamic Republic, all Afghan citizens were required to have one, however such a provision was not implemented in practice. The first *e-tazkeras* (with an electronic chip containing biometric information) were issued in 2018. For more information, see: Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Tazkera, passports and other ID documents, 22 May 2019, [url](#), pp. 5–12

⁶⁰⁰ HRW, New Evidence that Biometric Data Systems Imperil Afghans, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰¹ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

⁶⁰² *Le Figaro*, À Kaboul, la terreur talibane jusqu’au bout du désespoir, 14 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰³ DW, Taliban conduct sweeping house-to-house searches [Online video], 16 March 2022, [url](#); VOA, Taliban Defend Door-to-door Searches in Kabul, Bar Future Evacuations of Afghans, 27 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁴ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 73; Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Forces Imprison, Torture Daikundi Residents As Staging Massive House-to-House Sweep, Reports, 1 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁵ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Forces Imprison, Torture Daikundi Residents As Staging Massive House-to-House Sweep, Reports, 1 March 2022, [url](#)



by DIS noted the ‘varying treatment’ received by individuals affiliated with the former government during this campaign: some were released after being detained for a couple of days or being questioned, while others were held incommunicado.⁶⁰⁶ In May-June 2022, according to information only reported by Hasht-e Subh, the Taliban were still conducting house searches in Herat Province, to identify former soldiers and extort them money, while in Panjsher Province, they set up checkpoints and used biometric devices to the same end.⁶⁰⁷

2.3. Recruitment of former ANDSF members by Taliban forces or other armed groups

In March 2022, USDOS affirmed that ‘most former ANDSF personnel [had] returned to civilian life and many others [had] departed the country’.⁶⁰⁸

In December 2021, the *de facto* authorities set up a special committee to create a new regular army. The Taliban Minister of Foreign Affairs said it would include ‘faithful and patriotic people’, and thus not retain ‘all ANDSF personnel’, who were trained by ‘foreign occupiers’.⁶⁰⁹

Although the Taliban Minister of Defence stated in February 2022 that ‘90 percent of the employees of the ministry [were] former officers’⁶¹⁰, a UNSG report from June 2022 noted that ‘the security personnel of the former government [had] been largely dismissed, except for technical staff and specialized military personnel’.⁶¹¹ AP observed that the Taliban had had little success in convincing former military personnel to join their army, due to fears of retribution.⁶¹² The US Defence Intelligence Agency added that ‘some ANDSF and civilians [had] joined the *de facto* security forces at lower levels, likely for personal gain’.⁶¹³ According to anecdotal evidence, some former ANDSF members were prepared to join the *de facto* security forces to ease the economic hardships that they faced since losing their job.⁶¹⁴

As listed by a Taliban official, rehired professionals included ‘pilots and engineers, service persons, logistical and administrative staff’.⁶¹⁵ As of March 2022, according to a Taliban source, 4 300 former Air Force members (including 33 pilots) had joined the military aviation of the *de facto* authorities. One of them told the New York Times that he had enrolled to

⁶⁰⁶ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁶⁰⁷ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Identifies Former Security Affiliates Using Biometric Devices Across Panjshir Routes, 15 May 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Restarts House-to-House Search Operations in Herat, 21 May 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Launches House-to-House Searches in Herat, Asking Money and Weapons from Former Regime Members, 16 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁸ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 70

⁶⁰⁹ Nikkei Asia, Taliban quietly forming regular army to make Afghanistan a state, 12 December 2021, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA appoints committee to review the Afghan army, 11 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁰ Khaama Press, Afghanistan will initially have a-110,000-member army: acting Defense Minister, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 11

⁶¹² AP, Taliban raised on war bring a heavy hand to security role, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹³ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 70

⁶¹⁴ AFP, Ex-government workers mine for salvation in Afghan mountains, 28 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Former Afghan Security Forces in Afghanistan Report Challenges, 28 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁵ Al Jazeera, Taliban to create Afghanistan grand army with old regime troops, 22 February 2022, [url](#)



support his family. At this time, though, pilots from the elite ‘Special Mission Wing’ were still moving from house to house because they placed no trust in the Taliban’s reassurances, who had killed several pilots before they took over Kabul.⁶¹⁶ In June 2022, the Taliban also announced that Afghan cadets sent to India by the previous administration to complete their military training were to be hired to the Taliban armed forces.⁶¹⁷ For more information on recruitment to the Taliban, see section [13.1. Recruitment to the Taliban](#).

While USDOS stated that rehired individuals were not allowed to serve in the leadership of the *de facto* security forces⁶¹⁸, Al Jazeera reported on the nomination of two senior Afghanistan National Army (ANA) officers (specialist surgeons) to ‘top posts in the Defence ministry’.⁶¹⁹

In November 2021, Professor Barnett Rubin, an expert on Afghanistan, expressed concern over former ANDSF personnel – especially Tajik individuals and members of the former military and intelligence services – joining ISKP and providing the group with their expertise.⁶²⁰ Their motivations did not appear to be ideological.⁶²¹ Instead, they saw the group as powerful enough to protect them from the Taliban. ISKP was also said to offer them ‘significant amounts of cash’.⁶²² In a report of May 2022, the UN Analytical Support and Monitoring Team assessed the number of ANDSF employees joining ISKP ‘for protection from or revenge against the Taliban’ as low.⁶²³ In an earlier assessment, the US Defence Intelligence Agency stated that ANDSF former agents ‘almost certainly [had] not joined violent extremist organizations within Afghanistan’. Nevertheless, a former prominent general quoted by SIGAR noted that commandos and intelligence officers unable to be evacuated were ‘especially vulnerable’ to ISKP recruitment⁶²⁴ and USIP’s Andrew H. Watkins warned that the Taliban ‘war on terror’ may become a smokescreen for retribution against former government forces’.⁶²⁵

Lastly, many of the NRF fighters were thought to be ‘low-ranking officers’ of the Islamic Republic.⁶²⁶ An NRF official told local Afghan media outlet Etilaat-e Roz that former ANDSF personnel – especially former special forces officers – were the ‘backbone’ of the movement.⁶²⁷ According to online magazine Guernica, some former soldiers (namely in Andarab District, Baghlan Province) had first taken the initiative to get together to ‘build rudimentary fortifications and weapons caches’ before coming under the NRF.⁶²⁸ Among the other resistance groups, the Afghanistan Islamic National & Liberation Movement was reportedly headed by a former special forces commander, while the Afghanistan Freedom

⁶¹⁶ New York Times (The), Afghan Aviators Hide as Taliban Urge Them to Return to Duty, 13 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, Foreign-trained cadets to be inducted into military: Mol, 25 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁸ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 70

⁶¹⁹ Al Jazeera, Taliban to create Afghanistan grand army with old regime troops, 22 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶²⁰ Rubin, B., The Once and Future Defeat in Afghanistan, War On The Rocks, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶²¹ Independent Afghan analyst, digital interview, 8 November 2021; WSJ, Left Behind After U.S. Withdrawal, Some Former Afghan Spies and Soldiers Turn to Islamic State, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶²² WSJ, Left Behind After U.S. Withdrawal, Some Former Afghan Spies and Soldiers Turn to Islamic State, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶²³ UN Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 26 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶²⁴ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 January 2022, [url](#), p. 72

⁶²⁵ Watkins, A. H., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

⁶²⁶ New York Times (The), Taliban Search Operation Echoes Resented U.S. Tactics, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶²⁷ Etilaat-e Roz, سیگار [SIGAR: Special forces of the former Afghanistan army have joined the "Resistance Front"], 3 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶²⁸ Guernica, Inside the Afghan Resistance, 24 May 2022, [url](#)



Front certified that it had rallied ‘the majority of generals and other officers of the former republican security forces’.⁶²⁹ VOA noted that General Yasin Zia, previously serving as Chief of General Staff of the armed forces and former deputy Minister of Defence⁶³⁰, was thought to be one of the Afghanistan Freedom Front’s leaders.⁶³¹ In April 2022, another prominent general, Sami Sadat, announced that he was preparing for war against the Taliban, along other former soldiers. BBC pointed out that Sadat had been previously accused of violence against civilians in Helmand Province, where he commanded Afghan forces in 2021.⁶³²

For more information on recruitment to the Taliban and armed groups, see section [13. Recruitment to armed groups](#).

2.4. Persons who served in former military units

In December 2021, in Kabul City, the Taliban took the former deputy commander of the 2017 Pamir Corps in Kunduz Province to an undisclosed location. A relative told TOLONews that the Taliban came to the commander’s house and took vehicles and weapons, but did not provide any clear reason for the arrest.⁶³³ In May 2022, according to uncorroborated information on social media, the Taliban intelligence directorate arrested a retired general at the Kabul International Airport, while he was trying to seek medical treatment abroad.⁶³⁴

Hasht-e Subh also reported on detentions and killings of rank-and-file ANA members. For instance, in December 2021, in Kabul, the Taliban arrested a former 205th ANA Corps member along with his brother-in-law. He was accused of not handing over weapons that he claimed had already been seized. Hasht-e Subh added that his family was not allowed to visit him in detention and that the officer had been identified through information provided by a friend of his, after the Taliban had detained him.⁶³⁵ In June 2022, the Taliban allegedly arrested ‘dozens’ of former soldiers in Kapisa Province on the charges of affiliation to the NRF.⁶³⁶

As regards the treatment of former ANA members while in detention, in December 2021, journalist Bilal Sarwary shared a video on social media of Taliban fighters beating a detainee identified as a former ANA battalion commander.⁶³⁷ Two days later, the *de facto* authorities announced that the individuals torturing the man had been arrested and were under investigation. Yet they did not release the commander.⁶³⁸ In January 2022, Bilal Sarwary reported on social media about an arrest of two brothers who had served in the ANDSF, during a night raid in Khiva/Kuzkunar District, Nangarhar Province. One of them reportedly died ‘under severe torture’.⁶³⁹ Other sources on the social media and microblogging service

⁶²⁹ Marty, F. J., *Vive la Résistance in Afghanistan?*, Swiss Institute for Global Affairs, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶³⁰ Adili, A. Y., *Still Preoccupied by Who Gets What*, AAN, 5 August 2020, [url](#)

⁶³¹ VOA, *Afghan Fighting Season Ushers in New Anti-Taliban Groups*, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶³² BBC News, *Afghanistan: Former army general vows new war against Taliban*, 29 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶³³ TOLONews, *Former Military Officer Detained by Islamic Emirate: Family*, 21 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁴ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 11 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶³⁵ Hasht-e Subh, *Taliban Arrest an Officer of the 205th Corps in Kabul*, 28 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁶ Hasht-e Subh, *Taliban Arrests Former Government Soldiers and Youths in Kapisa*, 29 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶³⁷ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 27 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁸ TOLONews, *Men Torturing Former Military Official on Video Detained*, 29 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁹ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 19 January 2022, [url](#)



Twitter noted that the Taliban had then arrested eight individuals linked to the case, including the former district governor.⁶⁴⁰ In March 2022, the Taliban arrested, allegedly tortured and then murdered a former soldier in Taloqan City, Takhar Province.⁶⁴¹ In April 2022, Etilaat-e Roz also reported that at least two former security forces member, a former soldier from Daykundi Province and a former policeman from Helmand Province respectively, had been tortured – the latter to death.⁶⁴²

There were also cases of non-fighting army personnel being detained and killed. For instance, a finance officer of an ANA brigade was killed in Kunduz Province in December 2021. His relatives accused the Taliban for the attack, who had asked him to resume his job for weeks.⁶⁴³ In May 2022, the Taliban arrested the protocol manager of the former Ministry of Defence during a house search in Kabul.⁶⁴⁴

Other killings remained unclaimed. In Khanabad District, Kunduz Province, two brothers (one was a former soldier) were allegedly killed by gunmen ‘in military uniforms’ in January 2022.⁶⁴⁵ Hasht-e Subh documented similar events in Firozkoh City, Ghor Province, where a former ANA member was killed under unclear circumstances in March 2022⁶⁴⁶, and in Parwan Province where a former soldier was shot on his doorstep in May 2022.⁶⁴⁷ The same source reported on unidentified men killing five relatives (two were military personnel) of a former commander in Kapisa Province in February 2022.⁶⁴⁸ In May 2022, in Dehrawud District, Uruzgan Province, the former commander of a military base and his son were killed. The Taliban claimed that this event was due to ‘personal enmity’ and that they had arrested three suspects.⁶⁴⁹ Last, in February 2022, Bilal Sarwary reported on Twitter that hand grenades had been thrown at a former ANA officer’s house in Sarkani District, Kunar Province, but did not cause casualties.⁶⁵⁰

In June 2022, Hasht-e Subh and RFEL/RL’s Radio Azadi reported that in provinces such as Herat, Farah and Zabul, the Taliban had evicted former soldiers (including high-ranking members) and their families from their homes, claiming that their houses were ‘government properties’. The properties were reportedly distributed to Taliban fighters. Some residents stressed that they had built the houses on land allocated to them by the former government and that they had nowhere to go. In Herat, some tenants said that they had received death threats and sent two delegations to Kabul to find a solution, to no avail.⁶⁵¹ In Uruzgan Province,

⁶⁴⁰ Reportedly [Twitter], posted on: 20 January 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴¹ Hasht-e Subh, Local Sources: Taliban Militants Murder a Former Army Soldier in Takhar Province, 27 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴² Etilaat-e Roz, طالبان گاهای بازداشت در شکنجه ادعای [Allegations of torture in Taliban detention centres] 6 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴³ Tajuden Soroush [Twitter], posted on: 15 December 2021, [url](#); Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 15 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁴ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Detains a Former Army Soldier in Kabul, 20 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁵ Hasht-e Subh, Gunmen in Military Uniforms Kill Two Brothers in Kunduz, 29 January 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Local Sources: A Former National Army Soldier Mysteriously Murdered in Ghor Province, 13 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁷ Hasht-e Subh, Anonymous Gunmen Shot Dead a Former Army Soldier in Parwan, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁸ Hasht-e Subh, 2 Soldiers, 3 Civilians Killed in Kapisa, 16 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁹ Hasht-e Subh, Two Former Soldiers Mysteriously Killed in Uruzgan, 6 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁰ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 10 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵¹ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Forcibly Evict Former Soldiers From Their Houses, Confiscate Their Properties, 8 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Orders Former Herat Army Corps Members to Evacuate Their Apartments by Eid-ul-Adha, 9 June 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Radio Azadi, فراد ولایت در طالبان سوی از سابق نظامیان اجباری کو چ [Forced relocation of former troops by the Taliban in Farah province], 22 June 2022, [url](#)



the Taliban reportedly turned houses of former soldiers into military bases, checkpoints or residences for their own fighters.⁶⁵²

2.5. Persons who served in former police units

As of June 2022, the new *de facto* police force was said to have retained ‘some’ former personnel ‘but had largely inducted Taliban fighters’.⁶⁵³ A couple of months earlier, Amina Khan, Director of Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Islamabad-based Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI), told DIS that ‘many former Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan Local Police (ALP) officers [were] still working’ but not receiving salaries.⁶⁵⁴ In that regard, about 30 agents in Balkh Province reportedly quit their jobs in February 2022 because they had not been paid in seven months.⁶⁵⁵ According to the Guardian, before the Taliban takeover, about 4 000 women were serving in the former police. As of April 2022, ‘most of them [had] lost their jobs. A fraction was retained to manage women’s prisons’.⁶⁵⁶ A former female police officer claimed she was the target of several threats because she had been in charge of recruiting other women and had worked alongside men.⁶⁵⁷

In May 2022, the Taliban were deemed responsible for the murder of a former police officer in Takhar Province.⁶⁵⁸ In June 2022, they reportedly killed a former border police agent in Kabul City, even though he had been provided with an amnesty letter.⁶⁵⁹ The perpetrators of other killings remained unknown. In January 2022, in Herat City, unidentified gunmen shot dead the former police chief of Taywara District, Ghor Province.⁶⁶⁰ In April 2022, a former officer of the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) was killed in Dara-i Nur District, Nangarhar Province. The local *de facto* authorities described the incident as an honour killing, and linked it to an intrafamilial conflict.⁶⁶¹

Sources also reported on arrests and disappearances of former police members. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International expressed concerns over the disappearance of the former head of the women’s prison in Herat, in October 2021. ANP’s Alia Azizi – also a member of the Hazara community – was given a protection letter and, at the request of the *de facto* authorities, resumed working after the Taliban takeover. On 2 October 2021, she never returned home after work. As of April 2022, her whereabouts were still unknown, and the Taliban were yet to launch a ‘credible’ investigation of the case.⁶⁶² As of March 2022, a former police officer in Kabul City had been detained for a month without the Taliban providing any

⁶⁵² Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Rebels Occupy Former Soldiers’ Houses in Urozgan Province, 18 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵³ Reuters, Afghan Taliban unveils new uniforms for reconstituted police force, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁴ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 77

⁶⁵⁵ Hasht-e Subh, Non-payment of Salaries to Traffic Police in Balkh, 18 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁶ Kumar, R., We had 4,000 policewomen in Afghanistan. Let them get back to work, The Guardian, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁷ Guardian (The), The Taliban hate us: a former senior female police officer, 20 January 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁸ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Shot Dead a Former Police Officer Along With Three Civilians in Takhar, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁹ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁰ Ariana News, Former district police chief in Ghor gunned down, 25 January 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶¹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former security official gunned down in Nangarhar, 30 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶² Al, Afghanistan: Taliban authorities must reveal Alia Azizi’s whereabouts, 21 January 2022, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Herat Women’s Prison Head Missing 6 Months, 20 April 2022, [url](#)



reason to his family.⁶⁶³ Hasht-e Subh reported on arrests of high-ranked former police officers in the provinces Takhar and Kandahar.⁶⁶⁴ In late June 2022, the Taliban arrested a retired former police commander of Bagram District, Parwan Province and two of his male relatives.⁶⁶⁵

In early 2022, the mother of a former policeman was taken by Taliban fighters and later killed in Mazar-e Sharif. The family had been harassed for some time, the Taliban demanding them to vacate their property and to hand over weapons they did not own.⁶⁶⁶ In Khost Province, the brother of a former police special forces unit commander claimed that he had been detained and tortured for four days by the Taliban, who demanded him to bring them his brother. They released him after he found somebody to vouch for him.⁶⁶⁷

2.6. Persons who served in the former NDS

In a December 2021 article, the New York Times quoted a Taliban commander stating that the general amnesty extended to the NDS special units, or 'Zero Units'⁶⁶⁸, described as the Taliban 'mortal enemies'.⁶⁶⁹ However, the Taliban have targeted people linked to the NDS.⁶⁷⁰ Anecdotal evidence gathered by USIP's Andrew H. Watkins suggested that 'efforts were made to track former special forces, commando, and intelligence personnel'.⁶⁷¹ The Washington Post echoed this view, noting in November 2021 that former 'members of Afghanistan's special forces and many prominent commanders [feared] they [were] at greater risk of revenge killings because they were more likely to have killed, imprisoned, or interrogated Taliban members than the Afghan military's rank-and-file'. In the first weeks following the Taliban takeover, most of the killings of former intelligence officers reportedly took place in the south and the east of Afghanistan, where the Taliban have their 'strongest source networks and where the Afghan intelligence was most active in the public, most exposed'.⁶⁷² ISSI's Amina Khan stated that while the extent of the targeting of former NDS agents is unknown, the *de facto* authorities focused on mid- and high-ranked officer. Many were 'outspoken critics' of the Taliban.⁶⁷³ Moreover, an anonymous Afghan source told journalist Lynne O'Donnell that former special forces and commando members were 'easy to identify from their physiques'.⁶⁷⁴

In March 2022, Le Figaro quoted a Taliban dignitary saying that the former NDS agents who refused to cooperate with the *de facto* government were to be executed.⁶⁷⁵ As of October

⁶⁶³ TOLONews, Ex-Police Officer Detained for 25 Days: Family, 12 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁴ Hasht-e Subh, Local Sources: Taliban Militants Murder a Former Army Soldier in Takhar Province, 27 March 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Arrests Ex-Police Chief of Ghorak District, Kandahar, 29 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁵ TOLONews, Former Military Official in Parwan Detained: Family, 29 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁶ Times (The), Afghanistan's disappeared women: an arrest by the Taliban, then a bullet-riddled body, 27 January 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁷ TOLONews, Brother of Former Police Commander Says He Was Tortured in Khost, 21 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁸ For more information on these units and the raids they conducted, see, for instance: Quilty, A. and Cole, M., The CIA's Afghan Proxies, Accused of War Crimes, Will Get a Fresh Start in the U.S., The Intercept, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁹ Aikins, M., Inside the Fall of Kabul, New York Times (The), 10 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁰ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 17

⁶⁷¹ Watkins, A. H., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷² Washington Post (The), Taliban wages campaign of targeted killings against former members of Afghan security forces, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷³ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 17

⁶⁷⁴ O'Donnell, L., Afghan kidnappings leave families in the dark, The New Statesman, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁵ Le Figaro, À Kaboul, la terreur talibane jusqu'au bout du désespoir, 14 March 2022, [url](#)



2021, most of the ‘fraction’ of former ANDSF personnel who had resumed work under the Taliban, were reportedly NDS agents.⁶⁷⁶ An anonymous international source, interviewed by Landinfo in February 2022, stated that former NDS instructors actively participated in trainings of Taliban members.⁶⁷⁷ Hasht-e Subh nevertheless reported on such an NDS agent who had started working for the Taliban as a trainer: they seemingly remained suspicious of him and ended up killing him.⁶⁷⁸ According to unverified information published on Twitter, in Ghazni Province, the Taliban intelligence directorate reportedly instructed its members to identify in their ranks and report, among others, ‘mercenaries’ belonging to the former government.⁶⁷⁹

During the reporting period, journalist Bilal Sarwary documented the killing of several former NDS officers, some of them carried out by unidentified gunmen: the former NDS district chief of Orgun, Kunar Province⁶⁸⁰, a former intelligence officer in Kandahar Province⁶⁸¹ and a former employee of the directorate 64 (D64) in Gardez, Paktya Province.⁶⁸² Later on, in May 2022, Sarwary reported on Twitter about the son of the former NDS chief of the Bahrak District, Takhar Province, being tortured to death by the Taliban.⁶⁸³ In mid-June 2022, the Taliban reportedly tortured and then shot a former senior executive of the NDS in Zabul Province. Hasht-e Subh claimed that several of his relatives were tortured as well.⁶⁸⁴

Hasht-e Subh reported on other former NDS members being arrested by the Taliban (or individuals presenting themselves as such) and taken to unknown locations: for instance, in February 2022, in Kabul City⁶⁸⁵, in April 2022 in the provinces Bamyan and Ghor⁶⁸⁶, and in May 2022, a former member of the NDS special forces in Kunduz Province.⁶⁸⁷ According to the same media source, in May 2022, Taliban forces visited several former NDS agents’ houses during a search operation in Kandahar Province and took them away.⁶⁸⁸

Journalist Bilal Sarwary reported on social media, in March 2022, on unknown gunmen shooting the brother of a former NDS commander in Kunar Province.⁶⁸⁹ The following month, Hasht-e Subh reported on the Taliban arresting and torturing the brother of another former intelligence officer in Kabul City.⁶⁹⁰ An anonymous international humanitarian organisation told DIS that family members of former NDS employees ‘would be interrogated’ about their relative’s whereabouts.⁶⁹¹ UNAMA also reported on a case of a former NDS officer who was

⁶⁷⁶ WSJ, Left Behind After U.S. Withdrawal, Some Former Afghan Spies and Soldiers Turn to Islamic State, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁷ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Talibans regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 21

⁶⁷⁸ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Murders a Former Soldier in Herat Province, 2 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁹ Dr. Ahmad Waqas [Twitter], posted on: 15 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁰ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 14 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸¹ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 20 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸² Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 22 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸³ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 21 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁴ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Shot Dead a Former Member of NDS in Zabul, 18 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁵ Hasht-e Subh, Armed Men Arrest Former Security Officer in Kabul, 13 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Arrests Two Former Forces of NDS in Bamiyan Province, 6 April 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Arrests the Former Regional Manager of National Directorate of Security for Ghor Province, 26 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁷ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Rebels Kill an Ex-Local Commander in Kunduz, 31 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁸ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Raids the Former Government Security Affiliates’ Residents in Kandahar, 11 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁹ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁰ Hasht-e Subh, Widespread Violations of General Amnesty—Former Soldiers Are Not Safe, 16 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁹¹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 22



detained on 27 December 2021 in Faryab Province by the Taliban GDI. He had reportedly been beaten and subjected to electric shocks in detention.⁶⁹²

2.7. Persons who served in former local defence forces and pro-government militias

Human Rights Watch listed former ALP and pro-government militias (also known as *arbaki* or 'uprising forces/groups'⁶⁹³) among the Taliban's targets, mainly because many Taliban and former militiamen knew each other on local level, which left room for personal enmities and settling of scores. Killings of local defence forces members were documented in the provinces Helmand, Kunduz and Ghazni, between August and October 2021.⁶⁹⁴

In December 2021, a former commander reportedly died in Kabul 'under severe torture', after several weeks' detention.⁶⁹⁵ During a night operation the following month, the Taliban killed the head of a former uprising group in Rostaq District, Takhar Province. Hasht-e Subh claimed that he had renounced armed struggle after the Taliban announced their general amnesty.⁶⁹⁶ In May 2022, again in Takhar Province (Khvajaghar District), three former members of an uprising group were shot dead by the Taliban.⁶⁹⁷ In another instance, the Taliban arrested the young sons of a former uprising group commander in Badakhshan Province.⁶⁹⁸ In December 2021, a former ALP commander in Eastern Afghanistan was reportedly killed in front of his house – although the reporting journalist, Bilal Sarwary, did not specify the perpetrators.⁶⁹⁹

According to Hasht-e Subh, other former commanders and their relatives were arrested in April–June 2022, accused of affiliation with NRF in Badakhshan, Ghor and Takhar provinces.⁷⁰⁰

On 25 June 2022, in Lal Wa Sarjangal District, Ghor Province, the Taliban reportedly killed the former chief of an uprising group. He was said to have joined the Hazara Taliban commander Mehdi Mujahid⁷⁰¹ who had recently broken off from the movement, prompting clashes.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹² UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁶⁹³ For more information on uprising groups, see, for instance: Clark, K. and Osman, B., Enemy Number One: How the Taliban deal with the ALP and uprising groups, AAN, 19 July 2018, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁴ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#), pp. 10–11

⁶⁹⁵ Tajuden Soroush [Twitter], posted on: 3 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Shot Dead a Former Uprising Commander in Takhar, 13 January 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁷ Hasht-e Subh, Three Members of Former Anti-Taliban Forces Shot Dead by Taliban Fighters While Harvesting Wheat in Takhar, 18 May 2022, [url](#); Tajuden Soroush [Twitter], posted on: 18 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁸ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Rebels Arrest Two Sons of a Local Former Commander in Badakhshan, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁹ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 14 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁰ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Arrests a Former Local Commander and His Nephew in Ghor, 29 April 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Arrests an Ex-Local Commander in Takhar, 21 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, An Ex-Police Officer Shot Dead by Taliban in Kishim, Badakhshan, 24 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰¹ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Kill Former Anti-Taliban Commander Along With His Wife and Daughter in Ghor Province, 26 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰² DW, سرپل ولايت بلخاب ولسوالۍ در جنگ آغاز احتمال از مردم نگرانی, [People are worried about the possibility of a war in Balkhab district of Sar-e-Pul province], 18 June 2022, [url](#)



Meanwhile, in June 2022, Ariana News announced the return of a former commander of an uprising group in Faryab, through the Taliban's return commission.⁷⁰³ For more information, see sections [1.5.1. Taliban attitudes and public statements](#) and [4.3. High-ranking former officials and diplomats](#).

2.8. Women who served in ANDSF

In December 2021, the Taliban Ministry of Interior announced working on 'a mechanism for hiring or retaining female [former] police officers' who, at this time, had been assigned to administrative services.⁷⁰⁴ In June 2022, the UNSG reported that the Taliban had only retained ANDSF female employees of detention facilities and helping with body searches.⁷⁰⁵

In December 2021, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) interviewed several former female ANDSF workers (representing about 2 % of the security personnel, or 6 300 women). They stated that they had 'become the target of a witch hunt', led by the Taliban or their own relatives. According to one source, these women had angered the 'deeply conservative' society surrounding them by enlisting, and they could be given away to the Taliban by their own communities.⁷⁰⁶ Rukhsana Media made similar findings in January 2022, noting that 'women in uniform who joined the [former] security forces were often seen as "prostitutes" rejected and sidelined by society'. Human Rights Watch's Associate Director of the Women's Rights Division, Heather Barr, was also quoted as saying that high-profile women were at 'particular risk'.⁷⁰⁷ In May 2022, Human Rights Watch's Patricia Gossman also mentioned a confluence of the perception that women should not have been in such roles and their involvement in the former security forces operating against the Taliban, and added that Human Rights Watch had heard about a few cases of female ANDSF members being targeted.⁷⁰⁸

In May 2022, Hasht-e Subh collected consistent testimonies of former ANDSF women employees in hiding in Samangan Province. Some claimed that the Taliban had harassed them by subjecting them to 'harsh' interrogations and detaining their relatives to make them hand over weapons from their previous employment. Other noted that they had not received their salaries in months, although they were working for the *de facto* authorities.⁷⁰⁹

For more information on women's access to employment, see section [5.2.2. Access to employment](#)

⁷⁰³ Ariana News, Former commander of Faryab's uprising forces returns to Afghanistan, 26 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁴ Hasht-e Subh, The Ambiguous Fate of Women in Afghanistan's Armed Forces, 28 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁵ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 11

⁷⁰⁶ WSJ, Afghanistan's Former Female Troops, Once Hailed by the West, Fear for Their Lives, 28 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁷ Rukhsana Media, These women were looked down on when they worked in the army. Now they've been abandoned in a "dungeon", 17 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁸ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

⁷⁰⁹ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Forces Female Officers to Buy Them Guns or Face Consequences, 29 May 2022, [url](#)



3. Persons affiliated with foreign forces

3.1. General situation under Taliban rule

According to the American news publication Foreign Policy (FP), by September 2021, the US intelligence agency CIA had managed to evacuate most of its Afghan spies and informants – amounting to several thousand people when including relatives. CIA reportedly conducted evacuation operations throughout Afghanistan.⁷¹⁰ Nonetheless, in December 2021, the USDOS said that over 60 000 Afghan interpreters and other US forces collaborators remained in Afghanistan.⁷¹¹ According to earlier estimates by the Association of Wartime Allies (AWA), a non-profit advocacy group quoted by the New York Times, Afghans with ‘a direct connection with official America’ remaining in Afghanistan were twice as many. The NGO International Rescue Committee assessed that they were 263 000 Afghans of this profiles. AWA too wrote that ‘it [was] reasonable that nearly 1 percent of the Afghan population [est. 40 million] has in some way worked for, or are family members of those who worked for, the United States’.⁷¹² According to AWA’s most recent survey on their conditions of life (about 2 000 respondents), published in June 2022, 94 % of the Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) programme applicants were men, with an average age of 35 years old and 4 years of service. Over 70 % of the respondents were then located in Kabul, with significant groups in other major urban areas (Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-e Sharif). AWA noted that SIV applicants in more remote areas were harder to reach.⁷¹³

As of April 2022, according to the British Ministry of Armed Forces, more than 1 000 Afghans who had supported the UK military effort (‘former interpreters and other local staff’) and eligible to relocation remained in Afghanistan. The total number amounted to 4 000 when including family members.⁷¹⁴

Right after their return to power, the Taliban announced that they would ‘[assure] the safety of all those who have worked with the United States and allied forces’ and that they would ‘not pose any risk to them, to their property and to their life’. Among the approximate 500 cases of killings and enforced disappearance of former soldiers and government officials collected by the New York Times, one case concerned a former police chief who had collaborated with the US. He had been tortured for 49 days and then hanged by the Taliban.⁷¹⁵ For more information on the amnesty and its enforcement, see section [2.1. General situation under Taliban rule.](#)

An international humanitarian organisation interviewed by DIS conjectured that individuals who had worked for the US military were ‘more vulnerable compared to Afghans who worked

⁷¹⁰ FP, The CIA Secretly Evacuated Most of Its Spies From Afghanistan, 3 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹¹ WSJ, More Than 60,000 Interpreters, Visa Applicants Remain in Afghanistan, 16 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹² New York Times (The), Afghans With Ties to U.S. Who Could Not Get Out Now Live in Fear, 3 September 2021, [url](#); Le Monde, Dix bases américaines mobilisées dans les opérations d’évacuation, 27 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹³ AWA, The Left Behind Afghans – Focus on Women, 1 June 2022, [url](#), pp. 1–2

⁷¹⁴ Independent (The), We’ve been forgotten: Thousands of Afghans accepted for relocation to UK still stranded eight months on, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹⁵ New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#)



for other government forces’.⁷¹⁶ Other anonymous DIS sources assessed that non-fighting, low-ranked personnel of foreign military facilities were not likely to be targeted ‘solely based on their previous jobs’ – although another anonymous interlocutor thought that the foreign troops’ collaborators were ‘a risk profile’.⁷¹⁷

DIS mentioned, among risk factors, the actual involvement of a former foreign forces’ collaborator in fighting with the Taliban, the public’s knowledge of his previous occupation (with cases of villagers reporting on former interpreters of foreign units who ‘had behaved poorly towards the local community’), or personal circumstances, such as the family background, which could make them more prone to be targeted. Besides, in personal vendettas, past collaboration with foreign troops could be used against a person.⁷¹⁸

According to an international humanitarian organisation interviewed by DIS, the targeting was more prevalent in urban areas as high profile and senior figures tend to live there.⁷¹⁹

As early as August 2021, French news website Mediapart alleged that, in Ghazni Province, local Taliban were drawing up lists of foreign forces’ former collaborators.⁷²⁰ Journalist Lynne O’Donnell later reported on foreigners held hostage by the Taliban (including an American engineer and Navy veteran held since 2020, and a previous war cameraman) and claimed that the Taliban were using them to ‘track down Afghan people who associate with them’.⁷²¹ Moreover, the Taliban could potentially use the HIIDE (Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment) system – a biometric device designed by US forces in order to, *inter alia*, identify Afghans working for the coalition – that was seized during the last week of the Taliban’s 2021 offensive.⁷²² For more information on the Taliban capabilities in identifying their targets, see section [2.2. Taliban capabilities in identifying their targets](#)

In October 2021, Dutch public television Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (NOS) reported that the Taliban had summoned Afghan interpreters previously working for the Netherlands to appear in court. Their families were informed that they might be held responsible if the interpreters, then in hiding, failed to comply.⁷²³ That same month, news magazine the Diplomat wrote that the Taliban had detained, questioned and violently beaten at least four interpreters that had worked for the Turkish army.⁷²⁴ In December 2021, the Taliban allowed about 30 former collaborators with Turkey (‘interpreters or technical staff at Kabul’s military airport’) hold a protest in front of the Turkish embassy.⁷²⁵ In October 2021, Taliban fighters killed an former army officer previously working as an interpreter for the Australian Defence Forces. His wife and children were reportedly in hiding.⁷²⁶ In regard with Australia’s Afghan collaborators, an official report stated in January 2022 that ‘a significant number’ of them had not been able to

⁷¹⁶ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁷¹⁷ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 18

⁷¹⁸ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 18

⁷¹⁹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 18

⁷²⁰ Mediapart, Survivre sous le régime des talibans, 21 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷²¹ O’Donnell, L., Afghan kidnappings leave families in the dark, The New Statesman, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷²² Intercept (The), The Taliban Have Seized U.S. Military Biometrics Devices, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷²³ France 24, Taliban summon Afghan interpreters who worked for Dutch, threaten families, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷²⁴ Diplomat (The), The Afghan Interpreters Turkey Left Behind, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷²⁵ AFP, Abandoned by Turkey, Afghan airport staff protest in Kabul, 22 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷²⁶ ABC, Interpreter who assisted ADF executed by Taliban, 20 October 2021, [url](#)



evacuate in August and that, since then, some of them had ‘been injured or killed by the Taliban, with others currently in hiding’.⁷²⁷

In late February 2022, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid announced travel restrictions on all Afghans ‘unless they had a clear destination’. He confirmed that these restrictions would extend to former NATO and US collaborators, which prompted fears that they would not be allowed on evacuation flights.⁷²⁸ Days later, he made clear that Afghan citizens ‘with legal documents and invitation’ were allowed to travel abroad.⁷²⁹ Earlier, according to Hasht-e Subh, the Taliban had nevertheless ordered their border forces to prevent American and NATO collaborators from leaving the country.⁷³⁰ More information on persons leaving Afghanistan is available in section [1.5.2. Treatment of persons trying to leave and returnees](#).

According to AWA’s June 2022 survey conducted among Afghan interpreters and other US forces collaborators remaining in Afghanistan, half of the respondents declared that the Taliban had questioned or detained them at some point. Almost all of them said they were afraid of leaving their house (97 %), even to seek medical treatment (86 %).⁷³¹

In March 2022, RFE/RL reported on a former security guard who had worked for US and NATO special forces for almost 10 years. While waiting for the processing of his SIV application, he lived in hiding and relocated several times. He said that he had left Kabul to hide among his relatives, in a remote area.⁷³²

In April 2022, a former worker for the British military told the British newspaper the Independent that, although he had been accepted under the UK relocation program, he could not obtain travel documents: not only were they expensive, but visiting the passport office could put him at risk. He added that three of his colleagues had been assassinated earlier, before they could be relocated to the UK.⁷³³

3.2. Interpreters

In a November 2021 article for Rolling Stone magazine, photojournalist Andrew Quilty listed ‘former interpreters for international militaries’ among the professionals who lived in hiding, ‘sheltering in small groups of trusted friends and colleagues’, because they were wary of the general amnesty.⁷³⁴

In March 2022, the British Forces Broadcasting Service released a short report on two former interpreters for the UK army. They were able to flee to Pakistan after enduring Taliban death

⁷²⁷ Guardian (The), Dishonourable: report says Afghans left behind at high risk of brutal reprisals due to links with Australia, 21 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷²⁸ Reuters, Taliban restrict Afghans going abroad, raises concern from U.S. and UK, 1 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷²⁹ Al Jazeera, Afghans with correct legal documents may travel abroad, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷³⁰ Hasht-e Subh, US, NATO’s In-Country Employees Cannot Leave Afghanistan, Says Taliban’s Interior Ministry, 28 February 2022, [url](#)

⁷³¹ AWA, The Left Behind Afghans – Focus on Women, 1 June 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁷³² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Battle Red Tape, Taliban In Hope Of Evacuation To United States, 14 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷³³ Independent (The), We’ve been forgotten: Thousands of Afghans accepted for relocation to UK still stranded eight months on, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

⁷³⁴ Quilty, A., Where the Taliban Rule, Rolling Stone, 28 November 2021, [url](#)



threats and staying in hiding with their families for a while. One of them reportedly jumped from a three-stories building to escape a Taliban search operation.⁷³⁵

In April 2022, a group of former Afghan interpreters for the Canadian army explained that their relatives remaining in Afghanistan were 'running from safe house to safe house to escape Taliban reprisals'.⁷³⁶ A former translator for US, UK and Australian forces, now living in Australia, stressed that his family's situation had grown increasingly precarious, because the people that he used to pay to hide his family were now scared of Taliban's reprisals.⁷³⁷

A representative of an international organisation in Afghanistan quoted by DIS in March 2022, deemed 'unclear' the reasons behind the targeting of some interpreters who had been arrested or killed 'without an apparent motivation or legal ground'.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ BFBS, Former Afghan interpreters who face Taliban persecution risk being forgotten, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷³⁶ Globe & Mail (The), Afghan interpreters press Ottawa to rescue their families, 11 April 2022, [url](#)

⁷³⁷ Sydney Morning Herald (The), Defence interpreters live in limbo and fear for families left behind in Afghanistan, 21 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷³⁸ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 70



4. Public officials and servants of the former government

4.1. General situation under Taliban rule

On 17 August 2021, the Taliban announced a general amnesty for all government workers, asking them ‘to restart [their] routine life with full confidence’.⁷³⁹ For more information on the amnesty and its enforcement, see section [2.1. General situation under Taliban rule](#).

According to the Afghanistan experts Gilles Dorronsoro and Adam Baczko, the Taliban needed to grant amnesty for public servants of the former republic to get the administration up and running again.⁷⁴⁰ The latter added that the Taliban were likely to integrate the ‘least politicised’ categories of the Afghan middle classes into their administration – as they had done with some public servants of the communist regime in the 1990s.⁷⁴¹

A New York Times article indicated that, as soon as the Taliban took over Kunduz during their 2021 offensive, they asked the local public staff to resume work and restore basic services. They reportedly resorted to ‘terror’, going from house to house to locate municipal servants in hiding. At the general hospital, they put up posters warning absentees that they would be punished.⁷⁴² Human Rights Watch noted that former high-ranked civilian agents of the previous government were required to obtain an ‘amnesty letter’ from the Taliban, just as former military personnel. Unaware of this, some of them – such as civil servants in the judiciary – did not do so and, as a result, were beaten and detained.⁷⁴³

According to Taliban sources cited in 2022 by International Crisis Group analyst Graeme Smith, the *de facto* authorities claimed to have retained all former public servants willing to keep working and appointed only 4 000 new staff. Smith, on the other hand, assessed that the actual number of new appointees was higher.⁷⁴⁴ DIS sources reckoned that 80 % of civil servants of the former administration had returned to work, including those ‘below a certain rank’ in local administrations.⁷⁴⁵ Journalist Stefanie Gliniski stressed that some employees of the former government had chosen to stay in Afghanistan, as many did not have the contacts to flee the country and, while wary of the Taliban, needed to make a living.⁷⁴⁶ As of February 2022, however, salaries had seemingly not been paid in months within some offices.⁷⁴⁷

⁷³⁹ France 24, Taliban declares general amnesty for Afghan government officials, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁰ Le Monde, Le mouvement taliban est paradoxalement dans une situation de faiblesse, le moment est propice pour négocier avec lui, 25 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴¹ Mediapart, Adam Baczko: La matrice idéologique des talibans est restée inchangée, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴² New York Times (The), A Week Into Taliban Rule, One City’s Glimpse of What the Future May Hold, 15 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴³ HRW, No Forgiveness for People Like You, Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, November 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁴ Smith, G., A Short Visit to the Taliban’s Tense and Quiet Capital, International Crisis Group, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁵ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 17

⁷⁴⁶ Gliniski, S., I Wanted to Stay for My People, FP, 9 February 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁷ TOLONews, Public Works Employees Hold Protest Over Unpaid Salaries, 27 February 2022, [url](#)



Returning from a trip to Afghanistan in spring 2022, Smith and another International Crisis Group analyst, Ibraheem Bahiss, described Afghan institutions as ‘hybrids of old and new’. While the cooperation between former and new officials was ‘not always easy’, they seemingly managed to work side by side. Smith noted that, although some former civil servants lived in fear, revenge killings had mostly targeted former military personnel, and stated that life under the Taliban for most civil servants was ‘more about adapting to the new bosses and worrying about keeping their salaries’.⁷⁴⁸ In June 2022, assistant law professor Haroun Rahimi made similar findings: ‘in terms of staffing, on the national level, the Taliban seems to have kept most of the staff in technical ministries who remained in the country but put Taliban members in leadership roles’.⁷⁴⁹ The Washington Post, however, reported on the former deputy finance minister who was allowed to retain his position.⁷⁵⁰ Rahimi also noted that the staff in ministries dealing with security affairs or issues seen as ‘sensitive’ (such as the Taliban Ministry of Education) had been largely replaced. Many Taliban were also appointed in local administrations but the *de facto* authorities seemingly retained most of the teachers.⁷⁵¹

The New York Times observed that the Taliban were filling civilian positions at all levels with ‘soldiers and theologians’. Some former public servants reportedly fled the country or did not resume work, causing ‘widespread vacancies’ in the administration. In interviews with the New York Times, some stated that they did not resume work because they were not being paid, or did not ‘want to taint their pending asylum cases’ in the US or Europe.⁷⁵² In a June 2022 report, the UNSG stated that the Taliban were continuing to replace former administrative personnel with their affiliates.⁷⁵³ According to Hasht-e Subh, in early June 2022, the *de facto* authorities restricted government jobs to individuals with ‘a fighting background in the ranks of the Taliban’.⁷⁵⁴ Throughout the reporting period, Hasht-e Subh also reported on the Taliban laying off hundreds of public agents in various administrations and provinces (or asking them to stay at home), often for unclear reasons: municipal employees in Herat; provincial agents in Takhar and Farah provinces; executives of the Ministry of Labour. In some cases, the Taliban commented that they had only fired absentees or corrupt individuals.⁷⁵⁵

In a September 2021 report, AAN analyst Martine van Bijlert noted that among the people hiding because of ‘specific, targeted, personalised threats’ were former government and security officials, judges, local politicians and community leaders.⁷⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch’s Patricia Gossman concurred that some former civil servants had been targeted, but to a lesser extent than former ANDSF personnel. Gossman underlined that the Taliban had a narrower

⁷⁴⁸ Smith, G., A Short Visit to the Taliban’s Tense and Quiet Capital, International Crisis Group, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁹ Rahimi, H., Afghanistan’s laws and legal institutions under the Taliban, Melbourne Asia Review, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁰ Washington Post (The), Afghanistan desperately needs aid. One technocrat from the former government is key to the Taliban’s efforts, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵¹ Rahimi, H., Afghanistan’s laws and legal institutions under the Taliban, Melbourne Asia Review, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵² New York Times (The), The Taliban Have Staffing Issues. They Are Looking for Help in Pakistan, 13 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵³ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 4

⁷⁵⁴ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Defines Fighting Background as Recruitment Criteria in Public Posts, 5 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁵ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Fires 300 Staff of Herat Municipality, 20 January 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Shirin Agha Lives a Hard Life After Losing His Job, 17 February 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Regime Expels 10s of the Former Government Employees in Farah Province, 6 April 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Continue Ethnic Based Expulsions of Former Government Employees, 25 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁶ van Bijlert, M., The Moment in Between: After the Americans, before the new regime, AAN, 1 September 2021, [url](#)



definition of ‘civilian’ than humanitarian law. For instance, they were prone to see individuals who used to hold positions of power (government and ministries officials, for instance) and non-combatant persons working for the former security institutions as non-civilians.⁷⁵⁷

During the reference period, sources mentioned violent abuses of former civil servants – sometimes by unidentified perpetrators: in December 2021, CSM reported on former employees of the Ministry of Finance in Nangarhar Province and a former district governor from Helmand Province (also described as a close collaborator of the US Army) being either hunted down, beaten or accused of being ‘infidels’ and ‘puppets of America’. The Taliban seemingly seized their properties and violently went after some of their relatives to learn of their whereabouts.⁷⁵⁸ In January 2022, a former employee of the Ministry of Agriculture was shot in Takhar Province. In March 2022, after a wave of killings or abductions of Taliban members in Helmand Province, the local *de facto* authorities threatened to take retaliatory measures against former government officials.⁷⁵⁹ In April 2022, the *de facto* security forces arrested a former human resources manager at the Ministry of Interior, who had resumed work after the Taliban takeover. His body – with visible signs of torture – was returned to his family four days later.⁷⁶⁰

As mentioned UNAMA’s monitoring indicated a ‘clear pattern’ regarding targeting taking place in the period 15 August 2021–15 June 2022 and identified former government officials as one of the groups having been ‘particularly at risk of experiencing human rights violations’. Figures concerning former government officials was demonstrated together with former ANDSF members, which included 160 extrajudicial killings (including 10 women), 178 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 23 incommunicado detentions, and 56 instances of torture and ill-treatment. All these instances were carried out by the *de facto* authorities and occurred in almost all parts of Afghanistan. According to UNAMA individuals on ‘differing level of affiliation to the former government’ fell victim to such acts, ‘from senior officials to drivers, bodyguards and relatives.’⁷⁶¹ From October 2021, UNAMA noted that the targeting of former government officials generally focused on individuals rather than groups. Killings were often carried out like quick executions and arbitrary arrests and detentions appeared to be ‘widespread’.⁷⁶²

In February 2022, SkyNews reported on living conditions in a prison in Herat. Many detainees were presented as former government workers, imprisoned without trial or evidence.⁷⁶³

Regarding female civil servants, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated in January 2022 that they were working ‘in the health and education sector and at Kabul International airport in customs and passport control’.⁷⁶⁴ According to the New York Times, only a ‘handful’ of education and health public workers had actually been allowed to resume work. The Taliban were then preventing the majority of female government workers from returning to

⁷⁵⁷ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

⁷⁵⁸ CSM, The Taliban won. So why, and who, are they still fighting?, 2 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁹ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Threaten Revenge Killings, 22 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁰ TOLONews, Body of Mol Officer, Showing Torture, Handed Over to Family, 18 April 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶¹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 13–14

⁷⁶² UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁷⁶³ SkyNews, Afghanistan: Inside prison where children as young as 12 are held and female governor has vanished, 7 February 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁴ AP, The AP Interview: Taliban pledge all girls in schools soon, 15 January 2022, [url](#)



work. The New York Times reported on one woman who was required to sign in at work once a month, which the newspaper called ‘a fiction that allows the Taliban to deny that they have fired female government workers’.⁷⁶⁵ In May 2022, a Taliban official told VOA that ‘the majority of female civil servants, 120 000 persons, were back at work’. According to the breakdown figures that he provided, 108 000 of them were hired by the Taliban ministries of education and public health.⁷⁶⁶ The Guardian collected testimonies of two former female employees of the Ministry of Women Affairs. As of January 2022, they were regularly changing residence to escape the Taliban. One of them stated that the Taliban were hunting down the former heads of the provincial offices of the Ministry, such as herself.⁷⁶⁷ For more information on women’s access to employment, see section [5.2.2. Access to employment](#).

Last, as regards relatives of former government personnel, one anonymous journalist, interviewed by DIS, stated that they were ‘generally not a target’ but that it depended on the specific occupation of their relative and on pre-existing, unresolved conflict with the Taliban.⁷⁶⁸ UNAMA, on the other hand, stated that it was ‘evident’ that individuals that did not hold senior roles within the former government were also targeted, and gave relatives as an example.⁷⁶⁹

4.2. Former judicial workers

In March 2022, although a Taliban spokesperson quoted by TOLONews assured that ‘a number’ of judiciary personnel ‘not involved in corruption’ had retained their positions⁷⁷⁰, OHCHR stated that ‘former judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers have remained mostly excluded from the *de facto* justice system and remain in limbo regarding their return to work’.⁷⁷¹ Also in March 2022, Taliban forces had reportedly ‘disturbed’ a protest of dozens of former judges complaining of their ‘uncertain fate’.⁷⁷² Assistant law professor Haroun Rahimi stated that they had been replaced with clerics versed in Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence.⁷⁷³

In September 2021, the Los Angeles Times reported on a former judge who had been voluntarily rehired by the Taliban to work for them in the same capacity.⁷⁷⁴ However, in November 2021, according to Bilal Sarwary, the Taliban Ministry of Justice released a directive restricting provincial positions to individuals who had a religious background and had not worked for the previous administration.⁷⁷⁵ In late 2021, the *de facto* authorities announced that only Taliban-approved lawyers could work in their courts, which in practice could be interpreted as the about 2 500 existing lawyers were stripped from their licenses. Moreover,

⁷⁶⁵ New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁶ VOA, Taliban Rebuff UN Calls for Reversing Rules on Afghan Women, 27 May 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁷ Guardian (The), We are struggling: two former officials at Afghan women’s affairs ministry, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁸ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 22

⁷⁶⁹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁷⁷⁰ TOLONews, Former Govt Judges Hold Protest to Demand Salaries, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 61

⁷⁷² TOLONews, Former Judges Hold Protest Over Their Uncertain Fate, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷³ TOLONews, Supreme Court Appoints 69 Provincial Judges, 16 December 2021, [url](#); Rahimi, H., Afghanistan’s laws and legal institutions under the Taliban, Melbourne Asia Review, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁴ LA Times (The), More Judge Judy than Cops: A first look at the Taliban’s new police, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁵ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 24 November 2021, [url](#)



they placed the Afghanistan's Independent Bar Association under the supervision of the Taliban Ministry of Justice. The bar association was previously the competent authority to grant lawyers with licenses, in order to 'prevent bribery and corruption'.⁷⁷⁶

In October 2021, a Taliban official assured that the general amnesty announced in August 2021 extended to former judges and lawyers.⁷⁷⁷ Nevertheless, in September 2021, in a joint statement, two professional organisations of Afghan judges warned that revenge killings might occur, and that former judges had been subjected to house-searches, threatening messages and physical harassment, and had had their bank accounts suspended. Their family, friends and neighbours were said to have been under pressure to reveal their whereabouts.⁷⁷⁸ Later on, former judges and prosecutors gave similar accounts.⁷⁷⁹ Some noted that along recently released ISKP members and criminals⁷⁸⁰, some Taliban fighters were pursuing 'personal vendettas' against former judges, and could not be controlled by the Taliban leadership.⁷⁸¹ According to another judge, as of October 2021, five of his colleagues had been killed since the takeover.⁷⁸² The New York Times also documented the killing of a former prosecutor and his brother in October 2021, while they were driving in Kabul.⁷⁸³

In December 2021, OHCHR deemed 'the safety of Afghan [former] judges, prosecutors, and lawyers – particularly women legal professionals – a matter for particular alarm'.⁷⁸⁴ OHCHR later expressed concern over former law and court personnel who were still living in hiding as of March 2022, or were subjected to threats and intimidation.⁷⁸⁵ The Taliban had reportedly gained access to the payroll system of the former Supreme Court and used it to identify former judges – in Bamyan Province, one former judge was arrested in December 2021 while he was trying to renew his passport.⁷⁸⁶ In February 2022, Afghan news media Reportedly and Etilaat-e Roz wrote about the killing of a former prosecutor by unidentified gunmen in Gardez, Paktya Province.⁷⁸⁷

In particular female former judges and prosecutors and their families reportedly lived in hiding and feared for their lives, as some had ruled in favour of women in divorce and/or domestic violence cases, and against Taliban members as well as released prisoners. As stated by a

⁷⁷⁶ Jurist, Afghanistan bar association head pleads for international help as armed Taliban take over offices, displace leadership, 24 November 2021, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 61; RFE/RL/Gandhara, Judge, Jury, And Executioner, 1 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁷ New York Times (The), Afghan Women Who Once Presided Over Abuse Cases Now Fear for Their Lives, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁸ IAJ and IAWJ, Joint IAJ and IAWJ Statement on the Current Situation in Afghanistan, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁹ VOA, Afghan Prosecutors Who Worked at Bagram Prison Fear Taliban's Reprisals, 19 October 2021, [url](#); San Francisco Chronicle, His relatives are being hunted in Afghanistan, 19 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁰ Hasht-e Subh, Afghan Prosecutors Are Concerned, Saying That They Live in Hiding, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸¹ Business Insider, Hunted by the Taliban, Afghanistan's former judges are disguising themselves and going underground, 2 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸² Hasht-e Subh, Afghan Prosecutors Are Concerned, Saying That They Live in Hiding, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸³ New York Times (The), The Taliban Promised Them Amnesty. Then They Executed Them [Online video], 12 April 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁴ Reuters, Taliban rule marked by killings, denial of women's rights – UN, 14 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 61

⁷⁸⁶ HRW, New Evidence that Biometric Data Systems Imperil Afghans, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁷ Reportedly [Twitter], posted on: 22 February 2022, [url](#); Etilaat-e Roz, مخ پټو وسله والو ګرځېدې کي یو ځارنوال په دزو وژلی, 22 February 2022, [url](#) [Unidentified gunmen shot dead a prosecutor in Gardez], 22 February 2022, [url](#)



source of the New York Times, ‘women judging men is anathema to the Taliban’. As of October 2021, 200 female former judges remained in Afghanistan.⁷⁸⁸

4.3. High-ranking former officials and diplomats

AAN analyst Martine van Bijlert noted that, in the immediate weeks after the Taliban takeover, some high or middle ranked public officials, who had been detained following their surrender, had been released⁷⁸⁹ – such as the former governor of Laghman Province, as reported by Pajhwok Afghan News.⁷⁹⁰ As of February 2022, among the former civil servants who resumed working for the *de facto* authorities, were ‘at least two deputies at the Ministry of Finance, two at the Ministry of Transport and Aviation, and one in Kabul’s municipal government’.⁷⁹¹

In April 2022, the Taliban Minister of Interior was quoted saying that former high-ranking officials could live in Afghanistan ‘with dignity’ and that the *de facto* government would fully defend their ‘honour, dignity and property’.⁷⁹² To that end, the Taliban set up a return commission in March 2022 and officially launched it in May 2022. It was tasked with contacting exiled political and military personalities and addressing their concerns.⁷⁹³ The head of the Taliban commission stressed that returning former politicians would be provided with documents assuring their safety, but did not specify whether they would be allowed to resume their political activities.⁷⁹⁴ Another member of the Taliban commission said that they would be able to do so ‘under the structure of the current Afghan government’⁷⁹⁵, while Reuters wrote that the Taliban commission would ‘ensure work in the private sector’.⁷⁹⁶ Several political figures expressed scepticism, criticising the Taliban commission’s lack of transparency and for overlooking politicians who remained in Afghanistan. Others said that the Taliban had not offered them sufficient guarantees of safety.⁷⁹⁷ By June 2022, several former ministers and deputy ministers had returned, along with a former presidential advisor, a former Member of Parliament, the former head of the national electricity supplier, a former ambassador and a member of the former National Security Council.⁷⁹⁸ For more information, see section [1.5. Leaving and returning to Afghanistan](#).

⁷⁸⁸ New York Times (The), Afghan Women Who Once Presided Over Abuse Cases Now Fear for Their Lives, 20 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghanistan’s Former Prosecutors Hunted By Criminals They Helped Convict, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁹ van Bijlert, M., The Moment in Between: After the Americans, before the new regime, AAN, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁰ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban release 4 former officials of Laghman, 28 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁹¹ Glinski, S., I Wanted to Stay for My People, FP, 9 February 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹² Ariana News, Haqqani calls on former officials to return home, assures them of their security, 25 April 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹³ TOLONews, Commission to Contact Former Afghan Officials Begins Activities, 22 March 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, EA reassures returning Afghan politicians and military figures of their security, 22 May 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁴ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Pledges Safety for Returning Afghans, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁵ TOLONews, Kabul Says Some Politicians Responded Positively to Return Offer, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁶ Reuters, Former Afghan minister returns to Kabul at Taliban invitation, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁷ TOLONews, Ex-Deputy Minister of Transport Returns to Kabul, 5 June 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁸ AP, Six months of Taliban: Afghans safer, poorer, less hopeful, 15 February 2022, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Former Defence Ministry spokesman returns to Kabul, 5 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Reiterates Pledge of Safety for Returning Afghans, 9 June 2022, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Former NSC official Khadim returns to Afghanistan, 26 May 2022, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Former education minister returns to Afghanistan, 28 June 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Two political figures and one doctor return to country, 29 June 2022, [url](#)



In January 2022, the Taliban arrested the former deputy head of the former Electoral Complaints Commission in Kabul (also a former member of parliament and deputy governor of Ghor Province).⁷⁹⁹ Sources also reported attacks on prominent officials by unknown assailants, such as a former member of parliament shot to death in Kabul City in January 2022.⁸⁰⁰ In February 2022, five relatives of another former member of parliament and ‘former jihadi commander’ were killed by unknown armed men in Kapisa Province, identified as Taliban by his family.⁸⁰¹ Also in February 2022, unidentified gunmen raided the home of the former deputy of the former Chief Executive of Afghanistan, killing one of his sons and a bodyguard. The Taliban ascribed the event to a private conflict.⁸⁰²

As for the highest dignitaries of the former government, former President Hamid Karzai and former Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah, are still in Afghanistan but were ‘essentially’ put under house arrest soon after the takeover.⁸⁰³ In that regard, President Karzai was reportedly prevented from flying to the UAE in May 2022⁸⁰⁴, while Abdullah Abdullah could visit his family in India for six weeks in May/June 2022.⁸⁰⁵

According to journalist Franz J. Marty, ‘several former members of Parliament and cabinet ministers’ of the former government have joined the Afghanistan Freedom Front.⁸⁰⁶ The NRF too claimed that some former civil servants were fighting in its ranks.⁸⁰⁷

After the Taliban takeover, most incumbent diplomatic personnel continued to represent the former government and kept on working independently. However, due to a lack of funds, the 45 embassies and 20 consulates had to close or scale down their activities.⁸⁰⁸ For instance, in March 2022, following the closure of Afghan diplomatic missions in the US, the 100 Afghan diplomats were given 30 days ‘to apply for residency or temporary humanitarian parole’. They were reportedly not at risk of being deported to Afghanistan.⁸⁰⁹ Some countries accepted Taliban accredited diplomats [see section 1.1.3. [Recognition and international relations](#)].⁸¹⁰ According to a former diplomat, the Taliban pushed ‘disgruntled, fired and laid off’ diplomats to join them. AFP and FP reported on a former diplomat attacking the Afghan ambassador in Italy in January 2022, claiming that he had been appointed ambassador by the Taliban. Other diplomats expressed concern about being targeted by Taliban supporters in Europe.⁸¹¹

⁷⁹⁹ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Arrest Former Deputy Head of the Electoral Complaints Commission, 7 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁰ Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 16 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Abdul Hadi Safi Wounded by Unknown Gunmen, 8 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰¹ TKG, Armed Men Gun down Relatives of Former MP, 16 February 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰² Bilal Sarwary [Twitter], posted on: 12 February 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Armed attack on former Afghan government deputy CE left two dead in Kabul, 12 February 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰³ Glinski, S., I Wanted to Stay for My People, FP, 9 February 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former President Karzai stopped from travelling to UAE, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁵ Ariana News, Abdullah returns to Afghanistan after 6 weeks in India, 11 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁶ Marty, F. J., Vive la Résistance in Afghanistan?, Swiss Institute for Global Affairs, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁷ Arte, Afghanistan : la résistance s'organise, 20 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁸ New York Times (The), Unpaid and Potentially Stateless, Afghan Diplomats Seek Permission to Remain in U.S., 13 February 2022, [url](#); AFP, Afghan diplomats under pressure from Taliban regime, 14 March 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghanistan's Embassies Remain In Limbo As Most Staff Still Loyal To Toppled Government, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁹ New York Times (The), Afghan Embassy, Now Out of Money, Will Shut Down, U.S. Says, 11 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹⁰ Khaama Press, Kabul Optimistic about Formal Recognition amid Heightened Situation, 27 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹¹ AFP, Afghan diplomats under pressure from Taliban regime, 14 March 2022, [url](#); FP, You're Very Vulnerable: Afghan Diplomats Fear Violent Taliban Reprisals, 11 January 2022, [url](#)



5. Gender-based targeting

5.1. General societal situation of women and girls

5.1.1. Position of women and girls in society

As described in [EASO COI Report Afghanistan – Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms](#) from 2017, women and girls generally have a lower societal status than men in Afghanistan, oftentimes leading to restrictions of their basic rights and to gender-based violence.⁸¹² The extent of the societal restriction of women's rights varies significantly across the country as a woman's position in society is defined by her direct social environment (family and village or neighbourhood), their socio-economic situation, and in some cases by ethnic or tribal customs.⁸¹³

An example for the different factors defining women's position in society is the role of the customary code *Pashtunwali* in women's daily life: Lutz Rzehak, a linguist and expert on Afghanistan, portrays *Pashtunwali* as a description of 'the way of the Pashtuns', 'an ethnic self-portrait', and a 'code of honour'.⁸¹⁴ According to the Austrian Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl (BFA) respect for women is a central element of *Pashtunwali*, since the code holds women as symbols of honour. Men should protect women's honour by keeping them within the private sphere and not mentioning their names in public. Violations, or perceived violations, of women's dignity can lead to deadly conflicts.⁸¹⁵ At the same time, *Pashtunwali* legitimises forced marriage to resolve a conflict⁸¹⁶ and levirate marriages within the patrilineal family to ensure the protection and livelihood of women.⁸¹⁷ However, the norms formulated by *Pashtunwali* should not be understood as all-encompassing and static. In her book on Afghan women, Elaheh Rostami-Povey points out that the relevance of *Pashtunwali* differs for Pashtuns in eastern and western provinces of Afghanistan.⁸¹⁸ Also, changes have taken place during the past decades: according to *Pashtunwali*, women used not to be allowed to attend *jirgas* (a specific form of council defined by *Pashtunwali*) but during the time of the Islamic Republic (2004–2021)⁸¹⁹, women participated in *Loya Jirgas* [grand assemblies] and special *jirgas* for women were established.⁸²⁰ One of the most famous examples of Afghan women taking public positions during the Islamic Republic, Zarifa Ghafari, the former mayor of Maidan Wardak, was Pashtun.⁸²¹ Girls in southern and eastern provinces were less likely to attend

⁸¹² EASO, Afghanistan – Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017, [url](#), p. 33

⁸¹³ Germany, BAMF, Länderreport 48 Afghanistan: Die Situation von Frauen, 1996 – 2022, January 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁸¹⁴ Rzehak, L., Doing Pashto: Pashtunwali as the ideal of honourable behaviour and tribal life among the Pashtuns, January 2011, [url](#), p. 1

⁸¹⁵ Austria, BFA, AfPak: Principals of the tribal & clan structure, 5 April 2017, [url](#), pp. 32, 51–53

⁸¹⁶ Austria, BFA, AfPak: Principals of the tribal & clan structure, 5 April 2017, [url](#), p. 42

⁸¹⁷ Rzehak, L., Doing Pashto: Pashtunwali as the ideal of honourable behaviour and tribal life among the Pashtuns, January 2011, [url](#), p. 10

⁸¹⁸ Rostami-Povey, E., Afghan Women: Identity and Invasion, 2007, [url](#), p. 5

⁸¹⁹ Britannica, Afghanistan: Facts & Stats, n.d., [url](#)

⁸²⁰ Austria, BFA, AfPak: Principals of the tribal & clan structure, 5 April 2017, [url](#), p. 32

⁸²¹ New York Times (The), Afghan Town's First Female Mayor Awaits Her Assassination, 4 October 2019, [url](#)



schools than girls in other provinces.⁸²² These provinces are mainly inhabited by Pashtuns.⁸²³ For example, in 2015 less than 10 % of girls attended secondary school in Kandahar and Paktika Provinces, whereas more than 30 % of girls attended secondary school in northern provinces such as Jawzjan, Faryab and Badakhshan.⁸²⁴ However, United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) found that the school attendance rates were closely related to security and the economic situation in the respective provinces as well as to a rural-urban divide.⁸²⁵ Other ethnicities, especially Hazara, were seen as more liberal with regards to women's position in society than Pashtuns.⁸²⁶

During the time of the Islamic Republic, the possibilities for some girls to obtain education and for women to pursue a career increased significantly in comparison to the 1990s.⁸²⁷ With the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the position of women and girls in society has changed. Restrictions in education, work, movement and freedom of speech have strongly limited women's and girls' possibilities to participate in social life. Human Rights Watch's Heather Barr described women in Afghanistan as 'virtual prisoners in their homes'. The arbitrariness in the implementation of Taliban rules, the Human Rights Watch report continues, has frequently led to self-restriction or restrictions by the social environment.⁸²⁸ A former university teacher and women's rights activist interviewed for this report highlighted that with the restrictions imposed by the Taliban and the resulting disappearance of women from public positions, the general respect for women has decreased. As a consequence, the source said, women felt less secure and were less likely to stand up for their rights, which made them more vulnerable to public harassment and domestic violence.⁸²⁹ Correspondingly, the author of an article in the Conversation estimated that violence against women was increasing.⁸³⁰ Research conducted by Human Rights Watch has shown that many women were facing mental health issues since the Taliban takeover, 'including fear, anxiety, hopelessness, insomnia, and a deep sense of loss and helplessness'.⁸³¹ According to Hasht-e Subh, the number of suicides among women has increased since the takeover.⁸³²

Women have been disproportionately affected by the humanitarian crisis according to World Food Programme's (WFP) Afghanistan Director Mary-Ellen McGroarty.⁸³³ As many women were barred from work, widows and other women heading a household as well as women who had been sole breadwinners were struggling to feed their families and to pay rent.⁸³⁴ Additionally, the media initiative Alive in Afghanistan reported that when men lost their jobs, women were

⁸²² UNICEF, Afghanistan: Education Equity Profile for Adolescent Girls, December 2019, [url](#), 4

⁸²³ MRG, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, Afghanistan: Pashtuns, December 2021, [url](#)

⁸²⁴ UNICEF, Afghanistan: Education Equity Profile for Adolescent Girls, December 2019, [url](#), 5

⁸²⁵ UNICEF, Afghanistan: Education Equity Profile for Adolescent Girls, December 2019, [url](#), pp. 10, 12

⁸²⁶ MRG, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, Afghanistan: Hazaras, December 2021, [url](#)

⁸²⁷ Germany, BAMF, Länderreport 48 Afghanistan: Die Situation von Frauen, 1996 – 2022, January 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁸²⁸ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸²⁹ Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 17 May 2022

⁸³⁰ Conversation (The), Afghan women face increasing violence and repression under the Taliban after international spotlight fades, 4 February 2022, [url](#)

⁸³¹ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸³² Hasht-e Subh, یک دختر جوان در تخار شلیک گلوله خودش را کشت [A young girl in Takhar committed suicide with a gun] 29 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸³³ Mary-Ellen McGroarty, World Food Programme Country Director for Afghanistan, in interview with Christiane Amanpour (CNN) [Twitter], posted on: 17 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸³⁴ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Widows Struggle To Survive Amid Humanitarian Disaster, 25 March 2022, [url](#)



forced to do informal work such as cleaning, washing and cooking for other families on top of their own household chores.⁸³⁵ In some areas it is common for women to eat after the male household members have finished their meal. The Guardian quoted a representative of UNOCHA explaining that, in times of food shortage, this practice leaves women without food. Similarly, the article continues, baby girls are more likely to suffer of malnutrition because in some families (especially in southern provinces) breast feeding and food is reserved for boys.⁸³⁶

5.1.2. Dress codes and behavioural norms

According to two women's rights activists interviewed by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge – BAMF) for this report, the dress codes of women have changed slightly after the Taliban takeover but still depended on the province, city, or even the neighbourhood a woman lived in.⁸³⁷ A report published by the AAN explains that women's dress codes also reflected the sense of safety and the socio-economic background, in areas where women felt safer and/or were wealthier they tended to use more colourful and tighter-fitting clothing and revealed more of their face and hair.⁸³⁸ The women's rights activists explained the general dress code of women according to the different regions of the country: in many areas, women would cover the hair with a headscarf and wear a long-sleeved dress or coat reaching at least the knees and long trousers. Headscarf and dresses used to be of different colours and covered hair and the shape of the body to a varying degree. Since the takeover, most women chose to wear dark colours and longer and wider dresses to avoid harassment by the Taliban. In Herat City and the surrounding areas most women would wear the *chador* or *chador namaz*, a fabric wrapped around the entire body showing the face only (usually black or brown, sometimes white). The *chadri* or *burqa*, the mostly blue cloth covering the entire body including the face, was most frequently used in the southern and eastern provinces. Especially since the takeover, the women's rights activists agreed, the use of the *burqa* had increased in all parts of the country.⁸³⁹ Protests by both men and women, against the Taliban's order for women to cover their faces have been covered by international media.⁸⁴⁰ There were no general rules for when girls should begin wearing a *hijab* but most girls would start covering their hair between the age of seven and twelve.⁸⁴¹

In the southern and mainly Pashtun dominated provinces, many women live in *purdah*, the complete segregation of women from all men except their direct relatives.⁸⁴² In many families

⁸³⁵ Alive in Afghanistan, The Woman that is Worth a Thousand Men, 13 April 2022, [url](#); Alive in Afghanistan, Home-Based Restaurant Gives Afghan Woman Purpose and Pay, 11 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸³⁶ Guardian (The), We exist but it is not a life: Afghan women face bleak prospects under Taliban, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸³⁷ Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 16 May 2022; Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 17 May 2022

⁸³⁸ Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸³⁹ Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 16 May 2022; Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 17 May 2022; Der Freitag, In Afghanistan beginnt jeder Tag mit Tränen, 5 March 2022, [url](#); Le Monde, In Afghanistan, the Taliban want to restrict women's activities into oblivion, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women Protest New Burqa Decree Despite Taliban Threats, 10 May 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Male Afghan TV presenters mask up to support female colleagues after Taliban decree, 24 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴¹ World's Children's Prize (The), Burka, chador or headscarf?, n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁴² Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, 1 June 2022, [url](#)



it is unacceptable for women to go to a restaurant.⁸⁴³ According to a report by Rukhshana Media, the fear of harassment of women in public had increased since the takeover as reports of Taliban fighters verbally and physically abusing women spread.⁸⁴⁴ Other women highlighted that verbal harassment by non-Taliban individuals has decreased. Under the previous government, it was common for women to be verbally harassed in public, but because of the brutal punishments by the Taliban, men were less bold.⁸⁴⁵ An article by Hasht-e Subh reported that a man was arrested by the Taliban's secret service and then lashed 29 times for harassing a girl. According to the article, no information regarding details of the harassment was available.⁸⁴⁶

According to RFE/RL's Radio Azadi, some women reported that following the Taliban's order for women to cover their faces, their relatives did not allow them to leave the house. The article interpreted this as a consequence of the Taliban's announcement that men would be punished for their female relatives not following the Taliban's rules for *hijab*.⁸⁴⁷ Even in Kabul, where women used to move around relatively freely before the takeover, fewer women could be seen on the streets.⁸⁴⁸

5.1.3. Women in public roles

As discussed in the 2017 [EASO COI Report Afghanistan on individuals targeted under societal and legal norms](#), women in public roles have frequently been harassed, both on the streets and at their workplaces.⁸⁴⁹ There were no women in the Taliban's cabinet or in other key *de facto* government positions.⁸⁵⁰ According to a women's rights activist interviewed by BAMF for this report, the combination of limitations for women imposed by the Taliban, growing power given to conservative members of society, restrictions imposed by worried family members, and self-restrictions by women, banned women from society and forced them to exclusively take care of children and the household.⁸⁵¹

Many of those women who had held public positions before the takeover were in hiding.⁸⁵² Some of them not only received threats by the Taliban but also by other members of society. One report showed that a woman, who had previously worked in a government position, changed her place of residence frequently and did not share her address with friends, as she received threatening calls by the Taliban as well as non-Taliban individuals.⁸⁵³ For more

⁸⁴³ Alive in Afghanistan, Badakhshan's First Restaurant for Women Struggles to Keep Doors Open, 18 February 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁴ Rukhshana Media, Women face verbal and physical abuse in the streets by the Taliban's religious police, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁵ BBC News, Five Afghan women who refuse to be silenced, 18 February 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁶ Hasht-e Subh, [یک جوان در غور به اتهام مزاحمت به یک دختر زده شد](#) [A young man in Ghor was lashed for the crime of harassment of a girl], 20 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁷ RFE/RL/Radio Azadi, [صدر فرمان حجاب اجباری از سوی طالبان سبب افزایش خشونت های خانوادگی شده است](#) [The Taliban's order of obligatory hijab is the reason for increasing domestic violence], 17 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁸ Der Freitag, In Afghanistan beginnt jeder Tag mit Tränen, 5 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴⁹ EASO, Afghanistan: Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017, [url](#), pp. 36–37

⁸⁵⁰ Washington Post (The), Taliban tells Kabul's female city government employees not to come to work, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁵¹ Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 17 May 2022.

⁸⁵² HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵³ Zeit Online, Ein Leben in Unsicherheit und Verzweiflung, 18 February 2022, [url](#)



information on women in certain positions, see sections [2.8. Women who served in ANDSF](#), [4.2. Former judicial workers](#), and [7. Journalists and media workers](#).

5.1.4. Harmful traditional practices

As discussed in the 2017 [EASO COI Report Afghanistan on individuals targeted under societal and legal norms](#), forced marriages is a widespread phenomenon in Afghanistan. Legally, the report points out, women above the age of 16 were allowed to marry and Islamic law requires the consent of women in marriage decisions. Nevertheless, girls and women were given to other families as brides in return for goods or money, were exchanged between families, or were victims of arranged marriage in the context of conflict resolutions. Forced marriages and marriages with a bride under the age of 16 was forbidden under the previous government but were widely practiced.⁸⁵⁴ As child marriages were not officially registered and forced marriages not reported, no official data on the development of these practices is available.⁸⁵⁵

A decree issued by the Taliban on 3 December 2021 bans forced marriages. However, in the decree, no legal mechanisms to enforce this rule or to protect victims of forced marriage are defined. The decree does not mention a minimum age for marriage.⁸⁵⁶ Most shelters for women have been closed.⁸⁵⁷

Although no data is available, reports indicated that the bad security situation and the collapse of the economy after the takeover have contributed to an increase in forced marriages, especially child marriages.⁸⁵⁸ Several sources refer to cases in which families forced their daughters into marriage out of fear that otherwise they would be taken by a Taliban fighter. This fear is rooted in experiences from the 1990s and has not been confirmed since August 2021.⁸⁵⁹ In other instances, women were forced to marry due to the fact that living without a *mahram*, a male family member serving as chaperone, has become impossible under Taliban rule.⁸⁶⁰ The local news outlet Etilaat-e Roz reported a case in which a 32 years old woman hanged herself in a village in Takhar Province on 23 May 2022. She divorced her first husband and her family had engaged her with another man without her consent.⁸⁶¹ Widows and divorced women usually remarry (forced or voluntarily, oftentimes within the family) because living alone bares a social stigma.⁸⁶² A women's rights activist interviewed by BAMF for this report attributed a resurgence of forced remarriages within the family to insecurity and the restrictions of women's rights.⁸⁶³ On 21 June 2022, Rukhshana Media reported that a few days

⁸⁵⁴ EASO, Afghanistan: Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017, [url](#), p. 39-40

⁸⁵⁵ OECD, Social Institutions & Gender Index, 2019, [url](#), p. 2

⁸⁵⁶ Al Emarah English: Special Decree Issued by Amir-ul-Momenin on Women's Rights, 3 December 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁷ AI, Afghanistan: Survivors of gender-based violence abandoned following Taliban takeover – new research, 6 December 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁸ Washington Post (The), Through child marriage or paid adoption, Afghan girls bear brunt of crisis, 14 April 2022, [url](#); Rukhshana Media, Forced marriages increased in Afghanistan, activists say, 16 April 2022, [url](#); VOA, Afghanistan Poverty Bears More Child Brides, 4 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁹ Rukhshana Media, Forced marriages increased in Afghanistan, activists say, 16 April 2022, [url](#); Zeit Online, Mein Leben in Kabul, 12 July 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁰ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶¹ Etilaat Roz, یک زن در تخار به دلیل نامزدی اجباری خودکشی کرد [A woman in Takhar committed suicide because of forced engagement], 24 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶² Al Jazeera, Taliban bans forced marriage of women in Afghanistan, 3 December 2021, [url](#); Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 26

⁸⁶³ Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 17 May 2022.



earlier in a village in Bamyan Province a young woman died the night before her engagement to which she had not consented. The circumstances of her death remained unclear.⁸⁶⁴ UNAMA reported on cases where the *de facto* authorities upheld forced marriages or denied women the freedom of choosing their partners.⁸⁶⁵

In a statement from November 2021, UNICEF estimated that 28 % of women aged 15–49 years got married before reaching 18 years of age.⁸⁶⁶ The age at which girls were sold into marriage has decreased since the Taliban takeover, due to the humanitarian crisis. According to the Washington Post parents were not only forced to marry their daughters in exchange for money because of the economic crisis, but also the habit of leaving the child brides with their own families until their teens was broken frequently.⁸⁶⁷ The Guardian published a similar report, indicating that daughters were given away at an early age as their families were not able to feed them. Internally displaced families were most vulnerable to such practices.⁸⁶⁸

As discussed in [EASO COI Report Afghanistan – Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms](#), divorces were legally possible by 2017, but almost impossible to obtain. Additionally, divorced women were looked upon negatively by society and sometimes their own family, leaving them without a home to return to.⁸⁶⁹ No explicit rules for divorces issued by the Taliban could be found. The women's rights activist from Herat interviewed by BAMF for this report pointed out that women used to have the right to take care of their children at least until they reached seven years of age. With nobody protecting women's rights, she observed that, since the Taliban takeover, in the case of a conflict between the parents, children were taken away from their mothers by their fathers or their father's family at an early age. The fear of losing the children restrained women from considering a divorce.⁸⁷⁰

5.1.5. Sexual and gender-based violence

Since 2009 until the Taliban takeover, women were legally protected by the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW): it defined 22 forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment and abuse, forced prostitution, forced marriage, child marriage, as well as the exclusion of women from work, education, and healthcare. The law defined institutions responsible for implementing women's rights and punishments for the violation of these rights.⁸⁷¹ The law slightly increased the reporting and prosecution of violence against women. However, due to societal pressure on the victims, police officers of that time refused to file cases or to arrest the perpetrators and, due to the lack of knowledge about or ignorance of the law by prosecutors, it was only partially enforced.⁸⁷² The Taliban closed the

⁸⁶⁴ Rukhshana Media, خبر های ضد و نقیض در مورد مرگ یک دختر جوان در ولسوالی سیغان بامیان [Contradictory news about the death of a young girl in Sighan District, Bamyan], 21 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁵ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 31–32

⁸⁶⁶ UNICEF, Girls increasingly at risk of child marriage in Afghanistan, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁷ Washington Post (The), Through child marriage or paid adoption, Afghan girls bear brunt of crisis, 14 April 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁸ Guardian (The), I've already sold my daughters; now, my kidney: winter in Afghanistan's slums, 23 January 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁹ EASO, Afghanistan: Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017, [url](#), pp. 57–58

⁸⁷⁰ Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 17 May 2022

⁸⁷¹ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Justice, Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW), 1 August 2009, [url](#)

⁸⁷² HRW, I Thought Our Life Might Get Better, August 2021, [url](#)



former MoWa⁸⁷³ and Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)⁸⁷⁴, both of which had provincial branches responsible for supporting victims of SGBV together with shelters and police stations.⁸⁷⁵ Additionally, under the *de facto* administration there are no laws in place protecting women from SGBV.⁸⁷⁶ The Taliban thus ended institutional and legal support for women facing SGBV.⁸⁷⁷

SGBV is reported to be a widespread problem in Afghanistan: a 2008 Global Rights report states that 87.2 % of women in Afghanistan were victims of ‘physical, sexual or psychological violence or forced marriage’ at least once in their lives.⁸⁷⁸ No data and statistics on SGBV since the Taliban takeover could be found. A report published by DIS indicated that monitoring of SGBV has stopped since the takeover. However, the report pointed out that SGBV has increased for reasons such as unemployment and drug abuse by returnees from Iran.⁸⁷⁹ Likewise, Amnesty International estimated that violence against women has increased since the takeover.⁸⁸⁰

Under the previous government, SGBV was underreported because women did not trust the authorities and feared to be stigmatised and/or accused of moral offences themselves.⁸⁸¹ Human Rights Watch reported before the takeover that family pressure often resulted in women not bringing incidents of domestic violence before a court.⁸⁸² An article published by TOLONews in May 2022 suggested that rising numbers in suicides committed by women in Badakhshan Province were related to increasing levels of domestic violence.⁸⁸³ A women’s rights activists interviewed by BAMF for this report explained that, additionally to the absence of a legal framework for the protection of women, women lacked legal support. Prior to the Taliban takeover, women addressing SGBV should have been provided with a (female) lawyer free of charge, she explained. Under the Taliban, female lawyers are not allowed, and most women could not afford to pay a lawyer.⁸⁸⁴

Some cases of domestic violence leading to death have been reported mostly by the newspaper Hasht-e Subh:

- On 19 February 2022 a woman was killed in Zaranj, Nimruz Province. Her husband was accused of being the perpetrator but the husband accused the son.⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁷³ Al Jazeera, Taliban replaces ministry for women with ‘guidance’ ministry, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁴ Guardian (The), Taliban dissolves Afghanistan’s human rights commission as ‘unnecessary’, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁵ Al, Afghanistan: Survivors of gender-based violence abandoned following Taliban takeover – new research, 6 December 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁶ Sirat, F., Violence Against Women: Before and After the Taliban, 15 March 2022, [url](#). Fahima Sirat is a former judge at the Afghan Anti-Corruption Justice Center and wrote the article as an academic visitor in the Oxford Law Faculty.

⁸⁷⁷ Al, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁸ Global Rights, Living with Violence. A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan, March 2008, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁷⁹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), pp. 27–28

⁸⁸⁰ Al, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸¹ EASO, Afghanistan: Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017, [url](#), pp. 42–43

⁸⁸² HRW, I Thought Our Life Might Get Better, August 2021, [url](#), pp. 18–19

⁸⁸³ TOLONews, Attempted Suicide Cases, Mostly of Women, Rise in Badakhshan, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁴ Women’s rights activist, telephone interview, 17 May 2022

⁸⁸⁵ Hasht-e Subh, کشته شدن یک زن در نیمروز؛ همسر قاتل است یا پسر؟ [Killing of a woman in Nimruz; Is the husband or the son the killer?] 1 March 2022, [url](#)



- On 28 February 2022 a woman was killed by her husband in the capital of Badghis Province.⁸⁸⁶
- On 14 May 2022 a woman died in hospital in Sar-e Pol Province after she was beaten by her husband.⁸⁸⁷
- On 19 May 2022 two women were killed in Tarinkot, the capital of Uruzgan Province. In one case the perpetrator was the woman's husband. The other case is referred to as a case of domestic violence but no information on the perpetrator was available.⁸⁸⁸
- On 20 May 2022 a woman was stabbed by her husband in Aybak, the capital of Samangan Province.⁸⁸⁹
- The newspaper Rukhshana Media reported a case in which a nine-year-old girl was beaten to death by her fiancé in Kandahar Province on 20 May 2022.⁸⁹⁰
- In late May 2022, two young women hanged themselves in Sheberghan, Jawzjan Province. They are reported to have committed suicide because of domestic violence.⁸⁹¹
- According to a Taliban press release referred to by Rukhshana Media, on 6 June 2022 a man strangled his wife in Ghor Province. He confessed and explained that his wife 'did not listen to his words'.⁸⁹²
- On 12 June 2022, a woman and her three-months-old child were beheaded by the husband and father in a village in Helmand Province.⁸⁹³
- On the same day, a man shot his two wives, four children and three sisters-in-law in Zaranj, Nimruz Province.⁸⁹⁴
- On 13 June 2022, a 19-year-old pregnant woman was stabbed by her husband in Maymana, Faryab Province.⁸⁹⁵
- On 28 June 2022, a woman was suffocated by her husband after a verbal argument in Maymana, Faryab Province.⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁸⁶ Hasht-e Subh, [A woman was killed by her husband in Badghis], 12 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁷ Hasht-e Subh, [After being rejected in courtship a man shot the girl he was interested in and her mother in Ghazni], 14 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁸ Hasht-e Subh, [Two women were killed in Urozgan], 20 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁹ Hasht-e Subh, [A man killed his wife and injured his two children], 21 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁰ Rukhshana Media, [A 9-year-old girl was killed by her fiancé in Kandahar], 21 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹¹ Hasht-e Subh, [Two young girls and an old man hanged themselves in Sheberghan], 5 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹² Rukhshana Media, [A man in Ghor: My wife did not listen to me, I suffocated her], 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹³ Hasht-e Subh, [A man in Helmand beheaded his wife and his three-month-old child], 13 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁴ Hasht-e Subh, [A man in Nimruz killed 9 members of his family], 13 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁵ Hasht-e Subh, [A pregnant woman was killed by her husband in Faryab], 14 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁶ Hasht-e Subh, [A man in Faryab killed his wife], 28 June 2022, [url](#)

In most of these cases, the respective articles mentioned that the Taliban have arrested the (assumed) perpetrators or claimed to be looking for them.⁸⁹⁷ No further information on consequences were available.

In an unverified video of an interview, which was shared in social media in April 2022, a woman who had just reported a case of domestic violence to a Taliban police station, claimed that she was treated with respect and the case was immediately taken care of.⁸⁹⁸ In another case discussed on social media a woman was turned away by the security guard of a *de facto* court who told her to return to her abusive husband as otherwise she should be imprisoned.⁸⁹⁹ An article by Hasht-e Subh based on anonymous local sources stated that women in Herat Province who approached the local *de facto* court to file a case of domestic violence against their husbands were generally turned away by the Taliban.⁹⁰⁰

No information on the Taliban's treatment of rape could be found. According to *sharia*, extramarital rape is considered an act of *zina*, sexual relations outside of marriage. No differentiation is made between perpetrator and victim.⁹⁰¹ A brief report by Hasht-e Subh stated that on 7 December 2021 four men were arrested and stoned to death by local Taliban fighters in Gizab District, Urozgan Province, after being accused of raping two women. The case was not decided before a *de facto* court and Taliban central authorities did not comment on it.⁹⁰² News outlets including the Guardian and the Conversation reported on a group of Taliban fighters in Mazar-e Sharif gang-raping eight women they had previously arrested.⁹⁰³

No information on the Taliban's treatment of marital rape could be found. Even before the takeover, marital rape was legally not a crime.⁹⁰⁴ One of the women's rights activists interviewed by BAMF for this report gave the view that the exclusion of women from education and public life increases the risk that women themselves do not consider marital rape to be a crime.⁹⁰⁵

⁸⁹⁷ Hasht-e Subh, 'کشته شدن یک زن در نیمروز؛ همسر قاتل است یا پسر؟' [Killing of a woman in Nimruz; Is the husband or the son the killer?], 1 March 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, 'یک زن از سوی شوهرش در بادغیس کشته شد' [A woman was killed by her husband in Badghis], 12 March 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, 'مرد در غزنی پس از دریافت پاسخ رد در خواستگاری دختر مورد علاقه و' [After being rejected in courtship a man shot the girl he was interested in and her mother in Ghazni], 14 May 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, 'دو زن در ارزگان کشته شد' [Two women were killed in Urozgan], 20 May 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, 'مردی در سمنگان زنش را کشت و دو کودکش را زخمی کرد' [A man killed his wife and injured his two children], 21 May 2022, [url](#); Rukhshana Media, 'یک کودک دخر ۹ ساله از سوی نامزدش در قندهار کشته شد' [A 9-year-old girl was killed by her fiancé in Kandahar], 21 May 2022, [url](#); Rukhshana Media, 'مردی در غور: خانمم به حرفهایم گوش نداد، خفه اش کردم' [A man in Ghor: My wife did not listen to me, I suffocated her], 8 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, 'مردی در هلمند همسر و کودک سه ماهه اش را سر برید' [A man in Helmand beheaded his wife and his three-month-old child], 13 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, 'یک زن حامله از سوی شوهرش در فاریاب کشته شد' [A pregnant woman was killed by her husband in Faryab], 14 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, 'مردی در فاریاب همسرش را کشت' [A man in Faryab killed his wife], 28 June 2022, [url](#).

⁸⁹⁸ Ramzy Noor [Twitter], posted on: 26 April 2022, [url](#).

⁸⁹⁹ Sirat, F., Violence Against Women: Before and After the Taliban, 15 March 2022, [url](#).

⁹⁰⁰ Hasht-e Subh, 'طالبان در هرات: زنان حق ندارند علیه شوهرشان در دادگاه شکایت کنند' [Taliban in Herat: Women don't have the right to complain about their husbands in court], 16 June 2022, [url](#).

⁹⁰¹ Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe, Afghanistan: Zina, ausserhehlicher Geschlechtsverkehr, 2 October 2012, [url](#), p. 7.

⁹⁰² Hasht-e Subh, Four People Stoned to Death in Urozgan Over Rape Accusation, 7 December 2021, [url](#).

⁹⁰³ Conversation (The), Afghan women face increasing violence and repression under the Taliban after international spotlight fades, 4 February 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), The media spotlight on Afghanistan is fading fast – but the agony of its people is far from over, 18 March 2022, [url](#).

⁹⁰⁴ EASO, Afghanistan: Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017, [url](#), p. 42.

⁹⁰⁵ Women's rights activist, telephone interview, 17 May 2022.

Before the Taliban takeover, about 30 shelters for women existed, spread unevenly throughout the country.⁹⁰⁶ According to Torunn Wimplemann, author of a thorough study of SGBV in Afghanistan from May 2017, these shelters had a negative connotation in large parts of society because they were mostly financed by Western donors.⁹⁰⁷ The New York Times wrote that the shelters were frequently labelled as ‘brothels’ as they allowed women to stay away from home over night.⁹⁰⁸ With the Taliban’s closure of the Ministry of Women, which ran many of the shelters, most of them were shut down. During the advance of the Taliban, shelters were looted and their staff harassed.⁹⁰⁹ According to a report by Human Rights Watch, some of the women who lived in the shelters were moved to prisons in 2021.⁹¹⁰ Amnesty International reported in December 2021, that many women were returned to their families, ‘forcibly removed by family members’ or had to ‘live with shelter staff, on the street, or in other unsustainable situations’. Former staff was in hiding with one of them telling Amnesty International that she was frequently threatened by ‘Taliban, ISIS, perpetrators and the [victims’] family members.’⁹¹¹ Few private shelters continued to operate in Kabul and some provincial capitals but did not take in any newly arriving women. Staff of these shelters reported visits by the Taliban and the resulting uncertainty of how long they would be allowed to operate.⁹¹²

5.1.6. Moral offences and adultery

Sharia does not differentiate between consensual sexual relations outside marriage and rape. Both is defined as *zina*.⁹¹³ According to *sharia*, *zina* is punished with stoning or lashing, depending on whether or not the perpetrators are married. The crime should be witnessed by four men or be confessed by the perpetrator.⁹¹⁴ The November 2017 penal code of the Islamic Republic drew a line between rape and consensual *zina*, with a maximum punishment for *zina* of five years of imprisonment and for rape of 16 years of imprisonment.⁹¹⁵

No information on the Taliban’s legal treatment of rape and adultery could be found. Some media reports on incidents of Taliban prosecuting adultery or other moral offences included the following:

⁹⁰⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women’s Shelters Vanishing Under Taliban Rule, 26 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁷ Wimplemann, T., *The Pitfalls of Protection*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2017, p. 3

⁹⁰⁸ New York Times (The), Threats and Fear Cause Afghan Women’s Protections to Vanish, 4 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁹ Guardian (The), I don’t know where to go: uncertain fate of the women in Kabul’s shelters, 1 October 2021, [url](#); AI, Afghanistan: Survivors of gender-based violence abandoned following Taliban takeover – new research, 6 December 2021, [url](#)

⁹¹⁰ HRW, Afghanistan: Events of 2021, n. d. (2022), [url](#)

⁹¹¹ AI, Afghanistan: Survivors of gender-based violence abandoned following Taliban takeover – new research, 6 December 2021, [url](#)

⁹¹² AI, Afghanistan: Survivors of gender-based violence abandoned following Taliban takeover – new research, 6 December 2021, [url](#); France 24, Nowhere to hide: Abused Afghan women find shelter dwindling, 2 January 2022, [url](#); Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 36

⁹¹³ Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe, Afghanistan: Zina, außerehelicher Geschlechtsverkehr, 2 October 2012, [url](#), p. 7; For a more detailed definition of *zina* see: EASO, Afghanistan: Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017, [url](#), pp. 43–44

⁹¹⁴ Wimplemann, T., *Adultery, rape, and escaping the house: The protection and policing of female sexuality in Afghanistan*, December 2017, [url](#), p. 5

⁹¹⁵ Wimplemann, T., *Adultery, rape, and escaping the house: The protection and policing of female sexuality in Afghanistan*, December 2017, [url](#), p. 10



- On 11 December 2021, Afghan newspaper Hasht-e Subh reported on the arrest of 18 people, including nine women, who were accused of immoral behaviour, namely prostitution.⁹¹⁶
- On 20 January 2022, a *de facto* court in Badakhshan Province sentenced a man and a woman to 39 and 40 lashes for alleged sexual relations outside of marriage. Observers report that the *de facto* court wanted to stone them, but another *de facto* judge decided on lashing.⁹¹⁷
- In early February 2022, an unmarried woman delivered a baby in a health clinic in Ghazni Province. Fearing punishment for sexual relations outside of marriage, she fled after giving birth. Three days later the Taliban arrested the midwife and her husband.⁹¹⁸
- On 14 February 2022, a woman and a man were stoned publicly for alleged sexual relations outside of marriage in Badakhshan Province. The order came from a local Taliban commander.⁹¹⁹
- On 22 February 2022, a man was accused of having committed adultery in Uruzgan Province. He was whipped publicly but it remained unclear if and how the woman involved was punished.⁹²⁰
- On 24 February 2022, Rukhshana Media reported the case of a man and a woman being accused of *zina* in Ghor Province. They were lashed 39 times each.⁹²¹
- On 6 June 2022, a woman was shot by the Taliban in Samangan Province as they accused her of sexual relations outside of marriage. Inhabitants of her village reportedly said that her husband was living in Iran and the man she was accused of having sexual relations with accompanied her as she lacked another *mahram*, a male relative serving as chaperone.⁹²²

According to a report published by DIS, most cases of sexual relations outside of marriage are resolved within the families with no authorities being involved.⁹²³ In the first half of 2022 only one newspaper report could be found, in which relatives punished a couple accused of sexual relations outside of marriage: on 13 May 2022, a boy and a girl were shot by a relative of the girl for having sexual relations outside of marriage in Ghazni Province. The Taliban claimed that they were looking for the culprit to arrest him.⁹²⁴ In another case, a woman and a man were shot dead in Ghor Province on 12 March 2022. Local residents claimed that they were shot by *de facto* security forces, but the local Taliban commander stated that they were shot by the woman's relatives.⁹²⁵

⁹¹⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Detain 18 Civilians, Including 9 women, in Herat for Prostitution, 11 December 2021, [url](#)

⁹¹⁷ Hasht-e Subh, دادگاه صحرایی؛ طالبان در بدخشان یک زن و مرد را به اتهام «روابط نامشروع» در زندان, 20 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹¹⁸ Fuller Project (The), The Taliban are harming Afghan women's health, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹¹⁹ Hasht-e Subh, یک مرد و یک زن در بدخشان محکمه صحرایی شدند, 14 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹²⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Publicly Flogs Afghan Man Accused of Adultery, 22 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹²¹ Rukhshana Media, A man and a woman was [sic] lashed for adultery in Ghor, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹²² Hasht-e Subh, طالبان یک زن را در ولسوالی دره صوف پایین ولایت سمنگان در مقابل فرزندانش تیرباران کردند, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹²³ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 34

⁹²⁴ Hasht-e Subh, یک دختر و یک پسر جوان در شهر غزنی به قتل رسیدند, 13 May 2022, [url](#)

⁹²⁵ Hasht-e Subh, یک مرد و یک زن در غور تیرباران شدند, 12 March 2022, [url](#)



Sources reported on strong social stigmatisation and shame around sexual activities outside of marriage.⁹²⁶ USDOS reported on mothers facing ‘severe’ social stigma for having children out of wedlock, ‘even if the pregnancy was a result of rape’. USDOS further reported on a ‘cultural stigmatisation’ of some women even spending just one night outside their home, which prevented them from seeking services, such as legal assistance for domestic or sexual abuse, available before the takeover.⁹²⁷ Research by the University of Melbourne, based on interviews with 10 women and a group discussion on the practice of *bacha posh* (girls living like boys), one identified reason for the practice was the fear of men targeting girls for premarital relations, ‘tainting their “pure” status’ and dishonouring the family.⁹²⁸ An eyewitness of the previously mentioned lashing of a man being accused of adultery in Uruzgan Province was quoted saying that the man had been ‘humiliated’ and would not ‘be able to live a dignified life’.⁹²⁹

5.1.7. Honour violence

Honour violence usually occurs when the action of a family member is perceived as shameful. In this perception, honour killings (usually by men against women) can restore the honour of the family.⁹³⁰ Prior to the Taliban takeover, honour had, for a long time, been a mitigating factor in the judiciary for murder cases. This changed with a new penal code in 2018. However, it was estimated that only one-third of the cases related to honour violence were prosecuted and in even less cases perpetrators were convicted.⁹³¹

No information could be found on the Taliban’s legal treatment of honour violence and on the punishment of assumed perpetrators they arrested.

Recently reported incidents of honour violence include the following:

- In January 2022, Taliban fighters reportedly gang-raped eight women they had previously arrested in Mazar-e Sharif. A journalist writing for the Guardian referred to ‘friends in Kabul’ who heard that some of the women were killed by their families after being released from custody, ‘in the name of “honour”’.⁹³²
- On 16 June 2022, Rukhshana reported that a man shot three members of a family: father, mother, and daughter, in Maywand District, Kandahar Province. Several months earlier he had killed his own daughter because she ‘ran away’ with a son of this family. The perpetrator fled to Pakistan after killing his daughter and had returned to Kandahar Province shortly before violently entering the house of this man’s family. He fled after killing the family members.⁹³³

⁹²⁶ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 12 April 2022, [url](#); Pursuit, Girls forced to act as boys in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹²⁷ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹²⁸ Pursuit, Girls forced to act as boys in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹²⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Publicly Flogs Afghan Man Accused of Adultery, 22 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹³⁰ EASO, Afghanistan: Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, December 2017, [url](#), pp. 51–52

⁹³¹ HRW, I Thought Our Life Might Get Better, August 2021, [url](#), pp. 24–25

⁹³² Guardian (The), The media spotlight on Afghanistan is fading fast – but the agony of its people is far from over, 18 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹³³ Rukhshana Media, در یک دعوی ناموسی در قندهار مردی دخترش و سه عضو یک خانواده دیگر را کشت [In an honour fight in Kandahar, a man killed his daughter and three other family members], 18 June 2022, [url](#)



5.2. Situation of women and girls under Taliban rule

Since their takeover, the *de facto* authorities have repeatedly expressed their commitment to respect women's and girl's rights within the framework of *sharia*.⁹³⁴ Women's active participation in political and economic life and their contribution to Afghan society have, however, been largely curtailed in comparison to their situation under the previous government.⁹³⁵ Several practices, regulations and instructions have been issued by the Taliban since 15 August 2021, impacting women's and girl's freedom of movement, expression and behaviour, as well as their access to education, employment, healthcare and social protection.⁹³⁶

On 3 December 2021, the Taliban issued a decree on women's rights, setting out rules governing marriage and women's ownership. The decree bans forced marriage (although it did not address the minimum age of marriage), stated that women should not be considered as 'property' and granted inheritance rights to widows. This decree did not, however, refer to wider women's and girls' rights, such as access to education and employment, freedom of movement and participation in public life.⁹³⁷

Some sources suggested that restricting women's rights and freedoms seemed to be not only an ideological matter but also a political Taliban tactic to demonstrate power,⁹³⁸ to show compromise in an effort to receive international aid,⁹³⁹ and to use the threat of violence against women as a 'bargaining chip' in their engagement with Western governments.⁹⁴⁰ According to Obaidullah Baheer, lecturer in transitional justice at the American University of Afghanistan the Taliban's position and policy regarding women in Afghan society has been 'elusive and confusing', with decisions often made at provincial level. This caused confusion

⁹³⁴ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban's first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Women's Rights [Online video], 15 December 2021, [url](#); VICE News, Life in the Taliban's Afghanistan [Online video], 13 February 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA says it's committed to addressing women's issues, 8 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Haqqani Tells Tribal Elders to Respect Women's Rights, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹³⁵ FIDH, Broken promises: Civil society under siege after 100 days of Taliban takeover, 23 November 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 3; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 66; Republik, A year under the Taliban, 21 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹³⁶ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 66; HRW, Afghan Women Watching the Walls Close In, 2 March 2022, [url](#); Al, There is a window of opportunity to negotiate for the rights of Afghan women, but it is rapidly closing, 1 April 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 38–39

⁹³⁷ Al Jazeera, Taliban bans forced marriage of women in Afghanistan, 3 December 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Taliban Decree an End to Forced Marriages in Afghanistan, 3 December 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban decree on women's rights, which made no mention of school or work, dismissed by Afghan women and experts, 4 December 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 6; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 34; USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁹³⁸ New York Times (The), Why Taliban's Repression of Women May Be More Tactical Than Ideological, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹³⁹ NPR, The Taliban give back some rights to women, but it may be all a political strategy, 21 November 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁰ Fair Observer, The Taliban Use Violence Against Women as a Bargaining Chip, 11 February 2022, [url](#)



among Taliban fighters on how orders should be enforced in practice, resulting in arbitrary implementation.⁹⁴¹

As stated by the UNSG, engagement of the *de facto* authorities with Afghan women remained limited, both on central level and on provincial and district level.⁹⁴² At the end of June 2022, a ‘grand assembly’ (*loya jirga*) was organised by the Taliban in Kabul to discuss various topics of national importance. The gathering was attended by over 3 000 religious scholars, tribal elders, intellectuals and influential figures. Women, however, were excluded from the meeting, with the Taliban Deputy Prime Minister, Abdul Salam Hanafi, declaring that ‘male delegates would speak on their behalf’.⁹⁴³ This caused widespread outcry, with national and international voices calling on the Taliban to make such decision-making gatherings inclusive.⁹⁴⁴

Violence against women reportedly increased under Taliban rule.⁹⁴⁵ As reported by OHCHR and Amnesty International, the Taliban takeover and change in national authority had an ‘adverse impact’ on Afghan women’s access to protection and support when faced with gender-based violence. The closure of specific institutions dealing with violence against women (such as the former MoWA and former specialised courts) and the fall out of qualified female personnel handling complaints (for example in the former police forces and former judicial departments) has hindered access to justice for women.⁹⁴⁶ Most women shelters have closed or are no longer operational⁹⁴⁷ out of fear of threats and repercussions or because of limited financial resources. This forced many women and girls to return to their abusers or remain in situations where they were at risk of experiencing gender-based violence.⁹⁴⁸ Two women protection centres have reportedly reopened in Kabul, although under a ‘redesigned model’, where women who were relocated from shelters across the country found refuge.⁹⁴⁹ For more information on gender-based violence, see section [5.1.5. Sexual and gender-based violence](#).

⁹⁴¹ Al Jazeera, Afghan women face hardship as Taliban struggles to revive economy, 12 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁴² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 9

⁹⁴³ Khaama Press, Men to Represent Women in the Taliban’s Grand Assembly: Taliban Leader, 29 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁴ Khaama Press, Human Rights Watch: Taliban’s Jirga Lacks Legitimacy If It Excludes Women, 27 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Clerics in Kabul Called for Inclusion of Women in Coming Gathering, 28 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Women Demand Inclusion in Clerics’ Gathering, 30 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁵ Conversation (The), Afghan women face increasing violence and repression under the Taliban after international spotlight fades, 4 February 2022, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 40

⁹⁴⁶ Al, Afghanistan: Survivors of gender-based violence abandoned following Taliban takeover, 6 December 2021, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 39

⁹⁴⁷ New York Times (The), Threats and Fear Cause Afghan Women’s Protections to Vanish Overnight, 4 September 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), I don’t know where to go: uncertain fate of the women in Kabul’s shelters, 1 October 2021, [url](#); VOA, Taliban Closure of Domestic Abuse Shelters Leaves Thousands at Risk, Experts Say, 10 December 2021, [url](#); New Humanitarian (The), Protections for women facing violence have vanished under the Taliban, 20 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁸ Al, Afghanistan: Survivors of gender-based violence abandoned following Taliban takeover, 6 December 2021, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 39

⁹⁴⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 40



5.2.1. Access to education

Shortly after the Taliban takeover, at the end of August 2021, primary schools for both boys and girls re-opened.⁹⁵⁰ In February 2022, the Taliban's Ministry of Education announced a new primary education plan. Boys and girls in grades 1 up to 6 were instructed to follow classes separately, with male teachers for boys and female teachers for girls, and at different times.⁹⁵¹

In mid-September 2021, the Taliban authorities announced that secondary education (above grade 6) would resume for boys. Access to secondary education for girls was not mentioned in this announcement.⁹⁵² Some sources called this a '*de facto* ban' on secondary education for girls.⁹⁵³ However, it was not applied uniformly across the country.⁹⁵⁴ Exceptions have been reported in several provinces (such as Balkh⁹⁵⁵, Jawzjan,⁹⁵⁶ Kunduz⁹⁵⁷, Samangan and Uruzgan⁹⁵⁸, Zabul⁹⁵⁹, Herat⁹⁶⁰, Sar-e Pul⁹⁶¹, Ghazni⁹⁶² and Faryab⁹⁶³). As reported by AAN, a number of secondary schools for girls in these provinces were allowed to remain open, often with the support of local Taliban leaders or because of strong pressure from parents and teachers in the community.⁹⁶⁴ In mid-November 2021, the Taliban's Ministry of Education announced that girls above grade 6 would pass to the next grade without examinations and that female students in grade 12 would not have to pass exams to graduate.⁹⁶⁵ In mid-December 2021, the Taliban Foreign Minister declared to AP that girls were attending secondary school classes in 10 provinces, without specifying which provinces.⁹⁶⁶ Many private

⁹⁵⁰ Clark, K. and AAN Team, Who Gets to Go to School? (1), AAN, 26 January 2022, [url](#); Kazemi, S. R., Clark, K., Who gets to go to school? (2), AAN, 31 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁵¹ TOLONews, Education Ministry Prepares New Plan for Grades 1-6, 22 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁵² Al Jazeera, Taliban says classes resume for Afghan boys, no mention of girls, 17 September 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Taliban reopens high school for boys, but makes no mention of female students, 17 September 2021, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 53–54

⁹⁵³ Shaharзад Akbar [Twitter], posted on: 16 October 2021, [url](#); HRW, Taliban Close Girls' Secondary Schools in Afghanistan, Again, 23 March 2022, [url](#); Jackson, A., The Ban on Older Girls' Education: Taleban conservatives ascendant and a leadership in disarray, AAN, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁴ BBC News, Afghanistan girls' tears over chaotic Taliban schools U-turn, 23 March 2022, [url](#); AP, Taliban break promise on higher education for Afghan girls, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁵ TOLONews, Schools Reopen for Girls in Grades 7-12 in Balkh Province, 8 October 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), We have never given up: how Afghan women are demanding their education under the Taliban, 10 February 2022, [url](#); HRW, Dress Restrictions Tighten for Afghanistan Girls' Schools, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁶ AP, UN official: Taliban to announce secondary school for girls, 16 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁷ France 24, Girls return to schools in Afghan province, remain barred elsewhere, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁸ AP, UN official: Taliban to announce secondary school for girls, 16 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁹ Rukhshana Media, The Taliban opened secondary schools for girls in Zabul province, 24 November 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Along Afghanistan's highway of dead, the bombs are gone but suffering has deepened, 20 December 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), We have never given up: how Afghan women are demanding their education under the Taliban, 10 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁰ TOLONews, Girls' Schools for Grades 7-12 Reopen in Herat, 8 November 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), We have never given up: how Afghan women are demanding their education under the Taliban, 10 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶¹ TOLONews, Girls Attend Schools in Kunduz, Balkh, Sar-e-Pul, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁶² France 24, Girls with rare chance to study under Taliban rule dare to dream, 7 December 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁶³ Clark, K. and AAN Team, Who Gets to Go to School? (1), AAN, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁴ Clark, K. and AAN Team, Who Gets to Go to School? (1), AAN, 26 January 2022, [url](#); Jackson, A., The Ban on Older Girls' Education: Taleban conservatives ascendant and a leadership in disarray, AAN, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁵ Radio Azadi, Taliban: 12th grade female students will graduate without an annual exam, 15 November 2021, [url](#)

Clark, K. and AAN Team, Who Gets to Go to School? (1), AAN, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁶ AP, The AP Interview: Taliban seek ties with US, other ex-foes, 14 December 2021, [url](#)



secondary schools and universities kept running, even in places where public secondary schools for girls remained closed.⁹⁶⁷ As indicated by USDOS, the Taliban's lack of a clear and uniform policy regarding education for girls, in combination with teachers not being paid their salaries, caused low enrolment rates even in areas where schools were open.⁹⁶⁸ A decline in the quality of education was also reported, with a ban on male teachers for female students causing the loss of specialists.⁹⁶⁹ Medical professionals, cited by the Guardian, indicated a rise in depression among teenage girls, confronted with an uncertain future as they were denied education and employment opportunities.⁹⁷⁰

In an interview in mid-January 2022, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid, declared that the Taliban hoped to open all schools for girls across the country after the start of the Afghan New Year on 21 March 2022. Mujahid added that education for women and girls 'is a question of capacity', referring to the challenge to find enough buildings, dorms and hostels to assure a complete gender segregation.⁹⁷¹ The Taliban authorities formulated a plan to segregate all schools by gender, with schools only for boys and schools only for girls. In areas where this would not be possible, boys and girls would go to the same school but at different timings.⁹⁷² In February and March 2022, in the weeks and days leading up to the start of the new school year, the Taliban Ministry of Education insisted several times that all schools would reopen, for boys as well as girls.⁹⁷³

However, on 23 March 2022, the Taliban announced the abrupt decision to keep all secondary schools closed for girls⁹⁷⁴, reportedly affecting an estimated 1.1 million Afghan girls across the country.⁹⁷⁵ This announcement caused widespread indignation among female students (with many of them already present at the school gates or in their classrooms when the decision was proclaimed)⁹⁷⁶, and it also provoked strong criticism from the international

⁹⁶⁷ Al Jazeera, Taliban says all Afghan girls will be back in school by March, 17 January 2022, [url](#); Clark, K. and AAN Team, Who Gets to Go to School? (I), AAN, 26 January 2022, [url](#); Jackson, A., The Ban on Older Girls' Education: Taleban conservatives ascendant and a leadership in disarray, AAN, 29 March 2022, [url](#); AP, Taliban break promise on higher education for Afghan girls, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁸ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 53

⁹⁶⁹ Guardian (The), We have never given up: how Afghan women are demanding their education under the Taliban, 10 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁰ Guardian (The), Robbed of hope: Afghan girls denied an education struggle with depression, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷¹ AP, The AP Interview: Taliban pledge all girls in schools soon, 15 January 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Taliban says all Afghan girls will be back in school by March, 17 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Girls' Schools May Open in New Year: Mujahid, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷² Ariana News, Afghan schools to be segregated by gender, 6 March 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Girls return to school in amidst hope and fear, 21 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷³ Ariana News, Education minister says schooling will be provided to all children, 11 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, MoE Says All Schools to Open, 18 March 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Afghan schools to reopen after a hiatus of 186 days, 22 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁴ New York Times (The), Taliban Renege on Promise to Open Afghan Girls' Schools, 23 March 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, The Taliban closes Afghan girls' schools hours after reopening, 23 March 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban backtrack on reopening high schools for girls, 23 March 2022, [url](#); HRW, Taliban Close Girls' Secondary Schools in Afghanistan, Again, 23 March 2022, [url](#); AP, Taliban break promise on higher education for Afghan girls, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁵ UNICEF and Save the Children, Afghanistan: Back to School - Situation Update (April 2022), 21 April 2022, [url](#), p. 2; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 38

⁹⁷⁶ BBC News, Afghanistan girls' tears over chaotic Taliban schools U-turn, 23 March 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Is it a crime to study?: outcry as Taliban bar girls from secondary schools, 23 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Girls Recount Experience of Being Turned Away From School, 23 March 2022, [url](#); HRW, Afghan Girls Grieve After



community.⁹⁷⁷ The Taliban, initially mentioned several reasons for this decision, such as a shortage of female teachers and a lack of consensus about an appropriate school uniform for girls.⁹⁷⁸ Eventually, the Taliban officially announced that secondary schools would remain provisionally closed for girls ‘until a comprehensive plan has been prepared according to Sharia and Afghan culture’.⁹⁷⁹ In the following weeks and months, the US⁹⁸⁰, the EU⁹⁸¹, numerous other countries⁹⁸², UN agencies⁹⁸³ and international organisations⁹⁸⁴, as well as former Afghan political leaders⁹⁸⁵, school teachers⁹⁸⁶, religious clerics⁹⁸⁷ and women’s rights activists⁹⁸⁸ expressed their deep concern on the Taliban’s decision and called on the *de facto* government to reopen schools for all girls.

As stated by the UNSG, there were reports (although unverified) of public high schools for girls that did reopen in some provinces, with a ‘tacit consent’ of the local Taliban authorities.⁹⁸⁹ In Herat Province, female students above grade 6 were reportedly allowed in class on the two first days of the new school year, however the schools closed from the third day onwards.⁹⁹⁰ In

School Ban Reinstated, 24 March 2022, [url](#); Take (The), The uncertain future of girls’ schools in Afghanistan [Podcast], 28 March 2022, [url](#); Time, Is Gaining Knowledge a Sin? Afghan Girls Contemplate a Future Without Schools After the Taliban Backtracks, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁷ Ariana News, IEA’s move to extend ban on teenage girls from going to school sparks outcry, 23 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Outcry Raised as Afghan Girls Over Grade 6 Barred From School, 23 March 2022, [url](#); AP, Many baffled by Taliban reneging pledge on girls’ education, 24 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Intl Criticism of Closed Girls’ Schools Remains Strong, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁸ Jackson, A., The Ban on Older Girls’ Education: Taleban conservatives ascendant and a leadership in disarray, AAN, 29 March 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), Taliban Renege on Promise to Open Afghan Girls’ Schools, 23 March 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban U-turn over Afghan girls’ education reveals deep leadership divisions, 25 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁹ BBC News, Afghanistan girls’ tears over chaotic Taliban schools U-turn, 23 March 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban U-turn over Afghan girls’ education reveals deep leadership divisions, 25 March 2022, [url](#); Jackson, A., The Ban on Older Girls’ Education: Taleban conservatives ascendant and a leadership in disarray, AAN, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁰ TOLONews [Twitter], posted on: 23 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews [Twitter], posted on: 23 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews [Twitter], posted on: 23 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸¹ Khaama Press, EU deplores Taliban’s restriction on girls’ schools, 24 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, EU: Decision on Girls’ Schools Impacts Engagement, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸² Khaama Press, US, UK, European countries slam Taliban’s decision over suspending girls’ schools, 25 March 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA’s move to ban teenage girls from schools came as a shock: Qatar FM, 27 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, 15 Foreign Ministers Issue Statement on Afghan Women’s Rights, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸³ UNAMA, Statement by the Secretary-General on Afghanistan, 23 March 2022, [url](#); UN News, Taliban’s backtracking on girls’ education, deeply damaging, 23 March 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, UN Secretary-General: postponement of girls’ schools is deeply damaging for Afghanistan, 24 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, UNAMA: Closing of Girls’ Schools Discriminatory, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁴ NRC, Statement in response to the suspension of girls’ return to secondary school in Afghanistan, [url](#); OIC [Twitter], posted on: 24 March 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Make girls’ education red line in talks with IEA, Amnesty tells int’l community, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁵ TOLONews, Prominent Afghans React to Closed Girls’ Schools, 23 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁶ TOLONews, Political Party Calls for Reopening of Girls’ Schools, 25 March 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Clerics, teachers, activists call on IEA to reopen girls’ schools, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁷ TOLONews, Afghan Clerics Call to Reopen Girls’ Schools, 31 March 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Religious Scholars Urge Taliban to Reopen Girls’ Schools, 11 April 2022, [url](#); NPR, Afghans who want teen girls back in school have new allies: Taliban-affiliated clerics, 5 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Scholars in Badghis Call to Reopen Girls’ Schools, 14 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁸ TOLONews, [Twitter], posted on: 23 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, [Twitter], posted on: 23 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Political Party Calls for Reopening of Girls’ Schools, 25 March 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Clerics, teachers, activists call on IEA to reopen girls’ schools, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 38

⁹⁹⁰ TOLONews, Herat Girls Over 6th Grade Now Banned From School, 27 March 2022, [url](#)



Balkh, a number of secondary schools for girls were reportedly still open at the end of April 2022⁹⁹¹ and in May 2022⁹⁹² and June 2022.⁹⁹³ However, some of these schools were threatened with closure if their female students did not comply with the strict dress code (*hijab*) rules,⁹⁹⁴ resulting in some girls dropping out of school, as reported by Human Rights Watch.⁹⁹⁵ As stated by Heather Barr, associate director of Human Rights Watch's Women's Rights Division, the Taliban adapted the curriculum in schools that remained open, with subjects such as science, literature and sports largely replaced by religious studies.⁹⁹⁶ In April and May 2022, several prominent figures of the *de facto* authorities declared that secondary education for girls would resume soon, with a committee of clerics and scholars formed to address the issue.⁹⁹⁷ In June 2022, a Taliban spokesman declared to VOA that public secondary schools for girls were open in 'about a dozen provinces' and private schools across the country from the first grade up to university level.⁹⁹⁸ In some areas, such as Pamir District in Badakhshan Province, girls' schools remained closed due to a lack of female teachers.⁹⁹⁹ The Taliban Ministry of Education announced the recruitment of 7 000 teachers and administrative personnel, of which more than 2 000 vacancies reportedly were reserved for women.¹⁰⁰⁰

According to researcher Ashley Jackson, who has written several books on the Taliban and on the conflict in Afghanistan, the Taliban's abrupt decision to keep secondary schools for girls closed 'may have had less to do with religion than the unpredictable nature of Taliban policy', and indicated 'the movement's broader failure to create a clear mechanism for making national policy decisions'. Jackson also referred to the importance of a small circle of very conservative clerics in the process of shaping Taliban policy. She described leader Haibatullah Akhundzada as 'unwilling to take controversial decisions' and 'personally opposing female education'. Instead of following a more moderate consensus within the movement, that was thought to be in favour of secondary schooling for girls, he acted in accordance with a minority of influential conservatives that were against.¹⁰⁰¹ In line with Jackson referring to tensions between pragmatic political leaders and hard-line religious clerics¹⁰⁰², several sources suggested that the decision to keep secondary schools for girls

⁹⁹¹ HRW, Dress Restrictions Tighten for Afghanistan Girls' Schools, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹² Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹³ Modaser Islami [Twitter], posted on: 1 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁴ Ariana News, IEA imposes strict dress codes on the few girls schools still open, 28 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁵ HRW, Dress Restrictions Tighten for Afghanistan Girls' Schools, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁶ Take (The), The uncertain future of girls' schools in Afghanistan [Podcast], 28 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁷ Khaama Press, Baradar Gives Hope on Girls Education in Afghanistan, 16 April 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Haqqani: Clerics' Gathering Will Solve School Issue, 4 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Assembly on Girls' Schools to Be Held in Kabul: Officials, 7 May 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA says girls' schools will reopen soon, 16 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Committee Formed to Reopen Girls' Schools: Islamic Emirate, 26 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, No Details Yet from Committee on Girls' Schooling: Spokesperson, 31 May 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁸ VOA, Taliban Rebuff UN Calls for Reversing Rules on Afghan Women, 27 May 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁹ TOLONews, Schools Remain Closed In Pamir District Of Badakhshan, 17 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁰ TOLONews, Over 7,000 Vacancies Announced for School Teachers, 8 June 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 38

¹⁰⁰¹ Jackson, A., The Ban on Older Girls' Education: Taleban conservatives ascendant and a leadership in disarray, AAN, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰² Jackson, A., The Ban on Older Girls' Education: Taleban conservatives ascendant and a leadership in disarray, AAN, 29 March 2022, [url](#)



closed is related to problems of internal division within the Taliban movement.¹⁰⁰³ On social media, some Taliban figures criticised the decision and voiced their support for all girls returning to school.¹⁰⁰⁴

A Taliban external relations and donor representative declared that ‘the leadership has not decided when or how they will allow girls to return to school’, adding that people in urban centres were mostly supportive of secondary education for girls but much of rural Afghanistan, in particular tribal Pashtun regions, were opposed to it.¹⁰⁰⁵ In February 2022, AAN researcher Sabawoon Samim referred to a ‘relatively new trend’ in the view on girls’ education within the Taliban movement. His research suggested that one part of the current generation of Taliban members, who had a certain degree of education themselves and had been familiar with city life and its modern services, ‘appears to be changing its attitude towards schooling’, searching for education opportunities for their own sons and daughters.¹⁰⁰⁶

Several local and international initiatives providing alternative forms of education for girls after grade 6 have been reported.¹⁰⁰⁷ In October 2021, Reuters reported on hundreds of girls and women continuing to learn through secret online schooling or in hidden makeshift classrooms. For example in Herat, students of Code to Inspire, Afghanistan’s first all-female coding academy, received laptops and internet packages to follow online courses in encrypted virtual classrooms.¹⁰⁰⁸ Also in Herat, an exiled teacher founded the Online Herat School, offering more than 170 online courses ranging from mathematics to music, cooking and painting to nearly 1 000 female students. The classes were delivered via the communication services Telegram or Skype by a group of nearly 400 volunteer teachers, mainly from Iran.¹⁰⁰⁹ Further, several sources have reported on initiatives of underground schooling in Kabul and in other parts of the country, where female teachers meet in private homes or at unknown clandestine locations to teach girls.¹⁰¹⁰ Students reportedly take different routes to join their classes at different times during the day, to avoid being noticed by the Taliban authorities.¹⁰¹¹ Other initiatives reported were an underground book club in Kabul where girls read and wrote their

¹⁰⁰³ BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban backtrack on reopening high schools for girls, 23 March 2022, [url](#); AP, Taliban break promise on higher education for Afghan girls, 24 March 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban’s Dramatic U-Turn On Reopening Girls’ Schools Reflects Internal Divisions, 24 March 2022, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Taliban restrict women’s rights as isolation looms, 30 March 2022, [url](#); New Lines Magazine, Why the Taliban View Education as a Weapon, 4 April 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, School closure might create friction among Taliban: Rina Amiri, 6 April 2022, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule in Afghanistan [Podcast], 6 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁴ Grame Smith [Twitter], posted on: 23 March 2022, [url](#); Afghan Analyst [Twitter], posted on: 23 March 2022, [url](#); Abdul salam zaeef. [Twitter], posted on: 24 March 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban U-turn over Afghan girls’ education reveals deep leadership divisions, 25 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁵ Guardian (The), Is it a crime to study?: outcry as Taliban bar girls from secondary schools, 23 March 2022, [url](#); AP, Taliban break promise on higher education for Afghan girls, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁶ Samim, S., Who Gets to Go to School? (3), AAN, 7 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁷ DW, Afghan girls set up secret school amid Taliban restrictions, 22 October 2021, [url](#); Times (The), Huddled in secret schools, Afghan girls refuse to give up on education, 5 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Prevented from Attending School, Afghan Girls Learn Handicrafts, 13 May 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: The secret girls school defying the Taliban, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁸ Reuters, Afghan girls learn, code underground to bypass Taliban curbs, 28 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁹ BBC News, The teacher defying the Taliban on girls’ education, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁰ WSJ, Afghan Teachers Defy Taliban by Secretly Schooling Teenage Girls, 25 November 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Banned From School, Afghan Girls Gather in Homes to Learn, 13 December 2021, [url](#); Times (The), Huddled in secret schools, Afghan girls refuse to give up on education, 5 February 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: The secret girls school defying the Taliban, 17 May 2022, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Many girls gather at Ghazni home to continue their studies, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹¹ DW, Afghan girls set up secret school amid Taliban restrictions, 22 October 2021, [url](#)



own stories¹⁰¹², literacy and vocational training courses (such as tailoring, hand-knitting, weaving and handicrafts) in Kabul City¹⁰¹³, Herat Province¹⁰¹⁴, and Badghis Province¹⁰¹⁵, a makeshift cave school run by a female university graduate in Bamiyan Province¹⁰¹⁶, lessons for girls offered by a charity foundation in Kabul City¹⁰¹⁷, and in a free educational centre (facilitated by a foreign organisation and supported by the provincial department of education) in Balkh Province.¹⁰¹⁸

In the beginning of September 2021, the Taliban Ministry of Education issued a decree stipulating rules for female university students. The order defined that classes had to be gender segregated, mixed classes were only allowed with less than 15 female students, and men and women were to be separated by a curtain. Furthermore, male and female students had to enter university through separate entrances or during different times, and female students could only be taught by female teachers or elderly men known for being 'trustworthy'. Lastly, female students, teachers and educational staff had to comply with the Islamic dress code according to *sharia*, specified as a black *abaya* robe and *niqab* covering the hair, body and most of the face, as well as gloves covering the hands.¹⁰¹⁹ These regulations came into effect as private universities reopened their doors for male and female students on 6 September 2021. Public universities remained closed, with the Taliban authorities referring to financial constraints and a lack of separate classrooms and safe transportation systems for female students.¹⁰²⁰

In mid-January 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Higher Education announced that all 40 public universities would soon reopen for male and female students.¹⁰²¹ On 2 February 2022, public universities in warm climate provinces reopened, more specifically in Nimroz, Nangarhar, Khost, Paktya, Laghman, Paktika and the southern provinces Kandahar and Helmand.¹⁰²² Public universities in other southern provinces, such as Uruzgan and Zabul remained closed.¹⁰²³ Public universities in cold climate provinces (except for Panjsher Province) reopened on 26 February 2022.¹⁰²⁴ The Taliban authorities assured that the enrolment for women in higher education could continue, however female students had to respect the compulsory Islamic dress code and were only allowed to follow lessons in gender segregated

¹⁰¹² Al Jazeera, Afghan students run underground book club to keep dreams alive, 9 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹³ TOLONews, Afghan Woman Runs Home-Based School for 600 Girls, 11 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, 60 Women Graduate from Trade School in Kabul, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁴ TOLONews, Prevented from Attending School, Afghan Girls Learn Handicrafts, 13 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁵ TOLONews, Facing Closed Schools, Badghis Girls Learn Tailoring, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁶ Al Jazeera, In remote Bamiyan, a school run by an Afghan woman offers hope, 20 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁷ Take (The), The uncertain future of girls' schools in Afghanistan [Podcast], 28 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁸ TOLONews, Free Education Center Established for Girls in Balkh, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Imposes New Dress Code, Segregation Of Women At Afghan Universities, 6 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Curtains separate male and female students as new term begins under Taliban rule, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁰ NPR, Kabul University chancellor says female students will be allowed, but segregated, 2 October 2021, [url](#); VOA, All Public Universities in Afghanistan Open to Male, Female Students, 26 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²¹ TOLONews, Public Universities to Reopen, Female Students Included: Minister, 12 January 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Higher education will be open to men and women based on Sharia: Deputy PM, 19 January 2022, [url](#); VOA, All Public Universities in Afghanistan Open to Male, Female Students, 26 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²² TOLONews, Afghan Public Universities Opened in Warm Zones, 2 February 2022, [url](#); Arab News, Afghan universities reopen with trickle of women attending, 2 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²³ Guardian (The), Afghan universities reopen with strict rules for female students, 3 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁴ VOA, All Public Universities in Afghanistan Open to Male, Female Students, 26 February 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan public universities reopen with gender segregated classes, 26 February 2022, [url](#)



classrooms. As reported by several media sources, only a limited number of female university students returned to their classrooms.¹⁰²⁵ A shortage of female university lecturers has been reported, since many educated professionals left the country after the Taliban takeover.¹⁰²⁶ Female students coming from the provinces to study in Kabul indicated a lack of appropriate accommodation.¹⁰²⁷ In mid-June 2022, Hasht-e Subh reported on Taliban raids on girls' hostels of Takhar University, with students being harassed and 30 female students being arrested for leaving the university without asking permission from the Taliban.¹⁰²⁸

As indicated by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, concerns remained that a strict gender segregation at universities could severely constrain women's access to higher education, as well as their teaching and learning quality.¹⁰²⁹ At the end of April 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Higher Education announced the scheduling of a new gender segregated timetable for university students, with separate weekdays allocated for male (Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday) and female (Saturday, Monday and Wednesday) students.¹⁰³⁰ And, as indicated by USAID in SIGAR's January 2022 Quarterly Report, even if female students were allowed to enrol in higher education, their inability to access secondary education would mean they were effectively banned from reaching university level.¹⁰³¹ Furthermore, many female students have reportedly dropped out of higher education due to financial pressures, in the context of the ongoing economic crisis.¹⁰³²

During the reference period, several protests and demonstrations for access to education for girls and women have been reported in Kabul and other parts of the country.¹⁰³³ For more information, see section 1.2.2. Demonstrations and protests.

5.2.2. Access to employment

Since 15 August 2021, Afghan women have been largely excluded from political life and the general workforce. No uniform policy related to women's access to employment was

¹⁰²⁵ Arab News, Afghan universities reopen with trickle of women attending, 2 February 2022, [url](#); Reuters, Female students join male peers as Afghan universities reopen, 2 February 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Afghan universities reopen with strict rules for female students, 3 February 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan public universities reopen with gender segregated classes, 26 February 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan women: I felt anxious going back to university, 4 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁶ VOA, All Public Universities in Afghanistan Open to Male, Female Students, 26 February 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan public universities reopen with gender segregated classes, 26 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Students Concerned With Shortage of Public University Professors, 27 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, University Students' Class Time Limited, Told to Self-Study, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁷ TOLONews, Students Concerned With Shortage of Public University Professors, 27 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁸ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Soldiers Harass Female Students at Takhar University Girl's Hostels, 19 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 19

¹⁰³⁰ TOLONews, New Timetable Scheduled for Kabul University Students, 23 April 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA unveils segregation plan for male and female university students, 24 April 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, IEA Separates Weekdays for Male, Female University Students, 24 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰³¹ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 January 2022, [url](#), p. 111

¹⁰³² Reuters, College dreams dashed as young Afghan women fight to keep poverty at bay, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰³³ Rukhshana Media, Women protestors call on the Taliban: Stop politicizing the education system, 1 December 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan girls stage protest, demand Taliban reopen schools, 26 March 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Protesters urge Taliban to reopen girls' schools, 26 March 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Open the schools: Afghan girls protest in Kabul for right to education, 26 March 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, The Taliban Suppresses the Women's Protest in front of Laisa Maryam, 26 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Women Protest Over Closed Girls' Schools, 29 May 2022, [url](#)



announced by the Taliban and rights and working conditions for women have remained uncertain.¹⁰³⁴ The *de facto* authorities repeatedly claimed their commitment to maintain women's right to access employment, within the framework of *sharia*.¹⁰³⁵ Since their takeover, they have announced several restrictions on women's participation in the Afghan labour market.¹⁰³⁶

In mid-September 2021, the Taliban did not make any appointments to the former MoWA, which was founded in 2001 with a mandate to promote gender equality under the previous government. In practice, this led to the closure of the ministry's functioning. The former MoWA's offices in Kabul were allocated to the Taliban MPVPV.¹⁰³⁷ This decision provoked protests from the former MoWA's female employees, urging the Taliban to let them return to work.¹⁰³⁸ Also in January 2022, women protests for the former MoWA's reactivation were reported.¹⁰³⁹ As stated by the UNSG, there has been no formal decision announced on the former MoWA or its provincial departments.¹⁰⁴⁰

Up to June 2022 reporting did not show any official political appointments for women in the *de facto* cabinet and women have not been included in political decision-making.¹⁰⁴¹ In January and February 2022, the appointment of a few women in 'symbolic government positions' was reported, including Dr. Malalai Faizi as director of Malalai Maternity Hospital in Kabul¹⁰⁴² and Nisa Mobarez as women's representative in Badakhshan.¹⁰⁴³ In an interview with

¹⁰³⁴ VOA, Taliban-run Kabul Municipality to Female Workers: Stay Home, 19 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban decree on women's rights, which made no mention of school or work, dismissed by Afghan women and experts, 4 December 2021, [url](#); New Yorker (The), The Taliban Confront the Realities of Power, 21 February 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 33–34; van Bijlert, M., Food Aid in a Collapsed Economy: Relief, tensions and allegations, AAN, 23 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁵ New York Times (The), The Taliban wants to forget the past, a leader tells The Times, but there will be some restrictions, 25 August 2021, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 34

¹⁰³⁶ Al, They are the revolution Afghan women fighting for their future under Taliban rule, 25 November 2021, [url](#), pp. 4–5; DW, Taliban are revoking Afghan women's hard-won rights, 2 January 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan women face hardship as Taliban struggles to revive economy, 12 January 2022, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#); PBS News Hour, Many Afghan women forced to quit careers, country in hopes of better life for their kids, 25 January 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Gulf envoys stress women's rights in meeting with Taliban FM, 14 February 2022, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰³⁷ New York Times (The), Taliban Seize Women's Ministry Building for Use by Religious Police, 17 September 2021, [url](#); AP, Taliban replace ministry for women with virtue authorities, 18 September 2021, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 33; USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 39

¹⁰³⁸ Al Jazeera, Taliban replaces ministry for women with guidance ministry, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁹ TOLONews, Women Protestors in Kabul Urge US to Release Bank Assets, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁰ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 7

¹⁰⁴¹ AP, Taliban form all-male Afghan government of old guard members, 8 September 2021, [url](#); UN Women, Expert: Gender equality is critical for Afghanistan's future, long-term development, and sustained peace, 12 October 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Taliban appoint members as 44 governors, police chiefs in Afghanistan, 7 November 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 5; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 33; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 4

¹⁰⁴² Ariana News, IEA makes first senior female appointment, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴³ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, February 2022, [url](#)



Ariana News in February 2022, Taliban spokesperson Shuhail Shaheen stated that ‘it is not necessary for any women to be in the cabinet of the caretaker government’.¹⁰⁴⁴

Shortly after the takeover, the Taliban leadership announced that female government employees could continue their work, but were not guaranteed senior positions.¹⁰⁴⁵ In mid-September 2021, women former workers in the Kabul City government administration were advised to stay at home, and only women in positions that could not be replaced by men were invited back to work.¹⁰⁴⁶ At the end of 2021, many female former government employees were still not working.¹⁰⁴⁷ In December 2021, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid declared that ‘no women had been fired from public-sector jobs and that they continued to receive salaries at home’.¹⁰⁴⁸ In some Taliban public administration offices, female employees reportedly had to show up once a month to register, although they were not receiving their salaries.¹⁰⁴⁹ The attendance sheets gave a false impression of the number of women being back at work, which could be used by the Taliban to disclose the amount of, in practice, dismissed female government workers.¹⁰⁵⁰ Some female government workers indicated they had received a reduced amount of their salaries.¹⁰⁵¹ In January 2022, dozens of women held a protest in Kabul, calling on the Taliban to not exclude women from the Taliban government’s structure.¹⁰⁵² According to Obaidullah Baheer, lecturer at the American University of Afghanistan, there were provincial differences, with women being discouraged to go to work by Taliban fighters on the roads in some provinces and women still active in *de facto* government jobs in other provinces (such as in the mayor’s office of Faryab’s provincial capital, Maymana¹⁰⁵³).¹⁰⁵⁴ In March 2022, the Taliban MPVPV issued national guidelines instructing gender segregation in Taliban government ministry offices and prohibiting female employees from entering their office without wearing *hijab*.¹⁰⁵⁵ According to a Pakistani analyst with good knowledge of Afghanistan, interviewed by Landinfo, this gender segregation at the workplace meant there must be separate entrances, working spaces, living and dining rooms for men and women.¹⁰⁵⁶ Women who previously served in the former national security sector

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ariana News, Shaheen says no women will be appointed to cabinet, 13 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁵ Guardian (The), Women can continue working in Afghan government, say Taliban, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁶ Guardian (The), Kabul government’s female workers told to stay at home by Taliban, 19 September 2021, [url](#); ABC News, Taliban tells female Kabul government workers not go to work as a deadly blast rocks Jalalabad, 19 September 2021, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁷ WSJ, After Taliban Return, Afghan Women Face Old Pressures From Fathers, Brothers, 15 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁸ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 66

¹⁰⁴⁹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Recent Events, December 2021, [url](#), p. 19; New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#); New Yorker (The), The Taliban Confront the Realities of Power, 21 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁰ New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵¹ Guardian (The), We are worse off: Afghanistan further impoverished as women vanish from workforce, 16 May 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 5

¹⁰⁵² TOLONews, Women in Kabul Demand Govt Jobs, Representation, 12 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵³ Channels Television, Taliban Top Sniper Appointed Mayor In Afghanistan, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁴ Al Jazeera, Afghan women face hardship as Taliban struggles to revive economy, 12 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁵ Reportedly [Twitter], posted on: 22 February 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Females Can’t Enter the Ministries without Islamic Hijab, Ministry of Ethics Says, 3 March 2022, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Taliban restrict women’s rights as isolation looms, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁶ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Situasjonen for afghanske kvinner etter Talibans maktovertakelse, 22 June 2022, [url](#), p. 5



have been excluded from service¹⁰⁵⁷, except for women serving in female detention facilities and assisting with body searches.¹⁰⁵⁸

Although many Afghan women who used to be part of the country's workforce have been at home since 15 August 2021¹⁰⁵⁹, exceptions have been reported.¹⁰⁶⁰ Since the end of August 2021, female staff members within the public healthcare sector were allowed to resume work.¹⁰⁶¹ However, many women were reportedly afraid to return¹⁰⁶² and restrictions on their freedom of movement (such as midwives having to be accompanied by a male guardian during home visits) and working conditions (such as salaries not being paid) have hindered their professional activities.¹⁰⁶³ In May 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Health pledged to provide more employment opportunities for women in the health sector, mainly to prevent maternal mortality.¹⁰⁶⁴ As of mid-September 2021, Kabul airport employees, including female employees (such as women working at passport control and customs) reportedly resumed work.¹⁰⁶⁵ There were also reports of female primary school teachers¹⁰⁶⁶, women working in the Taliban Ministry of Education¹⁰⁶⁷, women employed as street cleaners¹⁰⁶⁸, and women working in *de facto* passport offices¹⁰⁶⁹, post offices¹⁰⁷⁰, police stations¹⁰⁷¹ and prisons¹⁰⁷² that have resumed their professional activities. Late May 2022, a Taliban spokesman stated that the majority of female civil servants were back at work, referring to 120 000 women employees, including 94 000 working at the Taliban Ministry of Education, 14 000 at the Taliban Ministry of Health and 12 000 working in other departments such as the passports and immigration offices of the

¹⁰⁵⁷ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 9; Guardian (The), We had 4,000 policewomen in Afghanistan. Let them get back to work, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 11

¹⁰⁵⁹ WSJ, After Taliban Return, Afghan Women Face Old Pressures From Fathers, Brothers, 15 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁰ AP, Taliban announcement a clear sign girls returning to school, 21 March 2022, [url](#); Time, We Have to Fight Back. Afghan Women Are Losing Their Hard-Won Right to Work Under the Taliban, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶¹ Reuters, Taliban say Afghan women health service staff should go back to work, 27 August 2021, [url](#); AA, Taliban asks women healthcare workers to resume duties, 28 August 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 39

¹⁰⁶² USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶³ BMJ, Staring into the darkness: women health workers in Afghanistan, 6 September 2021, [url](#); CSM, How Afghan midwives are challenging Taliban strictures on women, 7 October 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), The Taliban know they need us: the Afghan hospitals run by women, 9 May 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), We are worse off: Afghanistan further impoverished as women vanish from workforce, 16 May 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), We exist but it is not a life: Afghan women face bleak prospects under Taliban, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁴ TOLONews, Health Ministry Pledges to Hire More Midwives, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁵ TOLONews, Kabul Airport Employees, Including Women, Return to Work, 13 September 2021, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 39

¹⁰⁶⁶ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, March 2022, [url](#), p. 121

¹⁰⁶⁷ AP, Taliban announcement a clear sign girls returning to school, 21 March 2022, [url](#); Suhail Shaheen [Twitter], posted on: 24 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ariana News, UNDP and Balkh Municipality launch street cleaning job program for 200 women, 21 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁹ Reuters, Afghanistan to start issuing passports again after months of delays, 5 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Passport Processing to Begin Countrywide on April 5th: Officials, 29 March 2022, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁰ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, March 2022, [url](#), p. 121

¹⁰⁷¹ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 65–66; Ariana News, Balkh police headquarters recruits 1,800 female officers, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 39



Taliban Ministry of Interior.¹⁰⁷³ However, these numbers could not be verified.¹⁰⁷⁴ As reported by Human Rights Watch and USDOS, Taliban rules and severe restrictions hindered female aid workers from doing their jobs effectively.¹⁰⁷⁵ The safety of female aid workers¹⁰⁷⁶ and interference in their activities providing key services for women and girls reportedly remained important concerns.¹⁰⁷⁷ In March 2022, AAN pointed at the lack of a clear and unified Taliban policy regarding women's participation in humanitarian aid delivery. Provisional agreements (partial agreements in 16 provinces and full agreements in 18 provinces) were made across the country that allowed female participation in humanitarian response. However, AAN indicated that this could change in the future, in the light of recent Taliban policies concerning women.¹⁰⁷⁸ For more information on the situation of female healthcare professionals and humanitarian workers, see section [9. Healthcare professionals](#).

In November 2021, the Taliban MPVPV issued guidelines banning female actors from appearing in television dramas and soap operas.¹⁰⁷⁹ The work of female journalists and media workers has been severely hindered and restricted¹⁰⁸⁰, with reportedly 84 % of women in the media sector having lost their jobs or left their positions since the Taliban takeover.¹⁰⁸¹ For more information on the situation of female journalists and media workers, see section [7. Journalists and media workers](#).

At the end of November 2021, the Taliban Ministry of Justice seized authority from the Afghanistan's Independent Bar Association (AIBA) declaring that only Taliban-approved lawyers could work in the *de facto* courts. According to the Brussels-based Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), this resulted in all Afghan women working in legal professions being excluded from their occupation.¹⁰⁸² As reported by the UNSG in January 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Justice communicated to UNAMA that 'women lawyers would be allowed to work in line with the necessary requirements', but no further clarification on these 'requirements' was given.¹⁰⁸³ Female former judicial workers (such as judges, prosecutors and lawyers) have reportedly faced threats, intimidation and harassment, preventing them from

¹⁰⁷³ VOA, Taliban Rebuff UN Calls for Reversing Rules on Afghan Women, 27 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ruttig, T., Afghanische Frauen in (und ohne) Arbeit, 10 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁵ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Blocking Female Aid Workers, 4 November 2021, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁰⁷⁶ ACAPS, Humanitarian Access Overview, 9 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁷ UN Security Council, Protection of civilians in armed conflict - Report of the Secretary-General, 10 May 2022, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁰⁷⁸ Clark, K. and Shapour, R., A Pledging Conference for Afghanistan... But what about beyond the humanitarian?, AAN, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁹ BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban unveil new rules banning women in TV dramas, 21 November 2021, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Taliban issue guidelines against women actors, 21 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁰ Guardian (The), We see silence filled with fear: female Afghan journalists plead for help, 16 August 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Female Reporters Fear Increased Restrictions, 9 January 2022, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Threatening Provincial Media, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸¹ RSF, Since the Taliban takeover, 40% of Afghan media have closed, 80% of women journalists have lost their jobs, 20 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Judge, Jury, And Executioner, 1 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸³ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 35



continuing their professional activities.¹⁰⁸⁴ For more information on the situation of female former judicial workers, see section [4.2. Former judicial workers](#).

Sources indicated that women have not been officially barred from private sector jobs.¹⁰⁸⁵ As reported by USDOS, the Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI) could not get a formal meeting with the Taliban's Ministry of Economy to obtain clarity on the fate of the private businesses led by women in the country, but was assured informally that women would be allowed to work 'if that work conformed with Islamic law'.¹⁰⁸⁶ In April 2022, the Taliban Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry declared the Taliban's support for female entrepreneurs.¹⁰⁸⁷ However, women's economic participation as entrepreneurs remained limited.¹⁰⁸⁸ Several women-owned/led businesses (especially restaurants and cafes), reportedly closed their doors, out of fear of violating Taliban edicts, due to the ongoing economic crisis or because they were shut down by the Taliban.¹⁰⁸⁹ In some provinces, such as Herat, Kabul and Balkh, there were reports of women entrepreneurs (such as beauty salon owners, handicraft workers and market traders) that were able to resume their professional activities.¹⁰⁹⁰ However, some of them indicated restrictions imposed by the Taliban authorities have hindered their work.¹⁰⁹¹

As reported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), female employment was reduced by an estimated 16 % in the third quarter of 2021 and this reduction is expected to reach 21 % by mid-2022.¹⁰⁹² Restrictions on their right to employment impacted women's economic

¹⁰⁸⁴ Reuters, Hunted by the men they jailed, Afghanistan's women judges seek escape, 3 September 2021, [url](#); BBC News, Female Afghan judges hunted by the murderers they convicted, 28 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, After Realizing Dream, Disabled Afghan Prosecutor Finds Herself Jobless And In Danger Under Taliban, 12 January 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), The Taliban want revenge: Afghanistan's female judges in exile in Australia, 19 February 2022, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁵ FT, Afghan women resist the return of Taliban's segregation, 20 October 2021, [url](#); Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan Recent Events, December 2021, [url](#), p. 19; AP, Taliban announcement a clear sign girls returning to school, 21 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁶ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 50

¹⁰⁸⁷ TOLONews [Twitter], posted on: 2 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 39

¹⁰⁸⁹ TOLONews, Kabul Restaurants Owned, Staffed by Women Now Closed, 22 September 2021, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 47; Guardian (The), We are worse off: Afghanistan further impoverished as women vanish from workforce, 16 May 2022, [url](#); Wazhma Tokhi [Twitter], posted on: 30 May 2022, [url](#); Afghan Witness [Twitter], posted on: 8 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁰ VICE News, I Must Face the Taliban: The Women in Kabul Keeping Their Beauty Salons Open, 14 December 2021, [url](#); Wadsam, Markets For Women's Products To Open In Capital & Provinces of Afghanistan, 22 December 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Afghan women losing jobs fast as economy shrinks and rights curtailed, 20 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Women-Made Handicrafts Showcased in Herat, 5 March 2022, [url](#); Salaam Times, Herat businesswomen return to work, showcase goods at trade fair, 28 April 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Balkh businesswomen hold expo to promote their products, 8 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Women at Kabul Exhibition Display Handmade Products, 8 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Businesswomen Form Friday's Market in Herat, 12 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Women's Market in Kabul Creates Opportunities, 30 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹¹ TOLONews, Afghan Women Artisans Struggling With Lack of Work, 24 February 2022, [url](#); Rukhshana Media, Recession hits the only women market in Herat, 1 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹² ILO, Employment prospects in Afghanistan: A rapid impact assessment, January 2022, [url](#), p. 1



security and financial independence.¹⁰⁹³ Especially women-headed households could face an increased risk of poverty due to their limited ability to work.¹⁰⁹⁴

As indicated by the UNSG and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the combination of a dire economic situation with a persistent countrywide unemployment and the majority of Afghan women confined to their homes, could contribute to a rise in domestic violence.¹⁰⁹⁵ The precarious socio-economic and humanitarian situation has forced an increasing number of Afghan families to resort to negative coping strategies such as selling young girls into marriage, raising concerns for the protection of women from exploitation and abuse.¹⁰⁹⁶

5.2.3. Freedom of movement

After their takeover, the *de facto* authorities have imposed several restrictions limiting women's freedom of movement.¹⁰⁹⁷

At the end of August 2021, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid announced a 'temporary policy' instructing women to stay home until a new procedure to ensure their safety would be in place, referring to the leadership's concern that some of their militants 'who were new and had not been yet trained very well may mistreat women'.¹⁰⁹⁸ Mujahid clarified that 'longer-term women would be free to resume their daily routines', calling concerns about women's restrictions 'baseless' and noting that 'the *mahram* (close male relative: either a husband or a male relative whom a women cannot marry, such as a brother, father, son or uncle)¹⁰⁹⁹ would only apply to journeys of three days or longer'. He stated that for going to school, to the office, to university or to the hospital, women did not need a *mahram*.¹¹⁰⁰ Since the takeover, sources reported on a reduction in the number of women seen in public.¹¹⁰¹ On the one hand, there were reports of women being stopped on the street, being intimidated and told to go home by

¹⁰⁹³ AI, They are the revolution, Afghan women fighting for their future under Taliban rule, 25 November 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan women face hardship as Taliban struggles to revive economy, 12 January 2022, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 39

¹⁰⁹⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 38; Republik, A year under the Taliban, 21 June 2022, [url](#); Moradi, M., Violence against women under the Taliban in Afghanistan, OMCT & PAHRA, May 2022, [url](#), p. 135

¹⁰⁹⁵ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 37; CSIS, Struggling to Survive: Gender, Displacement, and Migration in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁶ UNICEF, Girls increasingly at risk of child marriage in Afghanistan, 12 November 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 37; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 12

¹⁰⁹⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 36

¹⁰⁹⁸ New York Times (The), A Taliban spokesman urges women to stay home because fighters haven't been trained to respect them, 24 August 2021, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban tell working women to stay at home, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁹ Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁰ New York Times (The), The Taliban wants to forget the past, a leader tells The Times, but there will be some restrictions, 25 August 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁰¹ VICE News, Life in the Taliban's Afghanistan [Online video], 13 February 2022, [url](#); International analyst, digital interview, 17 March 2022; International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule in Afghanistan [Podcast], 6 May 2022, [url](#); Smith, G., A Short Visit to the Taliban's Tense and Quiet Capital, International Crisis Group, 9 June 2022, [url](#)



Taliban guards when travelling alone in cities like Kabul and Herat.¹¹⁰² On the other hand, sources reported on women moving around in public spaces in both cities without a *mahram*.¹¹⁰³

According to sources interviewed by DIS in November 2021 and in March and April 2022, women's freedom of movement varied on provincial level and was context specific, depending on regional customs, with a married women in Herat still able to visit restaurants and walk around in public, but most women in provinces such as Kandahar and Helmand confined to their homes.¹¹⁰⁴ The need for a woman to be accompanied by a *mahram* has been part of local customs in more conservative regions in Afghanistan, but was not common practice for women in Kabul under the previous government. ISSI's Amina Khan, interviewed by DIS in March 2022, pointed at 'mixed signals' for women in Kabul on how to behave and move around in the city. Although several beauty shops were reportedly still open, women were no longer able to visit cafes without being accompanied by a *mahram*.¹¹⁰⁵

At the end of December 2021, the Taliban MPVPV issued a new guideline for transport operators across the country preventing women from travelling long distances (more than 72 kilometres or 45 miles), unless accompanied by a male relative. This guidance also instructed taxi drivers to only transport female passengers who were respecting the Islamic dress code (wearing a *hijab* covering the hair).¹¹⁰⁶ Checkpoints were reportedly established in Kabul to ensure these orders were properly followed,¹¹⁰⁷ with women travelling alone being stopped and taxi drivers who transported them being punished.¹¹⁰⁸

Further restrictions on women's freedom of movement applied at provincial level were reported, with women moving around in public spaces without a *mahram* in some provinces being detained by the Taliban authorities.¹¹⁰⁹ In the beginning of January 2022, women were banned from entering public bathhouses in Balkh and Herat provinces, limiting them to the use of private bathhouses.¹¹¹⁰ However, not all Taliban officials in both provinces supported this decision.¹¹¹¹ In March 2022, the Taliban MPVPV announced the introduction of a gender segregation regulation for amusement parks in Kabul. Men and women had to visit Kabul's recreational areas on different days, with Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays reserved for women and Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays reserved for men and Taliban forces. The statement added that women had access to other touristic areas in Kabul

¹¹⁰² BBC News, Life in Kabul under Taliban: Where is your male escort?, 3 September 2021, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Abuses Cause Widespread Fear, 23 September 2021, [url](#); WSJ, After Taliban Return, Afghan Women Face Old Pressures From Fathers, Brothers, 15 December 2021, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 33–34; Al Jazeera, Shrinking public space for Afghan women as Taliban expands curbs, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁰³ New Lines Magazine, Is This the Future of Taliban Rule?, 13 December 2021, [url](#); Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, March 2022, [url](#), p. 125; International analyst, digital interview, 17 March 2022; AP, Afghanistan's Taliban order women to cover up head to toe, 8 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁴ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan Recent Events, December 2021, [url](#), pp. 20, 25

¹¹⁰⁵ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 25

¹¹⁰⁶ Al Jazeera, No long-distance travel for women without male relative: Taliban, 26 December 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban bans women from solo, long-distance road trips in Afghanistan, 29 December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁸ Al Jazeera, Shrinking public space for Afghan women as Taliban expands curbs, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 36, 38

¹¹¹⁰ Khaama Press, Taliban close women baths in northern Afghanistan, 3 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹¹ Guardian (The), Taliban stop Afghan women from using bathhouses in northern provinces, 7 January 2022, [url](#)



Province, such as Paghman, Shakardara and Istalif, but they should avoid mixing with strangers and foreigners.¹¹¹² As reported by the New York Times, women were banned from entering the capital's amusement parks and city zoo on the day of the Muslim festival of Eid, celebrating the end of the month of Ramadan.¹¹¹³ In May 2022, driving instructors in Herat declared to have been verbally ordered to stop offering driving lessons and issuing driving licences to women. However, they added that they were not directed to prevent women from driving around the city.¹¹¹⁴ In mid-May 2022, also in Herat, a gender segregation plan was reportedly implemented by the local Taliban authorities in the province's restaurants and public parks, with men not permitted to dine together with their female family members and women only allowed in the city's parks on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.¹¹¹⁵ A few days later, however, these reports were rejected by Herat's Taliban MPVPV.¹¹¹⁶ At the end of May 2022, the Provincial Directorate of the Taliban MPVPV in Kandahar issued an order prohibiting unaccompanied women from being transported by the city's public transportation system.¹¹¹⁷

As indicated by OHCHR and Human Rights Watch Director of Women's Rights, Heather Barr, limitations on their freedom of movement can also negatively impact other aspects of women's lives, such as accessing medical care and being able to flee their home when facing domestic violence.¹¹¹⁸ For example, in mid-December 2021, Afghan media outlet Etilaat-e Roz reported on women without a *mahram* being prevented from entering health centres in Ghazni Province.¹¹¹⁹ In March 2022, a midwife in Ghazni Province declared to FP that the Taliban had been preventing doctors from examining women who were not accompanied by a *mahram*, since November 2021.¹¹²⁰ Moreover, not all women had a *mahram* available to accompany them.¹¹²¹ Unmarried women interviewed by Human Rights Watch in Ghazni indicated the potential need to have a *mahram* may increase the pressure to marry.¹¹²² Sources additionally reported on a sense of 'self-censorship' among urban Afghan women¹¹²³ and families imposing restrictions on the mobility of women and girls as a protection measure.¹¹²⁴

At the end of February 2022, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid declared that women would not be able to leave the country unless accompanied by a male relative, adding that the

¹¹¹² Ariana News, IEA designates days for women and men to visit Kabul amusement parks, 27 March 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Afghan women restricted to three days entertaining in parks, 27 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹³ New York Times (The), Eid Under the Taliban Shows a Changed Afghanistan, 8 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁴ Times of India, Taliban tells driving teachers to stop issuing licenses to women: Report, 4 May 2022, [url](#);

Independent (The), Taliban regime stops issuing driving licences to women, reports say, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁵ Khaama Press, Gender Segregation Plan of Taliban in Restaurants, 12 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁶ Ariana News, Virtue and Vice Ministry reject claims of ordering gender segregation in restaurants, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁷ Khaama Press, Taliban Orders Kandahar City Transportation to Not Transport Women Without a Male Chaperone, 30 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁸ Al Jazeera, No long-distance travel for women without male relative: Taliban, 26 December 2021, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 38–39

¹¹¹⁹ Etilaatroz, ریاست امر به معروف طالبان ورود زنان بدون محرم به مراکز صحتی را در غزنی ممنوع کرد [The Taliban's directorate banned women from entering health centres in Ghazni], 15 December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹²⁰ FP, The Taliban Are Harming Afghan Women's Health, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹²¹ Guardian (The), We exist but it is not a life: Afghan women face bleak prospects under Taliban, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹²² HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹²³ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Recent Events, December 2021, [url](#), p. 21

¹¹²⁴ WSJ, After Taliban Return, Afghan Women Face Old Pressures From Fathers, Brothers, 15 December 2021, [url](#)



situation for female students studying abroad would still need to be considered.¹¹²⁵ According to an international organisation and a human rights activist interviewed by DIS in April 2022, some women without a *mahram* were reportedly allowed to cross land borders to Iran and Pakistan in March 2022, others were returned with the instruction to be accompanied by a legitimate *mahram*.¹¹²⁶ At the end of March 2022, AP reported that dozens of women were prevented from boarding several (domestic and international) flights at Kabul Airport because they were travelling without a *mahram*. According to an airport official, the order came from the Taliban leadership.¹¹²⁷ A few days later, ABC News reported that some unaccompanied women had been allowed to board airplanes in Kabul. According to two Taliban officials, the order banning women from flying abroad alone was being ignored by some members of the movement.¹¹²⁸ In May 2022, AP reported on women arriving unaccompanied at Kabul International Airport.¹¹²⁹ Also in May 2022, a female student declared to BBC that she was stopped from boarding a plane to take up a study scholarship in Iran, because she was not accompanied by a male relative.¹¹³⁰

Since the Taliban takeover, dozens of female sports athletes (soccer, basketball and cricket players) went into hiding¹¹³¹ or left the country.¹¹³² In September 2021, the Taliban Cultural Commission announced that women would not be allowed to play sports exposing their bodies, or exposing them to media, adding that 'sport is not seen as something important for women'.¹¹³³ In an interview in October 2021, the newly appointed Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) chairman indicated to have clarified with the Taliban that there is no official ban on women's sport, especially cricket, and that the Taliban have no problem with women taking part in sports as long as their cultural and religious norms and dress codes are respected.¹¹³⁴ On 24 November 2021, the ACB chairman declared that female cricket players could continue playing and that the ACB will provide for their basic needs and facilities.¹¹³⁵ The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the setup of a working group to review the future of the Afghan cricket programme under Taliban rule and indicated its continued commitment to support the development of Afghanistan's cricket for both men and women.¹¹³⁶ In January 2022, a female member of the Afghan national boxing team declared to The Guardian that

¹¹²⁵ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate's Mujahid Comments on House-to-House Searches, 27 February 2022, [url](#); France 24, Taliban ban Afghans from evacuating amid massive security sweep, 28 February 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 37

¹¹²⁶ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 25

¹¹²⁷ AP, Officials: Taliban blocked unaccompanied women from flights, 26 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹²⁸ ABC News, Afghan women traveling alone boarding flights despite ban, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹²⁹ AP, Afghanistan's Taliban order women to cover up head to toe, 8 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹³⁰ BBC News, Afghanistan face veil decree: It feels like being a woman is a crime, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹³¹ BBC News, Afghanistan women's cricket team: Players hiding in Kabul fear Taliban rule, 1 September 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Ban? No ban? Afghan cricket chief offers hope to women athletes, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Dozens More Afghans Linked To Women's Soccer, Basketball Are Evacuated From Afghanistan, 21 October 2021, [url](#); BBC News, Rescuing the Afghanistan girls' football team, 24 November 2021, [url](#); CNN, Afghan women footballers who fled Taliban want to be a voice for the voiceless, 28 April 2022, [url](#); National (The), Escape to victory: the Afghan women loving football again after fleeing the Taliban, 27 May 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan women's team: They escaped the Taliban but face uncertain football future, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹³³ SBS News, Taliban say women won't be allowed to play sport, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³⁴ Al Jazeera, Ban? No ban? Afghan cricket chief offers hope to women athletes, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³⁵ TOLONews, Afghan Official Says Women Can Continue Playing Cricket, 24 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³⁶ VOA, Official: Afghan Women to Continue Playing Cricket, 24 November 2021, [url](#); Ariana News, ICC expecting findings of study into women's cricket in Afghanistan, 8 April 2022, [url](#)



along with her sister and other boxing women she had faced threats and was ordered by the Taliban to stop practicing boxing.¹¹³⁷

5.2.4. Freedom of expression and assembly

As indicated by the UNSG and Amnesty International, the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association have been significantly constrained under Taliban rule, with increasing restrictions and any form of opposition or dissent met with violence, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and unlawful detentions. The situation is described as ‘particularly grim’ for women protesting against the reversal of their rights.¹¹³⁸

During the first weeks after the takeover, several women demonstrations were organised and hundreds of female protesters gathered in the streets of Kabul and other urban centres to demand their rights.¹¹³⁹ However, many of these demonstrations were violently dispersed and suppressed by Taliban foot soldiers,¹¹⁴⁰ threatening and beating protesters,¹¹⁴¹ firing warning gunshots,¹¹⁴² and using tear gas and pepper spray,¹¹⁴³ and whips and batons transmitting electric shocks.¹¹⁴⁴

When the Taliban announced in September 2021 that unauthorised assemblies would be prohibited and protests without government approval would not be allowed, the frequency of these women street rallies reportedly lessened.¹¹⁴⁵ The combination of these restrictions and the sometimes heavy-handed reactions to demonstrations increased the protester’s fear of reprisals for expressing their dissent in public.¹¹⁴⁶ As stated by female activists to RFE/RL and Reuters, many women renounced the street marches in October 2021¹¹⁴⁷, after the Taliban sent

¹¹³⁷ Guardian (The), I am losing my skills: female boxer who was on Afghan national team, 20 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹³⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 38; AI, Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 9, 39

¹¹³⁹ AP, Afghan women demand rights as Taliban seek recognition, 3 September 2021, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Women protest against all-male Taliban government, 8 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women At Forefront Of Nonviolent Resistance To Taliban, 10 September 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), Afghan women stage protest in Kabul after Taliban crack down on women's rights - video report, 19 September 2021, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 31–32

¹¹⁴⁰ New York Times (The), Taliban Fighters Crush a Women’s Protest Amid Flickers of Resistance, 4 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Militants Used Force To Disperse Rally For Women's Rights In Northern Afghanistan, 7 September 2021, [url](#); National (The), Protests against all-male Taliban Cabinet met with violence in Afghanistan, 8 September 2021, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 31–32

¹¹⁴¹ BBC News, Afghanistan: Women beaten for demanding their rights, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴² France 24, Taliban disperse women protesters with gunfire in Kabul, 30 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴³ BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban break up women's rights protest in Kabul, 5 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁴ BBC News, Afghanistan: Women beaten for demanding their rights, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁵ Reuters, Protests get harder for Afghan women amid risks and red tape, 4 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Safe Spaces: After Taliban Crackdown, Afghan Women Take Their Protests Home, 8 December 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 38

¹¹⁴⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 50

¹¹⁴⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Safe Spaces: After Taliban Crackdown, Afghan Women Take Their Protests Home, 8 December 2021, [url](#)



letters warning they had made a list of the protesters and would conduct house searches for them.¹¹⁴⁸

From November 2021, the number of female activists protesting on the streets reportedly decreased as Taliban forces were accelerating their crackdown on women rights defenders, infiltrating and intimidating women groups by appearing on private addresses and calling women activists on their phones, warning them to stay silent.¹¹⁴⁹ An activist, cited by the Guardian, declared she used to organise protests in online groups of hundreds of women opposing Taliban rule in the first months after the takeover, but had to change her way of operating to a more clandestine and disguised tactic, limiting the demonstrations to a selected few participants. According to a university professor and women's activist, the Taliban's requirement that slogans used at protests should first be approved was used as a tactic to identify active members of women's movements.¹¹⁵⁰ Another female protester declared to the New York Times that when permission to demonstrate was asked to the Taliban authorities for prior approval, it was never allowed.¹¹⁵¹ The crackdown on women's demonstrations has raised concerns among human rights organisations, with Human Rights Watch depicting it as 'an alarming and unlawful escalation of efforts to suppress peaceful protest and free speech in Afghanistan'.¹¹⁵²

As reported by RFI in February 2022, small groups of female protesters have subsisted, but indicated to organise their activities more and more underground by communicating through encrypted phone applications and coordinating manifestations from a dedicated telephone number that was deactivated after to avoid tracking. Newcomers wanting to join the networks were subjected to a 'meticulous' selection process to make sure they can be trusted and are passionate enough for the cause. On protest days, the women gathered in small groups pretending to be ordinary shoppers in the street and then suddenly flocked together unfolding banners and chanting slogans. The group's members indicated that they learned to adapt quickly to possible threats from Taliban fighters while demonstrating. If one of the protesters was hurt, two others took care of her, allowing the demonstration to proceed.¹¹⁵³

¹¹⁴⁸ Reuters, Protests get harder for Afghan women amid risks and red tape, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁹ Guardian (The), They stayed to fight the Taliban. Now the protesters are being hunted down, 4 November 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Safe Spaces: After Taliban Crackdown, Afghan Women Take Their Protests Home, 8 December 2021, [url](#); Reporterly [Twitter], posted on: 23 December 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Evidence mounts of Taliban reprisal arrests and killing, 10 February 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁰ Guardian (The), They stayed to fight the Taliban. Now the protesters are being hunted down, 4 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁵¹ New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵² HRW, Taliban Use Harsh Tactics to Crush Afghan Women's Rights Protest, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵³ RFI, My heart and body shake: Afghan women defy Taliban, 15 February 2022, [url](#)



From 1 December 2021 to 30 June 2022, women protests were reported in the capital Kabul¹¹⁵⁴, and in other provinces such as in Balkh¹¹⁵⁵, Badakhshan¹¹⁵⁶, Bamyán¹¹⁵⁷, Kapisa¹¹⁵⁸ and Parwan¹¹⁵⁹. These demonstrations were mostly directed against restrictions on women's lives imposed by the Taliban, (such as limitations on dress codes and freedom of movement) and centred around the general demand for women's rights (such as the right to access education and employment and the right to women's political and social participation).¹¹⁶⁰ However, sometimes the protests also related to specific events, such as a rally criticising the killing of former government soldiers in Kabul in December 2021¹¹⁶¹, the violent death of two women in Kabul in January 2022¹¹⁶², the claim that humanitarian aid was distributed based on ethnic and linguistic affiliation in Daykundi Province, also in January 2022¹¹⁶³, and the demand to release Afghanistan's frozen funds and assets in Kabul, in January and February 2022.¹¹⁶⁴ There were numerous reports of these demonstrations being dispersed by Taliban fighters, using violence against women protesters and women being detained while or after protesting.¹¹⁶⁵ In January 2022, the Taliban's Deputy Minister of Culture and Information stated that the movement had 'the right to suppress dissidents' and 'arrest protesters', since they 'trigger chaos' and 'intrude the tranquillity of cities'.¹¹⁶⁶ A Taliban spokesperson in Kabul declared to the New York Times

¹¹⁵⁴ TOLONews, Women Call for Political, Social Inclusion, 5 December 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Kabul Women Protesters Brave Taliban Shooting, 29 December 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban forces pepper-spray women's rights protesters in Kabul, 16 January 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, In Afghanistan, Taliban diktat sparks debate about women's attire, 26 January 2022, [url](#); Reporterly [Twitter], posted on: 10 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Protestors Call for Women's Access to Education, Work, 12 March 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan girls stage protest, demand Taliban reopen schools, 26 March 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Protester Women: The Taliban Intervenes Private Affairs of the People Instead of Addressing Economic Issues, 29 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Women in Kabul Call for Right to Work, End of Restrictions, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁵ TOLONews, Kabul Protest Spotlights Recent Killing of 2 Women, 16 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, We have right to suppress dissidents and imprison protestors: Mujahid, 23 January 2022, [url](#); Times (The), Afghanistan's disappeared women: an arrest by the Taliban, then a bullet-riddled body, 27 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁶ Reporterly [Twitter], posted on: 6 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, Some women tear down meeting banners in Bamyán, 5 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁸ Mohammad Natiq [Twitter], posted on: 10 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁹ Reporterly [Twitter], posted on: 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁰ TOLONews, Women Call for Political, Social Inclusion, 5 December 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Women Protest Over New Restrictions, 28 December 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Women in Kabul Demand Govt Jobs, Representation, 12 January 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Protestors Call for Women's Access to Education, Work, 12 March 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan girls stage protest, demand Taliban reopen schools, 26 March 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), The Taliban Pressure Women in Afghanistan to Cover Up, 21 May 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, The Taliban Intervenes Private Affairs of the People Instead of Addressing Economic Issues, 29 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Women in Kabul Call for Right to Work, End of Restrictions, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶¹ Al Jazeera, Afghan women call for rights, protest alleged Taliban killings, 28 December 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Kabul Women Protesters Brave Taliban Shooting, 29 December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁶² TOLONews, Kabul Protest Spotlights Recent Killing of 2 Women, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶³ Reporterly [Twitter], posted on: 24 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁴ TOLONews, Women Protestors in Kabul Urge US to Release Bank Assets, 17 January 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Afghan women protest for release of Afghanistan's frozen funds, 26 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Women Criticize Biden's Afghan Assets Decision, 17 February 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Safe Spaces: After Taliban Crackdown, Afghan Women Take Their Protests Home, 8 December 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Women Protesters Injured In Stampede After Taliban Militants Fire In The Air, 28 December 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Kabul Protest Spotlights Recent Killing of 2 Women, 16 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Mol-Detained Female Protesters in Video Claim Outside Influence, 21 February 2022, [url](#); CSIS, Struggling to Survive: Gender, Displacement, and Migration in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan, 23 February 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 49–51; Intercept (The), Women and journalists are targets of violence in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, reports says, 14 April 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), The Taliban Pressure Women in Afghanistan to Cover Up, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁶ TOLONews, We have right to suppress dissidents and imprison protestors: Mujahid, 23 January 2022, [url](#)



that the *de facto* security forces were ordered to arrest ‘anyone who disrupts the public’ and ‘bring them to justice’.¹¹⁶⁷ After a particularly harsh oppression by Taliban forces of a women’s demonstration in front of Kabul University on 16 January 2022¹¹⁶⁸ and the disappearance of several female human rights activists (see section [8.2. Incidents targeting human rights defenders and activists](#)), women’s street protests decreased in February and March 2022.¹¹⁶⁹ There have also been reports of journalists and media workers being prevented from covering women’s protests and being beaten and detained.¹¹⁷⁰

As reported by several sources, alongside public demonstrations, women have increasingly developed alternative ways of protesting, such as activities organised in private homes, wearing face masks, painting slogans on walls at night and relying more on social media to spread their advocacy messages.¹¹⁷¹ In mid-September 2021, an online campaign was launched with Afghan women around the world sharing pictures of themselves on Twitter wearing traditional colourful dresses, using the hashtag #DoNotTouchMyClothes.¹¹⁷² In mid-December 2021, a group of women activists gathered in Kabul for a 16-day campaign to ‘end violence against women’.¹¹⁷³ In December 2021 and February 2022, media sources reported on small groups of women gathering in private houses, holding signs and recording statements while speaking on camera, to share with journalists and on their social media accounts. They also wrote articles and attended debates on audio apps such as Clubhouse and Twitter, in the hope their stories would be picked up and spread by social media.¹¹⁷⁴ In January 2022, members of the Afghan Powerful Women’s Movement held a brief clandestine news conference in a private home, attended by a small group of journalists.¹¹⁷⁵ As an alternative to staging protest, women activists initiated a blood donation campaign to mark International Women’s Day in Kabul in March 2022. However, the initiative was halted by a Taliban-appointed hospital director.¹¹⁷⁶ In April 2022, Amnesty International reported on a

¹¹⁶⁷ New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁸ Guardian (The), Taliban forces pepper-spray women’s rights protesters in Kabul, 16 January 2022, [url](#); Rukhshana Media, The Taliban pepper-sprayed and beat the protesters calling for justice, 17 January 2022, [url](#); HRW, Taliban Use Harsh Tactics to Crush Afghan Women’s Rights Protest, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁹ Washington Post (The), Faced with disappearances, beatings and intimidation, Afghanistan’s women’s rights activists go quiet on the streets, 8 February 2022, [url](#); SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 73–74

¹¹⁷⁰ Süddeutsche Zeitung, Kopf hoch, Schwester, 21 December 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan women call for rights, protest alleged Taliban killings, 28 December 2021, [url](#); RFI, My heart and body shake: Afghan women defy Taliban, 15 February 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 49; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 37

¹¹⁷¹ TOLONews, Kabul Women Write Protest Slogans on City Walls at Night, 10 January 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 39; RFI, My heart and body shake: Afghan women defy Taliban, 15 February 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 50; Intercept (The), Women and journalists are targets of violence in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, reports says, 14 April 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 39

¹¹⁷² Guardian (The), #DoNotTouchMyClothes: Afghan women’s social media protest against Taliban, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁷³ TOLONews, Activists in Kabul Decry Violence Against Women, 13 December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Safe Spaces: After Taliban Crackdown, Afghan Women Take Their Protests Home, 8 December 2021, [url](#); RFI, My heart and body shake: Afghan women defy Taliban, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁵ New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁶ AP, Blood drive to mark Women’s Day halted, Afghan activists say, 8 March 2022, [url](#)



social media campaign ‘#StandAfghanWithWomen’ launched by Afghan women’s groups, asking the international community to support their engagement in restoring their rights and freedoms.¹¹⁷⁷ In May and June 2022, female artists in Kabul and Herat held an exhibition and painting competition with artworks showing their opposition to the Taliban’s restrictions imposed on women.¹¹⁷⁸

During the reference period, one report was found of a women’s demonstration in support of Taliban rule. In mid-January 2022, a group of pro-Taliban women from an elite women’s foundation gathered in Kabul stating that the Taliban government ‘guarantees national and Islamic interest’ and ‘is in favour of all’ and that ‘Afghanistan will not surrender to any kind of pressure from the world’. At the same time, they asked the *de facto* authorities to reactivate the Women’s Ministry, hire female teachers and appoint female deputy ministers for the Taliban ministries of education and higher education. As reported by Khaama Press, this kind of pro-Taliban women demonstration was rare, as most protests organised by women have been criticising and opposing the Taliban.¹¹⁷⁹

According to a survey published by UN Women in December 2021, women’s civil society has notably changed in the aftermath of the Taliban takeover, with the activities of many organisations significantly reduced. Many women leaders who campaigned for women’s rights in recent years also left the country. 65 % of the survey’s respondents stated that women’s civil society organisations were no longer active in their areas, mainly due to Taliban restrictions, a lack of financial resources and security concerns. Women’s organisations themselves indicated provincial differences in the enforcement of Taliban rules and restrictions, with some being forced to stop their work and others able to continue their activities in some areas. Most obstacles were faced in sectors directly challenging the Taliban’s view on women’s rights. A lack of clarity and ambiguous Taliban policies made it difficult for women’s civil society organisations to operate, with fear often leading to self-censorship, also due to the ‘vivid memories’ of the previous Taliban era in 1996-2001.¹¹⁸⁰

For more information on female human rights defenders and activists, see section [8. Human rights defenders and activists](#).

5.2.5. Implemented dress codes and behavioural norms

A few days after their takeover in August 2021, the Taliban leadership announced that the all-covering *burqa* would not be compulsory for women in public, but different types of *hijab* would be possible to wear, without mentioning which specific types.¹¹⁸¹ As indicated by AAN, during their first months as the new *de facto* authorities, the Taliban gave mixed messages regarding their intention to regulate women’s clothing and appearance, leaving space for local

¹¹⁷⁷ Al, There is a window of opportunity to negotiate for the rights of Afghan women, but is rapidly closing, 1 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁸ TOLONews, Artists Protest Over Restrictions on Women, 23 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Herat Artists Hold Exhibition to Protest Restrictions on Women, 2 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁹ Khaama Press, Women in Kabul ask IEA to reopen women’s ministry, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁰ UN Women, Women’s rights in Afghanistan: Where are we now, December 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹¹⁸¹ Al Arabiya, Taliban say burqa not compulsory for women, hijab is as they take over Afghanistan, 17 August 2021, [url](#)



variations.¹¹⁸² As reported by several sources, an increased number of women in Kabul and other cities have been dressing more conservatively¹¹⁸³ and started wearing the *burqa* since the Taliban takeover.¹¹⁸⁴ However, many urban women in the capital reportedly continued to wear different *hijab* versions, often only covering their hair and leaving most of their faces visible.¹¹⁸⁵ In November and December 2021, sources reported on women in Kabul¹¹⁸⁶, Mazar-e Sharif¹¹⁸⁷ and Herat¹¹⁸⁸ walking out in public without wearing a *burqa*. Also in December 2021, the Taliban's Kabul municipality ordered the removal of all images of women from signboards and advertisements of shops and other businesses in the capital.¹¹⁸⁹

In mid-January 2022, the Taliban MPVPV put up posters around Kabul ordering women to cover up and wear *hijab*. The posters showed an image of a woman wearing the face-covering *burqa* and a woman wearing a black *chador* (commonly worn in Iran), accompanied by the text 'according to Sharia law, a Muslim woman must observe the *hijab*'. According to a spokesperson for the ministry, the posters were meant as 'an incentive' to 'advice and encourage' women to cover themselves up in public but would not be strictly enforced in practice.¹¹⁹⁰ However, despite the lack of an official policy to punish women who do not comply with the advisory, Al Jazeera mentioned sporadic reports of local Taliban foot soldiers trying to enforce the rule. As indicated by Obaidullah Baheer, lecturer at the American University of Afghanistan, this 'tends to become problematic in the absence of clear guidelines and training for fighters'. The poster campaign was protested against by several women in the streets of the capital.¹¹⁹¹ At the end of February 2022, a statement from the Taliban MPVPV advised female *de facto* government employees to wear the *hijab*, otherwise they would be fired.¹¹⁹² As reported by RFE/RL in March 2022, the Taliban MPVPV ordered healthcare institutions to deny medical assistance to female patients without a *hijab*.¹¹⁹³ According to an international humanitarian organisation interviewed by DIS in March 2022, the Taliban authorities were not applying a uniform reaction towards women not adhering to the dress code perceived by them as correct, but their response depended on 'the situation and the personality of the Talib in charge at the given place and time'.¹¹⁹⁴

¹¹⁸² Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁸³ International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule in Afghanistan [Podcast], 6 May 2022, [url](#); Smith, G., A Short Visit to the Taliban's Tense and Quiet Capital, International Crisis Group, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women Disappear Under Burqas Amid Taliban Advance, 13 August 2021, [url](#); Bloomberg, As Kabul Falls, the Burqa Shops of Afghanistan Get Busy, 15 August 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Taliban Impose Head-to-Toe Coverings for Women, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁵ Al Jazeera, In Afghanistan, Taliban diktat sparks debate about women's attire, 26 January 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), Taliban Impose Head-to-Toe Coverings for Women, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁶ Rolling Stone Magazine, Where the Taliban rule, 28 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁷ Business Insider, A murder, a warning, and now Afghans worry that they could be next, 19 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁸ New Lines Magazine, Is This the Future of Taliban Rule?, 13 December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁹ TOLONews, Kabul Municipality Forbids Images of Women on Advertising, 21 December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁰ France 24, Taliban religious police issue posters ordering women to cover up, 7 January 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Religious Police Erect Banners Ordering Women To Wear Islamic Hijab, 10 January 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban stuck banners across Kabul to recommend hijab for women, 10 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹¹ Al Jazeera, In Afghanistan, Taliban diktat sparks debate about women's attire, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹² Reportedly [Twitter], posted on: 22 February 2022, [url](#); Salam Watandar, Women public servants asked to wear hijab or quit, 22 February 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Beardless government employees prevented entry to offices by Taliban, 28 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Resurrects Gender Segregation In Public Offices, Transport In Afghanistan, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁴ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 27



On 7 May 2022, the Taliban MPVPV announced a new decree instructing women that they should not leave the house without ‘real need’ and if they do to respect a strict dress code regulation. The ministry stated that women must cover themselves from head to toe, suggesting the *burqa* as ‘the good and complete *hijab*’ preferred for covering a woman’s hair, face and body. However, the *burqa* was not prescribed as mandatory, as long as women would cover themselves with a *hijab* or garment (defined as ‘customary black clothing and shawl that is not too short, thin or tight’) obscuring the outlines of their body. Officials were instructed by the ministry to put up posters in public places with visual instructions of garments that would be approved for women. The ministry also encouraged ‘the importance and benefits of the *hijab*’ to be discussed in mosques and spread through the media.¹¹⁹⁵ A Taliban morality police chief indicated to WSJ that the Taliban understand the word *hijab* as a reference to ‘female clothing that covers the body in accordance with Sharia’ and ‘a religious code that mandates women to cover their body in a loose fitting garment that ideally obscures the face as well’.¹¹⁹⁶

As prescribed by the order, a woman’s male guardian was legally responsible for policing her clothing. He should ensure she adheres to the correct dress code and will be punished for any violations. With a first violation, the family would receive a visit from the Taliban MPVPV officials with a warning and advice. A second and third violation would lead to the male head of the family being summoned to the ministry and being imprisoned for three days. With a last and fourth violation, the woman’s male guardian would have to appear in front of a religious court for further punishment.¹¹⁹⁷ Additionally, the decree mentioned that male *de facto* government employees whose female family members did not comply with the order would be suspended or dismissed from their work and that working women (such as medical staff and teachers) could be fired if they did not obey the new guideline.¹¹⁹⁸ The Taliban’s new dress code rule provoked widespread international reactions¹¹⁹⁹ and was protested against by dozens of women demonstrating in the streets of Kabul City.¹²⁰⁰

As reported by the New York Times and BBC, women’s compliance with the new decree was mixed on the streets of Kabul City and women with their faces uncovered were still a common sight.¹²⁰¹ In city areas like Dasht-e Barchi, predominantly inhabited by the Hazara minority, few women reportedly covered their faces, while in the Pashtun neighbourhood of Kart-e Naw

¹¹⁹⁵ New York Times (The), Taliban Impose Head-to-Toe Coverings for Women, 7 May 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Taliban orders Afghan women to cover their faces in public, 7 May 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban order all Afghan women to cover their faces in public, 7 May 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Taliban to force Afghan women to wear face veil, 7 May 2022, [url](#); Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 39

¹¹⁹⁶ WSJ, Taliban Crack Down on Social Freedoms With Even Stricter Policing, 5 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁷ New York Times (The), Taliban Impose Head-to-Toe Coverings for Women, 7 May 2022, [url](#); Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁸ New York Times (The), Taliban Impose Head-to-Toe Coverings for Women, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁹ UNAMA, UNAMA statement on the hijab directive by Taliban authorities, 7 May 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, Mandatory burqa decision by IEA sparks widespread reaction, 8 May 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, The Taliban’s Edict for Women to Wear the Hijab Alarmed the UN Secretary-General, 9 May 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, U.S. Envoy Dubs Taliban New Policy Affront to Human Rights, 9 May 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 39

¹²⁰⁰ Khaama Press, Women’s Movement for Justice and Freedom: We Do Not Accept Forced Hijab and Dictatorship, 9 May 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), The Taliban Pressure Women in Afghanistan to Cover Up, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰¹ New York Times (The), The Taliban Pressure Women in Afghanistan to Cover Up, 21 May 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Policing faces, bodies and beards on Kabul streets, 22 May 2022, [url](#)



most women covered their faces with a *hijab* or headscarf.¹²⁰² Some Taliban members reportedly described the new regulation as a compromise, with variations¹²⁰³ of dresses other than the *burqa* allowed.¹²⁰⁴ In mid-May 2022, the Taliban Minister of Interior declared that ‘women are not forced but advised to wear the *hijab*’.¹²⁰⁵ However, enforcement of the new dress code rule was reported in Kabul¹²⁰⁶, with large numbers of religious Taliban officers purportedly deployed to ensure obedience.¹²⁰⁷ Some women in Kabul declared to have been harassed and scolded by men when they were walking on the street with their faces uncovered.¹²⁰⁸ Some bus drivers declared they had been warned by officials from the Taliban MPVPV not to transport women with tight-fitting clothes, but women with their faces uncovered had not been prevented from travelling with them.¹²⁰⁹ Outside Kabul, most women reportedly followed the new regulation, with some declaring to have been ordered (sometimes violently) by Taliban guards to cover up. According to a spokesperson of the Taliban MPVPV, patrolling personnel ‘had not forced women to cover themselves but had merely explained the decree to encourage full compliance’.¹²¹⁰

In the weeks following the circulation of the new decree in the media, AAN conducted interviews with women in 10 provinces (Balkh, Badghis, Baghlan, Bamyán, Farah, Herat, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kandahar and Panjsher) to investigate to what extent the new order was enforced and how it was responded to by women and their families. The interviews indicated that the impact of the Taliban’s new regulation differed across the country. In provinces like Kandahar, Badghis and Farah, enforcement was not necessary since women’s local dress largely coincided with the new rules. In other provinces like Kabul and Herat, where women have been used to greater freedom and clothing variety, women declared to have felt forced to adjust their clothing to avoid potential problems for themselves and their male relatives, but indicated a reluctance to cover their faces completely when going outside. Taliban guards imposing the order at checkpoints were reported, mostly referring to the new guideline as an advice but sometimes shouting at women to obey it. In several provinces, the Taliban reportedly disseminated messages advising women to observe the *hijab*, such as notices placed at the entrance of apartment blocks in Kabul, cars with speakers driving through the streets of Daykundi’s provincial capital and notifications threatening legal action against violators in Bamyán. AAN did not receive reports of public punishments of women not complying with the order, nor of male relatives of women without a *hijab* being contacted or punished. As indicated by AAN, it was still further to be seen how the enforcement of this new order would be applied across the country, if there would be enough backing for it within the Taliban movement itself and how it would be received and complied with by the Afghan population in the long-run. AAN’s legal expert Ehsan Qaane pointed out that ‘it is a matter of

¹²⁰² New York Times (The), The Taliban Pressure Women in Afghanistan to Cover Up, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰³ Taliban, Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice [Twitter], posted on: 10 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁴ Smith, G., A Short Visit to the Taliban’s Tense and Quiet Capital, International Crisis Group, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁵ TOLONews, Haqqani: We Are Not Forcing Women to Wear Hijab, 18 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁶ Guardian (The), We exist but it is not a life: Afghan women face bleak prospects under Taliban, 13 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁷ Smith, G., A Short Visit to the Taliban’s Tense and Quiet Capital, International Crisis Group, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁸ New York Times (The), The Taliban Pressure Women in Afghanistan to Cover Up, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁹ BBC News, Afghanistan: Policing faces, bodies and beards on Kabul streets, 22 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹⁰ New York Times (The), The Taliban Pressure Women in Afghanistan to Cover Up, 21 May 2022, [url](#)



how individual Taliban officials interpret the order and whether and indeed how they decide to execute it'.¹²¹¹

On 19 May 2022, the *de facto* authorities ordered local media outlets to ensure that female TV presenters and other women working on screen in local stations would cover their faces while on air.¹²¹² After the order was announced, only a few outlets reportedly complied, but on 22 May 2022 most female presenters covered their faces on screen after the Taliban MPVPV began enforcing the decree.¹²¹³ The order evoked strong reactions on national and international level, with the EU and human rights organisations asking for its reversal.¹²¹⁴ A campaign called '#FreeHerFace' started on social media and male TOLONews presenters appeared on air wearing face masks in solidarity with their female colleagues.¹²¹⁵

The *de facto* authorities introduced several other restrictive measures concerning women's dress codes on provincial level. At the end of March 2022, Hasht-e Subh reported on a new decree banning women without a *burqa* from entering public institutions, government offices and schools in the provinces of Balkh and Bamyān.¹²¹⁶ In April 2022, the news agency reported on the same rule ordered for female students at Ghazni University.¹²¹⁷ Also in April 2022, Human Rights Watch reported on increasingly harsh dress code regulations imposed by the Taliban in secondary schools that remained open in Balkh Province, with informants recording and reporting female students and teachers who did not adhere to the rules. One school was reportedly closed for several days after some female students had their faces uncovered. In other schools female teachers were fired and female students expelled for not complying with the prescribed dress code.¹²¹⁸ In May 2022, students at Badakhshan University declared to TOLONews that the provincial Taliban MPVPV instructed them to wear black clothes and cover their faces with masks inside the university.¹²¹⁹ In June 2022, Hasht-e Subh reported on a Taliban order instructing female teachers and students from the fourth to the sixth grade in Ghazni Province to wear black clothes and to cover their faces with a mask when attending school, adding they would be expelled if not respecting the order.¹²²⁰ Also in June 2022, the Taliban MPVPV Department of Kandahar Province reportedly disseminated posters containing the message that women who do not wear a *hijab* 'are likening themselves

¹²¹¹ Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹² Al Jazeera, Taliban say female Afghan TV presenters must cover faces on air, 19 May 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan's female TV presenters must cover their faces, say Taliban, 19 May 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban orders female Afghan TV presenters to cover faces on air, 19 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹³ Al Jazeera, Taliban enforces order for Afghan women TV anchors to cover faces, 22 May 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban enforce face coverings for Afghanistan's female news presenters, 22 May 2022, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Women TV presenters cover faces one day after defying edict, 22 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹⁴ TOLONews, Order for Female TV Presenters to Cover Faces Sparks Reaction, 25 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹⁵ TOLONews, Twitter FreeHerFace Campaign Gained Intl Attention, 28 May 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Male Afghan TV presenters mask up to support female colleagues after Taliban decree, 24 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Issue New Decrees, Banning Hijabless Women's Entrance into Public Institutions, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹⁷ Hasht-e Subh, Female Students Must Wear Burqas While Attending Classes, Urges Taliban's Religious Police in Ghazni Province, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹⁸ HRW, Dress Restrictions Tighten for Afghanistan Girls' Schools, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹⁹ TOLONews, Girls at Badakhshan University Say Covering Faces Unhealthy, 28 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²²⁰ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban in Ghazni: Female Students from 4th Grade to 6th Must Cover Their Faces, 1 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Imposes New Dress Code on Female Teachers in Ghazni, 19 June 2022, [url](#)



to animals'. The content of the banners sparked widespread national and international reactions.¹²²¹

5.3. Incidents targeting women and girls

For information on targeting of women in public roles and certain positions, see sections 2.8. Women who served in ANDSF, 4.2. Former judicial workers, 7. Journalists and media workers, 8. Human rights defenders and activists, 9. Healthcare professionals and 10. Humanitarian workers.

Taliban restrictions on women's freedom of movement, possibilities to study and work, and gender segregation in health facilities had a strong impact on women's mental and physical health.¹²²² In the period 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, UNAMA recorded 87 cases of murder, rape, suicide, forced marriages, child marriages, assault and battery, and 2 cases of honour killings. None of the cases had reportedly undergone a formal judicial process.¹²²³

Reported instances of violence and other targeting of women and girls by the Taliban included the following:

- On 13 January 2022, Taliban fighters shot at a car at a checkpoint in an area mainly inhabited by Hazaras. One woman, Zeinab Abdulahi, was killed. The Taliban later explained that she was 'killed by mistake' and that they arrested the perpetrator. Abdulahi's death caused protests by women's rights activists in Kabul who said they were afraid to leave the house because of Taliban checkpoints.¹²²⁴
- On 27 January 2022, the Times reported that a woman was shot dead in Mazar-e Sharif after following a Taliban fighter. He had approached her saying he could help her son, who had worked for the army prior to the Taliban takeover. The report refers to interviews with medical staff in the city and argues that Taliban fighters bring roughly 15 corpses monthly with the majority of them being female.¹²²⁵
- On 15 February 2022, a woman along with her brother were summoned to a *de facto* court in Uruzgan Province regarding a marriage offer the woman repeatedly had refused. The *de facto* judges of the Taliban Primary Court reportedly tried to force her to accept, and beat the woman and her brother 'severely'. These individuals were forced to flee their home, and another brother who stayed was detained by the Taliban to make the woman accept the proposal.¹²²⁶

¹²²¹ Hasht-e Subh, Woman Without a Head-to-Toe Cover Resembles an Animal, Say Taliban's Virtue Promoters in Kandahar, 17 June 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Banners in Kandahar City Spark Reactions, 19 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²²² HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#); Fuller Project (The), The Taliban are harming Afghan women's health, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²²³ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 34

¹²²⁴ Rukhshana Media, Taliban checkpoint shot dead a young woman in Kabul, 15 January 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Taliban arrests fighter who shot dead Hazara woman at checkpoint, 19 January 2022, [url](#)

¹²²⁵ Times (The), Afghanistan's disappeared women, 27 January 2022, [url](#)

¹²²⁶ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 31–32



- On 19 February 2022, Taliban fighters shot on a *riksha* in Kandahar. One woman was killed and two wounded. According to the fighters, the *riksha* had not stopped on their command.¹²²⁷
- On 20 February 2022, an unverified video on social media showed a group of men marching with a corpse. The post claimed that a woman was shot by the Taliban in Kandahar the day before and that cases occurring outside of Kabul do not receive any attention.¹²²⁸
- The female aid-worker and comedian Nadima, also known as Patingara Kakai, was arrested by the Taliban in February without any publicly known charges. She was released almost a month later on 9 March 2022.¹²²⁹
- On 27 April 2022, a 15-year-old girl told UNAMA that she had been sold to an older man, but she had run away with another man whom she married. The father filed a complaint with the *de facto* authorities and the girl was arrested and told by the *de facto* police that she should divorce her husband and marry the old man. She was kept in prison awaiting an investigation.¹²³⁰
- In early June 2022 a married woman in Ghazni Province was reportedly kidnapped by the Taliban. She reappeared in Uruzgan Province roughly a week later.¹²³¹
- On 25 June 2022 the Taliban killed two young women and their father, a former military commander, in a village in Ghor Province. The Taliban accused the father of supporting Mawlawi Mehdi's resistance.¹²³²

¹²²⁷ Hasht-e Subh, [Residents of Kandahar protested after a woman was killed], 1 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²²⁸ Emroo [Twitter], posted on: 20 February 2022, [url](#)

¹²²⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan-Canadian Aid Worker Reappears After Weeks In Taliban Detention, 9 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²³⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 32

¹²³¹ Hasht-e Subh, [Taliban kidnapped a woman from Ghazni and took her to Urozgan], 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²³² Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Kill Former Anti-Taliban Commander Along With His Wife and Daughter in Ghor Province, 26 June 2022, [url](#)



6. Targeting based on ethnicity and religion

6.1. Ethnic and religious composition of Afghanistan

The term ‘Afghan’ is sometimes used as synonymous with ‘Pashtun’, hence denoting one of the ethnic groups of Afghanistan. The word ‘Afghan’, however, is also commonly used to denote a citizen of Afghanistan.¹²³³ There has never been a reliable census in Afghanistan.¹²³⁴ Hence, reliable demographic data is scarce, and the exact ethnic composition unknown.¹²³⁵ Furthermore, statistics relating to ethnicity have been a contentious issue in Afghanistan.¹²³⁶ The 2004 constitution of the former government explicitly recognises 14 ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbach, Gujur, Brahwi ‘and other tribes’.¹²³⁷ According to the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, an aid organisation with long time experience in the country¹²³⁸, ‘there are some 10 larger and more than 30 smaller ethnic groups’.¹²³⁹ There are various estimates of the relative sizes of the ethnic groups. Estimates of the share of Pashtuns ranged from 40 to 50 % of the population, Tajiks 25–27 %, Hazaras 9–18 %, Uzbeks 6–15 % and Turkmen 1.5–3 %.¹²⁴⁰

The predominant religion in Afghanistan is Islam.¹²⁴¹ More than 99 % of the population are estimated to be Muslims.¹²⁴² A majority of the people are Sunni of the Hanafi School of jurisprudence.¹²⁴³ 10–15 % of the population are Shia.¹²⁴⁴ The majority of Afghanistan’s Shia Muslims are Hazara, and vice versa, the majority of the Hazaras are Shia.¹²⁴⁵ There are, however, Hazaras who are not Shia and members of other ethnic groups who are Shia.¹²⁴⁶ Most Shiites in the country adhere to the Jafari School of jurisprudence, but there is also a small community of Ismaili Shias.¹²⁴⁷

¹²³³ Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan – What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, pp. 15–16

¹²³⁴ Lieven, A., An Afghan Tragedy: The Pashtuns, the Taliban and the State, 25 May 2021, [url](#), p. 7; Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan – What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, p. 171

¹²³⁵ MRG, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People – Afghanistan, December 2021, [url](#)

¹²³⁶ Guardian (The), Afghan census dodges questions of ethnicity and language, 3 January 2013, [url](#)

¹²³⁷ Afghanistan, Constitution of Afghanistan, 3 January 2004, [url](#)

¹²³⁸ SCA, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹²³⁹ SCA, The Afghan Population, n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁴⁰ MRG, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People – Afghanistan, December 2021, [url](#); US, Library of Congress, Afghanistan, 1997, archived page from 10 January 2009, [url](#), accessed 19 May 2022; SCA, The Afghan Population, n.d., [url](#); NPR, Afghans Confront Sensitive Issue Of Ethnicity, May 8 2013, [url](#)

¹²⁴¹ Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan – What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, p. 13

¹²⁴² US, CIA, The World Factbook – Afghanistan, October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴³ Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan – What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, p. 13

¹²⁴⁴ US, CIA, The World Factbook – Afghanistan, October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁵ Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan – What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, pp. 13–14; MRG, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People – Afghanistan - Hazaras, December 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁶ SCA, Religion in Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁴⁷ SCA, Religion in Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#); Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan – What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, pp. 13–14



6.2. Representation in the *de facto* government

The *de facto* government announced the first appointments to what they designate to be a caretaker cabinet on 7 September 2021.¹²⁴⁸ New rounds of appointments to the cabinet and of other senior officials were announced on 21 September 2021 and 4 October 2021, respectively.¹²⁴⁹ Of the 33 cabinet members and senior officials appointed in the first round, all but 3 were Pashtuns, the exceptions being two Tajiks and one Uzbek.¹²⁵⁰ The Taliban second deputy Prime Minister, Abdul Salam Hanafi, is an ethnic Uzbek.¹²⁵¹ The Taliban Minister of Economy Qari Din Muhammad Hanif and the Army Chief Qari Fasihuddin are both Tajiks.¹²⁵² Noorudin Azizi, an ethnic Tajik from Panjsher, was appointed Taliban Minister of Commerce in the second round of appointments.¹²⁵³ When announcing the second round of appointments, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated that the cabinet included appointments of ethnic minorities, such as the Hazaras.¹²⁵⁴ Furthermore, the appointments of Taliban deputy ministers included Tajiks and Uzbeks.¹²⁵⁵ The only Shiite and Hazara appointed in the second round was the Taliban Deputy Minister of Public Health.¹²⁵⁶ In December 2021, another member of the Hazara community was appointed as Taliban Deputy Minister of Economy.¹²⁵⁷

The Taliban have been criticised by the international community for a lack of diversity in government.¹²⁵⁸ Commenting on the criticism, a spokesperson for the Taliban said that ethnicity ‘did not matter to the new government’ but pointed to the appointments of Tajiks and Uzbeks. Furthermore, he said that foreign governments had a responsibility to recognise the *de facto* government.¹²⁵⁹ Also responding to such criticisms, Taliban Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the Taliban had formed an inclusive government that included representatives from all ethnic groups. However, he dismissed the idea of including opposition figures in the government, pointing to the fact that this was uncommon in other countries.¹²⁶⁰

¹²⁴⁸ Al Jazeera, Taliban announces new government in Afghanistan, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁹ van Bijlert, M., The Taliban’s Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁰ van Bijlert, M., The Focus of the Taliban’s New Government: Internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵¹ Economic Times (The), Once wanted terrorists, now Taliban are prominent members of 2021, 28 August 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵² Hindustan Times (The), Taliban forms 33-member cabinet in Afghanistan: Full list, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵³ Hasht-e Subh, The Taliban Announce Remaining Cabinet Members, 21 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Expands Afghan Cabinet List But Again Fails To Include Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#); WSJ, Taliban Add Minorities, Technocrats to Afghan Government, but No Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁴ Al Jazeera, Taliban names deputy ministers, double down on all-male cabinet, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁵ New York Times (The), Taliban Complete Interim Government, Still Without Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁶ WSJ, Taliban Add Minorities, Technocrats to Afghan Government, but No Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Taliban Complete Interim Government, Still Without Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁷ Khaama Press, A none-Taliban figure, Abdul Latif Nazari appointed as Deputy Minister of economy, 25 December 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁸ New York Times (The), Taliban Complete Interim Government, Still Without Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#); VOA, Taliban Reject Fresh US Criticism of Kabul Government, 21 February 2022, [url](#); AA, Taliban have all-inclusive government in Afghanistan, claims acting foreign minister, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁹ New York Times (The), Taliban Complete Interim Government, Still Without Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁰ AA, Taliban have all-inclusive government in Afghanistan, claims acting foreign minister, 12 November 2021, [url](#)



6.3. Religious freedom under Taliban rule

Shortly after the takeover, the Taliban stated, although not specifying religious freedom, that human rights in general would be respected in Afghanistan ‘within the framework of Islamic law’.¹²⁶¹ However, the Taliban did not elaborate on what such limits would look like in practice, and during the reporting period the situation remained unclear.¹²⁶² USCIRF reported that ‘religious freedom conditions in Afghanistan worsened’ after the Taliban takeover and claimed that ‘Afghans who do not adhere to the Taliban’s harsh and strict interpretation of Sunni Islam and adherents of other faiths or beliefs are at risk of grave danger’.¹²⁶³

Sharia allows for different interpretations and varies between different schools of thought. The Taliban’s view of *sharia* is based on the Sunni Hanafi school of jurisprudence and rooted in the late-19th-century Deobandi movement.¹²⁶⁴ It is also influenced by local traditions and tribal codes making it different from the interpretation and implementation of *sharia* in other countries with justice systems under Islamic law.¹²⁶⁵ During the peace negotiations held in 2020–2021 between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban there was disagreement over which interpretation of *sharia* should be followed in cases of any potential disputes. The Taliban insisted Sunni Hanafi school to be used as a sole source of interpretation.¹²⁶⁶ This was contradictory to the 2004 constitution of Afghanistan that provided as reference points both Sunni Hanafi and Shia Jafari jurisprudence.¹²⁶⁷ Shia jurisprudence was applicable only in family law, however.¹²⁶⁸ According to analyst Ali Yawar Adili, this dispute continued throughout the negotiations and the Taliban never accepted the use of Shia jurisprudence.¹²⁶⁹ They announced after the takeover that they will refer to some provisions of the 1964 constitution of Afghanistan that does not recognise Shia jurisprudence.¹²⁷⁰ However, they have not provided any written constitution during the reporting period¹²⁷¹, instead they have relied on rulings from Hanafi *fiqh* [*fiqh* refers to jurisprudence of Islamic scholars].¹²⁷² Likewise, a representative of an anonymous organisation interviewed by EUAA for this report was not aware of any specific Taliban policies targeting minority or religious communities as such. However, the presentative noted that the current situation, as of May 2022, might not stay the same as policies may change. The source further explained that because the decision making of the Taliban is not ‘particularly transparent’, the situation could ‘be different in six months or one

¹²⁶¹ Rehman, R., Taliban 2021: Mujahid, Munafiq? - Protecting Islam or undermining it?, Human Rights in Context, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁶² USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁶³ USCIRF, Annual Report 2022 – Country Chapters: Afghanistan, April 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹²⁶⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Tribal Version: Shari’a Is Not The Same Everywhere, 2 October 2021, [url](#); Mandaville, P., Whither Islam in Afghanistan’s Political System After the Taliban Talks?, USIP, 7 October 2020, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Tribal Version: Shari’a Is Not The Same Everywhere, 2 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁶ Adili, A. Y., Intra-Afghan Talks (I), AAN, 3 January 2021, [url](#); Mandaville, P., Whither Islam in Afghanistan’s Political System After the Taliban Talks?, USIP, 7 October 2020, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁷ Adili, A. Y., Intra-Afghan Talks (I), AAN, 3 January 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁸ Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan: What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, pp. 158–160

¹²⁶⁹ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹²⁷⁰ Shamshad, P., Afghanistan’s Unwritten Constitution under the Taliban, Blog of the International Journal of Constitutional Law, 17 May 2022, [url](#); Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹²⁷¹ Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#); Shamshad, P., Afghanistan’s Unwritten Constitution under the Taliban, Blog of the International Journal of Constitutional Law, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁷² Shamshad, P., Afghanistan’s Unwritten Constitution under the Taliban, Blog of the International Journal of Constitutional Law, 17 May 2022, [url](#)



year, or even one month'. If there were new policies enacted in this regard, they will be found in action, according to the source, rather than being officially announced.¹²⁷³

According to Javid Ahmad, a senior fellow with the Atlantic Council, in the Taliban's view of Islam, the religion dictates every aspect of daily life, and saw a need of 're-Islamization' of the Afghan society as it was 'insufficiently Islamic' under the rule of the republic.¹²⁷⁴ Obaidullah Baheer, a Kabul-based academic and grandson of Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,¹²⁷⁵ described to RFE/RL that the Taliban have been seeing 'any challenge to [its] policies as a challenge to the faith itself.' Although many of the decrees issued by the Taliban, have been claimed to be only recommendations, its fighters have enforced them sometimes violently.¹²⁷⁶ Furthermore, the religious clerics who serve as the movement's source of interpretation were described to be originalists, seeing Islam as their vanguard and the Quran as their constitution, rather than pragmatists.¹²⁷⁷ The Taliban also reinstated the Taliban MPVPV in September 2021, which has been enforcing policies based on their interpretation of Islamic law.¹²⁷⁸

USCIRF reported in April 2022 that 'the Taliban continue to persecute religious minorities and punish residents in areas under their control in accordance with their extreme interpretation of Islamic law.' USCIRF also reported, although not providing details, that they had obtained credible reports on the Taliban harassing and desecrating houses of worship of religious minorities, including nonbelievers and Muslims that do not adhere to the Taliban's interpretation of Islam.¹²⁷⁹

According to an article by RFE/RL of 6 January 2022, the Taliban have required all men to attend congregational prayers at mosques in parts of Kabul and Takhar provinces. A Kabul resident told RFE/RL that the requirement to attend prayers was 'recently' announced by officials from the Taliban MPVPV at the Abu Hanifa Mosque located in central Kabul. In Kabul mosques, the Taliban have ordered clerics to hold a roll call and report those who did not show up. First absence reportedly could be sanctioned with a fine, and a repeat offender could be 'punished'. Moreover, residents of Takhar's Rustaq District reported that 'those who do not attend prayers are fined and beaten' and referred to a recent incident where two men who had failed to attend prayers were beaten by Taliban fighters.¹²⁸⁰ These incidents could not be corroborated by other sources.

During Ramadan 2022, the Taliban interpretation of when the Ramadan should end was different than in other Sunni-majority countries, like Saudi Arabia, and as observed by Shias. According to an article by the New York Times of 10 May 2022, Shias in Kunduz Province held Eid al-Fitr prayers (following Ramadan) on the day the Taliban had declared, but 'they

¹²⁷³ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹²⁷⁴ Ahmad, J., The Taliban's religious roadmap for Afghanistan, MEI, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁵ Democracy Now!, Grandson of Notorious Warlord: My Family Is Celebrating the Taliban, But I Fear for My Friends' Lives, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁷ Ahmad, J., The Taliban's religious roadmap for Afghanistan, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#); USCIRF, Annual Report 2022 – Country Chapters: Afghanistan, April 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹²⁷⁹ USCIRF, Annual Report 2022 – Country Chapters: Afghanistan, April 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹²⁸⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)



continued their daylong Ramadan fast and refrained from celebrating in their homes', out of fear of possible repercussions from the Taliban.¹²⁸¹ Asian News International (ANI), an Indian news agency covering South Asian affairs, reported, based on a social media statement by Afghan journalist Mossoud Houssaini, that the Taliban had 'prohibited' several Shia mosques from holding prayers in Herat and Kabul during Eid al-Fitr holiday in May 2022. The journalist also claimed that the Taliban had forced 'some Shia followers' to break their Ramadan fast prior to the Shia clerics' announcement of its end.¹²⁸²

6.4. Hazaras and other Shia groups

6.4.1. Background on Hazaras

The Hazara people originate from a region in Central Afghanistan known as Hazarajat.¹²⁸³ Hazarajat is not an official entity, and hence, has no official or exact borders.¹²⁸⁴ Historically, the region encompassed the provinces of Bamyan, Ghor and Uruzgan, and parts of the Herat, Farah, Kandahar, Ghazni, Parwan, Baghlan, Balkh and Badghis provinces.¹²⁸⁵ In 2004, the Daykundi Province was created from Hazara dominated parts of Uruzgan.¹²⁸⁶ The Hazara constitutes the majority population in Bamyan and Daykundi¹²⁸⁷, as well as in several districts and parts of other provinces in Hazarajat.¹²⁸⁸ There are also major Hazara populations in the cities of Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif.¹²⁸⁹ The Hazara population of major cities tend to be geographically concentrated.¹²⁹⁰ In Kabul, for example, the Hazara population is concentrated to areas in western Kabul.¹²⁹¹

Up until the late 19th century, Hazarajat was largely autonomous.¹²⁹² Amir Abdur Rahman Khan violently incorporated Hazarajat in Afghan state structures. Among other things, he enabled the enslavement of Hazaras, engaged in mass killings and redistributed Hazara lands to Pashtuns.¹²⁹³ It is estimated that more than half of the Hazara population were killed or left

¹²⁸¹ New York Times (The), Eid Under the Taliban Shows a Changed Afghanistan, 8 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁸² ANI, Taliban forces prohibit Shia mosques from holding Eid prayers: Reports, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁸³ Britannica, Hazara, n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁸⁴ Mousavi, S. A., The Hazaras of Afghanistan: an historical, cultural, economic and political study, 1998, pp. 65–69, 106

¹²⁸⁵ Mousavi, S. A., The Hazaras of Afghanistan: an historical, cultural, economic and political study, 1998, p. xiii

¹²⁸⁶ Norway, Landinfo, Respons Afghanistan: Gizab-distriktet, 11 December 2014, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁷ NPS, Bamyan Provincial Overview, March 2017, [url](#); NPS, Dai Kundi Provincial Overview, March 2017, [url](#); Adili, A. Y., Afghanistan's 2019 election (18): How the people of Bamyan, Daikundi and Lal wa Sarjantal voted, AAN, 16 October 2019, [url](#); Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 93

¹²⁸⁸ Examples include the Jaghori and Malistan districts of Ghazni, the Behsud districts of Wardak and the Tala Wa Barfak district of Baghlan. CPAU, Conflict Analysis: Jaghori and Malistan districts, Ghazni province, April 2009, [url](#), p. 4; Australia, Refugee Review Tribunal, Country Advice Afghanistan: AFG36222 – Wardak Province – Hezb-I Wahdat Khalili, February 2010, [url](#), pp. 3–4, 17; UNHCR, District Profile [Baghlan – Tala-wa-Barfak], 9 April 2002, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁹ SCA, The Afghan Population, n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁹⁰ La Prensa Latina, Afghanistan's Hazaras live in the shadow of fear as attacks increase, 11 December 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁹¹ Finland, Finnish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 23

¹²⁹² Ibrahim, N., Divide and Rule: State Penetration in Hazarajat (Afghanistan) from the Monarchy to the Taliban, 2009, [url](#), p. 5; Britannica, Hazara, n.d., [url](#)

¹²⁹³ Ibrahim, N., Divide and Rule: State Penetration in Hazarajat (Afghanistan) from the Monarchy to the Taliban, 2009, pp. 4–6, [url](#)



Afghanistan during these times.¹²⁹⁴ Among the beneficiaries of the Amir's actions in Hazarajat were the Kuchis – Pashtun nomads. Kuchis were given grazing rights on Hazara land, which has led to recurrent violent conflicts between Hazara communities and Kuchis, even in recent times.¹²⁹⁵

Up until the Saur revolution of 1978, the Hazara were systematically discriminated against in most spheres of public life.¹²⁹⁶ After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, there was an uprising against the Soviet forces and the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime, and Hazarajat regained *de facto* autonomy.¹²⁹⁷ Initially, local Hazara leaders organised themselves politically in Hazarajat, and, among other things, provided public services.¹²⁹⁸ Soon thereafter, however, disagreements within the political elite led to intra-fighting and the formation of competing political groups in the area.¹²⁹⁹ In 1989, most of these groups united in the Hazara-based *mujahidin* party Hezb-e Wahdat.¹³⁰⁰ While political leaders in the autonomous Hazarajat stood in opposition to the PDPA regime, other Hazaras, mainly in the cities, joined the regime and gained political influence, as well as representation within state structures.¹³⁰¹

After the exit of the Soviet military and the ensuing fall of the PDPA regime, a civil war broke out in Afghanistan in the early 1990's.¹³⁰² Hezb-e Wahdat were among the warring parties.¹³⁰³ Like Hezb-e Wahdat, most *mujahidin* groups were dominated by a single ethnic and/or religious group.¹³⁰⁴ Due to the ethnic profile of the various *mujahidin* factions, fighting took an ethnic character, resulting in 'ethnic hatreds'.¹³⁰⁵ Civilians were heavily impacted by the conflict, collaterally as well as by direct targeting.¹³⁰⁶ *Mujahidin* groups engaged in collective punishment of communities based on a perceived affiliation with competing *mujahidin* groups. An example where this affected the Hazara community is the Afshar operation in Kabul 1993, resulting in, *inter alia*, the deaths of civilian Hazaras, looting and mass arrests.¹³⁰⁷ Hezb-e Wahdat, like other groups, also committed atrocities towards civilians.¹³⁰⁸

While underway to negotiate with the Taliban in 1995, Hezb-e Wahdat leader, Abdul Ali Mazari, along with other senior Wahdat officials, were killed by the Taliban.¹³⁰⁹ After the murder of Mazari, relations between the Taliban and the Hazara community were generally

¹²⁹⁴ Mousavi, S. A., *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: an historical, cultural, economic and political study*, 1998, p. 136

¹²⁹⁵ Norway, Landinfo, Report: Hazaras and Afghan insurgent groups, 3 October 2016, p. 18, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁶ Ibrahim, N., *The Hazaras and the Afghan State*, 2017, p. 101

¹²⁹⁷ Ibrahim, N., *The Hazaras and the Afghan State*, 2017, pp. 117–119

¹²⁹⁸ Ibrahim, N., *The Hazaras and the Afghan State*, 2017, pp. 119–120

¹²⁹⁹ Rubin, B. R., *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 2002, pp. 222–223

¹³⁰⁰ Mousavi, S. A., *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: an historical, cultural, economic and political study*, 1998, p. 185; Ibrahim, N., *The Hazaras and the Afghan State*, 2017, pp. 180–182

¹³⁰¹ Mousavi, S. A., *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: an historical, cultural, economic and political study*, 1998, pp. 171, 176; Norway, Landinfo, Report: Hazaras and Afghan insurgent groups, 3 October 2016, [url](#), p. 9

¹³⁰² Rubin, B. R., *Afghanistan: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2020, pp. 83–90

¹³⁰³ HRW, *Blood-Stained Hands: Past atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's Legacy of Impunity*, 2005, [url](#), p. 22

¹³⁰⁴ Rubin, B. R., *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 2002, pp. 212–223

¹³⁰⁵ Rubin, B. R., *Afghanistan: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2020, p. 86

¹³⁰⁶ HRW, *Blood-Stained Hands: Past atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's Legacy of Impunity*, 2005, [url](#), p. 35

¹³⁰⁷ HRW, *Blood-Stained Hands: Past atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's Legacy of Impunity*, 2005, [url](#), pp. 74–97

¹³⁰⁸ HRW, *Blood-Stained Hands: Past atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's Legacy of Impunity*, 2005, [url](#), pp. 110–111

¹³⁰⁹ Ibrahim, N., *Divide and Rule: State Penetration in Hazarajat (Afghanistan) from the Monarchy to the Taliban*, 2009, [url](#), p. 13



hostile.¹³¹⁰ There were divisions within the Hazara community during the first Taliban rule (1996-2001)¹³¹¹, and Hezb-e Wahdat was splintered. The main Wahdat group stood in opposition to the Taliban and engaged in armed confrontations.¹³¹² Collective punishment against civilians was a recurrent aspect of the conflict.¹³¹³ During this time, the Taliban engaged in massacres of Hazara civilians. One of these instances was the massacre in Mazar-e Sharif in 1998. The massacre was partly a revenge for the killing of captured Taliban fighters by armed Hazara and Uzbek groups, but there was also a more blatant sectarian aspect. In conjunction with the massacre, a senior Taliban official referred to Hazaras as infidels and ‘threatened them with death if they did not convert to Sunni Islam or leave Afghanistan’.¹³¹⁴

Following the US led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Bonn agreement(s) laid the foundation for the new state. Hazaras were represented in the process. Along with other ethnic groups, they gained political representation.¹³¹⁵ According to Afghan scholar Niamatullah Ibrahim, Hazaras were among the most passionate supporters of the post-2001 political process.¹³¹⁶ A new constitution came into force in 2004. The constitution recognized the rights of minorities, including the Hazaras.¹³¹⁷ The Hazaras made many gains during the period 2001-2021, they were represented politically and in the bureaucracy, and the education level among Hazaras rose sharply.¹³¹⁸ Various forms of discrimination against the group still occurred, however,¹³¹⁹ such as discrimination within education and public sector employment¹³²⁰, and general ‘societal discrimination’¹³²¹. Ethnic discrimination was not limited to Hazaras. As stated by Freedom House: ‘Ethnic-based patronage practices affect different groups’ access to jobs depending on the local context.’¹³²²

Generally, Hazara dominated parts of the country were among those areas that were the least impacted by the internal conflict between the former Government and the Taliban in 2001-2021.¹³²³ Beginning in 2016, ISKP has been conducting attacks targeting Hazaras and other Shia Muslims.¹³²⁴

¹³¹⁰ Barfield, T., *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 2012, p. 259

¹³¹¹ The Taliban regime 1996–2001 generally lacked international recognition and never controlled the whole country.

¹³¹² Australia, Refugee Review Tribunal, Background Paper Afghanistan: Political Parties and Insurgent Groups 1978-2001, March 2014, [url](#), pp. 28–29

¹³¹³ HRW, *World Report 2002: Afghanistan*, 2002, [url](#), pp. 186–187

¹³¹⁴ HRW, *Afghanistan: Massacres of Hazaras in Afghanistan*, February 2001, [url](#)

¹³¹⁵ Ibrahim, N., *The Hazaras and the Afghan State*, 2017, pp. 215–216

¹³¹⁶ Ibrahim, N., *The Hazaras and the Afghan State*, 2017, p. 215

¹³¹⁷ Rubin, B.R., *Afghanistan: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2020, pp. 158–160

¹³¹⁸ Norway, Landinfo, Report: Hazaras and Afghan insurgent groups, 3 October 2016, p. 12, [url](#); New York Times (The), *Hazaras Hustle to Head of Class in Afghanistan*, 3 January 2010, [url](#)

¹³¹⁹ AIHRC, *Assessing the Extent of the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in Afghanistan*, 2018, p. 34, [url](#)

¹³²⁰ MRG, *Hazaras*, n.d., [url](#)

¹³²¹ USDOS, *Afghanistan 2019 Human Rights Report*, 11 March 2020, [url](#), pp. 39–40

¹³²² Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2020 – Afghanistan*, 2020, [url](#)

¹³²³ Examples of such areas include the provinces Bamyan and Daykundi, see: EASO, *Afghanistan Security Situation*, 28 September 2020, [url](#), pp. 102–114

¹³²⁴ UNAMA, *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Attacks against Places of Worship, Religious Leaders and Worshipers*, 7 November 2017, [url](#); UNAMA, *Afghanistan – Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict – Annual Report 2020*, February 2021, [url](#), pp. 43, 51, 55-56; UNAMA, *Afghanistan – Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict – Midyear Update: 1 January to 30 June 2021*, July 2021, [url](#), pp. 5–6



6.4.2. General situation under Taliban rule

For an overview of the situation of Hazaras after the Taliban takeover up until 1 December 2021, see the [EASO COI report: Afghanistan – Country Focus \(January 2022\)](#).

As was stated in the previous EASO report in January 2022, there seemed to be no policies in place against the Hazara. The same source cited then (an Afghan human rights expert) also described Taliban behaviour as contextual. An announced policy from the leadership does not translate into uniform implementation in the provinces; rather implementation depends on local dynamics and those in charge there.¹³²⁵ Another source, an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, reiterated in May 2022 that there was no evidence of Taliban policies specifically or directly targeting Hazaras.¹³²⁶

Several sources believed that there was an anti-Shia and/or an anti-Hazara sentiment in at least some circles of the Taliban.¹³²⁷ Furthermore, there is a widespread belief within the Hazara community that the Taliban holds an anti-Hazara sentiment.¹³²⁸

In its 2021 report about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, the USDOS repeated what had been reported in their previous annual reports¹³²⁹: ‘Societal discrimination against Hazaras continued in the form of extortion of money through illegal taxation, forced recruitment and forced labour, physical abuse, and detention.’¹³³⁰ Without providing details, Freedom House stated in their annual report on political rights and civil liberties in 2021, that the Taliban have engaged in discrimination against members of ethnic minority groups, particularly Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks.¹³³¹ An international humanitarian organisation consulted by the COI unit of DIS stated in March 2022 that it was hard to assess whether the level of societal discrimination against Hazaras had changed after the Taliban takeover.¹³³² Only limited information on concrete examples of discrimination of Hazaras in the referencing period could be found. In an article by the Human Rights Watch from January 2022, a concrete example was provided. A female Hazara healthcare worker in Ghazni Province who was interviewed stated that Hazara staff members were ignored and threatened by the Taliban.¹³³³ An anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan interviewed for this report stated in May 2022 that they were not aware of any specific instances of discrimination, other than the cases of forced evictions (see section [6.4.3. Incidents targeting Hazaras and Shia Muslims](#)),

¹³²⁵ Afghan human rights expert, digital interview, 11 November 2021

¹³²⁶ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹³²⁷ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Recent events, December 2021, [url](#), pp. 28, 53–54, 58; Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022; Afghan human rights expert, digital interview, 11 November 2021; Chiovenda, A. (Dr.) and Kerr Chiovenda, M. (Dr.), professors at Zayed University, digital interview, 9 November 2021; Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 84

¹³²⁸ Sky News, Afghanistan: Orphaned and terrified – persecuted Hazara minority whose hard lives have just got harder under the Taliban, 31 January, [url](#); Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan, Taliban’s regime – situasjonen etter maktovertakelsen, 9 March 2022, [url](#), p. 25; AP, Despite mistrust, Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection, 16 November 2021, [url](#); Kabul Press, An Appeal to the World Concerning the Dire Situation of the Hazara Ethnic Group in Afghanistan, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

¹³²⁹ See e.g. USDOS, Afghanistan 2019 Human Rights Report, 11 March 2020, [url](#), pp. 39–40

¹³³⁰ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 50

¹³³¹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 – Afghanistan, 28 February 2022, [url](#)

¹³³² Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 55

¹³³³ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)



but that there was a history of discrimination of Hazaras and that they could ‘imagine’ that it occurred to some extent, for example at checkpoints.¹³³⁴

In December 2021, the Taliban held a series of meetings with Shia Hazara leaders from various parts of the country. In the meetings, the Taliban promised to provide security for all citizens and expressed a desire to avoid sectarian divisions.¹³³⁵ The Taliban have reportedly maintained communications with several political parties associated with the former republic after their takeover. Among them the predominantly Hazara party Hezb-e Wahdat, despite the senior leadership of the party having left Afghanistan.¹³³⁶

According to an anonymous source with presence in Afghanistan, the main perpetrators of atrocities against Shia Hazaras have been ISKP.¹³³⁷ Human Rights Watch’s Patricia Gossman stated in an interview held in May 2022 that one of the main concerns for the Hazara community are violent attacks by ISKP, and the fact that the Taliban are unlikely to protect them.¹³³⁸

Ali Yawar Adili, a researcher associated with the AAN and the think tank New America, stated in an interview in May 2022 that people in the Hazara-dominated provinces of Bamyan and Daykundi were harassed and arrested due to baseless accusations of having worked for the former government. There were instances where the Taliban have accused local people of keeping weapons, and then forced them to hand over the (non-existent) weapons. This has led to people borrowing money to buy weapons that they could hand-over to the Taliban.¹³³⁹ While this information could not be corroborated further, Afghan news outlet Hasht-e Subh reported about similar occurrences in Samangan in May 2022.¹³⁴⁰ In February 2022, the Taliban reinforced its military presence in Bamyan, a Hazara dominated province¹³⁴¹, by sending 1 500 troops to the province. A spokesperson for the *de facto* security forces claimed that the reinforcement was a response to ‘foreign gangs’ trying to destabilize the province, without specifying further.¹³⁴² No more detailed information about the reinforcements could be found.

An international humanitarian organisation consulted by DIS stated in March 2022 that the Taliban sought to impose a culture of fear among the Hazaras, but that it was generally more about a threat of violence rather than acts of violence. The situation was reported to be worse in predominantly Hazara provinces such as Bamyan than elsewhere, according to the source consulted by the DIS.¹³⁴³

Experts within the international community have raised concerns about the situation of the Hazara community following the Taliban takeover. In a letter dated 26 May 2022 to the

¹³³⁴ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹³³⁵ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 51

¹³³⁶ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 38

¹³³⁷ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹³³⁸ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹³³⁹ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁴⁰ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Forces Female Officers to Buy Them Guns or Face Consequences, 29 May 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁴¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Hazara In Afghanistans Bamiyan Region Fear Repeat Of Taliban Atrocities, 31 July 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁴² Salam Watandar, 1500 fresh troops deployed to Bamyan, 22 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Groups Seek to Destabilize Bamiyan, Says Commander, 21 February 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁴³ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 55



President of the UN Security Council, the chair of the Security Council Committee, established pursuant to resolution 1988¹³⁴⁴, expressed concerns with regard to the Shia Hazara community: 'The Taliban might not expend effort preventing attacks that do not target them, particularly if they advance Taliban interests. Attacks on Shia Hazara do not offend the Taliban and may be exploited by them as proof they are needed for counter-terrorism and that they, in turn, need international assistance for this.'¹³⁴⁵ In a statement in January 2022, a large group of experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council criticised the Taliban for their treatment of women and minorities. The experts expressed concern over 'the reports of extrajudicial killings and forced displacement of ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Hazara, which would suggest deliberate efforts to target, ban, and even eliminate them from the country'. Furthermore, they stated that the far-reaching discrimination of women was exacerbated in cases of women from ethnic minorities, such as the Hazara.¹³⁴⁶

As mentioned in section [6.4. Hazaras and other Shia groups](#), Hazaras were reported to be meagrely represented at the national political level. According to Ali Yawar Adili, the Taliban were keen to showcase the existence of Hazara representation to appease the international community, but he called it symbolic acts that has not translated into any real representation of Shia's or Hazaras, neither at the national level, nor the local level.¹³⁴⁷ A source consulted for [the EASO report](#) in January 2022 expressed a similar viewpoint.¹³⁴⁸ Under the years of the Republic (2001-2021), Hazara-dominated provinces such as Daykundi and Bamyan, had some level of political autonomy and Hazara representatives governed at both the provincial and district level. Since the Taliban takeover, the local administration in those provinces have been run by the Taliban, who installed mainly Pashtuns as office holders. There were some Hazaras on the local level working with the Taliban, however.¹³⁴⁹ The Taliban governors of Bamyan and Daykundi were Pashtuns, as of May 2022.¹³⁵⁰ According to an article from November 2021, however, there were several Hazaras holding posts at the provincial level. Those Hazara officeholders joined the Taliban a long time ago and were not widely recognized within the Hazara community.¹³⁵¹ According to an anonymous representative of an international organisation in Afghanistan consulted by DIS in March 2022, some of the Taliban foot soldiers in Bamyan and Daykundi are Shia Muslims.¹³⁵²

Mawlawi Mehdi, one of the few Hazaras in the Taliban ranks, was ousted from his position as head of intelligence in Bamyan in May 2022.¹³⁵³ Mehdi gained attention in 2020 when the Taliban appointed him shadow district governor for the Balkhab district in the Province of Sar-

¹³⁴⁴ Resolution 1988 (2011) established a committee of the UN Security Council to oversee the sanctions regime targeting the Taliban: UN Security Council, Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), n.d., [url](#)

¹³⁴⁵ UN Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 26 May 2022, [url](#), p. 19

¹³⁴⁶ UN News, Experts decry measures to steadily erase Afghan women and girls from public life, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁷ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁴⁸ Chioyenda, A. (Dr.) and Kerr Chioyenda, M. (Dr.), professors at Zayed University, digital interview, 9 November 2021

¹³⁴⁹ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022; Kerr Chioyenda, M. (Dr), professor at Zayed University, digital interview, 9 November 2021

¹³⁵⁰ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁵¹ AP, Despite mistrust, Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection, 16 November 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁵² Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 72

¹³⁵³ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban to Clear Its Ranks From Non-Pashtun Commanders, 31 May 2022, [url](#)



e Pul. He was the first known Hazara and Shia Muslim to be appointed to an official position within the Taliban.¹³⁵⁴ Mehdi assumed the position of head of intelligence in Bamyan after the Taliban takeover.¹³⁵⁵ According to media reports in June 2022, he has since taken up arms against the Taliban and captured the Balkhab district (Sar-e Pul). The Taliban reportedly responded by sending troops from other parts of the country to combat him.¹³⁵⁶ In June 2022, the Taliban were accused of carrying out extrajudicial executions and other human rights abuses in conjunction with military operations against Mehdi and his fighters in Balkhab. The Taliban denied the accusations.¹³⁵⁷ UNAMA and Amnesty International have expressed concerns about the allegations.¹³⁵⁸ However, Richard Bennett, the UN special rapporteur on the situation on human rights in Afghanistan, commented on Twitter that verification of the allegations, regrettably, was 'hampered by info blackout, internet cuts & denial of access to media & HR [human rights] monitors.'¹³⁵⁹ According to news reports, AIHRC confirmed in June 2022, that the Taliban had killed civilians in an attack on the Balkhab district.¹³⁶⁰

Sources consulted for the [EASO COI report: Afghanistan – Country Focus \(January 2022\)](#) did not report on any significant Hazara' based resistance against the Taliban.¹³⁶¹ In a blog post about resistance groups in Afghanistan by the Swiss Institute for Global Affairs from April 2022, the institute mentions two Hazara-based resistance groups; 'the Unknown Soldiers of Hazaristan' and 'the Freedom and Democracy Front'. The groups announced their existence in short videos on social media, but had since not made any news which, according to the institute, raised doubts whether the groups actually existed.¹³⁶² The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) had not recorded any violent incidents involving these groups since the Taliban takeover up until 17 June 2022.¹³⁶³

6.4.3. Incidents targeting Hazaras and Shia Muslims

(a) Land grabbing

Forced evictions of minority groups, including Hazaras, reportedly took place after the Taliban takeover in August 2021, and were apparently facilitated or tolerated by the *de facto* authorities.¹³⁶⁴ The evictions took place in several locations in September and October 2021, affecting Hazara communities in Helmand, Balkh, Daykundi, and Uruzgan provinces.¹³⁶⁵ For instance, according to UNAMA/OHCHR, reportedly at least 400 Hazara families were evicted and displaced in Daykundi Province. However, most of these families were reportedly allowed

¹³⁵⁴ Ruttig, T., The case of Mawlawi Mehdi and Balkhab District: Are the Taleban attracting Hazaras?, AAN, 23 May 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁵ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban to Clear Its Ranks From Non-Pashtun Commanders, 31 May 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Deploys Troops to Arrest Mawlawi Mehdi, 13 June, 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁷ VOA, Taliban's Alleged Extrajudicial Killings in Afghan District Worry UN, Rights Groups, 27 June, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁸ UNAMA News [Twitter], posted on: 29 June 2022, [url](#); Amnesty International South Asia [Twitter], posted on: 27 June 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁹ UN Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett [Twitter], posted on: 27 June 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁰ ANI, Afghan Human rights Commission confirms reports of civilian shooting in Balkhab, 30 June 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁶¹ EUAA, Afghanistan Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 41

¹³⁶² Marty, F., J., Vive la Résistance in Afghanistan?, Swiss Institute for Global Affairs, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁶³ ACLED, Data Export Tool, Incident data covering the period 16 August 2021–17 June 2022, extracted on 22 June 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 39, 64; HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Evict Minority Shia, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁵ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Evict Minority Shia, 22 October 2021, [url](#)



to return to their properties by February 2022.¹³⁶⁶ According to analyst Ali Yawar Adili there were people who left Daykundi for Kabul or other big cities who had not returned, as of May 2022, only those who were displaced within Daykundi had returned.¹³⁶⁷ According to a representative of an anonymous organisation interviewed for this report there were ‘some media reports’ about destruction of houses of those who had been evicted, but the organisation had not been able to confirm such reports.¹³⁶⁸ Moreover, the legal dispute concerning the evictions between the local Hazaras and Pashtuns in Daykundi was still ongoing in May 2022.¹³⁶⁹ For more detailed description of land grabbing in 2021, see [EASO COI report: Afghanistan – Country Focus \(January 2022\)](#).

Sources noted that there has been a long history of land and property conflicts in Afghanistan, and particularly provinces affected by the forced evictions in 2021.¹³⁷⁰ For instance, according to an anonymous organisation interviewed for the report, the above mentioned dispute in Daykundi even dated back 40 years in time.¹³⁷¹ Gossman described that it is hard to single out that the land grabbing particularly targets Hazaras without an understanding of the larger land grabbing crisis in Afghanistan since at least 2001, and even predating that.¹³⁷² Ali Yawar Adili noted that the opposite party from the Hazaras in the land conflicts have mainly been Taliban supporters who have had connections that they can use anytime to evict Hazaras.¹³⁷³ Dr. Andrea Chiovenda and Dr. Melissa Kerr Chiovenda also stated that people in support of the Taliban usually did not have a positive perception of the Hazaras. Thus, the Taliban’s strive to gain support could be at the expense of the Hazaras, for example taking sides in favour of non-Hazaras in land disputes. In the past, the Taliban usually took the side of Pashtun nomads in land disputes.¹³⁷⁴

Sources interviewed for the report said that they were not aware of other similar evictions specifically targeting Hazaras than those in 2021 happening during the reporting period [1 December 2021–30 June 2022].¹³⁷⁵ Nevertheless, in Spring 2022 there were reports on conflicts between the Hazaras and Kuchi nomads, as the Kuchis brought their livestock to pastures in the Hazara-claimed lands.¹³⁷⁶ For instance, Hasht-e Subh news agency reported on 30 April 2022 about disputes between local Hazara residents and Kuchis in the two Behsud districts of Wardak Province, after the Kuchis reportedly set their camp on Hazara-claimed lands. According to the same article similar incidents were reported in Malistan and Jaghori

¹³⁶⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 56

¹³⁶⁷ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁶⁸ Representative of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 30 May 2022

¹³⁶⁹ Representative of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 30 May 2022;

Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁷⁰ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022; Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 56

¹³⁷¹ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 30 May 2022

¹³⁷² Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹³⁷³ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁷⁴ Chiovenda, A. (Dr.) and Kerr Chiovenda, M. (Dr.), professors at Zayed University, digital interview, 9 November 2021

¹³⁷⁵ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022; Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹³⁷⁶ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022; Hasht-e Subh, Tensions Escalate Between Nomads and Villagers in Behsud District, Maidan Wardak Province, 30 April 2022, [url](#)



districts of Ghazni Province earlier in the Spring 2022.¹³⁷⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News reported on 25 June 2022 that the *de facto* authorities have stationed ‘security units’ in Wardak and Bamiyan Provinces in order to prevent conflict escalating between the Hazaras and the Kuchis.¹³⁷⁸ Sources interviewed for the report acknowledged that this dynamic between the Hazaras and the Kuchis existed long before the Taliban takeover, but after the takeover there has been a possibility that the Taliban supports the Kuchis in their demands.¹³⁷⁹

(b) Major attacks and incidents

After the Taliban takeover of Kabul on 15 August 2021, there was a month-long break from attacks targeting Hazaras in Dasht-e Barchi, a Hazara-dominated neighbourhood in west Kabul. After 18 September 2021 when an attack was committed in Dasht-e Barchi, several attacks have followed in Hazara-dominated areas of Kabul.¹³⁸⁰ According to Gossman, the violence against Shia Hazaras had already been rising for some time before the Taliban takeover, and ‘it has certainly not been quelled by the takeover.’¹³⁸¹

Analyst Ali Yawar Adili described in an article that there have been two patterns of attacks targeting Shia Hazaras after the Taliban takeover.¹³⁸² The first pattern was attacks mainly targeting civilian passenger vehicles, particularly public transport minivans favoured by ‘young, educated and professional Hazaras’ such as government employees, journalists, and NGO staff.¹³⁸³ Furthermore, Adili mentioned that ‘Hazaras have been stopped and singled out when travelling on the highways’. The second pattern was large-scale complex attacks, which have targeted Shia mosques, and hospitals and schools in Hazara dominated areas. These large-scale attacks targeting Hazaras have mainly taken place in the cities of Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Kandahar, and Kunduz.¹³⁸⁴ Representative of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan noted that the large-scale attacks took place in crowded places causing significant civilian harm and targeting minorities.¹³⁸⁵

ISKP has performed several attacks that have targeted in particular Shia minorities in urban areas.¹³⁸⁶ However, there was also a tendency that mass casualty attacks targeting places such as hospitals and schools in Hazara neighbourhoods, were not claimed by anyone. Because of that, analyst Ali Yawar Adili explained that he had three assumptions on the perpetrators of attacks against Hazaras. Adili’s primary suggestions were ISKP or some circles within the Taliban who wanted to target the community to keep them under control, see them as apostates, or make them support the Taliban. On the other hand, there was also the

¹³⁷⁷ Hasht-e Subh, Tensions Escalate Between Nomads and Villagers in Behsud District, Maidan Wardak Province, 30 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁸ Pajhwok Afghan News, Security units being stationed to prevent Kuchi-Hazara clashes, 25 June 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁹ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022; Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹³⁸⁰ Adili, A. Y., A Community Under Attack: How successive governments failed west Kabul and the Hazaras who live there, AAN, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁸¹ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹³⁸² Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁸³ Adili, A. Y., A Community Under Attack: How successive governments failed west Kabul and the Hazaras who live there, AAN, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁴ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁸⁵ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹³⁸⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 18



possibility that some anti-Taliban elements used the attacks as an opportunity to incite the Hazaras against the Taliban.¹³⁸⁷

Representative of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan stated that, while the mass casualty attacks against Hazaras were not, in their knowledge, committed by the Taliban but by ISKP, the Taliban's ability to prevent these attacks happening could be questioned. The source did not believe that the Taliban would have an interest in facilitating or silently approving these attacks. Instead, the representative believed that the Taliban was probably quite distressed about the attacks, because they show that there is a certain lack of control when it comes to security.¹³⁸⁸ Gossman stated that 'one of the principal concerns of the Hazara community is violence from ISKP', while mentioning that there may be some violence also conducted by the Taliban.¹³⁸⁹ Gossman further described ISKP as 'very decentralised', and many of its cells as urban based and operating without knowing what other cells were doing. Therefore, it was 'not surprising' that sometimes unclaimed attacks followed the same pattern as attacks claimed by ISKP.¹³⁹⁰

Several attacks targeting Shia Hazaras took place during the reporting period.¹³⁹¹ On 10 December 2021, a series of explosions targeting passenger vehicles was reported in west Kabul. The first attack hit a minivan in front of a building for large religious and political gatherings in Dasht-e Barchi, called Shahid Mazari Musalla. The second explosion occurred later the same day in Mazari Square in Pul-e Sokhta area and a third one in Dehburi area. AAN reported that a representative of the *de facto* authorities told reporters that two civilians had been killed and three others wounded in the attack targeting a minivan in Dasht-e Barchi, and one other civilian was wounded in one of the explosions in the area. ISKP claimed responsibility for the attacks.¹³⁹² On 25 December 2021, an assailant attacked the Imam Ali Shia mosque in Kandahar City wounding the mullah of the mosque and three others with a knife. AAN stated that the *de facto* authorities reportedly arrested the assailant and investigations were underway.¹³⁹³ Another attack targeting a minivan was reported in the city of Herat on 22 January 2022, in which at least six or seven people were killed and nine or ten others wounded.¹³⁹⁴ It took place in Herat's Haji Abbas, which is described as a Shia Hazara neighbourhood.¹³⁹⁵ According to Reuters, the attack was later claimed by ISKP.¹³⁹⁶

¹³⁸⁷ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁸⁸ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹³⁸⁹ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹³⁹⁰ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹³⁹¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 18; Diplomat (The), It Doesn't Matter If We Get Killed, 27 May 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁹² Adili, A. Y., A Community Under Attack: How successive governments failed west Kabul and the Hazaras who live there, AAN, 17 January 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Two Killed, Four Wounded After Blasts Hit Kabul Shi'ite Neighborhood, 10 December 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁹³ Adili, A. Y., A Community Under Attack: How successive governments failed west Kabul and the Hazaras who live there, AAN, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁴ Al Jazeera, Several killed in bus blast in western Afghanistan, 22 January 2022, [url](#); Reuters, Islamic State claims responsibility for attack in Herat, Afghanistan, 23 January 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, ISKP Claims Responsibility for a Deadly Attack in Herat, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁵ Hasht-e Subh, ISKP Claims Responsibility for a Deadly Attack in Herat, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁶ Reuters, Islamic State claims responsibility for attack in Herat, Afghanistan, 23 January 2022, [url](#)



Analyst Ali Yawar Adili explained that ‘a second wave’ of attacks after the Taliban takeover started in April 2022.¹³⁹⁷ On 2 April 2022, an explosion killed 5 and injured 23 others in the Hazara-dominated Jibraiel Township in Injil District, Herat Province. ISKP claimed responsibility for the explosion.¹³⁹⁸ On 19 April 2022, two bomb blasts at Abdul Rahim Shahid high school in Kabul’s Dasht-e Barchi neighbourhood killed at least six people and wounded more than 20 others.¹³⁹⁹ However, the reliability of these casualty figures has been questioned; Mohammad Mohaqiq, the leader of the Hezb-e Wahdat, said to Hasht-e Subh news agency that up to 126 were killed and 73 others were wounded in the blasts.¹⁴⁰⁰ There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, although many articles commented that ISKP has previously claimed similar attacks in Dasht-e Barchi.¹⁴⁰¹ On 21 April 2022, at least 31 people were killed and 87 wounded in an explosion carried out using ‘a remotely detonated booby-trapped bag’ targeting a Shia Mosque in Mazar-e Sharif during prayers. ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁴⁰² The mosque targeted reportedly belonged to the Hazara community.¹⁴⁰³ On 26 April 2022, five Hazara coal mine workers were robbed and killed by unidentified gunmen in Samangan Province while they were travelling to Balkh Province.¹⁴⁰⁴ According to Adili, another mine worker was killed later the same day, while the five others were shot on the site.¹⁴⁰⁵ On 28 April 2022, a series of two IEDs targeted civilian vehicles in Mazar-e Sharif. The estimates of casualties ranged from nine to 11 killed and 13 to 18 injured.¹⁴⁰⁶ The attack was claimed later by ISKP. According to a *de facto* police representative quoted by Khaama Press, the attacks were ‘apparently’ targeting Shias.¹⁴⁰⁷ According to Hasht-e Subh news agency, the explosions took place in Hazara neighbourhoods, the first near the Imam Ali Shrine and the second in the Sajjadia area.¹⁴⁰⁸ On 30 April 2022 an attack targeting a minivan in Kabul killed three and wounded two others. The attack occurred in Police District 3 of Kabul,¹⁴⁰⁹ which is a Shia and Hazara-majority area.¹⁴¹⁰ According to RFE/RL, the attack was claimed by ISKP.¹⁴¹¹ On 25 May 2022 another series of attacks targeting three minibuses in Mazar-e Sharif was claimed by ISKP. The blasts killed at

¹³⁹⁷ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹³⁹⁸ Hasht-e Subh, The Death Toll of Explosion in Jibraiel Township, Anjil District, Herat Rises to Five, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁹ New York Times (The), Blasts at Schools in Shiite Area of Kabul Kill at Least 6, 19 April 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Kabul blasts kill six and wound 20 at boys' school, 19 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁰ Hasht-e Subh, Suicide Attacks on Hazara Community Escalate Alarming As Taliban Rejects ISKP Threat in Afghanistan, 29 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰¹ New York Times (The), Blasts at Schools in Shiite Area of Kabul Kill at Least 6, 19 April 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Kabul blasts kill six and wound 20 at boys' school, 19 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰² BBC News, Afghanistan: Blood and fear everywhere after deadly IS blast, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰³ Hasht-e Subh, Mohaqiq Considers Taliban to Be Accountable for Recent Brutal Attacks on Hazara Community, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁴ Khaama Press, Five Coal Miners gunned Down in Samangan province, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁵ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁴⁰⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Suicide Attacks on Hazara Community Escalate Alarming As Taliban Rejects ISKP Threat in Afghanistan, 29 April 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, ISIS Claims Responsibility for Twin Blasts in Mazar-e-Sharif, 29 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁷ Khaama Press, ISIS Claims Responsibility for Twin Blasts in Mazar-e-Sharif, 29 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁸ Hasht-e Subh, Suicide Attacks on Hazara Community Escalate Alarming As Taliban Rejects ISKP Threat in Afghanistan, 29 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁹ Hasht-e Subh, Blast Hits a Bus in Western Kabul, Killing 3 Women and Injuring 2 Others, 1 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁰ Foschini, F., Kabul Unpacked: A geographical guide to a metropolis in the making, AAN, 19 March 2019, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁴¹¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Islamic State Claims Responsibility For Afghanistan Bus Bombing, 1 May 2022, [url](#)

least 10 and wounded 15 others.¹⁴¹² According to a Taliban spokesman interviewed by the AP, all the victims were Shias.¹⁴¹³

Various sources also stated that the attacks against Shia Hazaras were challenging the Taliban's narrative to provide security to all Afghans, why they might have wanted to tone down or even conceal the nature of these attacks.¹⁴¹⁴ Gossman stated that ISKP posed a very significant threat to the Taliban's ability to uphold control, and referred to the Taliban constantly saying that they had defeated ISKP, 'but the more they say it, the more obvious it is they have not.'¹⁴¹⁵ The Taliban have also restricted journalists' access to sites of attacks and instructed hospitals not to reveal the numbers of casualties.¹⁴¹⁶ Ali Yawar Adili also stated that the Hazara community has called for investigations of these attacks, but there has been no one to investigate them.¹⁴¹⁷

6.4.4. Other Shia groups

(a) Background

There are two main Shia communities in Afghanistan: the mainstream Shia branch *Ithna Ashariya* ('the Twelvers')¹⁴¹⁸ and the smaller Ismaili branch ('the Seveners')^{1419, 1420} As is the case with the Twelvers,¹⁴²¹ the Ismailis are also primarily Hazara. Most of the Ismailis live in the northeast of the country, in the provinces of Baghlan and Badakhshan.¹⁴²² According to Analyst Ali Yawar Adili, there are also Ismailis living in other provinces, such as Kabul, Bamyan, Kunduz, Takhar and Parwan.¹⁴²³

There are some Shia Tajiks and Pashtuns in the country,¹⁴²⁴ even though these two ethnic groups are predominantly Sunni.¹⁴²⁵ Renowned American anthropologist Louis Dupree has

¹⁴¹² France 24, Four bombs kill at least 12 in Afghanistan, 25 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹³ AP, Blast in Kabul mosque, IS bombs in north Afghanistan kill 14, 25 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁴ Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022; Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022; Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹⁴¹⁵ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹⁴¹⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 18

¹⁴¹⁷ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁴¹⁸ The Twelvers recognise twelve imams after the Prophet. The Twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi, is believed to be in a state of hiding and will return to the world, close to the day of Judgement.: Larsson, G. and Thurfjell, D., Shia-muslim i Sverige – en kortfattad översikt, 2013, [url](#), p. 14

¹⁴¹⁹ The Ismailis are sometimes called Seveners and they originally split from the main stream Twelvers because of a disagreement over the seventh Imam. The Ismailis of Afghanistan belong to the Nizari branch of Ismailism and recognize the living prince Karim al-Husayni as their Agha Khan (spiritual leader) and 49th Imam. Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Lifos, Afghanistans ismailiter – en shiaminoritet, 20 June 2017, [url](#), pp. 4, 6

¹⁴²⁰ GlobalSecurity.org, Afghanistan – Religion – Shia, 17 August 2012, [url](#); SAK, Förstå Afghanistan, 2018, p. 179

¹⁴²¹ EASO, Afghanistan: Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict, December 2017, [url](#), p. 53

¹⁴²² SCA, Religion in Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#); Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁴²³ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁴²⁴ Ibrahim, N., The Hazaras and the Afghan State, 2017, pp. 3–4; SCA, Religion in Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴²⁵ Ibrahim, N., The Hazaras and the Afghan State, 2017, pp. 3–4

furthermore pointed out the Qizilbash, the Farsiwan and some of the Pamiris as groups that adhere to Shia Islam in Afghanistan.¹⁴²⁶

The Qizilbash are Dari-speakers of Turkish descent, primarily populating urban centres.¹⁴²⁷ In Kabul, they are concentrated in the old city. Chindawal, in Police District 1, is traditionally a Qizilbash area. Many Qizilbash still live there,¹⁴²⁸ as well as in Murad Khani in Police District 2.¹⁴²⁹

The Farsiwan (meaning ‘Farsi speakers’) have principally lived near the border to Iran and in southern and western Afghan towns, according to Dupree. In literature, they have, often mistakenly, been referred to as Tajiks.¹⁴³⁰ Dr. Fabrizio Foschini, analyst for the AAN, noted in August 2018 that the Farsiwan nowadays mostly fall within the category of ‘Tajik’, apart from the ones that adhere to Shia Islam.¹⁴³¹ According to Dr. Foschini, the term ‘Farsiwan’, more than being an ethnonym used by members of a group to define themselves, is a category into which Pashtun-speakers (and following them, foreign observers) have lumped together different social groups and separate communities living in various parts of the country. There are for instance Dari/Farsi-speaking communities in the heartland of the Pashtun people, such as Paktia, Paktika, and Kandahar that are labelled ‘Farsiwan’ by their Pashtun neighbours. In Herat, on the other hand, there has been a long time Shia-Sunni divide between the Dari/Farsi-speakers, and the Herati Sunnis tend to identify as Tajiks while the Herati Shia do not necessarily identify as Farsiwan even though others may label them that.¹⁴³²

The Pamiris have also been referred to as ‘mountain Tajiks’, according to Dupree in his book *Afghanistan* from 1997.¹⁴³³ They primarily live in the mountainous areas of Badakhshan province.¹⁴³⁴ Some of them are Ismaili Shia while others are Sunni, according to Dupree.¹⁴³⁵ Analyst Ali Yawar Adili stated in May 2022 that there was a contemporary struggle among some Tajik Ismailis in Badakhshan as they wanted to reintroduce themselves as ‘Pamiris’. The Pamiris were not mentioned as an ethnic group in the 2004 constitution, but the Pamiri language was, and this has probably created an incentive for their current struggle according to Adili.¹⁴³⁶

In addition to the Hazara and Tajik Ismailis there is also a small number of Pashtun Ismailis in some parts of the country, according to Adili.¹⁴³⁷ More information about these Pashtun Ismailis could not be found within the scope of this report.

¹⁴²⁶ Dupree, L., *Afghanistan*, 1997, pp. 59–61

¹⁴²⁷ Barfield, T., *Afghanistan. A Cultural and Political History*, 2012, p. 29; Dupree, L., *Afghanistan*, 1997, p. 59

¹⁴²⁸ Representative of an international NGO (a), digital interview, 31 May 2022; Foschini, F., *Kabul Unpacked: A geographical guide to a metropolis in the making*, AAN, 19 March 2019, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁴²⁹ Foschini, F., *Kabul Unpacked: A geographical guide to a metropolis in the making*, AAN, 19 March 2019, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁴³⁰ Dupree, L., *Afghanistan*, 1997, p. 59

¹⁴³¹ Foschini, F., *Hitting Gardez: A vicious attack on Paktia’s Shias*, AAN, 18 August 2018, [url](#)

¹⁴³² Foschini F., AAN analyst, email, 9 June 2022.

¹⁴³³ Dupree, L., *Afghanistan*, 1997, p. 61

¹⁴³⁴ Dupree, L., *Afghanistan*, 1997, p. 61; Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁴³⁵ Dupree, L., *Afghanistan*, 1997, p. 61

¹⁴³⁶ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁴³⁷ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022



Another group in Afghanistan that may¹⁴³⁸ adhere to Shia Islam is the Sadat (singular Sayyed). According to Landinfo, the Sadat do not generally seem to be categorised as a specific ethnic group but rather as part of the majority people in the areas where they live.¹⁴³⁹ However, some years ago, Sadat tribal elders called on then President Ashraf Ghani to make it possible for all ethnic groups in the country, including Sadat, to have their ethnicity stated in the National identity card.¹⁴⁴⁰ The Sadat claim descent from the family of the Prophet,¹⁴⁴¹ and their claimed ancestry usually gives them a certain religious importance. They have often provided religious leadership for other Shias.¹⁴⁴²

6.4.5. Targeting of other Shia groups

As a majority of the Shia Muslims in Afghanistan belong to the Hazara ethnic group, the Hazaras have been the main victims of sectarian targeting against Shias.¹⁴⁴³ The targeting has not been limited to Hazaras, however. Other Shia groups have also become victims of targeted attacks, both before and after the Taliban takeover.¹⁴⁴⁴ For instance, some of the sectarian attacks against Shia Muslims have been carried out in areas that are not Hazara dominated.¹⁴⁴⁵ According to Adili, the victims of the publicised attack on a Shia mosque in Kandahar in October 2021 were not primarily Hazaras.¹⁴⁴⁶ The targeted mosque in Kandahar was reported to be a place frequented by Qizilbash as well as Shias of other ethnicities.¹⁴⁴⁷ An example of an attack targeting non-Hazara Shiites that took place before the Taliban takeover is the attack against a Shia Mosque in Gardez, Paktia in 2018. ISKP claimed the attack and the target was a small community of Shia Sadat, living in the outskirts of Gardez.¹⁴⁴⁸ UNAMA, however, did not specify the group affiliation in its reporting about civilian casualties from this attack,¹⁴⁴⁹ indicating that specific Shia group affiliation of victims has not always been specified in reports on sectarian attacks.¹⁴⁵⁰

Different sources assessed ISKP to be the main perpetrator behind the sectarian violence against Shias in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁵¹ ISKP claimed many of these attacks,¹⁴⁵² and their intention to

¹⁴³⁸ According to Afghan writer Hafizullah Emadi, as referred to by Landinfo in 2015, Sadat can be Shia as well as Sunni.: Landinfo, Afghanistan: Sadat/sayyed, 4 September 2015, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁴³⁹ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Sadat/sayyed, 4 September 2015, [url](#), pp. 1-2

¹⁴⁴⁰ TOLONews, Government Has No Legal Authority to Scrap Our Identity: Sadat Elders, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁴¹ Foschini, F., Hitting Gardez: A vicious attack on Paktia's Shias, AAN, 18 August 2018, [url](#); NPS, Ethnic Identity and Genealogies, Website updated March 2017, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴² Foschini, F., Hitting Gardez: A vicious attack on Paktia's Shias, AAN, 18 August 2018, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴³ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹⁴⁴⁴ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁴⁴⁵ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹⁴⁴⁶ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁴⁴⁷ Open Democracy, Kunduz to Kandahar: two explosions, one wounded community, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁸ Foschini, F., Hitting Gardez: A vicious attack on Paktia's Shias, AAN, 18 August 2018, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁹ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 2018, 23 February 2019, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁴⁵⁰ Other examples include the following reports: UNAMA, Afghanistan – Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Update: 1 January to 30 June 2021, July 2021, [url](#), p. 5; USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 50; Al Jazeera, At least 16 killed as explosions rock Afghan cities, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵¹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkerhetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), p. 43; Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022; Representative of an international NGO (a), digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹⁴⁵² Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022; HRW, Afghanistan: Surge in Islamic State Attacks on Shia, 25 October 2021, [url](#)



target Shias from ‘Baghdad to Khorasan’ has been stated in Telegram channels run by the Islamic State.¹⁴⁵³ ISKP consider Shia Muslims to be apostates and, hence, a legitimate target for killing.¹⁴⁵⁴

6.5. Tajiks

6.5.1. Background

For a large part of history, the term Tajik has been ambiguous in the context of Afghanistan.¹⁴⁵⁵ According to Professor Barnett Rubin, an expert on Afghanistan, the term Tajik has been vaguely defined historically. During the soviet occupation, the term Tajik came to refer to ‘all settled, Persian [Dari]-speaking, nontribal populations’. There are, however, Pashto-speaking Tajiks in Pashtun areas, and for example Persian-speaking Pashtuns in Tajik areas.¹⁴⁵⁶ The Tajik identity was generally strengthened as the *mujahidin* groups that arose in opposition to the Soviets took on an ethnic character.¹⁴⁵⁷ According to scholar Ryan Brasher, the term ‘Tajik’ and other related terms have often been used to describe ‘the other’ in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁵⁸ Historically, the Tajiks have distinguished themselves as a sedentary population, rather than being nomadic.¹⁴⁵⁹ Unlike Pashtuns and many other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, the Tajik community lacks a tribal structure.¹⁴⁶⁰ A majority of the Tajiks are Sunni Muslims, but there are also those adhering to the Shia branch of Islam (see section [6.4.4. Other Shia groups](#)).¹⁴⁶¹ Tajiks live in various areas of the country, but are mainly concentrated in northern, north-eastern and western Afghanistan, and in and around Kabul.¹⁴⁶² Several provinces are believed to have a majority Tajik population: Badakhshan, Badghis, Baghlan, Kapisa, Panjsher, Parwan and Samangan.¹⁴⁶³ Furthermore, there are at least sizeable Tajik populations in several other areas, such as Kabul (both the province and the city), Balkh, Ghor, Takhar, and Herat

¹⁴⁵³ Adili, A. Y., A Community Under Attack: How successive governments failed west Kabul and the Hazaras who live there, AAN, 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Wages Deadly Crackdown On Afghans Salafists As War With IS-K Intensifies, 22 October 2021, [url](#); CSIS, Background: Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), 9 November 2018, [url](#), p. 3; France 24, What is the Islamic State threat in Afghanistan?, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵⁵ Brasher, R., Ethnic Brother or Artificial Namesake? The Construction of Tajik Identity in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, in Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 2011, Vol. 55, Borders and Belonging (2011), [url](#), p. 104

¹⁴⁵⁶ Rubin, B. R., The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, 2002, p. 30; Rzehak, L., The Persian Dialect of the Kandahari-Pashtuns in Afghanistan, 2015, [url](#), p. 160

¹⁴⁵⁷ Brasher, R., Ethnic Brother or Artificial Namesake? The Construction of Tajik Identity in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, in Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 2011, Vol. 55, Borders and Belonging (2011), [url](#), pp. 112–113

¹⁴⁵⁸ Brasher, R., Ethnic Brother or Artificial Namesake? The Construction of Tajik Identity in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, in Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 2011, Vol. 55, Borders and Belonging (2011), [url](#), pp. 111–112

¹⁴⁵⁹ Britannica, Tajik people, n.d., [url](#); NPS, Panjsher Provincial Overview, March 2017, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁰ MRG, Tajiks, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶¹ MRG, Tajiks, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶² MRG, Tajiks, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶³ UNDP, Provincial Profile – Badakhshan, October 2006, p. 1, [url](#); NPS, Badghis Provincial Overview, n.d., [url](#); NPS, Baghlan Provincial Overview, March 2017, [url](#); Vadsaria, N., Tajik Hope: Reflections on Engaging Women in Kapisa Province, 25 March 2013, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: The undefeated Panjshir Valley - an hour from Kabul, 26 August 2021, [url](#); Pattanaik, S. S., Ballot Box Distress and Future of Afghanistan, 30 July 2014, [url](#); NPS, Samangan Provincial Review, March 2017, [url](#)

(especially Herat City).¹⁴⁶⁴ Tajiks usually identify with their place of residence or birth rather than a tribe.¹⁴⁶⁵ Hence, terms such as Panjshiri, Badakhshi, Kabuli and Herati are used to denote Tajiks from Panjsher, Badakhshan, Kabul and Herat, respectively.¹⁴⁶⁶

During the civil war in the early 1990's, the fighting took on an ethnic character due to the ethnic profile of the various mujahedin factions, resulting in 'ethnic hatreds'.¹⁴⁶⁷ The main political and armed organisation associated with the Tajik population at that time was Jamiat-e Islami and the affiliated organization Shura-e Nazar, led by Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud.¹⁴⁶⁸ When various *mujahidin* factions resurrected the so-called Northern Alliance in opposition to the Taliban in 1996, Jamiat-e Islami was among the founding members of the alliance.¹⁴⁶⁹ According to various sources, Tajiks/Jamiat-e Islami dominated the alliance.¹⁴⁷⁰ Panjsher, the home of Massoud, was a centre for anti-Taliban resistance during the previous Taliban regime (1996-2001).¹⁴⁷¹ After the fall of the previous Taliban regime (2001), leaders from the Northern Alliance came to dominate the new interim administration.¹⁴⁷² Panjshiri Tajiks gained significant influence over the security sector. In the interim administration, the prominent Panjshiri Northern Alliance leader Yunous Qanouni became Interior minister. Panjshiris headed 12 out of 15 police districts in Kabul, as well as all the directorates of the national intelligence agency. A Panjshiri was appointed head of the army.¹⁴⁷³ Persons associated with Jamiat-e Islami and the Northern Alliance continued to hold important positions in the Afghan government up until the fall of the Islamic republic in 2021. Examples include former Vice President Amrullah Saleh and former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.¹⁴⁷⁴

In conjunction with the Taliban takeover, a resistance formed.¹⁴⁷⁵ UNAMA reported in June 2022, that 'the presence of armed groups opposed to the Taliban expanded, although their membership and capabilities are difficult to assess'. Furthermore, UNAMA pointed to the NRF as one of the two most active groups and identified Panjsher and Baghlan as the places with the highest level of activity in the first half of 2022.¹⁴⁷⁶ Ahmad Massoud, the son of Northern Alliance Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, has headed the NRF since its formation, and individuals with a background in the Northern Alliance has joined, such as former Vice

¹⁴⁶⁴ Ali, O., You Must Have a Gun to Stay Alive: Ghor, a province with three governments, AAN, 4 August 2013, [url](#); Austria, Staatendokumentation, Afghanistan – Socio-Economic Survey 2021, 12 January 2022, pp. 11–12, 22, [url](#); Ali, O., The Non-Pashtun Taleban of the North (3): The Takhar case study, AAN, 29 July 2017, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁵ Rubin, B.R., The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, 2002, p.30

¹⁴⁶⁶ Hanley, R., Ethnic Violence, Impact on Afghanistan, 8 April 2011, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶⁷ Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan: What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, p. 86

¹⁴⁶⁸ MRG, Tajiks, n.d., [url](#); Rubin, B.R., The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, 2002, pp. 234-235

¹⁴⁶⁹ United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigrations Services, Afghanistan: Background on the Anti-Taliban group, the Northern Alliance, 14 December 1999, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁰ MRG, Tajiks, n.d., [url](#); O'Hanlon, M.E. [Op-ed], A preliminary verdict on Afghanistan Strategy, 5 October, 2021, [url](#); Asia Society, Barnett Rubin: In Afghanistan, A Vicious Cycle, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁷¹ BBC News, Afghan resistance attack Taliban, sparking reprisals in Panjshir, 16 May, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷² Asia Society, Barnett Rubin: In Afghanistan, A Vicious Cycle, n.d., [url](#); Middle East Institute (the), What Went Wrong after Bonn, December 2009, [url](#); Guardian (The), The Afghan interim government: who's who, 6 December 2001, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷³ SIGAR, Police in Conflict: Lessons from the U.S Experience in Afghanistan, June 2022, p. 37, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁴ India Today, From spy to political leader: Amrullah Saleh, the braveheart of Panjshir, 19 August 2021, [url](#); BBC News, Who is Abdullah Abdullah? Afghanistan's three-times presidential contender, 27 September 2019, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁵ Guardian (The), Afghanistan resistance fighters clash with Taliban in Panjshir valley, 3 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 17

President Saleh.¹⁴⁷⁷ Both Massoud and Saleh have since fled abroad.¹⁴⁷⁸ Many of the NRF's fighters have come from the remnants of the former security forces¹⁴⁷⁹ and were dominated by Tajiks as of April 2022.¹⁴⁸⁰ NRF has claimed to have their base in Panjsher Province, predominantly inhabited by Tajiks.¹⁴⁸¹

6.5.2. General situation under Taliban rule

No comprehensive information about the ethnic composition of the Taliban in predominantly Tajik provinces could be found within the scope of this report. The *de facto* governor of Baghlan was reportedly Tajik, as of March 2022.¹⁴⁸² The *de facto* governors of Badghis and Kapisa are reportedly Pashtuns.¹⁴⁸³ Initially, the Taliban appointed a local Panjshiri to the governorship of Panjsher, but he was replaced in June 2022 by a Pashtun from Helmand.¹⁴⁸⁴ Information on the ethnicity of other Taliban appointed governors of Tajik majority provinces could not be found. RFE/RL reported in January 2022 that tensions were building up between mainly Pashtun fighters and Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik communities in northern Afghanistan.¹⁴⁸⁵ The UN Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988¹⁴⁸⁶ reported in May 2022 that southern Pashtuns had replaced several key Tajik and Uzbek Taliban commanders in the north.¹⁴⁸⁷

In May 2022, Human Rights Watch received a growing number of reports of reprisal killings and attacks on civilians in areas associated with resistance groups (such as the NRF). The killings and attacks on civilians have reportedly been a Taliban response on NRF attacks. In May, Human Rights Watch had not been able to verify all the reports, but subsequently was able to confirm a number of detentions of civilians apparently accused of supporting the NRF or other resistance groups.¹⁴⁸⁸ In June 2022, Human Rights Watch reported on their website that Taliban forces had engaged in the beating and arbitrary arrests of civilians in Panjsher who were accused of supporting the NRF. Human Rights Watch concluded that this amounted to collective punishment.¹⁴⁸⁹ Citing local sources, BBC reported in May 2022 that civilians in

¹⁴⁷⁷ BBC News, Panjshir – the valley trying to hold off the Taliban, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁸ France 24, Afghan resistance has sanctuary in Tajikistan, but fighting Taliban a non-viable prospect, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷⁹ VOA, Anti-Taliban Group Registers with US to Try to Build Afghan Resistance, 1 November 2021, [url](#); BBC News, Afghan resistance attack Taliban, sparking reprisals in Panjshir, 16 May 2022, [url](#); SIGAR Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p. 70

¹⁴⁸⁰ New York Times (The), Taliban Search Operation Echoes Resented U.S. Tactics, 2 March 2022, [url](#); SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, p. 70, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸¹ VOA, Anti-Taliban Group Registers with US to Try to Build Afghan Resistance, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸² Afghan Bios, Qari Bakhtiar Muaz, 21 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸³ Afghan Bios, Maulvi Abdul Sattar Sabir, 10 February 2022, [url](#); Afghan Bios, Qari Ehsanullah Baryal, 30 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁴ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Appoints New Pashtun Governor for Panjshir Province, 8 June 2022, [url](#); EASO, Afghanistan – Country Focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁴⁸⁵ RFE/RL, Taliban's Arrest Of Ethnic Uzbek Commander Sparks Clashes In Northern Afghanistan, 29 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁶ Resolution 1988 (2011) established a committee of the UN Security Council to oversee the sanctions regime targeting the Taliban: UN Security Council, Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁸⁷ UN Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 26 May 2022, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁴⁸⁸ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹⁴⁸⁹ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Torture Civilians in Panjshir: Collective Punishment Over Armed Group's Actions Is Unlawful, 10 June 2022, [url](#)



Panjsher had been killed and arrested. Reportedly, fighting between the NRF and the Taliban had erupted over a religious dispute. The Taliban had attempted to arrest a local cleric who had disagreed with the Taliban over when Eid was to be celebrated. NRF fighters then ambushed Taliban fighters and the Taliban sent reinforcements. The victims appeared to have been killed in the Taliban's search for NRF fighters. Furthermore, BBC reported similar incidents taking place in adjacent Tajik-dominated areas in Baghlan and Takhar. The Taliban denied the accusations.¹⁴⁹⁰

UNAMA also recorded human rights violations of individuals suspected or accused of NRF affiliation. In the reporting period 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, UNAMA recorded 18 extrajudicial killings, 54 instances of torture and ill-treatment, 113 arbitrary arrests and detentions, and 23 incommunicado detentions. The majority of these cases took place in Baghlan and Panjsher provinces, 'where NRF are known to be most active' according to UNAMA. The same source recorded arbitrary arrests of large groups of civilians in these areas related to accusations of supporting NRF, which were carried out by the *de facto* authorities. In the cases outlined as examples the Taliban arrested large groups of civilian men and some boys, some were released following mediation by community elders while others were kept in detention.¹⁴⁹¹ Furthermore, UNAMA noted an increase in reported extrajudicial killings individuals accused of affiliation with the NRF in the first half of 2022.¹⁴⁹² Moreover, UNAMA reported that the Taliban had redeployed forces from the south to Panjsher, Baghlan and Takhar in the context of active engagements between the Taliban and resistance forces in those provinces.¹⁴⁹³

In June 2022, there were news reports about the forced evictions of residents in the districts of Pol-e Hesar, Deh Salah and Andarab, in Baghlan province. Reportedly, the seized homes were turned into military installations in many cases.¹⁴⁹⁴

According to AAN analyst Martine van Bijlert, there were uncorroborated reports early on after the Taliban takeover of young Panjshiri men being rounded up in Tajik dominated areas of Kabul.¹⁴⁹⁵ In February and March 2022, the Taliban conducted house-to-house searches in Kabul and other provinces.¹⁴⁹⁶ The stated purpose was to arrest criminals and to confiscate weapons.¹⁴⁹⁷ According to a report by the New York Times, the Taliban were on the outlook for persons connected to the armed resistance. Reportedly, the search operation was initially focused on neighbourhoods in the North of Kabul city, mainly inhabited by ethnic Tajiks and where the flag of the so-called Northern Alliance was a common occurrence in the past.

¹⁴⁹⁰ BBC News, Afghan resistance attack Taliban, sparking reprisals in Panjshir, 16 May, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹¹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁴⁹² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 33

¹⁴⁹³ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 17

¹⁴⁹⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Accused Of Forced Evictions As Fighting Intensifies In Northern Afghanistan, 7 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹⁵ van Bijlert, M., The Focus of the Taliban's New Government: Internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹⁶ New York Times (The), Taliban Search Operation Echoes Resented U.S. Tactics, 2 March 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Taliban launches sweeping raids across Kabul, 27 February 2022, [url](#); VICE News, Taliban Fighters Are Conducting Door-to-Door House Searches, 3 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹⁷ Washington Post (The), Taliban launches sweeping raids across Kabul, 27 February 2022, [url](#); VICE News, Taliban Fighters Are Conducting Door-to-Door House Searches, 3 March 2022, [url](#)



According to the same news report, the Taliban forces only conducted cursory searches in some homes, while in other homes the search was performed more thoroughly and more brutally. Reportedly, the more brutal searches were performed in ‘neighborhoods belonging to ethnic minorities’.¹⁴⁹⁸ A representative of an international NGO in Kabul, whose own house was searched and who has intimate knowledge of the Khair Khana neighbourhood [inhabited mainly by Tajiks], did not see any evidence of ethnic targeting during the house searches. All houses in the source’s area were searched and in many cases it was done respectfully. The Taliban did engage in harsh treatment in some instances but, as far as the source knew, this was only the case in homes to families with known links to e.g. criminality or opposition groups.¹⁴⁹⁹ Commenting on the house searches in Kabul, Ali Yawar Adili stated that the Taliban acted more harshly and engaged in harassment in Tajik dominated areas in northern Kabul.¹⁵⁰⁰

An anonymous representative of an international organisation in Afghanistan consulted by DIS stated in March 2022 that house searches were more thorough in Tajik homes and that it was possibly linked to a perceived threat of a spring offensive by the NRF. The same source stated that there was a higher level of perceived threat towards Panjshiris in Kabul at the time.¹⁵⁰¹ Other sources consulted by DIS stated that the Taliban treated Panjshiris with more suspicion than Tajiks in general due to the connection between Panjsher and Panjshiris, and the NRF.¹⁵⁰²

There have been allegations on social media that the Taliban ‘persecuted’ ethnic Tajiks as killings and other atrocities took place in Tajik dominated areas of the country.¹⁵⁰³ This claim has also surfaced in some Afghan media outlets.¹⁵⁰⁴ According to a representative of an international NGO in Kabul, the Taliban have engaged in killings and arrests of civilians in Tajik-dominated areas in the northeast. The source specifically pointed to the provinces of Badakhshan, parts of Baghlan (Andarab) and Parwan, Panjsher and Takhar. The source believed that the purpose of the Taliban’s actions was to intimidate the local population so that they would not support the NRF.¹⁵⁰⁵ Without providing details, Freedom House stated in their annual report on political rights and civil liberties in 2021, that the Taliban have engaged in discrimination against members of ethnic minority groups, including Tajiks.¹⁵⁰⁶

¹⁴⁹⁸ New York Times (The), Taliban Search Operation Echoes Resented U.S. Tactics, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹⁹ Representative of an international NGO (a), digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹⁵⁰⁰ Adili, A. Y., programme coordinator at New America and researcher with AAN, digital interview, 16 May 2022

¹⁵⁰¹ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), pp. 71–72

¹⁵⁰² Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), pp. 84, 94

¹⁵⁰³ BBC Monitoring, Briefing: Videos showing killings by Afghan Taliban cause outcry, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁴ Hasht-e Subh, Deported Refugees in Islam Qala Border: Taliban Filters Refugees from Panjshir During the Investigation, 10 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁵ Representative of an International NGO (b), digital interview, 1 June 2022

¹⁵⁰⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 – Afghanistan, 28 February 2022, [url](#)



6.6. Other ethnic groups and religious minorities

6.6.1. Sufis

Sufism¹⁵⁰⁷ has existed in Afghanistan for almost as long as Islam itself, and many cities and towns in Afghanistan have remained among the most important centres of Sufism for more than a thousand years. Many Afghans, although not necessarily being Sufis themselves, respect learnings of Sufism and believe that the Sufi elders possess a spiritual power, or *karamat*, that enable them 'to perform acts of generosity and bestow blessings'.¹⁵⁰⁸ Sufism is not a type of jurisprudence but a form of belief that put emphasis on inner contemplation of Islam,¹⁵⁰⁹ which is in sharp contrast to the Taliban's and ISKP's views of following literal interpretation of Islam.¹⁵¹⁰ There are two major Sufi orders in Afghanistan, the Qadiri and the Naqshbandi.¹⁵¹¹ In addition to those, an article by Newlines Magazine mentioned that there are the Chishti and the Suhrawardi orders 'in Afghanistan and the wider region'.¹⁵¹² The Qadiri order has had followers in Pashtun tribes of eastern Afghanistan, while the Naqshbandi has been spread out around Afghanistan.¹⁵¹³ The Chishti order originated near Herat.¹⁵¹⁴

During the Taliban rule in the 1990s the movement adopted policies that included bans of several Sufi practices, such as playing music during their rituals, stormed their gatherings, and issued punishments to those involved in their activities. After being targeted, many Sufis then decided to go into exile or hiding.¹⁵¹⁵ Nevertheless, an article by RFE/RL mentioned that some Taliban members have been former followers of Sufism.¹⁵¹⁶ According to an article by Newlines Magazine, after the Taliban takeover the movement has had a complex relationship with the Sufi community, but the Taliban have not been openly hostile towards the community. Some Sufi scholars have also publicly supported the Taliban. However, the Sufi elders who used to move around in Kabul collecting alms and carrying out their rituals in public seem to have disappeared from the streets after the Taliban takeover.¹⁵¹⁷ Nevertheless, ISKP considers Sufis as 'apostates',¹⁵¹⁸ and according to RFE/RL, were believed to target them in order to 'incite a sectarian war and undermine Taliban rule'.¹⁵¹⁹

¹⁵⁰⁷ Sufism is a mystical form of Islam which followers are predominately Sunni Muslims, but there are also some Shia Sufis. BBC News, Afghanistan: Kunduz mosque attacked during Friday prayers, 22 April 2022, [url](#); NYT, Who Are Sufi Muslims and Why Do Some Extremists Hate Them?, 24 November 2017, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁸ Al Jazeera, The keeper of Afghanistan's poetic past, 6 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰⁹ Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan's Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fear Grips Afghanistan's Sufi Community Following Deadly Attacks, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fear Grips Afghanistan's Sufi Community Following Deadly Attacks, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹¹ Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan – What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, p. 14; South Asian Voices, The Political Role of Sufi Mystics in Afghanistan, 14 September 2021, [url](#); Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan's Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹² Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan's Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹³ Rubin, B.R., Afghanistan – What Everyone Needs to Know, 2020, p. 14

¹⁵¹⁴ Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan's Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁵ Schwmding, A., The Problem of Multiplicity: Deconstructing Sufism and the Taliban, Berkley Forum, 3 November 2022, [url](#); South Asian Voices, The Political Role of Sufi Mystics in Afghanistan, 14 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fear Grips Afghanistan's Sufi Community Following Deadly Attacks, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fear Grips Afghanistan's Sufi Community Following Deadly Attacks, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁷ Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan's Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁸ FP, Islamic State-Khorasan's Reach Extends Far Beyond Afghanistan, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵¹⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fear Grips Afghanistan's Sufi Community Following Deadly Attacks, 16 May 2022, [url](#)



At least two large-scale attacks targeting the Sufi community took place during the reporting period. On 22 April 2022, a bomb attack targeting Khanaqa-e Malawi Sikandar Sufi mosque in Kunduz killed at least 33 and wounded 43 others.¹⁵²⁰ The attack was claimed by ISKP.¹⁵²¹ On 29 April 2022, an attack targeted the Khalifa Sahib Sufi Mosque in Kabul. The number of casualties were uncertain, but news agencies believed that more than 50 people died¹⁵²² and 30 others were injured.¹⁵²³ It was unclear whether the attack was a suicide attack or a bomb explosion.¹⁵²⁴ There was no immediate claim for the attack, but news agencies commented that ISKP has committed similar attacks before.¹⁵²⁵

6.6.2. Baha’i

Information on Baha’is in Afghanistan was scarce, and the only recent sources which mentioned them are reports by the US government. According to the USDOS, reliable estimates of the amount of those belonging to the Baha’i community were not available, but they were reportedly among the ethnic and religious groups constituting less than 0.3 % of the Afghan population. In 2007 the then Supreme Court of Afghanistan ruled that the Baha’i faith is distinct from Islam and a form of blasphemy. According to the ruling, Muslims who convert to it were to be considered apostates. Baha’is have also been labelled ‘infidels’ by many Muslims in Afghanistan.¹⁵²⁶ USCIRF reported in April 2022 that Baha’is, among other religious minorities, ‘practiced their faith in hiding due to fear of reprisal and threats from the Taliban and separately from the Islamic State Khorasan Province’.¹⁵²⁷ No information on targeting of Baha’is could be found within the reporting period.

6.6.3. Sikhs and Hindus

For a background on the history of the Sikh community in Afghanistan and information on developments prior to 18 March 2022, see [the EUAA COI Query Response about the situation of Sikhs in Afghanistan](#).

There was once a substantial Sikh community in Afghanistan, but it has diminished over the last three decades.¹⁵²⁸ Several consulted sources assessed the remaining Sikh and Hindu communities to be few in number.¹⁵²⁹ Citing civil society groups, the USDOS estimated that approximately 150 Sikhs and Hindus remained in Afghanistan at the end of 2021, compared to

¹⁵²⁰ BBC News, Afghanistan: Kunduz mosque attacked during Friday prayers, 22 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵²¹ Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan’s Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵²² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Kabul Mosque Bombing Condemned; Higher Death Count Claimed, 30 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵²³ Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan’s Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Kabul Mosque Bombing Condemned; Higher Death Count Claimed, 30 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁴ Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan’s Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁵ Newlines Magazine, Afghanistan’s Sufis Are Under Attack, 1 June 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fear Grips Afghanistan’s Sufi Community Following Deadly Attacks, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁶ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵²⁷ USCIRF, Annual Report 2022 – Country Chapters: Afghanistan, April 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁵²⁸ EUAA, COI Query Response – Afghanistan – Situation of Sikhs, 23 March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁵²⁹ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022; Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022; BBC News, Afghanistan gurdwara attack: Sikhs say We don’t feel safe, 18 June 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, pp. 2, 5, [url](#); New York Times (the), Several Killed in Militant Attack on a Sikh Temple in Afghanistan, 18 June 2022, [url](#); Representative of an international NGO (a), digital interview, 31 May 2022



around 400 in the beginning of the same year.¹⁵³⁰ Out of those, fewer than 50 were reported to be Hindus. Reportedly, all of them were male and had their families in other countries.¹⁵³¹ At the time of the Taliban takeover, there were fewer than 300 Sikhs left in Afghanistan and community leaders estimated the number of Sikhs to be around 140 in June 2022.¹⁵³² Another report from BBC from the same date, in contrast cited a community leader saying that there were approximately 150 Sikhs left in Jalalabad alone, compared to an estimated 1 500 Sikhs living there at the time of a publicized attack in 2018.¹⁵³³ According to the USDOS, most members of the small Sikh and Hindu communities resided in Kabul, but there were also smaller numbers in Ghazni and other provinces.¹⁵³⁴ As of 2022, there was only one functioning *Gurdwara*¹⁵³⁵ in Kabul, called Dashmesh Pita, located in the Kart-e Parwan neighbourhood.¹⁵³⁶

In conjunction with the Taliban takeover, many Sikhs and Hindus sought resettlement outside Afghanistan¹⁵³⁷ and large parts of the remaining Sikh and Hindu communities have continued to leave Afghanistan since then.¹⁵³⁸

ISKP have conducted attacks against the Sikh and Hindu communities in Afghanistan in recent years.¹⁵³⁹ An armed attack was carried out on a Sikh *Gurdwara* in Kabul on 18 June 2022.¹⁵⁴⁰ At least two persons were killed – a Sikh worshipper and a member of the *de facto* security forces, and seven others were injured.¹⁵⁴¹ An anonymous source cited by the New York Times, however, claimed that six Sikhs were killed in the attack.¹⁵⁴² ISKP claimed the attack and furthermore stated that the attack was a response to a political debacle in India, where a politician previously had made remarks interpreted as an insult to the Prophet Mohammed. The *de facto* security forces intervened and tried to protect the *Gurdwara*.¹⁵⁴³ No further information could be found on the occurrence of similar attacks against Sikhs or Hindus in the referencing period.

After their takeover, the Taliban have promised to protect the rights of Sikhs and Hindus.¹⁵⁴⁴ There have been concerns, however, in the Sikh and Hindu communities over their physical security since the Taliban takeover.¹⁵⁴⁵ The USDOS cited Sikh community leaders as having said ‘they believed the Taliban’s violent persecution of them would be inevitable.’¹⁵⁴⁶ There

¹⁵³⁰ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁵³¹ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁵³² BBC News, Afghanistan: Deadly explosion rocks Sikh site in Kabul, 18 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵³³ BBC News, Afghanistan gurdwara attack: Sikhs say We don't feel safe, 18 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁴ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, p. 5, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁵ Gurdwara is a Sikh place of worship.

¹⁵³⁶ AFP, Afghanistan's last Sikhs in a dilemma: To stay or leave, January 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Deadly explosion rocks Sikh site in Kabul, 18 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵³⁷ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁵³⁸ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 50; EUAA, COI Query Response, Afghanistan – Situation of Sikhs, 23 March 2022, [url](#), pp. 2-3; Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022; Representative of an international NGO (a), digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹⁵³⁹ EUAA, COI Query Response – Afghanistan – Situation of Sikhs, 23 March 2022, pp. 6–7, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan gurdwara attack: Sikhs say We don't feel safe, 18 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁰ BBC News, Afghanistan gurdwara attack: Sikhs say We don't feel safe, 18 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴¹ Reuters, Islamic State claims attack on Sikh temple in Kabul that killed two, 20 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴² New York Times (The), Several Killed in Militant Attack on a Sikh Temple in Afghanistan, 18 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴³ Reuters, Islamic State claims attack on Sikh temple in Kabul that killed two, 20 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁴ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁵⁴⁵ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁵⁴⁶ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 10



were reports in the fall of 2021 that armed Taliban members had harassed Sikhs at their central temple in Kabul.¹⁵⁴⁷ Senior representatives of the Taliban met with Sikh and Hindu community leaders in December 2021. The Taliban gave security assurances and welcomed the communities to return to Afghanistan. The USDOS cited a Sikh meeting participant who stated that the commitment seemed genuine and contrasted it with the situation during the previous Taliban regime.¹⁵⁴⁸

In its annual report on religious freedom for 2021, the USDOS reported that Sikhs and Hindus faced verbal harassment from other members of society.¹⁵⁴⁹

6.6.4. Uyghurs

The presence of foreign fighters such as the Uyghurs¹⁵⁵⁰ in Badakhshan Province, bordering China, can be traced back to 2014,¹⁵⁵¹ but information about their group affiliations and numbers has been ambiguous over the years.¹⁵⁵² According to Sean R. Roberts, an associate professor of George Washington University who has published a book on Uyghurs, there was a small group of Uyghur fighters in Afghanistan also during the first Taliban rule in the late 1990s, but most of them were later expelled to China by the Taliban, while others were detained by the US forces after the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.¹⁵⁵³

In February 2022, UN sanction monitors reported of member states' assessments of hundreds of fighters of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM/TIP) present in northern Afghanistan.¹⁵⁵⁴ According to the US Congressional Research Service (CRS), ETIM/TIP is an insurgency group that seeks independency for the Muslim Uyghurs in western China.¹⁵⁵⁵ However, according to Sean R. Roberts, it is highly questionable whether ETIM actually exists as a distinct insurgency group, but the Chinese government labels them as a terrorist group as they perceive Uyghur fighters in general as a potential threat to the Chinese government. Nevertheless, Roberts recognises that there was still, as of 2020, some Uyghur fighters in Afghanistan, although there was no reliable information about their numbers and locations.¹⁵⁵⁶ In the time following the Taliban takeover, the *de facto* authorities seemed to have taken China's security concerns seriously, thus moving Uyghur militants from Badakhshan Province and areas near the Chinese border to the provinces of Baghlan and Takhar in order to monitor

¹⁵⁴⁷ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 12; Economic Times (The), Afghanistan's Sikhs to make choice between converting to Islam or leaving country: Report, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴⁸ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁵⁴⁹ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁵⁵⁰ The Uyghurs are a mostly Muslim people speaking a Turkic language and primarily inhabiting the north-west region of China. Roberts, S. R., *The War on the Uyghurs: China's Internal Campaign against a Muslim Minority*, 2020, p. 7

¹⁵⁵¹ EASO, Afghanistan: Security situation, June 2021, [url](#), p. 104

¹⁵⁵² Marty, F. J. and Callahan, T., *Tilting at Windmills: Dubious US claims of targeting Chinese Uyghur militants in Badakhshan*, AAN, 19 March 2018, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵³ Roberts, S. R., *The War on the Uyghurs: China's Internal Campaign against a Muslim Minority*, 2020, pp. 100, 109-112

¹⁵⁵⁴ UN Security Council, Twenty-ninth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 3 February 2022, [url](#), pp. 16-17

¹⁵⁵⁵ US, CRS, *Terrorist Groups in Afghanistan*, 19 April 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁵⁵⁶ Roberts, S. R., *The War on the Uyghurs: China's Internal Campaign against a Muslim Minority*, 2020, pp. 11, 90-95, 100, 241-242



their activities. According to some reports, the Taliban's effort to control these fighters is instead pushing them towards ISKP.¹⁵⁵⁷ When ISKP claimed an attack against a Shia mosque in Kunduz in October 2021, they also stated that their bomber was a Uyghur Muslim and that the onslaught was aimed at targeting Shias as well as the Taliban because of their alleged willingness to expel Uyghurs in response to Chinese demands.¹⁵⁵⁸

Apart from the presence of Uyghur foreign fighters there was also a small Uyghur community in Afghanistan, living in cities such as Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif,¹⁵⁵⁹ and in Badakhshan Province.¹⁵⁶⁰ They are thought to number about 2 000-3 000 people, and many of them were second generation immigrants whose parents fled from China decades ago.¹⁵⁶¹ These Uyghurs were Afghan citizens but their identity cards also stated that they were 'Uyghurs' or 'Chinese refugees', which reportedly caused some worries within the community that they could be easy to track if the Taliban should decide to do so.¹⁵⁶² After the Taliban takeover, these Uyghurs have expressed fears that they may be arrested by the Taliban and expelled to China.¹⁵⁶³ There have been reports of deportations of Uyghurs from Afghanistan to China over the years and one case was confirmed by the Uyghur Human Rights Project¹⁵⁶⁴ in 2014.¹⁵⁶⁵ Apart from the Taliban's removal of Uyghurs from areas near the Chinese border, information about other targeting of Uyghurs by the Taliban or deportations to China could not be found within the scope of this report.

6.6.5. Ahmadiyya

The Ahmadiyya¹⁵⁶⁶ movement is an Islamic messianic movement that emerged in British India in the late 19th century. The Ahmadiyya community consider themselves to be Muslims, but are widely seen as heretical by Sunnis and Shia alike.¹⁵⁶⁷ Only limited information could be found about the Ahmadiyya community in Afghanistan.

USCIRF reported in 2022 that estimates of the size of the Afghan Ahmadiyya community ranged from 450 to 2 500.¹⁵⁶⁸ The USDOS estimated the number to be 'in the hundreds' at the

¹⁵⁵⁷ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, China's Activities and Influence in South and Central Asia, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵⁸ Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Dozens killed in suicide bombing at Kunduz mosque, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵⁹ BBC News, Afghanistan's Uyghurs fear the Taliban, and now China too, 27 August 2021, [url](#); VOA, Uyghurs From Afghanistan Fear Deportation to China, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁰ VOA, Uyghurs From Afghanistan Fear Deportation to China, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶¹ BBC News, Afghanistan's Uyghurs fear the Taliban, and now China too, 27 August 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Afghan Uyghurs Fear Deportation as Taliban Cozy Up to China, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶² Uyghur Human Rights Project, Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky, 2021, [url](#), p. 16; New York Times (The), Afghan Uyghurs Fear Deportation as Taliban Cozy Up to China, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶³ BBC News, Afghanistan's Uyghurs fear the Taliban, and now China too, 27 August 2021, [url](#); VOA, Uyghurs From Afghanistan Fear Deportation to China, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁴ Uyghur Human Rights Project is an US-based human rights group that 'promotes the rights of the Uyghur people through research-based advocacy'. Uyghur Human Rights Project, Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky, 2021, [url](#), p. II

¹⁵⁶⁵ Uyghur Human Rights Project, Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky, 2021, [url](#), p. 26; New York Times (The), Afghan Uyghurs Fear Deportation as Taliban Cozy Up to China, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶⁶ Ahmadiyya is sometimes referred to as 'Ahmadi'.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Australia, DFAT, Thematic Report Afghanistan Political and Security Developments August 2021 to January 2022, January 2022, [url](#), p. 14; USCIRF, Factsheet: Ahmadiyya Muslims, October 2021, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁵⁶⁸ USCIRF, Annual Report 2022, [url](#), p. 13



end of 2021 and reported that around 100 Ahmadiyya Muslims had left the country since the Taliban takeover. According to the same report, the community was concentrated in Kabul.¹⁵⁶⁹

According to USCIRF, Ahmadiyya Muslims have faced a long history of persecution in Afghanistan and have neither been recognised by the Sunni nor Shia faith. Furthermore, USCIRF stated that Ahmadiyya Muslims who express their faiths openly face dire consequences, including death, if discovered by the Taliban or ISKP.¹⁵⁷⁰ Ahmadiyya Muslims could not exercise their religion openly, neither before, nor after the Taliban takeover.¹⁵⁷¹

There were instances of targeted violence against the Ahmadi community in November and December 2021.¹⁵⁷² In its report on religious freedom in Afghanistan 2021, the USDOS reported that the Taliban detained 28 members of the Ahmadiyya community in Kabul in November and December 2021, falsely accusing them of being members of ISKP. According to cited international Ahmadiyya organisations, the Taliban physically abused the detainees and forced confessions. Some of them were reported to still be detained at the end of 2021. Some of those who were released claimed that their release was conditioned. They were instructed to repent their beliefs and attend a Taliban-led *madrassa* [Islamic religious school].¹⁵⁷³

6.6.6. Salafists

Salafism¹⁵⁷⁴ in Afghanistan can be traced back to the nineteenth century although it first flourished during the anti-Soviet Jihadi era in the 1980s,¹⁵⁷⁵ when Saudi Arabia among others supported ‘salafisation’ of the Afghan *mujahidin*. Despite the efforts to teach and spread Salafism, resistance from traditional religious leaders and communities largely confined Salafi influence to a few enclaves in eastern and northern Afghanistan.¹⁵⁷⁶

There are variants of Salafism ranging from ‘quietist Salafism’, which shuns politics and focus on purity and preaching, to Jihadi-Salafism whose followers advocate for violent Jihad.¹⁵⁷⁷ According to Afghanistan expert Borhan Osman the variants may overlap and those currently representing the quietist tendency may have been jihadists in the past and vice versa.¹⁵⁷⁸

When the Taliban came to power in the 1990s, they inherited a traditional hostility towards Salafism. Consequently, Salafi teachings were banned, and the Taliban took other measures

¹⁵⁶⁹ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), pp. 5, 22

¹⁵⁷⁰ USCIRF, Annual Report 2022, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁵⁷¹ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, pp. 4, 20–22, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 52

¹⁵⁷² Representatives of an anonymous organisation with presence in Afghanistan, digital interview, 31 May 2022

¹⁵⁷³ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), pp. 1, 11

¹⁵⁷⁴ Salafism is a sub-sect of Sunni Islam originating from Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century. It preaches a return to Islam as practised by the first generations of Muslims and reject Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and other interpretations of Islam. USIP, Bourgeois Jihad. Why Young, Middle-class Afghans Join the Islamic State, June 2020, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁵⁷⁵ Hudson Institute, Making Sense of the Islamic State’s War on the Afghan Taliban, 25 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷⁶ USIP, Bourgeois Jihad. Why Young, Middle-class Afghans Join the Islamic State, June 2020, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁵⁷⁷ Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, Salafism, 5 August 2016, [url](#); USIP, Bourgeois Jihad. Why Young, Middle-class Afghans Join the Islamic State, June 2020, [url](#), p. 27

¹⁵⁷⁸ USIP, Bourgeois Jihad. Why Young, Middle-class Afghans Join the Islamic State, June 2020, [url](#), p. 27



to prevent its spread. This contributed to a strong resistance from Salafi communities in some pockets of eastern Afghanistan when the Taliban conquered their areas.¹⁵⁷⁹

When ISKP emerged in Afghanistan in early 2015, Afghan Salafis were reportedly initially positive believing that the group could strengthen Salafism in the country, at least in the eastern provinces Kunar and Nangarhar. This changed however due to the extremism and brutal violence perpetrated by ISKP in Afghanistan, and the Salafi *ulema* called on Salafis to defect from ISKP's ranks.¹⁵⁸⁰ Even though the Afghan Salafi community has been a recruitment ground for ISKP, many Salafis in the country were opposing the group. Despite this, the Taliban have generally acted harshly against Salafi communities since their takeover in August 2021.¹⁵⁸¹ With the Taliban back in power, Afghanistan's Salafis have faced 'severe challenges and insecurities' according to analyst Abdul Sayed, due to their perceived ties to ISKP. One of the most influential Afghan Salafi scholars, Shaikh Abu Obaidullah Mutawakil, was abducted by the Taliban soon after the takeover and later he was killed under unclear circumstances.¹⁵⁸²

According to some analysts, the ISKP has tried to provoke the Taliban to pursue indiscriminate security policies towards the Afghan Salafi communities to gain from this in the long run. This has allegedly already resulted in ill-conceived policies of the Taliban, including collective punishment and brutal targeting of Salafis suspected of ties to ISKP.¹⁵⁸³ In Kunar Province, the Taliban governor closed down all Salafi mosques and *madrassas*. This caused a major backlash in the local community and the Taliban leadership decided to take the governor down and reverse his order.¹⁵⁸⁴ Other sources also noted that there was ongoing targeting of Afghan Salafis even though they may have nothing to do with ISKP. Salafi communities in the east, in for example Nangarhar and Kunar, have been targeted. Although the numbers are unclear, the targeting has included both disappearances and summary executions.¹⁵⁸⁵

¹⁵⁷⁹ USIP, *Bourgeois Jihad. Why Young, Middle-class Afghans Join the Islamic State*, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 6-7

¹⁵⁸⁰ Jamestown Foundation, *The Taliban's Persistent War on Salafists in Afghanistan*, 24 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸¹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, *Afghanistan: Säkerhetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande*, 29 April 2022, [url](#), p. 48

¹⁵⁸² Jamestown Foundation, *The Taliban's Persistent War on Salafists in Afghanistan*, 24 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸³ Hudson Institute, *Making Sense of the Islamic State's War on the Afghan Taliban*, 25 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸⁴ Giustozzi, A., *The Taliban's Homemade Counterinsurgency*, RUSI, 4 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸⁵ Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022; France 24, *Fear stalks city in Islamic State's Afghan heartland*, 21 January 2022, [url](#)



7. Journalists and media workers

7.1. General situation under Taliban rule

Numerous journalists fled from Afghanistan after the takeover or went into hiding, and the closure of media outlets left thousands of journalists jobless, forcing many to find other employment.¹⁵⁸⁶ Salaries for journalists also reportedly decreased, one journalist claimed that he earned a salary corresponding to around EUR 52, in contrast to the previous salaries of journalists before the Taliban takeover ranging from EUR 132–440.¹⁵⁸⁷ According to AAN analyst Ehsan Qaane, Afghan media was still, as of March 2022, impacted by financial problems, as well as by restrictions imposed by the Taliban, and violence.¹⁵⁸⁸ Statistics from International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Afghanistan National Journalists' Union (ANJU) show that 2 735 journalists had lost their jobs as of February 2022¹⁵⁸⁹, while statistics from the Afghan Association of Free Journalists, as reported by Khaama Press, indicated that nearly 6 000 journalists had lost their jobs as of May 2022.¹⁵⁹⁰

Most female media workers lost their jobs after the Taliban takeover.¹⁵⁹¹ According to RSF, around 25 % of women journalists working at the start of August were still working as of January 2022.¹⁵⁹² Statistics from IFJ and ANJU similarly indicated that around 24.8 % of female journalists were still working as of February 2022.¹⁵⁹³ TOLONews worked against the trend of unemployment among female journalists by hiring women to fill in the gaps after staff members were evacuated in August 2021, and by February 2022 TOLONews had more female than male journalists.¹⁵⁹⁴ According to media reports, many of Afghanistan's provinces completely lacked active female reporters.¹⁵⁹⁵

After the takeover, many media outlets closed¹⁵⁹⁶ mainly due to financial issues¹⁵⁹⁷. Qaane noted that it was difficult to estimate exactly how many media outlets had closed, as figures of the outlets existing before the takeover were not fully clear.¹⁵⁹⁸ For instance, figures provided by the Afghanistan Federation of Journalists and Media (AFJM) indicated that 507 media

¹⁵⁸⁶ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media, 1 October 2021, [url](#); Columbia Journalism Review, What happened to Afghanistan's journalists after the government collapsed, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸⁷ France 24, Thousands of Afghan journalists out of a job since Taliban takeover, 25 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸⁸ Qaane, E., Regime Change, Economic Decline and No Legal Protection: What has happened to the Afghan media?, AAN, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸⁹ IFJ and ANJU, Statistics Report, February 2022, [url](#), pp. 3–4

¹⁵⁹⁰ Khaama Press, Afghan Reporter Goes Missing in Kabul Province, 28 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹¹ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Threatening Provincial Media, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹² DW, Afghanistan: How press freedom has crumbled since the Taliban takeover, 7 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹³ IFJ and ANJU, Statistics Report, February 2022, [url](#), pp. 3–4

¹⁵⁹⁴ AP, Fear runs through Afghanistan's hazardous media landscape, 17 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹⁵ DW, Afghanistan: How press freedom has crumbled since the Taliban takeover, 7 January 2022, [url](#); Qaane, E., Regime Change, Economic Decline and No Legal Protection: What has happened to the Afghan media?, AAN, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹⁶ New York Times (The), New Taliban Guidelines Stir Fear About the Future of Press Freedom, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹⁷ Ariana News, Crippling economy closing Afghan media outlets, 11 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Media Face Budget Issues, Lack of Access to Information, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹⁸ Qaane, E., Regime Change, Economic Decline and No Legal Protection: What has happened to the Afghan media?, AAN, 7 March 2022, [url](#)



outlets had closed since the takeover until June 2022, including 38 television stations, 91 radio stations, 16 online media outlets, 10 news agencies, 11 media outlets and media content providers, and 18 newspapers.¹⁵⁹⁹ In contrast to these figures, statistics by IFJ and ANJU indicated that already by February 2022, 318 outlets had stopped operating, including 51 television stations, 132 radio stations, 94 printing press outlets, and 41 online outlets.¹⁶⁰⁰ Meanwhile, data from the Afghan Association of Free Journalists, as reported by Khaama Press, indicated that 287 outlets had closed as of May 2022.¹⁶⁰¹

Immediately after their takeover, the Taliban claimed to be committed to media, and allowed private media to continue their activities, but they also requested that Islamic values were taken in account and urged Afghan media not work to against national values or unity.¹⁶⁰² In September 2021, the Taliban issued guidelines for journalists, including rules against addressing topics in conflict with Islam or ‘insulting national personalities’, and instructing media to produce reports in coordination with the Taliban government’s media office.¹⁶⁰³ On 2 February 2022, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated that the Taliban had studied the mass media law of the former government and found no issues with it.¹⁶⁰⁴ According to RSF this meant that the 2015 law remained in force.¹⁶⁰⁵ Mujahid further stated that media coverage should consider ‘national interests, Islamic values and national unity’, and that the Taliban were working on re-establishing the Media Violation Commission to prevent “misunderstandings” and to take action against problems.¹⁶⁰⁶ This commission was not established as of June 2022, according to UNAMA.¹⁶⁰⁷ In March 2022, Mujahid claimed that the Taliban were seeking foreign aid to support Afghan media outlets.¹⁶⁰⁸ AP reported that there seemed to be some room for critical reporting, referring to local media airing a clip of Taliban fighters beating a former soldier. A few days later the Taliban supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhунzada ‘warned Taliban fighters against excesses, saying they would be punished’.¹⁶⁰⁹ On 21 May 2022, the Taliban MPVPV issued instructions for women presenters to cover their faces while presenting on television. A spokesperson of the ministry told TOLONews that it was a final decision which they would not be willing to discuss.¹⁶¹⁰

The issued restrictions on media were vague, and difficult for media workers to follow in practice.¹⁶¹¹ According to OHCHR, the Taliban’s restrictions were enforced unevenly across the country, especially on provincial level.¹⁶¹² Journalists furthermore received directives from different parts of the Taliban’s *de facto* authorities (including the Taliban Ministry of Culture and Information, the Taliban GDI, the Taliban MPVPV, the Taliban Government Media and

¹⁵⁹⁹ TOLONews, IFJ: ‘Arbitrary Detentions of Journalists’ Must Halt, 12 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰⁰ IFJ and ANJU, Statistics Report, February 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁶⁰¹ Khaama Press, Afghan Reporter Goes Missing in Kabul Province, 28 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰² Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban’s first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰³ New York Times (The), New Taliban Guidelines Stir Fear About the Future of Press Freedom, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰⁴ Ariana News, IEA says it’s happy with former government’s media law, 2 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰⁵ RSF, Afghanistan, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰⁶ Ariana News, IEA says it’s happy with former government’s media law, 2 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 27

¹⁶⁰⁸ Ariana News, IEA seeks foreign aid for Afghan media outlets, 6 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰⁹ AP, Fear runs through Afghanistan’s hazardous media landscape, 17 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁰ TOLONews, Ministries Repeat Call for Female News Presenters to Cover Faces, 21 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹¹ LA Times, Many of Afghanistan’s journalists have fled. Those who remain face a harsh new world, 22 October 2021, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Journalists encounter tough times under Taliban rule, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶¹² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 41



Information Centre), causing confusion among journalists according to RSF.¹⁶¹³ In June 2022, the Herat Journalists Association and the provincial department of the Taliban Ministry of Culture and Information established a committee to prevent ‘unwarranted arrests of journalists and media workers’. According to the Taliban committee head, the three main aims of the committee were to regulate the broadcasting of audio and video media, to support and advocate for media rights, and investigate violations committed by media.¹⁶¹⁴

According to Qaane, the Taliban’s policy on female journalists was unclear¹⁶¹⁵ and a female journalist told TOLONews in March 2022 that the Taliban increasingly restricted their work.¹⁶¹⁶ Female journalists reported that they were sometimes barred from attending Taliban-held press conferences.¹⁶¹⁷ A TOLONews representative told AP that female staff members had not been threatened by the Taliban, but at times they were denied access ‘because of their gender’.¹⁶¹⁸ Al Jazeera also reported on female journalists in Herat Province being barred from entering a press conference by the Taliban provincial director of information and culture. One female journalist also described increased difficulties in travelling far distances for journalistic work, as officials from the MPVPV stopped women journalists and questioned them about not being accompanied by a *mahram*. Other female journalists also told Al Jazeera about Taliban officials refusing to answer their questions or participate in interviews with women journalists.¹⁶¹⁹ In a survey by ANJU published on 9 March 2022, 87 % of Afghan women journalists had experienced gender discrimination under Taliban rule. Furthermore, 79 % stated that they had been insulted and threatened since the Taliban takeover, including physical threats and abuse, as well as written and verbal threats, by Taliban officials.¹⁶²⁰

According to Human Rights Watch, female journalists working in Afghanistan’s provinces faced ‘particularly devastating’ restrictions. Compared to female journalists in the capital, provincial-based female journalists reportedly encountered more barriers, including security issues and sexism. In the provinces of Ghor, Kapisa, Kandahar, and Zabul female journalists were no longer working. In Nangarhar Province and Herat Province, female reporters were no longer allowed in newsrooms, and their voices were not part of audios. In Balkh Province, female media workers were reportedly no longer allowed to ‘attend seminars and events held by the journalists themselves’.¹⁶²¹

After the takeover, the media that were still operating reportedly adjusted their reporting in general by decreasing potentially provocative content, while content praising the Taliban increased.¹⁶²² There was also a tendency to self-censorship¹⁶²³. IFJ reported on journalists

¹⁶¹³ RSF, Afghanistan, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁴ Ariana News, Media monitoring and support committee launched in Herat province, 23 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁵ Qaane, E., Regime Change, Economic Decline and No Legal Protection: What has happened to the Afghan media?, AAN, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁶ TOLONews, Afghan Female Reporters Fear Increased Restrictions, edited 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁷ TOLONews, Afghan Female Reporters Fear Increased Restrictions, edited 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁸ AP, Fear runs through Afghanistan’s hazardous media landscape, 17 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹⁹ Al Jazeera, Afghan female journalists defiant as Taliban restrictions grow, 24 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁰ IFJ, Afghanistan: 87% of women journalists have suffered discrimination under Taliban rule, 9 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶²¹ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Threatening Provincial Media, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶²² RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#); BBC News, How Afghanistan’s media is changing under Taliban rule, 21 August 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fewer women, No Entertainment: Kabul’s Media Scene Transforms After Taliban Takeover, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶²³ New York Times (The), Everything Changed Overnight: Afghan Reporters Face an Intolerant Regime, 11 September 2021, [url](#)



battling censorship daily, especially in the provinces¹⁶²⁴, and according to the Free Speech Hub (FSH) the Taliban's Intelligence Department systematically censored media, including by using force, threats and psychological pressure.¹⁶²⁵ Research by Oslo Metropolitan University demonstrated a culture of pre-censorship being 'institutionalised' in Afghanistan, which impacted self-censorship, as well as threats and interference by Taliban officials. Oslo Metropolitan University concluded that the Taliban MPVPV had replaced the Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture as the main body handling media, and also mentioned Taliban intelligence officers interfering by entering newsrooms 'to check on and threaten journalists and editors who do not abide by their rules'.¹⁶²⁶ Human Rights Watch reported on journalists in the provinces feeling 'compelled' to self-censor after threats, detentions and beatings of media personnel. Many claimed to have been beaten while trying to cover subjects that 'cast Taliban officials in bad light', including anti-Taliban protests and arbitrary detentions. The Taliban reportedly compelled journalists to share reports prior to publication, and regularly told media organisations what to publish, and warned them about contradicting policies and report on violence by Taliban officials.¹⁶²⁷

Some sensitive topics were difficult for media to cover.¹⁶²⁸ According to RSF topics related to religion, women's status, and human rights were 'off limits'.¹⁶²⁹ According to an anonymous international NGO in Kabul, interviewed by the Swedish Migration Agency's Unit for Migration Analysis on 16 March 2022, there were three main themes the Taliban did not want to talk about openly as it could put them in a bad light: ISKP, resistance, and the production of narcotics.¹⁶³⁰ Oslo Metropolitan University stated that there were 'typical no-go areas' for journalists, which included women's protests, human rights activities, resistance, and ISKP. They further stated that media workers may need to refrain from reporting in these topics, to avoid 'being bullied, and/or arrested'.¹⁶³¹ RSF also reported on arrests and intimidation of journalists covering women's protests.¹⁶³²

7.2. Incidents targeting journalists and media workers

By 30 June 2022, no journalist or media worker had been killed in Afghanistan in 2022 according to RSF, and no journalists or media workers were in prison.¹⁶³³ In May 2022, a journalist was however reportedly sentenced to one years' imprisonment in a Taliban military court. RSF called both the trial and sentence 'illegal' and 'disproportionate'. The journalist was reportedly not defended by a lawyer and was forced to renounce his right to appeal.¹⁶³⁴ Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid denied that the journalist had been tried in a military

¹⁶²⁴ IFJ, Afghanistan, Under the Taliban, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁵ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Systematically Censors Media Outlets, 18 January 2022, [url](#); Free Speech Hub [Twitter], posted on: 17 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁶ Oslo Metropolitan University, Afghan Journalism – Slowly Dying?, 9 June 2022, [url](#), pp. 2, 84

¹⁶²⁷ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Threatening Provincial Media, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁸ RSF, Afghanistan, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶²⁹ RSF, Afghanistan, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶³⁰ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Unit for Migration Analysis, Afghanistan: Säkershetsläget efter talibanrörelsens maktövertagande, 29 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 10–11

¹⁶³¹ Oslo Metropolitan University, Afghan Journalism – Slowly Dying?, 9 June 2022, [url](#), p. 85

¹⁶³² RSF, Afghan journalists increasingly harassed by Taliban intelligence and new ministry, 4 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶³³ RSF, Afghanistan, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶³⁴ RSF, Afghanistan : Afghan journalist tried by military court, sentenced to one year in prison, 11 May 2022, [url](#)



court and said that the case was not related to his journalistic work. Mujahid claimed that a *de facto* civil court in Herat had sentenced the journalist for ‘criminal misconduct’.¹⁶³⁵

Journalists were interrogated or arrested by *de facto* police forces and the *de facto* security service¹⁶³⁶ and faced intimidation, violence and arbitrary detention.¹⁶³⁷ According to ACLED data, violence targeting journalists in general spiked in August 2021 with around 9 recorded events, and violence towards journalists during demonstrations spiked in September 2021.¹⁶³⁸ ACLED recorded 24 cases of violence against journalists by Taliban forces between 17 August 2021 and 15 April 2022. 12 of the instances took place in Kabul City.¹⁶³⁹ UNAMA records demonstrated 163 violations against journalists and media workers carried out by the *de facto* authorities. This included 122 arbitrary arrests (including 1 female), 12 incommunicado detentions, 58 cases of torture (including 1 female), and 33 cases of threats or intimidation (including 3 females). UNAMA furthermore called Kabul City the ‘epicentre’ of such violations.¹⁶⁴⁰ The Asia Programme Director of the Committee to Protect Journalists stated that it was unclear whether attacks against Afghan journalists were systematic or “semi-random events” initiated by Taliban members holding “a grudge”. The representative described the Afghan media landscape as “full of hazards” that were not “fully predictable”.¹⁶⁴¹ AAN on the other hand called the violence against Afghan journalists ‘systematic’ and accused the Taliban intelligence agency and *de facto* police of increasingly controlling the media.¹⁶⁴² Arbitrary detentions were reportedly used to keep the media within accepted lines.¹⁶⁴³

The IFJ announced on 19 January 2022, that ‘several Afghan journalists had been attacked and detained in the first weeks of 2022.’ And pointed out that a ‘disturbing trend’ of arrests and attacks against journalists and media workers continued to grow under the Taliban.¹⁶⁴⁴ UNAMA also raised concerns over forced disappearances and instances of violence against Afghan media workers.¹⁶⁴⁵ In February 2022, RSF estimated that at least 50 journalists had been arrested or detained by the *de facto* police or intelligence. According to the same source, the duration of detention varied from hours to days, and violence often occurred.¹⁶⁴⁶ According to an anonymous journalist and a representative of an anonymous international organisation, interviewed by DIS in Islamabad in March and April 2022, ill-treatment of journalists occurred while in detention. Another source, the Director of Centre for Afghanistan,

¹⁶³⁵ VOA, Taliban Court Sentences Afghan Journalist to Prison, 12 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶³⁶ RSF, Afghanistan, 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶³⁷ UNAMA, Statement by friends of Afghan Women Ambassadors’ group on world press freedom day, 3 May 2022, [url](#); HRW, Taliban Intensify Attacks on Afghan Media, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶³⁸ ACLED and APW, Tracking Disorder During Taliban Rule in Afghanistan, April 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁶³⁹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. Kabul as Admin 1 and Admin 2, all Taliban forces as ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 2 and search for ‘journalist’ in the notes-column. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 15 August 2021 to 1 June 2022, as of 17 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁰ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁶⁴¹ AP, Fear runs through Afghanistan’s hazardous media landscape, 17 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴² Qaane, E., Regime Change, Economic Decline and No Legal Protection: What has happened to the Afghan media?, AAN, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴³ Qaane, E., Regime Change, Economic Decline and No Legal Protection: What has happened to the Afghan media?, AAN, 7 March 2022, [url](#); AI, Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁶⁴⁴ IFJ, Afghanistan: Attacks and detentions of journalists continue to escalate, 19 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁵ TOLONews, UN Says Equal Rights Must Become Everyday Reality in Afghanistan, 10 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁶ RSF, Afghan journalists increasingly harassed by Taliban intelligence and new ministry, 4 February 2022, [url](#)



Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) and the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad stated that abduction and physical punishment of journalists occurred.¹⁶⁴⁷

According to Al Jazeera, the Taliban often were behind assaults against journalists, justifying their actions by calling Afghan journalists ‘spies’. Al Jazeera further described a history of targeting journalists, not just by the Taliban but also by criminal elements, who perceived journalists working with foreigners as wealthy and connected to the West. According to a local source, who ran a media service company providing services to foreign journalists there had always been dangers while working with foreigners, including robberies, kidnappings and killings by armed groups and criminals. The source further claimed that journalists had been arrested by local authorities and subjected to torture, abuse, and prosecution.¹⁶⁴⁸ In April 2022, an Afghan journalist reported on social media that one of his colleagues had been arrested, badly beaten and tortured by Taliban intelligence officials.¹⁶⁴⁹

Recorded events targeting journalists and media workers during the reference period included several detentions.¹⁶⁵⁰ In some instances journalists were detained after reporting on protesters criticising the Taliban¹⁶⁵¹ and after hosting guests in television shows criticising the Taliban.¹⁶⁵² On 17 March 2022, three TOLONews employees were detained by the Taliban, reportedly for sharing news about the Taliban’s prohibition of foreign drama series. They were released after 21 hours.¹⁶⁵³ On 19 April 2022, an Afghan journalist was arrested while reporting on a bombing at the Abdul Rahim Shahid school in western Kabul. He was accused of being ‘complicit in organising the attack’ and was severely beaten before being released two hours later.¹⁶⁵⁴ On 24 May 2022, Taliban intelligence officials reportedly detained the former owner and editor of Radio Aftab at a checkpoint in Herat City, after detecting journalistic posts on his social media accounts while searching his phone. They detained him and accused him of working as a journalist for NRF. No official charges were however brought against him.¹⁶⁵⁵ In some instances, journalists were detained by the Taliban while trying to cover women’s protests.¹⁶⁵⁶ An anonymous human rights defender, interviewed by DIS, stated that a journalist he knew had been executed by the Taliban in Helmand Province in January 2022. The source stated that the journalist ‘wrote critically on Facebook’.¹⁶⁵⁷

¹⁶⁴⁷ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁶⁴⁸ Al Jazeera Media Institute, Kill the rented journalists’ - the reality of life for local journalists and fixers left behind in Afghanistan, 1 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴⁹ Sharif_Hassanyar [Twitter], posted on: 17 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁰ TOLONews, 22 Cases of Mistreatment of Media in Past Month: Watchdog, 30 March 2022, [url](#); HRW, Taliban Intensify Attacks on Afghan Media, 30 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, TOLONews Presenters Freed After Night in Detention, 18 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵¹ IFJ, Afghanistan: Attacks and detainments of journalists continue to escalate, 19 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Detains Two Kabul Journalists, Colleagues And Relatives Say, 1 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵³ HRW, Taliban Intensify Attacks on Afghan Media, 30 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, TOLONews Presenters Freed After Night in Detention, 18 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁴ IFJ, Afghanistan: Journalist beaten and arrested by Taliban militants, 10 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁵ CPJ, Taliban intelligence agents detain four media workers in Kabul, Herat and Paktia provinces, 31 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁶ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration, 16 May 2022, [url](#), p. 1; CPJ, Taliban intelligence agents detain four media workers in Kabul, Herat and Paktia provinces, 31 May 2022, [url](#); Salam Watandar, Salam Watandar reporter detained by intelligence forces for hours, 29 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁷ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 20



On 28 March 2022, the Taliban GDI raided four radio stations in Kandahar City, after they had violated a ban on music. Six journalists were detained but were released after promising not to broadcast music again.¹⁶⁵⁸

On 4 May 2022, three journalists were reportedly 'charged with criminal insult'.¹⁶⁵⁹ On 6 May 2022, the Committed to Protect Journalists (CPJ) accused the Taliban of sentencing a journalist to a year in prison in a Taliban military court.¹⁶⁶⁰

ACLED also recorded five incidents impacting journalists committed by unidentified armed groups between December 2021 and May 2022. All of them occurred in Kabul City. The recorded attacks included an attack against a journalist in the area Dasht-e Barchi on 19 December 2021. On 11 January 2022, the Deputy Director of Salam Watandar Radio Station in Police District 4 was attacked and injured by unidentified militants in January 2022. On 15 January 2022, a journalist (also former director of Khawar TV) was attacked by two perpetrators identifying themselves as police, in his home in Kabul City. One of the perpetrators hit the victim with an object while the other tried to stab him in the neck. The perpetrators were not identified, but the victim claimed he was harassed by 'the Taliban and their supporters'. On 16 April 2022, a journalist (also director of a private television station) was beaten by unidentified militants in the area Qala-e-Fathullah. The final case concerned the aforementioned disappearance of a journalist on 24 May 2022, which ACLED classified as abduction/forced disappearance by unidentified armed groups.¹⁶⁶¹

UNAMA also recorded the killing of five journalists (including two women) by ISKP. Furthermore, one killing could not be attributed and four male journalists were injured by unknown armed men.¹⁶⁶² On 10 January 2022, the deputy director of Salam Afghanistan Media Organisation, was attacked by three unidentified men in his vehicle.¹⁶⁶³

¹⁶⁵⁸ HRW, Intensify Attacks on Afghan Media, 30 March 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Afghan Journalists Face Ever-Increasing Restrictions, 18 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵⁹ IFJ, Afghanistan: Journalist beaten and arrested by Taliban militants, 10 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Media Watchdog Demands Release Of Afghan Journalist Held By Taliban, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶¹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. Kabul as Admin 1 and Admin 2, 'unidentified armed groups' as ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 2 and search for 'journalist' in the notes-column. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 15 August 2021 to 1 June 2022, as of 17 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶² UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁶⁶³ IFJ, Afghanistan: Attacks and detainments of journalists continue to escalate, 19 January 2022, [url](#)



8. Human rights defenders and activists

8.1. General situation under Taliban rule

The *de facto* authorities frequently expressed a commitment to respect human rights within the framework of *sharia*. However, since the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan's civil society narrowed down significantly.¹⁶⁶⁴ According to UNAMA, civil society actors and human rights defenders largely halted their activities in most provinces, out of fear of repercussions.¹⁶⁶⁵ As reported by several sources since 15 August 2021, civil society actors, such as human rights defenders and women's rights activists, have experienced intimidation, harassment, ill-treatment and threats and have been subjected to attacks, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, incommunicado detentions and killings.¹⁶⁶⁶ The Taliban authorities responded to these reports by saying that they were 'incorrect', based on 'false information' and that the human rights situation has improved compared to previous years.¹⁶⁶⁷ As reported by the Human Rights Memorial, Afghanistan was one of the countries in which most human rights defenders (19 individuals) were killed in 2021.¹⁶⁶⁸

As indicated by the former chairwoman of AIHRC, Shaharзад Akbar, in interviews in May and June 2022, there has been 'a closure of civic space' in Afghanistan since the Taliban regained power, with new policies and structures put in place by the *de facto* authorities 'to actively silence dissent, punish criticism and completely close the space for human rights activism'. According to Akbar 'the situation has become increasingly difficult for activists and human rights defenders inside the country', with a trend of an increased Taliban focus on targeting and hunting down activists and media workers since November 2021.¹⁶⁶⁹

Based on information from around a hundred online testimonies, UN Special Rapporteur Mary Lawlor reported in November 2021 on 'a climate of fear, intense insecurity and growing desperation' among human rights defenders in Afghanistan. According to her report, people 'most at risk' were those documenting alleged war crimes, female criminal lawyers, cultural rights defenders and others from minority groups. In their testimonies, respondents detailed

¹⁶⁶⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 52

¹⁶⁶⁵ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁶⁶⁶ AI, Afghanistan: The fate of thousands hanging in the balance: Afghanistan's fall into the hands of the Taliban, 21 September 2021, [url](#), pp. 12–15; UN News, Climate of fear prevails for human rights defenders in Afghanistan, 3 November 2021, [url](#); Asia Pacific Forum, Afghanistan: AIHRC Chairperson's statement to Human Rights Council, 20 December 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 33; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 52; AI, Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), pp. 1–2; AI, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 21, 43; UN Human Rights Council, Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights, Richard Bennett, following his visit to Afghanistan from May 15–26, 2022, 26 May 2022, [url](#), p. 3; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 33

¹⁶⁶⁷ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Denies Claims in HRW Report on Afghanistan, 14 January 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban Denies US Report over Violation of Human Rights, 15 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶⁸ Front Line Defenders, Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2021, 9 February 2022, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁶⁶⁹ Aspen Institute UK, The Future of Afghanistan [Podcast], 20 May 2022, [url](#); Strength and Solidarity, Afghanistan: Can the Taliban tame the hunger for rights? [Podcast], 6 June 2022, [url](#)



specific tactics used against them by the Taliban, such as raiding offices of human rights and civil society organisations to search for contact details of people who worked there. Some activists indicated they erased or modified their online presence and data history to minimize the risk of being identified. Several human rights defenders from rural areas declared to have moved to bigger cities, as they were often well known in their local communities, but even there they had been forced to change locations frequently. The fact that many activists have also lost their source of income has reportedly further curtailed their options to ‘find safety’.¹⁶⁷⁰

Since the takeover, sources reported on Taliban fighters conducting house searches in Kabul and other parts of the country, looking for human rights defenders and activists.¹⁶⁷¹ There were reports of human rights defenders receiving calls and WhatsApp messages, asking them for their personal details and instructing them to hand over their organisation’s equipment and money and come to specific locations.¹⁶⁷² Others described the Taliban’s tactics of questioning people at local mosques and using the former police’s resources and records to obtain personal information on activists.¹⁶⁷³ Women’s rights activists reported threats by phone, harassment on social media and intimidation by being followed by Taliban militants on the street.¹⁶⁷⁴

Female human rights activists in the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif reported in November 2021 that they received phone calls, messages and emails from unknown suspicious numbers, offering to help them to leave the country by asking for personal information and inviting them to come to specific locations.¹⁶⁷⁵ Also in November 2021, the Taliban reportedly issued a warning to human rights activists and civil society workers in Panjsher Province. The notice indicated the work of individuals or organisations operating under the name of civil society or human rights activists as ‘illegal’ and that the Taliban were therefore ‘instructed to seriously find and pursue them and arrest them as soon as possible to stop their false and anti-religious activities’. Anyone violating or resisting this warning, would be ‘dealt with seriously in order to be a lesson for others’.¹⁶⁷⁶ In March 2022, activists in Helmand declared to Human Rights Watch that the Taliban had increased their surveillance of ‘individuals and groups they accuse of being “opposed to the Islamic Emirate”’, with threats to retaliate against activists and former

¹⁶⁷⁰ UN News, Climate of fear prevails for human rights defenders in Afghanistan, 3 November 2021, [url](#); OHCHR, Afghanistan: Human rights defenders living under climate of fear - UN expert, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷¹ France 24 Observers, I knew they’d come for us: Afghan journalists, activists report Taliban reprisals, 20 August 2021, [url](#); AI, Afghanistan: Taliban wasting no time in stamping out human rights says new briefing, 21 September 2021, [url](#); CIVICUS, Ongoing threats and attacks against civil society, media in Afghanistan while protests restricted, 21 October 2021, [url](#); AI, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 43

¹⁶⁷² AI, Afghanistan: The fate of thousands hanging in the balance: Afghanistan’s fall into the hands of the Taliban, 21 September 2021, [url](#), pp. 12–15

¹⁶⁷³ France 24 Observers, I knew they’d come for us: Afghan journalists, activists report Taliban reprisals, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁴ New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Faced with disappearances, beatings and intimidation, Afghanistan’s women’s rights activists go quiet on the streets, 8 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁵ France 24, Four women slain in Afghanistan after phone call to join evacuation flight, 6 November 2021, [url](#); ABC News, Women’s rights activists feared for their lives, now they are disappearing, 21 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁶ Jurist, Afghanistan dispatches: Taliban warning calls rights activists in Panjshir province infidels and calls for their immediate arrest, 25 November 2021, [url](#)



government officials in response to recent abductions and killings of Taliban commanders in the province.¹⁶⁷⁷

Several human rights activists declared to media sources to have been forced to live in hiding or to move between places out of fear of reprisals from the Taliban.¹⁶⁷⁸ As reported by the UNSG, civil society actors and human rights defenders have halted their activities in most provinces, out of fear of repercussions from the Taliban.¹⁶⁷⁹ Although opportunities to leave the country were scarce and challenging,¹⁶⁸⁰ a number of human rights defenders fled abroad.¹⁶⁸¹ In March 2022, the Dublin-based NGO Frontline Defenders declared to VOA that it helped more than 1 000 human rights defenders and their immediate family members evacuate from Afghanistan in 2021. According to the NGO's head of communications, 2 000 more human rights activists were still waiting to be taken out of the country.¹⁶⁸²

Also in March 2022, Human Rights Watch reported on the Taliban controlling systems containing sensitive biometric data left behind by Western donor governments and organisations when they evacuated after the takeover. Afghan citizen's personal and biometric data (including iris scans, fingerprints, photographs, occupation information, home addresses, and names of relatives) that were stored in these digital identity and payroll systems, could be used by the Taliban to target dissidents. As suggested by Human Rights Watch's research, the Taliban have possibly already used these data in some cases. A Taliban commander cited by Human Rights Watch, declared that his unit was using US-made scanners 'to tap into Interior Ministry and other national biometric systems to gather data, including on journalists and so-called human rights people'.¹⁶⁸³

At the end of January 2022, a closed-door meeting was held in the Norwegian capital Oslo in which several Afghan women's rights defenders engaged with officials from the *de facto* authorities. During the meeting, the representatives of Afghan women's rights called for the reopening of all girl's schools, women's right to access employment, women's inclusion in the government, the right to enjoy freedom of speech, the release of all women protesters that

¹⁶⁷⁷ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Threaten Revenge Killings, 22 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁸ France 24 Observers, Lay low and stay home: The only option for Afghans targeted by Taliban, 23 August 2021, [url](#); CIVICUS, Ongoing threats and attacks against civil society, media in Afghanistan while protests restricted, 21 October 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), They stayed to fight the Taliban. Now the protesters are being hunted down, 4 November 2021, [url](#); ABC News, Women's rights activists feared for their lives, now they are disappearing, 21 November 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Threatened and Beaten, Afghan Women Defy Taliban With Protests, 24 January 2022, [url](#); Business Insider, The Taliban faces questions about missing women activists as they seek access to \$9 billion in frozen assets, 26 January 2022, [url](#); RFI, My heart and body shake: Afghan women defy Taliban, 15 February 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Faced with disappearances, beatings and intimidation, Afghanistan's women's rights activists go quiet on the streets, 8 February 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Taliban arrests Canadian aid worker amid widening crackdown on activists and foreigners, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 37

¹⁶⁸⁰ France 24 Observers, Lay low and stay home: The only option for Afghans targeted by Taliban, 23 August 2021, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan: The fate of thousands hanging in the balance: Afghanistan's fall into the hands of the Taliban, 21 September 2021, [url](#), pp. 12–15; Guardian (The), They stayed to fight the Taliban. Now the protesters are being hunted down, 4 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸¹ TOLONews, UN's Bachelet Asks All States to Support Afghan Human Rights, 19 January 2022, [url](#); VOA, Taliban Uncertainty Prompts Bid for Afghan Rights Body in Exile, 10 March 2022, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 43; Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 21

¹⁶⁸² VOA, Taliban Uncertainty Prompts Bid for Afghan Rights Body in Exile, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸³ HRW, New Evidence that Biometric Data Systems Imperil Afghans, 30 March 2022, [url](#)



were allegedly detained by the Taliban, the formation of an independent council by the UN to monitor human rights in Afghanistan and the Taliban authorities' commitment to the constitution.¹⁶⁸⁴ At the end of March 2022, a two-day Afghan civil society consultative gathering was held in Kabul, the first meeting of this kind since the Taliban takeover. The meeting was reportedly attended by more than 280 representatives of Afghan civil society (including Islamic scholars, tribal elders, families of war victims and dozens of civil society activists), discussing human rights issues such as access to education and employment for women and calling for trust-building between the *de facto* authorities and civil society. As reported by TOLONews, the gathering was welcomed by the Taliban's Ministry of Information and Culture, calling for 'cooperation of the participants with the government to find a solution to the Afghan crisis'.¹⁶⁸⁵

Amnesty International reported that most detentions of human rights defenders and activists were carried out by the Taliban GDI, with male activists mostly arrested from public spaces and female activists often arrested during home raids. Amnesty International indicated these arrests and detentions as arbitrary, since the detainees were not charged or brought before a *de facto* court and were denied access to legal support in most cases. As stated by Amnesty International 'the ongoing arbitrary arrests and detention, cases of enforced disappearances of particularly women protesters, and lack of clear accountability within the Taliban rank and file have created an intimidating environment for the victims' families and others to openly report violations and advocate for redress and change'. Sources declared to Amnesty that relatives of detainees have been discouraged from publicly sharing information or talking to the media and that victims and their families have been reluctant to talk due to fear of reprisals. Detainees were reportedly allowed to inform their families they were in Taliban custody and that they might be released after investigation, but they had to instruct their relatives to avoid engaging with the media.¹⁶⁸⁶

On 18 September 2021, the AIHRC issued a statement declaring it had not been able to operate since 15 August 2021, with its premises (offices across the country and the headquarters in Kabul) occupied, its assets (such as cars and computers) used by Taliban forces and its staff unable to fulfil their duties.¹⁶⁸⁷ AIHRC's nine commissioners, including its then chairwoman Shaharзад Akbar, left the country, fearing retribution from the Taliban.¹⁶⁸⁸ However, Akbar has continued to advocate for the situation of human rights in Afghanistan from exile.¹⁶⁸⁹ According to an anonymous source interviewed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 2021, several of the former employees of the AIHRC

¹⁶⁸⁴ TOLONews, Oslo Talks: Afghan Women Activists Meet With Islamic Emirate, 24 January 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Taliban, Western officials meet in Oslo to discuss Afghanistan, 24 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Women Submit Demands to Kabul Delegates, Intl Envoys, 25 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸⁵ TOLONews, Activists Meet to Discuss Current Situation, Women's Rights, 31 March 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Civil Society Gathering Calls for Trust-Building, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸⁶ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), pp. 2-3

¹⁶⁸⁷ AIHRC [Twitter], posted on: 18 September 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#); para. 40; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 52; AI, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸⁸ VOA, Taliban Uncertainty Prompts Bid for Afghan Rights Body in Exile, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸⁹ Asia Pacific Forum, Afghanistan: AIHRC Chairperson's statement to Human Rights Council, 20 December 2021, [url](#); VOA, Taliban Uncertainty Prompts Bid for Afghan Rights Body in Exile, 10 March 2022, [url](#); Strength and Solidarity, Afghanistan: Can the Taliban tame the hunger for rights? [Podcast], 6 June 2022, [url](#)



left Afghanistan. This source was aware of three violent incidents directed against AIHRC employees after 15 August 2021, two of which involved drivers being beaten by Taliban soldiers.¹⁶⁹⁰ At the end of December 2021, the office of the *de facto* cabinet announced the decision to retain AIHRC but with the intention to modify its name.¹⁶⁹¹ In March 2022, OHCHR stated that the Taliban authorities had not yet issued a 'specific policy concerning the future status or mandate of the AIHRC'.¹⁶⁹² As reported by VOA in the same month, no new commissioners had been appointed to the organisation and its 400 employees had not been instructed to resume their work.¹⁶⁹³ In May 2022, the Taliban dissolved five departments of the former government, including the AIHRC, as they were not considered 'necessary' and were not included in the new annual national budget.¹⁶⁹⁴

As stated by human rights defenders cited by the OHCHR, it has become difficult for human rights NGOs to operate in most provinces. Out of fear of repercussions and because of restrictions imposed by the Taliban, many organisations have been merely focussing their activities on the humanitarian situation. A lack of financial resources was also indicated as an important challenge hindering civil society organisations' operations.¹⁶⁹⁵ Several sources reported on NGOs and civil society groups' offices being raided and searched by the Taliban, having their accounts frozen, their material confiscated and their staff interrogated on personal details of directors and senior staff members.¹⁶⁹⁶ According to Human rights Watch's Patricia Gossman, it was not clear if the Taliban actually obtained that kind of information and if they had made use of it. As further indicated by Gossman, human rights groups and organisations have not been able to carry out as much documentation and data collection since the Taliban takeover. When still active, they have been working remotely or resorted to hidden and very careful ways to organise their activities.¹⁶⁹⁷ For more information on women's freedom of expression and assembly and women's civil society organisations, see section [5.2.4. Freedom of expression and assembly](#).

¹⁶⁹⁰ Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, March 2022, [url](#), p. 84

¹⁶⁹¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 7

¹⁶⁹² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 55

¹⁶⁹³ VOA, Taliban Uncertainty Prompts Bid for Afghan Rights Body in Exile, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹⁴ Guardian (The), Taliban dissolves Afghanistan's human rights commission as unnecessary, 17 May 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, The Abolition of AIHRC Is a Massive Setback, says Richard Bennett, 19 May 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, UN's Bachelet Deeply Concerned by Closing of AIHRC, 20 May 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Rina Amiri Expresses Concern About the Dissolution of Human Rights Commission, 22 May 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 4

¹⁶⁹⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 54

¹⁶⁹⁶ OHCHR, Oral update on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 13 September 2021, [url](#); CIVICUS, Activists and journalists at risk, crackdown on protests in Afghanistan following Taliban takeover, 15 September 2021, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan: The fate of thousands hanging in the balance: Afghanistan's fall into the hands of the Taliban, 21 September 2021, [url](#), pp. 14–15; CIVICUS, Ongoing threats and attacks against civil society, media in Afghanistan while protests restricted, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹⁷ Gossman, P., Associate Director for the Asia division of HRW, digital interview, 12 May 2022



8.2. Incidents targeting human rights defenders and activists

As reported by the OHCHR in March 2022, 10 civil society activists were killed since 15 August 2021, of which five deaths were attributed to the Taliban. A further 36 activists were reportedly threatened, beaten, or arrested by the *de facto* authorities.¹⁶⁹⁸ As reported by the UNSG, some deadly attacks on human rights defenders were also attributed to ISKP.¹⁶⁹⁹ In other cases, the perpetrators were not known. According to the OHCHR there were no reports indicating that the Taliban authorities have investigated the incidents targeting human rights defenders or have taken any action against the perpetrators.¹⁷⁰⁰ In the period 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, UNAMA recorded the killings of 10 civil society activists (including 2 women), 5 were carried out by the Taliban, 3 by ISKP and 2 could not be attributed. UNAMA further recorded abuses against 65 human rights defenders, including 47 arbitrary arrests (including 11 women), 17 cases of incommunicado detention (including 10 women), 10 cases of torture and ill-treatment (including one woman), and 17 cases of threats and intimidation (including 6 women). UNAMA noted that most cases occurred in Kabul City, especially during the increased number of women protests in January and February 2022.¹⁷⁰¹

Other reports included activists being killed included an activist being shot dead by the Taliban on 7 September 2021, while protesting against the group in Herat province.¹⁷⁰² In two separate incidents in October 2021, two activists were shot dead in Nangarhar Province¹⁷⁰³, and Khost Province. There was no claim of responsibility for both attacks.¹⁷⁰⁴ On 4 November 2021, a women's rights activist and lecturer was found dead, her body covered with bullet wounds, in Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh Province.¹⁷⁰⁵ Three other women were also killed after disappearing a couple of weeks before. They had all reportedly received a call from someone pretending to offer them assistance to leave the country.¹⁷⁰⁶ Later in November 2021, the Taliban reportedly arrested a civil society activist in his home in Lashkargah, Helmand Province. His dead body, with signs of ill-treatment, was found three days later.¹⁷⁰⁷ On 19 January 2022, unknown gunmen reportedly killed a civil society activist in Baghlan

¹⁶⁹⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 53

¹⁶⁹⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 33

¹⁷⁰⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 53

¹⁷⁰¹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 28–29

¹⁷⁰² AI, Afghanistan: The fate of thousands hanging in the balance: Afghanistan's fall into the hands of the Taliban, 21 September 2021, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁷⁰³ Asia Pacific, Prominent rights activist gunned down in Afghanistan, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁴ CIVICUS, Ongoing threats and attacks against civil society, media in Afghanistan while protests restricted, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁵ Guardian (The), Women's rights activist shot dead in northern Afghanistan, 5 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁶ France 24, Four women slain in Afghanistan after phone call to join evacuation flight, 6 November 2021, [url](#); ABC News, In Afghanistan, women's rights activists feared for their lives, now they are disappearing, 21 November 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), More rights defenders murdered in 2021, with 138 activists killed just in Colombia, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 53

Province¹⁷⁰⁸ and a female activist in Balkh Province, who had participated in a protest against the Taliban's restrictions on women's rights a month earlier.¹⁷⁰⁹

Reports on detentions and/or abductions included family members of a female civil society activist in Kandahar Province on 12 September 2021. They were abducted by Taliban members who broke into their home according to the activist.¹⁷¹⁰ On 25 September 2021, an activist was reportedly detained for 18 days in Kabul after being accused of organising demonstrations against the Taliban and in support of NRF.¹⁷¹¹ On 18 January 2022, the Taliban detained human rights activist Azeem Azeemi together with three other activists for organising a protest against the visit of Pakistan's national security adviser Moeed Yusuf to Kabul.¹⁷¹² For more information on this incident, see section [1.2.1. Expressed opposition and criticism](#).

On 19 January 2022, a female activist and her brother-in-law were abducted while travelling in Kabul.¹⁷¹³ Later that same day, another female activist and her three sisters were arrested and taken from their house in Kabul. The activist reportedly belonged to a women's rights group known as 'Seekers of Justice', which had organised several protests advocating for women's rights in Kabul City since the Taliban takeover. Both these activists had also participated in the demonstration in front of Kabul University on 16 January 2022¹⁷¹⁴, which was harshly pushed back by Taliban forces (see section [5.2.4. Freedom of expression and assembly](#)).¹⁷¹⁵ Since then, there were several reports of house searches targeting women having participated in protests.¹⁷¹⁶ An anonymous witness declared to AP that the raid against the home of one of the aforementioned activists was carried out by 'about 10 armed men, claiming to be from the Taliban intelligence department'.¹⁷¹⁷ A Taliban spokesperson denied the arrest of these activists but indicated at the Taliban 'had the right to detain and imprison opponents or those

¹⁷⁰⁸ Reportedly [Twitter], posted on: 19 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰⁹ Massoud Hossaini [Twitter], posted on: 19 January 2022, [url](#); Usman Sharifi [Twitter], posted on: 19 January 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 36

¹⁷¹⁰ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban attack Fahima house, arrest family members, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷¹¹ CIVICUS, Ongoing threats and attacks against civil society, media in Afghanistan while protests restricted, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷¹² VOA, Taliban Detain Human Rights Activists Planning Protest of Pakistan Official's Visit, 18 January 2022, [url](#); Munaza Shaheed [Twitter], posted on: 18 January 2022, [url](#); AI, Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁷¹³ OHCHR, Press briefing notes on Afghanistan, 1 February 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Faced with disappearances, beatings and intimidation, Afghanistan's women's rights activists go quiet on the streets, 8 February 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 51

¹⁷¹⁴ AP, Taliban storm Kabul apartment, arrest activist, her sister, 20 January 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban launch raids on homes of Afghan women's rights activists, 20 January 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghan women taken from their homes after speaking out, 21 January 2022, [url](#); Business Insider, The Taliban faces questions about missing women activists as they seek access to \$9 billion in frozen assets, 26 January 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Faced with disappearances, beatings and intimidation, Afghanistan's women's rights activists go quiet on the streets, 8 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷¹⁵ HRW, Taliban Use Harsh Tactics to Crush Afghan Women's Rights Protest, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷¹⁶ Guardian (The), Taliban launch raids on homes of Afghan women's rights activists, 20 January 2022, [url](#); OHCHR, Press briefing notes on Afghanistan, 1 February 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Faced with disappearances, beatings and intimidation, Afghanistan's women's rights activists go quiet on the streets, 8 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷¹⁷ AP, Taliban storm Kabul apartment, arrest activist, her sister, 20 January 2022, [url](#)

who violate the law'.¹⁷¹⁸ A Taliban intelligence spokesperson, cited by AP, neither confirmed nor denied the arrests.¹⁷¹⁹

Beginning February 2022, two additional female activists were reported missing after participating in demonstrations demanding equal rights for women. Also in these cases the Taliban authorities denied detaining the women.¹⁷²⁰

The disappearance of these female activists provoked widespread reactions of indignation. The UN, EU, international human rights organisations and several Afghan women and human rights defenders expressed their concerns on the whereabouts and well-being of the activists and urged the Taliban to investigate the cases, ensure the women's safety and allow them to return home.¹⁷²¹ The Taliban repeatedly declared that they were investigating the cases.¹⁷²² On 12 and 13 February 2022, the four Afghan women activists, as well as their relatives who went missing with them, were reportedly released by the Taliban authorities.¹⁷²³ Relatives of the activists confirmed their release to TOLONews, but indicated that the women were 'pressured' to not publicly share any details about their detention. In the same article, reference was made to the arrest of another two female activists at their homes in Kabul by the Taliban.¹⁷²⁴

A day before their release, on 11 February 2022, the Taliban raided a house and detained 29 women's rights activists and their relatives, as reported by US Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls and Human Rights, Rina Amiri.¹⁷²⁵ On 21 February 2022, the Taliban Ministry of Interior released a video in which several women of this group were filmed stating that they were encouraged by foreign-based human rights activists to take to the streets and protest, as

¹⁷¹⁸ Yalda Hakim [Twitter], posted on: 20 January 2022, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban deny arrest of female protestor in Kabul, 22 January 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban: We Have the Right to Detain the Regime's Opponents, 23 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, We have right to suppress dissidents and imprison protestors: Mujahid, 23 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷¹⁹ AP, Taliban storm Kabul apartment, arrest activist, her sister, 20 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷²⁰ BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban takes another women's rights protester, 3 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews [Twitter], posted on: 3 February 2022, [url](#); Reporterly [Twitter], posted on: 3 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, UN, Afghan Women Demand Answers Over More Missing Activists, 3 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Calls Mount For Answers Over Missing Women Activists, 4 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷²¹ UNAMA [Twitter], posted on: 22 January 2022, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: UN pressures Taliban over missing women's activists, 22 January 2022, [url](#); HRW, Afghan Women's Rights Activists Forcibly Disappeared, 24 January 2022, [url](#); AI [Twitter], posted on: 25 January 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, UN asks IEA to probe issue of missing Afghan women, 25 January 2022, [url](#); Afghanistan Times, Afghan women activists meet Taliban in Oslo, 25 January 2022, [url](#); Business Insider, The Taliban faces questions about missing women activists as they seek access to \$9 billion in frozen assets, 26 January 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, UN Human Rights Office Raises Alarm Over 6 Kabul Abductees, 1 February 2022, [url](#); OHCHR, Press briefing notes on Afghanistan, 1 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Calls Mount For Answers Over Missing Women Activists, 4 February 2022, [url](#); Zahra Rahimi [Twitter], posted on: 5 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, UN Reiterates Concerns Over Missing Afghan Women Activists, 9 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Protesters Call for Release of Female Activists, 12 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷²² TOLONews, Probe Launched Over Missing Female Activists: Islamic Emirate, 29 January 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban takes another women's rights protester, 3 February 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Faced with disappearances, beatings and intimidation, Afghanistan's women's rights activists go quiet on the streets, 8 February 2022, [url](#); Ariana News, IEA says it's investigating the disappearance of women activists, 10 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷²³ Khaama Press, Taliban release Afghan women activists, foreigners, 12 February 2022, [url](#); UNAMA [Twitter], posted on: 13 February 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Missing Afghan women activists released: UN, 13 February 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghan woman activist released after arrest in January, 13 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷²⁴ TOLONews, Freed Activists Feel Pressure to Not Share Details: Relatives, 13 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷²⁵ TOLONews [Twitter], posted on: 12 February 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban have detained 29 women and their families in Kabul, says US envoy, 12 February 2022, [url](#)



it could offer them and their families a chance to leave the country. The women reportedly also declared ‘they were not treated harshly’ by the Taliban. In the same video, a Taliban spokesman claimed that the women ‘regretted their actions’.¹⁷²⁶ However, as reported by Amnesty International, the circumstances in which this video clip was filmed remained unclear.¹⁷²⁷ On 23 February 2022, Reportedly cited one of the women activists stating that ‘the Taliban took their confession by force’.¹⁷²⁸ The Taliban authorities reportedly released many of the group of women activists and their families on 28 February 2022.¹⁷²⁹ Referring to this incident, an international organisation interviewed by DIS in April 2022, distinguished two types of Taliban responses to female protesters and activists: coordinated operations such as this arrest of a group of women and their family members, and isolated responses driving protesters and activists apart with some level of violence.¹⁷³⁰

As indicated by OHCHR and Gossman, it was very difficult to verify information on the detention conditions and the release of these female human rights activists and protesters, due to reported threats and restrictions on their ability to speak publicly about their experiences.¹⁷³¹ Related to the above-mentioned cases, Amnesty International reported on ‘a well-established pattern of reprisals against and intimidation of women activists, including reports of torture’.¹⁷³² According to information received from the former AIHCR chairwoman Shaharзад Akbar, most of these female activists and protesters were harassed or tortured during their detention. One woman was allegedly subjected to gang rape, and another had her fingernails pulled out. After their release, the women were asked to sign ‘commitment letters’, pledging that they would not participate in protests anymore nor engage with media or human rights organisations. Some of the women were reportedly still in Kabul in June 2022, others had been able to leave the country and were evacuated to Pakistan.¹⁷³³ In an interview with DIS in April 2022, journalist Lynne O’Donnell indicated that many women protesters and activists refrained from publicly talking about their time in detention because of the risk of assumptions that they might have been raped, which is perceived as shameful and linked to the perception of a woman losing her honour.¹⁷³⁴ For more information on reactions on women right’s demonstrations, see section [5.2.4. Freedom of expression and assembly](#).

Also in February 2022, civil society activist and former government official Fayaz Ghouri was arrested in Herat City.¹⁷³⁵ According to sources interviewed by Amnesty International, Ghouri was arrested by the Taliban’s Provincial Directorate of Intelligence on 1 February 2022, but the

¹⁷²⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Detained Women Activists In Afghanistan Apparently Forced To Confess Before Release, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷²⁷ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷²⁸ Reportedly [Twitter], posted on: 23 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷²⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 51; AI, Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷³⁰ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 21

¹⁷³¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 51; Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, digital interview, 12 May 2022

¹⁷³² AI, There is a window of opportunity to negotiate for the rights of Afghan women, but it is rapidly closing, 1 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷³³ Akbar, S., former AIHRC chairperson, emails, 22 and 24 June 2022

¹⁷³⁴ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 21

¹⁷³⁵ Etillaat-e Rooz, بازداشت یک فعال مدنی در هرات از سوی طالبان [Detention of a civil activist in Herat by the Taliban], 3 February 2022, [url](#)





Taliban denied his arrest for several days. A month later, on 2 March 2022, Ghouri was reportedly transferred to Herat's central prison, where his family could see him once. As stated by the same sources, Ghouri had been involved with the Herat Civil Society Institution Activist Solidarity and had criticised some of the Taliban's policies on social media.¹⁷³⁶ In March 2022, the Washington Post reported on '20 female Afghan activists remaining in prison despite repeated international pressure for their release'.¹⁷³⁷

¹⁷³⁶ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁷³⁷ Washington Post (The), Taliban arrests Canadian aid worker amid widening crackdown on activists and foreigners, 7 March 2022, [url](#)





9. Healthcare professionals

9.1. General situation under Taliban rule

After the Taliban takeover, the number of healthcare professionals was reported to have ‘most likely’ decreased due to several factors: the inability of the Taliban to pay salaries to health sector workers, and uncertainty around security conditions. The clashes of 2021 and the Taliban takeover reportedly forced many health sector professionals, including women¹⁷³⁸ (also midwives¹⁷³⁹ and women working at maternity hospitals¹⁷⁴⁰) to flee Afghanistan.¹⁷⁴¹ In October 2021, France 24 reported that many healthcare workers feared to return to work, despite the Taliban’s calls that they should resume their duties.¹⁷⁴²

In a mid-January 2022 report, Human Rights Watch noted that in Ghazni Province the Taliban were calling healthcare workers ‘in the middle of the night’ to ask for medical help for ‘their patients and families’ and entering the hospital ‘with their guns’, making it ‘difficult for the doctors and nurses to manage’.¹⁷⁴³

9.1.1. Employment of women in the health sector

On 27 August 2021, a Taliban spokesperson stated that all women healthcare workers in Kabul and the provinces should return to work.¹⁷⁴⁴ In September 2021, BBC News reported that female patients were allowed to be attended only by women healthcare professionals.¹⁷⁴⁵ The same month, representatives of the Afghanistan Nurses Association (ANA) stated that the situation of women employment was ‘unclear’ and mentioned cases where some patients would not accept a female nurse and where ‘armed soldiers’ were entering hospital wards, making some nurses flee their workplace.¹⁷⁴⁶ In October 2021, the Taliban announced that they would allow the involvement of women frontline workers in a nationwide polio vaccination campaign, committing ‘to provide security and safety for all frontline health workers’.¹⁷⁴⁷ In November 2021, Human Rights Watch noted that women health sector employees might not be able ‘to comply with Taliban requirements for a male family member to escort women to and from work’.¹⁷⁴⁸

In a December 2021 report, UNDP noted that healthcare and education were two fields in which employment of women was not restricted after the Taliban takeover.¹⁷⁴⁹ In December

¹⁷³⁸ New York Times (The), Afghanistan’s Health Care System Is Collapsing Under Stress, 14 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷³⁹ CSM, How Afghan midwives are challenging Taliban strictures on women, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁰ BBC News, Giving birth under the Taliban, 20 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴¹ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to Congress, 30 January 2022, [url](#), p. 120;

¹⁷⁴² France24, Under years of Taliban rule, women nurses work alongside men, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴³ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁴ Reuters, Taliban say Afghan woman health service staff should go back to work, 27 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁵ BBC News, Giving birth under the Taliban, 20 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁶ ICN, Afghan nurses report on extreme challenges and need for international support, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁷ AI, Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁸ HRW, Afghanistan Facing Famine, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴⁹ UNDP, Afghanistan: Socio-Economic Outlook 2021-2022 - Averting a Basic Needs Crisis, 1 December 2021, [url](#), p. 30



2021, the Taliban Minister of Foreign Affairs said that all women who worked in the health sector before the takeover had returned to their places of employment.¹⁷⁵⁰ In correspondence with SIGAR in mid-December 2021, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) stated that policies on the return of women healthcare workers were not ‘consistent among provinces’ and that their partners in Afghanistan advised women health sector employees ‘to work from home until it is clear that they can return to the office safely.’ At the same time, ‘some female staff’ reportedly returned ‘to the office, health facilities, and field visits.’¹⁷⁵¹ According to a report of the UNSG, published on 15 June 2022, women’s employment was allowed in healthcare, education, and humanitarian sectors.¹⁷⁵²

According to a September 2021 report by the New York Times from Chak-e Wardak District, Wardak province, women constituted 14 out of 65 employees at a local hospital; a midwife working in the hospital stated that the Taliban had visited the hospital, but she did not feel any threat.¹⁷⁵³ A midwife in Paktika Province, interviewed for CSM reporting at the beginning of October 2021, quoted a Taliban commander, who had entered her hospital with two other fighters, railing that women “have no right to go out or work at all” and that “midwives are not necessary in society, because death is in the hands of God, and only God can save mothers’ lives.”¹⁷⁵⁴ According to AFP reporting in October 2021, local Taliban leaders perceived women employment as necessary in Day Mirdad District, Wardak Province, which is a mountainous and remote area. Seven women – a nurse, a vaccine specialist, two midwives, a nutritionist, and two cleaners – were reported to work side by side with men in the district’s only hospital, staffed by 28 healthcare workers in total.¹⁷⁵⁵ A government worker in Ghazni Province, interviewed by Human Rights Watch for a mid-January 2022 report, noted that female doctors continued working in private hospitals and clinics in the province, but became ‘harder to find.’ The report also noted that most female healthcare workers were not receiving salaries because of the continuing financial crisis.¹⁷⁵⁶

In May 2022, women were reported to run several hospitals in Kabul City. One of such hospitals, a maternity hospital, was employing at least 140 women while several men, who had been employed at the hospital, were forced to leave their employment after the Taliban takeover.¹⁷⁵⁷ In June 2022, the medical staff of a maternity hospital in Khost, operated by Doctors Without Borders (MSF), was reported to consist ‘almost entirely’ of women.¹⁷⁵⁸ In July 2022, WSJ reported that ‘[m]idwives say dozens of staff have fled the country, and more plan to leave because of the Taliban’s ban on girls’ education and curbs on women’s freedom.’¹⁷⁵⁹

¹⁷⁵⁰ Diplomat (The), We Are Committed in Principle to Women Participation, Says Taliban Minister, 13 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵¹ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to Congress, 30 January 2022, [url](#), p. 117

¹⁷⁵² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 34

¹⁷⁵³ New York Times (The), This Is Life in Rural Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵⁴ CSM, How Afghan midwives are challenging Taliban strictures on women, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵⁵ France 24, Under years of Taliban rule, women nurses work alongside men, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵⁶ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵⁷ Guardian (The), The Taliban know they need us: the Afghan hospitals run by women, 9 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵⁸ MSF, A hospital of women, for women, 20 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵⁹ WSJ, Maternity Care, Once a Sign of Hope in Afghanistan, Is Faltering Under the Taliban, 18 July 2022, [url](#)



9.1.2. Incidents targeting healthcare professionals

For 2021, the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) and Insecurity Insight reported that 20 incidents of violence against healthcare or obstruction of healthcare were recorded in Afghanistan after 15 August 2021, compared to 87 incidents recorded in the previous months of 2021. According to the report, violence against healthcare and/or obstruction of healthcare was committed by the Taliban (seven incidents) and ISKP (one incident); in 11 instances, the perpetrators remained unclear.¹⁷⁶⁰ As of 26 July 2022, no data for 2022 were published.¹⁷⁶¹

In 15 August 2021–1 June 2022, ACLED recorded 16 incidents in which health sector workers were targeted, consisting of attacks and abductions or enforced disappearances. Nine of these incidents were attributed to the Taliban.¹⁷⁶² These cases included the killing of four doctors, of which three killings were attributed to the Taliban. One doctor was reportedly well-known and had treated both NRF and Taliban fighters. He was killed in September 2021 along with some of his family members in Baghlan Province. Another case concerned a doctor of Hazara origin who reportedly had worked for ANSF. He was killed around 31 March 2022, in Kibrail area, Herat City. Another case concerned Taliban member's torturing a doctor in Kishm District, Badakhshan Province on 25 November 2021, his brother was reportedly a former ANDSF member.¹⁷⁶³ Other reports included the killing of a nurse, who was also advocating for women's rights, soon after the Taliban takeover¹⁷⁶⁴ and the beating of a female doctor, also a civil society activist in Kandahar Province, in September 2021¹⁷⁶⁵ during a 'night raid on her home'.¹⁷⁶⁶ Other reports included the Taliban torturing and killing a midwife of Hazara origin¹⁷⁶⁷ in Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh Province, on 1 April 2022.¹⁷⁶⁸ She was reportedly stopped by the Taliban for sitting in a car without a *mahram*.¹⁷⁶⁹

Other individual reports indicated that 'doctors who criticised the Covid-19 vaccination policy of the Taliban, expressed fear for their safety'¹⁷⁷⁰, and that such individuals had been threatened by the Taliban.¹⁷⁷¹ Other reports included a male doctor in Nangarhar Province who was beaten by the Taliban 'for trying to assist women at a medical centre'¹⁷⁷², a doctor and an

¹⁷⁶⁰ SHCC and Insecurity Insight, *Unrelenting Violence: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict*, 24 May 2022, [url](#), pp. 13, 15–17

¹⁷⁶¹ HDE, *Afghanistan: Attacks on Aid Operations, Education, Health and Protection*, [url](#), accessed 1 June 2022

¹⁷⁶² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Afghanistan*, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁷⁶³ ACLED, *Curated Data Files, Afghanistan*, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁷⁶⁴ France 24 Observers, *Out Observers recount life under Taliban rule in 2021*, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶⁵ Khaama Press, *Female doctor in Kandahar claims to be beaten by Taliban*, 12 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶⁶ SHCC and Insecurity Insight, *Unrelenting Violence: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict*, 24 May 2022, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁷⁶⁷ UN, *Amid Plummeting Humanitarian Conditions in Afghanistan, Women, Girls Are Being Written Out of Society by De Facto Authorities*, Briefers Warn Security Council, 23 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶⁸ Rawa News, *Taliban tortured and killed midwife in Mazar-e Sharif*, 2 April 2022, [url](#); UN, *Amid Plummeting Humanitarian Conditions in Afghanistan, Women, Girls Are Being Written Out of Society by De Facto Authorities*, Briefers Warn Security Council, 23 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶⁹ Rawa News, *Taliban tortured and killed midwife in Mazar-e Sharif*, 2 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷⁰ Insecurity Insight, *Attacks on Health Care, Bi-Monthly News Brief*, 25 August – 7 September 2021, 7 September 2021, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷⁷¹ SHCC and Insecurity Insight, *Unrelenting Violence: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict*, 24 May 2022, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁷⁷² SHCC and Insecurity Insight, *Unrelenting Violence: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict*, 24 May 2022, [url](#), p. 15



ambulance driver being ‘severely beaten’ by Taliban members while transferring a patient of Kuchi origin, injured in a clash, to a hospital in Shinwari District, Parwan Province¹⁷⁷³, and a Shia healthcare worker in Ghazni Province being threatened by a patient’s family with assumed connections to the Taliban.¹⁷⁷⁴

Several health sector professionals were reported to have been killed by the Taliban while crossing checkpoints¹⁷⁷⁵, some seemingly because the driver failed to stop.¹⁷⁷⁶

On 2 November 2021¹⁷⁷⁷, an ISKP-affiliated suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted the entrance of Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan Military Hospital in Kabul City, after which a larger second explosion occurred.¹⁷⁷⁸ At least 19 people were reportedly killed and 43 injured.¹⁷⁷⁹

Reports on attacks against healthcare workers by unknown gunmen¹⁷⁸⁰ included the killing of eight health workers, including four women¹⁷⁸¹ in February 2022.¹⁷⁸² They were engaged in the polio vaccination programme and were killed in the districts Kunduz and Emamsaheb, Kunduz Province, and Taloqan District, Takhar Province.¹⁷⁸³ On 27 April 2022, unknown gunmen fatally shot a doctor and injured his companion while driving a car in the 3rd security district of Jalalabad City, Nangarhar Province.¹⁷⁸⁴

Since the Taliban takeover sources have reported on an increase in abductions across the country.¹⁷⁸⁵ Reports included unidentified armed men abducting and killing a prominent psychiatrist on 20 September 2022 in Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh Province¹⁷⁸⁶, and a doctor in Kart-

¹⁷⁷³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁷⁷⁴ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷⁵ ANI, Afghanistan: Driver, doctor killed in firing by Taliban affiliates, 18 January 2022, [url](#); ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁷⁷⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, Doctors gunned down in Herat, 26 November 2021, [url](#); ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁷⁷⁷ Al-Jazeera, Afghanistan: Deadly blasts, gunfire hit Kabul military hospital, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷⁸ SHCC and Insecurity Insight, Unrelenting Violence: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict, 24 May 2022, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁷⁷⁹ Al-Jazeera, Afghanistan: Deadly blasts, gunfire hit Kabul military hospital, 2 November 2021, [url](#); SHCC and Insecurity Insight, Unrelenting Violence: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict, 24 May 2022, [url](#), p. 15

¹⁷⁸⁰ UN, United Nations mourns the death of health workers and halts polio vaccination campaign in Kunduz and Takhar Provinces of Afghanistan, 24 February 2022, [url](#); Insecurity Insight, Attacks on Health Care, Bi-Monthly News Brief (23 February – 8 March 2022), 22 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸¹ TOLONews, 8 Health Workers in Vaccination Campaign Killed in Takhar, Kunduz, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸² UN, United Nations mourns the death of health workers and halts polio vaccination campaign in Kunduz and Takhar Provinces of Afghanistan, 24 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, 8 Health Workers in Vaccination Campaign Killed in Takhar, Kunduz, 24 February 2022, [url](#); Salam Watandar, UN mourns killing of 8 polio vaccinators in Kunduz, Takhar, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸³ UN, United Nations mourns the death of health workers and halts polio vaccination campaign in Kunduz and Takhar Provinces of Afghanistan, 24 February 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, 8 Health Workers in Vaccination Campaign Killed in Takhar, Kunduz, 24 February 2022, [url](#); Salam Watandar, UN mourns killing of 8 polio vaccinators in Kunduz, Takhar, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸⁴ Hasht-e Subh, Unknown Gunmen Shot Dead a Doctor in Nangarhar, 28 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸⁵ TOLONews, Kidnapping Cases Surge in Afghanistan, 28 October 2021, [url](#); Salaam News, Abductions, murders of Afghan businessmen highlight Taliban security failures, 3 November 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Kidnapping incidents must stop: Ghazni residents, 12 December 2021, [url](#); The Print, Killings, kidnappings of businessmen have increased in Afghanistan: Chamber of Commerce, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Nader Alemi, a Kidnapped Psychotherapist, Was Killed in Balkh Last Night, 19 November 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Fears for Afghan psychiatrist abducted by armed men, 27 September 2021, [url](#); AP, Prominent Afghan doctor kidnapped, killed in northern city, 20 November 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Nader



e Naw area, Kabul City, on 23 December 2021.¹⁷⁸⁷ On 26 March 2022, armed gunmen reportedly abducted a dermatologist and owner of two clinics in Kabul and Nangarhar on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway.¹⁷⁸⁸ On 4 April, TOLONews reported that a doctor from Parwan Province had allegedly been detained by ISKP five months ago and remained missing.¹⁷⁸⁹

¹⁷⁸⁷ ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁷⁸⁸ Central Asia News.Net, Doctor abducted by unknown gunmen on Kabul-Jalalabad highway, 28 March 2022, [url](#);

Insecurity Insight, Attacks on Health Care, Bi-Monthly News Brief (23 March – 4 April 2022), 19 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸⁹ TOLONews, Family Says Doctor Went Missing 5 Months Ago, 4 April 2022, [url](#)



10. Humanitarian workers

10.1. General situation under Taliban rule

After the Taliban takeover, some humanitarian aid workers were evacuated from Afghanistan.¹⁷⁹⁰ In September 2021, the *de facto* authorities stated its guarantees for ‘the safety and security of humanitarian staff’ and freedom of movement of humanitarian workers, including women.¹⁷⁹¹ The pledges ‘to safeguard humanitarian aid workers’ were repeated in February 2022.¹⁷⁹²

According to reporting by AP on 2 February 2022, the *de facto* administration did not interfere in the work of the WFP in Logar Province and provided ‘security at distribution sites.’¹⁷⁹³ As of March 2022, UNOCHA reported that its humanitarian partners in Afghanistan were able to travel to hard-to-reach areas more easily compared to the pre-takeover period; however, provincial *de facto* authorities were reportedly interfering in the work processes of humanitarian actors, including the selection of beneficiaries and/or distribution process. According to UNOCHA, ‘violence and/or threats against humanitarian personnel, assets, and/or facilities’ were reported in 57 % of Afghanistan’s districts.¹⁷⁹⁴ A representative of an international organisation in Afghanistan, interviewed by DIS in March 2022, noted that ‘recently’ the Taliban had tried to interfere in which areas local NGOs should serve and said that there were ‘examples of assaults on NGO employees’ distributing aid.¹⁷⁹⁵

In the period from 1 January 2022 to 30 April 2022, UNOCHA reported on 134 instances of ‘violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities,’ 70 of which were reportedly committed by armed criminal groups (ACG), 47 by Taliban forces, 10 by Taliban authorities, 3 by community members, and 3 by ISKP. In April 2022, humanitarian workers in Kabul, Herat, and Jalalabad cities were affected by ACG-conducted series of robberies, in which two humanitarian workers were injured.¹⁷⁹⁶ In June 2022, UNOCHA recorded five incidents of threats against humanitarian workers, assets and facilities, nine incidents of robberies and/or thefts affecting humanitarian facilities, two attacks on humanitarian workers, and two arrests/detentions of humanitarian workers.¹⁷⁹⁷

10.1.1. Employment of women in the humanitarian sector

In November 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that UNOCHA had mapped agreements between aid agencies and the Taliban on the provincial level, ‘showing where female staff

¹⁷⁹⁰ DW, Afghanistan: Aid workers in need, 24 August 2021, [url](#); FAO, A humanitarian worker in Afghanistan, through thick and thin, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹¹ UN, Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General – on Afghanistan, 5 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹² AP, Swiss group: Taliban make pledges on education, aid workers, 11 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹³ AP, In freezing Afghanistan, aid workers rush to save millions, 2 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹⁴ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Humanitarian Access Severity Overview, 26 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 2–3

¹⁷⁹⁵ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 71

¹⁷⁹⁶ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Humanitarian Access Snapshot (1 January 2022 – 30 April 2022), 19 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹⁷ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Humanitarian Access Snapshot (1 June – 30 June 2022), 17 July 2022, [url](#)



members will be permitted to function'. According to the report, Taliban officials provided a written agreement that 'unconditionally' permitted women aid workers to fulfil their job 'in only three provinces.' As noted by Human Rights Watch, 'in over half the country' women humanitarian workers were restricted from fulfilling their work duties because of the requirement of male guardianship.¹⁷⁹⁸ The same month, a humanitarian worker employed with an NGO assisting farmers and herders affected by drought noted that his female colleagues were not permitted to work since the Taliban takeover. However, the source mentioned that 'some agencies' in his area received 'verbal permission for women to come back to work' from the Taliban authorities.¹⁷⁹⁹ As of 25 December 2021, nine Afghan provinces had 'only partial agreements for women humanitarian staff,' which limited women's employment to the areas of health and education. Even when allowed to work, the engagement of women humanitarian workers was reported to remain 'conditional' due to the requirement to be accompanied by a *mahram*.¹⁸⁰⁰

According to an international NGO worker in Ghazni province, interviewed by Human Rights Watch for the report published in January 2022, international organisations continued to work in Ghazni. However, under the Taliban requirements, particularly in what concerned a requirement to be accompanied by a *mahram* while being outside home, their operation was effectively possible only in the health sector.¹⁸⁰¹ A female employee at International Rescue Committee (IRC) noted in a letter, published in March 2022, that women continued their employment at IRC.¹⁸⁰² An international humanitarian organisation, interviewed by DIS in March 2022, stated that employment with NGOs was one of the main types of employment for women, besides in the education and healthcare sectors.¹⁸⁰³ Similarly, the UNSG mentioned the humanitarian sector as a sector in which the employment of women was permitted in his June 2022 report.¹⁸⁰⁴ In April 2022, an international organisation noted in an interview with DIS that some female staff employed with national NGOs were not able to resume work in 'certain locations', while in some places, where they were able to work they could 'face problems at checkpoints' with Taliban checking 'where or who is the *mahram*'.¹⁸⁰⁵ UNOCHA reported that two female humanitarian workers 'were not allowed to go to the office at the checkpoint' as they had no *mahram* with them.¹⁸⁰⁶ In its report on humanitarian access for June 2022, UNOCHA noted that 2 of 17 directives issued by the *de facto* authorities enforced the requirements of wearing *hijab* and having *mahram* for female humanitarian workers.¹⁸⁰⁷

10.1.2. Incidents targeting humanitarian workers

In the period between 15 August 2021 and 25 July 2022, Aid Worker Security Database (AWSDB) recorded seven 'major attacks' on aid workers in Afghanistan. On 27 August 2021,

¹⁷⁹⁸ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Blocking Female Aid Workers, 4 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹⁹ FAO, A humanitarian worker in Afghanistan, through thick and thin, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰⁰ UNHCR and UN Women, Afghanistan Crisis Update: Women and Girls in Displacement, 28 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰¹ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Deprive Women of Livelihoods, Identity, 18 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰² IRC, An Afghan woman and aid worker speaks out, 6 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰³ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 59

¹⁸⁰⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 39

¹⁸⁰⁵ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban's impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 50

¹⁸⁰⁶ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Humanitarian Access Snapshot (1 January 2022 – 30 April 2022), 19 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰⁷ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Humanitarian Access Snapshot (1 June – 30 June 2022), 17 July 2022, [url](#)



during the attack on Kabul Airport, ISKP fatally shot a woman staff member of an International non-governmental organisation (INGO) 'while in her car on the road,' as reported by a focal point source to AWSD. On 29 August 2021, a local staff of an INGO was killed with nine members of his family, including children, in a US drone strike in Kabul City.¹⁸⁰⁸ On 21 September 2021, unidentified armed men reportedly abducted and interrogated an UN agency worker in Herat City. The person was released the next day. On 25 December 2021, an INGO staff member was stabbed during a robbery in Jawzjan Province.¹⁸⁰⁹ Three 'major attacks' recorded by AWSD in 2022 were conducted on the members of the polio vaccination teams in the provinces Kunduz and Takhar.¹⁸¹⁰

Between 15 August 2021 and 1 June 2022, ACLED recorded four incidents, in which humanitarian workers were targeted by the Taliban or by an unidentified armed group.¹⁸¹¹ On 22 August 2021, the Taliban reportedly stopped a vehicle of an Afghan UN staff member who was trying to reach Kabul airport, and beat the person.¹⁸¹² On 24 December 2021, five Afghan Development Agency (ADA) employees 'were insulted and severely beaten' by the Taliban in Nili City, the capital of Daykundi Province; some employees of the agency were also reportedly detained for several hours. Around 24 January 2022, the Taliban reportedly 'assaulted and arrested' four NGO workers at a checkpoint in Sayyid Abad District, Wardak Province. The arrested NGO employees were later released, and the Taliban fighters arrested.¹⁸¹³ On 9 May 2022, according to local and international media, a UN vehicle was hit by a bomb in Kunar Province.¹⁸¹⁴

On 26 April 2022, Taliban GDI temporarily detained four humanitarian workers, including one woman, in Kandahar Province during their monitoring visit.¹⁸¹⁵

¹⁸⁰⁸ Guardian (The), US drone strike mistakenly targeted Afghan aid worker, investigation finds, 11 September 2022, [url](#); AWSD, Filter: 2021-2022, Afghanistan, accessed 25 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰⁹ AWSD, Filter: 2021-2022, Afghanistan, accessed 25 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸¹⁰ AWSD, Filter: 2021-2022, Afghanistan, accessed 25 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸¹¹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁸¹² Reuters, EXCLUSIVE Internal UN document says Taliban threatened, beat staff, 25 August 2021, [url](#); ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁸¹³ ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022

¹⁸¹⁴ ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022; West Australian (The), Bomb hits UN car in Afghanistan: Taliban, 10 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸¹⁵ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Humanitarian Access Snapshot (1 January 2022 – 30 April 2022), 19 May 2022, [url](#)



11. LGBTIQ¹⁸¹⁶ persons

11.1. General situation under Taliban rule

In January 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that the Taliban ‘echoed the previous government’s support for the criminalisation of same-sex relations’, with some Taliban leaders ‘vowing to take a hard line’ against the rights of the ‘LGBT’ community.¹⁸¹⁷ According to a manual issued by the Taliban MPVPV in 2020 and revised in February 2021, same-sex relations were prohibited, while “strong allegations” of homosexuality were to ‘be reported to the ministry’s district manager for further action, presumably punishment.’¹⁸¹⁸ In October 2021, a spokesperson for the Taliban Ministry of Finance said that ‘gay rights’ would not be included into human rights respected within the framework of *sharia* and that ‘LGBT’ were ‘against our Sharia law.’¹⁸¹⁹

In its annual report covering 2021, USDOS reported on human rights violations in relation to LGBTIQ community members in Afghanistan as violence by different actors and the ‘existence and use of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct’.¹⁸²⁰ In June 2022, the UNSG noted that the Taliban MPVPV had ‘increased the enforcement of a wide range of rules and directives’ on extramarital relations and dress code, next to other spheres.¹⁸²¹

Following the Taliban takeover, members of the LGBTIQ community were reported to have faced attacks, direct threats by the Taliban,¹⁸²² arrests¹⁸²³, detentions, torture, killings,¹⁸²⁴ sexual assaults, and rapes.¹⁸²⁵ Sources reported on street attacks and threats over the phone to LGBTIQ persons.¹⁸²⁶ Various sources reported that LGBTIQ persons were forced into hiding,

¹⁸¹⁶ This term is used in accordance with the EU policy strategy, available at [url](#), which refers to sexual and gender minorities as: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons. In line with EASO COI Research Guide on LGBTIQ, available at [url](#), other acronyms (GBT, LGBT, LGBT+, etc.) are used when referencing sources that use these acronyms.

¹⁸¹⁷ HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸¹⁸ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Vice Handbook Abusive, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸¹⁹ Thomas Reuters Foundation, Taliban say gay rights will not be respected under Islamic law, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸²⁰ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 2–3

¹⁸²¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2022, [url](#), para. 34

¹⁸²² HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸²³ FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#); Pink News, Taliban using monkeypox as an excuse to round up and arrest LGBTQ+ Afghans, 3 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸²⁴ FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸²⁵ HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#); FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#); Pink News, Taliban using monkeypox as an excuse to round up and arrest LGBTQ+ Afghans, 3 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸²⁶ ABC, LGBT Afghans are on the run, afraid they could be stoned to death under Taliban law, 2 September 2021, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: LGBTQ people fear for their lives under Taliban rule, 10 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Angry and afraid, Afghanistan’s LGBTQ community say they’re being hunted down after Taliban takeover, 18 September 2021, [url](#); DW, Trans in Afghanistan: A mortal danger under the Taliban, 2 October 2021, [url](#); Thompson Reuters Foundation, LGBT+ Afghans fear being forgotten 100 days since Taliban takeover, 23 November 2021, [url](#)



fearing for their lives and safety.¹⁸²⁷ As reported by FP in May 2022, ‘dozens of cases of harassment, beatings, burning, and killings of young people’ of the LGBT community were documented by activists since 15 August 2022.¹⁸²⁸ A report by Human Rights Watch noted that LGBT people feared to leave their homes for work or shopping even if they received no direct threats from the Taliban.¹⁸²⁹

In a telephone interview with France24, the Executive Director of Rainbow Railroad, the only international LGBTIQ organisation in Afghanistan, claimed that the Taliban had a ‘kill list’ for members of the LGBTIQ community, initially based on ‘information sharing’ by the international human rights groups to identify people to be evacuated after the takeover and complemented ‘through active persecution, by means of “entrapment” and data leaks.’¹⁸³⁰ In June 2022, the UK-based queer media outlet Pink News referred to two gay men living in Kabul City, who claimed that targeting of LGBTQ+ community by the Taliban have intensified after detection of monkeypox in Europe.¹⁸³¹

As reported by Human Rights Watch, after the Taliban takeover, many members of the LGBT community left bigger cities and returned to their families in rural areas; many reportedly changed their phone numbers and discontinued contact with other community members.¹⁸³² FP reported that some LGBT persons were suffering under ‘severe mental health problems,’ while many found themselves on the streets, after leaving their homes, with no means of subsistence.¹⁸³³ In September 2021, the Guardian reported on rumours that the Taliban tried to trick gay men by contacting them on social media and offering ways to leave Afghanistan. According to the same source, transgender women were forced to hide their gender identity, and lesbian women to act ‘more feminine’.¹⁸³⁴

‘Gender nonconforming individuals’ interviewed by Human Rights Watch said they feared to go to a passport office or to pass through checkpoints on public roads. It was also reported that Taliban members had assaulted people wearing non-traditional clothes and searched their phones and personal belongings to find evidence that they were members of LGBT community. For lesbian and bisexual women, difficulties in moving around were reported due to the Taliban’s requirement to have a male relative accompanying them.¹⁸³⁵

‘The half dozen queer Afghans,’ interviewed by FP and the Fuller Project in April 2022, said the Taliban was ‘actively searching for them.’ One of the interviewed persons stated they were tortured by the Taliban when the Taliban identified them as a member of the queer community

¹⁸²⁷ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 31; USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 48; HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#); FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#); BBC News, LGBT in Afghanistan: I could be killed on the spot, 20 August 2021, [url](#); ABC, LGBT Afghans are on the run, afraid they could be stoned to death under Taliban law, 2 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Angry and afraid, Afghanistan’s LGBTQ community say they’re being hunted down after Taliban takeover, 18 September 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), The Taliban will have no mercy: LGBTQ+ Afghans go into hiding, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸²⁸ FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸²⁹ HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸³⁰ France 24, The Taliban has a kill list for the Afghan LGBT community, NGO says, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸³¹ Pink News, Taliban using monkeypox as an ‘excuse’ to ‘round up’ and arrest LGBTQ+ Afghans, 3 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸³² HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸³³ FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸³⁴ Guardian (The), The Taliban will have no mercy: LGBTQ+ Afghans go into hiding, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸³⁵ HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)



after checking their phone at a checkpoint in Kabul.¹⁸³⁶ A member of civil society in Afghanistan, interviewed by DIS in May 2022, noted that the Taliban were ‘very harsh’ on checkpoints and some transgender people were beaten and detained for hours.¹⁸³⁷

As reported by DIS, there were ‘no regional differences concerning the treatment of LGBT people by Taliban’ and LGBT people were often escaping their families and settling in major cities, for instance Kabul City and Mazar-e Sharif.¹⁸³⁸

11.2. Societal treatment

Prior the Taliban takeover, members of the LGBTIQ community were reported to have faced threats and harassment from the general society.¹⁸³⁹ After 15 August 2021, attacks on LGBTIQ people by family members, neighbours, and members of general society have reportedly increased.¹⁸⁴⁰ According to a June 2022 report of FP, many LGBT people were abused by their families and living in fear of their neighbours. Some claimed that their neighbours reported them to the Taliban.¹⁸⁴¹ Beatings by neighbours were also reported.¹⁸⁴²

In its January 2022 report, Human Rights Watch noted that LGBT people were facing threats from family members, neighbours, acquaintances, romantic partners, and online contacts who either became supportive of the Taliban or were trying ‘to ensure their own safety’ by taking action against LGBT people. Some of the people interviewed by Human Rights Watch said that their family members reported them to the *de facto* authorities, ‘seeing a chance to settle old scores or to win their own protection from Taliban violence.’ In one instance, a gay man said he had received threats from the Taliban, allegedly because his father, an acquaintance to a senior Taliban official, used his connections to chase him down due to his sexual identity. In some cases, the threats were coming from former romantic partners, who had joined the Taliban.¹⁸⁴³

Many LGBT Afghans were reported to have conformed to social expectations to marry a different-sex partner and have children, as they wanted to maintain connections with their families. As reported by Human Rights Watch, lesbian women were forced to engagement or marriage. In one instance, a lesbian woman’s male relatives, who had joined the Taliban, threatened her by saying that now ‘they had the power to kill’ her.¹⁸⁴⁴

¹⁸³⁶ FP, What the Taliban Mean for Queer Afghans, 20 April 2022, [url](#); Fuller Project (The), Queer Afghan lives are at risk under the Taliban, 20 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸³⁷ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 89

¹⁸³⁸ Denmark, DIS, Afghanistan – Taliban’s impact on the population, June 2022, [url](#), p. 31

¹⁸³⁹ FP, What the Taliban Mean for Queer Afghans, 20 April 2022, [url](#); Fuller Project (The), Queer Afghan lives are at risk under the Taliban, 20 April 2022, [url](#); USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 60

¹⁸⁴⁰ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 60; HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#); FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴¹ FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴² HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#); FP, Millions of Afghans Want to Flee. LGBTQ Afghans Have To., 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴³ HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴⁴ HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)



After the attack on a transgender person in Herat Province in December 2021, transgender people residing in the province told TOLONews that they were abandoned by their families and rejected by the Afghan society.¹⁸⁴⁵

In its 2021 report, USDOS noted that since 15 August 2021 it had become more difficult for LGBTIQ people to gain access to reproductive healthcare due to ‘widespread discrimination and abuse.’ At the same time, the previously existing support network of LGBTIQ people ‘largely disintegrated’ as the members of the community either fled Afghanistan or went into hiding.¹⁸⁴⁶

11.3. Incidents targeting LGBTIQ persons by the Taliban and armed groups

As noted by Human Rights Watch in January 2022, the extent of violence against LGBT people by the Taliban after the takeover remained unclear. The Taliban have denied their involvement in extrajudicial killings, trying to gain international recognition, while the ability of Afghan media to report on the instances of violence was undermined by the restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities on the media and the impact of financial crisis on the sector. Moreover, ‘documenting killings of people suspected of being LGBT’ have become ‘especially difficult’ as people who know the victims either fear or are too ashamed to report.¹⁸⁴⁷

In the reference period, ACLED recorded two violations against LGBTIQ persons. Around 30 August 2021 in Kabul city, a gay man was reportedly stopped by two Taliban members, who searched his phone and beat him after discovering content related to homosexuality. The Taliban attempted to arrest the person, but he managed to escape. On 28 December 2021, a 65-year-old¹⁸⁴⁸ transgender person was reportedly beaten and tortured by three men in Herat city who tried ‘to have relations’ with the person.¹⁸⁴⁹

On 2 September, ABC News referred to a 26-year-old man who stated that his boyfriend ‘had been dragged from his house, beaten, and beheaded in the street’ on 15 August 2021.¹⁸⁵⁰ In an article on LGBT+ community on Afghanistan, published in November 2021, Thomas Reuters Foundation News stated that ‘one gay man contacted by email said a friend had been killed after gay material was found on his mobile phone during a checkpoint search.’ The article noted further that killings of LBGT+ community members in Afghanistan had not been independently verified, and a Taliban spokesman did not give any comments when contacted by journalists.¹⁸⁵¹ As noted by Human Rights Watch in January 2022, some LGBT persons

¹⁸⁴⁵ TOLONews, Transgender Person Attacked by Unknown Individuals in Herat, 29 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴⁶ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 48

¹⁸⁴⁷ HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴⁸ TOLONews, Transgender Person Attacked by Unknown Individuals in Herat, 29 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴⁹ ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, as of 6 June 2022; TOLONews, Transgender Person Attacked by Unknown Individuals in Herat, 29 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵⁰ ABC, LGBT Afghans are on the run, afraid they could be stoned to death under Taliban law, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵¹ Thompson Reuters Foundation News, LGBT+ Afghans fear being forgotten 100 days since Taliban takeover, 23 November 2021, [url](#)



indicated that several people they knew had gone missing since 15 August 2021, and they believed they had been killed. In one case, a male couple claimed that their ‘several gay friends’ had been killed, allegedly by the Taliban in targeted killings that were motivated by their sexuality and/or participation in anti-Taliban protests.¹⁸⁵²

In August 2021, a gay man was reported to have been ‘tricked into a meeting by two Taliban members’, who beat and raped him.¹⁸⁵³ Two gay men interviewed for the January 2022 report of Human Rights Watch said that ‘they were raped or blackmailed into sex’ by the members of the Taliban.¹⁸⁵⁴

¹⁸⁵² HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵³ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 60

¹⁸⁵⁴ HRW, Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You, 26 January 2022, [url](#)



12. Education personnel

12.1. Background

The enrolment of children increased from approximately 1 million students to 10 million in 2001–2018. In the same period, female pupils rose from almost zero to around 2.5 million.¹⁸⁵⁵

In the years before the Taliban takeover, some schools and other parts of the education system were targeted by the Taliban.¹⁸⁵⁶ Based on a Human Rights Watch report covering the first six months of 2021, explosive weapons were used to attack about 40 schools. 185 students and teachers were killed or wounded in the attacks, most were girls and women.¹⁸⁵⁷

Prior to the takeover, the Taliban's increasing presence in rural areas resulted in a growing number of public schools under their control. In some schools, continued teaching was allowed, except for certain subjects. Other schools only provided education for males or were limited to religious topics.¹⁸⁵⁸

12.2. General situation under Taliban rule

Following the Taliban takeover, primary and elementary school remained open¹⁸⁵⁹ but girls' secondary schools were closed.¹⁸⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch noted that Taliban policies towards education since August 2021 resulted in a 'collection of fragmented and sometimes incoherent policies', and called the situation of girls' secondary education 'a patchwork'.¹⁸⁶¹ The lack of a clear policies regarding women teachers and girls' education, combined with non-payment of teachers' salaries, led to low enrolment rates even where schools were open.¹⁸⁶² Some girls and women attended secret schools to cope with the restrictions.¹⁸⁶³

There was reportedly a shortage of female teachers¹⁸⁶⁴, a longstanding issue which worsened after the Taliban takeover as some teachers fled the country or left their jobs due to the non-payment of salaries.¹⁸⁶⁵ The lack of funds caused difficulties for the *de facto* authorities to ensure payment of salaries to education personnel¹⁸⁶⁶, and also impacted the operationality of

¹⁸⁵⁵ UNESCO, The right to education: What's at stake in Afghanistan?, A 20 year review, 2021, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁸⁵⁶ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵⁷ HRW, Explosive Weapons Attacks on Afghanistan Schools Increase, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵⁸ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵⁹ TOLONews, Afghan Students Anxious as Schools Remain Closed, 16 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶⁰ TOLONews, Concerns of Afghan Girls Rise Over Closed Schools, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶¹ HRW, Four Ways to Support Girls' Access to Education in Afghanistan, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶² USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶³ FT, Secret schools keep Afghan girls learning, 28 March 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: The secret girls school defying the Taliban, 18 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 10

¹⁸⁶⁵ HRW, Four Ways to Support Girls' Access to Education in Afghanistan, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, We Are Hungry: Afghan Schools Left Without Teachers As Instructors Struggle To Survive, 24 November 2021, [url](#)



schools, purchase of learning materials and teachers' training.¹⁸⁶⁷ Foreign aid initiatives provided cash support to some public teachers.¹⁸⁶⁸ The World Bank channelled incentives planned to financially support teachers in provinces allowing girls' secondary education¹⁸⁶⁹, but following the Taliban's decision to not reopen all secondary schools, the World Bank suspended four projects in worth USD 600 million.¹⁸⁷⁰

For more information on women's and girls' access to education, see section [5.2.1. Access to education](#).

12.3. Incidents targeting education personnel and school facilities

In January 2022, Afghan teachers employed at the British Council ('a public body that works around the world to promote cultural and educational links') in Helmand Province, reported to BBC that they hid from the Taliban out of fear of reprisals.¹⁸⁷¹ According to more than 20 testimonies to Amnesty International from 16 September to 8 October 2021, teachers faced intimidation and death threats.¹⁸⁷² A high school teacher reported to be threatened to death by Taliban. On 18 August 2021, two students were reportedly beaten by the Taliban while attempting to go to English classes, as considered 'infidels language'. A secondary school teacher said to be harassed and intimidated by the Taliban following a media interview in which she complained about teacher salaries and girls' access to secondary education.¹⁸⁷³

On 10 January 2022, UNAMA document the death of eight children, and injury of four, after an explosive remnant of war exploded near a school in Nangarhar Province.¹⁸⁷⁴ On 19 April 2022, a twin explosion occurred in Abdul Rahim Shaheed High School, and close to the Mumtaz Education Center. Both sites were within Hazara neighbourhoods in the area Dasht-e Barchi in Kabul City. According to Amnesty International, the explosion killed six persons and injured at least 11, including children.¹⁸⁷⁵ At the time of writing, the death-toll is not yet definitive. In the aftermath of the attack, there was no immediate claim of responsibility, but ISKP has been attributed previous attacks in the area.¹⁸⁷⁶

There were also incidents of the Taliban arresting university professors criticising them. For more information, see section [1.2.1. Expressed opposition and criticism](#).

¹⁸⁶⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 20

¹⁸⁶⁸ UNICEF, Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation Report n.3, 1-28 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶⁹ Guardian (The), West plans to tie Afghan teacher aid to girls' education pledge, 22 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷⁰ BBC News, Afghanistan: World Bank freezes projects over girls' school ban, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷¹ BBC News, Afghanistan: Terrified British Council teachers still in hiding, 13 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷² AI, Afghanistan: Taliban must allow girls to return to school immediately – new testimony, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷³ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban must allow girls to return to school immediately – new testimony, 13 October 2021, [url](#);

Amnesty International decided to omit precise locations of incidents for security reasons

¹⁸⁷⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 24

¹⁸⁷⁵ BBC News, Afghanistan: School bombings a reprehensible attack on religious and ethnic minorities, 19 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷⁶ BBC News, Kabul blasts kill six and wound 20 at boys' school, 19 April 2022, [url](#); France 24, Several killed in twin explosions at Shiite school in Afghan capital, 19 April 2022, [url](#)



13. Recruitment to armed groups

According to Omar Nuhzat, a Kabul-based political analyst, recruitment by different terrorist groups, particularly by ISKP, increased in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of international forces.¹⁸⁷⁷ In March 2022, VOA reported the following number of militants in Afghanistan:

- ISKP: 4 000 fighters (half were estimated to be foreigners)
- Al Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent: 400 fighters
- Haqqani Network: 3 000–10 000 fighters
- TTP: 3 000–5 000 (along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border)
- Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU): ‘several hundred fighters’
- Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM): 200–700 fighters.¹⁸⁷⁸

Regarding the aforementioned figures, no additional or corroborated information could be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this report.

For more information on recruitment by different militant groups in Afghanistan before 2021, see [EASO COI report on Afghanistan – Anti-Government Elements \(August 2020\)](#).

13.1. Recruitment to the Taliban

13.1.1. Overview

During spring and summer of 2021, when the US and its allied forces started withdrawing from Afghanistan, the Taliban reportedly recruited between 5 000 and 10 000 new fighters, a number approximately ‘10 times higher than the normal influx of Taliban recruits to Afghanistan during other regular fighting seasons’.¹⁸⁷⁹ During the same period, the group’s ‘clerics and commanders’ mobilised thousands of fighters and supporters from Pakistan to enter Afghanistan and strengthen their ranks across the country. Recruitment took place in mosques, training camps and *madrassas* in Pakistan, and numerous newly recruited Afghan students went to Afghanistan before completing their studies.¹⁸⁸⁰

According to VOA, in August 2021, ‘the number of fighters in the Taliban group’s ranks has not been independently confirmed’.¹⁸⁸¹ However, according to other sources, between 15 August 2021 and January 2022, the *de facto* government reportedly had an estimated number of 80 000 members in its ranks¹⁸⁸², who were stationed in eight military corps throughout

¹⁸⁷⁷ Salaam Times, Terrorist attacks aim to stoke ethnic, sectarian division in Afghanistan, 25 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷⁸ VOA, How Afghanistan’s militant groups are evolving under Taliban rule, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷⁹ SIGAR, Quarterly report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸⁰ Washington Post (The), Taliban recruits flood into Afghanistan from neighbouring Pakistan as the group works to consolidate control, 18 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸¹ VOA, Taliban seeking 110 000 – strong army after 6 months in power, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸² Guardian (The), A tale of two enemies; why Afghan forces proved no much for the Taliban?, 15 August 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Government to build 150 000 member forces, 10 January 2022, [url](#)



Afghanistan.¹⁸⁸³ In May 2022, a spokesperson for the Taliban Ministry of Defence claimed that the ministry had recruited 130 000 troops.¹⁸⁸⁴

According to the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, reporting on 26 May 2022, the Taliban government planned to have a total number of between 300 000 and 350 000 personnel for both the Taliban ministries of defence and interior, with 100 000 to 150 000 under the command of the Taliban Minister of Defence. The mentioned source further added that around 7 000 Taliban recruits had completed their training.¹⁸⁸⁵

As of 15 August 2021, the Taliban started to recruit and train new *de facto* police personnel for Kabul City, which reportedly reached 4 000 individuals in October 2021. During the same period, the Taliban ordered former government employees to return to work, including former police officers but ‘returns were slow due to fear of retaliation and lack of salary payments’.¹⁸⁸⁶ In October 2021, Mawlawi Qudratullah Abuhamza, governor of Balkh, stated that ‘soldiers from different ethnic groups have been recruited into the Balkh military corps’.¹⁸⁸⁷

In December 2021, the *de facto* government reportedly designated a new ‘special committee’ of 20 members ‘to review the Afghanistan army’. The committee was mandated ‘to work on a plan to create a “committed, disciplined, equipped, honest and responsible” army for Afghanistan’.¹⁸⁸⁸ In January 2022, the Taliban reportedly announced that the group will recruit ‘professional people’ in their army.¹⁸⁸⁹ According to Bakhtar News, the Taliban planned “to recruit experienced military officers”¹⁸⁹⁰, including officers and soldiers who served during the former regime.¹⁸⁹¹ According to Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid, ‘women will be recruited based on need, and troops with expert skills who were in the former army will also be recruited’.¹⁸⁹² In an interview with TOLONews in January 2022, a spokesperson of the Taliban Ministry of Defence stated that the enrolment process of new army members reached about 80 %, and that the registration of new members would be carried out in *kandaks* (battalions), *lewas* (brigades) and in other military bases across the country.¹⁸⁹³

According to Paikan, a Mazar-e Sharif based TV channel, the Taliban planned to recruit 143 women to serve within the 11 Police Districts, and Taliban criminal departments and Taliban prisons of the province. The mentioned recruitment process was claimed to be almost completed, and salaries paid to recruited female *de facto* police. Female *de facto* police personnel were recruited for the purpose of serving in prosecution and arrest cases, in particular during house searches, where female members of a family would be searched only

¹⁸⁸³ TOLONews, Government to build 150 000 member forces, 10 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸⁴ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate: over 130 000 soldiers recruited, 15 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸⁵ UN Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, /2022/419, 26 May 2022, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁸⁸⁶ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 1–2

¹⁸⁸⁷ TOLONews, In Balkh, MoD official urges troops to guard the nation, 17 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸⁸ Ariana News, IEA appoints committee to review the Afghan army, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸⁹ TOLONews, Government to build 150 000 member forces, 10 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹⁰ Bakhtar News Agency, MoD: Experience military personnel to join in new army, 14 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹¹ Al Jazeera, Taliban to create Afghanistan’s grand army with old regime troops, 22 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹² Ariana News, IEA to include Istishhad battalion in new army, 4 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹³ TOLONews, MoD to form 100,000-member defense force, 1 January 2022, [url](#)



by women in accordance with Afghan culture.¹⁸⁹⁴ Some of the newly recruited women have reportedly started operating in Mazar-e Sharif.¹⁸⁹⁵ In June 2022, a former female police officer in Balkh told Ariana News that she had returned to work and continued her previous job.¹⁸⁹⁶

13.1.2. Forced recruitment

According to several sources, the Taliban planned to build a 'regular' army in Afghanistan.¹⁸⁹⁷ As of January 2022, the Taliban Chief of Staff, Qari Fasihuddin Fitrat, reportedly announced that the Taliban would recruit soldiers on voluntary basis to their army.¹⁸⁹⁸

No information on forced recruitment to the Taliban could be found within the time constraints of this report.

13.2. Recruitment to Islamic State Khorasan Province

As of May 2022, ISKP reportedly had between 1 500 and 4 000 fighters in Afghanistan settled in rural areas of Kunar, Nangarhar (probably in Nuristan) provinces, with 'smaller covert cells' in Northern provinces of Afghanistan including in the provinces Badakhshan, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kunduz and Takhar.¹⁸⁹⁹ According to the Guardian, reporting in February 2022, ISKP was broadly recruiting across the country.¹⁹⁰⁰ According to an independent Afghan analyst, interviewed by EUAA in November 2021, ISKP used to have most presence in Nangarhar, Kunar and Kabul. Nangarhar was the first stronghold of ISKP in Afghanistan, and many rural areas in the province were under ISKP control for almost five years, until late 2019. The group had some tribal support, but were defeated by the former security forces supported by US intelligence. In Kabul, university students, Salafis and other groups had joined ISKP and the group had 'a lot' of support in the capital. ISKP also had support in Kunar which used to be the 'second home' of ISKP as they fled into the province and established a stronghold there after being defeated in Nangarhar Province in late 2019. According to the analyst, ISKP, unlike the Taliban, was composed of a large number of non-Pashtuns. The group was *inter alia* consisting of Tajik Islamists from Badakhshan and Parwan provinces, and Uzbeks from Faryab Province and Mazar-e Sharif. The majority were Salafis and the Pashtun-Tajik tensions 'within Islamic circles' reportedly made ISKP gain support. The analyst further stated that one could see trends on social media where non-Pashtun and anti-Taliban segments of the Northern alliance, who were part of the previous government, supported ISKP only because they were fighting the Taliban. According to the analyst, who referred to information from a former Afghan special forces' general, about 13–15 persons from the former security forces had

¹⁸⁹⁴ Paikan TV, فرماندهی جلب و جذب در بلخ از آغاز روند جذب بانوان خبر می‌دهند [The recruitment command in Balkh announces the beginning of the process of recruiting women] [Online video], 7 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹⁵ Kabul24 [Twitter], posted on: 9 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹⁶ Aria News, Hiring of 1,800 police female officers in Balkh [Online video], 10 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹⁷ TOLONews, Taliban says it will build a regular army, include former members, 15 September 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok, Taliban finalising plan to create new army, 16 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban turns insurgents into commandos as it builds fully capable army, 19 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹⁸ TOLONews, Government to build 150 000 member forces, 10 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹⁹ UN Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 26 May 2022, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁹⁰⁰ Guardian (The), Two suspect British Islamic State recruits seized by Taliban at border, 8 February 2022, [url](#)



joined ISKP, while other sources indicated around 2–3 dozens. The analyst further stated that about 2 000–3 000 ISKP members were released during the takeover when the Taliban opened Pul-e Charkhi Prison and Bagram Prison.¹⁹⁰¹

According to Afghan Voice Agency (AVA), a local media outlet in Afghanistan, ISKP has been increasingly recruiting amongst ‘unhappy’ Taliban members whose salaries have not been paid by the Taliban in the northern province of Samangan, including in Dara-i-Suf-e Payin (Lower Suf valley), Dara-i Suf-e Bala (Upper Suf valley) and Hazrat-e Sultan districts. As of October 2021, the number of new recruits reached 50 members (in Samangan) and the recruitment has been continuing. ISKP has reportedly promised a salary of 35 000 Afghani [about EUR 375] to each of its fighters.¹⁹⁰² The New York Times cited a former Afghan government employee stating that ‘the worsening economic situation in the country is [...] driving the Islamic State’s recruitment’.¹⁹⁰³ According to Azizullah Ayoubi, a military analyst in Badakhshan Province, quoted by Salaam Times, “the increasing unemployment and poverty in the country has been an achievement for [ISKP], as it recruits the youth and pays them monthly salaries”.¹⁹⁰⁴

In Afghanistan, ISKP reportedly tried to recruit amongst Tajik¹⁹⁰⁵, and also Turkmen and Uzbek ethnic groups in northern Afghanistan, and ‘to capitalize on the growing dissatisfaction among ethnic Tajiks, Turkmen, and Uzbeks against Taliban rule in northern Afghanistan’.¹⁹⁰⁶ According to Antonio Giustozzi, scholar and author of several books on the Taliban, ‘the Taliban seem to be trying to prevent [ISKP] and other opposition groups from using media reporting as a tool in their propaganda/recruitment strategy’.¹⁹⁰⁷

ISKP’s top leader, Shahab al-Muhajir, reportedly recruited members in Afghanistan including ‘young individuals from influential political and warlord families’.¹⁹⁰⁸ According to Jeff Seldin, who serves as a National Security Correspondent for Voice of American, ISKP ‘increased its recruiting of ETIM [Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement] members’.¹⁹⁰⁹ On 2 April 2022, Salaam Times reported that ISKP posted a video on social media showing its newly recruited members, in an unknown area of Afghanistan, ‘pledging allegiance’ to the group’s global leader Abu Hasan al-Hashemi al-Qurashi. The source cited a native of Panjsher Province residing in Kabul who stated that ‘the current situation has made the ground more conducive for [ISKP] recruitment’.¹⁹¹⁰

¹⁹⁰¹ Independent Afghan analyst, digital interview, 8 November 2021

¹⁹⁰² AVA, سرېزگيري داعش از ميان سربازان ناراضی طالبان در سمنگان, [ISKP recruiting from amongst unhappy Taliban soldiers in Samangan], 21 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰³ New York Times (The), ISIS poses a growing threat to new Taliban government in Afghanistan, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰⁴ Salaam Times, ISIS attack worrying residence of Afghanistan’s northern provinces, 18 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰⁵ Diplomat (The), Islamic State in Afghanistan looks to recruit regional Tajiks, inflict violence against Tajikistan, 29 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰⁶ FPRI, Northern Afghanistan and the new threat to central Asia, 13 May 2022, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁹⁰⁷ Giustozzi, A., The Taliban homemade counterinsurgency, RUSI, 4 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰⁸ CTC, The Islamic State Threat in Taliban Afghanistan: Tracing the Resurgence of Islamic State Khorasan, 1 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰⁹ VOA, How Afghanistan’s militant groups are evolving under Taliban rule, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹¹⁰ Salaam Times, Fresh ISIS recruitment efforts raise concerns in Afghanistan, 11 April 2022, [url](#)



According to the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, reporting on 26 May 2022, there was an increase in ISKP recruitment in Afghanistan, which was ‘fuelled by prison releases [between 500 and 1 000 fighters in August 2021], tensions within the Taliban and [ISKP] financial resources’. There have been Tajik and Uzbek defections within the Taliban in the north changing allegiance from the Taliban to ISKP.¹⁹¹¹

13.3. Child recruitment

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) reported in January 2022 that, prior to the Taliban takeover, ‘the task force verified the recruitment and use of at least 47 boys, 24 of whom were recruited by the Taliban, 16 by [former] pro-government militia and 7 by the [former] Afghan National Police’. According to the same source, meanwhile ‘children in the ranks of Taliban have become more visible since its takeover, leading to perceptions that the recruitment of children has increased, despite much of the recruitment likely having occurred previously’.¹⁹¹²

According to the Taliban *Layeha* (code of conduct), ‘youngsters (whose beards are not visible because of their age) are not allowed to be kept by *mujahidin* in residential or military centres’.¹⁹¹³ More recently on 27 March 2022, the Taliban supreme leader reportedly issued a decree instructing Taliban military officials not to recruit minors.¹⁹¹⁴

In September 2021, Human Rights Watch stated that ‘thousands of children may remain’ in Taliban ranks. According to the article, over the past two decades, the Taliban used children during conflict to plant and detonate IEDs, and as suicide bombers. Taliban commanders used *madrassas* ‘to train and provide children as soldiers’. In addition, the group reportedly brainwashed boys aged 6 years old, who often were trained to use a weapon at the age of 13. Children between the age of 13 and 17 were trained to join fighting according to Human Rights Watch.¹⁹¹⁵ On 14 December 2021, Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed deep concerns about ‘the continued risk of child recruitment, particularly boys, by both [ISKP] and the *de facto* authorities’.¹⁹¹⁶ On 12 January 2022, a report of UNHCHR indicated that the economic situation increasingly deteriorated after the Taliban takeover, and the increased poverty could lead to ‘recruitment and use of children by armed groups’.¹⁹¹⁷

In a February 2022 documentary provided by VICE News in Afghanistan, there was a video footage of young boys in the ranks of the Taliban including some holding guns. No further information was provided whether these boys were serving the Taliban. However, in response

¹⁹¹¹ UN Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 26 May 2022, [url](#), pp. 17, 18

¹⁹¹² UNHCHR, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 12 January 2022, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁹¹³ Taliban, لا يَحِبُّه [code of conduct], Voice of Jihad, n.d., [url](#); Referring to an English translation of the Layeha (2010 version) made by the AAN, Clark, K., The Layha: Calling the Taleban to Account, AAN, 4 July 2011, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁹¹⁴ Bakhtar News Agency, Amir-ul-Momineen: minors are not to be recruited in ranks or bases of mujahideen, 27 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹¹⁵ HRW, This is our opportunity to end the Taliban’s use of child soldiers, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹¹⁶ UN News, Afghanistan: humanitarian crisis threatens basic human rights, 14 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹¹⁷ UNHCHR, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 12 January 2022, [url](#), p. 6



to the journalist, some of the young boys stated that they wished to become *Talib* in the future.¹⁹¹⁸

According to USDOS, the Taliban recruited children from *madrassas* in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2021, where they received military training and religious studies. In addition, sometimes, families of these children were provided with ‘cash payments or protection in exchange for sending their children to these schools’.¹⁹¹⁹ On 13 May 2022, journalist Bilal Sarwary stated that the Taliban used young children in their ranks. He posted an image on social media showing at least five children in a Taliban pick-up vehicle, where some of the children held weapons.¹⁹²⁰

¹⁹¹⁸ VICE News, Six months after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, women’s rights are rapidly eroding [Online video], 13 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹¹⁹ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 22

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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The reference period should be 1 December 2021–30 June 2022. For profiles not included in the [EUAA COI report: Afghanistan – Country Focus \(January 2022\)](#), the reference period should be 15 August 2021–30 June 2022.

The report should cover targeting acts by the Taliban and other armed groups against the following profiles, and outline how and, as far as it is possible, why such targeting acts occurs. Societal violence should also be included when covering the situation of Hazaras, LGBTIQ persons and women.

The report should also contain information on the Taliban's perception of Afghans abroad and especially Afghans who have sought asylum in Europe and other Western countries.

1. Background: Situation under Taliban rule for the general population

- a. Political context
- b. Compliance with *sharia* law and Taliban norms, including information on reactions to perceived blasphemy and/or apostasy
- c. Persons leaving Afghanistan
 - i. Taliban attitudes and public statements
 - ii. Treatment of persons trying to leave or returning to Afghanistan

2. Persons affiliated with security institutions of the former government, and foreign forces

- a. Members of the Afghan National Security Forces
- b. Persons serving in military units
- c. Persons serving in police units
- d. Persons affiliated with foreign forces
 - i. Interpreters
 - ii. Other persons affiliated with foreign forces

3. Public officials and servants of the former government

- a. Judicial workers (judges, prosecutors, and judicial staff)
- b. Other public servants

4. Gender-based targeting

- a. Societal targeting
 - i. Position of women in society
 - ii. Dress codes and behavioural norms
 - iii. Women in public roles
 - iv. Harmful traditional practices
 - v. Domestic violence and sexual violence
 - vi. Moral offences and adultery (zina)
 - vii. Honour violence
- b. Targeting under Taliban rule
 - i. Access to education
 - ii. Access to employment
 - iii. Freedom of movement



- iv. Freedom of expression and assembly, reactions to women demonstrations
 - v. Dress codes and behavioural norms
- c. Attacks or acts of violence against women and girls by the Taliban and armed groups
- d. Attacks or acts of violence against women in certain public positions
- 5. The situation of religious and ethnic minorities**
 - a. Representation in the interim government
 - b. Hazara and Shia Muslims
 - i. Religious freedom under Taliban rule
 - ii. Discrimination
 - iii. Attacks against Mosques
 - iv. Other recorded attacks against Hazaras
 - c. Situation of other minorities (incl. Tajiks, Baha'i, Ismaili, Hindus, Uyghurs, and Sikhs)
- 6. Journalists and media workers**
 - a. Press freedom under Taliban rule
 - b. Recorded attacks against journalists and media workers
 - c. Human rights defenders and activists
 - d. Restrictions under Taliban rule
 - e. Attacks against human rights defenders and activists
- 7. Healthcare professionals, humanitarian workers, including individuals working for national and international NGOs**
 - a. Restrictions under Taliban rule
 - b. Attacks against healthcare professionals
- 8. LGBTIQ persons**
 - a. Restrictions under Taliban rule
 - b. Treatment by society
 - c. Attacks against LGBTIQ persons by the Taliban and other actors
- 9. Education personnel**
 - a. Attacks or acts of violence or threats against education personnel by the Taliban (including any differences observed in the treatment male and female educational personnel)
 - b. Attacks or acts of violence or threats against educational personnel by other actors, including ISKP or other armed groups
- 10. Information on forced recruitment since the Taliban takeover**
 - a. Are armed groups in Afghanistan currently engaging in (forced) recruitment?
 - b. Is child recruitment by the Taliban and/or other armed groups reported?



