



Afghanistan - Country Focus

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Country of Origin Information Report

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- Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Country of Origin Information Department
- Belgium, Centre for Documentation and Research (CEDOCA), Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons
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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023). 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.

The reference period of this report ends on 30 September 2023. Events taking place after this date are not included in this report. For more information on the reference period of this report, see the [Introduction](#).





Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghanistan National Army
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Forces
COI	Country of Origin Information
GDI	General Directorate of Intelligence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
<i>Madrassa</i>	Islamic religious school
MPVPV	Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice
<i>mullah</i>	Islamic religious cleric
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRF	National Resistance Front
<i>Pashtunwali</i>	traditional social, cultural, and quasi-legal code regulating the Pashtun way of life
SIV	Special Immigration Visa
<i>sharia</i>	the religious law of Islam; Islamic canonical law
<i>shura</i>	A decision-making community council; often formed for non-State dispute settlement; made up of a group of people with community authority (elders) to discuss and find solutions to a problem.
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan





Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide information relevant for international protection status determination, including refugee status and subsidiary protection, and in particular for use in updating EUAA’s country guidance development on Afghanistan.

The report covers the period of 1 July 2022–30 September 2023. The report is partly to be read as an update of the following COI reports published in August 2022: (1) [EUAA COI Report: Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals](#), (2) [EUAA COI Report: Afghanistan – Security Situation](#), and (3) [EUAA COI Report – Key socio-economic indicators in Afghanistan and in Kabul City](#). Events taking place after the end of the reference period have not been included.

Methodology

This report was drafted by EUAA and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries, as mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section.

This report is produced in line with the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023)¹ and the EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2023).²

Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) of this report were defined by EUAA based on discussions held and input received from COI experts in the EUAA COI Specialist Network on Afghanistan and from policy experts in EU+ countries within the framework of a Country Guidance development on Afghanistan. The ToR for this report can be found in [Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#).

Collecting information

The information gathered is a result of research using public, specialised paper-based and electronic sources until 20 October 2023. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 23 November 2023.

Quality control

To ensure that the authors respected the EUAA COI Report Methodology and that the Terms of Reference were comprehensively addressed, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the

¹ EUAA, EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

² EUAA, EUAA Writing and Referencing Guide for EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, February 2023, [url](#)





final draft of this report, which was finalised on 23 November 2023. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

Sources

In accordance with EUAA COI Report Methodology, a range of different published documentary sources have been consulted on relevant topics for this report. These include: COI reports by governments; information from civil society, advocacy groups, humanitarian organisations, and NGOs; international and NGO human rights reports; reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations; Afghan and regionally-based media and social media; academic publications and think tank reports and specialised sources covering Afghanistan. All information from these sources was consulted within time constraints and within the research constraints posed by Afghanistan's challenging information-gathering environment.

In addition to using publicly available documentary sources, several oral sources were contacted for this report. Some sources who were interviewed chose to remain anonymous. Sources were assessed for their background, publication history, reputability and current ground-level knowledge. All oral sources are described in the [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

The local Afghan media outlet Hasht-e Subh has been used as a source, although a shift in the reporting tone has been noted since the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021. The source provides information that is highly critical of the Taliban, especially as regards events related to the Taliban's crackdowns on resistance groups and events taking place in Panjsher Province and adjacent areas. This source is, however, one of the few local sources reporting in English and that covers events related to the resistance. Due to difficulties assessing the reliability of this source, a case-by-case assessment has been carried out before including reports from it. Particular care has been taken on topics related to resistance groups, events taking place in Panjsher Province and adjacent areas, as well as the Taliban's interaction with the local population in these areas.

Sources on security incidents

Data of the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)³ and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)⁴ have been used for information on security events and fatalities. Data provided by UN reports have also been used in some sections.

ACLED is a project that collects, analyses and maps information on 'dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events around the world'.⁵ For Afghanistan, ACLED covers political violence and protests spanning from January 2017 to the present. Each week, around 110 sources are reviewed in English, Dari/Farsi, Pashto, and Arabic and the information is compiled in a database.⁶ The EUAA downloaded the ACLED

³ ACLED, The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project - Bringing clarity to crisis, n.d., [url](#)

⁴ UCDP, Department of Peace and Conflict Research – Uppsala University, Sweden, n.d., [url](#)

⁵ ACLED, About ACLED, n.d., [url](#)

⁶ ACLED, ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions around Political Violence and Demonstrations in Afghanistan (Version 5), February 2022, [url](#), pp. 3, 10





curated data files on Central Asia and the Caucasus, including Afghanistan, on 17 October 2023, which are used in this report.

ACLED explains the methodology applied for coding and monitoring the data in a codebook and in a specific methodology for Afghanistan.⁷ As ACLED points out, the reader should be aware of some limitations, including the fact that ‘most of the data is gathered based on publicly available, secondary reports’. Thus, the data is in part a reflection of the coverage and reporting priorities of media and international organisations. One effect of this is that it may under-estimate the volume of events of non-strategic importance (for example, low-level communal conflict, or events in very isolated areas). ACLED addresses this possibility by ‘triangulating data sources to include humanitarian and international organisation reports, rather than media alone; and by conducting ground-truthing exercises’ in which they ‘present data to local organisations and partners to assess its validity among people working directly in conflict-affected contexts’.⁸ Based on the above, ACLED’s figures in this report are to be considered as an estimate and illustration of violence trends over a given time period.⁹

ACLED also provides an estimated number of fatalities for each security event, but notes that ‘[f]atality data are typically the most biased, and least accurate, component of any conflict data’ and ‘should be treated as “reported fatalities”’.¹⁰ Furthermore, ACLED’s fatality figures include the reported deaths in totality per event, and do not distinguish civilian deaths.¹¹

ACLED records six event types: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, protests, riots and strategic developments.¹² For the analysis of the security situation in Afghanistan in this report, only battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians were included as incidents. ACLED uses the following definitions of these event types:

- **Battle:** ‘a violent interaction between two politically organized armed groups’ which occur ‘at a particular time and location’, ‘between armed and organised state, non-state, and external groups, and in any combination therein’. There is no fatality threshold for an incident to be included. Sub-events associated with ‘battles’ are designated according to the events outcome and consist of ‘armed clash’, ‘government regains territory’, and ‘non-state actor overtakes territory’.¹³
- **Violence against civilians:** ‘violent events where an organized armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants’ and includes attempts at inflicting harm (e.g. beating, shooting, torture, rape, mutilation) or forcibly disappearing civilian actors. Sub-events associated with ‘violence against civilians’ are: ‘sexual

⁷ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, January 2021, [url](#); ACLED, ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions around Political Violence and Demonstrations in Afghanistan (Version 5), February 2022, [url](#), pp. 3, 8; ACLED, ACLED’s Afghanistan Coverage: Adapting Sourcing Strategy in an Evolving Context, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸ ACLED, Guide for Media Users, January 2015, [url](#), pp. 9–10

⁹ ACLED, ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions around Political Violence and Demonstrations in Afghanistan (Version 5), February 2022, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, January 2021, [url](#), p. 32

¹¹ ACLED, ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions around Political Violence and Demonstrations in Afghanistan (Version 5), February 2022, [url](#), p. 19

¹² ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, January 2021, [url](#), p. 8

¹³ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, January 2021, [url](#), pp. 8–9



violence’, ‘attack’, and ‘abduction/forced disappearance’. It should be noted that all violence against civilians do not fall under this category, as civilians can also be harmed as ‘collateral damage’ in ‘explosions’ and ‘battles’ – in such cases a separate civilian-specific event is not recorded, although the number of fatalities is aggravated.¹⁴

- **Explosions/remote violence:** ‘one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the target to respond’. The sub-event types associated with ‘explosions/remote violence’ are ‘chemical weapon’, ‘air/drone strike’, ‘suicide bomb’, ‘shelling/artillery/missile attack’, ‘remote explosive/landmine/IED’, and ‘grenade’.¹⁵

ACLED identifies three codes for the geo-precision of events taking place in a particular town with available coordinates (geo-precision 1), ‘a small part of a region’ or ‘a general area’ (geo-precision 2) and a larger region (geo-precision 3).¹⁶ This report provides information about the security situation at provincial level and therefore make use of all geo-precision levels.

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) is a ‘data collection project for civil war’.¹⁷ UCDP provided EUAA with a Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) covering the reference period of the report. UCDP’s methodology is explained on its website as well as its GED Codebook.¹⁸ The unit of analysis of UCDP is the ‘event’¹⁹ which is defined as ‘[a]n incident where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organized actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date.’²⁰ This leads, among other things, to ‘seemingly low estimates’ because ‘a number of factors can preclude a potential conflict event from inclusion in the UCDP GED’, for example, unclear actors or uncertainty about whether fatalities occurred.²¹ UCDP provides three estimates for fatalities for each event – a low estimate, a best estimate, and a high estimate. In addition, UCDP provides an estimate of the number of civilian deaths.²² According to UCDP, ‘it is quite likely that there are more fatalities than given in the best estimate, but it is very unlikely that there are fewer’.²³

The stricter definition of an event of UCDP excludes violent incidents that are recorded by ACLED. This includes ACLED’s option to assign violent events to ‘unidentified armed groups’. The difference in definitions is one explanatory factor to why the number of events recorded by ACLED can be significantly higher than events recorded by UCDP.²⁴ In this report, UCDP data has been used to contrast ACLED data and to provide figures on civilian deaths. To reflect the security dynamic in Afghanistan, where the actor behind many security incidents is unknown, EUAA not only includes events that meet all UCDP’s set criteria (codified as ‘clear’ events in the UCDP dataset), but also include events codified as ‘unclear’ and ‘not applicable’.

¹⁴ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, January 2021, [url](#), pp. 9, 12

¹⁵ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, January 2021, [url](#), p. 10,

¹⁶ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, January 2021, [url](#), p. 29

¹⁷ UCDP, About UCDP, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁸ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#); UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁹ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

²⁰ UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), p. 4

²¹ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

²² UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook (Version 21.1), 2021, [url](#), pp. 5, 11, 24

²³ UCDP, UCDP Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

²⁴ ACLED, Comparing Conflict Data, Similarities and Differences Across Conflict Datasets, August 2019, [url](#), pp. 5–7



Structure and use of the report

The report's first chapter provides information on the general population's situation under Taliban rule. It contains information on the political context, the functioning of the *de facto* state administration, and the implementation of *sharia*. This is followed by a chapter outlining the general conflict-related security situation, and a chapter on the humanitarian situation. Thereafter, 12 chapters outline the situation of a specific group or profile of interest.

Terminology

Chapter 4 mainly focuses on targeting acts by the Taliban and other armed groups towards certain profiles. The perpetrator of some acts is difficult to identify, and motives behind some acts are unclear. For those reasons, an act's connection to 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 report refers 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.



Map



Map No. 3958 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS
June 2011

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

Map 1. Afghanistan's provinces²⁵

²⁵ UN, Afghanistan, Map No. 3958 Rev. 7, June 2011, [url](#)



1. Situation of the general population under Taliban rule

1.1. Political context

1.1.1. Territorial control and armed opposition

The Taliban took control over Afghanistan on 15 August 2021.²⁶ Since then, two insurgencies have been resisting Taliban rule with armed force. One is driven by resistance groups including the National Resistance Front (NRF), formed amid the Taliban takeover, and by other groups²⁷ that emerged in April 2022.²⁸ The other insurgency is driven by the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP).²⁹ These groups have remained active in some areas,³⁰ but none has been able to hold significant territory.³¹ Little information is available on the size and capacity of the resistance,³² but it has been assessed as lacking enough coordination and resources to seriously contest Taliban rule.³³ Likewise, ISKP was not considered as a serious threat to Taliban rule in the short term.³⁴ More information is available in chapter [2. Security situation](#).

The Taliban claimed to control all of the Afghan territory by October 2021,³⁵ after they struck down NRF in Panjsher Province.³⁶ Other sources have also described the Taliban as exercising control over all of Afghanistan.³⁷ Single reports however suggest that the Taliban were not in full control before June 2023,³⁸ and that some districts were contested as of 29 August 2022 (including Warsaj (Takhar Province), Khost wa Firing and Andarab (Baghlan Province), Shutul, Darah, Unabah, and Khinj (Panjsher Province)).³⁹ However, Afghanistan

²⁶ EASO, Afghanistan: Security situation update, September 2021, [url](#), p. 11

²⁷ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#); Rubin, B. R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, 20 October 2022, Stimson Center, [url](#)

²⁸ RFE/RL, Taliban Faces Rising Armed Resistance From Former Government Factions, 27 April 2022, [url](#); VOA, Afghan Fighting Season Ushers in New Anti-Taliban Groups, 28 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁹ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#); Rubin, B. R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, 20 October 2022, Stimson Center, [url](#)

³⁰ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 15; ORF, Resistance to the Taliban: Current status and prospects for the future, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

³¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 15; VOA, Afghan 'Fighting Season' Ushers in New Anti-Taliban Groups, 28 April 2022, [url](#)

³² UK, House of Commons Library, Afghanistan: One year under a Taliban government, 10 October 2022, [url](#), p. 17

³³ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#); Shekhawat, S., Resistance to the Taliban: Current status and prospects for the future, ORF, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

³⁴ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#); East-West Center, The World Must Not Wash Its Hands of Afghanistan, 26 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁵ VOA, Taliban order Afghan media to use group's official name, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁶ Watkins, A. H., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

³⁷ Rubin, B. R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, Stimson, 20 October 2022, [url](#); Sweden, Migrationsverket, Afghanistan: Styre och rättskipning [Afghanistan: Governance and administration of justice], (version 1.0) [source: Andrew Watkins, senior expert of Afghanistan, USIP], 06 July 2023, [url](#), p. 17

³⁸ UN Security Council, Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 1 June 2023, [url](#), para. 6

³⁹ FDD's LWJ, One year after U.S. withdrawal, resistance to Taliban rule grows, 29 August 2022, [url](#)



expert Andrew Watkins affirmed in an interview with the Swedish Migration Agency in April 2023, that the Taliban had established a monopoly of violence unprecedented in the last decades of conflict⁴⁰ and the UN Secretary-General stated that the Taliban ‘remained firmly in control’ by September 2023.⁴¹ UN organs have also referred to the Taliban as exercising ‘effective control’ in Afghanistan, bringing obligations under international human rights law.⁴²

1.1.2. International recognition and government formation

Soon after their takeover, the Taliban declared the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA),⁴³ previously in power during 1996–2001, and also announced an interim government.⁴⁴ At the time of writing, no state has recognised the IEA or its *de facto* government.⁴⁵ Although ‘effective control’ traditionally has been a standard criterion for governmental recognition,⁴⁶ the international community has indicated that recognition is conditional in this case.⁴⁷ Foreign state representatives have for example called on the Taliban to form an ‘inclusive’ government,⁴⁸ respect women’s and girls’ rights,⁴⁹ and make counterterrorism efforts.⁵⁰ Several states and international organisations have however interacted with the *de facto* government⁵¹ and some diplomatic missions have maintained⁵² or re-established presence in Kabul after the takeover.⁵³ Moreover, some neighbouring countries have accredited Taliban-appointed ambassadors at Afghan embassies.⁵⁴

The Taliban can be described as a conservative Sunni Islamic movement of the Deobandi school of thought.⁵⁵ Moreover, they adhere to the Sunni Hanafi School of jurisprudence.⁵⁶ During their previous rule in Afghanistan (1996–2001), they implemented a strict interpretation of *sharia*,⁵⁷ and what can be described as a mixture of Deobandi traditionalism, Wahhabi

⁴⁰ Sweden, Migrationsverket, Afghanistan: Styre och rättsskipning [Afghanistan: Governance and administration of justice], (version 1.0) [source: Andrew Watkins, senior expert of Afghanistan, USIP], 6 July 2023, [url](#), p. 17

⁴¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023 [url](#), para. 4

⁴² OHCHR, Human Rights Council Holds Urgent Debate on the Human Rights of Women and Girls in Afghanistan, 1 July 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 6 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴³ WSJ, Taliban unveil new Afghan government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴ BBC News, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Al Jazeera, Taliban gives a warm welcome to China’s new ambassador to Afghanistan, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Brookings, Recognition and the Taliban, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Brookings, Recognition and the Taliban, 30 September 2022, [url](#); Weiss, S., One year into the Taliban’s second rule, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 18 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Rubin, B. R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, Stimson Center, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹ UN, Afghanistan’s Future Depends on Taliban’s Engagement with World, But Restrictions on Women Signal Lack of International Commitments, Briefer Warns Security Council, 27 September 2022, [url](#); Reuters, Germany won’t recognise Taliban as “dire” Afghan conditions persist, 7 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰ Reuters, EXCLUSIVE Afghan Taliban sign deal for Russian oil products, gas and wheat, 28 September 2022, [url](#); USDOS, Communiqué of the U.S.-Europe Group on Afghanistan, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹ UN, Afghanistan’s Future Depends on Taliban’s Engagement with World, But Restrictions on Women Signal Lack of International Commitments, Briefer Warns Security Council, 27 September 2022, [url](#); Washington Institute (The), Turkey Calls for Recognition of the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵² WSJ, Who Are the Taliban and What’s Next for Afghanistan?, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵³ TOLONews, Potzel Urges Western States To Resume Diplomatic Missions in Kabul, 26 December 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 22

⁵⁵ Rana, S. and Ganguly, S., Taliban’s religious ideology – Deobandi Islam – has roots in colonial India, The Conversation, 25 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶ Lombardi, C. and March, A., Afghan Taliban Views on Legitimate Islamic Governance, USIP, February 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁷ CNN, Taliban to impose their interpretation of Sharia law in Afghanistan, 15 November 2022, [url](#)



puritanism and *Pashtunwali*.⁵⁸ Soon after their takeover in 2021, the Taliban declared that *sharia* is to be enforced as the legal system in Afghanistan.⁵⁹

The *de facto* government is all-male and predominantly consists of Taliban members.⁶⁰ Even though the Taliban movement includes many members of different ethnic communities, its core is dominated by the Pashtun ethnic group.⁶¹ This is reflected in the *de facto* cabinet where most are senior Pashtun members.⁶² Moreover, many within the *de facto* administration are under UN sanctions; 58 persons according to the UN Sanctions and Monitoring Team reporting in June 2023.⁶³ Some are also part of the Haqqani network, which is a designated terrorist organisation in the EU, UK and the US.⁶⁴ The UN Security Council previously exempted 13 sanctioned individuals holding senior positions from a travel ban, allowing them to meet with foreign officials abroad.⁶⁵ The waiver however expired on 19 August 2022⁶⁶ and has not been renewed.⁶⁷

1.1.3. Political opposition and civic space

Entities opposing Taliban rule have been fragmented⁶⁸ and mainly situated abroad.⁶⁹ Exiled Afghan politicians have formed political groups such as the ‘National Resistance for the Salvation of Afghanistan’⁷⁰ and the ‘Afghanistan National Movement for Peace and Justice’.⁷¹ Reported activities include appeals to the international community and the Taliban⁷² and formulating suggestions on how Afghanistan should be governed.⁷³

⁵⁸ Britannica, Taliban, 3 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁹ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 24

⁶⁰ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 6

⁶¹ Motwani, N., Taliban leaders still lack legitimacy, East Asia Forum, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶² UK, House of Commons Library, Afghanistan: One year under a Taliban government, 10 October 2022, [url](#), p. 5

⁶³ UN Security Council, Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 1 June 2023, [url](#), para. 6

⁶⁴ UK, House of Commons Library, Afghanistan: One year under a Taliban government, 10 October 2022, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁵ DW, UN ends Taliban travel ban exemptions, 20 August 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶ VOA, Taliban Say Travel Ban Hurts Diplomacy and Dialogue With World, 25 August 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁷ UN Security Council, Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 1 June 2023, [url](#), para. 61

⁶⁸ France24, Afghan opposition ‘very weak’ despite mounting anger against Taliban, 15 August 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 6

⁶⁹ Foschini, F., Afghanistan: Who Opposes the Taliban? Old Politics, Resistance and the Looming Risk of Civil War, ISPI, 11 August 2022, [url](#); France24, Afghan opposition ‘very weak’ despite mounting anger against Taliban, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Khaama Press, Ankara Gathering of Political Figures, 19 May 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹ Khaama Press, Afghanistan National Movement for Peace and Justice Emerges, Sparking Reactions, 16 October 2022, [url](#); Afghanistan International, Afghanistan National Movement for Peace and Justice Formed, 15 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷² Afghanistan International, Opposition Group Urges International Community to Support Decentralised Afghan Government, 9 September 2022, [url](#)

⁷³ Hasht-e Subh, Citizens to Exiled Politicians, No Need for Your Political Copies of Prescriptions, 7 November 2022, [url](#)



Inside Afghanistan there is no space for political opposition.⁷⁴ Free speech and peaceful political activity have been stifled by arrests, detentions, beatings, and coercion.⁷⁵ Although open criticism of the *de facto* government's policies has been occurring,⁷⁶ civic space has shrunk.⁷⁷ According to the monitoring project Afghan Witness (AW), opposition largely dispersed during the Taliban's second year of rule.⁷⁸ Media and human rights organisations have been under pressure,⁷⁹ inter alia by rules limiting media content,⁸⁰ a ban on defamation and 'unproven criticism' of *de facto* government officials,⁸¹ as well as 'open criticism' according to a Taliban official's statement.⁸² *De facto* state authorities have interfered with the work of media outlets and have detained journalists⁸³ as well as human rights activists.⁸⁴ The Taliban have banned 'unauthorised' demonstrations, but nonetheless peaceful protests have taken place.⁸⁵ Protests held outdoors have however decreased according to AW.⁸⁶ Especially women's rights activists have been at the forefront of the civil resistance⁸⁷ and have continued to protest major edicts out on the streets.⁸⁸ Taliban fighters have violently dispersed such demonstrations,⁸⁹ and have detained protesters.⁹⁰ Some activists have been tortured and ill-treated while in custody.⁹¹ Private citizens criticising the Taliban have also been detained,⁹² including individuals who have posted criticism in social media.⁹³ More information on the treatment of individuals criticising the *de facto* government is available in sections [4.6 Journalists and media workers](#) and [4.7 Human rights defenders and activists](#).

⁷⁴ Nishat, Z. et al., Why Do People in Afghanistan Object to Taliban Rule?, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 22 September 2022, [url](#); Ahmad, J. and London, D., America Should Recognize Afghanistan's Taliban Government, FP, 23 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵ USIP, One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶ AP, Afghan religious scholars criticize girls' education ban, 8 April 2023, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, Afghan TV talk show discusses Taliban chief's order on access to officials, 26 May 2023, [url](#); USIP, Amid Taliban Repression, Afghan Media Are a Beacon of Hope, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷ CIVICUS, A year of Taliban rule leaves civic space decimated in Afghanistan, 8 September 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 6 September 2022, [url](#), para. 80, 85

⁷⁸ AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁷⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 6 September 2022, [url](#), para. 80, 85; CPJ, Afghanistan's media faces crisis—and opportunity, 11 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰ CIVICUS, A Year of Taliban Rule Leaves Civic Space Decimated in Afghanistan, 8 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, 'Open Fear': Taliban Cracks Down On Afghan Media By Decree, 27 July 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Bans 'Unproven Allegations' Against Members, 22 July 2022, [url](#); Zabihullah [Twitter], posted on: 21 July 2022, [url](#)

⁸² Afghan Analyst [Twitter], posted on 21 September 2022, [url](#)

⁸³ PEN/Opp, The State of Freedom of Speech and Media in the Past Year, 9 October 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Media and Freedom of Speech on Verge of Collapse: UN Calls for International Community's Attention, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 34

⁸⁵ CIVICUS, A year of Taliban rule leaves civic space decimated in Afghanistan, 8 September 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶ AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁸⁷ CIVICUS, Protests Escalate in Afghanistan as Frustration with Taliban Rule and Abuses Grow, 28 November 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸ AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁸⁹ HRW, In Afghanistan, Resistance Means Women, 12 October 2022, [url](#); AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁹⁰ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 34

⁹¹ HRW, Afghanistan: Women Protesters Detail Taliban Abuse, 20 October 2022, [url](#); AI, Afghanistan: Taliban's 'suffocating crackdown' destroying lives of women and girls – new report, 27 July 2022, [url](#)

⁹² CIVICUS, A year of Taliban rule leaves civic space decimated in Afghanistan, 8 September 2022, [url](#)

⁹³ BBC News, Afghanistan: Peace at a price in the Taliban's heartlands, 20 August 2022, [url](#); AI, Afghanistan 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)



1.2. Implementation of *sharia*

The Taliban have referred to *sharia* as the legal system to be enforced in Afghanistan.⁹⁴ The *de facto* government considers itself a guiding body,⁹⁵ with the fundamental aims to ensure that the people live in accordance with religious laws.⁹⁶ Although consensus has been a key element within the Taliban movement's decision-making,⁹⁷ the conservative supreme leader Haibatullah Akhundzada's authority has become increasingly notable.⁹⁸ One example is his decision not to allow secondary education for girls,⁹⁹ which has even been publicly criticised by other Taliban officials although open internal criticism is rare.¹⁰⁰ The human rights situation has gradually deteriorated¹⁰¹ and sources noted tendencies of the *de facto* administration developing into a theocratic police state,¹⁰² ruling through an atmosphere of fear and abuse.¹⁰³

1.2.1. Issued instructions

Various interpretations of *sharia* laws exist,¹⁰⁴ and as no formal legal framework has been enacted,¹⁰⁵ there is uncertainty among the population of which laws apply.¹⁰⁶ Some sources have described the situation as a 'legal vacuum'.¹⁰⁷ The Taliban have issued some instructions in decrees and general guidance,¹⁰⁸ but few have been issued in writing.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the issued instructions have tended to be vaguely formulated, which leaves space for different

⁹⁴ 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](#)

⁹⁵ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁹⁶ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023; Ahmad, J., The Taliban's religious roadmap for Afghanistan, MEI, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Watkins, A., one Year After the Taliban Takeover, CTC Sentinel, [url](#), p. 5

⁹⁸ RFE/RL, Taliban Leader's Dominance Results In Increased Oppression, Isolation, 22 January 2023, [url](#);

International Crisis Group, Taliban Restrictions on Women's Rights Deepen Afghanistan, 23 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹ Watkins, A., one Year After the Taliban Takeover, CTC Sentinel, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰⁰ Los Angeles Times, Rare sign of division emerges among Afghan Taliban leaders, 16 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, [Andrew Watkins, senior expert on Afghanistan], 6 July 2023, [url](#), p. 13;

UNAMA, Dignity, freedom and justice must be upheld in Afghanistan, 10 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰² Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, [Andrew Watkins, senior expert on Afghanistan and international analyst], 6 July 2023, [url](#), p. 13; Ottawa Citizen, Levine: A year under the Taliban — UN workers pressing for women's rights, 16 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰³ Ottawa Citizen, Levine: A year under the Taliban — UN workers pressing for women's rights, 16 August 2022, [url](#); Diplomat (The), 2 Years of Taliban Rule: A Case for Humanitarian Intervention, 11 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ CNN, Taliban to impose their interpretation of Sharia law in Afghanistan, 15 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ ISHR, Afghanistan – Human Rights in a Lawless Society, 9 November 2022, [url](#); Baheer, O., Year to the ground: Taliban's quest for elusive global legitimacy, TRT World, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 11; New Lines Magazine, Is This the Future of Taliban Rule?, 13 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 6; Baheer, O., Year to the ground: Taliban's quest for elusive global legitimacy, TRT World, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 6

¹⁰⁹ ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023



interpretations.¹¹⁰ Sources have suggested that issued instructions are purposefully vague to, inter alia, increase policy ambiguity and leave space for adjustments.¹¹¹

Moreover, instructions have been communicated through a variety of channels, including by individual Taliban officials on their private social media accounts¹¹² and during media interviews.¹¹³ The legal nature of these instructions is not clear,¹¹⁴ and they have not always been embraced throughout the Taliban movement.¹¹⁵ Some rules have moreover not been enforced¹¹⁶ and there have been local variations in the implementation, for example, of the ban on secondary education for girls¹¹⁷ and the requirement of women to be accompanied by a *mahram*¹¹⁸ ('close male relative: either a husband or a male relative whom a women cannot marry, such as a brother, father, son or uncle'¹¹⁹). Moreover, there have been instances where Taliban officials have contradicted each other in public statements,¹²⁰ or where it has been possible to work around some announcements.¹²¹ For example, the Taliban banned women from working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on 24 December 2022, but after major organisations suspended their operations, the Taliban sometimes gave assurances on provincial or local level so that female staff would be able to carry out their duties.¹²²

A compilation of relevant Taliban national decrees and instructions issued since the takeover is available in Annex 3: Lists of national Taliban decrees and instructions.

During the reference period of this report the Afghan population was instructed that:

- defamation and unproven criticism of [*de facto*] government officials are banned (21 July 2022);¹²³
- women cannot visit recreational parks, public baths,¹²⁴ and gyms¹²⁵ in Kabul City (November 2022). It was not clear whether this instruction extends to other areas,¹²⁶

¹¹⁰ ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹¹¹ ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹¹² van Bijlert, M., The Taleban's Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

¹¹⁴ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

¹¹⁵ ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹¹⁶ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹¹⁷ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, [international analyst], 6 July 2023, [url](#), p. 17; Amu TV, Afghanistan: Six provinces keep schools open for girls despite nationwide ban, 1 January 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, [international analyst], 6 July 2023, [url](#), p. 17; Guardian (The), 'I daren't go far': Taliban rules trap Afghan women with no male guardian, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., We need to breathe too, AAN, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Göteborgsregionen, Temadag om Afghanistan [Online video], 18 Mars 2022, [url](#), 04:51:00–04:51:45; ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹²¹ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹²² RFE/RL, Aid Groups Begin Return To Afghanistan Amid Assurances For Female Workers, 17 January 2023, [url](#); International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹²³ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Bans 'Unproven Allegations' Against Members, 22 July 2022, [url](#); Zabihullah [Twitter], posted on: 21 July 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁴ RFE/RL, Banned From Public Parks And Bathhouses, Afghan Women Say Life Under Taliban Is Like A 'Prison', 10 November 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁵ France24, Taliban bans Afghan women from gyms, public baths, 13 November 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁶ RFE/RL, Banned From Public Parks And Bathhouses, Afghan Women Say Life Under Taliban Is Like A 'Prison', 10 November 2022, [url](#)



although a later announcement barred women from the same spaces in Faryab Province;¹²⁷

- university education for women is suspended (December 2022);¹²⁸
- national and international NGOs should suspend female staff members, or risk losing their licences (24 December 2022);¹²⁹
- people should avoid celebrating Valentine's Day (14 February 2023);¹³⁰
- celebrations of *Nowruz* were condemned by some *de facto* authorities (March 2023);¹³¹
- women are prohibited to work for UN agencies (5 April 2023);¹³²
- beauty salons are to close down (25 June 2023);¹³³
- sorcery is prohibited (7 August 2023).¹³⁴ According to the spokesperson for the Taliban Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV), amulets and ritual blowing in itself is not a legal issue, but rather that some had 'turned it into a business model', charging high amounts and paving way for 'illicit relations'. He further stated that someone carrying out sorcery should be arrested and brought to court, and pointed out that *sharia* allows the death sentence to be issued for such individuals.¹³⁵

Additional instructions were issued in some provinces:

- Mazar-e Sharif: shopkeepers were ordered not to sell to women without *hijab* (29 August 2022);¹³⁶
- Nimroz: coffee shops were ordered to close, and wedding halls were ordered to stop playing music at wedding parties (7 September 2022);¹³⁷
- Kabul: wedding halls were banned from playing music (11 June 2023);¹³⁸
- Bamiyan: women banned from Band-e-Amir national park (26 August 2023);¹³⁹
- Herat: women and families were banned from restaurants in gardens and green spaces (10 April 2023);¹⁴⁰

¹²⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 17

¹²⁸ TOLONews, Lecturer Rips Up His Certificates to Protest Ban on Women's Education, 1 January 2023, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban ban Afghan women from university education, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁹ TOLONews, Ministry Orders NGOs to Suspend Female Staff, 24 December 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁰ RFE/RL, The Thrill Is Gone For Valentine's Day In Taliban-Controlled Kabul, 14 February 2023, [url](#); Khaama Press, Citizens in Afghanistan Were Not Allowed to Celebrate Valentine's Day, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹ Hast-e Subh, Taliban Oppose Nowruz Celebrations, 23 March 2023, [url](#); Kabul Now, Taliban in Herat prohibit people from celebrating Nowruz, 21 March 2023, [url](#)

¹³² UN News, Excluded from Education, Public Life, Women, Girls Facing 'Gender Apartheid' in Afghanistan, Delegate Tells Security Council, 21 June 2023, [url](#)

¹³³ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹³⁴ UNAMA, Human Rights situation in Afghanistan, July - September 2023 Update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹³⁵ BBC Monitoring, Afghan Taliban ministry launch campaign against 'sorcery', 7 August 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Khaama Press, Taliban Orders Shops to Refuse Selling Things to Women without Hijab, 30 August 2022, [url](#); Rukshana, Taliban morality police close shops over improper hijabs, 23 October 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁷ TOLONews, Nimroz Vice and Virtue Dept Orders that Coffee Shops Be Closed, 7 September 2022, [url](#); ANI, Afghanistan: Taliban officials in Nimroz orders coffee shop to close down, 8 September 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁸ RFE/RL, Taliban Calls For Strict Ban On Music At Kabul Wedding Halls, 12 June 2023, [url](#); Kabul Now, Taliban bans playing music at weddings in Kabul, 12 June 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁹ TOLONews, Women Banned From Visiting Band-e-Amir National Park, 26 August 2023, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban ban women from visiting popular national park, 27 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 36; AP, Taliban ban restaurant gardens for families, women in Herat, 10 April 2023, [url](#)



- Helmand and Kandahar: education institutes closed until further notice (17 April 2023).¹⁴¹

Single local media reports further claimed that wearing *burqa* or *niqab* was made compulsory in Badakhshan¹⁴² (a previous national decree just instructed women to cover their faces¹⁴³), that shopkeepers in Mazar-e Sharif were ordered to close shops during prayers and attend them,¹⁴⁴ and that male teachers and high-school students in Kandahar were ordered to pledge in writing to conform with the Taliban's interpretation of *sharia* (including wearing traditional Afghan clothes and grow a beard). Failure to sign or adhere to the pledge could lead to dismissals of both students and teachers.¹⁴⁵ Corroborating information for these single reports could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA.

1.2.2. Policy implementation

The *de facto* state administration has been described as working in arbitrary and unpredictable ways.¹⁴⁶ Repressive bodies include the Taliban General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) and the Taliban MPVPV,¹⁴⁷ as well as a number of other *de facto* state institutions.¹⁴⁸ Issued instructions that regulate the private lives of Afghans have mainly been enforced by the Taliban MPVPV.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, policy implementation has varied across the country.¹⁵⁰ Local governance has varied due to different interpretations of decrees issued by the central *de facto* government,¹⁵¹ and due to the influence of local contexts and local stakeholders.¹⁵² The Taliban has established provincial *Uleema* councils to enforce central decisions.¹⁵³ According to an international journalist that has reported from Afghanistan for several years (but currently is based outside the country) such councils were being established already soon after the takeover, and there have not been any notable changes in the provinces' implementation of *sharia*. The international journalist stated that the local situations have depended on who has been in charge and how influential the governor has been – for example if it has been

¹⁴¹ Kabul Now, Taliban shuts all educational institutions in Helmand and Kandahar, 17 April 2023, [url](#); TOLONews, Classes Stopped at Private Education Centers in Kandahar, Helmand, 17 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴² Etilaatroz, امر به معروف طالبان در بدخشان: زنان برقع بپوشند یا نقاب بزنند, [Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Badakhshan: women should wear a *burqa* or a *niqab*], 23 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴³ AP, Afghanistan's Taliban order women to cover up head to toe, 8 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ Khaama Press, Taliban Orders Shops to Refuse Selling Things to Women without Hijab, 30 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ RFE/RL, Taliban Orders Male Teachers, Students To Sign Pledge To Observe Shari'a Law, 13 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ AAN, Transition to a New Political Order: AAN dossier takes stock of Afghanistan's momentous year, 12 August 2022, [url](#); Rubin, B. R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, Stimson Center, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ Felbab-Brown, V., Afghanistan in 2023: Taliban internal power struggles and militancy, Brookings, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 17; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹⁴⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 37

¹⁵⁰ USIP, One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State, 17 August 2022, [url](#); DIIS, Five tendencies that could impact the future development of Afghanistan, 6 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SAK, Årsrapport 2022 [Annual report 2022], 12 May 2022, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁵² Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023; EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 25–26

¹⁵³ SAK, Årsrapport 2022 [Annual report 2022], 12 May 2022, [url](#), p. 20



someone with a military background.¹⁵⁴ The journalist mentioned the Taliban governor in Ghor as a ‘prime example’ of how the person matters. The source referred to cases of aid workers being arrested and of embezzlement of aid (which has also been reported by other sources¹⁵⁵) due to this governor being particularly ‘hardline’ and not being held accountable for such acts. The source gave Nuristan as an opposite example where a local Taliban commander had tried to make the population treat women better by not letting them carry heavy loads, without success.¹⁵⁶ This information could not be corroborated by other sources.

According to UNAMA, the mandate of the Taliban MPVPV is being interpreted with great variation, and in some provinces its local departments have issued and implemented their own instructions.¹⁵⁷ The international journalist stated that there have been few examples where the Taliban implemented their decrees by force, as most of the time the population has been complying with them.¹⁵⁸ There have, however, been cases where Taliban MPVPV officials have arrested or ill-treated individuals transgressing issued guidelines,¹⁵⁹ such as calls on women to wear *hijab*¹⁶⁰ and to be accompanied by a *maharam*,¹⁶¹ as well as calls on men not to shave or trim beards¹⁶² and to attend congregational prayers.¹⁶³ Moreover, after the *de facto* authorities declared the last day of Ramadan to take place one day early under the Shia Calendar, Taliban officials reportedly forced Shia followers in Daykundi Province to break their fast¹⁶⁴ and to perform *Eid* prayers (also reported in Balkh Province). Some were beaten for refusing.¹⁶⁵

1.2.3. Corporal and capital punishments

The Taliban have reopened courts across Afghanistan but have replaced former staff. All newly appointed judges have been male Taliban members, educated in *madrassas*.¹⁶⁶ The lack of a clear legal framework has left the interpretation of *sharia* to individual Taliban judges, which has caused great variation in verdicts.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, as the Taliban abolished the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004), Shia jurisprudence was excluded

¹⁵⁴ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

¹⁵⁵ Hast-e Subh, Ghor Province: Taliban’s Embezzlement of Aid Leaves 42,000 Needy Families Deprived, 10 May 2023, [url](#); TOLONews, US Has Suspended Assistance Operations in Ghor: Miller, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

¹⁵⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 22–23

¹⁵⁸ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

¹⁵⁹ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#), p. 6; Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹⁶⁰ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#), p. 6; RFE/RL, Afghan Women Complain Of Harassment, Threats by Taliban’s Morality Police, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶¹ AI, Afghanistan: ‘Suffocating crackdown’ on rights of women and girls over past year under Taliban, 27 July 2022, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 40

¹⁶² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 38

¹⁶³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 38; Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Force Herat Residents to Pray Taraweeh During Ramadan, 17 April 2023, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban Orders Shops to Refuse Selling Things to Women without Hijab, 30 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 36; Kabul Now, Taliban in Daikundi forces residents to celebrate Eid a day earlier, 21 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ Kabul Now, Taliban in Daikundi forces residents to celebrate Eid a day earlier, 21 April 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), pp. 6–7; Bennet, R., in: DRC, Afghanistan conference, The Human Rights Situation after August 2021, 28 November 2022, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁶⁷ ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), pp. 6–7; VOA, Taliban Undertake Speedy Overhaul of Afghanistan’s Justice System, 28 September 2023, [url](#)



from the *de facto* judiciary.¹⁶⁸ Alongside formal *de facto* courts, informal justice mechanisms have addressed civil and criminal issues,¹⁶⁹ including *jirgas*, community elders and *imams*.¹⁷⁰ In many cases, punishments have also been left to individual Taliban fighters and commanders to issue and enforce ‘on the spot’.¹⁷¹

Initially after the Taliban takeover, there was reportedly a tendency among Taliban judges not to issue ‘too harsh’ punishments¹⁷² and there were only sporadic local reports on the use of corporal or capital punishments.¹⁷³ On 14 November 2022, however, the Taliban supreme leader ordered all Taliban judges to fully implement *sharia*,¹⁷⁴ and issue so called *hudud* and *qisas* punishments where applicable¹⁷⁵ which includes punishments such as execution, stoning, flogging and the amputation of limbs.¹⁷⁶ Several cases of public flogging followed this statement, across the whole country,¹⁷⁷ and the first known public execution since the takeover was carried out in Farah Province on 7 December 2022 (of a man convicted of murder).¹⁷⁸ Large crowds have been invited to witness punishments in sport stadiums,¹⁷⁹ which was common during the previous Taliban rule (1996–2001).¹⁸⁰ A second official execution took place in Laghman Province on 20 June 2023 (again of a man convicted of murder).¹⁸¹ Corpses of alleged criminals killed during the *de facto* authorities’ operations against them have also been put on display, mainly in Herat City¹⁸² but also in Mazar-e Sharif.¹⁸³

¹⁶⁸ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's Shi'ite Minority Suffers 'Systematic Discrimination' Under Taliban Rule, 17 July 2023, [url](#); Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹⁶⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 39; Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹⁷⁰ ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), p. 7; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹⁷¹ USIP, One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State, 17 August 2022, [url](#); Rahimi, H., Remaking of Afghanistan: How the Taliban are Changing Afghanistan's Laws and Legal Institutions, ISAS, 26 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷² Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#); AFP, Justice delayed as Taliban build their legal system in Afghanistan, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷³ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 34–36

¹⁷⁴ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Orders Full Implementation of Sharia Law, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁷⁶ AFP, Afghan supreme leader orders full implementation of sharia law, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ Al, Afghanistan: Taliban's cruel return to hardline practices with public floggings must be halted immediately, 24 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ UN News, Afghanistan: First public execution since Taliban takeover, ‘deeply disturbing’ says UN rights office, 7 December 2022, [url](#); VOA, Taliban Publicly Execute Convicted Murderer in Afghanistan, 7 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ Al Jazeera, Return of Afghan floggings as Taliban takes a hardline path, Taliban News, 10 December 2022, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Taliban publicly lash 14 people at a stadium, 23 November 2022, [url](#); UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), p. 14

¹⁸⁰ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁸¹ Reuters, Afghanistan's Taliban administration executes man for murder of five, 20 June 2023, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghanistan's Taliban publicly executes man convicted of murder, 20 June 2023, [url](#); UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁸² UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), p. 18; Kabul Now, Taliban puts two bodies on public display in Herat, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸³ AW, Taliban display bodies of alleged ‘kidnappers’, ‘insurgents’ and ‘thieves’, 17 March 2023, [url](#)



Corporal punishments in the form of lashings have been documented by UNAMA,¹⁸⁴ AW¹⁸⁵ and the recently founded Afghan human rights organisation Rawadari.¹⁸⁶ UNAMA noted that the great majority of lashings occurred after the supreme leader's statement in November 2022.¹⁸⁷

UNAMA recorded 63 cases of lashings being issued by a *de facto* court in the period 15 August 2021–24 May 2023,¹⁸⁸ while AW recorded 56 lashing cases in the period October 2022–September 2023,¹⁸⁹ and Rawadari reported on 69 individuals being lashed in the first six months of 2023.¹⁹⁰ The cases recorded by UNAMA encompassed 394 victims (313 men and 81 women, including 2 boys and 2 girls), most cases related to *zina*, adultery or running away from home, but lashings were also issued for theft, homosexuality, consuming alcohol, fraud and drug trafficking. In general, 30–39 lashes were issued per person, but in some cases up to 100 lashes were given.¹⁹¹ Later, UNAMA reported that public corporal punishments had continued in the period July–September 2023, and in some cases large groups had been punished in sport stadiums.¹⁹²

AW and Rawadari provided provincial breakdowns of their data. While AW recorded cases in 22 of Afghanistan's provinces (Laghman, Parwan, Paktya, Paktika, Zabul, Kandahar, Bamyan, Ghor, Helmand, Jawzjan, Badakhshan, Kabul, Nangarhar, Takhar, Wardak, Farah, Faryab, Khost, Kunduz, Logar, Sar-e Pul, Uruzgan)¹⁹³ Rawadari recorded lashings in 8 provinces (Bamyan, Badakhshan, Kandahar, Daykundi, Ghor, Jamwzjan, Zabul and Sar-e Pul).¹⁹⁴

AW also noted claims of amputations in social media.¹⁹⁵ [It has not been possible to corroborate such claims with other sources.] Rawadari also reported on two stoning sentences being issued in Bamyan Province.¹⁹⁶ Rawadari clarified to the EUAA that as far as they know, the stoning sentences had not yet been implemented.¹⁹⁷

According to assistant law professor at the American University of Afghanistan, Haroun Rahimi, who was interviewed by EUAA for this report, corporal punishments require a very high level of proof. Therefore, the large number of cases is 'alarming' in his view, since it is an indication of the loose standards of proof applied by Taliban justice.¹⁹⁸ UNAMA also recorded lashings that did not follow a court process but were handed down by individuals exercising a 'quasi-judicial function' within the *de facto* administration, and also *ad hoc* beatings and

¹⁸⁴ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), p. 13; UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁸⁵ AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁸⁶ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁸⁷ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 13–14

¹⁸⁸ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), p. 13; UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁸⁹ AW, Public punishments in Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁹¹ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 13–14; UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁹² UNAMA, Human Rights situation in Afghanistan, July – September 2023 Update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁹³ AW, Public punishments in Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 22 [footnote 10]

¹⁹⁵ AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁹⁶ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁹⁷ Rawadari, email communication, 17 October 2023

¹⁹⁸ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023





lashings carried out by, inter alia, members of the Taliban MPVPV and the *de facto* police against individuals not conforming with issued instruction on social codes and dress codes.¹⁹⁹

Rahimi stated that women have been accused of moral crimes to a higher degree, for example running away from home is only applied to women, as men may leave the house unaccompanied.²⁰⁰ UNAMA also mentioned that it was common for women to be accused of such crimes during the previous government (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan).²⁰¹

Torture and other forms of ill-treatment have been reported as a common practice against people held in custody.²⁰² UNAMA has documented human rights violations during arrests and subsequent detentions by the *de facto* authorities, including 18 deaths in custody. Torture and other cruel inhuman and degrading treatment or punishments constituted almost 50 % of cases recorded during the period 1 January 2022–31 July 2023.²⁰³ Rawadari also reported that the majority of detainees had been subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment by the Taliban while in custody.²⁰⁴ The United States Department of State (USDOS) described prison conditions *per se* as ‘life-threatening’.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 14–15

²⁰⁰ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

²⁰¹ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), p. 14

²⁰² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 59

²⁰³ UNAMA, The treatment of detainees in Afghanistan: Respecting human rights: a factor for trust, 20 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 3–4

²⁰⁴ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 22

²⁰⁵ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#)





2. Security situation

2.1. Recent security trends

After the Taliban takeover in 2021 the levels of armed violence²⁰⁶ and civilian harm significantly dropped compared to the previous years of conflict.²⁰⁷ However, during the period 17 August 2022–13 November 2022, the UN reported that security-related incidents had increased compared to the same period in 2021.²⁰⁸ Recorded events by ACLED data, however, remained on the same levels,²⁰⁹ while UCDP data indicated a slight decrease of events, when comparing the last months following the Taliban takeover in 2021 with the same period in 2022.²¹⁰ In 2023, there was a decrease in events recorded by ACLED and UCDP.²¹¹ The number of events recorded by ACLED as of September 2023, compared to the same period in 2022, represented a decrease of 34.8 % (1 979 vs 689 events)²¹² while UCDP data for the same periods indicated a 48.2 % decrease (720 vs 347 events).²¹³ The UN also reported a continued reduction of armed conflict levels in 2023,²¹⁴ with less armed clashes, IED explosions, and assassinations being recorded than in 2022. The overall number of conflict-related security incidents recorded, however, represented only a 1 % decrease during the period 1 February 2023–20 May 2023, and it slightly increased during the period 20 May 2023–31 July 2023, compared to the same periods in 2022. It should, however, be noted that security incidents recorded by the UN also included arrests (which increased) and criminality (which ‘remained high’).²¹⁵

During the reference period of this report, 1 July 2022–30 September 2023, ACLED recorded 1 618 events in total²¹⁶ which can be contrasted to UCDP data encompassing 781 events in

²⁰⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 3

²⁰⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 3

²⁰⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 18

²⁰⁹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 15 August 2021 to 31 December 2022, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁰ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023; UCDP, data covering 16 August 2021 to 22 October 2022 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 24 October 2022;

²¹¹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#); EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²¹² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 January 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²¹³ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 16 August 2021 to 22 October 2022 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 24 October 2022; UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²¹⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023, [url](#), para. 3

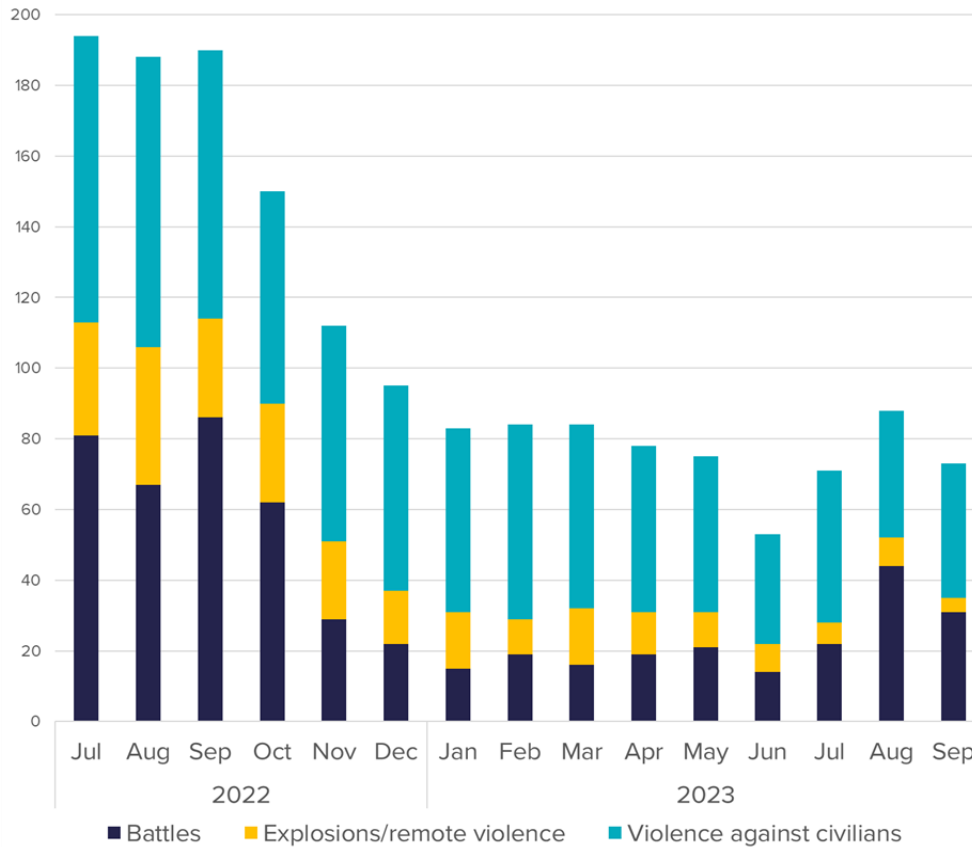
²¹⁵ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 15; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023, [url](#), para. 18

²¹⁶ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 20 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)



total.²¹⁷ UN statistics for the reference period 22 May 2022–20 May 2023 encompassed 7 339 ‘security incidents’ (which includes reports on assassinations, crime-related events and arrests).²¹⁸ In both ACLED and UCDP data, Kabul was the province with most recorded events, followed by Takhar and the adjacent province of Panjsher.²¹⁹ Thereafter, ACLED data indicated nearby Badakhshan and Baghlan as the fourth and fifth province experiencing most events,²²⁰ while UCDP data indicated Baghlan (49 events) as the fourth province with most events, while Badakhshan (33) was preceded by Nangarhar (44) and Kandahar (38).²²¹

Figure 1. Events by type and month, 1 July 2022–30 September 2023 (ACLED)



Source: EUAA chart based on ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²¹⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²¹⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 14; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 18; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2023, [url](#), para. 16; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 15; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023, [url](#), para. 18

²¹⁹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 20 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#); EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²²⁰ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 20 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²²¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023



2.2. Armed groups and armed confrontations

2.2.1. Activities of resistance groups

According to the UN, there were claims of at least 22 armed groups resisting the Taliban in 26 provinces by September 2022.²²² In 2023, UNAMA recorded claimed attacks by three main groups (NRF, Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) and Afghanistan Liberation Movement (ALM)) in eight provinces.²²³ ACLED data indicated that the activity of NRF and/or other resistance groups was concentrated in the northeast of Afghanistan, with most events taking place in either the provinces of Panjsher, Takhar, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kapisa or Parwan, although such groups were involved in or claimed to be involved in attacks in 14 additional provinces (Kabul, Kandahar, Ghazni, Kunduz, Laghman, Balkh, Nangarhar, Samangan, Badghis, Helmand, Jawzjan, Nuristan, Paktya, and Zabul).²²⁴ The challenging information environment however made it difficult to verify such claims.²²⁵

The report of the UN Secretary General noted an intensification of armed opposition activities against the Taliban in 2022.²²⁶ Sources however reported on a drop in activities by armed groups opposing the Taliban in 2023²²⁷ and NRF has been described as ‘weak’²²⁸ after Taliban operations against the group.²²⁹

As mentioned, the main areas of activity of NRF and other resistance groups have been in the northeast, primarily in Panjsher Province and adjacent areas.²³⁰ In 2022, they expanded further north to the provinces Takhar²³¹ and Badakhshan.²³² According to ACLED data, Takhar, followed by Panjsher, Badakhshan and Baghlan were the provinces with the highest number of recorded ‘battles’ during the reference period (238 in total). The actors involved were

²²² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 15

²²³ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 16

²²⁴ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²²⁵ Critical Threats, Mapping Anti Taliban Insurgencies In Afghanistan, 29 November 2022, [url](#)

²²⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 15; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 19

²²⁷ AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 4; ACLED and APW, Two Years of Repression: Mapping Taliban Violence Targeting Civilians in Afghanistan, 11 August 2023, [url](#); UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2023, [url](#), para. 17; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 16

²²⁸ ACLED and APW, Two Years of Repression: Mapping Taliban Violence Targeting Civilians in Afghanistan, 11 August 2023, [url](#); Felbab-Brown, V., Afghanistan in 2023: Taliban internal power struggles and militancy, 3 February 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, One Year After Seizing Power, Is The Taliban Here To Stay?, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

²²⁹ RFE/RL, One Year After Seizing Power, Is The Taliban Here To Stay?, 15 August 2022, [url](#); Roggio, B., in FDD Events, Afghanistan in Peril: Two Years After the U.S. Withdrawal, August 2023, [url](#), p. 2; ACLED and APW, Two Years of Repression: Mapping Taliban Violence Targeting Civilians in Afghanistan, 11 August 2023, [url](#)

²³⁰ ACLED and APW, Two Years of Repression: Mapping Taliban Violence Targeting Civilians in Afghanistan, 11 August 2023, [url](#); Critical Threats, Mapping Anti Taliban Insurgencies In Afghanistan, 29 November 2022, [url](#); Kabul Now, 50 Residents of Panjshir Released from Taliban Prisons, 27 December 2022, [url](#)

²³¹ ACLED and APW, Two Years of Repression: Mapping Taliban Violence Targeting Civilians in Afghanistan, 11 August 2023, [url](#)

²³² Kabul Now, NRF Commander, 20 Comrades Killed Fighting Against Taliban, 26 December 2022, [url](#)



mainly the Taliban clashing with AFF or NRF, and unidentified armed groups, but there were also some cases involving Taliban clashes with ISKP. Most battles in these provinces were recorded in July–October 2022, and another peak, but smaller, occurred in August 2023 (mainly in Badakhshan and Takhar).²³³ Out of the events recorded by UCDP in these provinces, about 56 % (121 events) involved the Taliban and NRF, and 4.6 % (10 events) involved the Taliban and AFF. UCDP data also indicated that most events in Takhar, Panjsher, Badakhshan and Baghlan (62 %) took place in July–October 2022, and that there was another but smaller peak of events (8.8 %) in August 2023.²³⁴ Out of the fatalities recorded by ACLED in the reference period, 1 053 or 42 % took place in Takhar, Panjsher, Badakhshan and Baghlan.²³⁵ Out of UCDP’s best estimate²³⁶ for fatalities, 35.8 % (695 deaths) took place in these provinces, and almost 70 % of the fatalities in these provinces occurred in July–October 2022. Among the 61 civilian deaths recorded in these provinces, over half took place in the same period.²³⁷

2.2.2. Activities of ISKP

After the Taliban takeover, ISKP launched several attacks targeting both Taliban and civilians, causing numerous deaths.²³⁸ The number of ISKP attacks have however decreased significantly after Taliban operations against the group,²³⁹ and ISKP’s capabilities have been described as ‘degraded’²⁴⁰ and ‘limited’.²⁴¹ An analysis by AW indicated that ISKP operated through fewer and smaller cells in 2022 and 2023.²⁴² ACLED recorded 118 events involving ISKP during the reference period of this report,²⁴³ while UCDP recorded 123 events.²⁴⁴ This can be contrasted to the numbers that were recorded as of the Taliban takeover until 30 June 2022, when ACLED recorded 255 events involving ISKP,²⁴⁵ and UCDP recorded 213 events.²⁴⁶ The report of the UN Secretary General noted a decrease in attacks claimed or attributed to

²³³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²³⁴ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²³⁵ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²³⁶ According to the UCDP Codebook the best estimate contain ‘the most reliable estimate of deaths identified in the source material’. See: UCDP, UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook Version 23.1, 2023, [url](#), p. 5

²³⁷ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²³⁸ EUAA, Afghanistan, Security Situation – August 2022, [url](#), p. 66

²³⁹ BBC Monitoring, Analysis: IS struggles in Afghanistan on second anniversary of Taliban return, 15 August 2023, [url](#); Gossman, P., HRW, email communication, 28 September 2023

²⁴⁰ TOLONews, West: Islamic Emirate ‘Significantly Degraded ISKP Capability’, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

²⁴¹ BBC Monitoring, Analysis: IS struggles in Afghanistan on second anniversary of Taliban return, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

²⁴² AW, Content released by ISKP indicates fewer and smaller cells, 30 August 2023, [url](#)

²⁴³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²⁴⁵ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 15 August 2021 to 30 June 2022, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 16 August 2021 to 30 June 2022, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 24 October 2022



ISKP in reporting periods spanning over September 2022–May 2023.²⁴⁷ In the period 14 November 2022–20 May 2023, the UN recorded 27 attacks, which can be contrasted to the 115 ISKP attacks recorded in the same periods in 2021/2022.²⁴⁸

The main areas of ISKP activity have been in areas of its former stronghold in eastern Afghanistan, and also in Kabul and some northern areas.²⁴⁹ Most ACLED events involving ISKP were recorded in Kabul (36 events), and the eastern provinces Kunar (18) and Nangarhar (15).²⁵⁰ Most events in the UCDP dataset involving ISKP also took place in the provinces Kabul, Kunar and Nangarhar.²⁵¹ Based on notes related to the reports in the ACLED dataset, some events in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces were related to Taliban operations against ISKP, and a couple of reported fatalities concerned individuals with links to the Salafi community or with alleged links to ISKP.²⁵²

Primary targets of ISKP have been Taliban fighters, Taliban officials and religious leaders in its strive to undermine Taliban rule.²⁵³ The deadliest attacks attributed or claimed by ISKP have however been directed against certain ethno-religious groups, in particular the Shia Hazara community.²⁵⁴ In December 2022, the UN Secretary General called on the *de facto* authorities to implement adequate protection measures due to the IED attacks against civilian targets and in civilian areas, and specifically mentioned places of worship and education facilities and Hazaras as a community ‘facing heightened risk’.²⁵⁵ On 6 September 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that ISKP had claimed 13 attacks against Hazara targets since the Taliban takeover, and that 3 additional attacks had links to the groups, resulting in the death of at least 700 persons.²⁵⁶ Later the same month, an unclaimed suicide attack was carried out against the Kaaj Education Centre in Kabul City.²⁵⁷ According to UN figures, the attack killed 54 and wounded 114 persons²⁵⁸ and most victims were Hazara teenage girls.²⁵⁹ ISKP also targeted Sikhs after the Taliban takeover;²⁶⁰ during the reference period of this report, a Sikh shop was

²⁴⁷ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 20, UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2023, [url](#), para. 18; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 17

²⁴⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2023, [url](#), para. 18; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 17

²⁴⁹ Critical Threats, Mapping Anti Taliban Insurgencies In Afghanistan, 29 November 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁵¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²⁵² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁵³ ISW, Afghanistan Warning Update: IS-KP in Afghanistan is Expanding Faster than Anticipated, 27 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁴ Critical Threats, Mapping Anti Taliban Insurgencies In Afghanistan, 29 November 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 75

²⁵⁶ HRW, Afghanistan: ISIS Group Targets Religious Minorities, 6 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ BBC News, Kabul blast kills teenager sitting practice exam, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 34

²⁵⁹ Al Jazeera, Suicide attacker kills at least 19 in Kabul school blast, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁰ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 151



attacked by an explosion on 3 December 2022 in Jalalabad, causing six casualties according to local *de facto* authorities.²⁶¹

According to AW, ISKP appeared to have shifted away from carrying out attacks against civilian and Shia Hazara neighbourhoods, as they predominantly have attacked Taliban targets. The project, reporting on 15 August 2023, stated that they had not recorded any ISKP attacks on Hazara or Shia targets since September 2022.²⁶² According to a USIP (United States Institute of Peace) report, 72 % of ISKP attacks targeted the Taliban in 2022.²⁶³ Patricia Gossman, associate director of the Asia division at Human Rights Watch, also told the EUAA on 28 September 2023 that ISKP attacks had decreased. Those attacks that had continued to occur in 2023 had targeted Taliban officials, and no major attacks against Hazaras or Sikhs had been reported in many months as of September 2023.²⁶⁴ An anonymous international organisation also told Landinfo that ISKP had shifted to primarily target the Taliban and high-profile *de facto* officials.²⁶⁵ Moreover, ISKP have claimed attacks against foreign targets,²⁶⁶ including the Russian embassy,²⁶⁷ the Pakistani embassy²⁶⁸ and a Chinese-owned hotel in Kabul City.²⁶⁹

2.2.3. Explosions and other events in Kabul Province

Kabul was the province where ACLED recorded most cases of explosions/remote violence. The 55 such events that were recorded in Kabul Province during the reference period made up around 21.7 % of explosions/remote violence in Afghanistan at large (254 cases). The great majority of cases recorded in Kabul Province were based on reports of the detonation of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and other explosions directed at both Taliban and civilian targets, including in places of worship, schools, and vehicles. Some attacks were claimed or attributed to ISKP, while in other cases the actor behind the attack was unknown. ACLED recorded a total of 189 fatalities due to explosions/remote violence in Kabul Province, in contrast to the total number of 537 fatalities in Afghanistan at large due to explosions/remote violence. When including 'battles' and 'violence against civilians', ACLED data indicates 336 fatalities in Kabul Province. The 41 battles recorded in the province were mainly related to clashes between the Taliban and ISKP, and the Taliban and NRF and AFF.²⁷⁰ Meanwhile, UCDP recorded 108 events in Kabul Province, causing 165 civilian deaths. This included 18 attacks against civilians carried out by/attribution to the *de facto* government, causing 12 civilian deaths. Moreover, the data included 12 attacks against civilians carried out

²⁶¹ Ariana News, Six injured in Saturday's blast in Jalalabad city, 4 December 2022, [url](#)

²⁶² AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), pp. 27, 29

²⁶³ Sayed, A. and Refslund Hamming, T., The Growing Threat of the Islamic State in Afghanistan and South Asia, USIP, 7 June 2023, [url](#), p. 9

²⁶⁴ Gossman, P., HRW, email communication, 28 September 2023

²⁶⁵ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: ISKPs strategi og modus etter Talibans maktovertakelse, 28 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

²⁶⁶ BBC Monitoring, Analysis: IS struggles in Afghanistan on second anniversary of Taliban return, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁷ RFE/RL, IS Claims Responsibility For Deadly Suicide Attack Outside Russian Embassy In Kabul, 5 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ Reuters, Islamic State claims responsibility for attack on Pakistani embassy in Kabul, 4 December 2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁹ Kabul Now, 21 Killed, Wounded in ISKP's Attack on Chinese Longan Hotel in Kabul, 13 December 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)



by/attributed to ISKP, causing 97 civilian deaths, and 11 attacks against civilians carried out by unknown actors, causing 21 civilian deaths. Furthermore, 32 events involved the *de facto* government on one side and ISKP on the other, causing 30 civilian deaths, and 21 events involved the *de facto* government on one side and NRF and AFF on the other, causing no known civilian deaths.²⁷¹

2.2.4. Other recorded events

Unclaimed bombings have occurred outside Sunni mosques causing several deaths and injuries, and ISKP has claimed or been attributed attacks against pro-Taliban clerics.²⁷² One unclaimed suicide attack in Herat City targeted a Taliban cleric outside the entrance to a mosque, killing at least 18 persons.²⁷³

During the reference period Taliban forces clashed with, inter alia, Pakistani and Iranian security forces in border areas.²⁷⁴ Pakistan has also fired against what it claims to be TTP targets, hitting populated areas in Afghanistan and causing civilian deaths.²⁷⁵ There have also been clashes between the Taliban and the local population in some areas in the implementation of the poppy cultivation ban.²⁷⁶ Notes related to reports in the ACLED dataset, provided information on two such cases taking place in Nangarhar and one in Badakhshan killing 6 farmers in total, and injuring 7–10 civilians.²⁷⁷ UCDP also recorded two such events in Badakhshan and Nangarhar, but did not record any civilian deaths.²⁷⁸

There have also been reports about some internal rifts in the Taliban movement,²⁷⁹ but it has been difficult to assess their scope and the power of different factions.²⁸⁰ Armed clashes following internal disagreements occurred in Faryab Province in January 2022 due to the arrest of an Uzbek commander, and in Sar-e Pul in June 2022 following the removal of a Hazara commander as the local intelligence chief.²⁸¹ According to Afghanistan-based journalist Ali Latifi (who has reported from various parts of the country for several international media outlets), there have been small examples of clashes between Taliban commanders which have been kept out of the news.²⁸² An Afghanistan-based international analyst also reported

²⁷¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²⁷² EUAA, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments, 4 November 2022, [url](#), p. 8

²⁷³ BBC News, Mujib Rahman Ansari: Taliban cleric killed in Herat mosque blast, 2 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 22; TOLONews, A Look at Afghanistan's Security Situation in 2022, 31 December 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁵ Barnett, R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ AW, Poppy eradication sparks clashes between Taliban and locals in Nangarhar, 27 April 2023, [url](#); BBC News, Inside the Taliban's war on drugs - opium poppy crops slashed, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁸ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²⁷⁹ WSJ, Taliban Splits Emerge Over Religion, Power and Girls' Schools, 1 July 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ Watkins, A., One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State, USIP, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

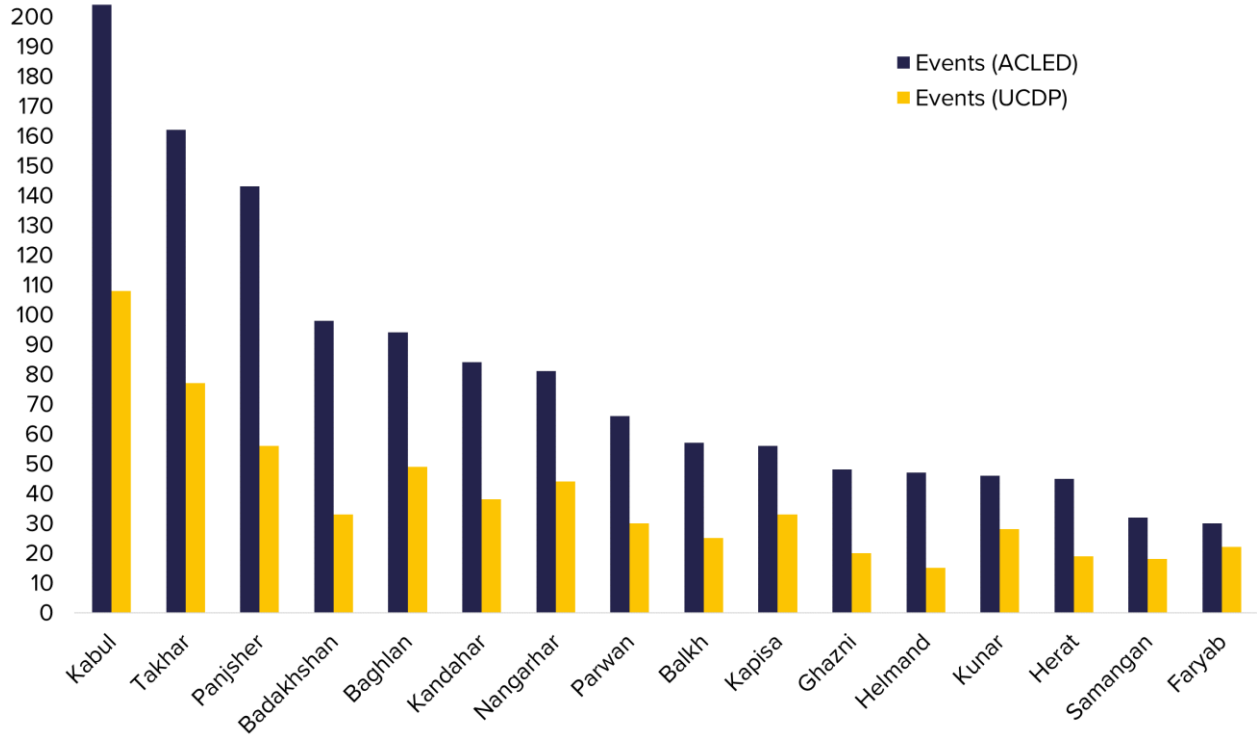
²⁸¹ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#)

²⁸² Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023



the same information and added that these incidents have not signified anything more serious than local tensions.²⁸³

Figure 2. Events by province 1 July 2022–30 September 2023



Source: EUAA chart based on ACLED and UCDP data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#); UCDP, data covering the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023.²⁸⁴

2.3. Impact of the violence on the civilian population

UCDP recorded 619 civilian deaths resulting from the 302 events in which civilians died.²⁸⁵ Based on 17 262 household interviews carried out by REACH, 5 % stated that they had been affected by conflict in the middle six months of 2022²⁸⁶ and UNDP estimated that this corresponded to 300 000 households or 2 million people when looking at the Afghan population as a whole. Among those households affected by conflict, as reported by UNDP, 32 % had lost shelter, 27 % had lost basic services, 19 % had lost healthcare, and 11 % had experienced an injury or death among their household members. UNDP also stressed that,

²⁸³ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

²⁸⁴ Provinces with less than 30 recorded ACLED events have not been included in the chart. Recorded ACLED/UCDP events for these provinces looked as the following: Kunduz: 27 ACLED events/13 UCDP events, Paktika: 26/12, Laghman: 25/19, Paktya: 25/10, Khost: 25/9, Zabul: 22/7, Logar: 20/9, Badghis 19/7, Daykundi: 19/3, Jawzjan: 18/12, Bamyan: 18/5, Ghor: 17/12, Nimroz: 17/7, Farah: 13/14, Uruzgan: 12/6, Nuristan: 8/4, Sar-e Pul: 8/6, Wardak: 6/6.

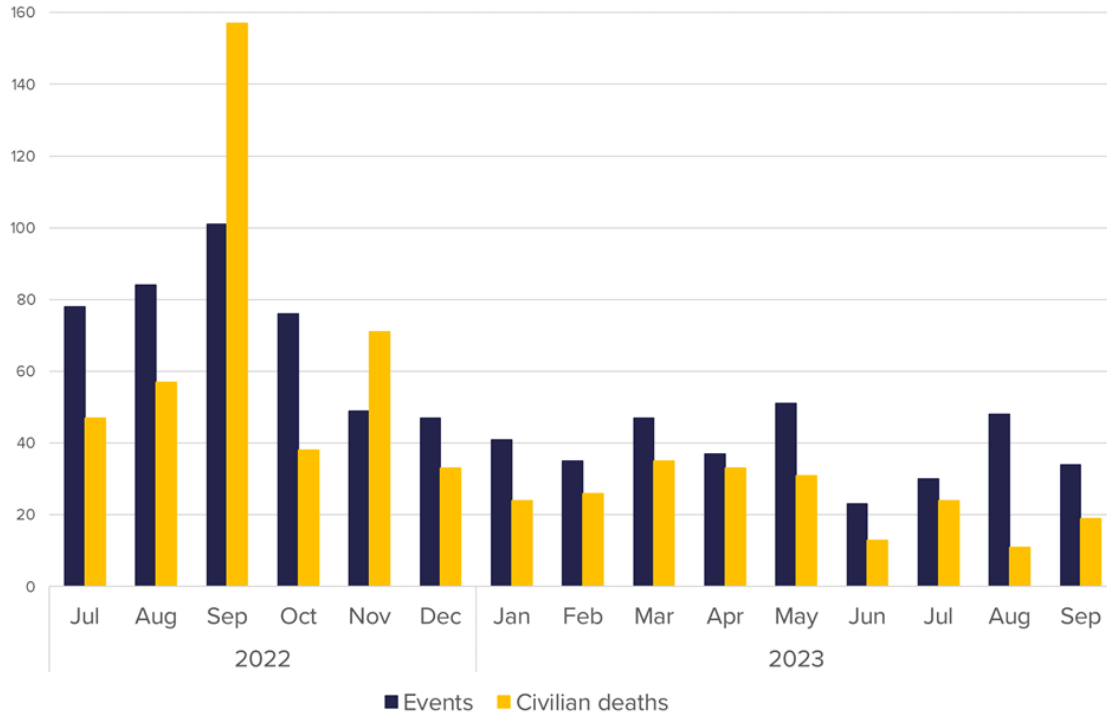
²⁸⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²⁸⁶ REACH, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment 2022 Key Findings Presentation, 20 September 2022, [url](#), pp. 4, 7



although only 5 % stated that they had been affected by conflict, it is not known to what extent conflict caused uncertainty and fear among the Afghan population.²⁸⁷

Figure 3. Civilian deaths and events per month 1 July 2022–30 September 2023 (UCDP)

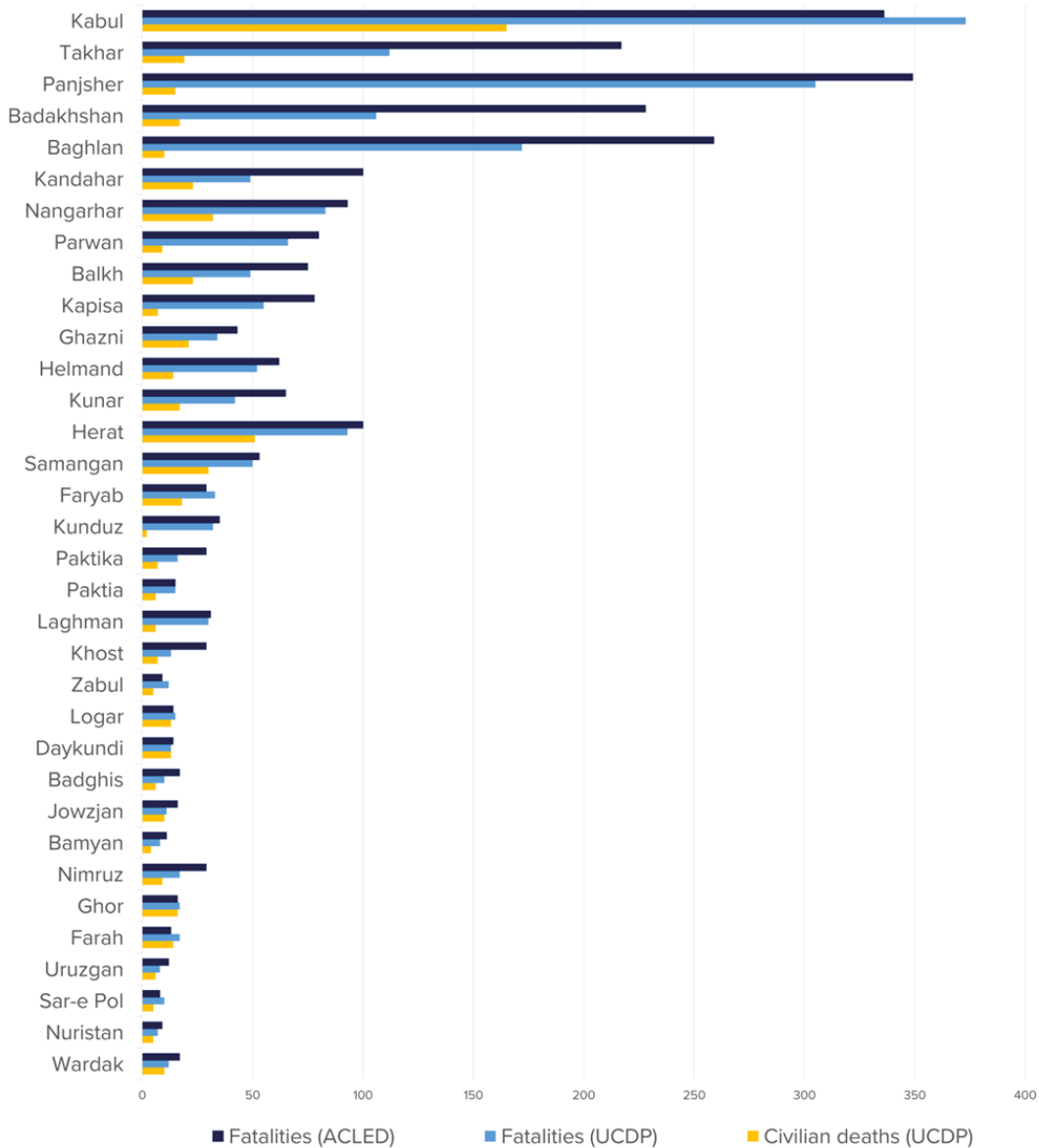


Source: EUAA chart based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023.

²⁸⁷ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 49, 57, 59



Figure 4. Fatalities and civilian deaths by province 1 July 2022–30 September 2023



Source: EUAA chart based on ACLED and UCDP data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#); UCDP, data covering the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023.

The Taliban have responded to armed opposition with force, which has been followed by reports of summary executions, detentions, and ill-treatment of detainees,²⁸⁸ as well as collective punishment and abuses of civilians suspected of supporting anti-Taliban groups.²⁸⁹ More information is available in section [4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups](#).

²⁸⁸ Watkins, A., One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State, USIP, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁹ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Execute, ‘Disappear’ Alleged Militants, 7 July 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 6 September 2022, [url](#), para. 51, 57



IED attacks, many claimed by ISKP but also several unclaimed attacks, have targeted places of worship. Such attacks have caused more than one third of all civilian casualties recorded by UNAMA since the Taliban takeover. Shia worshippers have been targeted, but also Sufi, Sunni and Sikh places of worship. The Hazara community, predominantly Shia, has also been targeted in attacks against education facilities, crowded streets, and public transportation. IEDs targeting the Taliban have also killed and injured civilians, including *de facto*-government employees and bystanders (63 deaths and 363 injuries since the takeover until 30 May 2023 according to UNAMA statistics).²⁹⁰ The four attacks with the highest rates of civilian deaths recorded by the UCDP constituted about 23 % of all civilian deaths during the reference period. These cases included an attack against the Kaaj education centre in a Hazara-dominated area in Kabul City (causing 53 civilian deaths) on 30 September 2022, a suicide attack outside a mosque in Herat (47 civilian deaths) on 2 September 2022, an explosion in a madrassa in Samangan (23 civilian deaths) on 30 November 2022, and another mosque attack in Kabul City (21 civilian deaths) on 17 August 2022.²⁹¹ More information is available in section [4.5.3. Hazaras and other Shia groups](#).

According to ACLED data, Kabul was the province that experienced the most events codified as ‘explosions/remote violence’.²⁹² On the question on how the number of IED attacks has impacted daily life in Kabul City, the international analyst and the international journalist both stated that it did not make any notable impact.²⁹³ According to the international analyst, an overwhelming majority of IED attacks has been carried out against the *de facto* security forces and it was mostly constituted by minor incidents.²⁹⁴ The international journalist affirmed that most explosions have been caused by small IEDs, often on the roadside. Comparing the current situation with the years before the Taliban takeover, the international journalist noted that the number of explosions is significantly lower now, even in Hazara-dominated neighbourhoods. The journalist added that Kabul City is a huge city in which it is not always possible to hear small explosions taking place one neighbourhood away. Due to the small scale of most explosions and roadside IEDs, infrastructure and roads have not been impacted. The source, however, noted that it is not possible to measure the fear among the population in certain areas that have experienced explosions, but emphasised again that the numbers have been much lower than before the takeover.²⁹⁵

Rawadari reported that there were cases of civilians being killed due to internal disputes within the Taliban, and gave Bamiyan Province as an example where the Taliban can be divided into two rivalling factions – one supporting the Taliban governor and the other the Taliban police chief. The Taliban supporting the Taliban police chief has detained, tortured and killed civilians to discredit the first more powerful group.²⁹⁶ This information has not been

²⁹⁰ UNAMA, Impact of Improvised Explosive Devices on Civilians in Afghanistan, 27 June 2023, [url](#), pp. 6, 8–11

²⁹¹ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²⁹² EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁹³ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

²⁹⁴ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

²⁹⁵ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

²⁹⁶ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 14



possible to corroborate with other sources. ACLED recorded 11 fatalities in Bamiyan Province²⁹⁷ and UCDP recorded 4 civilian deaths.²⁹⁸

Afghanistan is highly contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war. Especially children have been victims in recorded casualties.²⁹⁹ ICRC recorded 541 incidents involving landmines and explosive remnants in January 2022–June 2022. A total of 1 092 people were killed or injured in these incidents, of whom 640 were children. Cases were recorded all over the country, but mainly in southern and eastern Afghanistan.³⁰⁰

2.3.1. Internal displacement and returns

While Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimated that 4.4 million people lived in displacement due to conflict in Afghanistan in 2022,³⁰¹ UNHCR estimated that 3.25 million people lived in internal displacement due to conflict in 2023.³⁰² The conflict between the Taliban and the previous government caused large displacement with an average of 380 000 new displacements per year across the whole country according to IDMC. After the Taliban takeover, conflict-induced displacement decreased of nearly 100 % according to IDMC.³⁰³ New displacement remained on lower levels in 2022³⁰⁴ although sporadic armed clashes between the Taliban and other entities have continued to induce some displacement.³⁰⁵

Most displacement recorded in 2022 occurred in the provinces of Panjsher and Baghlan, where anti-Taliban opposition groups have been active, and also in Sar-e Pul³⁰⁶ where Mawlawi Mehdi based his resistance against the Taliban in late June 2022.³⁰⁷ UNOCHA statistics indicated that 29 050 individuals were displaced in Balkhab District, Sar-e Pul Province, in late June 2022. This constituted most cases recorded in 2022.³⁰⁸ The Protection Cluster and UNHCR reported that more than 3 000 families had been displaced from the area, but that most had returned or been forced to return by the *de facto* authorities as of mid-July 2022.³⁰⁹

UNOCHA data indicated that a total of 2 205 individuals (315 families) had been displaced since 1 July 2022 as of 22 August 2023. All recorded cases occurred in Panjsher Province, and people relocated to other parts of the same province, or to the provinces Parwan and Kabul.³¹⁰ According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, on the other hand, 583 466

²⁹⁷ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023 provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 9 October 2023

²⁹⁹ UNICEF Afghanistan [Twitter], posted on: 23 August 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot (March 2023), 25 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ ICRC, Afghanistan: Children are the main victims of unexploded and abandoned weapons, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

³⁰¹ IDMC, Global Internal Displacement Database, n.d., [url](#)

³⁰² UNHCR, Afghanistan situation, [2023], [url](#)

³⁰³ IDMC, One year on: the Taliban takeover and Afghanistan's changing displacement crisis, August 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ IDMC, One year on: the Taliban takeover and Afghanistan's changing displacement crisis, 24 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ Protection Cluster/UNHCR, Afghanistan, Protection Analysis Update, December 2022, [url](#), p. 6

³⁰⁶ UNOCHA, Conflict Induced Displacements Dashboard, 15 January 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁷ Rukshana, After taking control of Balkhab, Taliban summarily executed civilians, residents say, 1 July 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁸ UNOCHA, Afghanistan - Conflict Induced Displacements in 2022, 5 January 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ Protection Cluster, Afghanistan, Protection Analysis Update, December 2022, [url](#), p. 1

³¹⁰ UNOCHA, Afghanistan - Conflict Induced Displacements, (as of 22 August 2023), [2023], [url](#)



individuals were displaced in the last six months of 2022³¹¹ although these figures include a great majority of people who were displaced due to disasters such as floods and earthquakes. IOM's findings suggested that internally displaced persons (IDPs) were spread out across Afghanistan, although most who were displaced in 2021 and 2022 had relocated to the provinces Kabul (23 %) followed by Herat (10 %) and Balkh (8 %).³¹²

While conflict-induced displacement has decreased,³¹³ economic hardship has become a driving force in internal movement figures. Moreover, there has reportedly been a great increase in the share of people being displaced due to disasters.³¹⁴ Only 8 % of displacements were conflict-induced in May–October 2022 according to IOM's statistics.³¹⁵

Economic hardship has been identified as a barrier for IDPs to return to their areas of origin.³¹⁶ UNHCR recorded a total of 274 012 IDPs returning to their areas of origin in Afghanistan in 2022.³¹⁷ IOM reported figures of 1 525 577 IDPs returning to their areas of origin in 2022.³¹⁸

2.4. Recent crime trends

The crime levels have reportedly risen in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, and sources have put forward the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation as an explanatory factor.³¹⁹ According to 'anecdotal assessments of crime in urban centres' collected by Andrew Watkins, there has been a 'significant increase'.³²⁰ Both the international analyst and the international journalist stated that there are few reports on crime in Afghanistan.³²¹ While the international analyst suspected a significant underreporting especially in rural areas,³²² the international journalist stated that there is no exact data over crime, and that the reason for a reported increase in crime might as well be an increased attention to the problem.³²³

The Global Organised Crime index scored the criminality rate of Afghanistan as the 9th highest in the world.³²⁴ The report of the UN Secretary General mainly reported incidents relating to

³¹¹ IOM, Afghanistan - Baseline Assessment, Settlement Level Dataset, Round 16 (September-December 2022), Displacement Tracking Matrix, n.d., [url](#)

³¹² IOM, Afghanistan — Baseline Mobility Assessment Report, Round 16 (September-December 2022), Displacement Tracking Matrix, June 2023, [url](#), pp. 9–10

³¹³ Holloway K. et al., Climate Change, conflict and internal displacement in Afghanistan, November 2022, [url](#), p. 34

³¹⁴ IDMC, One year on: the Taliban takeover and Afghanistan's changing displacement crisis, August 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁵ IOM, Afghanistan — Baseline Mobility Assessment Report, Round 16 (September-December 2022), Displacement Tracking Matrix, June 2023 [url](#), p. 10

³¹⁶ IDMC, One year on: the Taliban takeover and Afghanistan's changing displacement crisis, August 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁷ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Afghanistan, 12 October 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁸ IOM, Afghanistan - Baseline Assessment, Settlement Level Dataset, Round 16 (September-December 2022), Displacement Tracking Matrix, n.d., [url](#)

³¹⁹ Watkins, A., The Taliban one year on, CTC Sentinel, August 2022, [url](#), p. 11; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 14; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2023, [url](#), para. 16

³²⁰ Watkins, A., The Taliban one year on, CTC Sentinel, August 2022, [url](#), p. 11

³²¹ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

³²² International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

³²³ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

³²⁴ Global Organized Crime Index, Afghanistan, [2023], [url](#)



robbery, theft and murder.³²⁵ Local media Khaama Press reported on increased crime leading to 'a rise in killings, suicides, and interpersonal disputes'.³²⁶ The same source indicated Kabul as one province where kidnapping and extortion 'recently' [10 November 2022] had grown.³²⁷

According to an analysis by the Protection Cluster and UNHCR, increased crime levels, along with the economic crisis and intimidation related to debt issues, were among the most common reasons for feeling insecurity among Afghan households.³²⁸ Rawadari reported on serious concern among many citizens due to a high number of targeted or 'mysterious' killings that were not followed by arrests or identified perpetrators.³²⁹

2.5. Recruitment into the Taliban and armed groups

The Taliban has been creating a national *de facto* military and has recruited its own members as well as former members of the Afghan security forces who had served the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.³³⁰ An international analyst confirmed this information but added that the number of recruited former security force personnel has been limited and generally concerned specialists.³³¹

When announcing their plans to create an army, the Taliban stated that they would recruit on voluntary basis.³³² The Taliban have recruited in large numbers and their own members have been treated preferentially. Sometimes, however, the recruitment efforts have caused resentment or disappointment, as Taliban members have not always been rewarded.³³³ An Afghan analyst who often travels Afghanistan to conduct field-based research, gave Kandahar Province as an example, where the *de facto* security structures did not have enough positions to accommodate all Taliban members in the province. Another example of resentment stemmed from fighters and commanders feeling that the position they were offered were not commensurate with the sacrifice they made. The same source further explained that many fighters were disappointed by the fact that most public servants of the former government were retained, and there was reportedly a push to incorporate Taliban fighters into the *de facto* state administration. The Afghan analyst however added that these issues were more pressing in 2022 and seemed to have been resolved in 2023.³³⁴

Both the Afghan analyst and the international journalist were not aware of instances of forced recruitment. They described the situation as quite the opposite to forced recruitment, as it is very popular to be part of the *de facto* security structure in an economy without other job

³²⁵ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 15

³²⁶ Khaama Press, Elderly Cab Driver Killed by Armed Robbers in Northern Afghanistan, 21 August 2022, [url](#)

³²⁷ Khaama Press, Taliban Releases Kidnapped Child in Northeastern Afghanistan, Arrests Two, 10 November 2022, [url](#)

³²⁸ Protection Cluster/UNHCR, Afghanistan, Protection Analysis Update, December 2022, [url](#), p. 3

³²⁹ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 14

³³⁰ Reuters, Taliban aim to boost Afghan security forces, anti-aircraft capacity -army chief, 12 April 2023, [url](#)

³³¹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

³³² TOLONews, Government to build 150 000 member forces, 10 January 2022, [url](#)

³³³ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

³³⁴ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023



opportunities.³³⁵ Also the international journalist pointed out the lack of other job opportunities and stated that the Taliban have enough men, and that many were willing to serve on voluntary basis, even without pay.³³⁶

Taliban members have been recruited to fill gaps in the former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), as most previous personnel was removed (except for people with highly technical functions such as pilots). Some skilled personnel of the former government have been asked to stay or resume their work within the *de facto* civil administration and security forces.³³⁷ The international journalists knew about a case where the Taliban went five times to someone's home and asked him to return, but he was not coerced to return to his job although he decided to do so after a while when it was clear that he would not be able to leave Afghanistan or get other employment.³³⁸ The Afghan analyst also provided anecdotal evidence suggesting that the Taliban tried to be 'extra nice' to people that they wanted to retain in their government, including civilian and security personnel. Some people that the analyst spoke with decided not to go back to their roles, despite being approached 'multiple times' to return to their duties. The Afghan analyst, however, believed that one should not rule out the possibility that some of the former security officials might have gone back to work out of fear, reasoning that it is the best security against possible reprisals by Taliban members and sympathisers.³³⁹

The only report found on forced recruitment was USDOS' report on the human rights situation in Afghanistan in which it is stated that societal discrimination against Hazaras have taken place 'in the form of extortion of money through illegal taxation, forced recruitment and forced labor, physical abuse, and detention'.³⁴⁰ This exact statement has been prevalent in every yearly report of USDOS on the human rights situation in Afghanistan since 2010.³⁴¹

Children were recruited to Taliban ranks during their time as an insurgency³⁴² and according to some sources, child recruitment has continued after the takeover.³⁴³ Stimson Center estimated that thousands of children may remain in Taliban ranks.³⁴⁴ According to the Afghan analyst, the Taliban have formed a commission to remove child soldiers from their ranks, and

³³⁵ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

³³⁶ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

³³⁷ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

³³⁸ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

³³⁹ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

³⁴⁰ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁴¹ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 12 April 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 30 March 2021, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 – Afghanistan, 11 March 2020, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 – Afghanistan, 13 March 2019, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017 – Afghanistan, 20 April 2018, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2016 – Afghanistan, 3 March 2017, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015 – Afghanistan, 13 April 2016, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2014 – Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2013 - Afghanistan, 27 February 2014, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2012 - Afghanistan, 19 April 2013, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2011 - Afghanistan, 24 May 2012, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2010, 8 April 2011, [url](#)

³⁴² HRW, This is our opportunity to end the Taliban's use of child soldiers, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁴³ Borgen Project (The), Child Soldiers in Afghanistan, 26 September 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ Stimson, CSPA Implementation Tracker, Afghanistan, 7 December 2022, [url](#)





today the Taliban usually avoid recruiting boys that are too young by rejecting children without a beard. The source added that the idea of childhood ending at 18 is seen as a Western construct, and that in a country where the large majority of the people do not know their date of birth or their age, becoming adult at 18 ‘makes very little sense’, and many oftentimes estimate their age.³⁴⁵

As regards recruitment to ISKP, the Salafi community and Taliban foot soldiers have reportedly been called upon to support the group.³⁴⁶ Afghanistan expert Antonio Giustozzi published a research article finding that two important sources for recruitment in Afghanistan have been the Salafi community and university students. Giustozzi’s study demonstrated that ISKP sought to recruit individuals with a militant Salafi profile and particularly religious students, especially those known to have experienced harassment from ‘extremist Hanafi students’ or from the Taliban in their repression of ISKP. Recruitment methods demonstrated in this study included sending recruitment videos, ‘messages about Salafism and news about the Taliban negotiating with America’. If the student did not react positively to such approaches, the recruitment attempt was allegedly stopped. Moreover, students joining ISKP often had not been interested in becoming fighters but took on other roles. ISKP recruitment has mainly focused on the *Sharia* faculty but other students demonstrating a strong religious interest, even non-Salafis, could be approached. Recruitment hotspots were Kabul and Gulbahar, and also Nangarhar University and Badakhshan University.³⁴⁷ The UN Sanctions and Monitoring Team also reported on the new ISKP leader focusing on recruiting more educated individuals and had extended recruitment to non-Salafism.³⁴⁸

ISKP has reportedly also engaged in recruiting children.³⁴⁹ In analysis of images from ISKP cells, AW noted that a child appeared in one picture of ISKP fighters.³⁵⁰

No information about forced recruitment to ISKP or other armed groups opposing the Taliban was found within the time constraints of drafting this report.

³⁴⁵ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

³⁴⁶ Sayed, A. and Refslund Hamming, T., *The Growing Threat of the Islamic State in Afghanistan and South Asia*, USIP, 7 June 2023, [url](#), p. 11

³⁴⁷ Giustozzi, A., *An Unfamiliar Challenge: How the Taliban are Meeting the Islamic State Threat on Afghanistan’s University Campuses*, RUSI, [url](#), pp. 3, 6–10

³⁴⁸ UN Security Council, *Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team*, 1 June 2023, [url](#), para. 46

³⁴⁹ USDOS, *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Afghanistan*, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁰ AW, *Content released by ISKP indicates fewer and smaller cells*, 30 August 2023, [url](#)





3. Humanitarian situation

3.1. The economic and humanitarian crisis

Afghanistan faced an economic and humanitarian crisis already before the Taliban takeover, due to drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and decreased international military spending.³⁵¹ After the takeover, this crisis escalated³⁵² and the Afghan economy entered a stage of ‘free fall’ for months.³⁵³ The Afghan Central Bank’s assets were frozen, which has caused a liquidity crisis and shortages of banknotes.³⁵⁴ All economic activity in the country has been impacted.³⁵⁵ Furthermore, the non-recognition of the *de facto* government has limited its possibilities to receive funds from international financial institutions to handle the situation.³⁵⁶ The World Bank reported that the Afghan economy contracted by 20.7 % in 2021, and by 6.2 % in 2022.³⁵⁷ High inflation drove up prices on basic goods and food,³⁵⁸ and large parts of the population have become increasingly reliant on humanitarian aid.³⁵⁹ The UN aid appeal for Afghanistan in 2022 was the largest in history for one country,³⁶⁰ asking for USD 4.44 billion in funding.³⁶¹ Moreover, the Taliban’s restrictions on women access to work have impacted the economy.³⁶²

The Afghan economy started to stabilise in mid-2022, but at a lower equilibrium than before.³⁶³ Living conditions marginally improved, although the situation continued to be dire.³⁶⁴ Large sums of afghani (AFN) banknotes were imported in November 2022,³⁶⁵ and the World Bank reported on a halt in the Afghan banks ‘sharp decline in deposits’ – although the banking system remained under stress.³⁶⁶ In 2023, there were some signs of a slight economic revival.³⁶⁷ The afghani stabilised in relation to major currencies, nominal and real

³⁵¹ USIP, One Year Later, Taliban Unable to Reverse Afghanistan’s Economic Decline, 8 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁵² HRW, Economic Causes of Afghanistan’s humanitarian Crisis, 4 August 2022, [url](#); NRC, Afghanistan at a Precipice, 10 August 2022, [url](#), p. 4

³⁵³ USIP, One Year Later, Taliban Unable to Reverse Afghanistan’s Economic Decline, 8 August 2022, [url](#); UN News, Afghanistan economy in ‘freefall’, threatening to take entire population with it, 19 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁴ HRW, Afghanistan: Economic Crisis Underlies Mass Hunger, 4 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

³⁵⁶ UK, House of Commons Library, Afghanistan: One year under a Taliban government, 10 October 2022, [url](#), p. 6

³⁵⁷ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

³⁵⁸ HRW, Afghanistan: Economic Crisis Underlies Mass Hunger, 4 August 2022, [url](#); ICRC, Afghanistan: People suffer as spending capacity shrinks, prices rise, 13 July 2022, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ IOM, With More than Half of Afghans Dependent on Humanitarian Aid, IOM Calls for Sustained Support, 1 September 2022, [url](#); Islamic Relief, Two years on, millions of Afghan civilians need greater international support, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁰ UN News, Afghanistan: UN launches largest single country aid appeal ever, 11 January 2022, [url](#)

³⁶¹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022, [no date], [url](#)

³⁶² World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 16

³⁶³ USIP, One Year Later, Taliban Unable to Reverse Afghanistan’s Economic Decline, 8 August 2022, [url](#); World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update, October 2022, [url](#), pp. 9, 17

³⁶⁴ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update, October 2022, [url](#), pp. 2, 10, 17

³⁶⁵ Reuters, Afghan central bank gets fresh banknotes after U.S. helps clear payment, 9 November 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 15

³⁶⁷ USIP, Two Years into Taliban Rule, New Shocks Weaken Afghan Economy, 10 August 2023, [url](#)



wages slightly improved,³⁶⁸ and the inflation declined³⁶⁹ to overgo in deflation in April 2023.³⁷⁰ The Afghan population has however been under substantial pressure³⁷¹ and has struggled to cover basic needs.³⁷² The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased from 24.4 million people in 2022 to 28.3 million people in January 2023 (which corresponds to two thirds of the Afghan population).³⁷³ Sources described the Afghan economy and humanitarian needs as continuously vulnerable to spillover effects from global and regional economic challenges,³⁷⁴ as well as internal disasters related to climate change.³⁷⁵ Some examples include Afghanistan entering its third consecutive year of drought,³⁷⁶ flash floods causing deaths and severe damages to houses, land and livestock across the country,³⁷⁷ and an earthquake hitting Badakhshan Province on 21 March 2023.³⁷⁸

Aid delivery became increasingly complicated after the takeover, inter alia because Taliban individuals under UN sanctions held key *de facto* government positions.³⁷⁹ Aid delivery was also impacted by increased costs³⁸⁰ and difficulties in transferring money into Afghanistan.³⁸¹ The situation was further complicated when the Taliban banned women from working for NGOs³⁸² and for UN offices.³⁸³ (More information on the treatment of aid workers is available in the section [4.8 Humanitarian workers](#)) Moreover, funding for humanitarian assistance has decreased.³⁸⁴ The UN aid appeal for Afghanistan in 2022 was funded by 75 %, and on 30 September 2023 the response plan for 2023 (USD 3.23 billion) had only been funded by 34 %.³⁸⁵ The shortfall in funds has for example impacted the World Food Programme (WFP), who had stopped giving food assistance to 10 million people by September 2023.³⁸⁶

³⁶⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Economic Monitor, 31 July 2023, [url](#), pp. 2, 5

³⁶⁹ World Bank, Afghanistan Economic Monitor, 31 July 2023, [url](#), p. 4; ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

³⁷⁰ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

³⁷¹ World Bank, Afghanistan, Key conditions and challenges, April 2023, [url](#), p. 1

³⁷² ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 12

³⁷³ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, 23 January 2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁴ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 18, 26

³⁷⁵ SIPRI, Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet: Afghanistan 2023, February 2023, [url](#), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan: The alarming effects of climate change, 1 August 2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁶ Save the Children, The international community must not turn its back on hungry children in Afghanistan as 2 million people lose food assistance, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁷ EUAA, Afghanistan, Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments, 4 November 2022, [url](#), p. 14; UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Floods Jul 2023, 2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁸ BBC News, Earthquake in Pakistan and Afghanistan kills at least 19 people, 22 March 2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁹ HRW, Economic Causes of Afghanistan's humanitarian Crisis, 4 August 2022, [url](#); NRC, Afghanistan at a Precipice, 10 August 2022, [url](#), p. 4

³⁸⁰ NRC, Afghanistan at a Precipice, 10 August 2022, [url](#), p. 3; Refugees International, Fit for Purpose: Getting Humanitarian Aid Right in Afghanistan One Year after the Taliban Takeover, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 4, 14

³⁸¹ HRW, Economic Causes of Afghanistan's humanitarian Crisis, 4 August 2022, [url](#); NRC, Afghanistan at a Precipice, 10 August 2022, [url](#), p. 4

³⁸² VOA, Taliban Hold Firm to Ban on Afghan Female Aid Workers, 30 December 2022, [url](#); NRC, A ban on female aid workers in Afghanistan will cost lives, warn leading aid groups, 29 December 2022, [url](#)

³⁸³ UN News, Taliban order bars Afghan women from working with UN, 4 April 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ IRC, Two years since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, almost 30 million people remain in dire need of assistance as funding shortfalls jeopardize the humanitarian response, 7 April 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Critical Funding Gap, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁵ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2023, n.d., [url](#)

³⁸⁶ WFP, WFP in Afghanistan forced to drop 10 million people from lifesaving assistance, deepening despair and worry for Afghans, 5 September 2023, [url](#)



3.2. Poverty, basic subsistence and employment

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world.³⁸⁷ The most recent poverty estimates are based on data collected in 2019 and 2020, which suggested that 47.5 % of the population lived on assets below the poverty threshold.³⁸⁸ The World Bank affirmed these figures and estimated 48.3 % of the population to be poor in April–June 2023, although monetary poverty was estimated to impact 70 % of the population.³⁸⁹ Other sources have however reported on nearly all Afghans living in poverty.³⁹⁰ UNDP, for example, suggested that 85 % of the population (34 million people) lived below the poverty line in December 2022 – their estimate does not however correspond to the conventional poverty rate.³⁹¹

The decrease in labour earnings and wages has been reported as a main challenge for households to cover basic expenses.³⁹² In most Afghan households, agriculture and livestock have been primary sources of income.³⁹³ These sectors have been negatively impacted by drought³⁹⁴ and extreme temperatures.³⁹⁵ Moreover, the Taliban have enforced their ban on opium poppy cultivation, which has been a common source of income.³⁹⁶

Salaried employment opportunities decreased significantly after the Taliban takeover.³⁹⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that 450 000 persons had lost their jobs between the second quarter of 2021 and the fourth quarter of 2022, and projected that 900 000 people would have been unemployed by the end of 2022 had not the administration changed.³⁹⁸ The World Bank also noted a negative unemployment and underemployment trend³⁹⁹ – only 16 % had a salaried employment in the public or private sector in October 2022,⁴⁰⁰ which went down to 12 % in April–June 2023 according to WFP.⁴⁰¹ Particularly women and youth were overrepresented in unemployment rates.⁴⁰² According to ILO, both female and youth employment had decreased 25 % by the last quarter of 2022 compared to before the

³⁸⁷ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 12; World Bank, Gross national income per capita 2022, Atlas method and PPP, 1 July 2023, [url](#), pp. 3–4

³⁸⁸ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 43

³⁸⁹ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 6, 23

³⁹⁰ IOM, With More than Half of Afghans Dependent on Humanitarian Aid, IOM Calls for Sustained Support, 1 September 2022, [url](#); IRC, Afghanistan: An entire population pushed into poverty, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

³⁹¹ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 14, 46

³⁹² World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update, October 2022, [url](#), p. 2; HRW, Economic Causes of Afghanistan's Humanitarian Crisis, 4 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁹³ UNOCHA and REACH, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment, October 2022, [url](#), p. 3; ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 11

³⁹⁴ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: The alarming effects of climate change, 1 August 2023, [url](#); IPS, Drought-Displaced Afghan Peasants Yearn for Their Rural Life, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁵ FAO, Afghanistan: Cold Wave Assessment on Livestock, 4 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1; IPS, Drought-Displaced Afghan Peasants Yearn for Their Rural Life, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁶ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 11; USIP, The Taliban's Successful Opium Ban is Bad for Afghans and the World, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁷ UNDP, One Year in Review-Afghanistan since August 2021, 5 October 2022, [url](#), p. 27; ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 11

³⁹⁸ ILO, Employment in Afghanistan in 2022: A rapid impact assessment, March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

³⁹⁹ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47

⁴⁰⁰ World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 10–11

⁴⁰¹ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, 5 July 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁴⁰² ILO, Employment in Afghanistan in 2022: A rapid impact assessment, March 2023, [url](#), p. 1



takeover.⁴⁰³ The World Bank reported an unemployment rate of 31 % for males in the age group 14–24, in contrast to the average male unemployment rate of 18 % for all ages (14–65 years). Meanwhile, the average unemployment rate among women was 44.4 %.⁴⁰⁴ Moreover, women in urban areas, with a secondary or post-secondary education and who used to be employed in 2020, tended to be unemployed in 2022.⁴⁰⁵ Other sources also reported on educated women facing unemployment due to Taliban restrictions.⁴⁰⁶

The World Bank noted a significant increase in labour force participation among both men and women in 2022 and 2023.⁴⁰⁷ Male labour force participation rose from 69 % to 86 %, and the participation of women saw a threefold increase by April–June 2023 compared to the situation in 2020.⁴⁰⁸ Due to the lack of employment opportunities people have however increasingly engaged in work in the informal sector.⁴⁰⁹ According to the World Bank's statistics most men were self-employed or engaged in casual work,⁴¹⁰ while women tended livestock, worked on farms⁴¹¹ or engaged in small-scale economic activities from home.⁴¹² Other sources have also reported on how economic struggles have made women engage in home-based business.⁴¹³

At the same time as job opportunities have decreased, the high inflation in 2021–2022 reduced the real value of earnings.⁴¹⁴ By April–June 2023, however, nominal wages had recovered to their pre-crisis levels according to the World Bank, and the real wages value was accentuated by the lower inflation and the subsequent deflation. The World Bank further reported that this contributed to an improvement in household welfare, but also pointed out that poverty remained high and that the recent gains could be an effect of households exhausting all resources and coping strategies.⁴¹⁵ ILO reported that labour income had become more insecure as more people engaged in self-employment.⁴¹⁶ According to a survey carried out by REACH, the average monthly household income in 2022 was AFN 6 489 [about EUR 80, by September 2023], and the median income per person was AFN 833 [about EUR 10, by September 2023].⁴¹⁷

⁴⁰³ ILO, *Employment in Afghanistan in 2022: A rapid impact assessment*, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 3–4; World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability*, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47

⁴⁰⁴ World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability*, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47

⁴⁰⁵ World Bank, *Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey*, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 10–11

⁴⁰⁶ SCMP, *Afghan women, 'gradually dying' as Taliban shuts off more jobs, retrain as nurses*, 9 August 2023, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, *Business Women's Day: Work Deprivation Has Depressed Women in Afghanistan*, 23 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁷ World Bank, *Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey*, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 10–11; World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability*, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 14

⁴⁰⁸ World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability*, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 14

⁴⁰⁹ UNDP, *One Year in Review-Afghanistan since August 2021*, 5 October 2022, [url](#), p. 27

⁴¹⁰ World Bank, *Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey*, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 10–11

⁴¹¹ World Bank, *Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey*, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 10–11; World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability*, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 14

⁴¹² World Bank, *Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey*, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 10–11

⁴¹³ Context, *Afghan women set up secret businesses to escape Taliban bans*, 15 August 2023, [url](#); New Humanitarian (The), *For Afghan women, fashion and crafts offer a work lifeline*, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹⁴ World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update*, October 2022, [url](#), p. 2; HRW, *World Report 2023: Afghanistan*, 12 January 2023, [url](#); ILO, *Employment in Afghanistan in 2022: A rapid impact assessment*, March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴¹⁵ World Bank, *Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability*, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 23

⁴¹⁶ ILO, *Employment in Afghanistan in 2022: A rapid impact assessment*, March 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁴¹⁷ UNDP, *Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023*, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 39



According to the World Bank, poverty rates were higher in urban areas.⁴¹⁸ The urban population heavily relied on work within the construction sector which collapsed after the Taliban takeover.⁴¹⁹ Meanwhile, the populations in rural areas have to a large extent depended on agriculture⁴²⁰ and, with the possibility to self-produce, farmers have generally been less vulnerable to changes in workforce demands.⁴²¹ The agricultural sector has however been vulnerable to climate change⁴²² and some reports suggest that poverty has been more intense in rural areas.⁴²³ ACAPS, on the other hand, described rural and urban households as linked and impacting each other as regards job losses and income reduction.⁴²⁴

Common strategies to cope with the situation have included reducing the quality and quantity of food, getting into heavy debt, selling property,⁴²⁵ begging,⁴²⁶ marrying off girls,⁴²⁷ taking children out of school, child labour,⁴²⁸ and in extreme cases organ trafficking.⁴²⁹ According to WFP, households without an income have been more likely to resort to extreme coping mechanism during food shortages.⁴³⁰ A nationwide household survey called the Whole of Afghanistan Assessment (WoAA) covers the situation for Afghan households in the previous six months (as of September 2022). It was carried out by REACH and is based on 17 262 household interviews.⁴³¹ This survey found that 92 % of households were using coping mechanisms, or lacked such alternatives as they had already exhausted their resources. Based on this data, UNDP assessed that 4.3 million households had borrowed money to secure food, almost 470 000 had been begging, more than 850 000 had sent their children to work, and almost 80 000 (2 %) had married off girls earlier than intended.⁴³²

According to UNOCHA, Kabul was the province where most people in need of humanitarian assistance were located as of January 2023. There were 4.7 million people in need in this area, but the severity of needs in Kabul (as well as Takhar) were estimated not to be as grave as in other provinces.⁴³³ A study by ACAPS found that households in Kabul City as well as households in rural Qarabagh (Kabul Province) struggled to meet their basic needs due to the economic situation and the dysfunctional financial system. Many households had resorted to

⁴¹⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47

⁴¹⁹ MEE, 'Afghanistan's food crisis is one of access, not availability', 29 September 2023, [url](#); CMI, Understanding and addressing poverty and food insecurity in Afghanistan, April 2023, [url](#)

⁴²⁰ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47; Asef Shaiq, M. et al., Dimensions of Poverty in Kunduz Province of Afghanistan, 30 November 2022, [url](#)

⁴²¹ CMI, Understanding and addressing poverty and food insecurity in Afghanistan, April 2023, [url](#)

⁴²² World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47; Asef Shaiq, M. et al., Dimensions of Poverty in Kunduz Province of Afghanistan, 30 November 2022, [url](#)

⁴²³ Hakimi, H., Afghanistan's Outlook: Under Taliban Rule, the economy slumps as taxation income rises, 15 August 2023, [url](#); Asef Shaiq, M. et al., Dimensions of Poverty in Kunduz Province of Afghanistan, 30 November 2022, [url](#); AAN, No Food For Hope: Afghanistan's Child Malnutrition Dilemma in 2023, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

⁴²⁴ ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁴²⁵ CARE, The Impact of the Food Crisis on Women and Girls in Afghanistan, 29 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 10–11; UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 15, 62, 68

⁴²⁶ New Humanitarian (The), For Afghan women, fashion and crafts offer a work lifeline, 8 June 2023, [url](#); UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 15

⁴²⁷ CARE, The Impact of the Food Crisis on Women and Girls in Afghanistan, 29 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 11; Save the Children, Afghanistan, Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment, January 2022, [url](#), p. 8

⁴²⁸ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 57

⁴²⁹ CARE, The Impact of the Food Crisis on Women and Girls in Afghanistan, 29 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 11

⁴³⁰ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁴³¹ REACH, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment 2022 Key Findings Presentation, 20 September 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁴³² UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 15, 63–64

⁴³³ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (January 2023), 23 January 2023, [url](#), p. 9





coping mechanisms such as changing their diet, delaying or avoiding medical care, borrowing money, resorting to humanitarian aid, selling assets and child labour.⁴³⁴

3.3. Food security

Afghanistan is one of the most food insecure countries in the world.⁴³⁵ The hunger situation has not been classified as a famine⁴³⁶ but food insecurity is widespread throughout the country.⁴³⁷ Buying food has been the top priority for Afghan households⁴³⁸ and in certain periods in 2022 the average household was spending over 90 % of its income on food.⁴³⁹ After a sharp increase following the Taliban takeover,⁴⁴⁰ prices on food and basic household items started to decrease in 2022⁴⁴¹ and continued to do so in 2023.⁴⁴² Prices were however still high in contrast to before the takeover,⁴⁴³ and the general purchasing power has been weak.⁴⁴⁴

WFP estimated that at least 89 % of the population experienced insufficient food consumption in November 2022,⁴⁴⁵ but noted a marginal improvement (down to 87 %) in the first two quarters of 2023.⁴⁴⁶ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classifications (IPC)⁴⁴⁷ provides overviews of the acute food insecurity situation for September 2022–October 2022 as well as for April 2023. According to these analyses, at least 40 % of the population has been

⁴³⁴ ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴³⁵ ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁴³⁶ MEM, 'Afghanistan's food crisis is one of access, not availability', 29 September 2023, [url](#); IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for September 2022 - October 2022 and Projection for November 2022 - March 2023, 23 January 2023, [url](#); IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for April 2023 and Projection for May - October 2023, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴³⁷ UNOCHA and REACH, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment, October 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁴³⁸ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 57

⁴³⁹ IRC, Afghanistan: An entire population pushed into poverty, 22 December 2022, [url](#); WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update – December 2022, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁰ Save the Children, Afghanistan: Price Hikes Push Food out of Reach for Millions of Children, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴¹ REACH and WFP, Afghanistan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) (12 - 21 July 2022), 21 August 2022, [url](#), p. 3; REACH and WFP, Afghanistan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) (06 - 15 December 2022), 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁴⁴² WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, [url](#), pp. 3, 13; Pajhwok, Consumer prices in Afghanistan fall, first deflation since 2021, 2 July 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁴³ WFP, Afghanistan: Countrywide Weekly Market Price Bulletin, Issue 169: Week 4 September 2023, 2 October 2023, [url](#), p. 1; World Bank, Afghanistan Economic Monitor, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁴ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, [url](#), pp. 3, 13; ACAPS, Afghanistan Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁴⁴⁵ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update, November 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁶ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, [url](#), pp. 8–9; WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 2nd Quarter (June 2023), 26 September 2023, [url](#), p. 8

⁴⁴⁷ IPC 'provides a common scale for classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity and acute malnutrition' with five phases ranging from None/Minimal (Phase 1) to Catastrophe/Famine (Phase 5). See: IPC, Understanding the IPC Scales, June 2022, [url](#), pp. 3–4





experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and 4).⁴⁴⁸ IPC provided the following figures on the prevalence of acute food insecurity within the total population:

Table 1: Prevalence of acute food insecurity according to IPC

IPC Phase	September–October 2022	April 2023
1: No or minimal	22 % (9,4 million)	24 % (10,1 million)
2: Stressed	37 % (15,4 million)	36 % (15,8 million)
3: Crisis	30 % (12,5 million)	32 % (13,9 million)
4: Acute	11 % (4,4 million)	8 % (3,4 million)
5: Famine	0 %	0 %

Source: IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for September 2022 - October 2022 and Projection for November 2022 - March 2023, 23 January 2023, [url](#); IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for April 2023 and Projection for May - October 2023, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

IPC indicated that all provinces had been experiencing ‘crisis’ conditions (IPC Phase 3), except for Badakhshan and Ghor where the situation has been ‘acute’ (IPC Phase 4): 20 % of the respective populations have experienced ‘acute’ food insecurity.⁴⁴⁹ Other sources noted difficult conditions in northern provinces severely affected by drought.⁴⁵⁰ In Kabul City, 45 % experienced IPC phase 3 or 4 in September–October 2022, and 40 % in April 2023.⁴⁵¹

Many households have coped with the situation by adjusting their diets to avoid expensive food,⁴⁵² and reducing the food quality, for example by eating more staples, and less meat, fruit, and vegetables.⁴⁵³ Parents have been skipping meals so their children can eat.⁴⁵⁴

Food insecurity has particularly impacted households headed by persons with lower education,⁴⁵⁵ persons with disabilities,⁴⁵⁶ and women.⁴⁵⁷ Women’s access to food has been negatively impacted due to restrictions on their freedom of movement,⁴⁵⁸ and limited job

⁴⁴⁸ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for September 2022 - October 2022 and Projection for November 2022 - March 2023, 23 January 2023, [url](#); IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for April 2023 and Projection for May - October 2023, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁹ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for September 2022 - October 2022 and Projection for November 2022 - March 2023, 23 January 2023, [url](#); IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for April 2023 and Projection for May - October 2023, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, [url](#), p. 9; Save the Children, Afghanistan: Three in Four Children Surveyed are Eating Less Amid Soaring Hunger, as Country Marks Two Years of Taliban Rule, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵¹ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for September 2022 - October 2022 and Projection for November 2022 - March 2023, 23 January 2023, [url](#); IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for April 2023 and Projection for May - October 2023, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵² WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 2nd Quarter (June 2023), 26 September 2023, [url](#), p. 9; ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁴⁵³ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, [url](#), p. 8; CARE, The Impact of the Food Crisis on Women and Girls in Afghanistan, 29 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 8–9

⁴⁵⁴ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 2nd Quarter (June 2023), 26 September 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁴⁵⁵ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, [url](#), p. 8; Najam, W., et al., Social Determinants of Rural Household Food Insecurity under the Taliban Regime, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁶ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, [url](#), p. 8; IFRC, Afghanistan: Hunger and poverty surge as drought persists, 17 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁷ Save the Children, Afghanistan: Three in Four Children Surveyed are Eating Less Amid Soaring Hunger, as Country Marks Two Years of Taliban Rule, 15 August 2023, [url](#); Najam, W., et al., Social Determinants of Rural Household Food Insecurity under the Taliban Regime, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁸ CARE, The Impact of the Food Crisis on Women and Girls in Afghanistan, 29 December 2022, [url](#), p. 5





opportunities.⁴⁵⁹ A study by CARE International found that both men and women have been skipping meals for the sake of their children and partner. The newest female family member (often daughters-in-law) were however identified as likely to be more food insecure than other household members. Often, they have to ensure that all senior members in the household are cared for first.⁴⁶⁰ In the IPC analysis of the prevalence of malnutrition in September–October 2022, 4 million women and children were estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition, including over 800 000 pregnant or breast-feeding women.⁴⁶¹ A SMART⁴⁶² survey found that 20.7 % of pregnant and lactating women were malnourished.⁴⁶³

According to IPC, 16 % of children had a minimum acceptable diet in September–October 2022⁴⁶⁴ and UNICEF reported that 12 % of children aged 6–24 months received the right variety and quantity of food needed for their age.⁴⁶⁵ In a survey by Save the Children from August 2022, in which 1 690 children in seven provinces participated, 88 % were eating less than usual since the Taliban takeover, and 10 % frequently went to bed hungry (two thirds of these children were girls).⁴⁶⁶ Moreover, many children have shown signs of psychosocial distress due to their families' economic hardship.⁴⁶⁷

Since the Taliban takeover, the number of children under five being admitted into health facilities due to severe acute malnutrition has increased.⁴⁶⁸ According to UNICEF, over 41 % of children under five suffered from stunting (an indicator of long-term malnutrition) which is the highest rate in the world.⁴⁶⁹ The SMART survey (covering April–October 2022), however, found that the overall prevalence of stunting was 32.7 %.⁴⁷⁰ The same study found that 23.4 % of children under five were underweight, whereof 6.3 % were severely underweight. Higher rates of child malnutrition and stunting was recorded in some southern provinces (Ghazni, Kandahar, Paktika, Uruzgan, and Zabul), in the northeast (Badakhshan, Badghis, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, and Nuristan), and in Ghor and Kapisa. Paktika was singled out as the one province experiencing 'very high' rates of malnutrition. Furthermore, Uruzgan had the highest rate of child stunting (59.3 %). In Kabul City, the rates of underweight (24.8 %) and severe underweight (7 %) were slightly over the national average, while the rates of stunting (25.5 %) and severe stunting (6.6 %) were slightly below.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁵⁹ IRC, One year later: What are Afghans facing now?, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁰ CARE, The Impact of the Food Crisis on Women and Girls in Afghanistan, 29 December 2022, [url](#), pp. 6–7

⁴⁶¹ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Malnutrition Situation for September - October 2022 and Projection for November 2022 - April 2023, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶² 'The SMART Methodology is a simplified and standardized cross-sectional survey method'. See: Nutrition Cluster et al., Afghanistan National SMART Survey Report (April-October 2022), 8 June 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁴⁶³ Nutrition Cluster et al., Afghanistan National SMART Survey Report (April-October 2022), 8 June 2023, [url](#), p. 60

⁴⁶⁴ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Malnutrition Situation for September - October 2022 and Projection for November 2022 - April 2023, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁵ UNICEF, Nutrition, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ Save the Children, Breaking Point: Children's Lives One Year under Taliban Rule, 10 August 2022, [url](#), pp. 4, 6

⁴⁶⁷ WHO, Afghanistan: A Children's Crisis, 11 August 2022, [url](#), p. 4; Save the Children, Breaking Point: Children's Lives One Year under Taliban Rule, 10 August 2022, [url](#), pp. 4, 6

⁴⁶⁸ PBS, 1.1 million Afghan children under 5 could face severe malnutrition this year, U.N. says, 25 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ UNICEF, Nutrition, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ Nutrition Cluster et al., Afghanistan National SMART Survey Report (April-October 2022), 8 June 2023, [url](#), p. 42

⁴⁷¹ Nutrition Cluster et al., Afghanistan National SMART Survey Report (April-October 2022), 8 June 2023, [url](#), pp. 39–45, 58





3.4. Housing

According to the local media outlet Pajhwok, property prices and rental rates sharply decreased after the Taliban takeover, but stabilised and went up again by September 2022, although at a lower level than before.⁴⁷² However, according to a survey by Gallup, 73 % of Afghans experienced economic challenges in providing adequate shelter or housing for themselves and their families in 2022, in contrast to 58 % in 2021.⁴⁷³ Many have struggled to pay rent⁴⁷⁴ and most lack a formal rental agreement.⁴⁷⁵ The WoAA for 2022 found that housing was the sixth top priority among Afghan households (after food, employment, healthcare, repaying debts and clean water). Among surveyed households, 61 % lived in shelters made of mud, and many shelters were partially damaged. Only 6 % lived in permanent shelters of robust materials, and 20 % lived in severely damaged shelters. Leaks were reported as common under heavy rain (45 %) and light rain (28 %). Over 40 % could not afford repairs. Many of the poorest reportedly lived in tents.⁴⁷⁶

The same survey found that many households had problems with water and energy. 80 % lacked access to piped water, and there was a lack of sanitation facilities and soap. More than half of households lacked heating devices for cooking, and 16 % had no cooking items at all. Electricity was short in supply and too weak to support more than some light bulbs or a telephone charger. Moreover, deaths from cold have been common in Afghanistan and the WoAA for 2022 found that only 1 % of households used electricity for heating, and 2 % used liquid petroleum gas. Others burned wood, coal, dung, paper, carton or plastics for heating purposes. Moreover, winter clothes were in very short supply. Over half of households did not have winter clothing, and only 18 % had winter clothing for all their children. In some provinces the average number of blankets were less than one per person.⁴⁷⁷ ACAPS also reported on a lack of warm winter clothing.⁴⁷⁸

3.5. Healthcare

Public healthcare was free under the previous government except for registration fees, medication and some medical supplies.⁴⁷⁹ Oftentimes people however turned to private healthcare options as they were perceived as providing better quality care than government facilities.⁴⁸⁰ After the Taliban takeover, the already weak public health system was heavily

⁴⁷² Pajhwok, Falling a year ago, home prices up by 24pc in Kabul – Pajhwok Afghan News, 19 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷³ Gallup, Taliban Plunge Afghans Into Economic Ruin, 1 December 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁴ NRC, Private renters facing risk of eviction, October 2022, [url](#), p. 1; ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁴⁷⁵ NRC, Private renters facing risk of eviction, October 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁷⁶ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 53–55, 57, 65

⁴⁷⁷ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 53–55, 57, 65

⁴⁷⁸ ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁴⁷⁹ HRW, “I Would Like Four Kids – If We Stay Alive”, Women’s Access to Health Care in Afghanistan, May 2021, [url](#), pp. 19, 28–31

⁴⁸⁰ MSF, The Continued Struggle to Access Medical Care in Afghanistan, 18 June 2021, [url](#), p. 18, HRW, “I Would Like Four Kids – If We Stay Alive”, Women’s Access to Health Care in Afghanistan, May 2021, [url](#), p. 33



impacted by the halt in aid flows.⁴⁸¹ Many health workers did not receive their salaries, medicines ran out and many health professionals left Afghanistan.⁴⁸² The few private healthcare options that remained have often been too expensive for people to afford.⁴⁸³ At the same time, multiple infectious diseases have spread, including heavy outbreaks of measles and acute watery diarrhoea,⁴⁸⁴ and natural disasters have caused deaths and injuries.⁴⁸⁵ In a research study published in June 2023, healthcare workers across all of Afghanistan's provinces in rural, semi-rural and urban areas, experienced a deterioration of their working conditions, as well as the availability and quality of care. Main issues were the lack of skilled staff, shortages in medical supplies and medication, and harassment by the Taliban against staff members and against women seeking care.⁴⁸⁶

Especially maternal and child healthcare have deteriorated.⁴⁸⁷ Afghanistan has had one of the world's highest maternal and neonatal mortality rates in the world for a long time, despite a steady decline in the past 20 years.⁴⁸⁸ Although no recent data has been available,⁴⁸⁹ the mortality numbers of both mothers and infants have been expected to increase.⁴⁹⁰ In the above-mentioned research study from June 2023, more than one third of healthcare workers believed that child and maternal mortality had increased. One healthcare worker reported that some healthcare facilities did not have any professional midwives.⁴⁹¹ WHO estimated that 167 infants die every day in Afghanistan due to preventable child mortality causes.⁴⁹²

The costs of healthcare services and the costs of travelling were the main obstacles for people to access healthcare,⁴⁹³ and many have avoided seeking care due to its expenses.⁴⁹⁴ Particularly women have faced obstacles in accessing healthcare due to mobility restrictions

⁴⁸¹ WVI, Afghanistan: A Children's Crisis, 11 August 2022, [url](#), p. 14; WHO, Afghanistan's health system is on the brink of collapse: urgent action is needed, 24 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸² ICRC, Health Care in Afghanistan, 25 October 2022, [url](#); Jalazai, R. et al., The Maternal and Child Health Crisis in Afghanistan, Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health and Human Rights, 9 November 2022, [url](#), p. 6

⁴⁸³ WVI, Afghanistan: A Children's Crisis, 11 August 2022, [url](#), p. 14; ICRC, Health Care in Afghanistan [Podcast], 25 October 2022, [url](#), [4:40–5:10]

⁴⁸⁴ WHO, Afghanistan Emergency Situation Report, December 22, [url](#), pp. 1, 4; Neyazi, N. et al., Non-communicable diseases in Afghanistan: a silent tsunami, 17 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁵ WHO, Afghanistan Emergency Situation Report, December 22, [url](#), p. 1; France24, Afghanistan earthquake death toll rises to more than 2,400, says Taliban spokesman, 8 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁶ Glass, N., et al., The crisis of maternal and child health in Afghanistan, 12 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁷ WHO, Afghanistan: A Children's Crisis, 11 August 2022, [url](#), pp. 4, 6, 12; Jalazai, R. et al., The Maternal and Child Health Crisis in Afghanistan, Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health and Human Rights, 9 November 2022, [url](#), pp. 5–6; Health Cluster and WHO, Afghanistan Health Cluster Bulletin, August 2023, 25 September 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁸⁸ Jalazai, R. et al., The Maternal and Child Health Crisis in Afghanistan, Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health and Human Rights, 9 November 2022, [url](#), p. 4; WSJ, Maternity Care, Once a Sign of Hope in Afghanistan, Is Faltering Under the Taliban, 18 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁹ MSF, Persistent barriers to access healthcare in Afghanistan, 6 February 2023, [url](#), p. 19

⁴⁹⁰ Jalazai, R. et al., The Maternal and Child Health Crisis in Afghanistan, Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health and Human Rights, 9 November 2022, [url](#), p. 16; GiHA Working Group et al., Afghanistan Inter-agency Rapid Gender Analysis, November 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁴⁹¹ Glass, N., et al., The crisis of maternal and child health in Afghanistan, Conflict and Health, 12 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹² WHO Afghanistan [Twitter], posted on: 17 April 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹³ MSF, Persistent barriers to access healthcare in Afghanistan, 6 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 3, 15

⁴⁹⁴ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 64; MSF, Persistent barriers to access healthcare in Afghanistan, 6 February 2023, [url](#), p. 7



and the lack of female health workers.⁴⁹⁵ The WoAA for 2022 found that only 20 % of Afghan households experienced no barrier to accessing healthcare.⁴⁹⁶

Basic health services have not been physically available in some places,⁴⁹⁷ and distances and possibilities to obtain transport have been issues in accessing healthcare.⁴⁹⁸ Some rural areas have been described as ‘white areas’ – areas without any healthcare structures in place.⁴⁹⁹ WHO described the distance to health care as better in urban and peri-urban areas, with an average travel time of around 90 minutes. In contrast, the average travel time for inhabitants in rural areas was four hours in summer and ‘much longer’ in winter.⁵⁰⁰ UNOCHA and REACH also assessed Kabul and other urban areas as experiencing less issues related to transport.⁵⁰¹

According to WHO there were 134 hospitals in Afghanistan, and 26 were located in Kabul.⁵⁰² The Health Cluster and WHO reported that its care giving partners were present in all 34 provinces in January–August 2023. By August 2023, the coverage had however decreased from 353 districts to 321 districts, and from 1 471 health facilities to 972. Baghlan and Panjsher were the two provinces with only three to four active agencies, in contrast to Kabul where over nine were active.⁵⁰³ The same source identified 21 provinces as having critical/extreme health needs in August 2023 (Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Daykundi, Farah, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Kabul, Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Nimroz, Nuristan, Paktika, Paktya, Panjsher, Parwan, Sar-e-Pul, Wardak and Zabul) and the remaining 13 provinces as having severe health needs.⁵⁰⁴ WHO warned that the lack of funding of the humanitarian assistance programme in 2023 will leave 8 million people without essential health assistance, 450 000 with little to no trauma care services (including blood transfusions and referrals), and 1,6 million people with mental health issues without access to consultations and psychosocial support.⁵⁰⁵

⁴⁹⁵ MSF, Persistent barriers to access healthcare in Afghanistan, 6 February 2023, [url](#), p. 4; Glass, N., et al., The crisis of maternal and child health in Afghanistan, Conflict and Health, 12 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁶ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 65

⁴⁹⁷ Save the Children, Afghanistan, Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment, January 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁴⁹⁸ Protection Cluster, Afghanistan, Protection Analysis Update, December 2022, [url](#), p. 5; Save the Children, Afghanistan, Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment, January 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁴⁹⁹ WHO, Afghanistan: A Children's Crisis, 11 August 2022, [url](#), pp. 12, 14; Intersos, Health emergency in Afghanistan, system close to collapse, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁰⁰ WHO, Afghanistan: A Children's Crisis, 11 August 2022, [url](#), pp. 12, 14

⁵⁰¹ UNOCHA and REACH, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment, October 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁵⁰² WHO, Afghanistan, Hospital and laboratory services, 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰³ Health Cluster and WHO, Afghanistan: Health Cluster Partners Presence (January - August 2023), 24 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁴ Health Cluster and WHO, Afghanistan Health Cluster Bulletin, August 2023, 25 September 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁰⁵ WHO, Afghanistan's health system suffers critical underfunding, calls for donor support, 18 August 2023, [url](#)



4. Treatment of certain profiles and groups of the population

4.1. Officials of the former government's public sector and security sector

4.1.1. The general amnesty and its implementation

Soon after their takeover in 2021, the Taliban issued a general amnesty for individuals serving the former government.⁵⁰⁶ Taliban officials have repeatedly expressed their commitment to the amnesty, and have called upon their members to uphold it.⁵⁰⁷ There is, however, limited information about the efforts made by the *de facto* authorities to hold individuals accountable for breaching the amnesty and carrying out human rights violations against former government officials and ANDSF members.⁵⁰⁸ Moreover, the amnesty's text has not been available beyond general reference to its existence, including from senior Taliban officials.⁵⁰⁹ UNAMA explained how the lack of a written text has caused uncertainties around the amnesty's temporal scope and consequences for breaching it.⁵¹⁰

Sources have described the practices towards former officials as 'inconsistent',⁵¹¹ 'ad hoc',⁵¹² and 'an interesting mixture of contradictory policies'.⁵¹³ Some senior members of the former government have remained in Afghanistan, including former President Hamid Karzai (although relatives told TOLONews that he has been facing restrictions as regards travelling abroad and meeting with people in Afghanistan⁵¹⁴), the former chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah, the former chairman of the senate Committee, Fazal Hadi Muslimyar, and the leader of the political party Hezb-e Islami, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.⁵¹⁵ Moreover, most civilian former public officials have been able to resume their duties within the new *de facto* administration in Kabul,⁵¹⁶ except for most female civil servants that were sent

⁵⁰⁶ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 56

⁵⁰⁷ UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁰⁸ UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1; USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁵⁰⁹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵¹⁰ UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁵¹¹ Rubin, B., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, Stimson, [url](#)

⁵¹² Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁵¹³ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵¹⁴ TOLONews, Karzai's Relatives Confirm Ban On His Travel Abroad, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁵ TOLONews, No Restrictions Imposed on Former Govt Officials: Mujahid, 28 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 78; Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023



home.⁵¹⁷ At sub-national level the Taliban have tried to bring in their own members to be trained by and then replace former officials.⁵¹⁸ Some former security personnel work in the Taliban's *de facto* forces,⁵¹⁹ and an international journalist knew about a case where even the former local head of the former National Directorate of Security (NDS) in one area had been appointed head of the Taliban valley *shura*.⁵²⁰ Retired officials have also staged protests against the non-payment of their pensions.⁵²¹ At the same time, killings and various forms of ill-treatment have taken place against both former military and civilian personnel,⁵²² and such individuals have reportedly been living in hiding.⁵²³

The Taliban have communicated that former officials returning from abroad will be ensured safety, and established a commission for the 'Return and Communications with Former Afghan Officials and Political Figures' in March 2022.⁵²⁴ According to this commission, as reported by TOLONews, up to 1 000 businessmen and political or military figures had returned to Afghanistan as of early November 2022, including some former ministers, governors, and generals.⁵²⁵ The commission continued to report on returns of political figures and former government officials in 2023.⁵²⁶ An international analyst questioned their estimate of 1 000 people returning, stating instead that a handful former political and military figures had returned, and that many could have gone but left again.⁵²⁷

Other media outlets also reported on political figures and former government officials returning to Afghanistan.⁵²⁸ According to the international analyst, the return commission has not led to any political recognition or pledges for allegiance, and the commission has mainly been a way for wealthy individuals to return to manage their assets.⁵²⁹ The former director of Afghanistan's intelligence agency, Rahmatullah Nabil, also stated that some former officials had returned for personal business interests, to retain their properties and assets.⁵³⁰ Local media Kabul Now reported on individual cases of low-ranking military officials being detained, disappeared or killed after returning. The same source reported that some high-ranking military officials had received a 'warm reception' by Taliban officials upon their return, whilst others had received a 'cold welcome' or were living in fear and uncertainty. The same source

⁵¹⁷ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁵¹⁸ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵¹⁹ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁰ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁵²¹ TOLONews, Retirees in Kabul Protest Unpaid Pensions, 2 January 2023, [url](#)

⁵²² EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 75

⁵²³ RFE/RL, 'They Call Us Infidels': Former Afghan Soldiers Still Live in Hiding to Avoid Taliban Retribution, 13 July 2022, [url](#); WSJ, Arrests and Killings Drive Afghan Troops Once Allied With U.S. Into Hiding. The Taliban appear to have launched a campaign to track down former Afghan forces, the troops and American veterans trying to help they say, 26 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁴ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 52, 83

⁵²⁵ TOLONews, Delaware: Almost 1,000 Ex-Officials, Business People Have Returned, 6 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁶ TOLONews, Commission: 30 Individuals Return to Country in Past Two Months, 6 September 2023, [url](#); TOLONews, 25 Political Figures, Officials Returned Last Month: Commission, 30 June 2023, [url](#); TOLONews, Over 100 Political Figures Returned to Afghanistan in 3 Months: Commission, 15 January 2023, [url](#); International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵²⁷ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵²⁸ Pakistan Observer, Dawlat Waziri, former Defence ministry spokesperson, returns to Afghanistan, [2022], [url](#);

VOA, Taliban Welcome, Others Criticize Return of Former Afghan Officials, 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵³⁰ VOA, Taliban Welcome, Others Criticize Return of Former Afghan Officials, 8 June 2022, [url](#)



reported that returning officials were to be provided with ‘immunity cards’ upon their return to ensure that they were not detained. However, it was reportedly difficult to receive an immunity card as the Taliban had not announced a registration centre and the return commission was hard to reach, and in some cases returned individuals had to bribe Taliban officials to receive an immunity card. Moreover, in some cases Taliban officials detained individuals despite having immunity cards.⁵³¹ It has not been possible to corroborate the information provided by Kabul Now with other sources.

4.1.2. Extrajudicial killings and other human rights abuses

Since the takeover, there have been continuous claims of the Taliban killing former ANDSF members and their relatives.⁵³² Some experts have assessed that the reprisals have been relatively few in contrast to the size of the former administration’s civil and military sector.⁵³³

As of 30 June 2023, UNAMA had recorded at least 800 cases of human rights violations against former civilian and military personnel carried out by the *de facto* authorities since the Taliban takeover. These cases included 218 killings, 14 instances of enforced disappearance, 424 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 144 instances of torture, and multiple threats. Most cases took place in the four months immediately following the takeover in 2021, including around half of the killings. Killings and other human rights violations have however continued to be recorded in 2022 and 2023.⁵³⁴

Rawadari also recorded human right abuses against former civilian and military personnel, but their reference period was the first six months of 2023. Moreover, the perpetrators in their data included both the Taliban and unknown individuals. Rawadari recorded 54 killings and 1 person being injured in targeting incidents, including 45 former military personnel and 10 former civilian employees (it was not clear whether the injured person had worked for a civilian or a security department). Furthermore, Rawadari recorded 11 enforced disappearances of both civilian and military personnel, as well as individuals affiliated to such persons. Last, it recorded arbitrary arrests of 47 former security personnel, and 5 former civil servants. The prevalence of enforced disappearances was believed to be much higher as Rawadari had received reports about the Taliban threatening family members to not speak with human rights organisations.⁵³⁵ Kabul Now also reported on the Taliban pressuring family members of detained individuals not to approach media or human rights organisations.⁵³⁶

Data collected by the NGO Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization (SMRO) and AW only included former ANDSF members and their families, and not former civilian government

⁵³¹ Kabul Now, Taliban’s False Amnesty: The Fate of Former Military Officers Who Return to Afghanistan, 23 July 2023, [url](#)

⁵³² AW, Claims of Taliban killings of former ANDSF and family members continue to surface, including female officer, 1 August 2023, [url](#)

⁵³³ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan’s Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#); International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁵³⁴ UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, [url](#), pp. 5–10

⁵³⁵ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 4, 11, 14–18

⁵³⁶ Kabul Now, Fear and Nightmares: the dark life after Taliban captivity, 14 April 2023, [url](#)



personnel. These sources also included cases with unknown perpetrators.⁵³⁷ In 2022, SMRO recorded 76 killings and 57 detentions of former security forces, but noted an increase in 2023, as they logged 27 killings and 55 detentions in the first quarter alone.⁵³⁸ In the second quarter of 2023, SMRO logged 2 instances of rape and another 15 killings and 35 detentions of former security forces in numerous provinces. Most killings took place in Kabul (4 cases). Moreover, one former NDS official reportedly committed suicide after being subjected to severe torture in custody in Khost Province.⁵³⁹ In almost the same reference period (1 January 2023–10 July 2023), AW recorded 108 claims of torture, arbitrary detention, killings and attacks against former ANDSF members and their family members in 28 provinces. 57 alleged killings were carried out across 19 provinces, and one took place in an unknown location. AW data also indicated that most killings took place in Kabul Province (9 cases).⁵⁴⁰

4.1.3. Revenge and other motives

According to International Crisis Group, the sporadic nature of the reprisals and their relatively low numbers suggest that the Taliban have not had a ‘nationwide policy to hunt down all former government officials’.⁵⁴¹ This information was confirmed by the international journalist who stated that if the Taliban had carried out an orchestrated revenge campaign to kill former soldiers, the number of deaths would be much higher.⁵⁴²

The Taliban have claimed that violations of the amnesty have taken place due to personal animosities, and not because of a government policy.⁵⁴³ Expert sources emphasised that it has been hard to discern motives behind the killings, especially when taking what was described as an existing ‘revenge culture’ into account.⁵⁴⁴ According to Human Rights Watch’s Patricia Gossman, as referenced by RFE/RL, there have been cases of revenge killings being carried out ‘with the knowledge or tacit approval of senior Taliban commanders’.⁵⁴⁵

According to the international analyst, the most important thing for the Taliban is that individuals are loyal to them today, rather than their allegiances from before the takeover. However, people may be targeted due to personal disputes.⁵⁴⁶ Journalist Ali Latifi stated that individuals that are willing to function within the new circumstances of the *de facto* administration have been able to do so, as the Taliban needs to keep the *de facto* authorities functioning. However, Latifi also pointed out retaliating acts as a continuing issue for the *de facto* administration – which it has been for all governments in Afghan history.⁵⁴⁷ French

⁵³⁷ AW, Claims of Taliban killings of former ANDSF and family members continue to surface, including female officer, 1 August 2023, [url](#); SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, April–June 2023, [2023], [url](#), pp. 8, 11, 13; SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, January–March 2023, [2023], [url](#), p. 10

⁵³⁸ SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, January–March 2023, [2023], [url](#), p. 10

⁵³⁹ SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, April–June 2023, [2023], [url](#), pp. 8, 11, 13

⁵⁴⁰ AW, Claims of Taliban killings of former ANDSF and family members continue to surface, including female officer, 1 August 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴¹ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan’s Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴² International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁵⁴³ Rubin, B., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, Stimson, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁴ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview 3 October 2023

⁵⁴⁵ RFE/RL, ‘They Call Us Infidels’: Former Afghan Soldiers Still Live in Hiding to Avoid Taliban Retribution, 13 July 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁶ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October, 2023

⁵⁴⁷ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October, 2023



newspaper Le Figaro reported that journalists and international observers lack insight on the situation in the Afghan countryside where former enemies of the Taliban have frequently been hunted and executed. Amnesty International and a US Department of State official told Le Figaro that disappearances of such individuals have been ‘completely underestimated’.⁵⁴⁸

Rawadari recorded cases of human rights abuse against former military and former civilian personnel following allegations of possessing weapons. The organisation also reported that there have been cases of the Taliban killing people of these groups but claiming that the victims were ISKP members or committed suicide.⁵⁴⁹ The international analyst also noted uncertainties as regards people presented as ISKP by the Taliban, particularly in the north. It is unclear whether those people have actually been ISKP members or they have been simply suspected of being part of the former regime or they were linked to resistance groups.⁵⁵⁰ UNAMA noted that arrests and detentions of former government officials and ANDSF members occurred on accusations of affiliations to NRF, and according to some accounts such claims were false and used as a cover for the Taliban to target individuals who had served the former government.⁵⁵¹ More information related to this topic is available in section [4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups](#).

In February 2023, the Taliban reportedly announced that they had conducted a mass burial of over 100 corpses of deceased ‘drug addicts’. No further details were provided about these individuals’ identity, why they were in Taliban custody or about the cause of death. According to the Independent, the event fuelled ‘concern that this was a poorly concealed cover-up of extra-judicial killings’.⁵⁵² This information could not be corroborated by other sources.

4.1.4. Victim profiles

Both the international analyst and the international journalist stated that it is not possible to draw any conclusions or identify any patterns as regards the targeting of particular profiles among civil and security personnel of the former government.⁵⁵³ The international analyst added that there have been many more killings than what has been reported.⁵⁵⁴ The international journalist had not noted any indications of targeting being carried out based on some general criteria. However, based on Taliban propaganda and the patterns of attacks they carried out during the insurgency, one could note that they, by then, particularly disliked the NDS Zero Units (‘squadrons of U.S.-trained Afghan special forces soldiers’⁵⁵⁵), the army commandos and the Afghan Local Police (ALP). The source could however not say if this has played a role in the targeting that has occurred after the takeover.⁵⁵⁶ Le Monde reported that

⁵⁴⁸ Le Figaro, Afghanistan, un pays à la dérive, 3 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁹ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁵⁰ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵⁵¹ UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁵⁵² Independent (The), Inside the Taliban slaughterhouses where Western ‘collaborators’ are tortured to death, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵³ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁵⁵⁴ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵⁵⁵ ProPublica, The Truth About Afghanistan’s Zero Unit Night Raids, March 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁶ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023



the Taliban hold a ‘real grudge’ against NDS agents, which is ‘aggravated toward those who have worked with foreign forces’.⁵⁵⁷

Rather than the targeting being carried out based on an individual’s previous role in the former government, the international journalist thought that the targeting depended on the local contexts. In one area, for example, the amnesty was upheld, and the former local NDS director was appointed head of the Taliban approved valley *shura*, while many killings seemed to take place in Kandahar.⁵⁵⁸ According to ACLED data over fatalities in Kandahar Province, 29 events (out of 100) concerned killings of former security forces personnel, as well as the killing of one former customs department employee. The Taliban was the main identified perpetrator, but in many cases the actor behind the killings was unknown.⁵⁵⁹ In an interview carried out by the Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN), a former senior civil servant of the former government described how he and his two brothers had been able to return to Afghanistan (after fleeing to Turkey amid the Taliban takeover) after the general amnesty was announced. This individual stated that he had not faced any issues with the *de facto* authorities, and that they even let him carry a gun for his protection while travelling in his area of origin. He thought that the reason for the Taliban not targeting him or his family was due to the fact that they had not fought the Taliban but served as civilians for the former republic. A former Afghan National Army (ANA) member from Nangarhar stated that he had been arrested and faced one week’s imprisonment and subsequently was investigated two more times, as the social network of his home village did not protect him from retaliation. Rather, he had been ‘subjected to a “show of force” by fellow tribesmen’ on the winning side after the Taliban takeover.⁵⁶⁰

Out of the 800 human rights violations against former government officials and former security personnel that UNAMA documented in the period 15 August 2021–30 June 2023, 31 % targeted members of the former military, and 26 % targeted members of the former police (including the former Afghan National Police (ANP) and the former ALP). Moreover, 22 % targeted affiliates to the former provincial and district departments, 15 % targeted the former NDS, and 4 % targeted the former central government and former national authorities. Cases were recorded in all provinces, but mostly in Kabul, Kandahar and Balkh. UNAMA could also note some geographical concentration in the targeting of certain profiles, for example former ANP members were targeted to a greater extent in Kandahar Province, and former members of the paramilitary unit Khost Protection Force (KPF) in Khost Province.⁵⁶¹

Former security personnel also made up the majority of victims in Rawadari’s data, although cases of former servants of various former civilian departments were also recorded, as well as their relatives.⁵⁶² SMRO, on the other hand, only recorded cases of former security personnel

⁵⁵⁷ Le Monde, The bitterness of former Afghan spies who worked for France, 12 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁸ International journalist, online interview 3 October 2023

⁵⁵⁹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, as of 17 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁰ Samim, S., Back to the Village: Afghan city dwellers go home for a long-over-due visit, AAN, 25 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶¹ UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, [url](#), pp. 5–6

⁵⁶² Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 11–12



being targeted, as well as their close relatives.⁵⁶³ While UNAMA pointed out former ANA members as most exposed to targeting acts,⁵⁶⁴ Rawadari and SMRO did not report on any former security profile being more exposed, but provided data on various such profiles being targeted, including former members of the Republic's army, police, and intelligence.⁵⁶⁵ Rawadari also reported on former uprising force members being targeted.⁵⁶⁶

4.1.5. Family members of former civilian and security personnel

ACAPS reported that households in both urban and rural Kabul feared that they would be abused by the *de facto* authorities due to a family member's previous employment in the ANDSF. This concern caused anxiety and reportedly impacted all household members, affecting their ability to travel, work, or access humanitarian aid, as they did not want to attract the attention of the Taliban.⁵⁶⁷ SMRO explained that relatives were frequently 'caught up' in attacks targeting former security personnel and gave the example of a wife and two sons of a former military official being beaten when their home was raided by Taliban troops. The two sons were taken to an unknown location.⁵⁶⁸

In the second quarter of 2023, SMRO collected data of 6 relatives of former security personnel being detained, and 1 being raped.⁵⁶⁹ In the first six months of 2023, Rawadari recorded arbitrary arrests of 21 relatives of former civil and security personnel. As mentioned, Rawadari assessed the prevalence of enforced disappearances to be much higher due to reports of family members being threatened not to speak with human rights organisations. The cases documented by Rawadari included the Taliban torturing and subsequently killing a woman married to a former soldier that had left Afghanistan. Another case concerned the Taliban's enforced disappearance and subsequent killing of a person that was affiliated to a former soldier, as well as the imprisonment of one of his family members. Moreover, the Taliban detained a former NDS member together with one of his family members, a 17-year-old boy in Panjsher Province who refused to disclose his father's whereabouts (a former security official), and the father of a former security official who had left Afghanistan.⁵⁷⁰ AW also reported on family members to former ANDSF being killed, although no breakdown of events was provided. AW noted that some victims appeared to be minors.⁵⁷¹ Moreover, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan reported that 21 individuals

⁵⁶³ SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, January–March 2023, [2023], [url](#), p. 10; SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, April–June 2023, [2023], [url](#), pp. 8–9

⁵⁶⁴ UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, [url](#), p. 6

⁵⁶⁵ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 11–12, 16, 18; SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, January–March 2023, [2023], [url](#), p. 10; SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, April–June 2023, [2023], [url](#), pp. 8–9

⁵⁶⁶ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 11, 17

⁵⁶⁷ ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 7

⁵⁶⁸ SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, April–June 2023, [2023], [url](#), p. 9

⁵⁶⁹ SRMO, Civic Space Quarterly Report, April–June 2023, [2023], [url](#), p. 8

⁵⁷⁰ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 4, 11–12, 14–18

⁵⁷¹ AW, Claims of Taliban killings of former ANDSF and family members continue to surface, including female officer, 1 August 2023, [url](#)



were arrested and tortured in Daykundi Province in December 2022, because they were family members to former government employees and possessed weapons.⁵⁷²

In August 2022, the daughter of a former army general accused a Taliban official on social media of raping her while in custody, and subsequently forcing her to marry him. She moreover accused him of ill-treating her throughout their marriage. The accusations were denied by the Taliban official.⁵⁷³ The woman was detained anew in November 2022 on charges of defamation.⁵⁷⁴ After escaping Afghanistan in April 2023, she described how she was tortured for months while in custody.⁵⁷⁵

4.1.6. Former judges and prosecutors

The Taliban ousted all judges after their takeover,⁵⁷⁶ and although prosecutors initially were told not to come to work, they were not formally dismissed.⁵⁷⁷ Some male judges working in administration and considered ‘professional’ have, however, been asked to return to work according to interlocutors of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN).⁵⁷⁸ The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the other hand reported on 11 September 2023 that no former judges had been retained.⁵⁷⁹ ILAC reported that there were a few reports of a handful of male judges being called back to limited or temporary roles, but these reports remained unconfirmed and ‘extremely rare’.⁵⁸⁰ Former prosecutors have been resuming work at the *de facto* prosecutor’s office.⁵⁸¹ Although emphasising that the numbers are not precise, ILAC estimated that 20–25 % of former prosecutors had returned to work at the Attorney General’s office in Kabul by late 2021. Later announcements by the Taliban supreme leader and the Taliban Attorney General, however, indicated that the *de facto* courts should not rely on prosecutors and that prosecutors should cease operations. The *de facto* Attorney General’s Office has, however, not been abolished. The legal and operational status of prosecutors has remained unclear and ‘varied substantially from region to region’ according to ILAC.⁵⁸² Many prosecutors (as well as judges) have however reportedly been living in hiding or have left Afghanistan.⁵⁸³ Particularly women judges have fled the country.⁵⁸⁴ The Afghanistan

⁵⁷² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 40

⁵⁷³ Independent (The), Forced to be a Taliban official’s wife, she was imprisoned for 156 days: “They beat me up until I passed out, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁴ Independent (The), Afghan woman says she was raped and forced to marry Taliban official, 2 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁵ Independent (The), Forced to be a Taliban official’s wife, she was imprisoned for 156 days: “They beat me up until I passed out, 5 July 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁶ OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁷⁷ ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), pp. 13, 21

⁵⁷⁸ Clark, K. and Shapour, R., What do the Taleban Spend Afghanistan’s Money on?, AAN, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 36–37

⁵⁷⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 16

⁵⁸⁰ ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁵⁸¹ Clark, K. and Shapour, R., What do the Taleban Spend Afghanistan’s Money on?, AAN, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 36–37; ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), p. 21

⁵⁸² ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), pp. 21–22

⁵⁸³ Clark, K. and Shapour, R., What do the Taleban Spend Afghanistan’s Money on?, AAN, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 36–37

⁵⁸⁴ OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 3; NAWJ, Escape from Kabul – and Those Left Behind, 24 January 2023, [url](#)



Judges Association has stressed that male judges face a precarious situation⁵⁸⁵ which was also indicated by a legal consultant, who also emphasised that male prosecutors had been attacked, in a conversation with the International Bar Association.⁵⁸⁶

Among the 800 human rights violations documented by UNAMA in the period 15 August 2021–30 June 2023, 2 % targeted former judges and prosecutors.⁵⁸⁷ Criminal offenders released by the Taliban have sought to carry out reprisals against prosecutors and judges who had sentenced them.⁵⁸⁸ According to a member of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys Afghanistan, as cited by the Guardian, at least 28 former prosecutors and their family members have been killed since the Taliban takeover.⁵⁸⁹ The UN Special Rapporteur reported on over a dozen former prosecutors being killed in July–December 2022.⁵⁹⁰

4.2. Persons formerly affiliated with foreign forces

The Taliban's general amnesty extended to individuals that were affiliated with foreign forces.⁵⁹¹ Many left Afghanistan during the evacuation efforts following the Taliban takeover,⁵⁹² and in media interviews, individuals who have remained stated that they were living in hiding.⁵⁹³ As previously mentioned, Le Monde reported that the Taliban hold a 'real grudge' against NDS agents, which is 'aggravated toward those who have worked with foreign forces'.⁵⁹⁴ Furthermore, a joint investigation by The Independent, Lighthouse Reports and Sky News found that dozens of former commandos 'set up, trained and funded by the British' had been beaten, tortured or killed by the Taliban since August 2021.⁵⁹⁵ The men served the former Commando Force 333 (CF333) established in 2002 and the former Afghan Territorial Force 444 (ATF444), known as the 'Triples' established in 2006. Documentary evidence showed that the units had received a salary from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and after 2014 Polish forces reportedly took charge of the ATF444.⁵⁹⁶ Many reportedly also lived in hiding apart from their families, and moved location every month to escape the Taliban. The investigation could verify 24 such cases, and provided examples of 6 killings

⁵⁸⁵ Afghanistan Judges Association, [No title], February 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁶ IBA, Afghanistan: Male judges and prosecutors left behind in 'forgotten crisis', 17 January 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁷ UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, [url](#), pp. 5–6

⁵⁸⁸ OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), pp. 1, 3

⁵⁸⁹ Guardian (The), Thousands of Afghan judges and legal staff remain at risk post-Taliban takeover, 14 August 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 79

⁵⁹¹ AP, Afghanistan: more than 100 believed killed despite Taliban amnesty offer, says UN, 31 January 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Amid violent reprisals, Afghans fear the Taliban's 'amnesty' was empty, 31 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹² Lighthouse Reports, France's forgotten Afghan spies, 12 April 2023, [url](#); EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 74

⁵⁹³ TRT World [YouTube], One year under Taliban: Forgotten interpreters in hiding, 31 August 2022, [url](#); Times (The), Hundreds of British Army's interpreters still stranded in Afghanistan, 28 August 2023, [url](#); Lighthouse Reports, France's forgotten Afghan spies, 12 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁴ Le Monde, The bitterness of former Afghan spies who worked for France, 12 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁵ Independent (The), Murdered, tortured or in hiding: The special forces abandoned by Britain, 1 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁶ Lighthouse Reports, Abandoned Afghan Commandos, 1 November 2023, [url](#)



carried out by the Taliban and unidentified actors, and 3 cases of torture in Taliban custody.⁵⁹⁷ One man who previously worked as a US contractor, building NATO military bases, told the AAN that he had ‘managed to establish good connections’ with the *de facto* authorities after the takeover, and described the Taliban as ‘committed to the amnesty’.⁵⁹⁸

The Association of Wartime Allies surveyed Afghans that have served US forces and had applied for a Special Immigration Visa (SIV) in 2023. Although not specifying the number of respondents, the source indicated that 30 % had been imprisoned by the Taliban due to their service to the US, and around half of the respondents stated that they had been detained or questioned by the Taliban. Almost all respondents did not dare to leave their homes out of fear of retaliation. 76–78 % had personally witnessed violence towards individuals supporting the US mission in Afghanistan.⁵⁹⁹ The organisation No One Left Behind surveyed 16 000 SIV applicants in 2022. Almost 70 % were living in Kabul City, and another 10,8 % in Kabul Province. 63.8 % stated that they and their families did not live secure and safe from harm, while 6.5 % stated that they did, and 29.7 % stated that they did this ‘sometimes’. The Taliban were identified as the biggest threat to safety by 77.6 % of the respondents. Close to 10 % stated that they and their families had been threatened by the Taliban within the last week, and 75.8 % had been threatened within the last one to six months (in August 2022). 14.5 % had never been threatened by the Taliban.⁶⁰⁰

4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups

The Taliban have responded to armed opposition with force, with subsequent reports on summary executions, detentions, and ill-treatment of detainees,⁶⁰¹ as well as collective punishment and abuses of civilians suspected of supporting anti-Taliban groups.⁶⁰² From March 2022 until August 2023, UNAMA documented 408 arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals perceived as NRF affiliates and 39 arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals perceived as ISKP affiliates.⁶⁰³ According to data collected by Rawadari, in the first half of 2023, the *de facto* authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained at least 53 individuals accused of affiliation with NRF and other armed groups opposing the Taliban. Moreover, at least nine civilians were killed by the Taliban due to suspicions of being members or collaborating with NRF or other anti-Taliban groups.⁶⁰⁴ More information on the security situation’s impact on civilians is available in section [2.3. Impact of the violence on the civilian population](#).

⁵⁹⁷ Independent (The), *Murdered, tortured or in hiding: The special forces abandoned by Britain*, 1 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁸ Samim, S., *Back to the Village: Afghan city dwellers go home for a long-over-due visit*, AAN, 25 March 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁹ AWA, *Quarterly Report*, April 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁶⁰⁰ No One Left Behind, *State of the SIV Program and its Applicants*, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 2–3

⁶⁰¹ Watkins, A., *One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State*, USIP, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰² HRW, *Afghanistan: Taliban Execute, ‘Disappear’ Alleged Militants*, 7 July 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, *Situation of human rights in Afghanistan*, 6 September 2022, [url](#), para. 51, 57

⁶⁰³ UN Human Rights Council, *Situation of human rights in Afghanistan*, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 58

⁶⁰⁴ Rawadari, *Human rights situation: Mid-year report 1 January to 30 June 2023*, August 2023, [url](#), p. 19



4.3.1. Suspected NRF affiliates

Various sources reported that during 2022 the Taliban carried out reprisal attacks, including arbitrary arrests and killings of civilians in areas associated with resistance groups, mostly in Panjsher Province⁶⁰⁵ but also in the provinces Baghlan, Takhar⁶⁰⁶ and in Daykundi.⁶⁰⁷ Following a visit to Afghanistan in October 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan stated that communities in, inter alia, Panjsher Province were being ‘heavily suppressed’ and that civilians considered to be associated with NRF were subjected to house searches, arbitrary arrests, detentions, extrajudicial killings, torture, displacement and an information blackout. The UN Special Rapporteur further stated that it appeared to ‘amount to collective punishment’.⁶⁰⁸ Media sources have also reported on the Taliban subjecting civilians in Pansjher Province to arrests,⁶⁰⁹ killings,⁶¹⁰ torture and forced evictions,⁶¹¹ as well as limited information flows from the province.⁶¹² Amnesty International carried out interviews with residents of Panjsher Province, who also informed about civilians being subjected to arbitrary arrests, killings and torture carried out by the Taliban.⁶¹³ In September 2022, videos circulated which appeared to show the Taliban executing two groups of NRF fighters.⁶¹⁴ The UN Special Rapporteur expressed deep concern about the allegations and called for an investigation,⁶¹⁵ while Amnesty international carried out an initial assessment confirming that the videos did show extrajudicial executions of what seemed to be NRF members, carried out by the Taliban.⁶¹⁶ AW later reported that they, through OSINT techniques, could link the Taliban to the executions of 10 men in Dara District. In addition, AW reported on an additional 17 executions and 30 deaths resulting from the Taliban offensive against the resistance in Panjsher Province in September 2022.⁶¹⁷

In November 2022, journalist Ali Latifi reported that around 150 families had fled seven villages in Panjsher’s Shotul District in the last months. Crossfire between the Taliban and

⁶⁰⁵ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban’s cruel attacks in Panjshir province amount to war crime of collective punishment – new report, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁶ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, online interview, 12 May 2022; HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Torture Civilians in Panjshir: Collective Punishment Over Armed Group’s Actions Is Unlawful, 10 June 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghan resistance attack Taliban, sparking reprisals in Panjshir, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁷ UNICEF, [Twitter], posted on: 25 November 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Survivors Of Deadly Taliban Raid On Hazara Village In Afghanistan Demand Justice, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁸ UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 26 October 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁶⁰⁹ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Arrests and Severely Tortures 30 Civilians in Panjshir, 29 August 2022, [url](#); Kabul Now, Taliban Arrest and Torture Locals after Infighting in Panjshir, 21 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁰ BBC News, Afghanistan: In a quiet valley the Taliban face armed resistance, 27 July 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Sources report that the Taliban group arrested another Panjshiri resident in Kabul and then shot him dead, 13 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹¹ Kabul Now, Villagers Forces To Leave Properties Under Crackdown in Panjshir, 26 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹² Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Bans Smartphones Use, An Attempt to Covering Crimes, 24 October 2022, [url](#); Yalda Hakim [Twitter], posted on: 29 August 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹³ AI, “Your Sons Are in the Mountains”: The collective punishment of civilians in Panjshir by the Taliban, 7 June 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁶¹⁴ RFE/RL, UN ‘Deeply Concerned Over Video Appearing To Show Taliban Executing Members Of Resistance Group, 15 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁵ UN Special Rapporteur Richard Bennet [Twitter], posted on: 14 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁶ Amnesty International South Asia [Twitter], posted on: 15 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁷ AW, Systematic and Summary: Investigating Evidence of Prisoner Executions in the Panjshir Valley in September 2022, [url](#), p. 1



NRF, and also the Taliban's demands for information about NRF fighters from villagers (assuming they had kinship ties) reportedly prompted people to leave.⁶¹⁸ On 27 December 2022, Kabul Now reported on the Taliban's release of 50 individuals originating from Panjsher Province, who had been arrested over alleged connections with anti-Taliban armed groups. One of the men said that he had been detained for nine months.⁶¹⁹ Kabul Now also reported on local sources in Panjsher Province describing 'a heavy and wider' military presence by the Taliban in most villages, making life 'difficult' for the local population [in 2022]. However, with the winter approaching, clashes between NRF and the Taliban reportedly decreased.⁶²⁰ Kabul Now also reported on the Taliban arresting individuals originating from Panjsher Province in Kabul City for suspected links to NRF.⁶²¹

An Afghan analyst noted that Tajiks (also called by the Taliban *Panjsheris* or *Andarabis* as an insult) were among the communities more prone to violations in the aftermath of the takeover. Since armed opposition groups have 'almost disappeared' in these areas, the situation in both Panjsher Province and Andarab District of Baghlan Province has reportedly changed recently, and treatment of civilians by the Taliban 'has improved significantly'. However, the same source also noted that individuals suspected of being affiliated with armed groups still face significant challenges, including arbitrarily detentions, inhuman treatment and 'allegedly even torture.' Moreover, the source stated that a person may become guilty by association if seen with a suspected NRF or ISKP affiliate, and mentioned cases of civilians travelling with a suspect, being arrested and mistreated at the hands of the *de facto* intelligence department.⁶²² Latifi stated that the *de facto* police has been adamant about searching for vehicles and pedestrians that, they believe, are operating as 'gun runners' for armed groups opposing the Taliban. Latifi reported that residents from Panjsher had told him in interviews that they were caught in the crossfire of both sides and met with suspicion from the *de facto* authorities: 'Such suspicion and questionings by [the] Taliban have forced thousands of Panjsheris to move to Parwan (if they have fewer financial means) or to Kabul (if they have better financial means).' Latifi mentioned the case of a Panjsheri man who was beaten and then arrested for allegedly transporting guns and knives to Kabul only because he had a bag placed over his head.⁶²³ In January 2023, 15 men were arrested in Ab-e-Barik Village in Anaba District of Panjsher Province, on accusations of being NRF members. According to Rawadari, these individuals included activists, students, university professors, drivers, and farmers. Another case concerned a young man who was arrested and then killed in April 2023 in Takhar Province, due to suspicions of being a NRF member.⁶²⁴

4.3.2. Suspected ISKP affiliates

Taliban crackdowns on Salafists have coincided with the Taliban's effort to restrain ISKP.⁶²⁵ Killings and abuses of suspected ISKP affiliates and supporters were especially reported in

⁶¹⁸ New Humanitarian (The), In Afghanistan's shadowy new conflict, new displacement and new civilian abuses, 23 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁹ Kabul Now, 50 Residents of Panjshir Released from Taliban Prisons, 27 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶²⁰ Kabul Now, Clash Between Taliban and NRF Leaves 5 Dead in Panjshir, 16 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶²¹ Kabul Now, Taliban Arrest Six Panjshir Residents over Cooperation with NRF, 5 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶²² Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁶²³ Latifi A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁶²⁴ Rawadari, Human rights situation: Mid-year report 1 January to 30 June 2023, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 13, 19

⁶²⁵ RFE/RL, Senior Clerics Caught In The Crossfire Of The Taliban's Intensifying War With IS-K, 24 August 2022, [url](#)





October and November 2021 in the provinces Nangarhar⁶²⁶ and Kunar.⁶²⁷ Reported cases included extrajudicial killings, beheadings, mutilation and severe torture.⁶²⁸ UNAMA statistics indicated that human rights violations against suspected ISKP affiliates decreased in September–December 2022 in comparison to the same period the previous year.⁶²⁹ According to an international journalist there were a few cases of Salafists being killed in 2022, in both Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. The Taliban's crackdowns of 2021 had ebbed out a bit, although the situation 'went a bit up and down' in 2022 with the issue being addressed to temporarily stop and to later resume again. Local Salafists told the journalist that things were 'much better' in 2022. The journalist however noted that this issue is heavily underreported, making it hard to follow.⁶³⁰ Another source, an international analyst, also stated that violations against Salafists occurred in 2023 as well, and gave as an example that women and children have been arrested without charges.⁶³¹ The international journalist explained that the situation in Kunar has not been as bad in Nangarhar, due to the fact that the great majority of the population is Salafi in Kunar, including most of the Taliban rank-and-file. In Nangarhar, on the contrary, the few persons that dared to speak with the journalist described how they had stopped to go to the Salafi mosque and stopped praying 'Salafi style' (e.g. raising their hands and holding their hands higher up on their chest than Hanafi Muslims). In 2022, Salafists told the journalist the situation was 'liveable' again, although incidents still occurred. The most recent case that the journalist was aware of concerned a man who was detained for two weeks during Ramadan in 2022, after having prayed 'Salafi style' in a Hanafi mosque. The journalist did not know if Salafists in Nangarhar still avoided to pray in certain ways or avoided Salafi mosques in 2023.⁶³²

The Taliban's approach towards Salafists has reportedly varied from location to location, with attempts by the Taliban to distinguish between Salafi members with links to ISKP and those who had no links to the group.⁶³³ As mentioned, social and communal profiling of Salafists, took place especially in the east, in the provinces of Nangarhar and Kunar, but then also increasingly in Kunduz and Badakhshan. In addition to disappearances and summary executions in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces,⁶³⁴ some limitations were imposed on Salafi communities on what they can teach.⁶³⁵ Teachers and university students with suspected links to ISKP were arrested from the university campus in Kabul City and subsequently released,⁶³⁶

⁶²⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 26

⁶²⁷ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Execute, 'Disappear' Alleged Militants, 7 July 2022, [url](#)

⁶²⁸ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Execute, 'Disappear' Alleged Militants, 7 July 2022, [url](#); EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 49–50

⁶²⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 36

⁶³⁰ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁶³¹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁶³² International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁶³³ Giustozzi A., An Unfamiliar Challenge. How the Taliban are Meeting the Islamic State Threat on Afghanistan's University Campuses, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, May 2023, [url](#), p. 15; Giustozzi A., The Taliban's Campaign Against the Islamic State: Explaining Initial Successes, RUSI, October 2023, [url](#), pp. 17–18

⁶³⁴ HRW, World report 2023, Afghanistan, Events of 2022, 12 January 2023, [url](#); Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, online interview, 12 May 2022; France24, Fear stalks city in Islamic State's Afghan heartland, 21 January 2022, [url](#); International journalist, Online interview, 3 October 2023

⁶³⁵ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁶³⁶ Giustozzi A., An Unfamiliar Challenge. How the Taliban are Meeting the Islamic State Threat on Afghanistan's University Campuses, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, May 2023, [url](#), pp. 8, 16





and there were cases of high-level Salafi clerics being assassinated and imprisoned.⁶³⁷ In October 2023, the international analyst stated that, more recently, the *de facto* security forces in Nangarhar (notably the Taliban GDI chief and the Taliban Chief of Police) had adopted a much more conciliatory approach, with Salafi *madrassas* re-opening in an attempt to prevent Salafists having no other option to protect themselves from supporting ISKP.⁶³⁸

4.3.3. Impact on other communities

Since 15 August 2021, a pattern of forced evictions and land grabbing based on ethnicity or political association was documented⁶³⁹ (see chapter [4.5 Ethnic and religious groups](#)). Reporting on such a trend, AAN analyst Fabrizio Foschini mentioned cases of forced evictions of local communities, including Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek communities, in northeastern provinces as well as in Hazarajat,⁶⁴⁰ in favour of formerly displaced Pashtuns returning to their areas of origin and Kuchi nomads (also Pashtuns). Foschini noted that such a phenomenon could be attributed to the Taliban's strategy aimed at gaining political and military control over these areas rather than for the purpose of 'Pashtunisation' of the country. Moreover, according to Foschini, the Taliban fear that non-Pashtun communities in Takhar might be exposed to recruitment campaigns of armed groups opposing the Taliban (NRF and ISKP) as well as radical Islamist groups only loosely aligned with the movement (such as Jundullah).⁶⁴¹

As the Taliban clashed with the dissident Taliban member Mawlawi Mehdi in Balkhab District, Sar-e Pul Province, in the end of June 2022⁶⁴² there were reports of the Taliban killing civilians in the district – which has a large Hazara population.⁶⁴³ Some sources reported on summary executions of civilians, and the Taliban also reportedly blocked communication means in the area.⁶⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch's Patricia Gossman told Foreign Policy that the reports of civilians being executed seemed to be part of a pattern where the Taliban failed to distinguish civilians from combatants, or resorted to collective punishments in areas of armed resistance.⁶⁴⁵ Rawadari reported that the Taliban killed a resident of Chemtal District, Balkh Province, in a night raid along with six members of his family. The event happened in 2023 and according to relatives it was due to allegations of having connections with Mehdi.⁶⁴⁶

⁶³⁷ Giustozzi A., The Taliban's Campaign Against the Islamic State: Explaining Initial Successes, RUSI, October 2023, [url](#), pp. 28, 38; Giustozzi A., An Unfamiliar Challenge. How the Taliban are Meeting the Islamic State Threat on Afghanistan's University Campuses, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, May 2023, [url](#), p. 29

⁶³⁸ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁶³⁹ UNHRC, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 46; RFL/RL, Taliban Accused Of Forced Evictions As Fighting Intensifies In Northern Afghanistan, 7 June 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Settlement of Hundreds of Nomad Families in Northern Afghanistan's Takhar Province, 5 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁰ A unofficial region in Central Afghanistan. Historically encompassing the provinces of Bamyan, Ghor, Uruzgan, and parts of Herat, Farah, Kandahar, Ghazni, Parwan, Baghlan, Balkh and Badghis. See: EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 130

⁶⁴¹ Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taliban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴² Rukshana, After taking control of Balkhab, Taliban summarily executed civilians, residents say, 1 July 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴³ FP, Taliban Wage War Over Coal Mining in Afghanistan, 5 July 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁴ Rukshana, After taking control of Balkhab, Taliban summarily executed civilians, residents say, 1 July 2022, [url](#); Amnesty International South Asia [Twitter], posted on: 27 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁵ FP, Taliban Wage War Over Coal Mining in Afghanistan, 5 July 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁶ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 13





Moreover, the Taliban reportedly killed six Hazaras during a raid in Ghor Province. According to Amnesty International, Taliban news sources claimed that the target for the operation had been affiliated with Mawlawi Mehdi and participated in attacks against the Taliban in Balkhab District. During this raid the Taliban detained four men and executed them; one of the bodies showed signs of torture, and a woman and a 12-year-old girl were killed when the Taliban targeted their home with rifle and grenade attacks.⁶⁴⁷

Some sources have pointed out that people affiliated to former General Abdul Raziq in Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province, and members of his Pashtun Achakzai tribe were being targeted by the Taliban.⁶⁴⁸ According to the Afghan analyst some incidents have been recorded in Kandahar Province; as the Taliban understand the southern tribal tensions, they can target individuals more easily there than in Panjsher, for instance where it has been more difficult for them to identify people.⁶⁴⁹ The international journalist emphasised that the issue was linked to General Raziq, but that tribal tensions between the Achakzai tribe and the Nurzai tribe predates this individual.⁶⁵⁰ A former lawmaker from Kandahar also told RFE/RL that 'Achakzai leaders and others in Kandahar accuse them of turning the crackdown on Raziq's supporters into a tribal vendetta' – potentially reigniting the 'century-old vendetta' with the Nurzai tribe.⁶⁵¹

Senior figures close to General Raziq told RFE/RL that members of the Achakzai tribe had been subjected to 'killings, forced disappearances, torture, detention, displacement and property seizures'. The exiled former presidential adviser told media on behalf of Raziq's family that about 4 000 of Raziq's supporters had been killed by the Taliban, including women and children and that thousands had been forcefully disappeared or detained. A former lawmaker from Kandahar told RFE/RL that the Taliban had 'systematically' targeted the 18 000 members that served the former border force of Spin Boldak and the former police in Kandahar under General Raziq. He claimed that 300 members of these forces were killed immediately after the Taliban takeover.⁶⁵² An analyst claiming to cite intelligence sources, declared that 600 youths and tribal leaders from the Achakzai tribe were killed in the first four months after the Taliban takeover.⁶⁵³ These figures have not been possible to corroborate.

⁶⁴⁷ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban torture and execute Hazaras in targeted attack – new investigation, 15 Septer [url](#)

⁶⁴⁸ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023; Kabul Now, Special Report: Inside the Taliban's factional and tribal warfare to control, 3 April 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁹ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁶⁵⁰ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁶⁵¹ RFE/RL, 'Afghanistan Is Hell': Supporters Of Late Afghan General Claim Taliban Killings, Persecution, 2 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵² RFE/RL, 'Afghanistan Is Hell': Supporters Of Late Afghan General Claim Taliban Killings, Persecution, 2 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵³ Sohail, A., Pakistani Intelligence Agencies ignite Tribal Conflicts in Pak-Afghan Region, 26 September 2022, [url](#)





4.4. Women and girls

4.4.1. General situation under Taliban rule

Since their takeover, the *de facto* authorities have repeatedly expressed their commitment to respect women's and girls' rights within the framework of *sharia*.⁶⁵⁴ Several edicts, decrees and declarations have been issued by the Taliban since 15 August 2021, which have increasingly restricted women's and girls' freedom of movement, expression and behaviour, as well as their access to education, employment, healthcare, justice, and social protection.⁶⁵⁵ In practice, women and girls have been confined to the home.⁶⁵⁶ In June 2023, the UN assessed that the general situation of women's and girls' human rights further deteriorated,⁶⁵⁷ and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan further stated that the violations of women's and girls' rights were 'large-scale', 'systematic' and implemented with 'harsh enforcement methods'. He further called the Taliban's policies 'discriminatory' and 'misogynistic', constituting 'gender persecution and an institutionalized framework of gender apartheid'.⁶⁵⁸

A compilation of relevant Taliban national decrees and instructions issued since the takeover are available in Annex 3: Lists of national Taliban decrees and instructions.

Some of the edicts/instructions issued by the *de facto* authorities during the reference period of this report include:

- shopkeepers in Mazar-e Sharif ordered not to sell to women without *hijab* (August 2022);⁶⁵⁹
- women government workers asked to stay home from work (23 August 2022);⁶⁶⁰
- women not allowed to visit recreational parks, public baths⁶⁶¹, and gyms⁶⁶² in Kabul City, (November 2022)⁶⁶³ and in Faryab (November 2022);⁶⁶⁴
- the right of women to attend university suspended (20 December 2022);
- education for girls beyond grade 6 suspended (22 December 2022);

⁶⁵⁴ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban's first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Haqqani Tells Tribal Elders to Respect Women's Rights, 30 March 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 11

⁶⁵⁵ HRW, Afghan Women Watching the Walls Close In, 2 March 2022, [url](#); UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, (February-April 2023), 9 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 1–2; Shapour R. and Mirzada, R., Strangers in Our Own Country: How Afghan women cope with life under the Islamic Emirate, AAN, 28 December 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 17; Bjelica J., What Do Young Afghan Women Do? A glimpse into everyday life after the bans, ANN, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 30

⁶⁵⁷ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 37

⁶⁵⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 97

⁶⁵⁹ Khaama Press, Taliban Orders Shops to Refuse Selling Things to Women without Hijab, 30 August 2022, [url](#); Rukshana, Taliban morality police close shops over improper hijabs, 23 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 17

⁶⁶¹ RFE/RL, Banned From Public Parks And Bathhouses, Afghan Women Say Life Under Taliban Is Like A 'Prison', 10 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶² France24, Taliban bans Afghan women from gyms, public baths, 13 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶³ RFE/RL, Banned From Public Parks And Bathhouses, Afghan Women Say Life Under Taliban Is Like A 'Prison', 10 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 17



- right of women to work with national and international NGOs suspended (24 December 2022);
- Afghan women banned from working in the UN (4 April 2023);⁶⁶⁵
- women and families banned from restaurants, gardens and green spaces in Herat (April 2023);⁶⁶⁶
- women's beauty salons ordered to close within a month (25 June 2023;⁶⁶⁷ the order entered into force on 25 July 2023);⁶⁶⁸
- women banned from visiting the Band-e-Amir national park in Bamiyan Province (26 August 2023);⁶⁶⁹
- wearing *burqa* or *niqab* compulsory for women in Badakhshan (August 2023)⁶⁷⁰ [this information could not be corroborated];
- in Khost and Zabul provinces, *de facto* MPVPV announced via loudspeaker that women are forbidden from going to local markets or shops without a *mahram* (September 2023).⁶⁷¹

The enforcement of issued edicts and instructions has not been consistent,⁶⁷² especially at local level, 'leading to a climate of legal uncertainty and fear, in which people self-censor to avoid punishment by individual Taliban officers who have their own understanding of the restrictions and punishments for perceived transgression.'⁶⁷³ In practice, women's active participation in political, economic and social life has been largely curtailed in comparison to their situation under the previous government,⁶⁷⁴ and violations of women's rights under the *de facto* authorities have been systematic.⁶⁷⁵ While for most rural women, education and work opportunities have always been limited (beyond menial farm work), since the Taliban takeover, their situation has worsened, largely due to the deteriorating economy (e.g. forcing them to ration food, undertake more labour, avoid seeking medical assistance).⁶⁷⁶ Some women and girls have been 'disproportionately affected by lack of access to services and means to navigate the restrictive environment' including those without a male family member.⁶⁷⁷ The situation of widows has been socially and economically precarious, especially for widows

⁶⁶⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 17

⁶⁶⁶ AP, Taliban ban restaurant gardens for families, women in Herat, 10 April 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁷ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁶⁸ Reuters, Beauty salons banned in Afghanistan, 24 July 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, After Deadline Passes, Afghan Women Pay The Price As Beauty Salons Shut Their Doors, 26 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁹ TOLONews, Women Banned From Visiting Band-e-Amir National Park, 26 August 2023, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban ban women from visiting popular national park, 27 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁰ Etilaatroz, امر به معروف طالبان در بدخشان: زنان برقع بپوشند یا نقاب بزنند, [The Taliban Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Badakhshan: women should wear a *burqa* or a *niqab*], 23 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷¹ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁷² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 19–20; Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁶⁷³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 19–20

⁶⁷⁴ 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](#)

⁶⁷⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 10; HRW, Joint Statement: Marking Two Years of Taliban Oppression, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁶ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁶⁷⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 87



without sons due to the intensified requirement of having a *mahram*.⁶⁷⁸ Female-headed households have also faced issues in accessing humanitarian assistance due to their lack of a *mahram* and the lack of female humanitarian staff.⁶⁷⁹ Coupled with the dire economic situation the country is facing, the restrictions imposed on women have had a significant impact also on their physical and mental health.⁶⁸⁰ Although statistics on suicide are not available, reports of women committing suicide have been widespread,⁶⁸¹ especially among teenage girls who have been prevented from accessing education,⁶⁸² with cases occurring across the whole country.⁶⁸³

Documented cases of women being harassed or beaten up at checkpoints for not wearing *hijab*, or ordered to return home from markets because they were not accompanied by a *mahram* have reportedly occurred frequently.⁶⁸⁴ However, journalist Ali Latifi also observed that, in the cities, some women defy Taliban's instructions to wear a black *niqab* or a blue *chadari* and continue to dress as they used to (e.g. colourful outfits, makeup, sunglasses and other expressions of personal style and fashion). However, Latifi also noted, that when women need to go to government buildings for instance, they will wear a 'proper' dress in line with the Taliban's direction and would be accompanied by a male *chaperone*.⁶⁸⁵

4.4.2. Freedom of expression and assembly

Since the Taliban took power, women have held peaceful demonstrations protesting⁶⁸⁶ the multiple restrictions imposed on their rights. The *de facto* security forces have responded to these protests with excessive use of force, intimidation, arrest, arbitrary detention (in some cases amounting to enforced disappearance) and ill-treatment.⁶⁸⁷ Women activists being detained have reportedly been subjected to ill-treatment, including sexual violence and torture.⁶⁸⁸ The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, reporting in June 2023, said to have received 'numerous credible reports' of women protesters being brutally beaten, arbitrarily arrested and detained. Most of these women were subsequently released under the guarantee of stopping their activism and of not disclosing the treatment they received. Those arrested reported that the Taliban subjected them to

⁶⁷⁸ Shapour R., The Daily Hustle: Being a widow in Afghanistan, AAN, 4 June 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁹ UN Women, Out of jobs, into poverty – the impact of the ban on Afghan women working in NGOs, 13 January 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁸⁰ UNHCR, Afghanistan Crisis update: Women and Girls in Displacement, Factsheet III, May 2023, [url](#), p. 2; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 12, 55, 63; IOM, UNAMA, UN Women, Summary report of country-wide women's consultations, September 2023, [url](#), pp. 2, 3

⁶⁸¹ BBC News, Afghan women in mental health crisis over bleak future, 5 June 2023, [url](#); Guardian (The), 'Despair is settling in': female suicides on rise in Taliban's Afghanistan, 28 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 63; Washington Post (The), As Afghan schools remain closed for girls, mental health crisis builds, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸³ BBC News, Afghan women in mental health crisis over bleak future, 5 June 2023, [url](#); Guardian (The), 'Despair is settling in': female suicides on rise in Taliban's Afghanistan, 28 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 32

⁶⁸⁵ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁶⁸⁶ Reuters, Protests get harder for Afghan women amid risks and red tape, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁷ Hindustan Times, Taliban open fire to push back protesting women in Kabul, 30 September 2021, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Women Protesters Detail Taliban Abuse, 20 October 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023 [url](#), para. 29, 30; CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30; EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 171



violence, including sexual violence, in order to seek information about the organisers of the protests.⁶⁸⁹ Amnesty International also reported on detainees being subjected to rape or threats by Taliban members. Moreover, women being detained subsequently face a ‘life-long stigma’ as the surrounding community tend to assume that all detained women were subjected to sexual violence.⁶⁹⁰

Between 1 January 2022 and 30 July 2023, UNAMA documented over 1 600 human rights violations (almost 50 % of which comprised ‘acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’) perpetrated by *de facto* authorities during arrests and detention across 29 provinces. 11 % of these violations involved women.⁶⁹¹ From March 2022 until August 2023, at least 78 women civil society activists were arbitrarily arrested and detained.⁶⁹² Among those arrested were women’s rights activist Zarifa Yaqobi, who was subsequently released,⁶⁹³ as well as activists Neda Parwani and Zholya Parsi who were detained in September 2023.⁶⁹⁴

Journalist Ali Latifi mentioned the case of a woman activist he personally knew who was detained for more than six months between 2022 and 2023. She had been under watch prior to her arrest and once in detention, the *de facto* security forces took her phone searching for any incriminating evidence, including others she was in correspondence with. Her family was warned that her activities could impact them as well. ‘She has since been silenced and makes few public appearances, if she is still in the country.’⁶⁹⁵ In July 2023, women held demonstrations in Kabul against the closure of beauty salons. The *de facto* security forces responded with water cannons⁶⁹⁶ and beatings; some protesters said stun guns were also used against them and others said their phones had been confiscated.⁶⁹⁷ Four women protestors were arrested and released later the same day.⁶⁹⁸

4.4.3. Freedom of movement

Women and girls have been banned from accessing public spaces such as public bathhouses, (hammams),⁶⁹⁹ gyms, parks,⁷⁰⁰ including more recently the Band-e-Amir national park in Bamiyan Province.⁷⁰¹ In a previous decree issued in December 2021 women were instructed

⁶⁸⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30

⁶⁹⁰ AI, Afghanistan: Death in slow motion: Women and girls under Taliban rule, 27 July 2022, pp. 36, 76, 78

⁶⁹¹ UNAMA, The treatment of detainees in Afghanistan, 20 September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁹² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 55, 56

⁶⁹³ RFE/RL, Women’s Rights Activist Zarifa Yaqobi Released From Taliban Prison, Sister Says, 13 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁴ RFE/RL, UN’s Afghan Mission Condemns Arrest Of Women’s Rights Activists By Taliban, 29 September 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁵ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁶⁹⁶ BBC News, Afghanistan: Women protest against beauty salon closures, 19 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁷ CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁸ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁹⁹ Guardian (The), Taliban stop Afghan women from using bathhouses in northern provinces, 7 January 2022, [url](#);

France24, Taliban ban Afghan women from gyms and public baths, 13 November 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁰ Bjelica J., What Do Young Afghan Women Do? A glimpse into everyday life after the bans, ANN, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰¹ BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban ban women from visiting popular national park, 27 August 2023, [url](#); UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 2



not to travel more than 72 km without being accompanied by a *mahram*.⁷⁰² In March 2022, women were further barred from boarding domestic or international flights without a *mahram* and without wearing a ‘proper *hijab*’.⁷⁰³ Journalist Ali Latifi stated that the ban imposed on women from travelling domestically without a male guardian, likewise all other instructions issued by the *de facto* authorities, has been implemented inconsistently, and ‘thousands of women have ignored that rule and still go out on their own or with other female associates on a daily basis’. He added that, while he has witnessed women travelling without a male guardian on the way to Logar and Bamiyan, as well as within the city of Kabul, he is also aware of incidents occurred to women who travelled to Mazar-e Sharif and who faced issues trying to return to Kabul without a *mahram*. Another incident he mentioned took place in Bamiyan, where a group of women was not given a hotel room because they were not accompanied by a male guardian.⁷⁰⁴ The UN stated that these restrictions are increasingly enforced, especially at checkpoints and harassment is commonly reported. Women are being increasingly questioned when travelling alone and moving in the public space, while men travelling with women are requested to show ID cards or marriage certificates to prove their relation to the woman.⁷⁰⁵

Ali Latifi stated that the ruling forbidding Afghan women from traveling outside the country without a *mahram* has been instead very strictly enforced in recent months (whereas during 2021 and 2022, it was more lax), ‘to the point where even a well-known female doctor was not allowed to attend an international health conference last winter.’⁷⁰⁶ Other reported cases of women being prohibited to travel abroad⁷⁰⁷ include the case of some 60 girls who were granted a scholarship to study at the University of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The girls were turned away from the airport in August 2023.⁷⁰⁸

4.4.4. Access to education

Following the Taliban takeover, primary and elementary schools were reopened⁷⁰⁹ after being closed down during the Covid-19 pandemic.⁷¹⁰ Girls have however been denied education beyond primary level,⁷¹¹ as girls’ secondary schools were ordered to remain closed.⁷¹² As some sources noted, Taliban policies towards education, including towards girls’ secondary education has been inconsistent since their takeover.⁷¹³ In some cases, secondary schools for

⁷⁰² RFE/RL, Afghan Women Banned From Making Trips Unless Escorted, 26 December 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL, Afghans Fear For Their Rights As Taliban Resurrects Religious Policing, 6 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰³ Reuters, Taliban ban women in Afghanistan from flying without male chaperone, 27 March 2022, [url](#); Bjelica J., What Do Young Afghan Women Do? A glimpse into everyday life after the bans, AAN, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁴ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁰⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 54

⁷⁰⁶ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁰⁷ Reuters, Taliban ban women in Afghanistan from flying without male chaperone, 27 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁸ BBC News, Taliban stop female Afghan students leaving country to study in Dubai, 28 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁹ TOLONews, Afghan Students Anxious as Schools Remain Closed, 16 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹⁰ Al Jazeera, The Taliban closes Afghan girls’ schools hours after reopening, 23 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 33

⁷¹² TOLONews, Concerns of Afghan Girls Rise Over Closed Schools, 21 September 2021, [url](#); HRW, Taliban Close Girls’ Secondary Schools in Afghanistan, Again, 23 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹³ HRW, Four Ways to Support Girls’ Access to Education in Afghanistan, 20 March 2022, [url](#)



girls were able to open⁷¹⁴ in at least 13 provinces during the 2021–2022 school year.⁷¹⁵ Private secondary schools were reportedly allowed to offer education for girls in all provinces,⁷¹⁶ but many schools closed due to lack of resources stemming from families affected by poverty and unemployment, and their resultant inability to pay school fees.⁷¹⁷ However, sources indicated that most secondary schools have since closed⁷¹⁸ in all provinces, including private secondary schools.⁷¹⁹

According to a local media outlet, some private schools providing secondary education for girls were open in Herat in 2022⁷²⁰ and in 2023.⁷²¹ There were also reports of the Taliban in Kandahar Province conducting inspections of girls' primary schools and expelling hundreds of secondary education aged girls who attended primary level education.⁷²² Underground secret schools have been running in parts of the country despite the ban.⁷²³ According to the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, other 'adaptive and creative methods' have emerged to support girls' education, including online. However, these methods 'are not equally accessible or sustainable,'⁷²⁴ also due to the instable internet connection across the country.⁷²⁵

In October 2022, women were allowed to take entrance exams to universities only for limited subjects, and hindered from applying for many others, including journalism, engineering, economics, and many subjects of social and natural sciences.⁷²⁶ (For more information see [EUAA Query Response, Afghanistan, Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 1 July to 31 October 2022, 4 November 2022](#)). On 20 December 2022, the right for women to attend universities was however 'suspended' until further notice.⁷²⁷ In July 2023, a statement issued by the Taliban National Examination Directorate informed that female students would not be allowed to take university entrance exams for the new academic year.⁷²⁸ In August 2023, the Taliban Ministry of Education announced that women

⁷¹⁴ Clark K., Who Gets to Go to School? (1): What people told us about education since the Taleban took over, AAN, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 33, 36

⁷¹⁶ Rubin, B. R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, Stimson, 20 October 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), 'She asked me, will they kill you if they discover you?': Afghan girls defy education ban at secret schools, 13 August 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹⁷ Salaam Times, Poverty, restrictions on girls shutter 400 Afghan private schools, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

⁷¹⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 33, 36

⁷¹⁹ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023

⁷²⁰ Salaam Times, Resalat private high school in Herat offers hope to hundreds of girls, 29 September 2022, [url](#)

⁷²¹ Salaam Times, Herat businessman provides free education for hundreds of Afghan girls, 14 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷²² RFE/RL, Taliban Inspects Girl's Schools, Expels Hundreds Of Pubescent Students, 6 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷²³ Washington Post (The), Where learning is against the law: A secret school for Afghan girls, 9 November 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Five key moments in the crushing of Afghan women's rights, 15 August 2023, [url](#); VOA, Despite Taliban Ban, Secret Schools Educate Afghan Girls, 22 January 2023, [url](#)

⁷²⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 33, 36

⁷²⁵ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁷²⁶ RFE/RL, 'Heartbroken And Disillusioned': Taliban Bans Afghan Women From Many University Courses, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷²⁷ Reuters, Taliban-led Afghan administration suspends women from universities, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

⁷²⁸ Kabul Now, Taliban excludes female students from next academic year's university entrance exams, 17 July 2023, [url](#)



will be readmitted to universities as soon as the supreme leader gives the order for the ban to be lifted. However, it was not clarified when or whether that would actually happen.⁷²⁹ UNAMA reported that throughout July, August and September 2023, the *de facto* authorities took ‘various steps’ to ensure that the exclusion of women from secondary and tertiary education was fully implemented.⁷³⁰

On 30 September 2022, a suicide attack was carried out against the Kaaj Educational Centre in Dasht-e Barchi District of Kabul, killing 54 people and injuring another 114. Most of the victims were young Hazara women and girls who were preparing for the university entrance exams.⁷³¹ In June 2023, between 60⁷³² and 90 schoolgirls and their teachers were poisoned and hospitalised in two separate targeted poison attacks against two primary schools in Sangcharak District in Sar-e Pul Province. A Taliban education official claimed that a ‘personal grudge’ was behind the attack. Such an incident was reportedly the first of its kind since the Taliban took power in August 2021.⁷³³

4.4.5. Access to employment

Unlike the 1990s, the *de facto* authorities have not outright banned paid employment for women. However, their restrictions on where women can work outside their home has significantly affected the female workforce.⁷³⁴ Based on a survey conducted from June to August 2022, the World Bank estimated that nearly half of women previously employed in salaried work lost their job since Taliban took power.⁷³⁵

The approximate 4 000 women who had served within the Afghan military in the previous government have lost their job. Some are reported to be forced to beg for a living and live in hiding to avoid reprisals.⁷³⁶ (More information is available in section [4.1. Officials of the former government’s public sector and security sector](#)). Women lawyers and judges have been altogether barred from practicing.⁷³⁷ Many female judges have reportedly been living in hiding or have left Afghanistan due to threats received from convicts released from prison.⁷³⁸ (More information is available in section [4.1.6 Former judges and prosecutors](#)). Women journalists have been banned from state-run media outlets and those in the private sector have been allowed to work within certain restriction, such as covering their faces when appearing on TV

⁷²⁹ AP, Afghan universities ready to readmit women but not until Taliban leader says it’s ok, official says, 12 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁰ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁷³¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 38

⁷³² Reuters, Sixty Afghan girls hospitalised after school poisoning, 5 June 2023, [url](#)

⁷³³ New York Time, Nearly 90 Afghan Schoolgirls Were Poisoned, Officials Suspect, 5 June 2023, [url](#); AP, Official: Almost 80 schoolgirls poisoned, hospitalized in northern Afghanistan, 4 June 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁴ Bjelica J., What Do Young Afghan Women Do? A glimpse into everyday life after the bans, ANN, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁵ World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey, November 2022, [url](#), p. 3

⁷³⁶ Guardian, Hungry, hunted, terrified: unending plight of the Afghan women who served in military and police, 14 August 2023, [url](#); Guardian, ‘I was a policewoman. Now I beg in the street’: life for Afghan women one year after the Taliban took power, 14 August 2022, [url](#)

⁷³⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 23

⁷³⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 85



and working in gender-segregated offices.⁷³⁹ Also, female journalists have been banned from attending press conferences,⁷⁴⁰ and from interviewing male government officials.⁷⁴¹ Since the Taliban takeover, 80 % of women journalists are estimated to have lost their jobs.⁷⁴²

Women working in the public sectors were instructed to stay home and they have been cut-off from working in most of the government entities, although some continue working in some roles within the *de facto* ministries of Public Health, Interior and Education, and also at airports and in security.⁷⁴³ In December 2022, women were banned from working in international and national NGOs, and on 5 April 2023, the *de facto* authorities issued a countrywide ban on Afghan women working in the UN. Most foreign embassies were also informed that Afghan women could no longer work in their offices, as reported by the UN.⁷⁴⁴ Although not officially stated by the *de facto* authorities, many NGOs reported that exemptions of such ban were made for women working in health, nutrition and education sectors. In Kandahar Province, however, most female health workers have not been able to work.⁷⁴⁵ As journalist Ali Latifi noted, by January 2023, many women employees in both international and local NGOs were able to 'create workarounds' that allowed them to continue working, for example by working from home when they were barred from inter-provincial travel. In some international NGOs, female staff has reportedly returned to work, including working from the offices. 'However, they all fear that if this situation becomes too public it could lead to a backlash and these exceptions and workarounds being taken away.'⁷⁴⁶ The ban on Afghan female NGO workers has further complicated aid delivery efforts.⁷⁴⁷

Women entrepreneurs have been encouraged by the Taliban, which represents an exception among restrictions for women.⁷⁴⁸ Female entrepreneurship summits have taken place, with the Taliban often promoting these events to claim they are not as restrictive on women as the outside world makes them look.⁷⁴⁹ It has been reported, however, that women in the private sector have also been affected by restrictions, including cases of suppliers refusing to sell material to them,⁷⁵⁰ being requested to operate in a gender segregated environment and to cater to female consumers only.⁷⁵¹ Ali Latifi stated that women are still allowed to work in private businesses, such as airlines, banks (including government-run banks), stores, travel

⁷³⁹ AFJC, 366 Violations against media freedoms in Afghanistan during two years of Taliban rule: AFJC, 15 August 2023, [url](#); VOA, Female Afghan Journalists Describe Life Under Taliban Misogyny, 30 August 2023, [url](#); Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁴⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 46

⁷⁴¹ VOA, Female Afghan Journalists Describe Life Under Taliban Misogyny, 30 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 46; RSF, Afghan journalism still resisting after two years of Taliban persecution, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 27; Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁴⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 47–48

⁷⁴⁵ Clark K., Bans on women working, then and now: The dilemmas of delivering humanitarian aid during the first and second Islamic Emirates, AAN, April 2023, [url](#), pp. 8, 9

⁷⁴⁶ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, Taliban Restrictions on Women's Rights Deepen Afghanistan's Crisis, 23 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁸ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁴⁹ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁵⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 48, 49

⁷⁵¹ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023



agencies, cell phone and production companies.⁷⁵² In July 2023, beauty salons were shut down, which left some 60 000 women without an income.⁷⁵³ UNAMA reported that salons that have continued to operate beyond the deadline, have faced ‘harsh responses’ by the Taliban officials. For instance, in one case, Taliban GDI officers ‘raided a beauty salon that was operating in secret, fined the owner, arrested and physically assaulted the owner’s brother and forced the salon’s clients to wash their makeup and to promise never to visit any salon in future.’⁷⁵⁴

The lack of employment prospects has pushed increasingly more women in the main cities to stroll the streets, pushing carts and selling second-hand goods or simple food goods from the carts.⁷⁵⁵ The humanitarian situation has also impacted women’s participation in the labour market⁷⁵⁶ (see section [3.2 Poverty, basic subsistence and employment](#)).

4.4.6. Access to healthcare and basic services

Women and girls have been facing difficulties in accessing critical and routine healthcare due to a ‘strained health system, the economic crisis, the limitations on movement and the restrictions placed on male health-care professionals treating women and girls’. For instance, there were reports of women unable to give birth in clinics because of the costs involved or insufficient resources in the clinics.⁷⁵⁷ Moreover, humanitarian workers have faced increasing challenges in gaining access to women in need across the country.⁷⁵⁸ The bans on working for international and national NGOs and the UN have also jeopardised the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to women,⁷⁵⁹ as well as medical support service. Women belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, such as Shia Hazara, women with disabilities, women living in poverty, in rural areas, and those without male family members face additional challenges in accessing services.⁷⁶⁰ The humanitarian situation has also impacted women’s access to healthcare (see section [3.5 Healthcare](#)).

4.4.7. Violence against women

Afghanistan has been estimated to have one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world.⁷⁶¹ In December 2021, the *de facto* authorities issued a Decree on Women’s

⁷⁵² Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁵³ USIP, Two Years of the Taliban’s ‘Gender Apartheid’ in Afghanistan, 14 September 2023, [url](#); New York Times, Taliban Shut Beauty Salons, One of Afghan Women’s Last Public Spaces, 25 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁴ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁷⁵⁵ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023; Sadat S. A., and Shapour R., The Daily Hustle: Women take to street peddling to feed their families, AAN, 22 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁶ ILO, Employment in Afghanistan in 2022: A rapid impact assessment, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 3–4; World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47

⁷⁵⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 57, 61

⁷⁵⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 57

⁷⁵⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 11; International Crisis Group, Taliban Restrictions on Women’s Rights Deepen Afghanistan’s Crisis, 23 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 87–88

⁷⁶¹ Japan Times, Afghan women forced back to abusive ex-husbands after divorces annulled, 2 April 2023, [url](#); Sardinha, L., et al., Global, regional, and national prevalence estimates of physical or sexual, or both, intimate partner violence against women in 2018, *Lancet* 2022; 399: 803–13, 16 February 2022, [url](#)



Rights,⁷⁶² outlawing some traditional practices, such as forced marriage, including for widows, as well as *baad* - the exchange of daughters between families or clans as a way to end feuds or disputes.⁷⁶³ Despite the Decree, cases of gender-based violence have been treated inconsistently by the *de facto* authorities, and in many instances resolved through informal means such as mediation.⁷⁶⁴

The phenomenon of forced and early marriage of women and girls has seen an increase under Taliban rule, due to several factors, but mostly related to the economic and humanitarian crisis, lack of education and employment prospects, and families' belief that securing a spouse for their daughters would protect them from being forced to marry a member of the Taliban.⁷⁶⁵ Women seeking a divorce have reportedly been routinely forced to return to violent relationships.⁷⁶⁶ International media have reported on cases of divorced women being forced back to their ex-husbands by the local Taliban. Some women have voiced concerns that divorces made under the previous government would not be seen as valid by the Taliban; senior Taliban officials did not give clear answers as whether they would accept judgements made in divorce cases under the previous government.⁷⁶⁷

From March 2022 until August 2023, UNAMA documented at least 324 cases of violence against women and girls, including so-called 'honour killings', forced and child marriages, beatings and domestic violence resulting in self-immolation or suicide.⁷⁶⁸ ACLED reported that sexual violence was on the rise, and documented 22 such incidents in the first six months of 2023.⁷⁶⁹ Taliban officials have reportedly subjected women protesters to ill-treatment, including sexual violence in custody.⁷⁷⁰ In another case, Taliban members allegedly carried out a gang rape against a woman and her two minor daughters on 28 February 2023.⁷⁷¹ In another case, a Taliban official allegedly raped a woman in custody and subsequently forced her to marry him.⁷⁷² UN experts assessed that the instruction on punishment of men 'for the conduct of women and girls' might lead to normalisation of discrimination and violence against women and girls.⁷⁷³

⁷⁶² Zabihullah [Twitter], posted on: 3 December 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁶³ Barnett R. R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 27

⁷⁶⁵ AI, Death in Slow Motion: Women and girls under Taliban rule, 27 July 2022, [url](#), p. 7; RFE/RL, Afghans Increasingly Marrying Off Young Daughters To Avoid Forced Unions With Taliban, 1 December 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 82

⁷⁶⁷ Washington Post (The), Afghan women who were divorced under prior government fear for their status, 4 March 2023, [url](#); Japan Times, Afghan women forced back to abusive ex-husbands after divorces annulled, 2 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 27

⁷⁶⁹ ACLED, Two Years Of Repression: Mapping Taliban Violence Targeting Civilians in Afghanistan, 11 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30

⁷⁷¹ AI, Afghanistan: Alleged rape by Taliban members must be investigated and prosecuted immediately, 10 March 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷² Independent, Forced to be a Taliban official's wife, she was imprisoned for 156 days: 'They beat me up till I passed out', 5 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 20



4.4.8. Access to justice

The Taliban's exclusion of female judges and lawyers from practicing the law⁷⁷⁴ has negatively impacted women's access to justice, including their ability to obtain legal aid and equality before the law.⁷⁷⁵ Moreover, for certain issues such as domestic violence women's access to justice is very limited.⁷⁷⁶ Corporal punishments inflicted by courts for both men and women have increased under Taliban rule,⁷⁷⁷ especially since November 2022. From 15 August 2021 until 30 April 2023, UNAMA documented 80 instances of women being subjected to the judicial punishment of lashings, mostly in relation to *zina* (adultery or 'running away from home').⁷⁷⁸ More information on such punishments is available in section [1.2.3 Corporal and capital punishments](#).

4.5. Ethnic and religious groups

4.5.1. General situation under Taliban rule

The *de facto* government has been led by a thirty-three-member caretaker cabinet, composed of men who are predominantly ethnic Pashtuns.⁷⁷⁹ Non-Pashtun members of the cabinet include the Taliban deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Mullah Abdul Salam Hanafi⁷⁸⁰ (ethnic Uzbek from Jawzjan Province),⁷⁸¹ the Taliban Minister of Agriculture, Mawlawi Atallah Omari⁷⁸² (ethnic Uzbek from Faryab Province),⁷⁸³ the Taliban Minister of Economy, Qari Din Mohammad Hanif⁷⁸⁴ (ethnic Tajik from Badakhshan Province),⁷⁸⁵ the Taliban Chief of Staff, Qari Fasihuddin⁷⁸⁶ (also ethnic Tajik from Badakhshan Province),⁷⁸⁷ the Taliban Minister of Trade Hajji Norruddin Azizi⁷⁸⁸ (ethnic Tajik from Panjsher Province),⁷⁸⁹ and Mohammad Khaled, the Taliban Minister of the MPVPV⁷⁹⁰ (ethnic Nuristani from Nuristan Province).⁷⁹¹ Three Hazaras have been appointed *de facto* deputy ministers of Economy, Public Health and Urban Development and Land since the takeover,⁷⁹² and were reported to still serve in their post in

⁷⁷⁴ UN OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#); AP, The Taliban have waged a systematic assault on freedom in Afghanistan, says UN human rights chief, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 23

⁷⁷⁶ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁷⁷⁷ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁷⁷⁸ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment in Afghanistan, May 2023, [url](#), pp. 13–14

⁷⁷⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, The Taliban in Afghanistan, last updated 19 January 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁰ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸¹ AA, Who's who in Taliban interim government?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸² BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸³ Ali, O., Non-Pashtun Taleban of the North (2): Case studies of Uzbek Taleban in Faryab and Sar-e Pul, AAN, 17 March 2017, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁴ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁵ AA, Who's who in Taliban interim government?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁶ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁷ AA, Who's who in Taliban interim government?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁸ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁹ Agenzia Nova, Afghanistan: the Taliban appoint a UN representative and ask to speak to the General Assembly, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁰ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹¹ Afghanistan, *de facto* MOPVPE, Biography of the ministry leadership, *n.d.*, [url](#)

⁷⁹² Kabul Now, Taliban Appoint a Shia-Hasara as Deputy Minister, 2 December 2022, [url](#)



2023.⁷⁹³ At provincial level, ethnic groups other than Pashtuns have been represented to a somewhat higher degree.⁷⁹⁴ An international analyst however pointed out that the local communities do not necessarily feel represented by these individuals solely by sharing the same ethnicity.⁷⁹⁵ Hazara interviewees also told AAN analyst Fabrizio Foschini that ethnic balance in the Taliban's commissions responsible for handling local land disputes did not guarantee impartiality.⁷⁹⁶

Since the Taliban took power, they have not enacted any formal discriminatory policies towards ethnic or religious groups,⁷⁹⁷ but the marginalisation of minorities in the decision-making processes has worsened due to their decreased representation in public positions.⁷⁹⁸ Afghanistan experts observed that, in theory, the Taliban leadership generally respected minorities,⁷⁹⁹ but in practice Taliban rank-and-file often do not.⁸⁰⁰ The Taliban's treatment of ethnic and religious groups has also been determined by the reality of the past wars and of Afghan society.⁸⁰¹ For instance, since having connections to government bodies is key to obtain services in Afghanistan,⁸⁰² ethnic and religious minorities have become more vulnerable in terms of accessing government services but also accessing justice.⁸⁰³ Moreover, Farsi signs are being replaced with Pashto signs in predominantly Farsi-speaking cities such as Herat and Mazar-e Sharif,⁸⁰⁴ and Pashto is increasingly being used in government services, which creates further obstacles to those who do not speak the language.⁸⁰⁵

In communication with the EUAA, the international analyst stated that ethnicity has become more important since the Taliban took power, adding that there are multiple examples of Taliban supporting Pashtun communities, especially in conflict with their non-Pashtun neighbours over property and land claims.⁸⁰⁶ Since 15 August 2021, historical tensions between settled and nomadic communities (which have fuelled ethnic and territorial disputes for decades) have intensified in the provinces of Parwan, Jawzjan, Badakhshan, Ghazni,

⁷⁹³ BBC Monitoring, Biography, Afghanistan, Mohammad Hassan Ghiassi, 25 May 2023, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, Biography, Afghanistan, Sheikh Madar Ali Karimi Bamiani, 4 May 2023, [url](#); BBC monitoring, Biography, Afghanistan, Dr Abdul Latif Nazari, 9 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁴ Aamaj News, 80% of Taliban's rulers Pashtuns, 98.3% their own members as 1.5 years passes, 15 February 2023, [url](#); International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁷⁹⁵ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁷⁹⁶ Foschini, F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁷ USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 42; USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁹ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁸⁰⁰ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023; Mohammadi, M., Human Rights Conditions for Hazaras in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime, 7 February 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁰¹ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023; Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰² Afghan analyst, online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁸⁰³ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁸⁰⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 43; Hasht-e Subh, Taliban's Animosity with Farsi: Fuelling the Fire of Afghanistan's Enemies, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁵ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁸⁰⁶ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023



Maidan Wardak and Daykundi.⁸⁰⁷ Forced evictions and displacement of minority groups, including Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks, were reportedly facilitated or tolerated by the *de facto* authorities.⁸⁰⁸ At least 2 800 Hazara residents have reportedly been forcibly displaced from 15 villages in Daykundi and Uruzgan provinces in September 2021 alone. In December 2022, residents of Sar-e Pul Province, mostly Uzbeks and Tajiks, ‘staged a protest against their forced eviction and the seizure of land’ by the Taliban in eight villages. They were reportedly ‘threatened with a military response if they did not follow orders’.⁸⁰⁹

Several land disputes also occurred in Takhar Province,⁸¹⁰ especially in the northern districts, including Dasht-e Qala, Rustaq, Darqad and Yangi Qala and Khwaja Bahauddin. These disputes involved returning Pashtun refugees from Pakistan, most of whom are Kuchis, reclaiming those areas. During these disputes, local Taliban authorities reportedly sided with the Pashtun Kuchis leading to the local population, mainly Uzbeks and Tajiks, being evicted from their houses and lands.⁸¹¹ According to an Afghan analyst, these conflicts are based more on complex land dispute dynamics between communities rather than being ethnically driven. Even in provinces with a homogenous ethnic composition, such disputes have re-emerged, often along tribal or clan-based lines. For instance, the analyst noted that people were evicted in cities as well, including in Kabul where the *de facto* authorities have demolished homes that were built on government land. Having said that, the same source stated that, ‘Kuchis have become more brazen, especially on claiming lands since Taliban took power.’⁸¹² Foschini also identified motivations other than ethnicity behind the Taliban’s general siding with Kuchis in land disputes, such as seeking political and military control over the affected areas,⁸¹³ as mentioned in section [4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups](#).

Since the Taliban takeover, several sources reported on the targeting of Tajik communities in the northeast provinces of the country, due to their perceived affiliation to armed resistance groups.⁸¹⁴ Salafi communities were also targeted, due to their perceived affiliation to ISKP.⁸¹⁵ (See section [4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups](#))

⁸⁰⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 46–47

⁸⁰⁸ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Evict Minority Shia, 22 October 2021, [url](#); Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 48

⁸⁰⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 46–48

⁸¹⁰ ANI, Land dispute leads to clashes between residents, refugees in Afghanistan's Takhar, 19 September 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Taliban to Displace 400 Families in Khwaja Bahauddin District, Takhar, 6 October 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹¹ Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹² Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁸¹³ Foschini, F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹⁴ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, online interview, 12 May 2022; HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Torture Civilians in Panjshir: Collective Punishment Over Armed Group’s Actions Is Unlawful, 10 June 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghan resistance attack Taliban, sparking reprisals in Panjshir, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹⁵ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; Gossman, P., Associate Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, online interview, 12 May 2022; France24, Fear stalks city in Islamic State’s Afghan heartland, 21 January 2022, [url](#); Jamestown Foundation, The Taliban’s Persistent War on Salafists in Afghanistan, 24 September 2021, [url](#); Hudson Institute, Making Sense of the Islamic State’s War on the Afghan Taliban, 25 January 2022, [url](#)



4.5.2. Religious freedom

In the aftermath of their takeover, the Taliban stated that human rights in general - although not specifying religious freedom - would be respected in Afghanistan 'within the framework of Islamic law'.⁸¹⁶ The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) noted that, since August 2021, religious freedom conditions have deteriorated, adding that not only have the *de facto* authorities enforced its harsh interpretation of *sharia* on all Afghans, but they have also failed to provide ethnic and religious communities residing in the country with safety and security against violence perpetrated towards these groups by ISKP and by 'factions of the Taliban itself'.⁸¹⁷ Physical and verbal attacks against religious minorities have been reported.⁸¹⁸ According to USCIRF, religious minorities such as Christians, Ahmadiyya Muslims, Baha'is, and nonbelievers have been unable to openly express their faith and belief, being actively discriminated against or targeted by the Taliban or ISKP.⁸¹⁹

Conversion from Islam to another religion is considered as apostasy and is punishable by death, according to the Taliban's interpretation of *sharia*.⁸²⁰ As noted by the international analyst, people born into another faith and who did not convert from Islam are allowed not to be Muslim. The same source noted that there has not been formal Taliban policy on hunting down converts, as there is a general expectation that converts are killed by their own families rather than by the authorities.⁸²¹

Some restrictions on religious and cultural events were issued by the *de facto* authorities during the reporting period. On 21 March 2023, the Taliban MPVPV announced the cancellation of the *Nowruz* (Persian New Year) celebration, considered an 'un-Islamic tradition'.⁸²² On 17 July 2023, it was announced that, for security reasons, large gatherings would not be allowed during the celebration of *Ashura*, a holy day for Shia Muslims.⁸²³

Some sources indicated that Taliban have ordered government employees to adhere to religious practices, including taking a test on Islamic subjects, making it mandatory to grow beards and wear traditional clothing, and in some areas also forcing them to attend prayers.⁸²⁴ In communication with the EUAA, a representative of the human rights organisation Rawadari explained that shopkeepers and men in markets have been 'encouraged, shamed, and threatened' by the Taliban MPVPV particularly to attend prayers on Fridays.⁸²⁵ Local media website Hasht-e Subh reported that, in April 2023, the *de facto* authorities forced residents in

⁸¹⁶ Rehman, R., Taliban 2021: Mujahid, Munafiq? - Protecting Islam or undermining it?, Human Rights in Context, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸¹⁷ USCIRF, Annual report on religious freedom – Afghanistan, May 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁸¹⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 36

⁸¹⁹ USCIRF, Annual report on religious freedom – Afghanistan, May 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁸²⁰ USCIRF, Religious Freedom and Women's Rights in Afghanistan, 30 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁸²¹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁸²² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 40; Kazemi S. R. and Sadat S. A., Simple Pleasures Amidst Great Frustrations: An essentially outlawed Nawruz in Taleban-ruled Afghanistan, 21 March 2023, [url](#); Reuters, Taliban cancel public holiday for Nowruz but say celebrations allowed, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸²³ Kabul Now, Death toll of Taliban crack down on Ashura mourners rises, 30 July 2023, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 40

⁸²⁴ RFE/RL, Under The Taliban, Public Employees Must Pass Test Of Faith, 8 September 2022, [url](#); Kabul Now, Taliban Foreign Ministry instructs employees to adhere to religious practices, 13 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁵ Rawadari, email communication, 18 October 2023



Herat City to attend congregational evening prayers during Ramadan. *De facto* security forces were reported to actively patrolling the streets in some areas of the city, looking for people not attending the prayers and ‘assaulting bystanders, shopkeepers, medicine vendors’.⁸²⁶ This information could not be corroborated. According to other local sources, during the same month, Taliban forced Shia Hazara communities in some parts of the country, including in Balkh⁸²⁷ and Daykundi provinces, to perform *Eid* prayers one day earlier than their religious practice foresaw, with reports of Taliban beating those who refused.⁸²⁸

Many Sikhs and Hindus sought to resettle outside of Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover,⁸²⁹ and in 2022 religious representatives estimated that less than 100 Hindus and Sikhs remained in the country - mainly to care for temples. According to USDOS, Sikhs and Hindus faced discrimination, including ‘unequal access to government jobs, harassment in school, and verbal and physical abuse in public places’.⁸³⁰ The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan also expressed concern about verbal and physical threats and attacks against religious minorities, including Sikhs, forcing some to flee the country.⁸³¹ UNAMA recorded one attack against a Sikh place of worship in the period 15 August 2021–30 May 2023, in which two individuals were killed and three wounded.⁸³² Indian media also reported on an explosion targeting a Sikh shop close to a Sikh place of worship in Kabul City on 27 July 2022.⁸³³

4.5.3. Hazaras and other Shia groups

Most Hazaras in Afghanistan are Shia Muslims.⁸³⁴ In the months following their coming to power, the Taliban held a series of meetings with Shia Hazara leaders from various parts of the country, promising to provide security for all citizens and expressing the willingness to avoid sectarian divisions.⁸³⁵ As mentioned, three Hazara deputy ministers have been appointed within the *de facto* government and public messaging by *de facto* authorities towards Hazaras and Shias has continued to be conciliatory.⁸³⁶ However, in practice, Hazaras and Shias have reportedly faced discrimination under Taliban rule.⁸³⁷ Hazaras have been killed in Taliban raids allegedly targeting armed groups⁸³⁸ or former government officials.⁸³⁹ Moreover, the Shia Hazara

⁸²⁶ Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Force Herat Residents to Pray Taraweeh During Ramadan, 17 April 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁷ Afghanistan International, Taliban Forced Shia Clerics To Offer Eid Prayers On Friday in Balkh, 22 April 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁸ Kabul Now, Taliban in Daikundi forces residents to celebrate Eid a day earlier, 21 April 2023, [url](#)

⁸²⁹ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 151

⁸³⁰ USDOS, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸³¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 36, 41

⁸³² UNAMA, Impact of Improvised Explosive Devices on Civilians in Afghanistan, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁸³³ Indian Express, Explosion rocks Sikh man’s shop near Kabul gurdwara; kin in Delhi call for India’s help, 27 July 2022, [url](#); Times of India (The), Kabul Gurdwara Attacked Again, Blast Near Main Gate, 28 July 2022, [url](#)

⁸³⁴ Mohammadi, M., Human Rights Conditions for Hazaras in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime, SJSU, 7 February 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁸³⁵ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 38, 51

⁸³⁶ Adili A. Y., The politics of survival in the face of exclusion: Hazara and Shia Actors under the Taliban, AAN, February 2023, [url](#), p. 35

⁸³⁷ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; RFE/RL, Afghanistan’s Shi’ite Minority Suffers ‘Systematic Discrimination’ Under Taliban Rule, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸³⁸ RFE/RL, Survivors Of Deadly Taliban Raid On Hazara Village in Afghanistan Demand Justice, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

⁸³⁹ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban torture and execute Hazaras in targeted attack – new investigation, 15 September 2022, [url](#)



community has been a target in attacks frequently claimed by ISKP and unknown perpetrators.⁸⁴⁰ (More information is available in section [2.3. Impact of the violence on the civilian population](#)) Sources noted a discrepancy between Taliban leadership's public stance towards Hazaras/Shias and the actual treatment of these communities by Taliban rank-and-file security forces.⁸⁴¹ Despite their public statements, the Taliban are reported to have failed to protect the Hazara and Shia communities from targeted attacks, while harassment and forced displacement of these communities have increased. AAN analyst Ali Yawar Adili further noted that Hazaras have become 'increasingly vulnerable to collective punishment' by the Taliban in their attempt to pre-emptively crack down on any possible mobilisation and armed resistance in Hazarajat.⁸⁴²

The international analyst explained to the EUAA that, while the Taliban leadership does not perceive the Hazaras and Shias as a threat and their position in this regard is very clear, local commanders do exhibit intolerance against these communities. The same source noted that Taliban do not usually attack Hazara and Shia communities, and no confrontations were documented in provinces where Hazara leaders have been appointed, such as in Bamiyan and Daykundi provinces. However, Hazaras have been facing discrimination and armed Taliban fighters have constantly been out controlling these areas: 'so, some will always think there is a possibility that the *status quo* may change for the worse.'⁸⁴³

As pointed out by the Afghan analyst, Hazaras have historically tended to face societal discrimination in Afghanistan, from Pashtuns and also from Tajiks, Uzbeks and others. Such discrimination has persisted to this date. Under the Taliban however, the analyst pointed out that Hazaras have not been facing targeted discrimination, although the local Taliban would 'view Hazaras negatively and treat them with contempt (in line with historical norms)'. The same source added that 'there is a view' that Hazaras 'benefitted too much' under the previous rule, which must be 'corrected' now. As a result, Hazaras have been 'systematically treated differently' by the local Taliban.⁸⁴⁴ Some sources reported on many individuals from the Hazara communities being dismissed and replaced from their government jobs.⁸⁴⁵ The Afghan analyst stated that since Hazaras have been disproportionately underrepresented within the *de facto* government (hence they tend to have fewer connections in positions of power), their access to government services has been negatively impacted.⁸⁴⁶ For example, Hazaras are reported to face more barriers in obtaining passports in order to leave the country.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁰ HRW, Afghanistan: ISIS Groups Targets Religious Minorities, 6 September 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, 9 September 2022, [url](#), para. 67

⁸⁴¹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁸⁴² Adili A. Y., The politics of survival in the face of exclusion: Hazara and Shia Actors under the Taliban, AAN, February 2023, [url](#), p. 35

⁸⁴³ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁸⁴⁴ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁸⁴⁵ Irish Examiner, Afghanistan's powerless Hazara community still facing persecution, 22 August 2022, [url](#); Mohammadi, M., Human Rights Conditions for Hazaras in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime, SJSU, 7 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 2, 3

⁸⁴⁶ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁸⁴⁷ Mohammadi, M., Human Rights Conditions for Hazaras in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime, SJSU, 7 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 2, 13; Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023



Some restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities on the Hazara and Shia communities include the prohibition to teach Shia jurisprudence in some universities;⁸⁴⁸ the ban on marriages among Shia and Sunni individuals in the Nusay district of Badakhshan Province issued in February 2023;⁸⁴⁹ restrictions on group movements and large gatherings during the Shia celebration of *Ashura* in July 2023.⁸⁵⁰

In November 2022, Taliban fighters conducted a raid in the village of Siwak Shibar, in Nili District of Daykundi Province,⁸⁵¹ killing four Hazara boys aged between 1 and 14,⁸⁵² wounding another four people and detaining several others. Taliban claimed that the target of this attack was ‘armed rebels’, while according to locals the victims were all civilians.⁸⁵³ On 28 July 2023, in Ghazni Province, members of the *de facto* security forces opened fire without warning at mourners gathered to commemorate the Shia *Ashura* ceremony.⁸⁵⁴ Four people were killed, including one child and one woman, six other were injured. *De facto* Provincial Governor’s office posted a tweet in response to the incidents stating that some people had thrown stones and had opened fired at the *de facto* security forces, resulting in the casualties, while UNAMA reported that the mourners were unarmed.⁸⁵⁵

Since the Taliban takeover, ‘a greater number’ of Kuchi nomads, compared to previous years, moved into Hazarajat (the central region of the country which is historically been disputed between the Kuchis/local Pashtuns and the Hazara people),⁸⁵⁶ resulting in the forced evictions and displacement of local Hazara population.⁸⁵⁷ Also, some decades-old judicial cases related to claims by Kuchis of human or animal losses in past disputes with the Hazaras, were reopened, with Taliban siding with the Kuchi/Pashtun party in all these cases and enforcing collective punishments towards local Hazara communities.⁸⁵⁸

Between August and September 2023, local media reported that the Taliban killed several Hazara residents in the Khas Uruzgan district of Uruzgan Province,⁸⁵⁹ and that hundreds of

⁸⁴⁸ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's Shi'ite Minority Suffers 'Systematic Discrimination' Under Taliban Rule, 17 July 2023, [url](#); USCIRF, Religious Freedom and Women's Rights in Afghanistan, 30 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁸⁴⁹ USCIRF, Religious Freedom and Women's Rights in Afghanistan, 30 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Hasht-e Subh, Taliban Ban Shia-Sunni Marriages in Badakhshan's Nusay District, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁰ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023, [url](#), para. 37; Kabul Now, Death toll of Taliban crack down on Ashura mourners rises, 30 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵¹ RFE/RL, Survivors Of Deadly Taliban Raid On Hazara Village In Afghanistan Demand Justice, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵² UNICEF, [Twitter], posted on 25 November 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵³ RFE/RL, Survivors Of Deadly Taliban Raid On Hazara Village In Afghanistan Demand Justice, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁴ Kabul Now, Death toll of Taliban crack down on Ashura mourners rises, 30 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 53

⁸⁵⁶ Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁷ 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](#); Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 48

⁸⁵⁸ Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁹ Hasht-e Subh, The National Resistance Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan: The Taliban have killed 17 Hazaras in Uruzgan Province in the Last Two Years, 24 September 2023, [url](#)



Hazara families were at risk of forced eviction.⁸⁶⁰ UNAMA informed that a delegation of the *de facto* government visited Khas Uruzgan District on 16 September 2023, to investigate such allegations. Following this visit, 16 individuals were reportedly arrested and were awaiting trial. With regards to these alleged violations, UNAMA stated to have confirmed the following incidents in the Khas Uruzgan District between January and September 2023: killings of at least six Hazara residents by unknown perpetrators; at least five cases of destruction of property (including vehicles, houses and agricultural crops) belonging to Hazara residents by unknown perpetrators; at least two incidents of beatings of Hazara residents by unknown perpetrators.⁸⁶¹

According to the UN, from 30 August 2021 to 30 September 2022, there were 22 recorded attacks against civilians in Afghanistan, 16 of which targeted the Hazara population specifically.⁸⁶² During 2022, attacks claimed by ISKP against Hazaras and Shias killed and injured at least 700 people, according to some estimates.⁸⁶³ In 2023, the number of attacks against the Shia Hazara community has gone down, and as of September 2023, no major attacks on Hazaras has been recorded. Some sources link such a decrease to the Taliban's operations against ISKP and a shift of focus of ISKP to Taliban targets.⁸⁶⁴

In August 2022, a string of ISKP attacks targeting the Shia Hazara group occurred in Kabul City during three consecutive days before the *Ashura* commemoration on 8 August 2022.⁸⁶⁵ Reports on the death toll varied between 2,⁸⁶⁶ 3⁸⁶⁷ and 8,⁸⁶⁸ as well as reports on the number of injured which ranged from 7 to 30.⁸⁶⁹ Unclaimed bombings have also been reported in the Dacht-e Barchi Shia dominated area of Kabul City in August and September 2022.⁸⁷⁰ On 30 September 2022, a suicide IED attack was carried out against the Kaaj educational centre in Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul,⁸⁷¹ killing 54 people and injuring another 114. Out of the 54 killed, 51 were young Hazara women between the ages of 14 and 22 who were studying for the university entrance examination.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁰ Kabul Now, Hundreds of Hazara families risk forced eviction in Khas Uruzgan district , 14 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶¹ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 5, 6

⁸⁶² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 36

⁸⁶³ HRW, Afghanistan: ISIS Group Targets Religious Minorities, 6 September 2022, [url](#); HRW, World report 2023, Afghanistan, Events of 2022, 12 January 2023, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁴ Gossman, P., HRW, email communication, 28 September 2023; AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), pp. 27, 29

⁸⁶⁵ UN Security Council, Situation of in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 16; Business Standard, Over 120 killed, wounded in recent days in Afghanistan: United, 8 August 2022, [url](#); VOA, Islamic State Bombing Kills 8 Afghan Shiite Mourners in Kabul, 5 August 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, 3 People Die in Blast on Second Day of Attacks in Kabul, 6 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁶ APW, Weekly Briefing August 01 – Aug 07, 8 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁷ TOLONews, 3 People Die in Blast on Second Day of Attacks in Kabul, 6 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁸ Reuters, Bomb blast in Kabul kills eight, injures more than 20, 6 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁹ TOLONews, 3 People Die in Blast on Second Day of Attacks in Kabul, 6 August 2022, [url](#); APW, Weekly Briefing Aug 01 – Aug 07, 8 August 2022, [url](#); Reuters, Bomb blast in Kabul kills eight, injures more than 20, 6 August 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁰ BBC News, Kabul blast kills teenager sitting practice exam, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 46; BBC News, Kabul blast kills teenager sitting practice exam, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 36



4.6. Journalists and media workers

Immediately after they came to power, the Taliban claimed to be ‘committed to media’ within their ‘cultural frameworks’. They allowed private media companies to continue their activities, although instructing them to respect ‘Islamic values’ and urging Afghan media not to work against national values or unity.⁸⁷³ In practice, the right to freedom of opinion and expression has been severely curbed since the Taliban took power.⁸⁷⁴ Most female media workers lost their jobs:⁸⁷⁵ it is estimated that more than 80 % of women journalists have had to stop working since 15 August 2021.⁸⁷⁶ Many media outlets closed, mainly due to financial issues⁸⁷⁷ but also due pressure from the Taliban.⁸⁷⁸

Numerous journalists fled Afghanistan or went into hiding, and the closure of media outlets left thousands of journalists jobless, forcing many to find other employment.⁸⁷⁹ Out of the roughly 12 000 journalists – male and female – active in Afghanistan in 2021, more than two thirds are estimated to have quit the profession.⁸⁸⁰

During the reference period of this report, the media landscape and press freedoms have further deteriorated in Afghanistan, and journalists have increasingly faced surveillance, intimidation, threats, violence, arrest and detention from the *de facto* authorities.⁸⁸¹ Guidelines for the media issued between August 2021 and March 2022 remained in place and increasing restrictions were introduced.⁸⁸² In July 2022, a decree issued by the supreme leader warned against criticising Taliban authorities.⁸⁸³ In October 2022, the *de facto* authorities suspended two Afghan news websites, Hasht-e Subh and Zawia News and threatened to revoke the licenses of several other news agencies. In December 2022, they blocked the FM broadcasts of Radio Azadi and Voice of America (in addition to the previous ban on BBC News and Deutsche Welle TV channels in March 2022).⁸⁸⁴ In March 2023, the *de facto* minister of higher education warned that ‘all those who undermine the regime, whether that is via tongue, pen or

⁸⁷³ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban’s first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 33

⁸⁷⁵ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Threatening Provincial Media, 7 March 2022, [url](#); RSF, Afghan journalism still resisting after two years of Taliban persecution, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁶ RSF, Afghan journalism still resisting after two years of Taliban persecution, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁷ 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](#)

⁸⁷⁸ New York Times (The), New Taliban Guidelines Stir Fear About the Future of Press Freedom, 23 September 2021, [url](#); RSF, Since the Taliban takeover, 40% of Afghan media have closed, 80% of women journalists have lost their jobs, 20 December 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁹ 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](#)

⁸⁸⁰ RSF, Afghan journalism still resisting after two years of Taliban persecution, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸¹ AFJC, 366 Violations against media freedoms in Afghanistan during two years of Taliban rule: AFJC, 15 August 2023, [url](#); RSF, Nine arrested in Taliban offensive against Afghan journalists, 15 August 2023, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 68–73; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 57; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023, [url](#), para. 36

⁸⁸² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 33

⁸⁸³ Zabihullah [Twitter], posted on: 21 July 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Bans ‘Unproven Allegations’ Against Members, 22 July 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 73



practically undermining it, are considered rebellious and deserve death'.⁸⁸⁵ On 25 July 2023, the Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture started distributing ID cards to male and female journalists. While UNAMA observed that this measure 'has the potential to facilitate journalists' access to reporting sites and press conferences',⁸⁸⁶ some media practitioners voiced concerns that this practice may instead further increase control on the press by the *de facto* authorities.⁸⁸⁷

The issued restrictions on media are considered vague, and difficult for media workers to follow in practice.⁸⁸⁸ After the Taliban takeover, the media outlets that continued to operate adjusted their reporting by decreasing potentially provocative content, while content praising the Taliban increased.⁸⁸⁹ Moreover, there have been reports of increased self-censorship⁸⁹⁰ among Afghan journalists as a result of continuous harassment.⁸⁹¹ Reporting on certain topics and events, particularly women's rights issues and women's protests might lead to abuse.⁸⁹² According to journalist Ali Latifi, 'that's a major red line, and footage of these protests is now often taken by women themselves'. Most incidents where journalists were involved occurred during women's protests, Latifi noted, and as such, 'coverage of such events has become much rarer'. Nevertheless, journalism continues in Afghanistan,⁸⁹³ with some journalists defying potential reprisals by raising critical voices, covering protests and questioning Taliban edicts, including on women's rights.⁸⁹⁴

Summons, punitive measures and arrests against journalists and media workers have been carried out mainly by the *de facto* intelligence security apparatus,⁸⁹⁵ as well as by the Taliban MPVPV.⁸⁹⁶ According to Latifi, while journalists have not actively been killed, they have been intimidated, pressurised and allowed to work within certain constraints: 'It depends on who you deal with.' Usually, high officials have been more welcoming towards reporters whereas the lower Taliban ranks are more prone to intimidate and antagonise journalists, 'especially when reporting in English'. There have even been instances where media permits issued by the Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) or Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) have not been recognised by the *de facto* police and other Taliban officials on the ground in Kabul and other provinces. Latifi said to be aware of frequent reports of journalists

⁸⁸⁵ TOLONews, Nadim Warns of Consequences for Opponents of Interim Govt, 12 March 2023, [url](#); USIP, Amid Taliban Repression, Afghan Media Are a Beacon of Hope, 10 August 2023, [url](#); VOA, Those Undermining Taliban 'Deserve Death,' Says Taliban Minister, 15 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁶ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

⁸⁸⁷ VOA, Afghan Journalists Wary of Taliban Registration, 26 July 2023, [url](#); UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

⁸⁸⁸ USIP, Amid Taliban Repression, Afghan Media Are a Beacon of Hope, 10 August 2023, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Journalists encounter tough times under Taliban rule, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁹ BBC News, How Afghanistan's media is changing under Taliban rule, 21 August 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL, Fewer women, No Entertainment: Kabul's Media Scene Transforms After Taliban Takeover, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁰ New York Times (The), Everything Changed Overnight: Afghan Reporters Face an Intolerant Regime, 11 September 2021, [url](#); AFJC, 366 Violations against media freedoms in Afghanistan during two years of Taliban rule: AFJC, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹¹ USIP, Amid Taliban Repression, Afghan Media Are a Beacon of Hope, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹² HRW, World report 2023, Afghanistan, Events of 2022, 12 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹³ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁸⁹⁴ USIP, Amid Taliban Repression, Afghan Media Are a Beacon of Hope, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁵ USIP, Amid Taliban Repression, Afghan Media Are a Beacon of Hope, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁶ AFJC, 366 Violations against media freedoms in Afghanistan during two years of Taliban rule: AFJC, 15 August 2023, [url](#)



held for questioning for hours or days and then released (for example in Khost, Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif), as well as of journalists being beaten up by the *de facto* security forces on the streets of Kabul, Herat and Kandahar.⁸⁹⁷

From 15 August 2021 until 15 August 2023, the civil society organisation Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) documented a total of 366 violations against media freedom, including the case of 3 journalists who lost their life in Kabul and in Balkh provinces, 23 cases of journalists being injured, 176 cases of temporary and mid-term detentions, with frequent reports of insult, physical violence, and even torture during detention. At least 139 cases of threats, and 25 cases of physical harassment and beatings were also reported.⁸⁹⁸

UNAMA documented several incidents in which journalists were prevented from accessing sites of IED incidents for reporting purposes, ‘including through excessive or inappropriate use of force, threats and arbitrary arrests and detention.’⁸⁹⁹ From March 2022 until August 2023, UNAMA documented arbitrary arrests and detentions of at least 115 media workers.⁹⁰⁰ French-Afghan journalist, Mortaza Behboudi was arrested in January 2023⁹⁰¹ on unknown charges.⁹⁰² Between July and August 2023, the Taliban carried out a series of raids against journalists and independent media outlets ‘at an astonishing pace’, leading to the closure of some media platforms and the arrests of journalists, including the arbitrary arrest by *de facto* GDI of nine journalists from six provinces in August 2023.⁹⁰³ The nine journalists were subsequently released.⁹⁰⁴

In March 2023, ISKP carried out a bomb attack in Mazar-e Sharif during a ceremony marking ‘Afghan Journalists Day’, killing 2 journalists and a security guard and injuring at least 15 other journalists.⁹⁰⁵

4.7. Human rights defenders and activists

The *de facto* authorities frequently expressed commitment to respect human rights within the framework of *sharia*. Since the Taliban takeover, the space of Afghanistan’s civil society has narrowed down significantly.⁹⁰⁶ Civil society organisations (CSO) have been targeted, with reports of Taliban raiding their offices, freezing their bank accounts, and forcing many to close their offices.⁹⁰⁷ Human rights defenders and civil society actors largely halted their activities in most provinces, out of fear of repercussions.⁹⁰⁸ Activists, especially women rights defenders,

⁸⁹⁷ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁸⁹⁸ AFJC, 366 Violations against media freedoms in Afghanistan during two years of Taliban rule: AFJC, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁹ UNAMA, Impact of Improvised Explosive Devices on Civilians in Afghanistan, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁹⁰⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 57

⁹⁰¹ Le Monde, Concern grows for detained French-Afghan journalist Mortaza Behboudi, 7 June 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 57

⁹⁰³ RSF, Nine arrested in Taliban offensive against Afghan journalists, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁴ IFJ, Afghanistan: Taliban releases nine journalists following crackdown, 5 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁵ RSF, Mazar-i-Sharif bombing – “biggest attack” on Afghan journalists in months, 14 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 52

⁹⁰⁷ CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 20



have faced arbitrary arrest and detention,⁹⁰⁹ but also men publicly advocating or protesting in support of women's rights have been arrested, detained and ill-treated.⁹¹⁰ Prominent Afghan education activist, Matiullah Wesa⁹¹¹ and founder of a local NGO was arrested on 27 March 2023 on unspecified charges.⁹¹² During the same month, university lecturer, Islamic scholar and activist Rasool Parsi was also arrested, after having criticised the Taliban on social media.⁹¹³ Both Wesa and Parsi remained in detention during the reference period of this report.⁹¹⁴ In a joint statement issued on the second-year anniversary since the Taliban takeover, a coalition of civil society organisations, besides expressing serious concerns for the safety of those in Taliban custody, stated that many human rights defenders have been compelled to leave the country. The CSO's coalition further assessed that 'internal protection and legal safeguards for those at risk are practically non-existent'.⁹¹⁵

Official approval by the *de facto* authorities is needed in order to hold demonstrations,⁹¹⁶ and as journalist Ali Latifi pointed out, authorisation is given only for certain types of gatherings. In practice, 'Taliban have no patience at all for protests or dissent of any kind.' According to the same source, the situation for activists and protestors deteriorated following the December 2022 decree banning women from university. 'We saw men protestors in Kandahar being chased away and potentially being shot at on the streets.' These protests, mainly attended by men, spread to nearby Kunar and Khost provinces and were met with violence.⁹¹⁷ During the same wave of protests, beatings of women protestors were also reported in Kabul City and Herat City.⁹¹⁸

The Taliban GDI and the Taliban MPVPV are said to be effective mechanisms of repression and control, actively working to identify opponents.⁹¹⁹ Methods used by the *de facto* security apparatus to suppress dissent include various ways of intimidation, and not necessarily killings. Assistant law professor Haroun Rahimi noted that 'if you resist in a softer way, you get intimidated, harassed and your family gets questioned to make you stop resisting'.⁹²⁰

Sources noted that activists and individuals seen as aligned against the Taliban are considered as instruments and 'puppets' of Western influence,⁹²¹ and Taliban believe they have the right to suppress such dissent.⁹²² Therefore, 'anyone who chooses to resist the Taliban may face

⁹⁰⁹ CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30

⁹¹¹ New Humanitarian (The), Arrest of leading education activist leaves Afghans confused and worried, 12 April 2023, [url](#); TOLONews, Amnesty Intl Calls For Release of Matiullah Wesa, Neda Parwani, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30

⁹¹³ Human Rights Watch, Taliban Expand Civil Society Crackdown, 29 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁴ Al et al., Alliance for Human Rights in Afghanistan – Joint statement – Afghanistan: call for Justice accountability and effective response to ongoing violations and gender persecution, 15 August 2023, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, The Taliban's Suppression of Critics: Where is Rasool Parsi?, 31 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁵ Al et al., Alliance for Human Rights in Afghanistan – Joint statement – Afghanistan: call for Justice accountability and effective response to ongoing violations and gender persecution, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁶ Guardian, Taliban ban protests and slogans that don't have their approval, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹¹⁷ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023; Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁹¹⁸ CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹²⁰ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁹²¹ Latifi A., In-person interview, 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁹²² Al Jazeera, Missing Afghan women activists released: UN, 13 February 2022, [url](#); Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023



consequences', according to Rahimi.⁹²³ Ali Latifi mentioned the case of education activist Matiullah Wesa, who was arrested and then released several times. But the moment he started to publicly announce he was meeting with foreigners and going abroad, not only was he arrested, but also his family was targeted. His house was raided and at least two of his brothers were also briefly detained, while another brother fled the country.⁹²⁴

4.8. Humanitarian workers

Following the Taliban takeover, some humanitarian aid workers were evacuated from Afghanistan.⁹²⁵ 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.⁹²⁶ The pledges 'to safeguard humanitarian aid workers' were reiterated in February 2022.⁹²⁷ While humanitarian workers have strived to continue their work, the overall environment in which they perform their activities is reported as 'extremely challenging'⁹²⁸ and precarious, with *de facto* local authorities routinely interfering and restricting their operations. Since the Taliban took power, the UN noted an increase in the number of arrests of humanitarian workers (from 3 cases in 2020 to 76 cases in 2022).⁹²⁹ Between 6 February and 20 May 2023, a total number of 299 incidents involving interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities was recorded by the UN, which represents an increase compared to the same period in 2022 (with 158 incidents recorded). During the same period, 78 attacks against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities were recorded, which is a decrease from 91 incidents documented in the same period in 2022.⁹³⁰

An international analyst stated that the Taliban GDI and the Taliban MPVPV actively work to identify perceived opponents, including by creating obstacles for NGOs whose personnel they suspect or/and whose programmes do not align with Taliban ideology.⁹³¹ During September 2023, 18 staff members (including an American surgeon) of the NGO International Assistance Mission (IAM) in Afghanistan were arrested from their offices in Ghor Province and detained. The circumstances that led to this arrest is unclear.⁹³² In an interview with the EUAA, an international journalist noted that the *de facto* governor of Ghor Province is notoriously a Taliban hardliner, adding that the arrest of the 18 humanitarian workers could be seen as an

⁹²³ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁹²⁴ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁹²⁵ DW, Afghanistan: Aid workers in need, 24 August 2021, [url](#); FAO, A humanitarian worker in Afghanistan, through thick and thin, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

⁹²⁶ UN, Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General – on Afghanistan, 5 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹²⁷ AP, Swiss group: Taliban make pledges on education, aid workers, 11 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹²⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 11

⁹²⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 31, 66

⁹³⁰ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 20 June 2023, [url](#), para. 63

⁹³¹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹³² AP, The Taliban have detained 18 staff, including a foreigner, from an Afghanistan-based NGO, it says, 16 September 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, Taliban Detains 18 Staffers At Humanitarian NGO's Offices, Including American Surgeon, 15 September 2023, [url](#)



example of the arbitrariness and inconsistency with which the *de facto* authorities treat NGOs and their personnel, which they believe do not comply with their policies.⁹³³

4.9. Education personnel

Since the Taliban took power, only *madrassa*-educated men were assigned as senior appointees to the *de facto* Ministry of Education (MoE). A similar trend was noted at subnational level. In various provinces, such as Herat, Helmand, Kandahar, Logar, Paktya, Balkh, some clerics and Taliban ‘sympathising schoolteachers’ have been appointed as heads of provincial and district directorates of education.⁹³⁴ Some changes were introduced in the Afghan education system, including the revision of school *curriculum*, with the aim to make it ‘compatible’ with *sharia*.⁹³⁵ Pashtana Durrani, human rights activist and founder of the NGO LEARN Afghanistan, stated that such changes of the *curriculum* regard in particular history and geography subjects. As an example of these revisions, she mentioned the removal from books of some Afghan historical figures (including women figures) who have now been replaced with others, such as Mullah Yacoub being described as ‘the historical character who made the infidels leave the countries.’⁹³⁶ Teachers have been required to take religious tests, with the allegedly intention by the Taliban to dismiss those who are not *madrassa*-educated.⁹³⁷ A proliferation of *madrassas* for both boys and girls has been noticed across the country since the Taliban took power.⁹³⁸

In communication with the EUAA, an international analyst explained that the supreme leader is determined to implement the Taliban’s version of *sharia* to ‘purify’ Afghan society, which he sees as his mandated responsibility. Within this context, the issue around education is not only about the assault against female education: it is an assault against Western education altogether.⁹³⁹ Such a ‘purification’ campaign⁹⁴⁰ and efforts to eradicate secular education are reported to have intensified during the reference period of this report.⁹⁴¹ As of September 2023, further steps were taken by the *de facto* authorities to ensure the implementation of edicts, including the expansion of religious education.⁹⁴²

⁹³³ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁹³⁴ Clark K., Who Gets to Go to School? (1): What people told us about education since the Taleban took over, AAN, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹³⁵ USCIRF, Issue Update: Religious freedom and women’s rights in Afghanistan, [url](#), August 2023, p. 4; Kazemi S. R., Clark K., Who Gets to Go to School? (2) The Taleban and education through time, 31 January 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, EXCLUSIVE: Taliban Modify Education Curriculum to Propagate Violence and Bigotry, 17 December 2022, [url](#)

⁹³⁶ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023

⁹³⁷ USIP, Taking a Terrible Toll: The Taliban’s Education Ban, 13 April 2023, [url](#)

⁹³⁸ Afghan Witness, Several new Taliban madrasas established and multiple others reported in nationwide drive, 22 June 2022, [url](#); USCIRF, Issue Update: Religious freedom and women’s rights in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 4; USIP, Two Years of the Taliban’s ‘Gender Apartheid’ in Afghanistan, 14 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹³⁹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹⁴⁰ Washington Post (The), Taliban forging religious emirate in Afghanistan with draconian Islamic law, 18 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴¹ RFE/RL, The Azadi Briefing: Taliban Intensifies Efforts To Eradicate Secular Education In Afghanistan, 14 July 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023, [url](#), para. 3



In July 2023, the Taliban MoE ordered the dissolution of Teachers Training Centres,⁹⁴³ stating that the almost 4 000 teachers affected would be reassigned to other departments of the Taliban MoE. According to information provided by the *de facto* authorities to UNAMA, as of 15 August 2023, there were around 15 000 *madrassas* in Afghanistan, all funded through national budget and reportedly teaching religious subjects with a few courses on modern sciences. In June 2023, the plan to recruit 100 000 *madrassa* teachers was approved, and – according to UNAMA – there are plans to ‘significantly increase’ the number of *madrassas* in the country. For girls beyond the sixth grade, *madrassa* education is reported to be almost entirely the only available education opportunity.⁹⁴⁴ Durrani told the EUAA that, according to their monitoring, in the past two months [by October 2023] some 400 new *madrassas* (mostly established in private homes’ rooms) were opened in Kandahar only.⁹⁴⁵

Harassment and intimidation of teachers are reported to occur carried out by the Taliban MPVPV.⁹⁴⁶ Sources reported on some cases of teachers being arrested for working in underground schools,⁹⁴⁷ and for criticising the Taliban's ban on education for women and girls.⁹⁴⁸ As mentioned, prominent Afghan education activist, Matiullah Wesa was arrested by the Taliban in March 2023.⁹⁴⁹

On 30 September 2022, a suicide IED attack was carried out against the Kaaj educational centre in Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul,⁹⁵⁰ killing 54 people and injuring another 114.⁹⁵¹ The attack was not claimed by any actor.⁹⁵²

4.10. Family members of dissenting voices and of persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups

Family members of activists, journalists and people perceived to be tied to resistance groups have reportedly been targeted by the *de facto* authorities as a way to obtain information, to scare and to intimidate.⁹⁵³ A local news outlet reported that in some cases, family members of detainees have been coerced ‘into collaborating with their intelligence network, forcing them

⁹⁴³ TOLONews, Teacher Training Center Shut Down by Islamic Emirate: Teachers, 12 July 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023, [url](#), para. 3, 11, 12

⁹⁴⁵ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023

⁹⁴⁶ USIP, Taking a Terrible Toll: The Taliban's Education Ban, 13 April 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁷ Washington Post (The), Where learning is against the law: A secret school for Afghan girls, 9 November 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁸ BBC News, Ismail Mashal: Taliban arrests Afghan professor who backed girls' education, 3 February 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, 'Arrested And Beaten': Afghan Professor's Protest Against Taliban's Education Ban On Women Lands Him In Prison, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁹ New Humanitarian (The), Arrest of leading education activist leaves Afghans confused and worried, 12 April 2023, [url](#); TOLONews, Amnesty Intl Calls For Release of Matiullah Wesa, Neda Parwani, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 46; BBC News, Kabul blast kills teenager sitting practice exam, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁵¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), para. 36

⁹⁵² Clark, K., Civilian Casualties since the Taleban Takeover: New UNAMA report shows sharp drop – but some communities still under threat, AAN, 27 June 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵³ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023; Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023



to spy on their communities.⁹⁵⁴ Journalist Ali Latifi stated that, in some instances, the *de facto* security forces detain family members rather than the targeted individuals themselves in order to avoid attracting too much public attention on such violations: ‘it is easier to silently take your father; that is often enough to scare people.’⁹⁵⁵ Amnesty International reported on cases of arrests of family members of individuals participating in women’s right protests during 2022.⁹⁵⁶ As explained by an international analyst, individuals who have been detained have normally been asked to provide all the names of male relatives on both sides of the family: ‘They will go through who you are, who your relatives are, and what they do. They won’t be satisfied if they can’t get this information. That’s their way of intimidating people.’⁹⁵⁷

4.11. Returnees

4.11.1. Cross-border movements

According to IOM statistics, millions of people have crossed the borders of Afghanistan to and from the neighbouring countries Pakistan and Iran. Precise arrival numbers and the circularity of flows are, however, not known.⁹⁵⁸ According to the same source, over 3 million people crossed into Afghanistan from Pakistan in 2022, and over 800 000 from Iran. In the same period almost 3.5 million crossed into Pakistan from Afghanistan, and over 500 000 crossed into Iran from Afghanistan.⁹⁵⁹ As of May 2023 almost 1.5 million people had crossed into Afghanistan from Pakistan and 182 197 from Iran. In the same period, over 1.5 million had crossed into Pakistan from Afghanistan and more than 180 000 into Iran from Afghanistan.⁹⁶⁰

There have been some reports about Afghans returning voluntarily to Afghanistan, to relocate there⁹⁶¹, for business, to visit family⁹⁶² and go on holiday⁹⁶³ – including from Europe⁹⁶⁴ and the US.⁹⁶⁵ The number of Afghans being deported increased in 2022 from Iran⁹⁶⁶ and Türkiye.⁹⁶⁷ According to Türkiye officials, as reported by the Middle East Eye in November 2022, over 57 000 individuals had been sent back to Afghanistan from Türkiye in 2022, and the vast majority (41 185 persons) were deported on 217 chartered flights.⁹⁶⁸ UNCHR reported that 12 795 refugees (395 from Iran, 12 283 from Pakistan, 117 from other countries) had returned to

⁹⁵⁴ Kabul Now, Fear and Nightmares: the dark life after Taliban captivity, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁵ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁹⁵⁶ AI, Afghanistan 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁷ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹⁵⁸ IOM, IOM Comprehensive Action Plan for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, May 2023, [url](#), pp. 8–9

⁹⁵⁹ IOM, Movements in and out of Afghanistan, 15 January 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁰ IOM, Movements in and out of Afghanistan, 23 June 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶¹ UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation - Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Refugees, 24 July 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶² MEE, On an Istanbul-Kabul flight, refugees and emigres prepare to see a new Afghanistan, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶³ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023; Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Departures and returns after Taliban’s takeover of power, 29 September 2022, [url](#), p. 5

⁹⁶⁴ MEE, On an Istanbul-Kabul flight, refugees and emigres prepare to see a new Afghanistan, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁵ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023

⁹⁶⁶ AP, As Iran-Taliban tensions rise, Afghan migrants in tinderbox, 2 May 2022, [url](#); MEE, Over 240,000 Afghan refugees deported from Iran and Turkey, 15 November 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁷ HRW, “No One Asked Me Why I Left Afghanistan”: Pushbacks and Deportations of Afghans from Turkey, 18 November 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁸ MEE, Over 240,000 Afghan refugees deported from Iran and Turkey, 15 November 2022, [url](#)



Afghanistan in 2023, as of September 2023, which is over three times higher than the figure reported during the same period in 2022.⁹⁶⁹

4.11.2. Commercial flights

According to Taliban sources, international airports have reportedly become operative again⁹⁷⁰ in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif.⁹⁷¹ According to the Independent, about 20–30 flights leave Afghanistan every day, and most go to Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Türkiye. Among the countries that allow direct flights to Afghanistan were China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and India.⁹⁷² International commercial air operators have not been flying to Afghanistan,⁹⁷³ but Fly Dubai announced that they planned to resume flights in November 2023.⁹⁷⁴

4.11.3. Attitudes towards people leaving Afghanistan

Senior Taliban officials called upon Afghans to stay in Afghanistan.⁹⁷⁵ According to an analysis by BBC Monitoring, the migrant discourse in Afghan media has focused on the situation of Afghans in neighbouring countries, expressing public sympathy for their difficult situation facing ‘indignity’ and ‘discrimination’.⁹⁷⁶ The Taliban have also sent their condolences to the families to those who died in the Mediterranean sea on their way to Europe, asking all citizens to refrain from using smugglers and illegal pathways to go to foreign countries.⁹⁷⁷ The bodies of 18 Afghans that suffocated to death in a lorry in Bulgaria were repatriated to Afghanistan on 23 May 2023.⁹⁷⁸ The Taliban foreign minister reportedly met with family members of the deceased and expressed his condolences.⁹⁷⁹

During a conference organised by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) on 28 November 2022, Dr. Liza Schuster, Reader in Sociology at University of London, shared her knowledge on the topic ‘Risk factors of returnees to Afghanistan focusing on westernization’. According to Dr. Schuster those who left after 2021 often were seen as ‘traitors’ by the Taliban. According to Dr. Schuster, the Taliban attitude is that people should stay and contribute with their skills and knowledge, at the same time as some individual Taliban members have made widespread

⁹⁶⁹ UNHCR, Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Refugees - South West Asia Quarterly Update, 2023 Q3, 18 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁰ Business Standard, All airports in Afghanistan operational, with 20 foreign flights daily, 5 June 2023, [url](#); Independent (The), China resumes commercial flights to Afghanistan as cooperation with Taliban regime grows, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷¹ ECHO, Report on humanitarian situation and humanitarian aid (as of July 2023), 19 July 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷² Independent (The), China resumes commercial flights to Afghanistan as cooperation with Taliban regime grows, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷³ ECHO, Report on humanitarian situation and humanitarian aid (as of July 2023), 19 July 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁴ TOLONews, Fly Dubai to Resume Flights to Afghanistan Next Month, 12 October 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁵ TOLONews, Over 100 Political Figures Returned to Afghanistan in 3 Months: Commission, 15 January 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁶ BBC Monitoring, Explainer: How anti-migrant discourse features in Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, 28 June 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁷ Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, د ایټالیا په سویلي سمندر کې د کښتۍ د دوو بڼو له امله د شهیدو شویو افغانانو د شهادت په اړه د ا.ا.د. تعزیت پیغام [Message of condolence from the IEA related to the Afghans who died in the Southern Italian Sea after their boat sank], 9 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁸ BBC Monitoring, Briefing: Bodies of 18 Afghan migrants repatriated from Bulgaria, 26 May 2023, [url](#); TOLONews, Acting Foreign Minister Muttaqi Calls World’s Sanctions ‘Cruel’, 31 May 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁹ Hafiz Zia Ahmad [Twitter], posted on: 30 May 2023, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, FM Muttaqi Condolences Family Victims of Bulgaria Incident, 31 May 2023, [url](#)



video recordings saying that it is a sin to leave Afghanistan and pointing out those who leave as sinners. Moreover, Dr. Schuster stated that the Taliban have been scrutinizing social media profiles, and that people consequently have been accused of moral corruption. Family members of people who have left have also been harassed by Taliban officials and neighbours according to Dr. Schuster, including evictions and aggressive questioning.⁹⁸⁰

The Afghan analyst described how obstacles have been created for people wanting to leave, and that *de facto* authorities have not been especially willing to cooperate. For example, documents related to travelling abroad have become monetised, and people have to pay a large amount of money to obtain such documents. In some cases, Taliban authorities have requested marriage certificates for people to leave – which is a document few people have in Afghanistan. Although they still issue the necessary documents, the *de facto* authorities perceive the applicant as ‘someone that wants to leave’, and may be harsh towards them or use bad words. Furthermore, bribes for passports had skyrocketed to over USD 3000. Ordinary applicants have been scrutinised at several levels, accused of paying bribes, abused and sometimes even beaten if they have been seen as creating chaos inside the office.⁹⁸¹ Journalist Ali Latifi added that it was difficult to obtain documents under the previous government too due to the corruption and a grudge against people who wanted to leave. People could be harassed, intimidated and asked for bribes already back then, and it was more common during the former rule than during the current.⁹⁸² Sources also noted that the requirement for women to travel with a *mahram* created problems when it came to women’s access to services and possibilities to travel abroad.⁹⁸³

4.11.4. Taliban reactions towards returnees

Information about the Taliban’s return commission and returning former government officials is available in section [4.1.1. The general amnesty and its implementation.](#)

Many states have halted deportations of Afghans, while IOM⁹⁸⁴ and Frontex have suspended activities facilitating or accompanying returns to Afghanistan.⁹⁸⁵ Therefore, no information was available about individuals being deported or returned from the EU after the Taliban takeover.

Matiullah Wesa, prominent activist advocating for girls’ education, was arrested after a trip to Brussels in early 2023⁹⁸⁶ where he had met with diplomats and EU officials.⁹⁸⁷ He had also

⁹⁸⁰ Schuster, L., in: DRC, Afghanistan conference, The Human Rights Situation after August 2021, 28 November 2022, [url](#), pp. 41–42, 44–45

⁹⁸¹ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹⁸² Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁹⁸³ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023; Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

⁹⁸⁴ CoE Parliamentary Assembly, The humanitarian crisis emerging for Afghanistan and Afghan refugees, 25 September 2023, [url](#), para. 37; IOM, Assisted Voluntary Return & Reintegration, n.d., [url](#)

⁹⁸⁵ CoE Parliamentary Assembly, The humanitarian crisis emerging for Afghanistan and Afghan refugees, 25 September 2023, [url](#), para. 37; [url](#), p. 24

⁹⁸⁶ New Humanitarian (The), Arrest of leading education activist leaves Afghans confused and worried, 12 April 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁷ Matiullah Wesa [Twitter], posted on: 27 February 2023, [url](#)



previously met with foreign diplomats⁹⁸⁸ and UN officials in Kabul City.⁹⁸⁹ Oftentimes he posted pictures from such meetings on Twitter.⁹⁹⁰ After the arrest, Taliban supporters made allusions online that Wesa had connections with foreign actors by circulating such pictures of Wesa meeting with foreign diplomats and travelling in Europe.⁹⁹¹ RFE/RL called it a ‘smear campaign’ portraying Wesa as a ‘Western spy’.⁹⁹² Moreover, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told VOA that Wesa was detained as the *de facto* intelligence agency had ‘some suspicious information about him’ and as he ‘was organising meetings and making contacts that were a cause of concern’.⁹⁹³ Anecdotal information from a journalist interviewed by RFE/RL, suggested that that Wesa’s visit to Brussels was likely the reason for his arrest, as the Taliban ‘want all Afghans to meet foreign officials only after getting their approval’.⁹⁹⁴

According to an international analyst, the Taliban have minimal background information on returning individuals. The source stated that, upon return, individuals sometimes have been given travel money to reach their homes, and may be lectured by a *mullah* on the dangers of leaving. Overall, the source found the Taliban ‘lenient’ in their handling of returnees. The source gave the example of a young man who cut the Taliban flag and draped his shoulders with the Republic flag in a video that went viral; the Taliban still took him back. Moreover, the source stated that, upon the return of individuals with criminal records in foreign countries arriving from Pakistan and Iran, the Taliban note details and then let most of them go. The source further stated that more than 800 individuals who had parts of their sentences to be served, had been deported from Iran and were sent to prison. Most of them were however pardoned and released during *Eid*. The source added that it was not clear on the basis of which criteria they were released or if any of these individuals had been re-arrested.⁹⁹⁵ Pashtana Durrani, human rights activist and founder of the project LEARN Afghanistan, explained that high-profile individuals might face problems if they would return. Based on her experience it has however been possible to return, as long as you do not have any problems with the *de facto* authorities.⁹⁹⁶

According to anonymous sources consulted by Landinfo, the security of Kabul airport has been outsourced to private security companies and the Taliban have not been visible inside the airport.⁹⁹⁷ The international analyst contradicted such statements, saying that the Taliban have been clearly in charge of security at the airport, and have controlled the terminal airport

⁹⁸⁸ Embassy of Japan in Afghanistan [Twitter], posted on: 3 February 2023, [url](#); Matiullah Wesa [Twitter], Posted on 28 January 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁹ UNAMA News [Twitter], posted on: 3 January 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁰ RFE/RL, Arrest Of Prominent Afghan Education Campaigner A ‘Sign of Authoritarianism’ Under The Taliban, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹¹ New Humanitarian (The), Arrest of leading education activist leaves Afghans confused and worried, 12 April 2023, [url](#)

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⁹⁹³ VOA, Taliban: Afghan Education Advocate Detained Over ‘Suspicious’ Activities, 29 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁴ RFE/RL, Arrest Of Prominent Afghan Education Campaigner A ‘Sign of Authoritarianism’ Under The Taliban, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁵ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹⁹⁶ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023

⁹⁹⁷ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Departures and returns after Taliban’s takeover of power, 29 September 2022, [url](#), p. 5





perimeter. The security companies have provided some ground handling services, including luggage screening and tarmac checks.⁹⁹⁸

It has not been possible to corroborate the information provided by oral sources in this section.

4.11.5. Societal reactions and challenges

Sources have emphasised that it is of great importance to have a social network in Afghanistan for returnees.⁹⁹⁹ TOLONews further reported that returnees were facing severe economic challenges and unemployment.¹⁰⁰⁰

Dr. Schuster stated that a ‘huge stigma’ exists around deportation, except for deportations from countries such as Iran or Pakistan – as this is very common.¹⁰⁰¹ Previously, when people left for Europe, applied for asylum and then involuntarily returned or been deported, they could raise suspicion and questions as regards to what extent they had been ‘contaminated’ by European ways of living. Dr. Schuster gave examples of neighbours asking questions about a deported individuals’ time in the West, scrutinising their behaviour and looking for signs that they had changed, and making assumptions about how they had been impacted. The surrounding community could make assumptions that deported individuals who had committed crimes, were ‘particularly stupid’ or unlucky. Bad luck is perceived as ‘contagious’ and therefore ‘not a good thing’ according to the source. Dr. Schuster moreover emphasised that accusations that may seem small, such as someone having had a girlfriend or having drunk alcohol in Europe, easily spread and may lead to conflicts. Moreover, the deported individuals’ families have often financed the move which adds ‘weight’ to a person’s involuntary return, at the same time as the surrounding community might assume that someone returning from Europe have money which makes them vulnerable to theft and robbery.¹⁰⁰²

⁹⁹⁸ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹⁹⁹ Schuster, L., in: DRC, Afghanistan conference, The Human Rights Situation after August 2021, 28 November 2022, [url](#), p. 47; SAK, in: Göteborgsregionen, Temadag om Afghanistan [Thematic day on Afghanistan] [Online video], 18 Mars 2022, [url](#), 05:13:58–05:15:10

¹⁰⁰⁰ TOLONews, Hanafi Aks Afghans Living Abroad to Return Home, 18 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰¹ Schuster, L., in: DRC, Afghanistan conference, The Human Rights Situation after August 2021, 28 November 2022, [url](#), p. 39

¹⁰⁰² Schuster, L., in: DRC, Afghanistan conference, The Human Rights Situation after August 2021, 28 November 2022, [url](#), pp. 39, 41, 48





4.12. Individuals and behaviour perceived as influenced by foreign values

4.12.1. Western influence

The Taliban have reportedly had the aim to ‘purify’ Afghan society¹⁰⁰³ and eject foreign influence from Afghanistan¹⁰⁰⁴. The *de facto* state has invested vast resources on building mosques and *madrassas* across the country.¹⁰⁰⁵ As mentioned, an international analyst stated that the Taliban’s ‘assault’ on Western education is part of the supreme leader’s project to ‘purify’ Afghan society.¹⁰⁰⁶

In some areas the Taliban have issued instructions against trimming beards and have advised men to not wear Western-style clothes¹⁰⁰⁷, but they have not imposed any general dress code for men.¹⁰⁰⁸ A Taliban official however called on people to stop wearing the necktie arguing that it is a symbol for the Christian cross.¹⁰⁰⁹ Male students and teachers have earlier been called upon not to wear ties (15 April 2022).¹⁰¹⁰ Ties are however still used by inter alia news anchors.¹⁰¹¹ There were also reports about people wearing t-shirts and clothes with US motives in Kabul City.¹⁰¹² Moreover, the New York Times reported on fast food restaurants and bodybuilding gyms being present in every neighbourhood in Kabul City.¹⁰¹³

4.12.2. Music and musicians

Some sources described music as banned in Afghanistan.¹⁰¹⁴ However, reports on formal instructions from the *de facto* authorities have concerned certain areas, such as parts of Kabul¹⁰¹⁵ and Kandahar¹⁰¹⁶, and also certain situations such as not playing music in cars.¹⁰¹⁷ According to OHCHR, the Taliban MPVPV has urged people to refrain from playing music at

¹⁰⁰³ Just Security, Time for the United States to Rethink its Strategy for Afghanistan, 20 April 2023, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Taliban forging religious emirate in Afghanistan with draconian Islamic law, 18 February 2023, [url](#); International Analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹⁰⁰⁴ Watkins, A., The Taliban one year on, CTC Sentinel, August 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰⁰⁵ Sweden, Swedish Migration Board, Afghanistan. Styre och rättskipning, 6 July 2023, [url](#), p. 14

¹⁰⁰⁶ International Analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹⁰⁰⁷ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 45–46

¹⁰⁰⁸ AFP, Afghan official says neckties ‘sign of cross’, calls for elimination, 28 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁹ AFP, Afghan official says neckties ‘sign of cross’, calls for elimination, 28 July 2023, [url](#); Afghanistan Times, Taliban say neckties a sign of cross and must be eliminated, 26 July 2023, [url](#)

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¹⁰¹¹ Afghanistan Times, Taliban say neckties a sign of cross and must be eliminated, 26 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹² New York Times (The) In These Corners of Kabul, Western Influences Live On, 29 June 2023, [url](#); Marty, F. J., Life under the Taliban, 25 July 2023, [url](#); Marty, F. J., Life under the Taliban, 25 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹³ New York Times (The) In These Corners of Kabul, Western Influences Live On, 29 June 2023, [url](#); Marty, F. J., Life under the Taliban, 25 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁴ RFE/RL, With Music Banned, Afghan Musician Now Sells Snacks To Feed His Family, 17 December 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 September 2022, [url](#), para. 81

¹⁰¹⁵ ZAWIA News [Facebook], posted on: 22 August 2022, [url](#); د امریالمعروف او نهی عن المنکر وزارت [Taliban MPVPV] [Twitter], posted on: 24 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁶ Rukshana, ‘The best night of my life turned into the worst one’: Taliban disrupt wedding parties, insult and detain people for playing music, 22 July 2022, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh, Dozens Arrested and Tortured by Taliban in Kandahar for Shaving Beards, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁷ RFE/RL, Afghan Women Banned From Making Trips Unless Escorted, 26 December 2021, [url](#)



wedding and hotels by putting up signs in Kabul City, and in a video this *de facto* authority explained that music is forbidden as it ‘destroys the roots of Islam’. The same source further reported that the Taliban MPVPV had disallowed poetry with a musical rhythm.¹⁰¹⁸ Other sources have reported on restaurants in Kabul still playing music.¹⁰¹⁹

Since the takeover, music schools have been closed¹⁰²⁰, and Taliban fighters have been destroying¹⁰²¹ and burning music instruments,¹⁰²² and subjecting musicians to public shaming, physical violence,¹⁰²³ and arrests.¹⁰²⁴ Many musicians have left Afghanistan.¹⁰²⁵ or have stopped performing.¹⁰²⁶ On 25 January 2023, a singer originating from Panjsher Province was arrested for the second time by the Taliban. In 2022, the singer was reportedly arrested and tortured, before being released.¹⁰²⁷ Afghan media reported on cases where the Taliban had detained,¹⁰²⁸ beaten¹⁰²⁹ and killed individuals for playing music.¹⁰³⁰ In one case the Taliban detained and shaved the heads of around 30 students in Faryab as punishment for playing music.¹⁰³¹ OHCHR also recorded instances of arbitrary arrests, detentions and ill-treatment in situations where music has been apprehended in private vehicles, on telephones and during weddings.¹⁰³² On 31 July 2023, the Taliban MPVPV announced that they had confiscated USB flash drives and memory cards with music in Badakhshan Province.¹⁰³³

International Music Council (IMC) called the situation of music in Afghanistan a violation of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the right to ‘freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts’.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰¹⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 39

¹⁰¹⁹ New York Times (The) In These Corners of Kabul, Western Influences Live On, 29 June 2023, [url](#); Marty, F. J., Life under the Taliban, 25 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁰ Kabul Now, IMC Condemns ‘Musical Genocide’ in Afghanistan, 14 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰²¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 September 2022, [url](#), para. 50; RFE/RL, Symphony Of Courage: Young Afghan Musicians Play On After Fleeing To Lisbon, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

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¹⁰²³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 September 2022, [url](#), para. 50, 81; EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 34

¹⁰²⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 September 2022, [url](#), para. 50, 81; Kabul Now, Taliban arrest ten people for playing music at a wedding in Helmand, 7 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 September 2022, [url](#), para. 50; RFE/RL, Exiled Afghan Musicians Who Fled The Taliban Fear Deportation From Pakistan, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

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¹⁰³² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 39

¹⁰³³ BBC Monitoring, Afghan media highlights 31 Jul 23, 31 July 2023, [url](#); Afghanistan International, Taliban Confiscates Memory Chips From Passenger Vehicles To Stop Music In Badakhshan, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The reference period should be 1 July 2022 - 30 September 2023.

The report should cover the general security situation as regards conflict-related violence, violent crime, and the humanitarian situation, and provide data on provincial level where available. The report should also cover treatment by the Taliban and other armed groups of the profiles listed below, as well as provide information on societal treatment where it is relevant.

Situation of the general population under Taliban rule

- International recognition status of the *de facto* authorities
- Territorial control
- Political context and civic space, including the situation of Afghan media, the space for anti-Taliban demonstrations and other criticism of the *de facto* authorities
- The Taliban's implementation of the *sharia*, including capital and corporal punishment
- Treatment of individuals returning from abroad, in particular individuals returning from Western countries
- Treatment of individuals perceived as influenced by foreign values.

Security situation

This part should provide a country-wide overview of the situation, highlighting regional and in some cases provincial specifics. It should focus on the dynamics concerning armed resistance groups, on the one hand, and ISKP on the other. Brief information should be provided on the provinces most affected by the above-mentioned conflicts.

- Presence of different armed actors
- Conflict-data and recent security trends, including a geographical overview of security trends and violence levels
- Impact on the civilian population; casualties, impact on infrastructure, displacement and returns, including a geographical overview of trends
- Crime trends and crime prevention under the Taliban, including a geographical overview of trends.

Humanitarian situation

- National economic and financial situation, and poverty rates including a geographical overview of trends
- Basic subsistence and employment, including a geographical overview of trends
- Food security, including a geographical overview of trends
- Housing, including a geographical overview of trends
- Healthcare, including a geographical overview of trends



Treatment of persons formerly affiliated with security institutions of the former government (including military units, police units, NDS), and treatment of family members

Treatment of persons formerly affiliated with foreign forces, and treatment of family members

Treatment of public officials and servants of the former government (including judicial workers), and treatment of family members

Treatment of women and girls

- Social norms, including dress-codes and behaviour
- Women's and girls' access to healthcare, education, employment and freedom of movement
- Women's and girls' freedom of expression and assembly, including Taliban reactions towards women-led demonstrations, and women's visibility in media
- Violence against women and girls, including forced and child marriage, sexual violence and rape, domestic violence, and honour violence.

Religious freedom and treatment of religious and ethnic minorities

- Religious freedom under Taliban rule (incl. aspects related to forced religious practice)
- Representation in the *de facto* authorities
- Treatment of Hazaras and other Shias, including reports on discrimination and attacks
- Treatment of other ethno-religious groups including reports on discrimination and attacks.

Treatment of individuals with a perceived affiliation to armed groups

Treatment of journalists and media workers

Treatment of human rights defenders and activists

Treatment of humanitarian workers, including individuals working for national and international NGOs

Treatment of education personnel

Forced recruitment, including information on recruitment by the Taliban and armed groups



Annex 3: Lists of national Taliban decrees and instructions

This is a list of national decrees and instructions issued by the Taliban, based on research for this report, previous reporting by the EUAA, and the AAN's translation of the Taliban's official gazette issued on May 2023 (the gazette included instructions from 2016 and onwards).¹⁰³⁵ The list is not exhaustive, and aims to provide an overview of national restrictions relevant for this report.

Media and freedom of expression

- Prohibition of indecency and profanity in the media, communications and letters (6 May 2017)¹⁰³⁶
- prohibition of unauthorised assemblies (8 September 2021)
- media should not address topics in conflict with Islam or 'insulting national personalities', reports should be produced in coordination with the Taliban government's media office (23 September 2021)¹⁰³⁷
- women news presenters "must" wear headscarves when appearing on screen, and men "must" wear proper clothes (22 November 2021)¹⁰³⁸
- prohibition of foreign drama series (March 2022)¹⁰³⁹
- a ban of defamation and unproven criticism of [*de facto*] government officials (21 July 2022).¹⁰⁴⁰

Women and girls

- Gender segregation at private universities (September 2021). Classes should be divided at least by a curtain, women should be taught by female teachers, or in the lack thereof, elderly men with 'good character'¹⁰⁴¹
- secondary education for girls was not reopened (September 2021)
- decree on women's rights (3 December 2021). Women should not be considered property or being forced into marriage, widows should have a share in their husbands property¹⁰⁴²
- women barred from appearing in television dramas, soap operas and entertainment shows (November 2021)

¹⁰³⁵ AAN, Decrees, Orders and Instructions of His Excellency, Amir al-mu'minin, as published in the Official Gazette on 22 May 2023, July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁶ AAN, Decrees, Orders and Instructions of His Excellency, Amir al-mu'minin, as published in the Official Gazette on 22 May 2023, July 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰³⁷ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), pp. 34, 48

¹⁰³⁸ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 39; CNN, Women banned from Afghan television dramas under new Taliban media rules, 22 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁹ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 44

¹⁰⁴⁰ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Bans 'Unproven Allegations' Against Members, 22 July 2022, [url](#); Zabihullah [Twitter], posted on: 21 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴¹ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 43

¹⁰⁴² EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), pp. 38–39



- women news presenters ‘must’ wear headscarves when appearing on screen (November 2021)
- women travelling more than 72 km should not be offered transport unless accompanied by a close male relative (26 December 2021)
- drivers should not pick up female passengers without a hijab covering their hair (26 December 2021)
- the Taliban Health Ministry should gender-segregate employees by separating male and female offices (16 March 2022)
- secondary education for girls to remain closed (23 March 2022)
- airlines should not let women board without a male chaperone (27 March 2022)
- female teachers were recommended to wear hijab (15 April 2022)
- women should cover their faces (7 May 2022). Failure to comply may result in the woman’s father or closest male relative facing reprimands, imprisonment or being fired from his employment. Women should not leave their homes unless ‘necessary’
- all female television presenters ordered to cover their faces while presenting (19 May 2022)¹⁰⁴³
- women are not allowed to visit recreational parks, public baths¹⁰⁴⁴ and gyms¹⁰⁴⁵ in Kabul City (November 2022) [It was not clear whether this extends to other areas¹⁰⁴⁶]
- university education for women was suspended (December 2022)¹⁰⁴⁷
- national and international NGOs were instructed to suspend female staff members, or risk losing their licences (24 December 2022)¹⁰⁴⁸
- women were prohibited to work for UN organs (5 April 2023)¹⁰⁴⁹
- beauty salons were ordered to close within one month (24 June 2023).¹⁰⁵⁰

Other

- Leadership approval needed for *hudud* and *qisas* punishments (6 May 2017)¹⁰⁵¹
- male students and teachers were called upon not to wear ties (15 April 2022)
- body building athletes should cover ‘abdominal muscles and limbs with loose-fitting garments’ (17 June 2022)¹⁰⁵²
- people were called on to avoid celebrating Valentine’s Day (14 February 2023)¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁴³ EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 43–45, 100

¹⁰⁴⁴ RFE/RL, Banned From Public Parks And Bathhouses, Afghan Women Say Life Under Taliban Is Like A 'Prison', 10 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁵ France24, Taliban bans Afghan women from gyms, public baths, 13 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁶ RFE/RL, Banned From Public Parks And Bathhouses, Afghan Women Say Life Under Taliban Is Like A 'Prison', 10 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁷ TOLONews, Lecturer Rips Up His Certificates to Protest Ban on Women’s Education, 1 January 2023, [url](#);

Guardian (The), Taliban ban Afghan women from university education, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁸ TOLONews, Ministry Orders NGOs to Suspend Female Staff, 24 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴⁹ UN News, Excluded from Education, Public Life, Women, Girls Facing ‘Gender Apartheid’ in Afghanistan, Delegate Tells Security Council, 21 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁰ AP, The Taliban are outlawing women's beauty salons in Afghanistan, 4 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵¹ AAN, Decrees, Orders and Instructions of His Excellency, Amir al-mu’minin, as published in the Official Gazette on 22 May 2023, July 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰⁵² EUAA, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 45

¹⁰⁵³ RFE/RL, The Thrill Is Gone For Valentine's Day In Taliban-Controlled Kabul, 14 February 2023, [url](#); Khaama Press, Citizens in Afghanistan Were Not Allowed to Celebrate Valentine's Day, 15 February 2023, [url](#)





- celebrations of *Nowruz* were condemned by some *de facto* authorities (March 2023)¹⁰⁵⁴
- a ban of poppy cultivation (5 April 2022)¹⁰⁵⁵
- restricted access to the social media platform TikTok and the online game PlayerUnknown's Battleground, closure of channels with 'immoral programs' (21 April 2022)¹⁰⁵⁶
- sorcery is prohibited (7 August 2023).¹⁰⁵⁷

¹⁰⁵⁴ Hast-e Subh, Taliban Oppose Nowruz Celebrations, 23 March 2023, [url](#); Kabul Now, Taliban in Herat prohibit people from celebrating Nowruz, 21 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁵ AAN, Decrees, Orders and Instructions of His Excellency, Amir al-mu'minin, as published in the Official Gazette on 22 May 2023, July 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰⁵⁶ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 44

¹⁰⁵⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights situation in Afghanistan, July – September 2023 Update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 7





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