



## COI QUERY

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Main subject	Hazaras, Shias
Question(s)	<b>1. Situation of Hazaras and Shias (2018-2020)</b> <b>1.1.</b> <a href="#">General overview of the situation of Hazara and Shia communities in Afghanistan</a> <b>1.2</b> <a href="#">Treatment by Afghan authorities of Hazara and Shia communities</a> <b>1.3</b> <a href="#">Treatment by Taliban of Hazaras and Shias, especially of those living in Hazara-dominated areas, Taliban-controlled or contested areas; including documented cases of discrimination/mistreatment</a> <b>1.4</b> <a href="#">Treatment by ISKP and other Anti-Government Elements (AGEs) of Hazaras and Shias, including documented cases of discrimination/mistreatment</a>
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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on 29 July 2020. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.



## COI QUERY RESPONSE

### 1. Situation of Hazaras and Shias (2018-2020)

#### 1.1 General overview of the situation of Hazara and Shia communities in Afghanistan

Hazaras are one of the ethnic groups or 'tribes' of Afghanistan directly recognised by the Afghan constitution.<sup>1</sup> Most of the Hazara in Afghanistan are Shia Muslims.<sup>2</sup> In the Sunni-majority Afghanistan, Hazaras have been long discriminated because of their religious beliefs and physical features.<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that Hazaras represent some 15 % of the total population of Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> Up to 15 % of Muslims in Afghanistan are Shia.<sup>5</sup> A very small percentage of Hazaras are Sunni.<sup>6</sup> Shia Hazaras are mostly Jafaris and to a smaller degree Ismailis.<sup>7</sup> The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) noted that for the purposes of the national ID cards, some ethnic identities have been merged and that some Sunni Hazaras were recorded as Tajik and some Sadat from the Hazara areas as Hazara.<sup>8</sup>

Hazaras traditionally reside in the central regions of the country.<sup>9</sup> Apart from Hazarajat in the central Afghanistan, they are found in the cities of Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, and in smaller numbers in the others cities.<sup>10</sup> Dasht-e-Barchi west of Kabul is said to be a Shia or Hazara neighbourhood.<sup>11</sup> It is estimated that one quarter of the Kabul residents are Hazara.<sup>12</sup>

According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Shia Muslims were one of the minority groups in Afghanistan whose situation has improved since 2001, which can be seen as one of the reasons for their targeting by the extremist groups.<sup>13</sup> They have been described

<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan, The Constitution of Afghanistan, 26 January 2004, [url](#), art. 4

<sup>2</sup> Geopolitics (The), The Agony of the Hazaras and the Indifference of the Afghan State, 18 May 2018, [url](#); UNHCR, UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 30 August 2018, available at: [url](#), pp. 62, 91

<sup>3</sup> Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Who are the Hazaras?, 27 June 2016, [url](#); Australian National University, On the Return of Hazaras to Afghanistan, 4 March 2020, [url](#), para. 7; Finland, FIS, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 23; Misaal Foundation, South Asia State of Minorities Report 2018, The State of Minorities in Afghanistan, 2018, [url](#), p. 278; MRG, No escape from discrimination: minorities, indigenous peoples and the crisis of displacement, 2017, [url](#), p. 17; MRG, Hazaras, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> Arab News, Afghan Taliban look for support of Hazaras whom they once persecuted, 8 May 2020, [url](#); Diplomat (The), TUTAP Power Project Reopens Old Wounds in Afghanistan, 4 August 2016, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> MRG, Hazaras, n.d., [url](#); Pew Research Center, Many Sunnis and Shias worry about religious conflict, n.d., [url](#), p. 2, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Religion in Afghanistan, 22 May 2018, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> HuffPost, Why ISIS Have Declared War On The Hazara Shias Of Afghanistan, 26 June 2017, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Religion in Afghanistan, 22 May 2018, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> AIHRC, Assessing the Extent of the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in Afghanistan, 2019, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>9</sup> Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Who are the Hazaras?, 27 June 2016, [url](#); Diplomat (The), TUTAP Power Project Reopens Old Wounds in Afghanistan, 4 August 2016, [url](#); MRG, Hazaras, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, The Afghan population, 22 May 2018, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> Al Jazeera, Afghanistan's persecuted Hazaras have little hope in peace talks, 26 February 2019, [url](#); BBC News, Afghan Shias in the firing line: 'IS wants to wipe us out', 27 November 2018, [url](#); CEDOCA, Afghanistan: Security Situation in Kabul City, 8 April 2020, [url](#), p. 9; Finland, FIS, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 23; HuffPost, Why ISIS Have Declared War On The Hazara Shias Of Afghanistan, 26 June 2017, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> Finland, FIS, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>13</sup> USCIRF, USCIRF 2019 Annual Report; Country Reports: Tier 2 Countries: Afghanistan, April 2019, [url](#), p. 3



as 'socially and culturally more progressive than other ethnic groups' in Afghanistan, especially in relation to education and women's rights.<sup>14</sup> Violations against the Hazara in Afghanistan included illegal taxation, forced recruitment and physical abuses, as reported by the UNHCR in 2018.<sup>15</sup>

In the period of January 2009 - December 2015, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded five incidents against Shias in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> According to the AIHRC, five attacks targeting Hazaras in 2015-2016 killed 156 people and wounded 479.<sup>17</sup> In 2016, five such attacks took place and eight in 2017 and 19 in 2018.<sup>18</sup> Sources indicate that Hazara have been increasingly targeted since 2016<sup>19</sup>, with the latest reported incident in March 2020<sup>20</sup>. UNAMA reported on the 'extreme harm to civilians' from the Hazara Shia community by the IS<sup>21</sup> since 2016 in their 2018 annual report.<sup>22</sup> Kabul saw some 13 attacks aimed at the Shias between 2016 and 2018.<sup>23</sup> In 2019, UNAMA reported on a general decrease of casualties but noted increase of targeted attacks on certain groups in Afghanistan including on Shia Muslims, including 'the deadliest incident of the year'.<sup>24</sup>

An Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) article indicates that an increased presence of Afghan Shias in Herat, who were repatriated from Iran or displaced from central provinces of Afghanistan over a longer period of time, is seen by some Sunnis as Iran's involvement.<sup>25</sup> Other source indicates that IS targets Shias because of religious differences, their involvement with Iran and fighting in Syria.<sup>26</sup>

In the past, Shia religious holiday of Ashura was marked by violent attacks, including in 2011<sup>27</sup> and in 2016<sup>28</sup>. No attacks during the holiday were reported in 2017, 2018 and 2019.<sup>29</sup> In 2018, attacks on the Shias happened not only in the places of worship but in such diverse places as a wrestling centre, voter's registration centre and a school.<sup>30</sup>

## 1.2 Treatment by Afghan authorities of Hazara and Shia communities

<sup>14</sup> RFE/RL, Living Scared: In Kabul's Shi'ite Enclave, Hazara Fear A Taliban Return, 5 April 2020, [url](#)

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 30 August 2018, [url](#), pp. 93-94

<sup>16</sup> Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report Afghanistan, 27 June 2019, [url](#), p. 29, para. 3.31-3.34

<sup>17</sup> AIHRC, Attacks against Hazaras in Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report Afghanistan, 27 June 2019, [url](#), p. 29, para. 3.31-3.34

<sup>19</sup> AAN, Speculation Abounding: Trying to make sense of the attacks against Shias in Herat city, 3 February 2019, [url](#); HRW, "No Safe Place": Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Afghanistan, 8 May 2018, [url](#); NPR, ISIS Claims Responsibility For Deadly Attack Aimed At Afghan Hazaras, 9 March 2018, [url](#); UNAMA, 2019 Annual Report, February 2020, [url](#), pp. 7-8; UNAMA, 2020 Quarterly Report, April 2020, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>20</sup> France 24, Gunmen stage deadly attack on Shiite memorial service in Afghan capital, 6 March 2020, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> Both, the IS and the ISKP, are used to describe the Islamic state affiliate active in Afghanistan in this query response.

<sup>22</sup> UNAMA, 2019 Annual Report, February 2020, [url](#), p. 47

<sup>23</sup> AP, Afghan IS branch claims deadly attack on Shiites in Kabul, 16 August 2018, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> UNAMA, 2019 Annual Report, February 2020, [url](#), pp. 7-8

<sup>25</sup> AAN, Speculation Abounding: Trying to make sense of the attacks against Shias in Herat city, 3 February 2019, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> AAN, With an Active Cell in Kabul, ISKP Tries to Bring Sectarianism to the Afghan War, 19 October 2016, [url](#); HuffPost, Why ISIS Have Declared War On The Hazara Shias Of Afghanistan, 26 June 2017, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> AAN, Dozens killed in attacks on holy day in Afghanistan, 12 October 2016, [url](#); Australian National University, On the Return of Hazaras to Afghanistan, 4 March 2020, [url](#), para. 8

<sup>28</sup> AAN, Dozens killed in attacks on holy day in Afghanistan, 12 October 2016, [url](#); Guardian (The), Shia Muslims killed in mosque bombing in northern Afghanistan, 12 October 2016, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> AAN, Before Ashura: Extra security measures in place for second year running, 19 September 2018, [url](#); Tolo News, Afghans Observe The Day Of Ashura In Peace, 10 September 2019, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 - Afghanistan, 11 March 2020, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>30</sup> AAN, Before Ashura: Extra security measures in place for second year running, 19 September 2018, [url](#)



Afghan constitution allows for the use of Shia jurisprudence in personal matters involving Shias.<sup>31</sup> Since 2009, Shia Muslims in Afghanistan have their own personal status law.<sup>32</sup>

Despite official prohibition of discrimination<sup>33</sup>, Hazaras reportedly face difficulties in accessing senior government positions.<sup>34</sup> A quota system aims to achieve representation of every ethnic group in the country in certain positions.<sup>35</sup> A Landinfo report indicates that the Hazara are overrepresented in the governmental positions.<sup>36</sup> The US Department of State (USDOS) indicated that Hazara police officers tend to hold symbolic positions on the Ministry of Interior and ANSDF officers are likely to be sent to insecure parts of the country.<sup>37</sup> A 2019 Finnish government fact-finding mission (FFM) found that 'government jobs are not very accessible to Hazaras.'<sup>38</sup> Sources reported that ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan faced discrimination in access to employment in 2019.<sup>39</sup>

Sources noted that the situation of the Hazaras has improved since 2001, including politically<sup>40</sup>. Nevertheless, an increase of violations by the extremist groups against the Hazara was reported between 2016 and April 2020.<sup>41</sup>

A source indicated in 2018 that the government had focused on fighting Taliban and left the situation of Hazaras behind.<sup>42</sup> Areas inhabited by the Hazara, including Bamiyan in central Afghanistan, were in 2018 reported as among the least developed in the country, lacking basic infrastructure.<sup>43</sup> A Landinfo report indicates that overrepresentation of Hazaras in the governmental jobs can provoke reactions from other ethnic groups.<sup>44</sup>

In light of the attacks against them, Hazaras complained on the lack of governmental protection.<sup>45</sup> According to the USCIRF, the government provided weapons to Hazara civilians to protect Shia mosques.<sup>46</sup> Sources indicate that the Hazara additionally organised their own security.<sup>47</sup> The 2019

<sup>31</sup> Afghanistan, The Constitution of Afghanistan, 26 January 2004, [url](#), art. 131

<sup>32</sup> CEDAW, Thematic Report on Article 16, Muslim Family Law and Muslim Women's Rights in Afghanistan, 2020, [url](#), p. 2; Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Country of Origin Report Afghanistan, March 2019, [url](#), p. 97

<sup>33</sup> Afghanistan, The Constitution of Afghanistan, 26 January 2004, [url](#), art. 4; Geopolitics (The), Politics of Preference: Rethinking the Afghan Quota System, 23 February 2019, [url](#)

<sup>34</sup> Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report Afghanistan, 27 June 2019, [url](#), p. 26, paras. 3.12, 3.14

<sup>35</sup> Geopolitics (The), Politics of Preference: Rethinking the Afghan Quota System, 23 February 2019, [url](#)

<sup>36</sup> Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019, 22 January 2020, [url](#), p. 29

<sup>37</sup> USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 - Afghanistan, 11 March 2020, [url](#), p. 40

<sup>38</sup> Finland, FIS, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 25

<sup>39</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020 - Afghanistan, 4 March 2020, [url](#); USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 - Afghanistan, 11 March 2020, [url](#), p. 40

<sup>40</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020 - Afghanistan, 4 March 2020, [url](#); MRG, Hazaras, n.d., [url](#); Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Country of Origin Report Afghanistan, March 2019, [url](#), p. 79; RFE/RL, Living Scared: In Kabul's Shi'ite Enclave, Hazara Fear A Taliban Return, 5 April 2020, [url](#); UNHCR, UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 30 August 2018, [url](#), pp. 93-94

<sup>41</sup> UNAMA, 2019 Annual Report, February 2020, [url](#), pp. 7-8; France 24, Gunmen stage deadly attack on Shiite memorial service in Afghan capital, 6 March 2020, [url](#); UNAMA, 2020 Quarterly Report, April 2020, [url](#), p. 4; UNHCR, UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 30 August 2018, [url](#), pp. 93-94

<sup>42</sup> GlobePost (The), Attacks on Hazara Community Killing Political Efficacy in Afghanistan, 29 April 2018, [url](#)

<sup>43</sup> Misaal Foundation, South Asia State of Minorities Report 2018, The State of Minorities in Afghanistan, 2018, [url](#), p. 279

<sup>44</sup> Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019, 22 January 2020, [url](#), p. 29

<sup>45</sup> Finland, FIS, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 24; USCIRF, USCIRF 2019 Annual Report; Country Reports: Tier 2 Countries: Afghanistan, April 2019, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>46</sup> USCIRF, USCIRF 2019 Annual Report; Country Reports: Tier 2 Countries: Afghanistan, April 2019, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>47</sup> Finland, FIS, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul, 15 October 2019, [url](#), pp. 24-25; RFE/RL, Under Threat, Kabul's Hazara Make Call to Arms, 20 September 2018, [url](#)



Finnish FFM stated that: 'There has been a meeting with the Hazara community and security agencies to improve the security situation. As a result, there are now 500 informal Hazara security personnel to protect around 100 mosques in Kabul. In total there are 500 Shia mosques in Kabul. It cannot be said how effective this protection is against a suicide attack.'<sup>48</sup>

A 2019 survey by the Asia Foundation revealed that Hazaras are more likely to cite insecurity as a reason to leave Afghanistan than other ethnic groups in the country (81.7 % of the respondents). According to the survey, over 70 % of respondents in Bamiyan indicated that local people were responsible for their own security, compared to 8.7 % in general, and less than 1 % of the respondents saw Afghan army as the provider of security in Bamiyan and Panjshir.<sup>49</sup>

The government has regularly condemned attacks on Hazaras in Afghanistan.<sup>50</sup>

### **1.3 Treatment by Taliban of Hazaras and Shias, especially of those living in Hazara-dominated areas, Taliban-controlled or contested areas; including documented cases of discrimination/mistreatment**

Taliban used to target Hazaras in the past<sup>51</sup>, declaring war on them after seizing power in 1996.<sup>52</sup>

According to a study published by the Hazara People website, some 3 000 Hazaras were killed during the Taliban rule in the period of 1994-2001.<sup>53</sup> A Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) article noted that: 'During their oppressive rule, the Taliban terrorized the Hazara, wresting control of Hazara regions in Afghanistan through a campaign of targeted killings and what rights groups have suggested amounted to ethnic cleansing.'<sup>54</sup>

In late 2018, Taliban launched attacks in Khas Uruzgan, Malestan, and Jaghori, areas with significant Hazara populations.<sup>55</sup> The Taliban attacks on the Hazara areas in Ghazni and Uruzgan provinces led to further displacements in 2018.<sup>56</sup> On 11 November 2018, the Taliban reached Jaghori, killing 30 Afghan soldiers along with 50 police officers within a day.<sup>57</sup> Some 10 000 families were displaced from the areas.<sup>58</sup> Following the attacks, in November 2018, Hazaras protested in Kabul over the lack of governmental protection. A suicide bomber killed six people during the event.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Finland, FIS, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 24

<sup>49</sup> Asia Foundation (The), A survey of the Afghan People - Afghanistan in 2019, 2019, [url](#), pp. 65, 244

<sup>50</sup> Al Jazeera, Dozens killed in Kabul ceremony attack claimed by ISIL, 6 March 2020, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Death toll rises to 11 in attack on Shia gathering in Kabul, 8 March 2019, [url](#); Guardian (The), Isis claims responsibility for Kabul mosque suicide bomb blast, 21 November 2016, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report Afghanistan, 27 June 2019, [url](#), p. 25, para. 3.8; Hasrat, M. H., Over a century of persecution: massive human rights violation against Hazaras in Afghanistan, In: Hazara People, February 2019, [url](#), p. 20; Diplomat (The), Why Are the Taliban Wooing a Persecuted Afghanistan Minority Group?, 28 May 2020, [url](#); HRW, The Massacre in Mazar-e Sharif, November 1998, [url](#); MRG, Hazaras, n.d., [url](#); Stars and Stripes, New generation of Taliban fuels battles in northern Afghanistan, 10 September 2019, [url](#)

<sup>52</sup> MRG, Hazaras, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> Hasrat, M. H., Over a century of persecution: massive human rights violation against Hazaras in Afghanistan, In: Hazara People, February 2019, [url](#), p. 26

<sup>54</sup> RFE/RL, Living Scared: In Kabul's Shi'ite Enclave, Hazara Fear A Taliban Return, 5 April 2020, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> Australian National University, On the Return of Hazaras to Afghanistan, 4 March 2020, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Country of Origin Report Afghanistan, March 2019, [url](#), pp. 79-80; UNAMA, 2018 Annual Report, Feb 2019, [url](#), pp. 8, 19

<sup>57</sup> CEP, Taliban, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> Hasrat, M. H., Over a century of persecution: massive human rights violation against Hazaras in Afghanistan, In: Hazara People, February 2019, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>59</sup> Australian National University, On the Return of Hazaras to Afghanistan, 4 March 2020, [url](#), para. 9



Referring to the situation in Jaghori and Malestan districts in the Ghazni province in October 2019, a Landinfo report indicated that an agreement between Taliban and Iran exists, which includes respect for Shias in Afghanistan.<sup>60</sup> Another sources from June and July 2020 indicated that Iran seeks to protect Shia Muslims in Afghanistan<sup>61</sup> and that there is an understanding between the Taliban and Iran that the group will stop persecuting Shias.<sup>62</sup>

Human rights Watch (HRW) indicates that while the IS targeted Hazara, the Taliban aimed their attacks on civilians working with the Afghan government or international forces in 2019.<sup>63</sup> The Taliban denied involvement in the recent attacks on Shias<sup>64</sup> and at occasions condemned them.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, local populations reportedly do not necessarily distinguish between the Taliban and the IS, which also includes former Taliban members.<sup>66</sup>

Even though predominantly Pashtun, the Taliban started to recruit members from another ethnic groups over the last ten years.<sup>67</sup> In May 2020, Taliban appointed a Shia Hazara man as its 'shadow district governor in Sar-e Pul province'.<sup>68</sup> Sources indicate that this was a political move to show that the group is inclusive of all Afghan ethnic groups<sup>69</sup> and a first such appointment in the group's history.<sup>70</sup> In a video released on 22 April 2020, the new Hazara leader called out to all Afghans to unite and fight against the 'Jewish and Christian invaders'.<sup>71</sup> In May 2020, Arab News quoted a Taliban spokesman saying that '[w]e have clear targets such as an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and the (establishment of) an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. All ethnicities which accept these targets are to enjoy equal rights in any future settlement.'<sup>72</sup> After the appointment of the Shia leader, the Taliban issued a statement highlighting the role of Hazaras in the Taliban's past operations.<sup>73</sup> Previously, after an attack on Shias in November 2018, the Taliban stated that 'its aim was not to target any "specific race, ethnicity or sect" but rather to attack anyone abetting the government.'<sup>74</sup>

Some recent examples of targeted violence against Hazara and Shia communities by Taliban include:

- In 2019, Abdul Samad Amiri, a Hazara and the provincial director of the AIHRC, was abducted and killed, reportedly by the Taliban.<sup>75</sup> The incident took place on the way from his home in

<sup>60</sup> Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019, 22 January 2020, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>61</sup> CSIS, Afghanistan: The Prospects for a Real Peace, 7 July 2020, [url](#), p. 56

<sup>62</sup> MEI, Iran's influence in Afghanistan, 23 June 2020, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> HRW, World Report 2020 - Afghanistan, 14 January 2020, [url](#)

<sup>64</sup> Al Jazeera, Dozens killed in Kabul ceremony attack claimed by ISIL, 6 March 2020, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> AAN, With an Active Cell in Kabul, ISKP Tries to Bring Sectarianism to the Afghan War, 19 October 2016, [url](#); HRW, "No Safe Place": Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Afghanistan, 8 May 2018, [url](#)

<sup>66</sup> RFE/RL, Living Scared: In Kabul's Shi'ite Enclave, Hazara Fear A Taliban Return, 5 April 2020, [url](#)

<sup>67</sup> Stars and Stripes, New generation of Taliban fuels battles in northern Afghanistan, 10 September 2019, [url](#)

<sup>68</sup> AAN, The case of Mawlawi Mehdi and Balkhab District: Are the Taleban attracting Hazaras?, 23 May 2020, [url](#); National (The), Taliban attempts to woo Afghanistan's Hazara community with new appointment, 28 April 2020, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> Diplomat (The), Why Are the Taliban Wooing a Persecuted Afghanistan Minority Group?, 28 May 2020, [url](#); MEI (Middle East Institute), Iran's influence in Afghanistan, 23 June 2020, [url](#); New Arab (The), Afghanistan's Taliban appoints minority Shia Hazara official in 'historic first', 29 April 2019, [url](#)

<sup>70</sup> Hindu (The), Taliban reaches out to Shias, [url](#); MEI, Iran's influence in Afghanistan, 23 June 2020, [url](#); New Arab (The), Afghanistan's Taliban appoints minority Shia Hazara official in 'historic first', 29 April 2019, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> Hindu (The), Taliban reaches out to Shias, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> Arab News, Afghan Taliban look for support of Hazaras whom they once persecuted, 8 May 2020, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> MEI, Iran's influence in Afghanistan, 23 June 2020, [url](#)

<sup>74</sup> USCIRF, USCIRF 2019 Annual Report; Country Reports: Tier 2 Countries: Afghanistan, April 2019, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>75</sup> Diplomat (The), Why Are the Taliban Wooing a Persecuted Afghanistan Minority Group?, 28 May 2020, [url](#); HRW, Taliban Linked to Murder of Afghan Rights Defender, 6 September 2019, [url](#)



Ghowr to Kabul. According to The Washington Post, president Ghani attributed the incident to the Taliban but the group itself 'has not commented publicly on the attack'.<sup>76</sup>

- On 7 August 2019, at least 13 people were killed and 100 wounded after a Taliban-claimed car bomb attack in western Kabul, where many people from the Hazara community live.<sup>77</sup>
- On 4 December 2019, the Taliban stopped a car traveling from Ghor to Herat, killing three Hazara civilians.<sup>78</sup>
- On 13 May 2020, gunmen entered a maternity hospital in Dasht-e-Barchi hospital in western Kabul killing some 20 women and children, and wounding other 16 people. The neighborhood is predominately Hazara. Afghan government blamed Taliban for the attack who denied the accusations.<sup>79</sup> No group has claimed the attack by the half of June 2020<sup>80</sup>. Other sources indicated a possible involvement of the IS.<sup>81</sup> No further information on the perpetrators of the attack could be found amongst consulted and used sources in the time scope for this query response.

#### **1.4 Treatment by Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and other Anti-Government Elements (AGEs) of Hazaras and Shias, including documented cases of discrimination/mistreatment**

The ISKP has been active in Afghanistan since 2015, with presence mainly in the Nangarhar and Kunar provinces.<sup>82</sup> The group has since targeted Afghan forces, as well as democratic institutions and religious minorities.<sup>83</sup> In 2019, the group was attacking religious minorities in neighboring Pakistan.<sup>84</sup> In May 2019, the ISKP announced a formation of its two new provinces in India and Pakistan.<sup>85</sup> The ISKP identified Shias in Afghanistan as one of their targets from the beginning of their presence in the country.<sup>86</sup> First attack ever by the ISKP in Kabul in July 2016 was aimed at Hazaras.<sup>87</sup> An increase in sectarian violence against Shias and Hazaras has been attributed to the ISKP.<sup>88</sup> The ISKP reportedly sees Shias as a legitimate target for killing as they are seemed as heretical.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Washington Post (The), A young Afghan pledged to better his country. Then he was shot dead., 9 September 2019, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> DW, Afghanistan: Taliban car bomb kills several people in Kabul, 7 August 2019, [url](#)

<sup>78</sup> NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: December 2019, 30 December 2019, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> Al Jazeera, Babies among 24 killed as gunmen attack maternity ward in Kabul, 13 May 2020, [url](#); FP, Horrific Attack on Maternity Ward Threatens to Upend Afghan Truce, 14 May 2020, [url](#); VOA News, 'It Was Horrific:' Afghan Mother Speaks Out About Maternity Ward Attack, 18 May 2020, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> BBC News, MSF Afghan maternity ward to close after deadly gun attack, 16 June 2020, [url](#)

<sup>81</sup> Associated Press (The), MSF closes Kabul program after May maternity hospital attack, 16 June 2020, [url](#); Daily Sabah, Afghan maternity ward reopens after deadly attack, 1 July 2020, [url](#)

<sup>82</sup> UNAMA, 2018 Annual Report, Feb 2019, [url](#), p. 59

<sup>83</sup> Defence Post (The), Turning east: the rise of Islamic State's Khorasan Province, 31 July 2018, [url](#)

<sup>84</sup> USDOS, Country Report on Terrorism 2019, 24 June 2020, [url](#), pp. 269-270

<sup>85</sup> Defence Post (The), ISIS announces new India and Pakistan provinces, casually breaking up Khorasan, 15 May 2019, [url](#)

<sup>86</sup> ACCORD, Overview of security in Afghanistan, 26 May 2020, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> Defense Post (The), Casualties reported after suicide bombing in Kabul's Hazara neighborhood, 9 March 2018, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> Finland, FIS, Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 24

<sup>89</sup> AP, Afghan IS branch claims deadly attack on Shiites in Kabul, 16 August 2018, [url](#); BBC News, 15 August 2018, Kabul suicide bomber kills 48 in tuition centre attack, [url](#); NBC News, Afghanistan bombing: Attack kills 48 Hazara college hopefuls in Kabul, 15 August 2018, [url](#)

The group continued to target Shias in 2019<sup>90</sup> and in early 2020<sup>91</sup>.

UNAMA recorded 'high levels of sectarian-motivated violence by Daesh/ISKP against the Shi'a Muslim religious minority population, most of whom also belong to the Hazara ethnic group' in 2018.<sup>92</sup> According to the USCIRF, the ISKP attacks on the Shia have been more lethal than others and left some 300 fatalities in 2018.<sup>93</sup> Between 1 January and 30 November 2019, UNAMA documented seven IS-claimed attacks against Shias, causing 112 deaths and 361 injuries.<sup>94</sup> The same source reported an increase in civilian deaths in the first quarter of 2020 comparing to the same period in 2019, including the IS attacks on the Hazaras.<sup>95</sup>

UNAMA observed a shift from places of attacks that shifted from places of worship in 2017 to civilian areas in 2018 such as *tazkira* (main Afghan ID card) distribution centres or education centres.<sup>96</sup>

Some recent examples of targeted violence against Hazara and Shia communities by ISKP include:

- In March 2018, the ISKP attacked a Shiite shrine in Kabul during Nauruz celebrations, leaving 26 killed and 18 wounded.<sup>97</sup>
- On 9 March 2018, an ISKP suicide bomber attacked a memorial event for a late Hazara leader, killing at least 7 people.<sup>98</sup>
- On 22 April 2018, some 60 people were killed in Kabul in a registration center. The attack, claimed by the ISKP, was targeted at Shiites.<sup>99</sup>
- On 15 August 2018, 48 people were killed and 67 injured after an ISKP suicide bomber attacked a private school in a Hazara neighbourhood of Kabul.<sup>100</sup> Associated Press reported that 34 of those killed and 57 of the injured were students.<sup>101</sup>
- In September 2018, an attack on a wrestling center in western Kabul left 20 dead and 70 wounded.<sup>102</sup>
- On 7 March 2019, an ISKP attack on Hazaras in western Kabul left 11 dead and 95 wounded.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019, 22 January 2020, [url](#) pp. 22, 25; AI, Human Rights in Asia-Pacific; Review of 2019 - Afghanistan, 30 January 2020, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020 - Afghanistan, 4 March 2020, [url](#)

<sup>91</sup> France 24, Gunmen stage deadly attack on Shiite memorial service in Afghan capital, 6 March 2020, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Gunmen kill 32 in Kabul attack, 6 March 2020, [url](#)

<sup>92</sup> UNAMA, 2018 Annual Report, Feb 2019, [url](#), p. 29

<sup>93</sup> USCIRF, USCIRF 2019 Annual Report; Country Reports: Tier 2 Countries: Afghanistan, April 2019, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>94</sup> UNHRC, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, and technical assistance achievements in the field of human rights; Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 16 January 2020, [url](#), para. 13

<sup>95</sup> UNAMA, 2020 Quarterly Report, April 2020, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>96</sup> UNAMA, 2018 Annual Report, Feb 2019, [url](#), pp. 29-30

<sup>97</sup> DW, Why is 'Islamic State' targeting Shiites in Afghanistan?, 21 March 2018, [url](#)

<sup>98</sup> Defense Post (The), Casualties reported after suicide bombing in Kabul's Hazara neighborhood, 9 March 2018, [url](#); NPR, ISIS Claims Responsibility For Deadly Attack Aimed At Afghan Hazaras, 9 March 2018, [url](#)

<sup>99</sup> DW, Afghanistan: Kabul suicide bomb kills dozens, 22 April 2018, [url](#); UNAMA, 2018 Annual Report, Feb 2019, [url](#), pp. 29-30

<sup>100</sup> BBC News, Kabul suicide bomber kills 48 in tuition centre attack, 15 August 2018, [url](#); NBC News, Afghanistan bombing: Attack kills 48 Hazara college hopefuls in Kabul, 15 August 2018, [url](#); Washington Post (The), 'It was a horror scene': Scores of Afghan students killed in Kabul suicide bombing aimed at minority Shiites, 15 August 2018, [url](#)

<sup>101</sup> Associated Press (The), Afghan IS branch claims deadly attack on Shiites in Kabul, 16 August 2018, [url](#);

<sup>102</sup> Al Jazeera, Afghanistan's persecuted Hazaras have little hope in peace talks, 26 February 2019, [url](#)

<sup>103</sup> Al Jazeera, Death toll rises to 11 in attack on Shia gathering in Kabul, 8 March 2019, [url](#); AOAV, 8 Action on Armed Violence, Mortar Attack on Shia Gathering Kills 11 in Afghanistan's Capital, 8 March 2019, [url](#); Defense Post (The), Explosions rock Afghanistan political gathering attended by top officials, 7 March 2019, [url](#)





- On 17 August 2019, over 60 people were killed and almost 200 wounded on a Hazara wedding in western Kabul.<sup>104</sup>
- On 6 March 2020, over 30 people were killed and 80 wounded at a ceremony commemorating a late Hazara leader in Kabul.<sup>105</sup> A Hazara leader demanded that the government creates an independent commission to investigate the incident.<sup>106</sup>

The UN Security Council (UNSC) noted that the number of attacks actually carried out by the ISKP is not clear and that Haqqani Network may be behind some of the attacks claimed by the group.<sup>107</sup> No information on targeting of Shias by other groups in Afghanistan was found even though an article by the AAN mentioned a possible involvement of other Sunni radical groups in an article about attacks against the Shia in Herat.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> BBC News, Afghanistan: Bomb kills 63 at wedding in Kabul, 18 August 2019, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Dozens killed in blast at Kabul wedding hall, 17 August 2019, [url](#); Telegraph (The), Islamic State Bomber Kills 63 at Afghan Wedding in the Worst Attack in Months, 18 August 2019, [url](#)

<sup>105</sup> Al Jazeera, Dozens killed in Kabul ceremony attack claimed by ISIL, 6 March 2020, [url](#); France 24, Gunmen stage deadly attack on Shiite memorial service in Afghan capital, 6 March 2020, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Gunmen kill 32 in Kabul attack, 6 March 2020, [url](#)

<sup>106</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Hazara leaders demand serious probe into ceremony attack, 7 March 2020, [url](#)

<sup>107</sup> UNSC, Letter dated 10 June 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 13 June 2019, [url](#), para. 62

<sup>108</sup> AAN, Speculation Abounding: Trying to make sense of the attacks against Shias in Herat city, 3 February 2019, [url](#)



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