

Afghanistan – Country Focus



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Country of Origin Information Report

November 2024



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- Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Country of Origin Information Department
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- Norway, Landinfo, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre
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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.

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

The reference period of this report ends on 30 September 2024. 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
AFF	Afghanistan Freedom Front
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Forces
<i>Burqa</i>	a long loose-fitting garment worn by women, which covers their entire body and face, and sometimes having a mesh panel covering the eyes
<i>Chadari</i>	a local term for <i>burqa</i>
<i>Fitna</i>	social disorder or chaos, which can itself facilitate sin
GDI	General Directorate of Intelligence
<i>Haram</i>	an act that is forbidden by God according to Islamic jurisprudence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
<i>Madrassa</i>	Islamic religious school
<i>Mahram</i>	a family member who you may not marry, in this report often used as a reference to a male relative serving as a chaperone
MPVPV	Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice
<i>Mullah</i>	Islamic religious cleric
<i>Mujahedin</i>	people who engage in a struggle for the sake of Islam
<i>Niqab</i>	a long garment worn by women, which covers their entire body and face, except for the eyes
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation





Term	Definition
NRF	National Resistance Front
<i>Pashtunwali</i>	Traditional social, cultural, and quasi-legal code regulating the Pashtun way of life
<i>Shalwar kameez</i>	a loose-fitting knee-length tunic over baggy pants worn by men
<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.
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan





Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide information relevant for international protection status determination, 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 October 2023–30 September 2024. The report is an update of the [EUAA COI Report: Country Focus – Afghanistan](#) published in December 2023. Events taking place after the end of the reference period have not been included.

Methodology

This report was drafted and reviewed by the 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 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, as well as interviews with expert oral sources, until 11 October 2024. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 5 November 2024.

Research challenges

[Chapter 4](#) mainly focuses on targeting acts by the *de facto* authorities and other armed groups towards certain profiles. The perpetrator of some acts is difficult to identify, and the 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

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](#)





particularly challenging in the Afghan context, where diverse and overlapping identities permeate society along, for instance, religious, ethnic, tribal and/or linguistic lines.

Since the Taliban takeover, Afghan local media and civil society have faced numerous restrictions, and it has become increasingly difficult to retrieve reliable and up-to-date information from the country. Especially media coverage on the situation in remote rural areas is difficult to obtain as the remaining media offices have been concentrated in Kabul City. Afghan media in exile, such as Hasht-e Subh, Afghanistan International and Kabul Now, have been used in some instances, but the information provided by these sources has been used restrictively, as it at times is highly critical of the Taliban and oftentimes is not possible to corroborate. Due to difficulties assessing the reliability of these sources, case-by-case assessment has been carried out before including reports from them.

In order to fill research gaps, several oral sources have been interviewed to obtain first-hand information on the situation on the ground. Many of these sources have, however, requested to be anonymised for their own safety or their families' safety, or due to operational reasons to be able to continue to travel to Afghanistan and report from the country. For example, some sources did not want to risk not getting future visas approved for being cited by name and title in this report.

Quality control

To ensure that the authors respected the EUAA COI Report Methodology and that the ToR 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 final draft of this report, which was finalised on 7 November 2024. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

Sources

In accordance with the 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 non-governmental organisations (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 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](#).



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 curated data files on Central Asia and the Caucasus, including Afghanistan, on 10 October 2024, 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 are 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

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

⁷ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [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, 3 October 2024, [url](#), p. 38

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, 3 October 2024, [url](#), p. 11



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 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:** ‘incidents in which one side uses weapon types that, by their nature, are at range and widely destructive’. 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 makes 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

¹³ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁴ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 18–19

¹⁵ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 16–18

¹⁶ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 3 October 2024, [url](#), pp. 36–37

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](#)



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 have 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’.

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, chapter 4 outlines the situation of 11 select groups and profiles.

Terminology

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. 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 as *de facto* state employees, but efforts had been made to give clear context in which capacity these persons are working. As the Taliban is both a movement and a *de facto* government, sources have sometimes referred to the ‘Taliban’ and the ‘*de facto* authorities’ interchangeably. This report refers to *de facto* authorities and *de facto* officials, when it is evident that the source refers to a person or a body operating under the *de facto* government. In other situations, where a source refers to the movement or where the status of the ‘Taliban’ referred to is unclear, the term ‘Taliban’ is used instead. Haibatullah Akhundzada, who is head of both the Taliban movement and the *de facto* state, is referred to as the ‘Taliban supreme leader’.

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, ‘the previous government’ or ‘the former 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

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



by the previous elected Afghan government and publications published under the current *de facto* authorities.





1. Situation of the general population under Taliban rule

1.1. Political context

1.1.1. Territorial control and armed opposition

Since the Taliban came to power on 15 August 2021,²⁶ they have faced armed resistance from two insurgencies. One insurgency has been driven by self-proclaimed resistance groups, including the National Resistance Front (NRF) formed amid the Taliban takeover, and other such groups²⁷ that emerged in April 2022.²⁸ Another insurgency has been driven by the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP),²⁹ that has been carrying out attacks against Taliban and civilian targets.³⁰ None of the groups have been assessed to pose a real threat to Taliban rule.³¹ More information is available in chapter [2. Security situation](#).

The Taliban claimed to control all of the Afghan territory by October 2021,³² after having struck down the NRF in the province of Panjsher.³³ Reports of the exact timing of the Taliban acquiring full territorial control differed, with some sources describing the Taliban as regaining control of all of Afghanistan's territory in 2022, although noting activities of armed groups in the country,³⁴ while some single reports suggested that there were still contested areas as of April 2022,³⁵ and as of 29 August 2022.³⁶ During the reference period of this report, the Taliban maintained territorial control over the whole country.³⁷ As the Taliban have consolidated administrative control of all of Afghanistan's territory, they are the *de facto* authorities, despite the lack of international recognition.³⁸

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](#), p. 11; 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](#), p. 1; Rubin, B. R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, 20 October 2022, Stimson Center, [url](#)

³⁰ HRW, Attacks Target Afghanistan's Hazaras, 3 May 2024, [url](#); CSIS, The Islamic State in Khorasan Province: Exploiting a Counterterrorism Gap, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

³¹ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 13; Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 8

³² VOA, Taliban order Afghan media to use group's official name, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

³³ Watkins, A., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

³⁴ UNAMA, Briefing by Special Representative Roza Otunbayeva to the Security Council, 20 December 2022, [url](#); World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update – Adjusting to the New Realities, April 2022, [url](#), p. 8

³⁵ Giustozzi, A., The Taliban's Campaign Against the Islamic State: Explaining Initial Success, RUSI, October 2023, [url](#), p. 22

³⁶ FDD, LWJ, One year after U.S. withdrawal, resistance to Taliban rule grows, 29 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁷ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 3; Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

³⁸ HRW, An Avenue to Justice for Afghan Women, 13 May 2024, [url](#)



1.1.2. Government formation and international recognition

Soon after their takeover, the Taliban declared the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA),³⁹ which was previously in power during 1996–2001.⁴⁰ They further announced an interim government⁴¹ which is all male,⁴² and predominantly consists of Pashtun⁴³ Taliban members.⁴⁴ The Taliban can be described as a conservative Sunni Islamic movement of the Deobandi school of thought.⁴⁵ Moreover, they adhere to the Sunni Hanafi School of jurisprudence.⁴⁶ During their previous rule in Afghanistan (1996–2001), they implemented a strict interpretation of *sharia*,⁴⁷ and what can be described as a mixture of Deobandi traditionalism, Wahhabi puritanism and *Pashtunwali*.⁴⁸ Soon after their takeover in 2021, the Taliban declared that *sharia* is to be enforced as the legal system in Afghanistan.⁴⁹ Moreover, within the *de facto* administration, there are several persons under UN sanctions⁵⁰ (at least 61, according to the UN Sanctions and Monitoring Team reporting in June 2024).⁵¹ Some are also part of the Haqqani network,⁵² which is a designated terrorist organisation in the UK,⁵³ the US⁵⁴ and by the UN.⁵⁵ The UN Security Council previously exempted 13 sanctioned individuals holding senior positions from a travel ban, allowing them to meet with foreign officials abroad.⁵⁶ The waiver however expired in August 2022⁵⁷ and was not renewed.⁵⁸ The UN Security Council have temporarily lifted travel restrictions of senior *de facto* officials to attend international meetings in 2024,⁵⁹ for example *de facto* Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani who was exempted from the ban in order to meet with representatives of the Gulf states in Abu Dhabi, and to perform *Hajj* in Mecca together with three other senior Taliban members.⁶⁰

³⁹ WSJ, Taliban unveil new Afghan government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰ BBC News, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹ BBC News, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴² DW, Can the US force Taliban to lift ban on girls' education?, 19 December 2023, [url](#); Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report – Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

⁴³ International Crisis Group, The Taliban's Neighbourhood: Regional Diplomacy with Afghanistan, 30 January 2024, [url](#); Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report – Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, The Taliban's Neighbourhood: Regional Diplomacy with Afghanistan, 30 January 2024, [url](#); Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report – Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

⁴⁵ Rana, S. and Ganguly, S., Taliban's religious ideology – Deobandi Islam – has roots in colonial India, The Conversation, 25 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Lombardi, C. and March, A., Afghan Taliban Views on Legitimate Islamic Governance, USIP, February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷ CNN, Taliban to impose their interpretation of Sharia law in Afghanistan, 15 November 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Britannica, Taliban, 3 November 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 24

⁵⁰ VOA, UN talks in Doha end; recognition remains distant dream for Taliban, 1 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹ UN Security Council, Fifteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 8 July 2024, [url](#), p. 22

⁵² UK, House of Commons Library, Afghanistan: One year under a Taliban government, 10 October 2022, [url](#), p. 5

⁵³ UK, Home Office, Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations, 26 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁴ USDOS, Foreign Terrorist Organizations, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁵ UN, United Nations Security Council Consolidated List, [url](#), section TAe.012

⁵⁶ DW, UN ends Taliban travel ban exemptions, 20 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁷ VOA, Taliban Say Travel Ban Hurts Diplomacy and Dialogue With World, 25 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁸ UN Security Council, Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 1 June 2023, [url](#), para. 61; UN News, Security Council Renews for One Year Mandate of Team Monitoring Sanctions against Taliban, with Some Regretting Travel Exemptions Not Extended, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁹ UN Security Council, Travel exemptions in effect, [2024], [url](#)

⁶⁰ AA, UN Security Council lifts travel restrictions on 4 Taliban leaders, 7 June 2024, [url](#)



At the time of writing, no state has recognised the *de facto* government.⁶¹ Although ‘effective control’ used to be a standard criterion for recognising a government, modern cases often involve conditions such as ‘human rights compliance’ or democracy.⁶² The international community has indicated that recognition is conditional also for the *de facto* government of Afghanistan,⁶³ calling for it to be more ‘inclusive’ and to respect women’s and girls’ rights.⁶⁴

Several states and international organisations have engaged with the *de facto* government,⁶⁵ *inter alia* by reopening their embassies in Kabul⁶⁶ or by accepting Taliban appointed attachés at Afghan embassies⁶⁷ (including in Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Türkiye⁶⁸ and China⁶⁹). *De facto* government officials have also attended meetings of the regional platform on Afghanistan known as the ‘Moscow Format’,⁷⁰ and in 2024 they attended a meeting in the Gambia organised by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC),⁷¹ and a UN meeting in Doha for special envoys on Afghanistan. The UN meeting, referred to as ‘Doha 3’,⁷² took place on 30 June–1 July 2024, and had the purpose to discuss ‘how to advance international engagement on Afghanistan in a more coherent, coordinated, and structured manner’.⁷³ UN representatives stressed that this meeting should not be seen as any legitimisation, normalisation⁷⁴ or formal recognition of the *de facto* authorities.⁷⁵ The *de facto* authorities had declined an earlier invitation to the UN meetings on Afghanistan in Doha, but accepted the invitation to ‘Doha 3’, reportedly after having their demands met of not having women rights addressed in the official agenda⁷⁶ and not having Afghan women or civil society attending the meeting.⁷⁷ According to Afghanistan expert Andrew Watkins, women’s rights were however

⁶¹ VOA, UN talks in Doha end; recognition remains distant dream for Taliban, 1 July 2024, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Afghanistan Three Years after the Taliban Takeover, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

⁶² Brookings, Recognition and the Taliban, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶³ 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](#)

⁶⁴ VOA, UN talks in Doha end; recognition remains distant dream for Taliban, 1 July 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵ UN, Afghanistan’s Future Depends on Taliban’s Engagement with World, But Restrictions on Women Signal Lack of International Commitments, Briefing Warns Security Council, 27 September 2022, [url](#); Washington Institute (The), Turkey Calls for Recognition of the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶ TOLONews, Muttaqi Says More Embassies Will Reopen in Kabul, 30 March 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, Which Countries Have Relations With The Taliban’s Unrecognized Government?, 30 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷ ORF, Taliban’s diplomatic advances in Central Asia, 12 August 2024, [url](#); TOLONews, Spokesman: Islamic Emirate Attachés Active in 16 Countries, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸ TOLONews, Spokesman: Islamic Emirate Attachés Active in 16 Countries, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹ Reuters, Afghanistan’s Taliban sends new ambassador to Beijing, 1 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Atlantic Council, Reflections on the 2022 Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan and regional security, 17 November 2022, [url](#); Afghanistan International, Moscow Format Contact Group Meeting To Be Held In Tehran, 4 June 2024, [url](#); Khaama Press, Tehran hosts Moscow Format as Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan consult ahead of Doha meeting, 8 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹ Afghanistan International, Taliban Delegation Attends 15th Session Of OIC In Gambia, 5 May 2024, [url](#); Firstpost, Is world embracing Taliban by inviting them to summits?, 9 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷² Watkins, A., What’s Next for the U.N.’s Doha Process on Afghanistan?, USIP, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷³ UN, Note to Correspondents: Doha Meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan, 25 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴ UN News, Doha Meeting on Afghanistan Provides Critical Opportunity to Discuss Women’s Rights, Speaker Tells Security Council, 21 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵ TOLONews, Doha Talks ‘In No Way’ Recognize Afghan Interim Govt: Dujarric, 26 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶ HRW, UN Meeting Blocks Afghan Women from Agenda, Participation, 24 June 2024, [url](#); Watkins, A., What’s Next for the U.N.’s Doha Process on Afghanistan?, USIP, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁷ Watkins, A., What’s Next for the U.N.’s Doha Process on Afghanistan?, USIP, 16 July 2024, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Afghan women and girls must be included in upcoming Doha meeting: UN women’s rights committee, 28 June 2024, [url](#)



discussed ‘extensively’ with the *de facto* authorities during ‘Doha 3’, as planned by the UN, despite their compromise of having the topic removed from the public agenda.⁷⁸

1.1.3. Political opposition and civic space

Inside Afghanistan there is no space for political opposition,⁷⁹ and political parties have been outlawed by the *de facto* authorities.⁸⁰ Entities that do oppose Taliban rule have been fragmented⁸¹ and are mainly situated abroad.⁸² Former politicians have not announced any Afghan government in exile,⁸³ but have formed various political groups⁸⁴ that have been calling for disengagement with the Taliban.⁸⁵ Exiled politicians have however not been invited to high-level meetings on Afghanistan such as the UN’s ‘Doha meetings’.⁸⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung described the activities of exiled politicians as taking place ‘through online forums, such as social networks’, but having no impact on the situation on the ground in Afghanistan.⁸⁷

Bertelsmann Stiftung further reported on the right to association and assembly being ‘severely restricted’ and civil society as ‘suppressed’.⁸⁸ The monitoring project Afghan Witness (AW) reported that general opposition largely dispersed during the Taliban’s second year of rule,⁸⁹ and CIVICUS has rated civic space as ‘closed’ in Afghanistan⁹⁰ since March 2023.⁹¹ This rating corresponds to a situation where, *inter alia*, ‘[t]here is complete closure - in law and in practice - of civic space’, and an atmosphere of fear and violence.⁹² Rawadari, an Afghan human rights organisation, also described an ‘atmosphere of fear and intimidation’, and the *de facto* authorities’ crackdown on civic space as a ‘continuing trend’.⁹³

⁷⁸ Watkins, A., What’s Next for the U.N.’s Doha Process on Afghanistan?, USIP, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹ 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](#)

⁸⁰ VOA, Taliban Ban Afghan Political Parties, Citing Sharia Violations, 16 August 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, Taliban Bans Political Parties In Afghanistan After Declaring Them Un-Islamic, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

⁸¹ 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

⁸² 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](#)

⁸³ Ruttig, T., Whose Seat Is It Anyway: The UN’s (non)decision on who represents Afghanistan, AAN, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Afghanistan International, Intra-Afghan Talks Should Be Focus of Tehran & Doha Meetings, Says Afghan Movement, 8 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁵ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 8; Afghanistan International, National Resistance Council Calls for Comprehensive Struggle Against Taliban, 27 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Afghanistan International, Intra-Afghan Talks Should Be Focus of Tehran & Doha Meetings, Says Afghan Movement, 8 June 2024, [url](#); New York Times (The), U.N. Held a Conference on Afghanistan. Taliban Officials Boycotted It, 19 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report – Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁸⁸ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report – Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁸⁹ AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁹⁰ CIVICUS, Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#)

⁹¹ CIVICUS, Afghanistan sinks to worst rating in a new global report on civic freedoms, 16 March, 2023, [url](#)

⁹² CIVICUS, Ratings, n.d., [url](#)

⁹³ Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), pp. 4, 21



Street protests have generally decreased since 2022⁹⁴ and according to Rawadari, dozens of women and men involved in organising demonstrations have left Afghanistan. ‘Fewer people now take the risk of expressing their criticism and opposition’, as reported by the source.⁹⁵ Especially women’s rights activists were at the forefront of the initial civil resistance against the Taliban,⁹⁶ but following reprisals⁹⁷ women have turned to staging protests in-doors.⁹⁸ More information on this topic is available in [4.8. Human rights defenders and activists](#).

The general media landscape has also faced comprehensive restrictions,⁹⁹ as well as financial constraints, which have resulted in a significant number of media outlets closing down and media workers leaving their jobs.¹⁰⁰ Between 2023 and 2024, Afghanistan dropped 26 places in Reporters Without Borders’ (RSF) World Press Freedom Index, ranking as the third worst country in the world.¹⁰¹ A number of topics have been described as ‘off limits’ for Afghan media to report on, such as criticism of the *de facto* authorities,¹⁰² and human rights.¹⁰³ Many journalists self-censor,¹⁰⁴ and have been facing ‘intrusive monitoring’, threats and violence.¹⁰⁵ Media outlets have also been requested to publish reports in coordination with the *de facto* authorities,¹⁰⁶ and has been increasingly difficult to retrieve reliable and up-to-date information from Afghanistan.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, on 20 August 2024, the *de facto* authorities announced that the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, was prohibited from entering the country. This decision came as a reaction to his reporting on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, which the *de facto* authorities described as ‘misleading and inaccurate information’ and as ‘propaganda’.¹⁰⁸ The UN Special Rapporteur called the decision ‘a concerning signal’ about the *de facto* authorities’ engagement with the UN and the international community on human rights.¹⁰⁹ More information the situation of journalists and media workers is available in section [4.6 Journalists and media workers](#).

⁹⁴ Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 21; AW, Two years of Taliban rule: documenting human rights abuses using open source, 15 August 2023, [url](#), p. 4; AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 13–14

⁹⁵ Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁹⁶ CIVICUS, Protests Escalate in Afghanistan as Frustration with Taliban Rule and Abuses Grow, 28 November 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Al Jazeera, Afghan women stage rare protests, braving Taliban reprisals, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸ HRW, Women’s Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023, [url](#); AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 1, 12–13

⁹⁹ RSF, Afghanistan: Media landscape suffocated by repressive Taliban directives that target women in particular, 13 March 2024, [url](#); RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#); RFE/RL, This Is What It’s Like To Be A Journalist Under Taliban Rule, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ IFJ, Afghanistan: Dramatic loss of independent media and free expression over past two years – Comprehensive new report, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ RSF, Index, 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰² RFE/RL, This Is What It’s Like To Be A Journalist Under Taliban Rule, 3 May 2024, [url](#); RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹⁰³ Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰⁴ RFE/RL, This Is What It’s Like To Be A Journalist Under Taliban Rule, 3 May 2024, [url](#); RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ IMS, Afghan media between a rock and a hard place, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), pp. 34, 48; RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ AW, Collect, preserve, verify: how we monitor human rights and current events in Afghanistan, [2023], [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ TOLONews, Travel Ban Imposed on UN’s Richard Bennett by Islamic Emirate, 20 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ UN OHCHR, UN Special Rapporteur says committed to people of Afghanistan despite Taliban barring entry, 21 August 2024, [url](#)



Sources noted that activists and individuals seen as aligned against the Taliban have been considered as instruments and ‘puppets’ of western influence,¹¹⁰ and the Taliban believe they have the right to suppress such dissent.¹¹¹ Afghanistan expert Obaidullah Baheer, who was interviewed by the EUAA for this report, explained that the Taliban believe in a one-party system, which is ‘very totalitarian’ and has been erasing any other political movement; individuals in this system are not allowed to hold their own politics.¹¹² Similarly, assistant law professor Haroun Rahimi stated, in an interview with the EUAA, that ‘anyone who chooses to resist the Taliban may face consequences’,¹¹³ while journalist Ali Latifi described the *de facto* authorities as having no patience for dissent of any kind.¹¹⁴ Rahimi further explained that on the international stage, the *de facto* authorities demonstrate that they understand the human rights discourse. However, ‘the claim that is coated in the language of human rights is not cognisable’ from their point of view in the national context, and in Afghanistan one cannot make a claim of having a certain human right that they must respect.¹¹⁵

Some criticism of the *de facto* government’s policies still occur, also on national television.¹¹⁶ For example, on International Women’s Day (8 March 2024), local media TOLONews hosted an all-female panel discussing women’s rights,¹¹⁷ and also had a series where the general public in different provinces was able to ask questions to local *de facto* officials.¹¹⁸ Rahimi explained that there are avenues for criticising the Taliban and their repressive policies, but there are some clear red lines for criticism; while criticising the Taliban as the legitimate ruler is not allowed and will be dealt with ‘very swiftly and very sternly’ through crackdowns and arrests, positive criticism on what the Taliban should live up to as the rulers of Afghanistan, and in relation to the promises they have made, seems to be accepted to some extent. The latter variant of criticism accepts the Taliban as the legitimate rule, and raises questions about good governance, unfulfilled promises, and more practical issues of being a subject under the *de facto* state. However, this sort of criticism occurs in ‘a very narrow and circumscribed way’, according to the source.¹¹⁹ On 21 September 2024, Afghan media were instructed to stop airing live debates, seek prior approval in the morning before such shows, and only invite experts as per a list with approved individuals – or seek prior permission from the *de facto* authorities. Media managers were also requested to remove ‘sensitive topics’ and criticism of the *de facto* government and its officials before publishing reports, and were informed about the prohibition of challenging ‘the laws, policies, and decisions of the Taliban government and

¹¹⁰ Latifi A., interview, 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹¹¹ 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

¹¹² Baheer, O., interview, 25 April 2024

¹¹³ Rahimi, H., online interview, 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹¹⁴ Latifi, A., email communication 1 October 2024

¹¹⁵ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹¹⁶ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; TOLONews [YouTube], ویژه برنامه - آیا خلاقیت‌های زنان متشیت بر سختی‌ها غلبه خواهد کرد؟ [Special program - Will the creativity of women entrepreneurs overcome difficulties?], 6 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Reuters, Afghan broadcaster airs rare all-female panel to discuss rights on Women's Day, 9 March 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹¹⁹ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.



criticizing Taliban officials’ without any proof.¹²⁰ Latifi described these new restrictions as ‘very reminiscent’ of the practice of the former communist governments, where media had to go through a censor board.¹²¹

(a) Criticism in social media, and surveillance

USDOS reported that ‘[m]edia outlets and activists routinely used social media to discuss political developments’, and that social media was widely used in urban areas.¹²² Some individuals who have posted criticism of the *de facto* authorities in social media have however faced arrests¹²³ as well as individuals raising human rights issues in social media.¹²⁴

Freedom House reported that ‘offline and online surveillance’ takes place¹²⁵ and other sources also reported that the *de facto* authorities monitor social media.¹²⁶ Rahimi confirmed that social media is ‘systematically monitored’, although it is not the matter of a very sophisticated surveillance system. He further stated that telecommunication companies monitor all internet flows in Afghanistan, meaning all forms of communications people have online, at the request of the *de facto* Ministry of Technology and Communication.¹²⁷ Rahimi also pointed to a provision in the law on the mandate of the *de facto* High Directorate of Supervision and Prosecution of Decrees and Edicts, which explicitly says that it shall monitor social media for complaints against the regime. Although this provision can be read as meaning ‘to be responsive to people’s criticism’, it also indicates an understanding of the social media space as ‘something that needs to be managed’.¹²⁸ Hamid Azizi, PhD Candidate at Flinders University in Adelaide, stated that the *de facto* authorities understand how social media may influence people, and have been trying to control social media by keeping track of people’s views, and by silencing those criticising them.¹²⁹ Anonymous sources also told the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2023, that monitoring of social media and other means of communication took place including by listening to telephone conversations from individuals calling their relatives in Afghanistan from abroad.¹³⁰ Freedom House reported on *de facto* officials searching mobile phones for critical social media posts,¹³¹ and a research study of Chatham

¹²⁰ AFJC, Taliban Imposes Stricter Regulations on Afghan Media, Raising Concerns Over Press Freedom, 23 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²¹ Latifi, A., email communication 1 October 2024

¹²² USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 21

¹²³ Rawadari, Intimidation, Repression and Censorship, May 2024, [url](#), p. 22; AI, Afghanistan 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#); Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

¹²⁴ Freedom House, Afghanistan: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report, 2024, [url](#); Ramizpoor, M. A. A., Restrictions of Civic Space in Afghanistan Under the Taliban – From Religious Ideas to Actions, RWI, April 2024, [url](#), p. 75

¹²⁵ Freedom House, Afghanistan: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report, 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶ RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#); Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

¹²⁷ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹²⁸ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹²⁹ Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

¹³⁰ The Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General country of origin information report Afghanistan, June 2023, [url](#), p. 42

¹³¹ Freedom House, Afghanistan: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report, 2024, [url](#)



House also found that personal devices have been ‘arbitrarily seized’ and searched at checkpoints, with *de facto* police officers ‘swiping through’ applications.¹³²

Many Taliban supporters have also been active online.¹³³ Individuals being critical of the *de facto* government,¹³⁴ and those raising women’s rights issues, have received hate comments and threats from pro-Taliban online activists.¹³⁵ Rahimi described this ‘fan base’ as trying to silence and threaten critics, and dominate the online space, but acting autonomously from the *de facto* government.¹³⁶ A research study of RAND institute, published in April 2023, also did not find strong evidence of such online activity being coordinated at a high level.¹³⁷ In April 2024, the *de facto* authorities announced a still pending plan to restrict access to Facebook.¹³⁸

1.2. Implementation of *sharia*

The Taliban have referred to *sharia* as the legal system to be enforced in Afghanistan.¹³⁹ The *de facto* government considers itself a guiding body¹⁴⁰ with the fundamental aim to ensure that the people live in accordance with religious laws.¹⁴¹ According to their world view, the obligations of an individual towards God and the community is primary, and the *de facto* state exists to make sure that *sharia* is followed, also in cases when people object. In this context, the *de facto* state does not have the function to guard individual civil rights.¹⁴²

Consensus has been a key element within the Taliban movement’s decision-making,¹⁴³ but the conservative supreme leader Haibatullah Akhundzada’s authority became increasingly notable in 2022.¹⁴⁴ At that time, the number of issued decrees ‘accelerated’,¹⁴⁵ and in the first half of 2023 some *de facto* officials publicly shared their differences of opinion on some decisions¹⁴⁶ – including on the supreme leader’s decision not to reopen secondary schools for

¹³² Shires, J. and Wilkinson, I., The internet under attack, Chatham House, August 2024, [url](#), p. 23

¹³³ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

¹³⁴ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹³⁵ AW, Violence behind a screen: rising online abuse silences Afghan women, 20 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹³⁷ Knopp, B. et al, Comparing Taliban Social Media Usage by Language, RAND, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. vi

¹³⁸ RFE/RL, Facebook Restrictions The 'Last Nail In The Coffin' For Free Speech In Afghanistan, 14 April 2024, [url](#); VOA, Taliban’s plans to curtail access to Facebook in Afghanistan alarm critics, 9 April 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹ 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](#)

¹⁴⁰ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹⁴¹ 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](#)

¹⁴² Rahimi, H., Remaking of Afghanistan: How the Taliban are Changing Afghanistan’s Laws and Legal Institutions Haroun Rahimi, ISAS, 26 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴³ Watkins, A., One Year After the Taliban Takeover, CTC Sentinel, August 2022, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁴⁴ 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](#)

¹⁴⁵ Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Afghanistan: Ruling by Decree, April 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁴⁶ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 3



girls.¹⁴⁷ In a report published in January 2024, Rahimi and Afghanistan expert Andrew Watkins stated that the supreme leader's role 'as the final arbiter of most policy' appeared to have been settled, although 'disagreements persist over allocation of state authority and the direction of domestic and foreign policy'.¹⁴⁸

The general human rights situation has gradually deteriorated after the takeover¹⁴⁹ and sources have also described the *de facto* administration as moving towards a theocratic police state,¹⁵⁰ ruling through a climate of fear¹⁵¹ and seeking to buy time by 'insisting on the temporary nature of its appointments and decisions'.¹⁵² In the period 15 August 2021–31 March 2024, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 1 033 instances where personnel of the *de facto* Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) applied force in implementing issued instructions, violating 'the liberty, and physical and mental integrity of persons'.¹⁵³

1.2.1. Nature of issued instructions

Various interpretations of *sharia* laws exist,¹⁵⁴ and the *de facto* government has not enacted a formal legal framework.¹⁵⁵ Some sources call the situation a 'legal vacuum',¹⁵⁶ as there have been uncertainties among the population about which laws apply.¹⁵⁷ UNAMA moreover reported on a 'climate of fear' stemming from the legal uncertainties of issued instructions and the punishment that may follow failure to adhere to them,¹⁵⁸ and Baheer described, in an interview with the EUAA, how one may be arrested for something that seemed to be legal.¹⁵⁹ Although the *de facto* MPVPV has 'highlighted that their instructions are recommendatory',¹⁶⁰ they may make use of means such as arrests and threats to enforce restrictions,¹⁶¹ and as

¹⁴⁷ Diplomat (The), Ruling Taliban Display Rare Division in Public Over Bans, 16 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁴⁹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan, Styre och rättskipning [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](#)

¹⁵⁰ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan, Styre och rättskipning, 6 July 2023, [url](#), p. 13; Economist (The), Afghans are suffering. Don't expect any tears from the Taliban, 14 August 2024, [url](#); PRIO et al., Pathways towards Strengthening Girl's Education in Afghanistan, December 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁵¹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan, Styre och rättskipning, 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](#); RFE/RL, The Azadi Briefing: Thousands Of Afghans Detained By Taliban's Morality Police, 23 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵² PRIO et al., Pathways towards Strengthening Girl's Education in Afghanistan, December 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁵³ UNAMA, De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 21

¹⁵⁴ CNN, Taliban to impose their interpretation of Sharia law in Afghanistan, 15 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ Austria, Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Afghanistan: Afghan legal system under the Taliban, 9 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 4 -5, 7; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 12

¹⁵⁶ Austria, Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Afghanistan: Afghan legal system under the Taliban, 9 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 12

¹⁵⁷ Baheer, O., interview, 25 April 2024; 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](#)

¹⁵⁸ UNAMA, De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁵⁹ Baheer, O., interview, 25 April 2024

¹⁶⁰ UNAMA, De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, [url](#), p. 21

¹⁶¹ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.



mentioned UNAMA have recorded several cases in which *de facto* MPVPV officials have applied force.¹⁶² On 31 July 2024, the *de facto* authorities adopted the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, also referred to as the ‘Morality law’,¹⁶³ which specifies a number of prohibited acts for the general public and also outlines the responsibilities and rules of conduct of *de facto* MPVPV staff.¹⁶⁴ More information about the enforcement of decrees is available in section [1.2.3. Policy implementation](#).

The *de facto* authorities have issued some instructions in decrees and general guidance,¹⁶⁵ but in the initial years following the takeover, few instructions were available in writing.¹⁶⁶ Instead, instructions and guidance were communicated through a variety of channels, including on social media¹⁶⁷ and during media interviews.¹⁶⁸ Although ruling by decree has continued, the *de facto* government has formalised a legislative process, in which a review board evaluates legislative proposals before they are submitted for the supreme leader’s final approval.¹⁶⁹ Issued decrees have also been compiled in public gazettes¹⁷⁰ as the authenticity of decrees published on social media was difficult to verify, and occasionally were not taken seriously, according to Heinrich Böll Foundation.¹⁷¹

Despite a more formalised process,¹⁷² instructions have continued to be issued verbally and in various other formats, sometimes lacking clarity as regards their legal status.¹⁷³ Local *de facto* state departments, as well as local branches of the *de facto* MPVPV, have moreover issued instructions of their own, according to UNAMA.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, an anonymous international organisation told the Swedish Migration Agency’s COI unit that not all instructions are being published, hence general knowledge about their existence may take some time.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶² UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 21

¹⁶³ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; UN OHCHR, *New morality law affirms Taliban’s regressive agenda, experts call for concerted action*, 30 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, *The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law* [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 6

¹⁶⁶ 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

¹⁶⁷ van Bijlert, M., *The Taleban’s Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments*, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ UNAMA, *Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022*, July 2022, [url](#), p. 23

¹⁶⁹ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., *Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years*, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 8; Heinrich Böll Stiftung, *Afghanistan: Ruling by Decree*, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 5

¹⁷⁰ Heinrich Böll Stiftung, *Afghanistan: Ruling by Decree*, April 2024, [url](#), p. 5; Amu TV, *Taliban publishes ‘gazette’ of its leader’s decrees and orders*, 29 May 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ Heinrich Böll Stiftung, *Afghanistan: Ruling by Decree*, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 5–6

¹⁷² Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., *Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years*, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 8; Heinrich Böll Stiftung, *Afghanistan: Ruling by Decree*, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 5; UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁷³ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, *Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret*, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁷⁴ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 5–10

¹⁷⁵ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, *Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret*, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7



Issued instructions have tended to be vaguely formulated,¹⁷⁶ which leaves space for different interpretations.¹⁷⁷ Sources have suggested that formulations have been purposefully vague in order to, *inter alia*, increase policy ambiguity and leave space for adjustments.¹⁷⁸ Rahimi explained that this gives leeway for adjustments for political reasons, for example 37 stoning punishments had been issued but not implemented as of September 2024, as they were pending final approval of the Taliban supreme leader. Rahimi noted that if the *de facto* government would adopt a more transparent mode of governance, that would not result in a system that is more accommodating of individual liberties, but in a much more ‘oppressive, cruel and coercive system’.¹⁷⁹ Several sources moreover explained that many instructions have been enforced although they have not been codified; for example the so-called ‘Morality law’, issued on 31 July 2024, was in line with what was already enforced before its announcement.¹⁸⁰ Some sources however believed that the formalisation of these instructions indicated that a stricter enforcement is to follow.¹⁸¹

An Afghan analyst, who preferred to remain anonymous for operational reasons, explained in an interview with the EUAA, that some restrictions have been inherently impossible to implement, including many rules in the above-mentioned ‘Morality law’ of 31 July 2024. One such example is the restriction on pictures of animate objects, which, according to the source’s understanding, would apply to videocalls and other features being fundamental parts of the modern context. This seemed to be ‘statements of virtue or intention’ rather than enforceable measures, according to the source.¹⁸²

1.2.2. Issued instructions

A compilation of relevant national decrees and instructions issued by the *de facto* authorities since the takeover is available at [Annex 3: Lists of national Taliban decrees and instructions](#).

The restrictions issued during the reference period of this report included the following:

¹⁷⁶ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7; ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁷⁷ ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁷⁸ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023; ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁷⁹ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹⁸⁰ Afghan analyst, online interview, 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency; Reuters, Taliban codify morality laws requiring Afghan women to cover faces, men to grow beards, 23 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Reuters, Taliban codify morality laws requiring Afghan women to cover faces, men to grow beards, 23 August 2024, [url](#); Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.

¹⁸² Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.



- an instruction to all universities and private education institutions to remove books considered against Hanafi jurisprudence from their libraries (14 December 2023);¹⁸³
- a law to prevent begging, prohibiting ‘healthy’ people who are able to secure one meal a day from begging, as well as using children or disabled people for begging purposes (18 May 2024);¹⁸⁴
- a law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (referred to as the ‘Morality law’), outlining the responsibilities and mandate of the *de facto* MPVPV, and listing a number of restrictions on the general public’s behaviour and appearance (31 July 2024).¹⁸⁵

The ‘Morality law’ also contained a number of restrictions on behaviour and appearance, as well as so-called ‘wrongful acts’ that the *de facto* MPVPV shall prevent.¹⁸⁶ Including instructions on dress codes for men and women, gender segregation, congregational prayers and non-Islamic celebrations, and music.¹⁸⁷ These instructions are outlined in section [1.2.4. Enforcement of select restrictions on personal freedoms](#) and in chapter [4.4. Women and girls](#). The law also outlines restrictions, among many other things, on the use pictures of animate objects, as well as certain sexual conduct, including adultery, ‘fornication’, anal sex, lesbianism, as well as temporary marriages and paedophilia.¹⁸⁸

1.2.3. Policy implementation

In his interview with the EUAA, Baheer described ‘a constant tug of war’ between what is being decreed and what is actually being enforced in Afghanistan, as the *de facto* state can be described as containing several states. Baheer further stated that this discrepancy between the decrees and their enforcement created uncertainty, and that one may be arrested for something that seemed to be legal.¹⁸⁹ Some issued instructions have moreover merely been announced and not implemented.¹⁹⁰ The Afghan analyst emphasised that it would be very difficult to implement some instructions, as *de facto* MPVPV officials cannot effectively keep track of people repeating ‘wrongful acts’ in a country like Afghanistan where a quite ‘archaic system’ is in place, and lacking a robust electronic system or a census, and where vast parts of the population do not have national identity documents.¹⁹¹

¹⁸³ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6; RFE/RL, Taliban Bans Books From Minority Muslim Sects In Private University Libraries, 22 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ Ariana News, IEA leader approves law on prevention of begging, 19 May 2024, [url](#); Amu TV, Taliban leader approves law to curb begging, 18 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ Afghanistan, *De facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

¹⁸⁷ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13, 14, 20, 22, 26

¹⁸⁸ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

¹⁸⁹ Baheer, O., interview, 25 April 2024

¹⁹⁰ Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Afghanistan: Ruling by Decree, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 3–4

¹⁹¹ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.



Some instructions have furthermore not been embraced throughout the Taliban movement¹⁹² and their implementation has varied across the country.¹⁹³ Decrees have been interpreted differently,¹⁹⁴ and the influence of local contexts and local stakeholders have also impacted their implementation.¹⁹⁵ Provincial level *de facto* officials have moreover been frequently rotated,¹⁹⁶ which has impacted the local implementation of restrictions; restrictions on, for example, dress codes and appearance may become stricter in an area if a more conservative and strict *de facto* official is stationed there.¹⁹⁷ According to an anonymous Afghan analyst, interviewed by the Swedish Migration Agency's COI unit, the *de facto* authorities' actions could sometimes even depend on individual *de facto* officials and their mood of the day.¹⁹⁸ Several sources could however see a general trend of instructions moving towards being implemented in more uniform ways across the country, and local variations decreasing.¹⁹⁹ As reported by Rahimi and Watkins, domestic policies are 'increasingly enforced to a single standard', although regional variations remain.²⁰⁰

The *de facto* state administration has been described as working in arbitrary and unpredictable ways.²⁰¹ A number of other *de facto* state institutions have been described as 'repressive', including the *de facto* MPVPV²⁰² (which is mandated to propagate virtue and prevent vice based on the *de facto* authorities' interpretation of *sharia*)²⁰³ and *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI).²⁰⁴ According to Heinrich Böll Foundation, the *de facto* authorities lack a 'functional mechanism to effectively translate [...] decrees into institutional guidance', making them difficult to enforce. The same source stated that several *de facto* institutions competed over the role of enforcing decrees.²⁰⁵ An anonymous organisation told the Swedish Migration Agency's COI unit that it is often unclear which *de*

¹⁹² ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, 25 April 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁹³ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 6; Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁹⁴ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 11; SCA, Årsrapport 2022 [Annual report 2022], 12 May 2022, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁹⁵ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan Three Years after the Taliban Takeover, 14 August 2024, [url](#); Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023; EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 25–26

¹⁹⁶ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 4; Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁹⁷ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁹⁸ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁹⁹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²⁰⁰ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²⁰¹ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 2, 4, 6, 21, 23; AAN, Transition to a New Political Order: AAN dossier takes stock of Afghanistan's momentous year, 12 August 2022, [url](#); Rubin, B., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, Stimson Center, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁰² Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), p. 17; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

²⁰³ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 6

²⁰⁴ Felbab-Brown, V., Afghanistan in 2023: Taliban internal power struggles and militancy, Brookings, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Afghanistan: Ruling by Decree, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 3–5



facto authority is responsible for the implementation.²⁰⁶ Issued instructions that regulate the private lives of Afghans have, however, mainly been enforced by the *de facto* MPVPV.²⁰⁷ The Afghan analyst explained that the enforcement of promulgation of virtue and prevention of vice is clearly the mandate of the *de facto* MPVPV, and that other *de facto* officials do not have that authority. According to this source, this was apparent at checkpoints manned by other *de facto* officials than *de facto* MPVPV officials; ‘if people play music, they generally only ask questions but are not stopping people to give them a lecture’.²⁰⁸

The *de facto* MPVPV is an influential institution, that directly report to the supreme leader in Kandahar on important issues.²⁰⁹ In principle, it has more of a guiding role,²¹⁰ but within the *de facto* MPVPV’s mandate, its staff may detain individuals failing to comply with compulsory acts or committing forbidden acts.²¹¹ There is however a ‘sliding scale’ of the enforcement,²¹² where *de facto* MPVPV staff shall use exhortation as a first step. If a ‘wrongful act’ continues, they may make use of threats, issue fines, and detain people for one hour up to three days, or issue any punishment ‘that an enforcer considers appropriate, and which is not the exclusive prerogative of a court of law’.²¹³ According to the Afghan analyst, *de facto* MPVPV officials also cause ‘financial damage’ at times, such as destroying mobile phones.²¹⁴ It has also been cooperating with the *de facto* GDI, whose mandate allows for further coercive measures.²¹⁵

UNAMA recorded cases of *de facto* MPVPV using force, including verbal intimidation, arrests and detentions, ill-treatment and lashings, and stated that there was an ‘apparent lack of accountability’ of its staff – despite the complaints mechanism in place.²¹⁶ The punishments and abuse of the *de facto* MPVPV have, however, not reached the same brutality as during the previous Taliban rule in the 1990s.²¹⁷ The enforcement of restrictions has tended to be

²⁰⁶ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7

²⁰⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 37

²⁰⁸ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁰⁹ Samim, S., Policing Public Morality, AAN, 15 June 2022, [url](#); UNAMA, human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6

²¹⁰ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

²¹¹ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 16; Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, *The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law* [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 24

²¹² Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²¹³ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, *The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law* [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 24

²¹⁴ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²¹⁵ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

²¹⁶ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 3–4, 16

²¹⁷ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10



stricter in the countryside, than in cities such as Kabul.²¹⁸ The enforcement in some conservative communities may be facilitated by local values being in line with the restrictions,²¹⁹ and as smaller communities are also easier to control than large populous cities.²²⁰ Azizi stated that, in areas where the Taliban traditionally have had a lot of influence and support, social norms at large conform with issued edicts, for instance, in the southern provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Nangarhar or in the eastern province of Khost. Meanwhile, the enforcement of some restrictions on women in the larger cities has been harder, as the *de facto* authorities have encountered resistance.²²¹ According to Azizi, the leadership in Kabul might moreover not necessarily agree with and implement all the supreme leader's decrees, as they see how it may impact people's lives and hurt their relationship with the local population.²²² Nevertheless, in March 2024, the activities of the Swedish Afghanistan Committee (SAC) were suspended, despite the fact that SAC was the oldest and largest non-governmental aid organisation in Afghanistan, bringing healthcare, education, and disability and livelihood support to nearly 3 million Afghans across 16 provinces every year.²²³

A research study, however, found that Kabul residents from the middle-class had been exposed to shifting norms due to the arrival of *de facto* officials originating from more conservative rural areas. Many interviewees had adapted to such norms, including on physical appearance and 'etiquettes' of living in a city, and experienced an 'increased affirmation' of being unable to 'express individual identity and values'.²²⁴

The Afghan analyst explained that the enforcement of some restrictions has been more intense in periods. For example, in 2023 women in Kabul City defied the *de facto* authorities' restriction on women accessing public parks. At that time the national park Shar-e Naw was full of women in a relaxed 'picnic atmosphere'. In September 2024, on the contrary, there was an increased presence of *de facto* MPVPV officials in Kabul following the announcement of the 'Morality law', and women were not visiting the park in the same way.²²⁵ Two anonymous NGOs also told the Swedish Migration Agency's COI unit that the *de facto* MPVPV has done periodic interventions to enforce certain restrictions intensely in some areas.²²⁶ In January 2024, the *de facto* MPVPV arrested several women in Kabul for not wearing proper *hijab*, as

²¹⁸ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 10–12; Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency; Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

²¹⁹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 10–12; Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

²²⁰ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 10–12

²²¹ Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

²²² Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

²²³ RFE/RL, Swedish Aid Group Suspends Afghanistan Operations After Taliban Order, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

²²⁴ Rahimi, L. and Joya, O., Surviving the Crisis: A Socioeconomic Assessment of the Middle Class in Kabul, Biruni Institute, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 1–2; Rahimi, L., The Silent Erosion of Afghanistan's Urban Middle Class: A Neglected Crisis, The Diplomat, 24 February 2024, [url](#)

²²⁵ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²²⁶ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 12



well in some other areas.²²⁷ The Afghan analyst stated that the enforcement in this case was admonished by the Taliban supreme leader, as ‘throwing people into buses and taking them to police stations’ is not in line with the codification of the *de facto* MPVPV, which sets out a escalatory system, as explained above. The Afghan analyst thought that this case was a ‘one-off measure’, but did not rule out the possibility of *de facto* MPVPV officials skipping the initial steps of this system and ‘jumping straight’ to arrests – although the source had not seen many such cases.²²⁸ UNAMA noted that the number of cases where the *de facto* MPVPV enforced dress code restrictions on women decreased after the peak in December 2023/January 2024, although cases continued to be reported.²²⁹

1.2.4. Enforcement of select restrictions on personal freedoms

This chapter describes the enforcement of select restrictions. Information on how these restrictions, along with other instructions, impact women’s and girls’ freedom of movement, access to work, education, and state service is available in chapter [4.4.Women and girls](#).

(a) Dress codes and appearance

Women have been instructed to cover their faces since May 2022,²³⁰ preferably with a *burqa*.²³¹ The ‘Morality law’ of 31 July 2024 further outlines that:

- women should cover their entire body and cover their faces to prevent *fitna* [‘social disorder or chaos, which can itself facilitate sin’];
- women’s clothes ‘should not be thin, short or tight’;
- it is the responsibility of women to ‘hide their body and their face from men who are not their *mahram*’;
- Muslim and righteous women are obliged to ‘cover themselves in front of non-believing or loose women’ to prevent *fitna*;
- ‘women not covering themselves properly’, is a ‘wrongful act’.²³²

The instructions on women’s clothing have not been implemented consistently.²³³ Many women and girls in Kabul City, for example, have continued to wear a type of *hijab* which

²²⁷ EUAA, COI Query, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 2 February 2024, [url](#), p. 2

²²⁸ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²²⁹ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 2

²³⁰ Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., “We need to breathe too”: Women across Afghanistan navigate the Taleban’s hijab ruling, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

²³¹ Clark, K. and Rahimi, S., “We need to breathe too”: Women across Afghanistan navigate the Taleban’s hijab ruling, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

²³² Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13, 22

²³³ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 12



cover their hair together with a medical facemask.²³⁴ In 2023, Latifi also observed that, in the cities, some women defied the *de facto* authorities' instructions to wear a black *niqab* or a blue *chadari* and continued 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 needed to go to government buildings for instance, they would wear a 'proper' dress in line with the restrictions, and also be accompanied by a *mahram*.²³⁵ The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (UN OHCHR), however, stated in September 2023, that there were reports of women frequently 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*.²³⁶ As mentioned, the *de facto* authorities cracked down on women and girls who were considered not to abide to issued instructions in Kabul City and other areas in January 2024.²³⁷ The Afghan analyst thought that this was a 'one-off' exercise, which was not sanctioned by the supreme leader,²³⁸ although sources, explained that the enforcement of some restrictions is 'periodic'.²³⁹ UNAMA continued to document cases of *de facto* MPVPV enforcing dress code restrictions on women, although it had decreased after the peak in December 2023/January 2024.²⁴⁰

There has been no notable immediate enforcement of the new 'Morality law', but the situation varies still depending on the local context.²⁴¹ In more conservative areas, such as the province of Kandahar, the *burqa* has continued to be the norm,²⁴² while the Afghan analyst had hardly seen any woman wearing *burqa* in Kabul City in September 2024.²⁴³ The same source noted that there was a slight increase of the use of *burqa* in Herat City, although the Iranian type of

²³⁴ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 12; Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²³⁵ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

²³⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 32

²³⁷ EUAA, COI Query, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 2 February 2024, [url](#), p. 2

²³⁸ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²³⁹ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 12

²⁴⁰ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 2

²⁴¹ Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024; Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency; Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁴² Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁴³ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.



chador (which does not cover the face) remained a more common way for women to dress.²⁴⁴ An earlier report of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), following the *de facto* authorities' first instruction on women to cover their faces in May 2022, described women across Afghanistan continuing to dress the same. Some women had however experienced pressure to dress more conservatively.²⁴⁵

Soon after the Taliban takeover in 2021, there were sporadic reports of people being abused for wearing 'western' style clothing, such as a suite or jeans,²⁴⁶ and in some areas men were advised not to wear 'western' style clothes.²⁴⁷ The *de facto* MPVPV has issued a dress code for male state employees, instructing them to 'dress like the prophet' (meaning, in principle, to wear *shalwar kameez* – a loose-fitting knee-length tunic over baggy pants, a traditional headgear and growing one's beard).²⁴⁸ Male students and teachers were also called upon not to wear ties on 15 April 2022,²⁴⁹ and in April 2023 the *de facto* Ministry of Education announced the *shalwar kameez* as the new school uniform for boys.²⁵⁰ The 'Morality law' of 31 July 2024, further states that:

- men should cover their bodies from the waist down to the knees, knees included;
- when 'pursuing pastimes and exercise, men are obliged to wear clothes that conceal the required parts of the body, and that are not very tight or make certain parts of the body apparent;
- befriending non-Muslims and assisting them, imitating them in one's appearance or character, are wrongful acts;
- wearing and popularising crucifixes, neckties and other such un-Islamic symbols', are 'wrongful acts'.²⁵¹

An Afghan researcher, who was interviewed for this report and who preferred to remain anonymous due to security concerns, stated that the instructions for *de facto* public officials had in general been implemented at the *de facto* ministries. In order to access some *de facto* government buildings, men needed to wear a traditional cap to enter (which could be bought by the entrance).²⁵² Men in general have also increasingly started to wear traditional

²⁴⁴ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁴⁵ Clark, K and Rahimi, S., "We need to breathe too": Women across Afghanistan navigate the Taleban's hijab ruling, 1 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20

²⁴⁷ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 46

²⁴⁸ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20

²⁴⁹ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 44

²⁵⁰ Afghanistan International, Taliban Introduces New Uniform for Students in Afghanistan, 6 April 2023, [url](#)

²⁵¹ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 14, 22

²⁵² Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.



clothing,²⁵³ although the use of untraditional clothing has continued.²⁵⁴ According to the Afghan analyst, the increase in men wearing traditional clothing and growing a beard in Kabul City does not necessarily have to do with the restrictions, as the look of the ruling class is in fashion.²⁵⁵ One source interviewed by the Swedish Migration Agency explained that he had started to dress traditionally to avoid criticism and verbal harassment from the *de facto* MPVPV,²⁵⁶ while the Afghan analyst added that resembling those in power may indicate a certain status and bring social benefits. For example, one may avoid being questioned if looking like an important person.²⁵⁷ While the Swedish Migration Agency's COI unit reported that men and boys still dressed in jeans and suits in April 2024,²⁵⁸ the Afghan analyst, interviewed on 1 October 2024, stated that pants had become more rare, although still being worn by some individuals within the younger generation.²⁵⁹ The Afghan researcher confirmed that there were still great variations between different regions as regards how people dress, and even between different districts within Kabul City, which also applies to other aspects as well, such as music, bodybuilding, tattoos, and short sleeve T-shirts which may be seen in some areas of Kabul, but which is basically impossible to see in provinces such as Kandahar.²⁶⁰ As of 30 September 2024, TOLONews news anchor still wore suits and neckties.²⁶¹

The *de facto* MPVPV has also issued advisory instructions for barbers not to cut men's beard or do 'western style' haircuts.²⁶² Although being advisory in their nature, there have been some reports of men and barbers being abused, arrested and detained for not abiding to these instructions.²⁶³ The 'Morality law' law of August 2024 also identified the 'wrongful acts' of 'shaving one's beard or reducing it to less than the width of a fist', and 'styling one's hair in

²⁵³ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 21; Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁵⁴ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁵⁵ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁵⁶ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 21

²⁵⁷ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁵⁸ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 21

²⁵⁹ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁶⁰ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.

²⁶¹ TOLONews [YouTube], TOLONews - 6pm News - 30 September 2024, 30 September 2024, [url](#); TOLONews [YouTube], TOLONews – 7pm News – 20 Sept 2024, 30 September 2024, [url](#)

²⁶² UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 11; UN Human Rights Council, *Situation of human rights in Afghanistan*, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 38

²⁶³ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 11; Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024





an un-Islamic manner'.²⁶⁴ Some men have continued to cut their beards and to wear 'western style haircuts' in Kabul City.²⁶⁵ According to the Afghan analyst, having a 'western style' or 'modern' haircut in general does not make any *de facto* officials react, but a more extreme haircut such as the 'mohawk' would probably not be accepted and make them stop a person and inform him that such a hairstyle is not allowed, due to religious *hadiths* forbidding hairstyles where half the head is shaved. The same source noted that also businessmen and youth in Kabul City move away from being clean shaved and growing a beard, although proportionally more older men dress traditionally and have beards. One could however still see a lot of younger individuals having modern hairstyles, and some young men still being clean shaved in Kabul City as of September 2024.²⁶⁶

(b) Gender segregation

As described by sources, gender segregation is a central idea within the Taliban movement, which impacts the decisions of the *de facto* government.²⁶⁷ An analyst interviewed by Landinfo in 2022, explained that, in this context, the *de facto* authorities issue instructions on gender segregation in order for women to be able to leave their homes at all, as gender segregation needs to be maintained for women to be able to access public spaces.²⁶⁸ For example, gender segregation has been used as a justification for barring women from accessing parks, gyms, public baths,²⁶⁹ and was also used as an explanation to why secondary schools have not reopened for girls.²⁷⁰ The *de facto* authorities have also instructed private universities to separate mixed classes (September 2021),²⁷¹ and the *de facto* Ministry of Health to gender-segregate male and female offices (16 March 2022).²⁷² Gender segregation has also been used as a justification to issue restrictions on women-led business, and in some areas, women shopkeepers have been relocated to designated floors.²⁷³

The 'Morality law' of 31 July 2024 further instructs that:

- men are forbidden from looking at an unrelated woman's body or face, and 'women are not allowed to look at strange men';

²⁶⁴ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

²⁶⁵ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 21; Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁶⁶ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁶⁷ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Situasjonen for afghanske kvinner etter Talibans maktovertakelse, 22 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2; Newswise, It is not just Sharia law: The Taliban, Pashtunwali and Afghan Women, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Situasjonen for afghanske kvinner etter Talibans maktovertakelse, 22 June 2022, [url](#), p. 2

²⁶⁹ UNAMA, *De Facto* Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, [url](#), p. 11

²⁷⁰ RFE/RL, Islam Does Not Ban Girls' Education. So Why Does The Taliban?, 13 August 2023, [url](#); Jackson, A., The Ban on Older Girls' Education: Taleban conservatives ascendant and a leadership in disarray, AAN, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁷¹ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 43

²⁷² RFE/RL, Taliban Resurrects Gender Segregation In Public Offices, Transport In Afghanistan, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁷³ UNAMA, *De Facto* Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, [url](#), p. 11





- an adult woman leaving her home ‘because of some urgent need’ is ‘duty-bound to hide her voice, face and body’;
- the *de facto* MPVPV shall ensure that staff and drivers of commercial vehicles do not transport uncovered or unaccompanied women, or ‘allow women to sit or mingle with an unrelated man’.²⁷⁴

Consulted sources have not seen an immediate enforcement of the ‘Morality law’.²⁷⁵ Before the law’s announcement, the *de facto* MPVPV has however been carrying out inspections on the compliance with issued instructions, including in offices, educational institutions, shopping centres and vehicles.²⁷⁶ According to the Afghan analyst, men and women that are not close relatives should not intermingle alone in a private or a semi-private setting from the *de facto* authorities’ perspective, as this is considered prohibited behaviour. They have therefore been trying to enforce restrictions to limit this aspect of social behaviour. One such example is that women should not go in a taxi alone, as this would be considered as a ‘semi-private situation’ opening up for illicit sexual behaviour, or other similar scenarios. Therefore, the *de facto* authorities have been issuing restrictions on taxi drivers picking up unaccompanied women. Moreover, a man may have a case built against him if he goes to a woman’s home, and she’s home alone. On the other hand, restrictions on this kind of intermingling do not apply to public settings where many people are present at the same time.²⁷⁷ In June 2024, videos circulated on social media showing a boy being sexually assaulted and with ‘several visible injuries on his back, buttocks, and thighs, consistent with beatings’. Afghan media, as cited by AW, identified the perpetrator as a *de facto* Security Commander of the district of Balcharagh, Faryab Province, and claimed that the boy was being punished for having a phone call with a girl.²⁷⁸

More information on women’s freedom of movement and access to public spaces is available in section [4.4.3. Freedom of movement](#).

(c) Congregational prayer and non-Islamic celebrations

The ‘Morality law’ of 31 July 2024, specifies a number of ‘wrongful acts’, including:

- ‘[N]ot praying’, delaying one’s prayers, ‘omitting mandatory and obligatory prayers’, and ‘not praying in congregation’;
- neglecting obligatory fasts;
- observing holidays that have ‘no Islamic foundation’, including *Nawruz*, *Shab-e Yalda*, fireworks night and other festivals;

²⁷⁴ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13, 20

²⁷⁵ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

²⁷⁶ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

²⁷⁷ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁷⁸ AW, Torture of young man by Taliban commander, 3 July 2024, [url](#)



- befriending non-Muslims and assisting them, imitating them in one's appearance or character.²⁷⁹

The same law further instructs that:

- prayers in congregation in the mosque shall be observed by 'traders, artisans and farmers, when conducting their affairs and carrying out their functions', at set times;²⁸⁰
- the *de facto* MPVPV shall ensure that staff and tourists at sightseeing and recreation spots observe congregational prayer.²⁸¹

The law requests the *de facto* MPVPV to make sure that public transport adjust timetables so that people can observe prayers. It further instructs *de facto* MPVPV staff to refer a person to court if 'without any valid excuse', 'repeatedly omits saying his daily obligatory and mandatory prayers', 'repeatedly omits joining in congregational prayers', 'does not fast during the holy month of fasting' or 'does not perform all the virtuous acts that are required of him or does not avoid all the iniquitous acts from which he should refrain'. People may also be referred to court '[i]n case any community collectively omits saying the call to prayer or offering congregational prayers'.²⁸²

Already before the announcement of this law, men were being instructed to observe congregational prayers.²⁸³ In some cases, men not attending prayers have been fined or beaten.²⁸⁴ For example, UNAMA reported on dozens of men being detained for not attending congregational prayer in Dehdadi District, Balkh Province, in December 2023. They were released after three hours. In response to UNAMA's report, the *de facto* authorities stated that these men were detained because they had not attended prayers for the past two and half years, despite being advised to do so.²⁸⁵ In communication with the EUAA in October 2023, a representative of the human rights organisation Rawadari explained that shopkeepers and men in markets have been 'encouraged, shamed, and threatened' by the *de facto* MPVPV particularly to attend prayers on Fridays.²⁸⁶ In a report from April 2024, the Swedish Migration Agency's COI unit reported that state employees and university students were obliged to attend congregational prayer, which often took place in praying rooms at their workplaces and universities, or nearby mosques. At the time, there was however no general obligation for men in Kabul City to attend congregational prayer, and it was not being practiced as strictly as in

²⁷⁹ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

²⁸⁰ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 18

²⁸¹ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 19

²⁸² Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 26

²⁸³ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 12; Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

²⁸⁴ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24; UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 12

²⁸⁵ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 12

²⁸⁶ Rawadari, email communication, 18 October 2023



rural areas. For example, the *de facto* MPVPV did not stop people on the streets of Kabul City to make them attend prayers, although one source explained that the *de facto* MPVPV could request individuals with businesses near a mosque to close down and attend prayers during praying time, and that the *de facto* MPVPV had also sometimes been driving around with loudspeakers requesting people to attend prayers at the mosque.²⁸⁷ In rural areas, on the contrary, there were reports of people being forced to attend prayers,²⁸⁸ and attendance lists being used in mosques.²⁸⁹ The Afghan analyst reiterated that the enforcement of *sharia* may be stricter in the provinces, and mentioned how the *de facto* MPVPV had threatened to close a hotel in Nangarhar as it had received people and allowed them to eat during prayer time.²⁹⁰

Already before the new ‘Morality law’, some *de facto* officials had condemned celebrations of *Nowruz*.²⁹¹ The *de facto* authorities moreover moved the start of the academic year to coincide with the day of *Nowruz*, rather than the day after, as had been practice for years.²⁹² According to Ariana News, the *de facto* authorities have communicated that the day will not be officially celebrated, but that they will not stop people from celebrating it.²⁹³ Although people have continued to celebrate the day,²⁹⁴ an academic research fellow with Raoul Wallenberg Institute stated that there was a sense of fear and uncertainty among the population after the *de facto* authorities had communicated that *Nowruz* was *haram*.²⁹⁵ TOLONews moreover reported that the celebrations in 2024 were ‘much less prominent’ compared to previous years, both in Kabul and the provinces.²⁹⁶ UNAMA reported that the *de facto* authorities in the provinces of Faryab and Herat had set up checkpoints to search vehicles for food and other items for the celebration, and the same source stated that people in the province of Parwan had been ‘warned’ against celebrating the day.²⁹⁷

The United Nations (UN) recorded arrests of individuals accused of sorcery,²⁹⁸ which was banned on 7 August 2023.²⁹⁹ The *de facto* MPVPV itself claimed to have arrested nearly 200 sorcerers and witches (called *Jadogar*) by 2 October 2023,³⁰⁰ and nearly 1 000 sorcerers and

²⁸⁷ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

²⁸⁸ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24; UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²⁸⁹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

²⁹⁰ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

²⁹¹ 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](#)

²⁹² ZAN Times, Nowruz ban: Suppressing cultural diversity in Afghanistan, 20 March 2024, [url](#); Amu TV, Nowruz celebrations persist in Kabul despite Taliban restrictions, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁹³ Ariana News, IEA cancel public holiday for Nowruz but say celebrations allowed, 21 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁴ Associated Press [YouTube], New Year celebrations in Kabul, Afghanistan, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁹⁵ Shirzay, M., Standing in Solidarity: Addressing Challenges Facing Female Education in Afghanistan at the Start of the New Academic Year, RWI, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

²⁹⁶ TOLONews, Jahanda Bala Ceremony Takes Place in Kabul on New Year’s First Day, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁹⁷ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 16

²⁹⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 December 2023, [url](#), para. 35

²⁹⁹ EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2023, [url](#), p. 23

³⁰⁰ TOLONews, Vice Ministry: Nearly 200 Jadogar (Sorcerers, Witches) Detained, 2 October 2023, [url](#)



‘amulet makers’ by August 2024.³⁰¹ In October 2023, the *de facto* MPVPV stated that prison sentences awaited those found guilty,³⁰² and, in August 2024, they stated that the 1 000 individuals concerned had been handed over to the courts.³⁰³ More information on the restrictions on religious freedom is available in section [4.6.2. Religious freedom](#).

(d) Music

Up until 31 July 2024, no formal decree prohibited music in general, although the Taliban movement perceived music as being prohibited by *sharia*.³⁰⁴ An unofficial ban was therefore ‘taken for granted by all those involved’ as reported by Afghanistan expert Fabrizio Foschini.³⁰⁵ The ‘Morality law’, however, specified music ‘emanating from any gathering or from the home’ as a ‘wrongful act’. The same law instructed *de facto* MPVPV officials to ensure that drivers of commercial vehicles do not play music.³⁰⁶

Many musicians left Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover³⁰⁷ or stopped performing.³⁰⁸ Already before the ‘Morality law’, music was generally no longer played in public spaces.³⁰⁹ Some musicians were still playing music, but behind closed doors;³¹⁰ some cafés and restaurants in Kabul still played music, and youth played music from their cars when Taliban members were not around.³¹¹ A photojournalistic report from 2024, also displayed teenage girls playing music in private homes ‘behind closed doors’.³¹² An Afghan analyst observed that some people still played music in their cars in Kabul City, as of September 2024, even when passing through checkpoints with *de facto* officials present.³¹³

³⁰¹ TOLONews, 5,000 Complaints Addressed in Just Over Year: MoVV, 20 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁰² EFE, Taliban arrest hundreds on allegations of performing witchcraft, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

³⁰³ TOLONews, 5,000 Complaints Addressed in Just Over Year: MoVV, 20 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 26

³⁰⁵ Foschini, F., Hearts Turned Away from Music: Afghan musicians’ path to exile, AAN, 24 April 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁶ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 20, 22

³⁰⁷ 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](#)

³⁰⁸ RFE/RL, With Music Banned, Afghan Musician Now Sells Snacks To Feed His Family, 17 December 2022, [url](#); Kabul Now, IMC Condemns ‘Musical Genocide’ in Afghanistan, 14 December 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 27

³¹⁰ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 27

³¹¹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 27

³¹² Fondation Carmignac, No Woman’s Land: An Intimate Look into the Battle for Women’s Rights in Afghanistan [2024], [url](#)

³¹³ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.



After the Taliban takeover, music schools closed,³¹⁴ and in some instances, Taliban fighters have destroyed³¹⁵ and burned music instruments,³¹⁶ and subjected musicians to public shaming, physical violence,³¹⁷ and arrests.³¹⁸ According to Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI), the mere possession of music can lead to arrest or other punishments. Some musicians told the organisation that they had themselves destroyed or buried their instruments and deleted any evidence of their musical careers – as random house searches had become common.³¹⁹ In February 2024, local media reported on about ten individuals being arrested in the district of Yengi Qala, Takhar Province, for playing music and singing in a private home.³²⁰ On 20 August 2024, officials of the *de facto* MPVPV claimed, during a press conference, that they had destroyed over 21 000 musical instruments in the past year.³²¹

(e) Wrongful acts committed by children and individuals with mental disabilities

The ‘Morality law’ specifically mentions the *de facto* MPVPV’s responsibilities in relation to ‘mentally handicapped’ persons and children committing ‘wrongful acts’. Article 23 (2) states that ‘If a child or a mentally handicapped person commits a wrongful act, then the enforcer is duty-bound to put an end to that wrongful act.’³²² According to Haroun Rahimi, these are mitigating circumstances, and according to classic Islamic jurisprudence, a person who is not aware of their behaviour cannot be held accountable and will not be punished.³²³ According to an expert on health issues in Afghanistan, including mental health, it is too early to draw any conclusion on the impact of this article on the situation of individuals with mental disabilities. Nevertheless, the source added that the already particularly high level of stigma against persons with cognitive/developmental/mental disabilities, and the fact that the enforcers of *sharia* ‘are already dreaded by a majority of people’, the source expressed concern about the new restrictions.³²⁴

Article 22 (24) identifies the ‘wrongful act’ of ‘[d]isobeying one’s parents’, and article 26 (5) further explains that children that are ‘repeatedly disobedient to their parents’ will be referred

³¹⁴ Kabul Now, IMC Condemns ‘Musical Genocide’ in Afghanistan, 14 December 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁵ AFI, Artistic Exodus, 13 November 2023, [url](#), p. 26; 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](#)

³¹⁶ RFE/RL, ‘I Feel Suffocated’: Taliban Intensifies Clampdown On Music In Afghanistan, 17 August 2023, [url](#); Sky news Australia [YouTube], Taliban sets fire to pile of musical instruments, 1 August 2023, [url](#)

³¹⁷ AFI, Artistic Exodus, 13 November 2023, [url](#), p. 26; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 September 2022, [url](#), para. 50, 81; EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 48–49

³¹⁸ AFI, Artistic Exodus, 13 November 2023, [url](#), p. 26; 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](#)

³¹⁹ AFI, Artistic Exodus, 13 November 2023, [url](#), p. 26

³²⁰ Khaama Press, Advertisement Dance and Music banned: At least 10 detained in Northeastern Afghanistan, 6 February 2024, [url](#); ANI, Taliban forces detain 10 people in Afghanistan for singing, playing musical instruments, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

³²¹ TOLONews, 5,000 Complaints Addressed in Just Over Year: MoVV, 20 August 2024, [url](#)

³²² Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 23(2)

³²³ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

³²⁴ Expert on health issues in Afghanistan, email communication, 4 September 2024 and 26 October 2024



to court.³²⁵ No information on the implementation of this article was available within the reference period of this report.

1.2.5. Treatment of people returning from abroad

Since their takeover, senior *de facto* officials have called upon Afghans to return to Afghanistan³²⁶ and to stay in the country.³²⁷ The *de facto* authorities have also established a commission for the ‘Return and Communications with Former Afghan Officials and Political Figures’ (in March 2022).³²⁸ Some individuals returning under this commission have however been facing reprisals.³²⁹ More information on this topic is available in section [4.1.1. The general amnesty and its implementation](#).

Hundreds of thousands of Afghans have been repatriated from Iran and Pakistan in 2023 and 2024.³³⁰ The *de facto* authorities allocated funds from the national budget to assist people being forced to return from Pakistan, and they provided returnees with shelter, food, medical services, cash assistance, SIM cards and transportation to their destinations.³³¹ More information on this topic is available in section [3.1. The economic and humanitarian crisis](#).

After the Taliban takeover, many states halted deportations to Afghanistan, and IOM³³² and Frontex suspended activities facilitating or accompanying returns.³³³ Referring to media reports, the Centre for Documentation and Research (Cedoca) at Belgium’s Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, outlined that France forcibly returned a man sentenced to 18 months in prison on 23 March 2023, and that the US forcibly returned an Afghan citizen with a criminal record, who had been evacuated earlier, on 13 February 2022.³³⁴ Germany moreover resumed deportations of Afghan nationals on 30 August 2024³³⁵ when 28 individuals with criminal records were deported.³³⁶ The negotiations between Germany and the Afghan *de facto* authorities were facilitated by Qatar.³³⁷ According to Der Spiegel, the deported individuals were detained upon their return, but most were

³²⁵ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22(24), 26(5)

³²⁶ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 51

³²⁷ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2024, [url](#), p. 97

³²⁸ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 52, 83

³²⁹ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5; Afghanistan International, Former Official Who Returned to Afghanistan at Taliban’s Invitation Forced to Flee Again, 16 May 2024, [url](#); Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

³³⁰ VOA, Taliban: Pakistan, Iran expelled over 400,000 Afghan refugees so far in 2024, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

³³¹ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Spotlight on social impact (October 2023 to February 2024), [url](#), p. 2

³³² 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](#)

³³³ CoE Parliamentary Assembly, The humanitarian crisis emerging for Afghanistan and Afghan refugees, 25 September 2023, [url](#), para. 37; Frontex, Risk Analysis for 2022/2023, September 2022, [url](#), p. 24

³³⁴ Belgium, Cedoca, COI Focus, Afghanistan. Migration movements of Afghans since the Taliban takeover of power, 14 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 18–19

³³⁵ JURISTnews, Germany departs 28 Afghan nationals following Solingen knife attack, citing security concerns, 30 August 2024, [url](#)

³³⁶ Al Jazeera, Germany departs 28 Afghans for first time since 2021 Taliban takeover, 30 August 2024, [url](#)

³³⁷ Al Jazeera, Germany departs 28 Afghans for first time since 2021 Taliban takeover, 30 August 2024, [url](#)



released again after about a week, while a handful of individuals remained in some sort of house arrest and were interrogated by the *de facto* security forces. Those released were reportedly handed over to their families, after their families assured to the *de facto* authorities that they would not commit crimes in the future.³³⁸

An international analyst, who was interviewed by the EUAA and who preferred to remain anonymous for operational reasons, stated in 2023 that the Taliban had minimal background information on returning individuals. The source described the return process as individuals sometimes being given travel money to reach their homes, and maybe being lectured by a *mullah* on the dangers of leaving the country. 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’.³³⁹ Based on her experience, Pashtana Durrani, human rights activist and founder of the project LEARN Afghanistan, stated that it was possible to return for individuals who did not have any problems with the *de facto* authorities, although she explained that high-profile individuals might face problems if they would return.³⁴⁰ A western security expert interviewed by Cedoca however stated, in March 2023, that ‘checks on passengers at Kabul Airport were very thorough’, and although the atmosphere at the airport was ‘not threatening’ the *de facto* authorities did try to ‘find out who was entering the country’. According to the same source, the *de facto* ‘immigration officials in the arrival and departure hall have lists of people wanted by the *de facto* Taliban authorities.’³⁴¹ A confidential source cited in a report by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs from June 2023, confirmed that there were lists of wanted people, namely former personnel of the former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).³⁴²

Matiullah Wesa, prominent activist advocating for girls’ education, was arrested after a trip to Brussels in early 2023³⁴³ where he had met with diplomats and EU officials.³⁴⁴ He was released in October 2023 after seven months in detention and has not publicly commented on his arrest or time in detention.³⁴⁵ Azizi was aware of two cases of Afghans based in Germany, facing consequences after having criticised the Taliban online. *De facto* officials went into their houses in Afghanistan and arrested close relatives and pressured the critics to return. Azizi reckoned that the reasoning of the *de facto* authorities in this regard, is that critics abroad might eventually create problems for the Taliban in Afghanistan. He did not believe that this concern extended to monitor whether Afghans follow *sharia* abroad.³⁴⁶ Rahimi was also aware of a case of an Afghan man based in Germany, who was arrested in Iran and nearly

³³⁸ Amu TV, Taliban releases 28 deportees from Germany, Spiegel reports, 8 September 2024, [url](#); Der Spiegel, Taliban lassen aus Deutschland abgeschobene Straftäter schon wieder frei, 6 September 2024, [url](#)

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

³⁴⁰ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023

³⁴¹ Belgium, Cedoca, COI Focus, Afghanistan. Migration movements of Afghans since the Taliban takeover of power, 14 December 2023, [url](#), p. 12

³⁴² The Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General country of origin information report Afghanistan, June 2023, [url](#), p. 148

³⁴³ New Humanitarian (The), Arrest of leading education activist leaves Afghans confused and worried, 12 April 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ Matiullah Wesa [X], posted on: 27 February 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ Independent (The), The women’s rights activist abducted, jailed and tortured by the Taliban, 27 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024



deported to Afghanistan after having criticised the Haqqani network.³⁴⁷ More information on online surveillance is available in section [1.1.3\(a\) Criticism in social media, and surveillance](#).

Sources have emphasised that it is of great importance to have a social network in Afghanistan for returnees.³⁴⁸ As explained by Bertelsmann Stiftung, there is no social safety network in the country, and most assistance comes from international actors.³⁴⁹ The Afghan analyst further described rental prices as being on the rise, and it being impossible to get a job without contacts, both in the private and public sectors.³⁵⁰

1.2.6. Corporal and capital punishments

After the takeover, the Taliban reopened courts across Afghanistan but replaced former staff. All newly appointed judges are male Taliban members, educated in *madrassas*.³⁵¹ The interpretation of *sharia* has largely been left to individual *de facto* judges, which has caused great variations in verdicts.³⁵² On 12 June 2024, *de facto* state-run media Kabul Times³⁵³ published an article that acknowledged that some judges were unqualified and did not resolve cases with transparency or in accordance with the rule of law.³⁵⁴

Moreover, as the *de facto* authorities abolished the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004), Shia jurisprudence was excluded from the *de facto* judiciary.³⁵⁵ Cases concerning the personal status of Shias have been resolved based on Hanafi jurisprudence, making Shias turn to informal mechanisms.³⁵⁶ Informal justice mechanisms have also been used to address civil and criminal issues,³⁵⁷ including *jirgas* (a specific form of council defined by *Pashtunwali*³⁵⁸), community elders and *imams*.³⁵⁹ In the meantime, research of AAN expert Jelena Bjelica found that the role village councils such as *jirgas* and *shuras*, have been increasingly diminished as the *de facto* authorities tend to favour their own *ulema* councils,

³⁴⁷ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

³⁴⁸ Schuster, L., in: DRC, Afghanistan conference, The Human Rights Situation after August 2021, 28 November 2022, [url](#), p. 47; SCA, in: Göteborgsregionen, Temadag om Afghanistan [Thematic day on Afghanistan] [Online video], 18 Mars 2022, [url](#), 05:13:58–05:15:10; Afghan analyst, interview, 25 April 2024; UNHCR, Protection Interventions for Afghan Returnees from Pakistan (April 2024 to December 2025), 22 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 1, 7

³⁴⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 27

³⁵⁰ Afghan analyst, online interview 25 April 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

³⁵¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12; 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

³⁵² 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](#)

³⁵³ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 5–6

³⁵⁴ Kabul Times (The), Justice, judicial organs should be quick, transparent in resolving cases, 12 June 2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ 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

³⁵⁶ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 35

³⁵⁷ 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

³⁵⁸ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 85

³⁵⁹ 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



and groups or individual men who represent the *de facto* state rather than the local population.³⁶⁰

After the Taliban takeover, there was an initial tendency among *de facto* judges not to issue ‘too harsh’ punishments³⁶¹ and there were only sporadic local reports on the use of corporal or capital punishments.³⁶² On 14 November 2022, the Taliban supreme leader ordered all *de facto* judges to fully implement *sharia*,³⁶³ and issue the so-called *hudud* and *qisas*³⁶⁴ punishments where applicable.³⁶⁵ These include execution, stoning, flogging and the amputation of limbs.³⁶⁶ Several cases of public flogging followed this statement across the whole country.³⁶⁷ Corporal punishment has continued to be enforced on a regular basis.³⁶⁸ While Rawadari documented 151 cases of flogging in the first six months of 2024,³⁶⁹ UNAMA recorded 179 cases in the three months period April–June 2024 (including 147 men, 28 women, and 4 boys).³⁷⁰ Local media outlet Hasht-e Subh also published a compilation of public floggings enforced since the Taliban takeover, as of 17 August 2024. Their data, which were based on information from the *de facto* Supreme Court and Hasht-e Subh’s own reporting, suggests that 715 individuals (whereof 136 were women) had been flogged across 31 of Afghanistan’s provinces.³⁷¹ Both Rawadari and Hasht-e Subh documented floggings being issued on charges of ‘fleeing from home’, extramarital relationships and theft.³⁷² Hasht-e Subh also documented floggings being enforced for ‘failure to adhere to the Taliban’s dress code, drinking alcohol, making phone calls to non-mahram individuals, sodomy, travelling without a mahram, and drug dealing.’³⁷³ In some cases, large groups have been lashed at the same time,³⁷⁴ and floggings have been carried out in public.³⁷⁵

As of May 2024, UNAMA had documented four public executions since the Taliban takeover, all of which have concerned men accused of murder.³⁷⁶ Within the reference period of this

³⁶⁰ Bjelica, J., The Fate Of Village Councils: The Emirate’s effort to institute hegemony over rural Afghanistan, AAN, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 46–47

³⁶¹ 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](#)

³⁶² EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 34–36

³⁶³ TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Orders Full Implementation of Sharia Law, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁴ As explained by Mortaza Rahimi, LL.M. at the University of Texas School of Law: ‘Hudud offenses are crimes against God whose punishment is clearly specified in the Quran and the Sunna (prophetic traditions), and Qisas are physical assault and murder punishable through retaliation by the victim or heirs of the victim or through the payment of blood money’, see Rahimi, M., Afghanistan’s new Penal Code: Whether or Not to codify Hudud and Qisas, University of Texas School of Law, n.d., [url](#)

³⁶⁵ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment and the Death Penalty in Afghanistan, 3 May 2023, [url](#), p. 5

³⁶⁶ AFP, Afghan supreme leader orders full implementation of sharia law, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁷ AI, Afghanistan: Taliban’s cruel return to hardline practices with public floggings must be halted immediately, 24 November 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁸ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³⁶⁹ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 23

³⁷⁰ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³⁷¹ Hasht-e Subh, The Taliban’s Vigilante Justice: 715 Public Floggings in Under Three Years, 17 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁷² Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 23; Hasht-e Subh, The Taliban’s Vigilante Justice: 715 Public Floggings in Under Three Years, 17 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁷³ Hasht-e Subh, The Taliban’s Vigilante Justice: 715 Public Floggings in Under Three Years, 17 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁷⁴ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5; Kabul Now, Taliban Publicly Flogs Over 60 Afghans, Including 15 Women, in Northern Afghanistan, 4 June 2024, [url](#)

³⁷⁵ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 23; Kabul Now, Taliban Publicly Flogs Over 60 Afghans, Including 15 Women, in Northern Afghanistan, 4 June 2024, [url](#)

³⁷⁶ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), pp. 4–5



report three men were executed; two were killed at the Ali Baba Football Stadium in Ghazni City on 22 February 2024³⁷⁷ and the third man was killed on 26 April 2024 at a sport stadium in Sherberghan City, Jawzjan Province.³⁷⁸ Rawadari also documented the execution in Ghazni Province, and reported that the accused were shot to death. The organisation also recorded two cases of stoning against two women in Badghis Province who were being punished for adultery.³⁷⁹ The stoning sentence has however not been reported by UNAMA,³⁸⁰ and Rahimi reported that stoning sentences have not been enforced, although 37 such punishments have been issued, as they await final approval of the Taliban supreme leader.³⁸¹

Human rights organisations do not have access to detention facilities,³⁸² but torture and other forms of ill-treatment were reportedly common practice against people held in custody.³⁸³ In the period 1 January 2022–31 July 2023, UNAMA documented over 1 600 human rights violations taking place in detention places managed by the *de facto* Ministry of Interior, the *de facto* GDI and the *de facto* Office of Prison Administration's provincial prisons. Almost 50 % of cases were considered acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and 18 deaths in custody were also recorded.³⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch stated that this UNAMA report suggested a systematic use of torture of detainees.³⁸⁵ Rawadari reported on torture being used as a means to force confessions, and the organisation has recorded 'common torture methods' used in prisons including 'tying stones to men's genitals, cutting flesh and nails, starving, exposing prisoners to extreme heat or cold, scaring with gunshots, waterboarding' and 'electric shocks, noise pollution, sleep deprivation, punching and kicking, beating with sticks and rifle butts, hanging from the ceiling, suffocation, and threatening to kill prisoners and their family members'.³⁸⁶ The United States Department of State (USDOS) described prison conditions *per se* as 'life-threatening'.³⁸⁷

³⁷⁷ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4

³⁷⁸ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³⁷⁹ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 23

³⁸⁰ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 5; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³⁸¹ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

³⁸² Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 20

³⁸³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 59

³⁸⁴ UNAMA, The treatment of detainees in Afghanistan: Respecting human rights: a factor for trust, 20 September 2023, [url](#), pp. 3, 24

³⁸⁵ HRW, World report 2024: Afghanistan, Events of 2023, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁶ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 20

³⁸⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7



2. Security situation

2.1. Recent security trends

After the Taliban takeover in 2021, the levels of armed violence³⁸⁸ and civilian harm significantly dropped compared to previous years of conflict.³⁸⁹ Armed groups opposing the Taliban emerged amid the takeover and in Spring 2022.³⁹⁰ Among these groups, the NRF and the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) were reported to be still active in 2023³⁹¹ and 2024.³⁹² The ISKP ramped up attacks after the takeover,³⁹³ and has continued to carry out attacks against civilian targets and against the *de facto* authorities.³⁹⁴ The *de facto* security forces have also clashed with Pakistani border forces, causing casualties on both side.³⁹⁵

UCDP assessed that the intensity of the conflict in Afghanistan did no longer amount to ‘war’ by 2022, according to the definition used by the project.³⁹⁶ In 2024, Bertelsmann Stiftung reported that there was ‘no indication of systematic or scattered combat in the country’.³⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights’ project RULAC (Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts project), continued to classify the situation as two parallel internal armed conflicts between the *de facto* authorities and, respectively, the NRF and the ISKP.³⁹⁸

Within the reference period of this report, ACLED recorded 799 events in total, where 360 events (45 %) were codified as ‘battles’, 352 (44 %) as ‘violence against civilians’ and 87 (11 %) as ‘explosions/remote violence’.³⁹⁹ Meanwhile, UCDP recorded 670 events, causing 395 civilian deaths.⁴⁰⁰ The number of events recorded by ACLED in the first nine months of 2024 (629), constituted a slight decrease of events compared to the same period in 2023 (690). However, ACLED recorded a higher share of events codified as ‘battles’ in 2024, peaking in July 2024 with 58 such events being recorded.⁴⁰¹ In contrast, UCDP recorded more events

³⁸⁸ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), para. 3

³⁸⁹ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 3

³⁹⁰ EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2023, [url](#), p. 17

³⁹¹ UCDP, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

³⁹² UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 21; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 18; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2024, [url](#), para. 16

³⁹³ UCDP, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

³⁹⁴ HRW, World report 2024: Afghanistan, Events of 2023, 12 January 2024, [url](#); Stimson, Transcript – Afghanistan’s Evolving Terrorism Landscape under the Taliban, 21 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁹⁵ TOLONews, Security Situation Considered at Three-Year Mark of Islamic Emirate Rule, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

³⁹⁶ UCDP, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

³⁹⁷ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³⁹⁸ RULAC, Non-international armed conflicts in Afghanistan, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴⁰⁰ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 3 October 2024

⁴⁰¹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 January 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024



(567) and civilian deaths (301) in the first nine months of 2024, than in the same period in 2023 when 347 events and 221 civilian deaths were recorded.⁴⁰² Both dataset however demonstrated a general decrease in the number of recorded events since 2022.⁴⁰³ In an interview with the EUAA, while being asked about the increase in ‘battles’ as indicated by ACLED data in the period March–July 2024,⁴⁰⁴ the Afghan analyst commented that there are usually ‘ebb and flow’ when it comes to armed violence, where it tends to pick up during summer months, and slow down in winter months. The source however believed that behind the increased data trends involving resistance groups could be the increased activity of the NRF in social media claiming responsibility for events which might not necessarily be true.⁴⁰⁵

The UN Secretary-General also noted a significant increase in ‘security-related incidents’ in 2024 compared to the previous year, although these data also included incidents related to narcotics⁴⁰⁶ and disputes over land.⁴⁰⁷ In the periods 1 November 2023–10 January 2024, 1 February–13 May 2024, and 14 May–31 July 2024, the UN recorded 6 140 ‘security-related incidents’ in total. About 4 % of the total consisted of ‘armed clashes’ (246 incidents in total).⁴⁰⁸ The UN Secretary-General noted that the drivers behind the increase were attempts of the *de facto* authorities to enforce the opium cultivation ban,⁴⁰⁹ but also due to an increase in armed clashes.⁴¹⁰

The following figure provides an overview over ACLED events covering the period 1 July 2022–30 September 2024.

⁴⁰² EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 January 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in emails on 3 October 2024 and 9 October 2023

⁴⁰³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 January 2022 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024 and UCDP

⁴⁰⁴ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴⁰⁵ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁴⁰⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 17

⁴⁰⁷ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2024, [url](#), para. 15

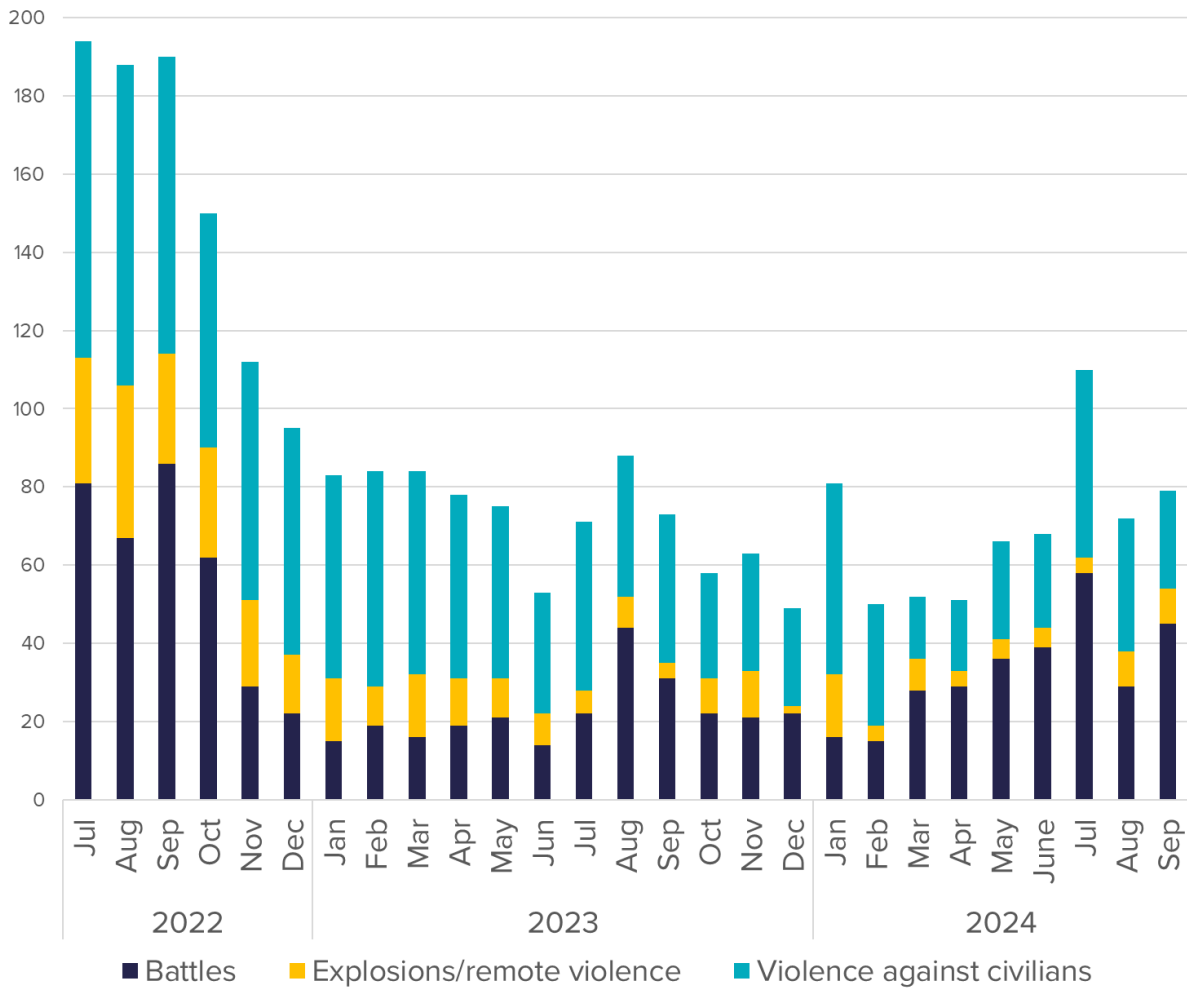
⁴⁰⁸ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 19–20; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 17; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2024, [url](#), para. 15

⁴⁰⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 17

⁴¹⁰ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2024, [url](#), para. 15; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 17



Figure 1. Events by type and month, 1 July 2022–30 September 2024 (ACLED)



Source: EUAA chart based on ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering the period 1 July 2022–30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024, [url](#)

2.2. Armed groups and armed confrontations

2.2.1. Activities of resistance groups

UNAMA claimed to be aware of at least 22 armed groups resisting the Taliban in 26 provinces as of September 2022.⁴¹¹ Since November 2023 (as of 31 July 2024), the UN had however not recorded attacks from any other armed political opposition groups than the AFF and the NRF.⁴¹² Within the reference period of this report neither UCDP recorded events of other

⁴¹¹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 September 2022, [url](#), para. 15

⁴¹² UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 21; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 18; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2024, [url](#), para. 16



resistance groups than the AFF and the NRF,⁴¹³ but ACLED recorded one ‘battle’ involving the Afghanistan Liberation Movement and two events (one ‘battle’ and one event codified as ‘explosions/remote violence’) involving the National Mobilisation Front, although the principal resistance groups involved in recorded events were the NRF and AFF.⁴¹⁴

The NRF claims to have a strength of 5 000 men in Afghanistan.⁴¹⁵ The UN Secretary-General however noted that it is difficult to assess the capabilities of the resistance groups, as their claims in social media could not be verified.⁴¹⁶ The Afghan analyst also pointed out the difficulties in triangulating claims of the NRF in social media.⁴¹⁷ Within the reference period of this report, ACLED recorded 202 events carried out by the NRF, mainly being codified as ‘battles’ (181 events) and concentrated in the provinces of Kabul and Herat.⁴¹⁸ The UN and ACLED did not record any attacks by the NRF in its former stronghold in Panjsher Province.⁴¹⁹ Meanwhile, UCDP recorded one event involving the NRF in Panjsher Province.⁴²⁰

AFF was reported by the UN to continue a ‘campaign of assassinations and small-scale attacks’ targeting the *de facto* security forces in the period 1 November 2023–10 January 2024.⁴²¹ In early 2024, the UN noted that the group had shifted its activities from rural to urban areas with attacks taking place in the cities of Pul-e Khumri (Baghlan Province), Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif (Balkh Province), Kandahar City and Aibak City (Samangan Province).⁴²² ACLED data also indicated a concentration of events connected to AFF in the provinces of Kabul (46) and also in Baghlan (13). However, only 4 events were recorded in the province of Balkh, 3 in the province of Kandahar and 1 in the province of Samangan.⁴²³

According to the Afghan analyst, as of 1 October 2024, there were no place in Afghanistan where armed opposition groups had overt presence, not even in former contested areas such as the province of Panjsher and the district of Andarab, where guerrilla fighting took place in 2022. In 2023, this analyst travelled through areas in which insurgents such as the NRF used to be active, including the provinces of Panjsher, Baghlan (including Andarab District),

⁴¹³ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 3 October 2024

⁴¹⁴ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁵ CNN, Leader of Afghanistan’s resistance movement says he will defeat the Taliban ‘no matter the odds’, 1 September 2024, [url](#); Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

⁴¹⁶ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), p. 21

⁴¹⁷ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre

⁴¹⁸ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴¹⁹ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 21; EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴²⁰ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 3 October 2024

⁴²¹ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 21

⁴²² UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 21

⁴²³ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024



Badakhshan, Kunduz and Takhar, and the source's general impression was that normal traffic was going, and locals told the source that there were no incidents taking place at that time.⁴²⁴

In the period 1 February–13 March 2024 the UN Secretary-General reported that the AFF and the NRF focused on attacking *de facto* security forces in Kabul City, using hit-and-run tactics, including the use of grenades in 22 attacks and of IEDs in 7 others.⁴²⁵ In the period 14 May–31 July 2024, AFF and NRF carried out 21 and 52 attacks respectively across Afghanistan, including 58 attacks in the 'central region', and 46 in the province of Kabul. These groups reported to hit-and-run tactics, ambushes and targeted killings against the *de facto* authorities.⁴²⁶ The Afghan analyst described the attacks by the NRF and the AFF as 'sporadic' and 'periodic'. According to this source, videos published by the AFF on the attacks they often carry out show, for example, a grenade being thrown at a car, with the AFF fighters running off right after.⁴²⁷

Within the reference period of this report, events involving the NRF and AFF caused two civilian deaths, according to UCDP data.⁴²⁸

2.2.2. Activities of the ISKP

After the Taliban takeover, the ISKP launched several attacks targeting both the *de facto* authorities and civilians, causing numerous deaths.⁴²⁹ The number of ISKP attacks however decreased significantly in 2023, after *de facto* authorities launched operations against the group.⁴³⁰ The *de facto* authorities have taken an 'aggressive stance' towards the ISKP, and have killed and detained numerous leaders and fighters.⁴³¹ In 2023, the ISKP's capabilities were reportedly weakened.⁴³² In a webinar organised by the think tank Stimson Centre in August 2024, Arian Sharifi, lecturer at Princeton University's School of Public and International Affairs, assessed that the ISKP's operational capacity was 'much lower' than three years ago. Moreover, Dr. Amira Jadoon, assistant professor at the Department of Political Science at Clemson University, also assessed the ISKP as 'much weaker than its peak years', although the group has previously shown high resilience and has retained its ability to inflict violence and carry out attacks.⁴³³

⁴²⁴ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁴²⁵ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 18

⁴²⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2024, [url](#), para. 16

⁴²⁷ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁴²⁸ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 3 October 2024

⁴²⁹ EUAA, Afghanistan, Security Situation – August 2022, [url](#), p. 66

⁴³⁰ 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

⁴³¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁴³² TOLONews, West: Islamic Emirate 'Significantly Degraded ISKP Capability', 13 September 2023, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, Analysis: IS struggles in Afghanistan on second anniversary of Taliban return, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴³³ Stimson, Transcript – Afghanistan's Evolving Terrorism Landscape under the Taliban, 21 August 2024, [url](#)



ALCED data suggest that the ISKP continued to carry out attacks, but that the number of attacks has decreased over time since 2022.⁴³⁴ Within the reference period of this report ACLED attributed 21 events to the ISKP. Out of these events, 13 targeted civilians, and the other 8 events targeted *de facto* military forces or *de facto* police forces. Most events were recorded in the province of Kabul (8), followed by the province of Kunar (4). Events were also recorded in the provinces of Ghor, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyán, and Herat.⁴³⁵

Although the ISKP have been targeting Taliban fighters and *de facto* officials since the takeover,⁴³⁶ the deadliest attacks attributed to or claimed by the ISKP have targeted certain ethno-religious groups, Shia Hazaras in particular.⁴³⁷ However, Jadoon explained that the group's targeting has been 'fluctuating' over time between state actors and civilians. According to her, attacks against civilians had outnumbered attacks targeting the *de facto* authorities by August 2024.⁴³⁸ ACLED data also indicated that the ISKP carried out more attacks targeting civilians than targeting the *de facto* authorities (14 vs. 9 events), while the UCDP recorded 14 events in which civilians were the target (based on the comments provided in the dataset), and 12 events in which the *de facto* authorities were the target.⁴³⁹ UCDP's dataset however also includes cases in which both civilians and *de facto* officials have been injured and where the primary target is not possible to identify based on the comments provided in the dataset.⁴⁴⁰

According to Jadoon, the ISKP has carried out attacks mainly in urban areas to cause more deaths. This approach has also given the group an opportunity to target minorities, Shia Hazaras in particular. The ISKP has however carried out an increased number of 'targeted assassinations of Afghan leaders or various local level leaders' as well. Sharifi, however stated that ISKP operations had shifted to focus on 'soft targets', such as targeting the Shia Hazara community.⁴⁴¹ More information on ISKP attacks targeting the Shia Hazara community is available in section [4.6.3 Hazaras and other Shia groups](#).

The following graph provides an overview of ACLED events attributed to the ISKP in the period 1 January 2022–30 September 2024, and the share of events in which civilians have been targeted.

⁴³⁴ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 January 2022 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴³⁵ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴³⁶ ISW, Afghanistan Warning Update: IS-KP in Afghanistan is Expanding Faster than Anticipated, 27 October 2021, [url](#); US, CRS, Terrorist Groups in Afghanistan, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴³⁷ Critical Threats, Mapping Anti Taliban Insurgencies In Afghanistan, 29 November 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁸ Stimson, Transcript – Afghanistan's Evolving Terrorism Landscape under the Taliban, 21 August 2024, [url](#)

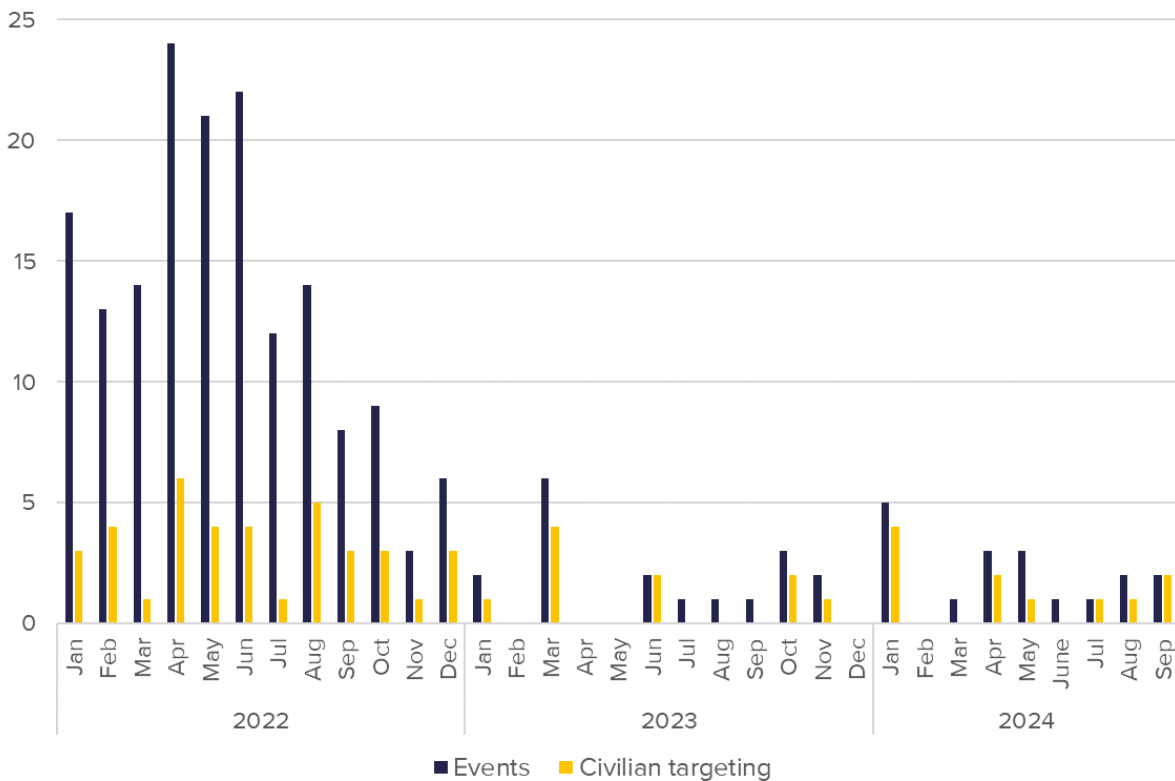
⁴³⁹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴⁴⁰ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 3 October 2024

⁴⁴¹ Stimson, Transcript – Afghanistan's Evolving Terrorism Landscape under the Taliban, 21 August 2024, [url](#)



Figure 2. ISKP attacks per month, and in relation to the share of events in which civilians were targeted, 1 January 2022–30 September 2024 (ACLED)



Source: EUAA chart based on ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering the period 1 July 2022 - 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024, [url](#)

Within the reference period of this report, the UCDP recorded 99 civilian deaths following attacks attributed to the ISKP.⁴⁴²

2.2.3. Other armed groups

Other groups reportedly present in Afghanistan, but who did not oppose the Taliban included the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP),⁴⁴³ the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM).⁴⁴⁴

The TTP has been carrying out operations in Pakistan,⁴⁴⁵ and Pakistan has launched attacks against alleged TTP targets inside Afghanistan.⁴⁴⁶ More information on this topic is available in section [2.4. Conflict trends by province](#).

⁴⁴² EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in email, 3 October 2024

⁴⁴³ US, CRS, Terrorist Groups in Afghanistan, 2 April 2024, [url](#); Giustozzi, A., The Islamic State in Khorasan between Taliban counter-terrorism and resurgence prospects, 30 January 2024, ICCT, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁴ US, CRS, Terrorist Groups in Afghanistan, 2 April 2024, [url](#); Giustozzi, A., The Islamic State in Khorasan between Taliban counter-terrorism and resurgence prospects, 30 January 2024, ICCT, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁵ Giustozzi, A., The Islamic State in Khorasan between Taliban counter-terrorism and resurgence prospects, 30 January 2024, ICCT, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁶ BBC News, Pakistan will continue attacks in Afghanistan – minister, 2 July 2024, [url](#)



IMU was formed by Uzbeks in the 1990's and carried out attacks into other Central Asian states at the time. ETIM strives to 'establish an independent Islamic state' for Uyghurs in western China. ETIM is reportedly 'headquartered' in northwestern Afghanistan, but has been moved away by the *de facto* authorities from the Chinese border.⁴⁴⁷ According to Afghanistan expert Antonio Giustozzi, some members of the IMU and ETIM have defected to the ISKP, after the *de facto* authorities imposed restrictions on them.⁴⁴⁸

In 2023 and 2024, the UN Sanctions and Monitoring Team (whose sources are UN members states⁴⁴⁹) reported that Al-Qaida had established new training camps across various provinces in Afghanistan.⁴⁵⁰ Based on the UN Sanctions and Monitoring Team's reporting, the Long War Journal stated that Al-Qaida had training camps in 12 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan as of July 2024,⁴⁵¹ and reported that Afghanistan under Taliban rule was a 'safe heaven' for Al-Qaida.⁴⁵² The Afghan analyst questioned the claims of Al-Qaida having overt training camps in Afghanistan, and had not noticed or heard anything confirming that information.⁴⁵³

2.3. Impact of the violence on the civilian population

UCDP recorded 395 civilian deaths in total within the reference period of this report,⁴⁵⁴ which constitutes an increase when compared to the same period in the previous year (1 October 2022–30 September 2023), when 358 civilian deaths were recorded.⁴⁵⁵ The deadliest events within the reference period of this report resulted from ISKP attacks against civilian targets, mainly Shia Hazaras. Based on the comments provided in the UCDP dataset, at least 12 attacks of the claimed or attributed to the ISKP, were targeting Shias or civilians in Hazara-populated areas, leading to 89 civilian deaths.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁴⁷ US, CRS, Terrorist Groups in Afghanistan, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁸ Giustozzi, A., The Islamic State in Khorasan between Taliban counter-terrorism and resurgence prospects, 30 January 2024, ICCT, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁹ Clark, K., Al-Qaeda Leader Killed in Kabul: What might be the repercussions for the Taleban and Afghanistan, AAN, 2 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ UN Security Council, Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 1 June 2023, [url](#), para. 41; UN Security Council, Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 1 June 2023, [url](#), para. 39

⁴⁵¹ FDD, LWJ, Analysis: Al Qaeda expands its network of training camps in Afghanistan, 11 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵² FDD, LWJ, Al Qaeda actively operating training camps in 5 Afghan provinces, 13 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵³ Afghan analyst, online interview, 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

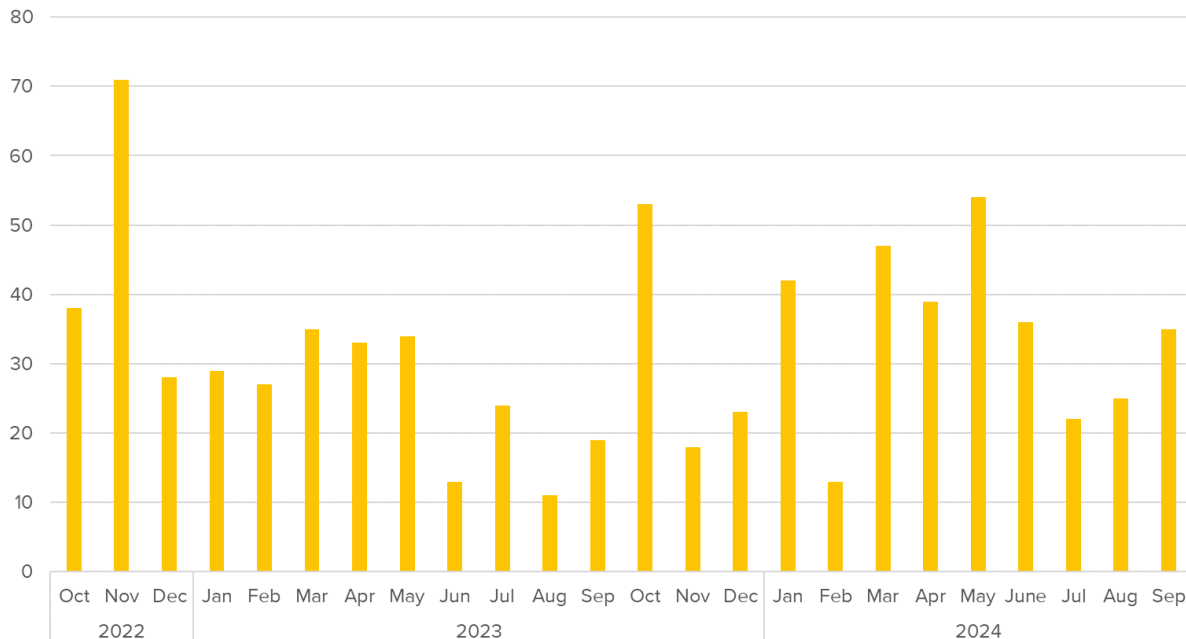
⁴⁵⁴ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in email, 3 October 2024

⁴⁵⁵ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in emails on 3 October 2024, 9 October 2023, and 24 October 2022

⁴⁵⁶ EUAA analysis based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in email, 3 October 2024



Figure 3. Civilian deaths per month 1 October 2022–30 September 2024 (UCDP)



Source: EUAA chart based on UCDP data. UCDP, data covering the period 1 July 2022 - 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in emails on 3 October 2024, 9 October 2023, 24 October 2022.

‘Violence against civilians’ was the second most represented category of events recorded by ACLED, with 352 events being recorded within the reference period of this report. 285 of these events were attributed to the *de facto* authorities.⁴⁵⁷

In 2023, the Afghan analyst travelled through areas in which resistance groups had been actively fighting the *de facto* authorities but could not notice any impact on the traffic. Moreover, locals told him that there were no incidents in these areas.⁴⁵⁸ In August 2024, the International Crisis Group reported that ‘peace and security’ was the main improvement since the Taliban takeover, and that anti-Taliban resistance from the ISKP and resistance groups ‘simmer in remote areas’ with the number of clashes ‘steadily’ declining.⁴⁵⁹

International Crisis Group further reported that the *de facto* authorities have ‘dismantled hundreds of roadblocks’ and that ‘travel is much safer’. Many Afghans go on holiday domestically and reunite with relatives in areas that were too dangerous to visit before the Taliban takeover, according to the same source.⁴⁶⁰ The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) also reported on improvements in Afghanistan’s overall security situation, which has *inter alia* facilitated access to areas that were previously unreachable.⁴⁶¹ As pointed out by Latifi, many Afghans based abroad have travelled to visit Afghanistan for the first time in decades as general security has improved. Latifi however described an ‘underlying tension’ among people

⁴⁵⁷ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴⁵⁸ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁴⁵⁹ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan Three Years after the Taliban Takeover, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan Three Years after the Taliban Takeover, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶¹ NRC, Three years on: Afghans are paying the price for the world’s neglect, 13 August 2024, [url](#)



living in the country, and a fear of *de facto* officials and *de facto* authorities who abuse and harass people, despite orders from above not to.⁴⁶²

According to the Afghan analyst, the *de facto* authorities seem to have become more efficient in dismantling ISKP cells. In the cities of Kabul and Herat the security had ‘relaxed quite significantly’ as of September 2024, according to the source’s observations. In the past, *de facto* security officials would stop every car at checkpoints and ask questions. In September 2024, they did not seem to bother, and sometimes were not at their posts. The GDI is however still very active, according to the source, but as regards the presence of *de facto* security officials in public space it has come down ‘quite a lot’.⁴⁶³

NRC noted that Afghans still suffer from the legacy of decades of conflict, and other shocks such as the ongoing economic crisis, climate change and the restrictions on women.⁴⁶⁴ According to International Rescue Committee (IRC), ‘[s]tarvation could kill more Afghans than the last twenty years of war’.⁴⁶⁵ A research article from Action on Armed Violence further highlighted the thousands of civilians that struggle with mental health issues, intergenerational trauma, and physical health issues due to the years of conflict in 2001–2021.⁴⁶⁶ Latifi similarly emphasised that much of the violence dissipated with the Taliban takeover, as well as the fear (mainly among rural communities) of falling victim of drone attacks, night raids and other security concerns. People were however still facing hunger and lack of services.⁴⁶⁷ More information on the humanitarian situation is available in section [3. Humanitarian situation](#).

Afghanistan is highly contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war.⁴⁶⁸

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 1 401 casualties were recorded between January 2022 and February 2024. Of them, 86 % were children.⁴⁶⁹

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 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). After the Taliban takeover, conflict-induced displacement decreased by nearly 100 %, according to the same source.⁴⁷⁰ In 2023, IDMC recorded no new such displacements in Afghanistan.⁴⁷¹ In early September 2024, IDMC noted two cases of conflict-induced displacement in its preliminary estimates, involving 820 persons in the district of Zazi Maidan (Khost Province) being displaced due to border incidents

⁴⁶² New Humanitarian (The), Three years on, the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate is full of contradictions, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶³ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁴⁶⁴ NRC, Three years on: Afghans are paying the price for the world’s neglect, 13 August 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁵ IRC, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ AOA, The impact of the 9/11 wars on Afghanistan and the physical health of its population, 18 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁷ New Humanitarian (The), Three years on, the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate is full of contradictions, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁸ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Unearthing hope from a legacy of mines, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Unearthing hope from a legacy of mines, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ IDMC, One year on: the Taliban takeover and Afghanistan’s changing displacement crisis, August 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ IDMC, Afghanistan, 26 August 2024, [url](#)



between *de facto* Afghan forces and Pakistani forces.⁴⁷² UN OCHA have not provided conflict-induced displacement figures beyond 23 August 2023,⁴⁷³ and UNHCR (referring to UN OCHA data) reported on zero new IDPs in Afghanistan in 2023 and 2024 (as of 24 January).⁴⁷⁴ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that disaster replaced conflict as the main driver behind people being displaced.⁴⁷⁵ In a study carried out by the humanitarian initiative REACH in 2023, about 58 % of key informants identified drought as the primary cause of displacement in their settlements.⁴⁷⁶ IDMC stressed that internally displaced persons are vulnerable to disasters, and that environment disasters cause new displacements: for example the 380 000 displacements caused by the earthquake in Herat in October 2023.⁴⁷⁷

While IDMC estimated that 4.2 million people still lived in displacement due to conflict in Afghanistan in 2023,⁴⁷⁸ UNHCR tallied about 3.2 million persons as of 30 June 2024.⁴⁷⁹

Economic hardship has been identified as a barrier for IDPs to return to their areas of origin.⁴⁸⁰ UNHCR recorded a total of 19 014 IDPs returning to their areas of origin in Afghanistan in 2024 (as of 5 October 2024), while 48 578 returned in 2023. In 2024, most IDPs returned to the provinces of Baghlan (45 % of them), Faryab (21 %), and Takhar (16 %).⁴⁸¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) projected that between 1.1–1.3 million would return to Afghanistan from abroad in 2023 and 2024⁴⁸² and UNHCR reported that 733 300 had returned from Pakistan alone in the period 15 September 2023–30 September 2024.⁴⁸³

2.4. Conflict trends by province

According to ACLED data, most events codified as ‘battles’ have been taking place in the province of Kabul, northern Afghanistan, and in the province of Herat, as well as along the eastern border to Pakistan.⁴⁸⁴ Out of the 255 events attributed to resistance movements by ACLED, 184 took place in Kabul (108) and in the North-east, in the provinces on Parwan, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kapisa, Panjsher, and Takhar (76 in total).⁴⁸⁵

Kabul was the province which had the highest rate of ‘explosions and remote violence’ (31 % of the total of such events countrywide). The 27 events recorded by ACLED in the reference period of this report constitute a slight decrease of such events compared to the period 1

⁴⁷² IDMC, Afghanistan, 26 August 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷³ UN OCHA, Conflict Induced Displacements Dashboard, 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁴ UNHCR, Afghanistan, Forced Displacements and Returns in 2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁵ IOM, Afghanistan Crisis Response Plan 2024, 26 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁶ REACH, Afghanistan: Comparative Drought Analysis, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁷ IDMC, Afghanistan - Earthquakes extend cycle of conflict and disaster displacement, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁸ IDMC, Global Internal Displacement Database, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁷⁹ UNHCR, Afghanistan, Forced Displacements and Returns in 2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁰ IDMC, One year on: the Taliban takeover and Afghanistan's changing displacement crisis, August 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸¹ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Afghanistan, 12 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸² IOM, Afghanistan Crisis Response Plan 2024, 26 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁸³ UNHCR, Afghanistan, Forced Displacements and Returns in 2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴⁸⁵ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024



October 2022–30 September 2023, when 30 events were recorded.⁴⁸⁶ In 2023, consulted sources stated that the explosions that did take place in Kabul City did not make a notable impact, as those attacks mainly were small road-side bombs targeting the *de facto* security officials.⁴⁸⁷ In October 2023, an international journalist interviewed for this report, and who preferred to remain anonymous for operational reasons, stated that given the size of Kabul City it is not always possible to hear smaller explosions taking place in an adjacent neighbourhood, although the source also pointed out that it is not possible to measure fear in those areas that have been experiencing explosions.⁴⁸⁸ On 9 April 2024, the ISKP claimed responsibility for an IED attack against a fuel tanker in the Qala-e Murad Beg area (Kabul City). As reported by AW, the explosion marks the first ISKP attack targeting critical infrastructure since May 2022.⁴⁸⁹

In 2024, Pakistan launched cross-border attacks claiming to target the TTP, while the *de facto* authorities have stated that such attacks have led to civilian deaths.⁴⁹⁰ Among returnees interviewed by the non-governmental project ACAPS in 2024, individuals in the province of Nimroz expressed concern over border instability.⁴⁹¹ Meanwhile interviewees in the provinces of Herat and Bamyan considered the general security situation as ‘safer than before’.⁴⁹² According to AW, the province of Bamyan had not seen any ISKP attacks under the *de facto* government until gunmen attacked a group of tourists⁴⁹³ in May 2024.⁴⁹⁴ ACLED did not encode any ‘battles’ or ‘explosions/remote violence’ in the province of Bamyan within the reference period of this report, while in the province of Herat 40 ‘battles’ were recorded, as well as 20 events encoded as ‘violence against civilians’ and 2 events encoded as ‘explosions/remote violence’.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁸⁶ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024

⁴⁸⁷ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁴⁸⁸ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁴⁸⁹ AW, ISKP: Group re-emerges after two-month gap in activity, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁰ Al Jazeera, Tensions high after Pakistan launches cross-border attacks into Afghanistan, 18 March 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, From Allies To Enemies: Relations Between Afghan Taliban And Pakistan Hit Rock Bottom, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹¹ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Understanding the key human safety and security issues that returnees to Afghanistan are facing, 16 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁴⁹² ACAPS, Afghanistan, Understanding the key human safety and security issues that returnees to Afghanistan are facing, 16 August 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁴⁹³ AW, ISKP: attacks against Taliban officials in Ghor and expansion of area of operations, 19 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁴ BBC News, Three Spanish tourists killed in central Afghanistan gun attack, 18 May 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Three Afghans, three Spanish tourists killed in Bamyan shooting, 18 May 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁵ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024



Figure 4. Events and civilian deaths by province, 1 October 2023–30 September 2024

Province	Battles (ACLED)	Explosions/remote violence (ACLED)	Violence against civilians (ACLED)	Civilian deaths (UCDP)
Badakhshan	8	3	17	13
Badghis	8	3	3	6
Baghlan	26	7	11	36
Balkh	5	2	15	10
Bamyan	0	0	5	6
Daykundi	2	0	10	18
Farah	5	0	2	10
Faryab	5	0	10	15
Ghazni	0	0	5	16
Ghor	6	0	8	10
Helmand	0	1	8	12
Herat	40	2	20	37
Jawzjan	4	0	1	6
Kabul	114	27	67	48
Kandahar	3	3	7	21
Kapisa	18	0	3	4
Khost	9	3	17	9
Kunar	9	5	9	10
Kunduz	6	1	4	1
Laghman	5	0	5	5
Logar	0	2	5	5
Nangarhar	14	4	13	29
Nimroz	5	0	8	3
Nuristan	8	0	0	2
Paktika	4	4	8	8
Paktya	7	0	5	15
Panjsher	8	1	13	1
Parwan	21	7	15	2
Samangan	2	0	4	6
Sar-e Pul	3	2	5	3
Takhar	14	10	40	13
Uruzgan	0	0	2	6
Wardak	1	0	6	5
Zabul	0	0	1	4
Total	360	87	352	395

Source: EUAA table based on ACLED and UCDP data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, data covering the period 1 October 2023 - 30 September 2024, as of 10 October 2024, [url](#); UCDP, data covering the period 1 October 2023 - 30 September 2024, provided by courtesy of UCDP in an email, 3 October 2024.



2.5. Recent crime trends

Some sources suggested that the crime levels increased in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover.⁴⁹⁶ According to ‘anecdotal assessments of crime in urban centres’ collected by Watkins in 2022, there had been a ‘significant increase’.⁴⁹⁷ The Afghan analyst however stated that the situation concerning violent crime had significantly improved by 2024, although it had not been completely suppressed.⁴⁹⁸ As in previous annual reports,⁴⁹⁹ USDOS mentioned the persistent activities of armed groups that ‘threatened, robbed, kidnapped, and attacked foreigners, medical and non-governmental organization workers, and other civilians’,⁵⁰⁰ and Freedom House also reported on ‘significant levels of violent crime, including kidnappings and armed robberies’ being reported from many parts of the country.⁵⁰¹ In March 2024, the *de facto* authorities, as cited by local media Pajhwok Afghan News, stated that they were fighting ‘the corrupt, robber, kidnappers and smugglers’ every day across Afghanistan, but claimed that violent incidents had ‘considerably decreased’.⁵⁰²

(a) *Bacha bazi*

The practice of *bacha bazi* (boys’ play), refers to boys being dressed up like girls and forced to dance in front of older men. In many cases, the boys are also raped.⁵⁰³ As reported by All Survivors Project, *bacha bazi* is often associated with the victims being boys and transgender children but may also include ‘keeping’ boys for other roles such as bodyguards and servants, in the context of also sexually abusing them.⁵⁰⁴ Men who practice *bacha bazi* have usually been influential people, treating the children as their property. Both perpetrators and victims of the practice have been stigmatised by the surrounding community, although it usually has affected the victim more than the perpetrator due to their weak social position.⁵⁰⁵ The Taliban movement rose partly as a reaction to the prevalence of *bacha bazi* among warlords,⁵⁰⁶ and

⁴⁹⁶ 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

⁴⁹⁷ Watkins, A., The Taliban one year on, CTC Sentinel, August 2022, [url](#), p. 11

⁴⁹⁸ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁴⁹⁹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#); 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](#)

⁵⁰⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁰¹ Freedom House, Afghanistan: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report, 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰² Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 killed, 5 wounded in Afghanistan last week, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰³ Germany, BAMF, Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan SOGI (Sexuelle Orientierung und geschlechtliche Identität): Situation von LGBTIQ-Personen, March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁰⁴ ASP, Conflict-related sexual violence: New dangers facing men and boys in Afghanistan, January 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁵⁰⁵ Germany, BAMF, Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan SOGI (Sexuelle Orientierung und geschlechtliche Identität): Situation von LGBTIQ-Personen, March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁰⁶ FP, Bacha Bazi: An Afghan Tragedy, 28 October 2013, [url](#)



the practice was punishable by death during their first rule in 1996–2001.⁵⁰⁷ After the Taliban were ousted from power in 2001, the practice of *bacha bazi* increased again.⁵⁰⁸

As reported by All Survivors Project, *bacha bazi* is ‘notoriously difficult to monitor’ since it is ‘typically practiced discreetly’ by ‘high-ranking, better-off, better-connected men’.⁵⁰⁹ USDOS reported on the practice having continued after the Taliban takeover, and that children as young as nine years old were being exploited. In northern provinces, community elders or private citizens were common perpetrators, while in southern provinces they were commonly former officials of the former government. In some cases, Taliban members were also reportedly among the perpetrators. The same source reported that victims were ‘hesitant to report their exploitation out of fear of punishment from the Taliban and social stigma’.⁵¹⁰ The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan also reported on the practice as continuing in February 2024.⁵¹¹ The Afghan analyst confirmed that some Taliban members practiced *bacha bazi* during their time as an insurgency, but stated that it was not common within the movement as it perceives *bacha bazi* with ‘extreme aversion’.⁵¹² A report by Rawadari, published in November 2023, also reported that boys who were ‘hired as body guards, secretaries, support staff or drivers for Taliban officials’ were ‘vulnerable to sexual abuse by their superiors’.⁵¹³

2.6. Recruitment by the Taliban and armed groups

The *de facto* authorities have created a national *de facto* military and have recruited their own members as well as former members of the Afghan security forces who served the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.⁵¹⁴ The international analyst confirmed this information in October 2023 but added that the number of recruited former security force personnel was limited and generally concerned specialists.⁵¹⁵

When announcing their plans to create an army, the *de facto* authorities stated that they would recruit on a voluntary basis.⁵¹⁶ The *de facto* authorities have recruited in large numbers and their own members have been treated preferentially. Sometimes, however, these recruitment efforts have caused resentment or disappointment, as Taliban members have not always been rewarded with positions.⁵¹⁷ The Afghan analyst gave the province of Kandahar as an example: there the *de facto* security structures did not have enough positions to

⁵⁰⁷ Germany, BAMF, Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan SOGI (Sexuelle Orientierung und geschlechtliche Identität): Situation von LGBTIQ-Personen, March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁰⁸ FP, *Bacha Bazi: An Afghan Tragedy*, 28 October 2013, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁹ ASP, Conflict-related sexual violence: New dangers facing men and boys in Afghanistan, January 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁵¹⁰ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 29 February 2024, [url](#), para. 36

⁵¹² Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024, and email communication, 11 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁵¹³ Rawadari, *The Human rights Situation of Children in Afghanistan*, November 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁵¹⁴ Reuters, Taliban aim to boost Afghan security forces, anti-aircraft capacity -army chief, 12 April 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁵ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵¹⁶ TOLONews, Government to build 150,000-member forces, 10 January 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹⁷ 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



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 during the insurgency. The same source further explained that many fighters were disappointed by the fact that most public servants of the former government were retained, and that there was a push to incorporate more 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 2023.⁵¹⁸

Several sources, including the Afghan analyst, the international analyst, and the international journalist, were not aware of instances of forced recruitment. They described the situation as quite the opposite, and that many sought to join the *de facto* security forces as there were few job opportunities available.⁵¹⁹ The international journalist also stated that the *de facto* authorities have enough men, and that many were willing to serve on a voluntary basis, even without pay.⁵²⁰

Taliban members have been recruited to fill gaps in the former ANDSF, as most previous personnel were removed.⁵²¹ Some skilled personnel of the former government were however asked to stay or resume their work within the *de facto* civil administration and security forces, for example people with highly technical functions, such as pilots.⁵²² The international journalist knew a person who had the Taliban coming to his home five times asking him to return to work, but they did not coerce him to do so, according to the source.⁵²³ 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 administration, including civilian and security personnel. Some people that the analyst spoke to decided not to go back to their roles, despite being approached ‘multiple times’. 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.⁵²⁴ Rahimi stated that the *de facto* authorities did engage in outreach to get people with critical expertise back in order to rebuild a *de facto* army after the takeover. Rahimi did however not know whether this outreach had been coercive or incentive, but he stated that coercion was probably not needed in some cases. Some Afghans who left amid the takeover have been willing to return, after facing difficulties in setting up their life in Europe and the US.⁵²⁵

In 2024, the Afghan analyst stated that the *de facto* army had become professionalised and that they made use of biometrics in order to identify people – including former government

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

⁵¹⁹ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023, 13 October 2024; International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁵²⁰ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁵²¹ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵²² Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁵²³ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁵²⁴ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁵²⁵ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.



officials. Such individuals, except those with certain skills as outlined above, had been removed from the *de facto* security forces, or not allowed to join the *de facto* police, *de facto* army or *de facto* intelligence.⁵²⁶ This information could not be corroborated with other sources.

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 labour, physical abuse, and detention'.⁵²⁷ This exact statement has been prevalent in every yearly report of USDOS on the human rights situation in Afghanistan since 2010.⁵²⁸

Children were recruited to Taliban ranks during their time as an insurgency⁵²⁹ and according to some sources, child recruitment has continued.⁵³⁰ In December 2022, Stimson Center estimated that thousands of children may remain in Taliban ranks.⁵³¹ The Afghan analyst explained that it has been a common practice among Taliban commanders, especially in the south, to keep boys in the ages 15–19+ years as personal bodyguards, referred to as *lagharzani* ('one whose beard has not grown out fully' or 'grown sparsely'). However, the Taliban have established a commission to remove younger boys from Taliban ranks, and to avoid recruiting boys that are too young by rejecting those without a beard. Many children have been removed in this process, and young boys could not be seen among Taliban fighters as directly after the Taliban takeover – although it was not a very common sight back then either. 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.⁵³² Anonymous sources consulted by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2023 also stated that 'the age of boys is not determined by their year of birth, but by their beard growth'.⁵³³ In the period 1 January–31 December 2023, the UN recorded 'the

⁵²⁶ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024, and email communication 13 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁵²⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁸ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#); 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](#)

⁵²⁹ HRW, This is our opportunity to end the Taliban's use of child soldiers, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁰ Borgen Project (The), Child Soldiers in Afghanistan, 26 September 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁵³¹ Stimson, CSPA Implementation Tracker, Afghanistan, 7 December 2022, [url](#)

⁵³² Afghan analyst, interviews 8–9 June 2023, 1 October 2024, and email communication, 10 October 2023, 13 October 2024. The interview on 1 October 2024 was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁵³³ The Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General country of origin information report Afghanistan, June 2023, [url](#), section 1.2.7.1





recruitment and use in combat (150) and support roles (192) of 342 boys by the Taliban’, but added that most of the children (333) had been released.⁵³⁴

As regards recruitment to the ISKP, the Salafi community and Taliban foot soldiers have reportedly been called upon by the group to support them.⁵³⁵ 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 the ISKP sought to recruit individuals with a militant Salafi profile and students being particularly religious – especially those known to have experienced harassment from ‘extremist Hanafi students’ or from the *de facto* authorities during their repression of the ISKP. Recruitment methods listed 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 reportedly stopped. Moreover, students joining the ISKP often had no interest in becoming fighters but took on other support 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, as well as Nangarhar University and Badakhshan University.⁵³⁶ The UN Sanctions and Monitoring Team also reported on the new ISKP leader focusing on recruiting more educated individuals and extending recruitment to non-Salafists.⁵³⁷ According to one source, i.e. the USDOS, the ISKP have also engaged in recruiting children.⁵³⁸ In analysis of images from ISKP cells, AW noted that a child appeared in one picture of ISKP fighters published in December 2022.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁴ UN Secretary General, Children and armed conflict, 3 June 2024, [url](#), para. 16

⁵³⁵ 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

⁵³⁶ 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

⁵³⁷ UN Security Council, Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 1 June 2023, [url](#), para. 46

⁵³⁸ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁹ 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 the decreased international military spending.⁵⁴⁰ This crisis escalated after the takeover on 15 August 2021,⁵⁴¹ and the Afghan economy entered a stage of ‘free fall’ for months.⁵⁴² Among other factors, the freezing of the Afghan Central Bank’s assets caused a liquidity crisis and shortages in banknotes,⁵⁴³ while the country was struck with international sanctions⁵⁴⁴ and an abrupt halt in aid flows.⁵⁴⁵ Since the *de facto* government was not recognised, it could not receive funds from international financial institutions to handle the crisis.⁵⁴⁶ Its restrictions on women’s access to work further impacted the economy negatively.⁵⁴⁷ According to the World Bank, the Afghan economy contracted by 20.7 % in 2021, and by a further 6.2 % in 2022, and was stagnating in 2023.⁵⁴⁸ High inflation drove up prices on basic goods and food,⁵⁴⁹ and the population was under substantial pressure⁵⁵⁰ struggling to cover basic needs.⁵⁵¹ Large parts of the population became increasingly reliant on humanitarian aid,⁵⁵² from 24.4 million people in 2022 to 28.3 million people in January 2023.⁵⁵³ While the economy stabilised again by mid-2022, it did so at a lower equilibrium than before.⁵⁵⁴ In 2023, there were some signs of a slight economic revival,⁵⁵⁵ and the inflation declined⁵⁵⁶ and overwent into deflation in April 2023.⁵⁵⁷ Deflation⁵⁵⁸ as well as favourable weather conditions for food production,⁵⁵⁹ (as drought conditions

⁵⁴⁰ USIP, One Year Later, Taliban Unable to Reverse Afghanistan’s Economic Decline, 8 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴¹ HRW, Economic Causes of Afghanistan’s humanitarian Crisis, 4 August 2022, [url](#); NRC, Afghanistan at a Precipice, 10 August 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁵⁴² 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](#)

⁵⁴³ HRW, Afghanistan: Economic Crisis Underlies Mass Hunger, 4 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁴ NRC, NRC in Afghanistan, 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁵ Clark, K., Survival and Stagnation: The State of the Afghan economy, AAN, 7 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁶ UK, House of Commons Library, Afghanistan: One year under a Taliban government, 10 October 2022, [url](#), p. 6

⁵⁴⁷ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁴⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 9, 12–13

⁵⁴⁹ 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](#)

⁵⁵⁰ World Bank, Afghanistan, Key conditions and challenges, April 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁵¹ ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁵⁵² 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](#)

⁵⁵³ UN OCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, 23 January 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁴ USIP, One Year Later, Taliban Unable to Reverse Afghanistan’s Economic Decline, 8 August 2022, [url](#); World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update – Adjusting to the New Realities, October 2022, [url](#), pp. 9, 17

⁵⁵⁵ USIP, Two Years into Taliban Rule, New Shocks Weaken Afghan Economy, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁶ 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

⁵⁵⁷ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

⁵⁵⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 9, 21; FEWS NET, Afghanistan Food Security Outlook, February - September 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁹ FEWS NET, The 2023-24 agricultural season concluded with an average harvest despite extremely variable in season precipitation and above-average temperatures, 21 June 2024, [url](#)



improved⁵⁶⁰) led to price reductions in food items.⁵⁶¹ The lower living costs⁵⁶² eased the financial pressure on households.⁵⁶³ Between April and October 2023, acute food insecurity among the population dropped from 40 % to 29 %, ⁵⁶⁴ and by January 2024, the need of humanitarian assistance had decreased to 23.7 million people.⁵⁶⁵ Economic activity has however stagnated⁵⁶⁶ and the population has been facing poverty, food insecurity and unemployment.⁵⁶⁷ As noted by the World Bank, a longer period of deflation might also contract the economy, and in turn increase poverty and unemployment.⁵⁶⁸ As explained by the World Bank: ‘[I]f consumers postpone spending in anticipation of further price drops, businesses may cut back on investments, hindering economic expansion and job creation, which are crucial for long-term poverty reduction.’⁵⁶⁹

Afghanistan also remains vulnerable to disasters related to climate change,⁵⁷⁰ including drought,⁵⁷¹ floods⁵⁷² and earthquakes.⁵⁷³ According to a compilation of such disasters in 2024 (as of 7 September) by UN OCHA, almost 179 000 people were impacted by natural disasters, causing 524 deaths and injuring 820 persons, damaging 14 764 houses and destroying 6 465.⁵⁷⁴ A great share of the population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture and livestock,⁵⁷⁵ which was highly affected by the persistent droughts in 2021–2023.⁵⁷⁶ This was one of the worst drought periods in Afghan history.⁵⁷⁷ Flash floods have also caused deaths

⁵⁶⁰ REACH, Afghanistan: Comparative Drought Analysis, September 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁶¹ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 15–16; WFP, Afghanistan: Monthly Market Report: Issue 49: June 2024, [url](#); REACH, Afghanistan: Comparative Drought Analysis, September 2024, [url](#), p. 23

⁵⁶² Rahimi, L., The Silent Erosion of Afghanistan’s Urban Middle Class: A Neglected Crisis, The Diplomat, 24 February 2024, [url](#); World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁵⁶³ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 15–16

⁵⁶⁴ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), p. 14

⁵⁶⁵ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024, Response Overview (1 January – 30 June 2024), 29 August 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁶⁶ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 9, 12; UNDP, Afghanistan’s economy has ‘basically collapsed’, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁷ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 9, 12; ADB, Asian Development Outlook: Afghanistan, April 2024, [url](#), p. 131

⁵⁶⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁵⁶⁹ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁷⁰ FEWS Net, Afghanistan Food Security Outlook June 2024 - January 2025: The wheat harvest is improving food access, particularly in rural areas, 6 July 2024, [url](#); SIPRI, Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet: Afghanistan 2023, February 2023, [url](#), p. 1; UN OCHA, Afghanistan: The alarming effects of climate change, 1 August 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷¹ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Drought - 2021-2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷² FEWS Net, Afghanistan Food Security Outlook June 2024 - January 2025: The wheat harvest is improving food access, particularly in rural areas, 6 July 2024, [url](#); ADB, Asian Development Outlook: Afghanistan, April 2024, [url](#), p. 129

⁵⁷³ FEWS Net, Afghanistan Food Security Outlook June 2024 - January 2025: The wheat harvest is improving food access, particularly in rural areas, 6 July 2024, [url](#); IDMC, Afghanistan - Earthquakes extend cycle of conflict and disaster displacement, 14 May 2024, [url](#); ADB, Asian Development Outlook: Afghanistan, April 2024, [url](#), p. 129

⁵⁷⁴ UN OCHA, Natural Disasters Dashboard, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁵ REACH, Afghanistan: Comparative Drought Analysis, September 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁷⁶ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Drought - 2021-2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁷ REACH, Afghanistan: Comparative Drought Analysis, September 2024, [url](#), pp. 3–4



and severe damages to houses, land and livestock across the country.⁵⁷⁸ In April and May 2024 alone, according to data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), flash floods killed at least 300 persons, injured hundreds, and destroyed nearly 9 000 homes.⁵⁷⁹ In October 2023, a series of powerful earthquakes hit the province of Herat, which caused the destruction of entire villages, and in some areas, killed almost all inhabitants. Mainly women and children were killed as they were indoors at the time of the quakes.⁵⁸⁰ According to UN OCHA, more than 275 000 people in nine districts were ‘directly affected’,⁵⁸¹ while Alcis (a geographical information services organisation), based on satellite imagery showing compound destructions, more than five million people (12.5 % of the Afghan population⁵⁸²) had been impacted.⁵⁸³ The World Bank reported that the earthquakes led to a downturn in economic activity, projecting reductions in the national production of 0.7 % in 2023 and 0.2 % in 2024.⁵⁸⁴ More detailed information about this event is available in the EUAA COI Query Response: [Afghanistan - Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments](#).

The economy has also been impacted by the Taliban’s enforcement of their opium cultivation ban.⁵⁸⁵ Opium cultivation has drastically decreased,⁵⁸⁶ from 129 640 hectares in 2022 to 740 hectares in 2023 according to Alcis.⁵⁸⁷ The World Bank reported that the ban’s swift enforcement led to an 8 % reduction in GDP, and USD 1.3 billion losses in farmers’ income.⁵⁸⁸ As opium poppy cultivation used to be a common source of income⁵⁸⁹ and the ban has deprived millions of people of their livelihood.⁵⁹⁰

Forced repatriation of Afghans further impacted the economy⁵⁹¹ and put a strain on host communities with already limited resources.⁵⁹² In November 2023, Pakistan launched a

⁵⁷⁸ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Impact of flooding, 21 May 2024, [url](#), p. 1; FEWS Net, Afghanistan Food Security Outlook June 2024 - January 2025: The wheat harvest is improving food access, particularly in rural areas, 6 July 2024, [url](#); EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2023, [url](#), p. 46

⁵⁷⁹ UNDP, Why are flash floods so deadly in Afghanistan?, 29 May 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁰ EUAA, COI Query, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 2 February 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁵⁸¹ UN OCHA, Today’s top news: Occupied Palestinian Territory, Afghanistan, 16 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸² Shapour, R., Nature’s Fury: The Herat earthquakes of 2023, AAN, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸³ Alcis, Afghanistan Earthquakes, [2024], [url](#)

⁵⁸⁴ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁵⁸⁵ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), p. 14

⁵⁸⁶ Alcis, Uncharted Territory: Does the Taliban’s new edict signal a crackdown on the drugs trade is looming?, 2 November 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Trouble In Afghanistan’s Opium Fields: The Taliban War On Drugs, 12 September 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁷ Alcis, Uncharted Territory: Does the Taliban’s new edict signal a crackdown on the drugs trade is looming?, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), p. 9

⁵⁸⁹ 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](#)

⁵⁹⁰ International Crisis Group, Trouble In Afghanistan’s Opium Fields: The Taliban War On Drugs, 12 September 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹¹ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Navigating Challenges: Confronting Economic Recession and Deflation, April 2024, [url](#), p. 14

⁵⁹² UN OCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024 (December 2023), 23 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 3, 27



repatriation program of Afghans⁵⁹³ forcing about 541 000 individuals to cross the border to Afghanistan during the first phase of the programme.⁵⁹⁴ In June 2024, Pakistan announced that they would initiate the second phase of the program,⁵⁹⁵ but it was suspended⁵⁹⁶ and postponed for one year.⁵⁹⁷ According to UNHCR, about 712 200 Afghans of all statuses had reportedly returned from Pakistan, including through deportations, assisted Voluntary Repatriation and other types of returns in the period September 2023–1 September 2024.⁵⁹⁸

More information on the repatriation of Afghans from Pakistan is available in the following EUAA Query Responses:

- [EUAA COI Query Response: Afghanistan – Situation of Afghan returnees from Pakistan amid the campaign linked to the ‘Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan’ \(IFRP\)](#)
- [EUAA COI Query Response: Pakistan – ‘Illegal Foreigners’ Repatriation Plan \(IFRP\)](#)

3.2. Poverty, basic subsistence and employment

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world.⁵⁹⁹ The most recent poverty estimates are based on official data of the former government collected in 2019 and 2020, which suggest that about 47 % of the population lived on assets below the poverty threshold.⁶⁰⁰ The World Bank reused this figure in 2023 and estimated that 48.3 % of the population were poor, although monetary poverty was estimated to impact 70 % of the population.⁶⁰¹ UNDP however suggested that 84 % of the population live in monetary poverty,⁶⁰² on less than one US dollar a day.⁶⁰³

Insufficient labour earnings have been a challenge for households to cover basic expenses.⁶⁰⁴ Nominal and real wages contracted significantly after the Taliban takeover,⁶⁰⁵ although wages for both skilled and unskilled work have recovered and even passed their value from before

⁵⁹³ Al Jazeera, Pakistan says registered Afghan refugees can stay for one more year, 10 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁴ Al Jazeera, Pakistan to start second phase of Afghan deportations, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁵ Al Jazeera, Pakistan to start second phase of Afghan deportations, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁶ UNHCR, UNHCR calls for greater efforts towards longer-term solutions for Afghans in Pakistan, 9 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁷ AI, Pakistan: One-year extension of UN-registered Afghan refugees a welcome first step, lifeline must extend to all, 11 July 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁸ UNHCR, Afghanistan situation, [2024], [url](#)

⁵⁹⁹ World Bank, Gross national income per capita 2023, Atlas method and PPP, 1 July 2024, [url](#), pp. 3–4; World Population Review, Poorest Countries in the World 2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁰ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 43; World Bank, Updating Poverty in Afghanistan Using the SWIFT-Plus Methodology, November 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁰¹ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 6, 23

⁶⁰² UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 9–10

⁶⁰³ UNDP, Approximately 85 percent of Afghans live on less than one dollar a day, 10 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁴ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 43; Gallup, Economic Uncertainty Awaits Returning Afghans, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁵ HRW, Economic Causes of Afghanistan’s Humanitarian Crisis, 4 August 2022, [url](#); World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update – Adjusting to the New Realities, Uncertainty after Fleeting Stability, 2023, [url](#), p. 23



the Taliban takeover.⁶⁰⁶ Deflation has been a driving factor in this regard,⁶⁰⁷ at the same time as it has decreased general living costs.⁶⁰⁸ The World Bank reported that household's welfare improved in 2023, but emphasised that poverty remained high, and that the recent gains could be an effect of households exhausting all their resources and coping strategies.⁶⁰⁹ Large parts of the population still struggle to cover basic expenses, including food.⁶¹⁰ Reported coping strategies include reducing food intake,⁶¹¹ taking on debts, selling property,⁶¹² begging,⁶¹³ marrying off girls, child labour,⁶¹⁴ and selling kidneys.⁶¹⁵

Unemployment and underemployment have worsened since the Taliban takeover,⁶¹⁶ in particular access to salaried employment.⁶¹⁷ The World Bank noted that only 16 % among household heads had a salaried employment in the public or private sector in June–August 2022, and 9 % among all adults.⁶¹⁸ World Food Programme (WFP) reported that 12 % of adults had an employment in April–June 2023.⁶¹⁹ Unemployment among women and youth was particularly high.⁶²⁰ In October 2023, the World Bank reported that 31 % of males in the age group 14–24 were unemployed, while the average male unemployment rate was 18 % for all ages (14–65 years). Meanwhile, the average unemployment rate among women was 44.4 %.⁶²¹

The general labour force participation however saw a significant increase among both men and women in 2022 and 2023.⁶²² Male labour force participation rose from 69 % in 2020 to 86 % in April/June 2023, and female labour force participation three-folded in the same period.⁶²³ The lack of job opportunities has been a driving factor, pushing men to increasingly engage in informal work⁶²⁴ and pushing women to engage in small-scale home-based

⁶⁰⁶ World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey (AWMS), Round 3, October 2023, [url](#), pp. 7–8; World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 43; WFP, Afghanistan: Monthly Market Report: Issue 49: June 2024, [url](#); REACH, Afghanistan: Comparative Drought Analysis, September 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁶⁰⁷ World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey (AWMS), Round 3, October 2023, [url](#), pp. 7–8; World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 43

⁶⁰⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 10, 43; ADB, Asian Development Outlook: Afghanistan, April 2024, [url](#), p. 131

⁶⁰⁹ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 23

⁶¹⁰ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 42, 45; Gallup, Economic Uncertainty Awaits Returning Afghans, 10 November 2023, [url](#); UN Afghanistan, Annual Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁶¹¹ UN OCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024, 23 December 2023, [url](#), p. 31

⁶¹² UN OCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024, 23 December 2023, [url](#), p. 31; ACAPS, Afghanistan, Understanding resilience strategies and tools, 3 June 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁶¹³ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Understanding resilience strategies and tools, 3 June 2024, [url](#), p. 8

⁶¹⁴ Save the Children, Afghanistan, [2023]. [url](#); UN OCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024, 23 December 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁶¹⁵ New York Times (The), Barren Fields and Empty Stomachs: Afghanistan's Long, Punishing Drought In a country especially vulnerable to climate change, a drought has, 19 March 2024, [url](#); AFP, Desperate Afghans resort to selling their kidneys to feed families, 28 February 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹⁶ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47

⁶¹⁷ UNDP, One Year in Review-Afghanistan since August 2021, 5 October 2022, [url](#), p. 27; ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁶¹⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 8, 10–11

⁶¹⁹ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, 5 July 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁶²⁰ World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey (AWMS), Round 3, October 2023, [url](#), p.12

⁶²¹ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47

⁶²² 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

⁶²³ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 14

⁶²⁴ UNDP, One Year in Review-Afghanistan since August 2021, 5 October 2022, [url](#), p. 27





business.⁶²⁵ A survey carried out by WFP showed that the restrictions on women's access to work had led to significantly less households having a female household member engaging in any type of wage labour or salary employment. By March 2024, women engaging in small businesses had decreased by 13 %, and women with salaried employment had decreased by 16 %, compared to the period before the restrictions.⁶²⁶

According to the World Bank, poverty rates were higher in urban areas.⁶²⁷ The urban population relied heavily on work within the construction sector, which collapsed after the Taliban takeover.⁶²⁸ Meanwhile, people in rural areas have depended on agriculture to a large extent⁶²⁹ and the farmers' possibility to self-produce has generally made them less vulnerable to changes in workforce demands.⁶³⁰ A multi-authored research article of Biruni Institute suggested that the rural population has adapted over the years and developed diverse coping mechanism to handle economic shocks, in contrast to the urban population which on one hand lacks informal insurance mechanisms such as land, food savings, localised co-insurance, and on the other hand also cannot rely on any formal insurance mechanism of a welfare state – such as unemployment benefits.⁶³¹ Some reports however suggest that poverty has been more intense in rural areas in recent years.⁶³² The agricultural sector is vulnerable to climate shocks,⁶³³ and many households relying on agriculture and livestock as their primary sources of income⁶³⁴ have been impacted by the past years' drought⁶³⁵ and floodings.⁶³⁶

3.3. Food security

In March 2024, WFP estimated that 88 % of the population experienced 'insufficient food consumption'.⁶³⁷ According to analyses of acute food insecurity by the Integrated Food

⁶²⁵ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 23; World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey (AWMS), Round 3, October 2023, [url](#), p. 14

⁶²⁶ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, 5 July 2023, [url](#), p. 7

⁶²⁷ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 47

⁶²⁸ 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](#)

⁶²⁹ 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, World, 30 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶³⁰ CMI, Understanding and addressing poverty and food insecurity in Afghanistan, April 2023, [url](#);

⁶³¹ Rahimi, L., The Silent Erosion of Afghanistan's Urban Middle Class: A Neglected Crisis, The Diplomat, 24 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶³² 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, World, 30 November 2022, [url](#);

AAN, No Food For Hope: Afghanistan's Child Malnutrition Dilemma in 2023, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

⁶³³ 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, World, 30 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶³⁴ UN OCHA and REACH, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment, October 2022, [url](#), p. 3; ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁶³⁵ UN OCHA, 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](#)

⁶³⁶ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Impact of flooding, 21 May 2024, [url](#), p. 1; EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2023, [url](#), p. 46

⁶³⁷ WFP, Afghanistan, Food Security Update, March 2024, [url](#), p. 8. The WFP's Food Consumption Score (FCS) aggregates household-level data, and calculates a composite score based on 'dietary diversity, food consumption frequency, and relative nutritional value of different food groups' during a seven-day reference period. See: WFP, Food Consumption Score, 4 October 2019, [url](#)





Security Phase Classifications (IPC),⁶³⁸ 29–32 % of the population has been experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and 4).⁶³⁹ IPC provided the following figures on the prevalence of acute food insecurity among the total population:

Table 1: Prevalence of acute food insecurity according to IPC

IPC Phase	October 2023	March–April 2024
1: No or minimal	31 % (13.8 million)	31 % (14.1 million)
2: Stressed	40 % (17.7 million)	36 % (16.2 million)
3: Crisis	24 % (10.6 million)	25 % (11.3 million)
4: Acute	5 % (2.4 million)	7 % (2.9 million)
5: Famine	0 %	0 %

Source: IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March - April 2024 and Projection for May – October 2024, 27 May 2024, [url](#); IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for October 2023 and Projection for November 2023 – March 2024, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

IPC reported on ‘marginal improvements’ since the severe situation that developed after the Taliban takeover in 2021. A third (32 %) of Afghanistan’s population continued to experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or 4), which corresponds to 14.2 million people.⁶⁴⁰ This can be contrasted to the IPC data covering September–October 2022 when 41 % of the population experienced IPC Phase 3 or above.⁶⁴¹ Similarly, data from the most recent Whole of Afghanistan Assessment (WoAA)⁶⁴² demonstrated how poor food consumption among the population peaked at 42 % in 2022 (up from 38 % in 2021), and decreased again to 28 % in 2023 as drought conditions improved. However, despite these improvements, the percentage of households with ‘acceptable’ food consumption never exceeded 30 % in 2021–2023,⁶⁴³ and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stressed in March 2024 that although food security has been improving, the crisis is far from over.⁶⁴⁴ Many households have coped with food insecurity by adjusting their diets to avoid expensive food.⁶⁴⁵ Adults have also been skipping meals to ensure that children can eat.⁶⁴⁶ In March–April 2024, IPC classified all Afghan provinces as experiencing ‘crisis’ conditions (IPC Phase 3), except for Kabul City where the situation was classified as ‘stressed’ (IPC Phase 2). Meanwhile, most people experiencing ‘emergency’ conditions (IPC Phase 4) were located in

⁶³⁸ 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

⁶³⁹ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March - April 2024 and Projection for May - October 2024, 27 May 2024, [url](#); IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for October 2023 and Projection for November 2023 - March 2024, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁰ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March - April 2024 and Projection for May - October 2024, 27 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴¹ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for September 2022 - October 2022 and Projection for November 2022 - March 2023, 23 January 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴² WoAA is a nationwide household survey carried out by REACH in 2022.

⁶⁴³ REACH, Afghanistan: Comparative Drought Analysis, September 2024, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁴⁴ WFP, Afghanistan: the food security situation is improving, but the crisis is far from over, 14 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁵ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January–April) 2023, 5 July 2023, [url](#), p. 9; ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan – Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁶⁴⁶ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 2nd Quarter (June 2023), 26 September 2023, [url](#), p. 12; World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey (AWMS), Round 3, October 2023, [url](#), p. 7 [footnote 5]



the provinces of Badakhshan, Badghis, Ghor, Ghazni, Helmand, Herat (including Herat City), Kunduz, Kandahar and Takhar.⁶⁴⁷

According to IOM, the prices of food items have been volatile and a ‘significant concern’. Based on interviews with retail shops in local markets, IOM could present the following figures of costs of food and fuel.⁶⁴⁸ In general, the prices on these items have gone down since January 2023, in particular on flour, rice, and cooking oil. The price of chicken had however increased in all three cities.⁶⁴⁹

Table 2: Prices in the cities Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e Sharif, as of 28 January 2024

Item	Kabul	Herat	Mazar-e Sharif
Bread (one piece)	AFN 10 (EUR 0.12)	AFN 10 (EUR 0.12)	AFN 10 (EUR 0.12)
Flour (50 kg)	AFN 1 400 (EUR 17.34)	AFN 1 600 (EUR 19.82)	AFN 1 350 (EUR 16.72)
Rice (25 kg)	AFN 3 000 (EUR 37.16)	AFN 2 200 (EUR 27.25)	AFN 2 200 (EUR 27.25)
Beans (7 kg)	AFN 800 (EUR 9.9)	AFN 770 (EUR 9.54)	AFN 780 (EUR 9.66)
Cooking oil (5 l)	AFN 450 (EUR 5.57)	AFN 700 (EUR 8.67)	AFN 380 (EUR 4.7)
Chicken (1 kg)	AFN 250 (EUR 3.09)	AFN 220 (EUR 2.73)	AFN 220 (EUR 2.73)
Fuel (1 l)	AFN 70 (EUR 0.87)	AFN 64 (EUR 0.79)	AFN 67 (EUR 0.83)

Source: IOM, Information on the socio-economic situation in Afghanistan, 22 February 2024, [url](#), p. 7

Food insecurity has particularly impacted households headed by persons with lower education,⁶⁵⁰ persons with disabilities,⁶⁵¹ and women.⁶⁵² Women’s access to food has been negatively impacted due to the *de facto* authorities restrictions,⁶⁵³ and limited job opportunities.⁶⁵⁴ While WFP estimated that 800 000 pregnant and breastfeeding women would be malnourished in 2023, received numbers in their clinics indicated that 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women were actually malnourished, and the organisation expected the number to increase further in 2024. Moreover, 3 million children under 5 years were estimated to be malnourished in 2024.⁶⁵⁵ UNICEF reported that 12 % of children aged 6–24 months received the right variety and quantity of food needed for their age.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁴⁷ IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March - April 2024 and Projection for May - October 2024, 27 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁸ IOM, Information on the socio-economic situation in Afghanistan, 22 February 2024, [url](#), p. 7;

⁶⁴⁹ IOM, Information on the socio-economic situation in Afghanistan, 12 January 2023, [url](#), p. 7

⁶⁵⁰ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update, 4th Quarter, December 2023, [url](#), p. 13; Najam, W., et al., Social Determinants of Rural Household Food Insecurity under the Taliban Regime, 30 March 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵¹ FEWS NET, Afghanistan Food Security Outlook June 2024 - January 2025, 6 July 2024, [url](#), p. 9; IFRC,

Afghanistan: Hunger and poverty surge as drought persists, 17 June 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵² FEWS NET, Afghanistan Food Security Outlook June 2024 - January 2025, 6 July 2024, [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](#)

⁶⁵³ AA, In Afghanistan, women and children bearing worst of hunger crisis, 13 March 2024, [url](#); CARE, The Impact of the Food Crisis on Women and Girls in Afghanistan, 29 December 2022, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁵⁴ FEWS NET, Afghanistan Food Security Outlook June 2024 - January 2025, 6 July 2024, [url](#), p. 9; IRC, One year later: What are Afghans facing now?, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁵ WFP in Afghanistan [X], posted on: 28 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁶ UNICEF, Nutrition, n.d., [url](#)



After the Taliban takeover, the number of children under five being admitted into health facilities due to severe acute malnutrition increased.⁶⁵⁷ Children suffering from severe acute malnutrition commonly die.⁶⁵⁸ According to the most recent joint child malnutrition estimate, from 2022, 44.6 % of children under five suffered from stunting (an indicator of long-term malnutrition).⁶⁵⁹ The most recent national SMART survey⁶⁶⁰ (covering April–October 2022), however, found that the overall prevalence of stunting was 32.7 %.⁶⁶¹ 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 were 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 %) children were slightly over the national average, while the rates of stunting (25.5 %) and severe stunting (6.6 %) were slightly below.⁶⁶² A BBC News coverage from the Jalalabad regional hospital in Nangarhar Province in September 2024 described the situation as having reached ‘an unprecedented precipice’, with 700 children under five years dying to due to malnutrition in the previous six months. Some interviewed mothers told BBC News that they did not have money to feed their children, and some had lost up to seven children due to malnutrition.⁶⁶³

3.4. Housing

According to Pajhwok Afghan News, property prices and rental rates sharply decreased after the Taliban takeover, but stabilised again and were on the rise by September 2022, although at a lower level than before.⁶⁶⁴ According to IOM, rental prices were higher in the cities and also in Kabul City compared to other urban centres. Based on data collected from rental companies and homeowners, IOM could present the following rents on 28 January 2024.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁵⁷ PBS, 1.1 million Afghan children under 5 could face severe malnutrition this year, U.N. says, 25 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁸ AA, In Afghanistan, women and children bearing worst of hunger crisis, 13 March 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁹ World Bank, Prevalence of stunting, height for age (% of children under 5) – Afghanistan, 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁰ ‘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

⁶⁶¹ Nutrition Cluster et al., Afghanistan National SMART Survey Report (April–October 2022), 8 June 2023, [url](#), p. 42

⁶⁶² Nutrition Cluster et al., Afghanistan National SMART Survey Report (April–October 2022), 8 June 2023, [url](#), pp. 39–45, 58

⁶⁶³ BBC News, The hospital struggling to save its starving babies, 9 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, Falling a year ago, home prices up by 24pc in Kabul, 19 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁵ IOM, Information on the socio-economic situation in Afghanistan, 22 February 2024, [url](#), p. 6



Table 3: Rents in the cities Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e Sharif, as of 28 January 2024

Type	Kabul	Herat	Mazar-e Sharif
2 beds (city center)	AFN 10 000 (EUR 123.87)	AFN 7 000 (EUR 86.7)	AFN 6 500 (EUR 80.52)
2 beds (outside cc)	AFN 7 000 (EUR 86.7)	AFN 5 500 (EUR 68.13)	AFN 4 500 (EUR 55.74)
3 beds (city center)	AFN 13 000 (EUR 161.03)	AFN 10 000 (EUR 123.87)	AFN 9 000 (EUR 111.48)
3 beds (outside cc)	AFN 9 000 (EUR 111.48)	AFN 7 000 (EUR 86.7)	AFN 6 000 (EUR 74.32)
4 beds (city center)	AFN 17 000 (EUR 210.58)	AFN 15 000 (EUR 185.8)	AFN 12 500 (EUR 154.83)
4 beds (outside cc)	AFN 12 000 (EUR 148.64)	AFN 10 000 (EUR 123.87)	AFN 8 500 (EUR 105.29)

Source: IOM, Information on the socio-economic situation in Afghanistan, 22 February 2024, [url](#), p. 6

According to a 2023 survey by the global analytics and advisory firm Gallup, 69 % of Afghans experienced economic challenges in finding adequate shelter. Although the pressure eased a bit in 2023, compared to 2022, the rates were still ‘higher than at any point before the Taliban takeover’.⁶⁶⁶ Returnees from Pakistan have also faced a lack of shelter,⁶⁶⁷ and Khaama Press reported that the high number of returnees in Nangarhar in November 2023 caused a two-fold increase in house rents.⁶⁶⁸

Traditional houses in Afghanistan, especially on the countryside, are often made of mud-bricks and stone.⁶⁶⁹ As reported by UNDP, such constructions endure harsh weather conditions but ‘have low resistance to seismic hazards’, such as the Herat earthquake.⁶⁷⁰ This earthquake left over 10 000 homes ‘in ruins’, according to UNDP,⁶⁷¹ and the flash floods that hit different provinces in April–May 2024 destroyed nearly 9 000 homes according to the same source.⁶⁷² The most recent WoAA, carried out in 2022, found that 61 % of Afghan households lived in shelters made of mud, many of which being partially damaged with leaks during both heavy and light rain. The same survey found that a majority of households had problems with water and energy, lacking access to piped water and heating devices for cooking, and there was also a lack of sanitation facilities and soap.⁶⁷³ Many of the poorest were reportedly living in tents,⁶⁷⁴ including disaster-struck individuals⁶⁷⁵ and returnees.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁶⁶ Gallup, Economic Uncertainty Awaits Returning Afghans, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁷ European Commission, Afghans returning from Pakistan share their fears of an uncertain future, 22 January 2024, [url](#); Gallup, Economic Uncertainty Awaits Returning Afghans, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁸ Khaama Press, Surge in returning Afghan refugees leads to rent increases in Nangarhar, 6 November 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁹ Britannica, Housing of Afghanistan, 9 October 2024, [url](#); UNDP, What is vernacular architecture, and how can it help Afghanistan?, 18 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁰ UNDP, What is vernacular architecture, and how can it help Afghanistan?, 18 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁷¹ UNDP, A Shelter of Hope, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷² UNDP, Why are flash floods so deadly in Afghanistan?, 29 May 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷³ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 53–55, 57, 65

⁶⁷⁴ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 53–55, 57, 65

⁶⁷⁵ Guardian (The), War, deforestation, flooding: in Afghanistan they are all linked, 14 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁶ AP, Displaced, repatriated and crossing borders: Afghan people make gruelling journeys to survive, 31 December 2023, [url](#)



Deaths from cold have been common, *inter alia* due to poor housing conditions,⁶⁷⁷ and a lack of adequate winter clothing⁶⁷⁸ and blankets.⁶⁷⁹ According to the most recent WoAA, the average number of blankets were less than one per person in some provinces.⁶⁸⁰ A cold wave on 3 March 2024 reportedly caused the death of 35 persons.⁶⁸¹

3.5. Healthcare

Public healthcare was free under the previous government except for registration fees, medication and some medical supplies.⁶⁸² However, oftentimes people turned to private healthcare options as they were perceived as providing better quality care than government facilities.⁶⁸³ After the Taliban takeover, the already weak public health system was heavily impacted by the halt in aid flows.⁶⁸⁴ Initially, many health workers did not receive their salaries, medicines ran out and many health professionals left Afghanistan.⁶⁸⁵ The few private healthcare options that remained were often too expensive for people to afford.⁶⁸⁶

Health facilities suffer from poor infrastructure, lack of equipment⁶⁸⁷ and personnel.⁶⁸⁸ As mentioned, many health professionals left Afghanistan amid the Taliban takeover⁶⁸⁹ while the healthcare system already was short in medical staff; according WHO records (collected in from 2018 to 2020) the number of doctors, nurses, midwives, dentists, and pharmacists was well below WHO's thresholds⁶⁹⁰ for 'critical shortage'.⁶⁹¹ There has also been a general shortage in medicines.⁶⁹² According to a human rights activist, interviewed by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum's COI unit in 2023, antibiotics, painkillers and general health medicines were still being imported, but specific medicines (for example those

⁶⁷⁷ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 54

⁶⁷⁸ PIN, We distributed jackets, socks, and hats to over 9,680 Community-Based Education students and teachers ahead of winter in central Afghanistan, 12 December 2023, [url](#); ACAPS, ACAPS Thematic Report Afghanistan Coping with the crisis, 17 June 2023, [url](#), p. 1; UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 54

⁶⁷⁹ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 54; Muslim Aid, The Silent Crisis: Winter in Afghanistan, 25 December 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁰ UNDP, Afghanistan, Socio-Economic Outlook 2023, 18 April 2023, [url](#), p. 54

⁶⁸¹ UN OHCHR, Afghanistan: Cold Wave - Mar 2024, 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁸² 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

⁶⁸³ 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

⁶⁸⁴ 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](#)

⁶⁸⁵ 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

⁶⁸⁶ 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]

⁶⁸⁷ Humanitarian Action, Health, [2024], [url](#); Basij-Rasikh, M., Primary healthcare system and provider responses to the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, BMJ Glob Health, 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁸ Humanitarian Action, Health, [2024], [url](#)

⁶⁸⁹ 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

⁶⁹⁰ WHO, National Health Workforce Accounts Data Portal, 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹¹ WHO, Working together for health, 2006, [url](#), pp. 11–12

⁶⁹² RFE/RL, 'What Choice Do We Have?': Afghans Resort To Opium To Treat Common Illnesses Amid Health-Care Crisis, 2 November 2023, [url](#)



used for cancer treatment) were not available in Afghanistan. People could moreover not travel to neighbouring countries to receive treatment and buy medicines as easily as they used to, according to the same source.⁶⁹³ As reported by Human Rights Watch, the lack of sufficient healthcare services has left the Afghan population ‘vulnerable to disease and other consequences of inadequate medical care’.⁶⁹⁴ At the same time, the health system has faced a ‘continuing shock’ due to outbreaks of infectious diseases,⁶⁹⁵ such as measles and acute watery diarrhoea,⁶⁹⁶ and 18 polio cases were recorded in 2024 (as of 11 September).⁶⁹⁷ According to The Guardian, referring to a health official, door-to-door campaigns to vaccinate children against polio had been ‘temporarily suspended’ in mid-September due to security concerns and women’s involvement in the vaccination campaign. The Guardian reported that *de facto* officials feared having their location revealed to ‘foreign threats’, and connected this to the allegedly fake vaccination campaign launched by US intelligence agencies to locate Osama bin Laden in Pakistan and Afghanistan.⁶⁹⁸

People’s ability to pay for healthcare has worsened since the takeover⁶⁹⁹ and the costs of medicines and travelling were reported barriers to access healthcare.⁷⁰⁰ Especially those living in remote areas and women experienced limited access to quality healthcare.⁷⁰¹ Although the improved security situation has made it possible for humanitarian health workers to reach communities that were previously inaccessible,⁷⁰² the Taliban’s restrictions on women have hampered the work of mobile health teams.⁷⁰³ Funding-shortages have also led to such initiatives being discontinued,⁷⁰⁴ further limiting remote communities’ access to healthcare.⁷⁰⁵ The Health Cluster⁷⁰⁶ reported that its caregiving partners were present in all 34 provinces in July 2024.⁷⁰⁷ Since January 2023, the number of districts covered had however decreased

⁶⁹³ Afghan human rights activist, interviewed by Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Country of Origin Information Department, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁴ HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁵ Humanitarian Action, Health, [2024], [url](#)

⁶⁹⁶ WHO, Afghanistan Emergency Situation Report, July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁹⁷ GPEI, Polio this week, September 2024, [url](#); PBS, UN: Taliban suspended polio vaccination campaigns in Afghanistan, 16 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁸ Guardian (The), Afghanistan risks polio outbreak as Taliban restricts women from delivering vaccines, 17 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁹ Valente, M. et al., Access to care in Afghanistan after august 2021: a cross-sectional study exploring Afghans’ perspectives in 10 provinces, Conflict and Health, 22 April 2024, [url](#); HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁰ Valente, M. et al., Access to care in Afghanistan after august 2021: a cross-sectional study exploring Afghans’ perspectives in 10 provinces, Conflict and Health, 22 April 2024, [url](#); HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰¹ Humanitarian Action, Health, [2024], [url](#)

⁷⁰² Valente, M. et al., Access to care in Afghanistan after august 2021: a cross-sectional study exploring Afghans’ perspectives in 10 provinces, Conflict and Health, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰³ HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁴ WHO, WHO’s Health Emergency Appeal 2024, 2024, [url](#), p. 23; Valente, M. et al., Access to care in Afghanistan after august 2021: a cross-sectional study exploring Afghans’ perspectives in 10 provinces, Conflict and Health, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁵ Valente, M. et al., Access to care in Afghanistan after august 2021: a cross-sectional study exploring Afghans’ perspectives in 10 provinces, Conflict and Health, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁶ The Health Cluster is led by WHO and is a platform for humanitarian partners to share information, coordinate and jointly plan for health service delivery, and bridge gaps. See; WHO, Health Cluster, What We Do, n.d., [url](#)

⁷⁰⁷ WHO, Afghanistan Emergency Situation Report, July 2024, [url](#), p. 1



from 353 districts⁷⁰⁸ to 287 districts⁷⁰⁹, and from 1 471 health facilities⁷¹⁰ to 763.⁷¹¹ In addition, more provinces were left with less than four active agencies, expanding from Baghlan and Panjsher to also include Farah, Bamyan, Parwan and Nuristan as of July 2024.⁷¹² The same source identified seven provinces as having critical or extreme needs (Farah, Helmand, Jawzjan, Nuristan, Paktika, Paktya, and Zabul), while the remaining 27 provinces had severe needs.⁷¹³

Especially maternal and child healthcare has deteriorated,⁷¹⁴ *inter alia* due to shortfalls in international funding of aid.⁷¹⁵ For example, the department of obstetrics and gynaecology at the provincial hospital reportedly had to close due to cutoffs in aid from WHO. It led to 73 specialists, midwives, doctors, and health workers being dismissed.⁷¹⁶

Women's and girls' access to healthcare has also been affected by the Taliban's restrictions on their freedom of movement, and the lack of female staff⁷¹⁷ – including educational restrictions for women and girls, which limit almost all training for future female health workers.⁷¹⁸ Women were reportedly still able to obtain an education as nurses.⁷¹⁹ Afghanistan has had one of the world's highest maternal and neonatal mortality rates for a long time, despite a steady decline during the 20 years of the Islamic Republic.⁷²⁰ Although no recent comprehensive data is available,⁷²¹ the WHO reported that preventable maternal and neonatal mortality killed 21 mothers and 148 infants every day in Afghanistan in 2024.⁷²² The *de facto* Ministry of Public Health rejected this figure, and claimed to have a record of 300 mothers and 4 000 infants dying in total in the first half of 2024.⁷²³

⁷⁰⁸ WHO, Health Cluster, Afghanistan: Health Cluster Partners Presence (January - August 2023), 24 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁹ WHO, Afghanistan Emergency Situation Report, July 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁷¹⁰ WHO, Health Cluster, Afghanistan: Health Cluster Partners Presence (January - August 2023), 24 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹¹ WHO, Afghanistan Emergency Situation Report, July 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁷¹² WHO, Health Cluster, Afghanistan: Health Cluster Partners Presence (July 2024), 26 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹³ WHO, Health Cluster, Afghanistan Health Cluster Bulletin, July 2024, [url](#), p. 2

⁷¹⁴ WVI, Afghanistan: A Children's Crisis, 11 August 2022, [url](#), pp. 4, 6, 12; WHO, Health Cluster, Afghanistan Health Cluster Bulletin, August 2023, 25 September 2023, [url](#), p. 2; Glass, N., et al., The crisis of maternal and child health in Afghanistan, *Conflict and Health*, 12 June 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹⁵ New Humanitarian (The), Three years on, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate is full of contradictions, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁶ TOLONews, OBGYN Department of Badakhshan Hospital Cut Due to Lack of Funds, 12 July 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁷ 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](#); HRW, "A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future", *Afghanistan's Healthcare Crisis*, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁸ HRW, "A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future", *Afghanistan's Healthcare Crisis*, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷¹⁹ Context, Shut out of jobs, Afghan women retrain as nurses, 8 August 2023, [url](#); Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.

⁷²⁰ 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](#)

⁷²¹ MSF, Persistent barriers to access healthcare in Afghanistan, 6 February 2023, [url](#), p. 19; Al Jazeera, 'Dying every two hours': Afghan women risk life to give birth, 27 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷²² WHO, WHO's Health Emergency Appeal 2024, 2024, [url](#), p. 23

⁷²³ TOLONews, Afghanistan Rejects WHO Report on Maternal and Infant Mortality Rates, 10 June 2024, [url](#)



3.6. Aid delivery

Aid delivery became increasingly complicated after the takeover, *inter alia* due to the fact that individuals that were under UN sanctions were assigned key positions within the *de facto* government.⁷²⁴ Respect of the sanctions and the ‘political unpalatability’ of directly benefitting the *de facto* government, made aid delivery difficult.⁷²⁵ Moreover, international funding for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan decreased.⁷²⁶ The situation became further complicated when the Taliban banned women from working for NGOs⁷²⁷ and for UN offices.⁷²⁸ In March 2024, the Swedish Afghanistan Committee, the oldest and largest non-governmental aid organisation in Afghanistan,⁷²⁹ paused its activities in Afghanistan following a decree from the Taliban supreme leader suspending all of ‘Sweden’s activities’ in the country, as a reaction to Quran burnings in Sweden.⁷³⁰ More information on the treatment of aid workers is available in the section [4.9 Humanitarian workers](#).

UN aid appeals for Afghanistan increased significantly after the Taliban takeover: for example, the aid appeal launched in 2022 was the largest one for a single country in history.⁷³¹ The past years’ aid appeals have however been short in funding, as the humanitarian response plans for 2022 were only covered with 74 %, the plan for 2023 with 52 %, and the plan for 2024 with 31 % (as of 18 September 2024).⁷³² According to UN OCHA, the shortages in funds as of June 2024 had limited the reach of services, and led to the exclusion of aid of 3 million people who needed healthcare services, including 1.3 million children under 5 years, and 470 000 pregnant and lactating women in need of supplementary feeding services, as well as thousands of earthquake and flood victims in need of longer-term shelter support.⁷³³ Due to the cuts in funding, WFP reduced emergency food assistance for 10 million people in 2023.⁷³⁴ Individuals being repatriated from Pakistan have further put a strain on stretched resources of humanitarian aid organisations.⁷³⁵

There have been some reports accusing the Taliban of aid diversion and interference.⁷³⁶ The UN Security Council reported on 1 775 ‘access incidents’ in 2023, most being attributed to the *de facto* authorities and *de facto* armed forces. The UN Secretary-General also reported on a

⁷²⁴ HRW, Economic Causes of Afghanistan’s humanitarian Crisis, 4 August 2022, [url](#); NRC, Afghanistan at a Precipice, 10 August 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁷²⁵ Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 15

⁷²⁶ 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 Gaps, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷²⁷ 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](#)

⁷²⁸ UN News, Taliban order bars Afghan women from working with UN, 4 April 2023, [url](#)

⁷²⁹ RFE/RL, Swedish Aid Group Suspends Afghanistan Operations After Taliban Order, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

⁷³⁰ SCA, SCA pauses all activities in Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

⁷³¹ UN News, Afghanistan: UN launches largest single country aid appeal ever, 11 January 2022, [url](#)

⁷³² UN OCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2023, 2023, [url](#)

⁷³³ UN OCHA, Afghanistan Critical Funding Gaps (June 2024), 15 June 2024, [url](#)

⁷³⁴ WFP, Annual Country Report 2023, Afghanistan, 2024, [url](#)

⁷³⁵ NRC, Afghans returning from Pakistan after expulsion order have nowhere to go, warn aid agencies, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

⁷³⁶ US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 10–15; NPR, Charities say Taliban intimidation diverts aid to Taliban members and causes, 23 June 2023, [url](#)



‘notable increase in bureaucratic and administrative impediments and restrictions on women aid workers’.⁷³⁷ UN OCHA reported on continued access constraints in 2023, with some humanitarian projects being suspended.⁷³⁸

Aid interference have taken place in the form of the *de facto* authorities trying to influence aid organisations’ beneficiary selection,⁷³⁹ by adding names to beneficiary lists,⁷⁴⁰ and by directing aid to certain areas (which the Taliban oftentimes consider as having been neglected during the years of conflict by the former government).⁷⁴¹ There have also been attempts to influence procurement processes,⁷⁴² to benefit Taliban-affiliated companies and to pressure aid organisations to hire Taliban members or relatives, according to the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).⁷⁴³

Moreover, SIGAR reported that the Taliban have been demanding payoffs to permit aid projects to be implemented, and have been taxing beneficiaries. SIGAR acknowledged that some acts may not constitute diversion ‘in a strict legal sense’ as they relate to the Taliban taxing donors,⁷⁴⁴ which is a standard expense in aid delivery.⁷⁴⁵ Afghanistan expert Ashley Jackson also cautioned in an article on the topic that discussions on aid diversion in Afghanistan must ‘distinguish overt attempts to divert aid from the indirect benefits aid brings’, as ‘the idea that a government, in any country, could be completely cut off from the benefits of aid is profoundly unrealistic’. According to Jackson, the indirect benefits of aid delivery for the *de facto* government do not constitute aid diversion. For example, the fact that aid may fund essential services, which in turn release assets that the *de facto* government may spend on other things. Jackson further emphasised that the attempts to control and regulate aid would be considered legitimate acts by any other aid-receiving country, but the fact that the *de facto* government is not recognised make donors perceive these acts as illegitimate interference.⁷⁴⁶

Jackson however also confirmed that there were more ‘clear-cut’ cases of aid diversion, and that in some provinces, such as Ghor and Daykundi, it has even been systematic.⁷⁴⁷ Aid

⁷³⁷ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 65

⁷³⁸ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot (July 2024), 4 Sep 2024, [url](#)

⁷³⁹ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot (July 2024), 4 Sep 2024, [url](#); US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 10–11; Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 17

⁷⁴⁰ US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 12; Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 21

⁷⁴¹ US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 12; Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 17

⁷⁴² UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot (July 2024), 4 Sep 2024, [url](#); US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 14

⁷⁴³ US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁷⁴⁴ US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 10–13

⁷⁴⁵ US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 10–11; Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 15, 17

⁷⁴⁶ Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 15, 17

⁷⁴⁷ Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 21



operations were temporarily suspended in these areas in February 2023, following reports of diversion.⁷⁴⁸ Jackson also confirmed that aid interference has occurred but that ‘the intensity and nature of these pressures vary according to place and type of activity or programme’,⁷⁴⁹ and that there were many ‘grey areas’ where general requests such as hiring certain individuals could be both a form of aid interference and motivated by creating jobs for the local community, and where requests to focus on certain neglected areas could actually be valid considering the needs of these communities.⁷⁵⁰ One aid worker told SIGAR that ‘[w]hen the Taliban tell us to give aid to people... they usually need it’, pointing out that most of the population was ‘suffering’.⁷⁵¹ Baheer, who has personally engaged in aid delivery in Afghanistan through his own aid initiative ‘Save Afghans from Hunger’, stated that while the Taliban sometimes have had demands for the delivery of aid, it was mostly about control. Sometimes they wanted to decide who should be on the list of beneficiaries to ‘feed their own cadres’.⁷⁵²

Some members of the Hazara community have accused the Taliban of diverting aid intended for Hazaras to Taliban supporters⁷⁵³ or the Pashtun ethnic group.⁷⁵⁴ An Afghan researcher however assessed that aid diversion in the sense of changing a project once it had been launched would be hard for the Taliban to do, as the donors would not accept it. Rather, the Taliban reject projects that they were ‘not happy with’.⁷⁵⁵ SIGAR also described accounts of Hazaras perceiving themselves as ‘systematically excluded from aid sector jobs’, as the Taliban have pushed aid organisations to hire Taliban soldiers.⁷⁵⁶ One aid worker interviewed for Jackson’s article, described how the Taliban may bargain and only give an organisation permission to work in Hazarajat if they also agreed to work in Taliban constituencies such as in Helmand or Kandahar.⁷⁵⁷ Jackson also described the dynamics in Daykundi (a Hazara-dominated area⁷⁵⁸) as ‘sensitive’, and that few were willing to speak openly about what had happened to cause the suspension of aid operations in the area.⁷⁵⁹

The *de facto* authorities have allocated funds from the national budget to assist people being forced to return from Pakistan and have provided them with shelter, food, medical services, cash assistance, SIM cards and transportation to their destinations.⁷⁶⁰ The *de facto* authorities also set up a commissions to coordinate the efforts in supporting returnees, and to support

⁷⁴⁸ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot (February 2023), 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴⁹ Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 17, 19

⁷⁵⁰ Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 17

⁷⁵¹ US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁷⁵² Baheer, O., interview, 25 April 2024

⁷⁵³ Genocide Watch, Taliban oppression of women and Genocide of Hazaras, 7 August 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁴ Kabul Now, Taliban’s Disruption of Aid Programs Push Hazaras To the Brink, 24 September 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵⁵ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.

⁷⁵⁶ US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁷⁵⁷ Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁷⁵⁸ Adili, A. Y., A Community Under Attack: How successive governments failed west Kabul and the Hazaras who live there, AAN, 17 January 2022, [url](#), [footnote 7]

⁷⁵⁹ Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 22

⁷⁶⁰ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Spotlight on social impact (October 2023 to February 2024), 25 April 2024, [url](#), p. 2



victims of the earthquake in Herat.⁷⁶¹ In some focus groups discussions of Afghan returnees organised by ACAPS, participants in Nimroz stated that financial support from the *de facto* authorities ‘seemed contingent upon certain conditions’ and that there was a tendency to prioritise their ‘own people’ by requiring recipients to present proof on their prior relationship with the Taliban. Without such a ‘clearance certificate’, a person did not receive a stipend.⁷⁶² It has not been possible to corroborate this information with other sources.

⁷⁶¹ New Humanitarian (The), Why I’m hopeful for Afghanistan, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶² ACAPS, Afghanistan, Understanding the key human safety and security issues that returnees to Afghanistan are facing, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 3



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 who had served in the former government.⁷⁶³ Nevertheless, since the takeover, extrajudicial killings of former government employees have been documented,⁷⁶⁴ as well as other human rights abuses against this profile.⁷⁶⁵ However, unlike previous power shifts in Afghan history⁷⁶⁶ no 'large-scale purges of previous adversaries',⁷⁶⁷ or massacres have taken place.⁷⁶⁸ Consulted sources suggest that the targeted killings that have been occurring have not been part of any 'nationwide policy'⁷⁶⁹ or an orchestrated campaign,⁷⁷⁰ as that would have generated significantly more deaths.⁷⁷¹ Nevertheless, an international analyst emphasised that far more killings have taken place than what has been recorded,⁷⁷² and Rawadari reported that local media no longer cover the topics of extrajudicial and targeted killings, as they have been warned by the *de facto* authorities not to do so, and as journalists have been facing reprisals for reporting on these issues.⁷⁷³ The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan

⁷⁶³ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 56

⁷⁶⁴ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 1; EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 57–58; 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; EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2024 [url](#), pp. 58–59; Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), pp. 11–12; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁷⁶⁵ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 57–58; 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. 7, 9–10; EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2024 [url](#), pp. 58–59; Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), pp. 11–12; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁷⁶⁶ Hodayun Nadiri, K., Brokers, Bureaucrats, and the Quality of Government: Understanding Development and Decay in Afghanistan and Beyond, January 2017, [url](#), pp. 164, 166, 172; HRW, Afghanistan, The Forgotten War: Human Rights Abuses and Violations of the Laws Of War Since the Soviet Withdrawal, February 1991, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Blood-Stained Hands: II. Historical Background, 2005, [url](#)

⁷⁶⁷ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁶⁸ Richard Bennet in Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#), 25:40–25:48

⁷⁶⁹ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#), p. 23

⁷⁷⁰ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁷⁷¹ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023; International Crisis Group, Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#), p. 23

⁷⁷² International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁷⁷³ Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), pp. 5, 11



continued to receive reports of violent behaviour against those who worked for the former government from across the Afghanistan by January 2024, including killings and torture.⁷⁷⁴

De facto officials have repeatedly expressed their commitment to the amnesty, and have called upon their members to uphold it.⁷⁷⁵ They have however dismissed violations of the amnesty as ‘personal animosities’⁷⁷⁶ and sources stressed that the *de facto* authorities have not held perpetrators accountable for breaching the amnesty.⁷⁷⁷ The UN Special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan expressed ‘serious doubts’ about the Taliban’s commitment and capability to bring perpetrators to justice.⁷⁷⁸ Rahimi and Watkins described ‘an atmosphere of impunity’,⁷⁷⁹ and according to the associate director for the Asia division of Human Rights Watch, Patricia Gossman, as cited by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in 2022, killings had taken place with the ‘knowledge or tacit approval of senior Taliban commanders’.⁷⁸⁰ Moreover, the amnesty’s text has not been available beyond general references to its existence,⁷⁸¹ which cause uncertainties around its temporal scope, and consequences for breaching it, as reported by UNAMA.⁷⁸²

Sources have described the practices towards former officials as ‘inconsistent’,⁷⁸³ ‘ad hoc’⁷⁸⁴ and ‘an interesting mixture of contradictory policies’.⁷⁸⁵ At the same time as killings and other human rights abuses of both former military and civil government employees have taken place,⁷⁸⁶ retired former security officials serving under the previous government have staged street protests against the *de facto* government for not paying their pensions.⁷⁸⁷ Some senior members of the former government have moreover been able to remain in Afghanistan, such as former President Hamid Karzai⁷⁸⁸ (although he has been facing travel restrictions⁷⁸⁹), the former chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah,⁷⁹⁰ and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of the political party Hezb-e Islami.⁷⁹¹ In March 2024, Hekmatyar was however forced to leave his residence in Kabul, provided to him by the former

⁷⁷⁴ Richard Bennet in Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#), 25:45–26:15

⁷⁷⁵ 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

⁷⁷⁶ HRW, Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Afghanistan, 11 October 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷⁷ HRW, Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Afghanistan, 11 October 2023, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 22 February 2024, [url](#), para. 84

⁷⁷⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 22 February 2024, [url](#), para. 84

⁷⁷⁹ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁸⁰ RFE/RL, ‘They Call Us Infidels’: Former Afghan Soldiers Still Live in Hiding to Avoid Taliban Retribution, 13 July 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸¹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁷⁸² 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

⁷⁸³ Rubin, B., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, Stimson, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁴ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁷⁸⁵ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁷⁸⁶ 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. 6–9

⁷⁸⁷ TOLONews, Retirees Protest Non-Payment of Pensions Amid Economic Hardships, 18 August 2024, [url](#);

TOLONews, Retirees Demand Pension Payments from Islamic Emirate, 1 August 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁸ Afghanistan International, Taliban Lifts Ban on Former President’s Travel, Claim Sources, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁸⁹ TOLONews, Karzai’s Relatives Confirm Ban On His Travel Abroad, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁰ Amu TV, UN’s DiCarlo meets with Karzai, Abdullah in Afghanistan, 19 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹¹ TOLONews, No Restrictions Imposed on Former Govt Officials: Mujahid, 28 April 2023, [url](#)





government.⁷⁹² According to RFE/RL, Hekmatyar had also been prevented from holding his Friday sermons and meeting with party members.⁷⁹³ While Bertelsmann Stiftung stated that Hekmatyar had been prohibited from making public appearances due to the ban on political parties,⁷⁹⁴ Afghan Witness (AW) reported that Hekmatyar had himself limited public appearances following a failed suicide attack against one of his sermons in December 2022.⁷⁹⁵ Moreover, most civilian former public officials have resumed their duties within the new *de facto* administration in Kabul after the takeover,⁷⁹⁶ except for most female civil servants who were sent home.⁷⁹⁷ At sub-national level, the Taliban however made efforts to bring in their own members to be trained by former officials and later replace them.⁷⁹⁸ AAN expert Martine van Bijlert pointed out that although a large portion of former staff of ministries were retained, the numbers may be exaggerated. She referred to a statement by the *de facto* head of legislative affairs, saying in 2023 that only middle positions in *de facto* ministries were held by former government staff, while leading posts were held by ‘friend of the Emirate’, and low-ranking posts by ‘mujahidin’.⁷⁹⁹ Some former security personnel were also recruited to the *de facto* armed forces, as reported by International Crisis Group in 2022.⁸⁰⁰ In 2024, the Afghan analyst however stated that the *de facto* army had become more professionalised, and made use of biometrics to, *inter alia*, identify former government officials who had been dismissed from or prevented from joining the *de facto* police, *de facto* army or *de facto* intelligence.⁸⁰¹ This information could not be corroborated with other sources.

The Taliban have announced that former officials returning from abroad will be ensured safety, and established the ‘Commission for the Return and Communications with Former Afghan Officials and Political Figures’ in March 2022.⁸⁰² The commission has announced the return of several hundred former ministers, governors, parliament members,⁸⁰³ businessmen and political or military figures.⁸⁰⁴ The Afghan analyst explained that, while high-level returnees have been able to return under promises of not speaking about politics, the Taliban have not convinced the most senior politicians to return – *inter alia* due to their treatment of Hekmatyar, Karzai and Abdullah.⁸⁰⁵ An international analyst questioned the commission’s

⁷⁹² AW, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar relocated from state-owned land by Taliban officials, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹³ RFE/RL, ‘One-Party Rule’: Taliban Wages Crackdown On Political Parties, 8 May 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁷⁹⁵ AW, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar relocated from state-owned land by Taliban officials, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁹⁶ EASO, 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; Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 31

⁷⁹⁷ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; ACAPS, Afghanistan, Scenarios, April 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁷⁹⁸ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁷⁹⁹ van Bijlert, M., How The Emirate Wants To Be Perceived: A closer look at the Accountability Programme, AAN, July 2024, [url](#), p. 30

⁸⁰⁰ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan’s Security Challenges under the Taliban, 12 August 2022, [url](#), p. 24

⁸⁰¹ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024, and email communication 13 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁸⁰² EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 52, 83

⁸⁰³ TOLONews, 952 Ex-Officials Return to Afghanistan Via Contact Commission, 20 August 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁴ TOLONews, Delaware: Almost 1,000 Ex-Officials, Business People Have Returned, 6 November 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁵ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.





figures and stated instead that, as of October 2023, only a handful former political and military figures had returned. The source pointed out that many may have returned but left again. The source further observed that the return commission had not led to any political recognition or pledges for allegiance, and stated that it has mainly been a way for wealthy individuals to return to manage their assets.⁸⁰⁶ RFE/RL reported on former officials leaving Afghanistan after returning through the commission⁸⁰⁷ and Rawadari reported on instances of returning former government employees being killed, despite returning on the Taliban's invitation.⁸⁰⁸ Exile media Afghanistan International reported on a former district governor who fled from Afghanistan again, after having returned through the commission, as he had faced four assassination attempts and as the Taliban had been harassing his family 'on various pretexts'.⁸⁰⁹ The Afghan analyst confirmed that repression may take place against low-level officials upon return, although the situation is not 'uniform'.⁸¹⁰ UNAMA reported that former government officials and ANDSF members have been facing abuse after being forcibly returned.⁸¹¹

4.1.2. Records of extrajudicial killings and other abuse

The majority of violations against former government officials and ANDSF members recorded by UNAMA, occurred in the months following the Taliban takeover. For example, out of the 218 extrajudicial killings that had been recorded as of 30 June 2023, almost half had taken place during the first four and a half months of Taliban rule in 2021.⁸¹² In the first six months of 2024, UNAMA recorded 9 extrajudicial killings of former government officials and former ANDSF members.⁸¹³ As regards other human rights abuses, UNAMA recorded 424 arbitrary arrests in the period 15 August 2021–30 June 2023, which were often accompanied by torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and in some cases led to extrajudicial killings.⁸¹⁴ Meanwhile, in the first six months of 2024, UNAMA recorded 98 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention, and 20 instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and former ANDSF members. UNAMA's data include perpetrators identified as members of the *de facto* authorities as well as unknown perpetrators.⁸¹⁵

⁸⁰⁶ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁸⁰⁷ RFE/RL, The Azadi Briefing: Fear, Disillusionment Undermine Taliban's Efforts To Woo Exiled Former Afghan Officials, 28 July 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰⁸ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁸⁰⁹ Afghanistan International, Former Official Who Returned to Afghanistan at Taliban's Invitation Forced to Flee Again, 16 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸¹⁰ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁸¹¹ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁸¹² 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

⁸¹³ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁸¹⁴ 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. 7–8

⁸¹⁵ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5



Rawadari also recorded abuses against former civilian and security personnel, but their data collection starts from 1 January 2023.⁸¹⁶ In 2023, the organisation recorded 82 targeted killings of former military and civilian government personnel, and 118 ‘illegal arrests’.⁸¹⁷ In the first six months of 2024, Rawadari recorded 51 ‘targeted, suspicious and extrajudicial killings or injuries’, but did not specify the number of targeted killings, although contextual information on 12 such cases was provided. Moreover, Rawadari recorded at least 6 cases of former military personnel being forcibly disappeared, and 64 cases of both former civil and military personnel being ‘illegally detained and imprisoned’. Rawadari’s data include perpetrators identified as Taliban members as well as unknown perpetrators.⁸¹⁸

As mentioned, the international analyst added that there have been many more killings than what has been reported.⁸¹⁹ Rawadari also stressed that due to the limitations on access to information, the numbers presented may not reflect the full extent of violations and that they had excluded numerous cases which they were unable to verify.⁸²⁰ In 2024, the organisation moreover stated that the Taliban had ‘created an atmosphere of fear’ and pressured victims’ families not to speak up and share their experiences.⁸²¹

4.1.3. Revenge and other motives

Expert sources emphasised that it has been hard to discern motives behind the killings, especially considering what they described as an existing ‘revenge culture’ in Afghanistan.⁸²² According to the international analyst, the most important thing for the Taliban is that individuals are loyal to them today, rather than their former (pre-takeover) allegiances. However, people may still be targeted due to personal disputes.⁸²³ Latifi stated that individuals that are willing to work within 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 – as it has been for previous governments in Afghan history.⁸²⁴ A research report by Human Rights Research League (HRRL) also identified revenge motives in almost all their recorded killings of former military and security personnel.⁸²⁵

There have also been reports about former government employees being targeted based on accusations of possessing weapons or being affiliated with opposition groups.⁸²⁶ More information is available in section [4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups](#).

⁸¹⁶ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: Mid-year Report 1 January to 30 June 2023, August 2023, [url](#), p. 4

⁸¹⁷ Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11, 16

⁸¹⁸ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), pp. 11–16

⁸¹⁹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁸²⁰ Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), pp. 5 – 6

⁸²¹ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁸²² International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview 3 October 2023

⁸²³ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October, 2023

⁸²⁴ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October, 2023

⁸²⁵ HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, [url](#), p. 41

⁸²⁶ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 15; Kabul Now, UN



4.1.4. Victim profiles

Victims of targeted killings and other abuse recorded since the Taliban takeover have been both military/security personnel and civilian personnel of the former government.⁸²⁷ In 2023, Rawadari recorded 68 targeted killings of former military personnel, and 14 targeted killings of former civilian employees.⁸²⁸ Although the number of targeted killings is not specified in Rawadari's subsequent report covering the human rights situation in the first six months of 2024, 12 cases of targeted killings were outlined, and included the following profiles: seven former military personnel, one former local police officer, one former commander of the People's Uprising Forces, one National Directorate of Security (NDS) officer, one security employee, and one former government employee. These cases included perpetrators identified as the Taliban as well as unknown perpetrators.⁸²⁹ As regards Rawadari's records of arbitrary arrests, 91 former military personnel and 6 former civilian personnel were arrested in 2023.⁸³⁰ During the first half of 2024, 64 arbitrary arrests were recorded, but Rawadari did not distinguish cases concerning former military personnel from cases concerning former civil personnel.⁸³¹ Meanwhile, UNAMA also reported that they continued to record arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture and ill-treatment as well as killings of former government officials and former ANDSF members, although they did not provide any breakdown of the data based on victims' profiles.⁸³² Among the killings of former government employees recorded by HRRL in the period October 2022–June 2023 were: police officers, civil servants, employees of the former intelligence service, former soldiers and officers of the former national army, a former cleaning lady working at the former police office, a former cook working at the former police headquarters, a case of a woman formerly working in the houses of wealthy former high officials, and former border police officers.⁸³³

The international journalist and the international analyst reckoned that it is not possible to draw any conclusions or identify any patterns as regards who is being targeted and who is not among civil and security personnel of the former government.⁸³⁴ The international journalist stated that the targeting depended on the local contexts and whether the amnesty was upheld there or not, rather than an individual's previous role in the former government. In one area, for example, a former local NDS director was appointed head of the Taliban-approved valley *shura*.⁸³⁵ HRRL also found that respect of the amnesty depended on arrangements with

Documents 60 Cases of Arbitrary Arrests of Former Government Officials in Past Three Months, 30 July 2024, [url](#); 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. 8–9

⁸²⁷ 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. 6–9; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 6; Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁸²⁸ Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁸²⁹ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁸³⁰ Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁸³¹ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁸³² UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁸³³ HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, [url](#), pp. 46–47, 49–51, 53, 55–56, 58, 61–62, 64, 68

⁸³⁴ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁸³⁵ International journalist, online interview 3 October 2023



local authorities.⁸³⁶ Rawadari reported that the Taliban ‘continuously harass low-ranking employees from the previous government who still work in the administration’, and outlined three examples where civil servants had been pushed to leave their jobs, arrested and then had charges of ‘administrative corruption’ brought against them.⁸³⁷ According to a report of Hasht-e Subh, local *de facto* officials reportedly had replaced ‘government office employees’ with Taliban fighters at various *de facto* directorates, ‘citing various reasons for their removal’, including the heads of the local *de facto* Civil Registry and *de facto* Land Authority who has been accused of ‘abuse of their duties’.⁸³⁸

4.1.5. Family members of former civilian and security personnel

According to a human rights expert interviewed by the Norwegian COI Unit Landinfo, family members of former government officials may face various reactions from the Taliban, including harassment, arrests, and, in some instances also killings. A well-informed analyst told Landinfo that there were some isolated incidents of family members being targeted right after the Taliban takeover, but the source was not aware of any such cases after late autumn 2021.⁸³⁹ Rawadari reported on family members of former government employees being arrested in 2023 (21 cases),⁸⁴⁰ and in 2024 the organisation reported that family members of former civil and military government employees were also among victims of killings. No breakdown of the data was provided by victim profile, although four examples of family members being killed were outlined.⁸⁴¹ Testimonies collected by Rawadari in the period 1 January–30 June 2023⁸⁴² and by HRRL in the period October 2022–June 2023⁸⁴³ described how family members of individuals who had left Afghanistan were being targeted.⁸⁴⁴ These cases included the wife of a former soldier, who was tortured and killed by the Taliban,⁸⁴⁵ the wife of a former intelligence officer who was killed in her home by unknown persons, and the wife and four children of a former intelligence officer, who were kidnapped and killed by unknown armed men.⁸⁴⁶ HRRL also recorded arrests and subsequent killings of brothers of former police officers,⁸⁴⁷ of high-ranking government employees,⁸⁴⁸ of a former adviser to the previous government (the perpetrators in this case were unknown),⁸⁴⁹ and the son of a former

⁸³⁶ HRRL, *Those We Left Behind*, November 2023, [url](#), p. 69

⁸³⁷ Rawadari, *The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report*, August 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁸³⁸ Hasht-e Subh, *Taliban Purge in Ghazni Province: Former Government Employees Face Insults, Dismissals, and Detentions*, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

⁸³⁹ Norway, Landinfo, *Afghanistan: Familiemedlemmer til personer med tilknytning til republikke*, 20 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 2–3

⁸⁴⁰ Rawadari, *Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023*, March 2024, [url](#), p. 16

⁸⁴¹ Rawadari, *The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report*, August 2024, [url](#), pp. 9, 11–12

⁸⁴² Rawadari, *Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: Mid-year Report 1 January to 30 June 2023*, August 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁸⁴³ HRRL, *Those We Left Behind*, November 2023, [url](#), p. 13; Rawadari, *Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: Mid year Report 1 January to 30 June 2023*, August 2023, [url](#), p. 5

⁸⁴⁴ Rawadari, *Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: Mid-year Report 1 January to 30 June 2023*, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 4, 11–12, 14–18; HRRL, *Those We Left Behind*, November 2023, [url](#), pp. 46–49

⁸⁴⁵ Rawadari, *Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: Mid-year Report 1 January to 30 June 2023*, August 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁸⁴⁶ HRRL, *Those We Left Behind*, November 2023, [url](#), pp. 47, 60

⁸⁴⁷ HRRL, *Those We Left Behind*, November 2023, [url](#), p. 46

⁸⁴⁸ HRRL, *Those We Left Behind*, November 2023, [url](#), pp. 52, 60

⁸⁴⁹ HRRL, *Those We Left Behind*, November 2023, [url](#), p. 54

intelligence officer.⁸⁵⁰ Moreover, Rawadari and HRRL have recorded cases of family members being detained⁸⁵¹ and killed together with former military officials.⁸⁵²

4.1.6. Former judges and prosecutors

In October 2021, a *de facto* official assured that the general amnesty extended to former judges and lawyers.⁸⁵³ The Taliban however ousted all judges after the takeover,⁸⁵⁴ and according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) no former judges had been retained as of 11 September 2023.⁸⁵⁵ On the contrary, some other sources suggest that some former male judges have been asked to return.⁸⁵⁶ International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) pointed out that only a ‘handful’ male judges had been called back to limited or temporary roles. ILAC added that these instances were unconfirmed and ‘extremely rare’.⁸⁵⁷ According to AAN interlocutors, some male judges ‘who had worked with administration’ and who were considered ‘professional’ had been asked to return.⁸⁵⁸

Prosecutors were initially told not to come to work after the Taliban takeover, but they were not formally dismissed.⁸⁵⁹ Some former prosecutors reportedly resumed their work at the *de facto* prosecutor’s office after the takeover,⁸⁶⁰ although their legal and operational status was unclear and ‘varied substantially from region to region’, according to ILAC.⁸⁶¹ In 2023, the *de facto* Attorney General’s Office was abolished and replaced with the *de facto* ‘Directorate of Supervision and Prosecution of Decrees and Orders’.⁸⁶² Based on an analysis of the decree outlining the mandate of this *de facto* directorate, Raoul Wallenberg Institute concluded that its role was to ensure the compliance and implementation of decrees, edicts and other instructions, rather than investigating crime and filing lawsuits. Moreover, the term ‘prosecutor’ had been replaced with ‘observer’ in the decree.⁸⁶³

⁸⁵⁰ HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, [url](#), pp. 48–49

⁸⁵¹ Rawadari, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, August 2023, [url](#), pp. 16, 18; HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, [url](#), pp. 39, 52, 54–60

⁸⁵² Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 11; HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, [url](#), p. 49

⁸⁵³ New York Times (The), Afghan Women Who Once Presided Over Abuse Cases Now Fear for Their Lives, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁴ UN OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁸⁵⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 16

⁸⁵⁶ Clark, K. and Shapour, R., What do the Taliban 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. 13; LA Times (The), More Judge Judy than Cops: A first look at the Taliban’s new police, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁵⁷ ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), p. 13

⁸⁵⁸ Clark, K. and Shapour, R., What do the Taliban Spend Afghanistan’s Money on?, AAN, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 36–37

⁸⁵⁹ ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), pp. 13, 21

⁸⁶⁰ Clark, K. and Shapour, R., What do the Taliban 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

⁸⁶¹ ILAC, Justice Matters: A Status Report on Afghanistan Since the Taliban Takeover, 2023, [url](#), pp. 21–22

⁸⁶² TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Abolishes Attorney General’s Office, 18 July 2023, [url](#); Rawadari, Latest Taliban decree on Attorney General’s Office (AGO) further erodes rule of law in Afghanistan, 25 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶³ Ramizpoor, M. A. A., Restrictions of Civic Space in Afghanistan Under the Taliban – From Religious Ideas to Actions, RWI, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 41, 55

Many prosecutors and judges left Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover or went into hiding.⁸⁶⁴ Among the 800 human rights violations documented by UNAMA in the period 15 August 2021–30 June 2023, 2 % targeted former judges and prosecutors.⁸⁶⁵ Later human rights reporting from UNAMA do not provide any breakdown by victim profile.⁸⁶⁶ In February 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan however stated that former members of the judiciary had been targeted despite the Taliban’s amnesty, and that former judges and prosecutors faced ‘dire circumstances’, being without jobs and ‘fearing for their lives’. According to the same source, 20 prosecutors (18 men and 2 women) had been killed across Afghanistan in the period 1 January 2023–31 January 2024.⁸⁶⁷

All female judges, attorneys and prosecutors have been barred from working within the *de facto* justice system, and the association of female judges is inactive.⁸⁶⁸ In the initial months after the Taliban takeover, women judges were particularly reported to live in hiding,⁸⁶⁹ fearing reprisals from the Taliban or released prisoners seeking revenge.⁸⁷⁰ In February 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan reported that women judges still feared reprisals from former prisoners released amid the Taliban takeover.⁸⁷¹

During the previous government over 250 women served as judges.⁸⁷² According to Marzia Babakarkhail, a woman judge in exile who engages in evacuation efforts of Afghan women judges, more than 40 women judges remained in Afghanistan as of April 2024.⁸⁷³ Justice Mona Lynch, who also engages in and coordinates evacuation efforts of Afghan women judges, assessed that, as of September 2024, 36 were still in Afghanistan.⁸⁷⁴

4.1.7. Lawyers

In October 2021, a Taliban official assured that the general amnesty extended to lawyers.⁸⁷⁵ All lawyers have however had to recertify and pass an exam testing, *inter alia*, their religious

⁸⁶⁴ Clark, K. and Shapour, R., What do the Taleban Spend Afghanistan’s Money on?, AAN, March 2023, [url](#), pp. 36–37; Independent (The), The female Afghan judges trapped in hiding, fearing reprisal from the Taliban, 7 April 2024, [url](#); Times (The), ‘Afghanistan has fallen off the agenda and been put on hold’, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁵ 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

⁸⁶⁶ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#); UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#); UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 29 February 2024, [url](#), para. 85

⁸⁶⁸ Austria, Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Afghanistan: Afghan legal system under the Taliban, 9 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁸⁶⁹ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 81

⁸⁷⁰ New York Times (The), Afghan Women Who Once Presided Over Abuse Cases Now Fear for Their Lives, 20 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL, Afghanistan’s Former Prosecutors Hunted By Criminals They Helped Convict, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 29 February 2024, [url](#), para. 85

⁸⁷² UN OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁷³ Independent (The), ‘Without reason, I cry. I can’t sleep’: The Afghan judges trapped in hiding, fearing reprisal from the Taliban, 7 April 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁴ HRW, Afghanistan’s Women Judges, Three Years After the Taliban Takeover, 19 September 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷⁵ New York Times (The), Afghan Women Who Once Presided Over Abuse Cases Now Fear for Their Lives, 20 October 2021, [url](#)



knowledge.⁸⁷⁶ Besides, the Association of Defence Lawyers lost its independent status by being incorporated with the *de facto* Ministry of Justice.⁸⁷⁷ Male lawyers that served during the previous government, have been able to renew their licenses, and practice law, according to Rahimi.⁸⁷⁸ The Taliban have however not issued licenses to female lawyers,⁸⁷⁹ effectively barring women from practicing law within the *de facto* justice system.⁸⁸⁰ UN Women reported that female lawyers face ‘significant obstacles’ to practice, including in having their licences renewed and being prohibited from taking the bar exam.⁸⁸¹ According to UN experts, women lawyers have found ways to provide legal assistance, in advisory roles and supporting male colleagues, or joining legal aid organisations – although this varies widely from province to province.⁸⁸² In September 2024, Rahimi confirmed that female attorneys sometimes provided out-of-court support to clients, for example through NGOs.⁸⁸³

On 20 April 2024, the *de facto* Ministry of Justice stated that 2 000 defence lawyers’ offices had been registered across Afghanistan.⁸⁸⁴ According to a report prepared for the Austrian COI unit, and drafted by Idris Nassary, Junior Professor of Islamic Jurisprudence at University of Paderborn, accused individuals have been directed to law firms to organise their defence, although defence lawyers have not been permitted to join the accused in the *de facto* court and read their defence statement.⁸⁸⁵ According to Rahimi, Taliban courts only allow attorneys in civil cases ‘as a matter of principle’.⁸⁸⁶

On the first anniversary of the Taliban takeover, the International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (IOLD) reported that lawyers were targets of the Taliban, because of their ‘very active role’ in defending human rights. According to the same source, prisoners that were released targeted lawyers as well – either their own lawyers, whom they held responsible for their conviction, or the lawyers who represented the victim in their cases.⁸⁸⁷ In 2023, the Day of the Endangered Lawyer (which occurs on 24 January each year) focused on the situation of lawyers in Afghanistan.⁸⁸⁸ The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in

⁸⁷⁶ JURIST, Afghanistan dispatch: new Taliban bar exam procedures — and the notable absence of new women attorneys, 1 July 2022, [url](#); International Observatory of Lawyers, Commemorating the Fall of Kabul A retrospective of the destruction of a profession: 15 August 2021 - 15 August 2022, 15 August 2022, [url](#), p. 5

⁸⁷⁷ Austria, Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Afghanistan: Afghan legal system under the Taliban, 9 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 4–5; UN OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁸⁷⁸ Rahimi, H., email communication, 19 September 2024

⁸⁷⁹ Austria, Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Afghanistan: Afghan legal system under the Taliban, 9 April 2024, [url](#), p. 5; UN OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), p. 1; Afghanistan International, Taliban Holds Third Bar Exam Without Afghan Women, 22 July 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸⁰ UN OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), pp. 1–2

⁸⁸¹ UN Women, Afghanistan, Gender Country Profile 2024, June 2024, [url](#), p. 31

⁸⁸² UN OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁸⁸³ Rahimi, H., email communication, 19 September 2024

⁸⁸⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 13 June 2024, [url](#), para. 13

⁸⁸⁵ Austria, Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Afghanistan: Afghan legal system under the Taliban, 9 April 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁸⁸⁶ Rahimi, H., email communication, 19 September 2024

⁸⁸⁷ International Observatory of Lawyers, Commemorating the Fall of Kabul A retrospective of the destruction of a profession: 15 August 2021 - 15 August 2022, 15 August 2022, [url](#), p. 3

⁸⁸⁸ Day of the Endangered Lawyer, 2023: Afghanistan, [2023], [url](#)



Afghanistan and the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers issued a joint statement to mark the day. They reported on a 'dire situation' of lawyers in Afghanistan, facing 'immense hardship and significant risks' when carrying out their work. According to the same statement, women lawyers were experiencing serious mental health problems because of the general restrictions imposed on women.⁸⁸⁹

In a testimony published by IOLD presented in August 2022, a lawyer explained that he was considered an 'enemy' because of his former work as a lawyer in several cases, and that he had fled to Iran to avoid reprisals. He was later sent back to Afghanistan, where he was tortured by the Taliban. He was living in hiding separated from his family.⁸⁹⁰ Rawadari reported on a defence lawyer serving under the previous government being arrested in Kabul City. This person was kept in a dark room for ten hours and thereafter detained and tortured for two months on accusations of spying and 'propagating' against the Taliban.⁸⁹¹

No information on the treatment of family members to lawyers could be found within the time constraints of drafting this report.

4.2. Persons formerly affiliated with foreign forces

The Taliban's general amnesty extended to individuals affiliated with foreign forces.⁸⁹² Many such individuals however left Afghanistan during the evacuation efforts following the Taliban takeover,⁸⁹³ and in media interviews, remaining persons have stated that they live in hiding,⁸⁹⁴ apart from their families,⁸⁹⁵ and moving location to escape the Taliban.⁸⁹⁶ As of January 2024, some countries, such as the US, the UK, and Germany, were still engaged in evacuating and resettling former local staff from Afghanistan.⁸⁹⁷ According to Professor Sara De Jong, University of York, the UK were still resettling as many as 200 former local staff each month, by January 2024.⁸⁹⁸

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan told Radio Sweden that people who used to serve foreign forces belong to one of the most vulnerable groups to

⁸⁸⁹ UN OHCHR, UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support, 20 January 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁸⁹⁰ International Observatory of Lawyers, Commemorating the Fall of Kabul A retrospective of the destruction of a profession: 15 August 2021 - 15 August 2022, 15 August 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁸⁹¹ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 20

⁸⁹² 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](#)

⁸⁹³ Lighthouse Reports, France's forgotten Afghan spies, 12 April 2023, [url](#); EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 74

⁸⁹⁴ 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](#); Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁵ Independent (The), Murdered, tortured or in hiding from the Taliban: The special forces abandoned by Britain, 1 November 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁶ Independent (The), Murdered, tortured or in hiding: The special forces abandoned by Britain, 1 November 2023, [url](#); Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹⁷ Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#), 32:00

⁸⁹⁸ Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#), 32:00



human rights violations, being considered as having been ‘working for the enemy’.⁸⁹⁹ In September 2024, National Public Radio (NPR) also reported on former Afghan soldiers still being ‘hunted down’ by the Taliban three years after the takeover, with former soldiers disappearing, living ‘on the run’ or in hiding, while Taliban members bribed or pressured their surrounding community to give up their location.⁹⁰⁰

A joint investigation by The Independent, Lighthouse Reports and Sky News, published in November 2023, verified 24 cases of former commandos working close to British forces being beaten, tortured or killed by the Taliban since August 2021. These cases included at least six killings, and among the victims were a former member of Commando Force 333 (CF333) who had surrendered his weapons to the Taliban and had received a letter ensuring his safety. In another case a former CF333 sniper was detained for three days in July 2023, and he was subjected to electric shocks and forced to sit in cold water. In a third case, a former member of the special unit Afghan Territorial Force 444 was arrested when visiting his family in 2022. The Taliban reportedly beat everyone in his family amid the arrest, including children, and took the former soldier to an unknown location where he was kept for two months. He was subjected to electric shocks and water torture. In a fourth case, a former group commander was arrested, put in a container in direct sun without windows nor AC. He was also beaten with electric cables and given electric shocks.⁹⁰¹ Rawadari reported on a former member of ‘the Special Unit of the Joint American and Afghan Forces’ being ‘mysteriously killed’ by unknown perpetrators on 10 March 2024 in the province of Khost.⁹⁰² According to a reportage of Radio Sweden, 50 persons who worked for the Swedish Armed Forces in Mazar-e Sharif were ‘left behind’ amid the evacuations. Former interpreters and a former female guard described how they lived in hiding and under death threats. Their family members were also reportedly in a precarious situation, receiving threats from the Taliban.⁹⁰³

4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups

The Taliban have responded to armed opposition with force: in 2022, there were reports on summary executions, detentions, and ill-treatment of detainees,⁹⁰⁴ as well as collective punishment and abuses of civilians suspected of supporting anti-Taliban groups.⁹⁰⁵ Throughout 2024, UNAMA continued to document abuses against accused affiliates of armed groups (primarily the ISKP and the NRF), including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and ill-treatment.⁹⁰⁶ Rawadari also continued to document killings of

⁸⁹⁹ Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#), 25:10

⁹⁰⁰ NPR, Three years after the U.S. withdrawal, former Afghan forces are hunted by the Taliban, 25 September 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰¹ Independent (The), Murdered, tortured or in hiding from the Taliban: The special forces abandoned by Britain, 1 November 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁰² Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁹⁰³ Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁴ Watkins, A., One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State, USIP, 17 August 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁰⁵ 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](#), paras. 51, 57

⁹⁰⁶ UN Human Rights Council, The human rights situation in Afghanistan, 3 September 2024, [url](#), para. 18



civilians accused of being affiliated with armed opposition groups in 2023 (21 cases)⁹⁰⁷ and 2024 (4 cases, as of 30 June). The organisation moreover recorded 252 arrests of such individuals in the first six months of 2024, which constituted a fivefold increase in arrests compared to the same period 2023.⁹⁰⁸ In 2023, Rawadari recorded 124 arrests of individuals being accused of affiliation with armed opposition groups.⁹⁰⁹

Rawadari noted that charges of ‘collaborating with opposition groups’ or ‘carrying weapons’ have been used to arrest and suppress opponents and critics of the Taliban, including civil society activists and journalists.⁹¹⁰ In 2023, Rawadari reported on cases in which the *de facto* authorities, ‘especially their intelligence agency’, had assassinated former government officials and claimed that they were affiliated with the ISKP or had committed suicide.⁹¹¹ The international analyst also noted uncertainties as regards people presented as ISKP affiliates by the Taliban, particularly in the north. It is unclear whether those people were actual ISKP members, or if they were suspected of being part of the former regime or linked to resistance groups.⁹¹² In August 2023, UNAMA also noted that arrests and detentions of former government officials and former ANDSF members occurred on false accusations of affiliations to the NRF.⁹¹³

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 Province⁹¹⁴ but also in the provinces Baghlan, Takhar⁹¹⁵ and in Daykundi.⁹¹⁶ The 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 had ‘almost disappeared’ in both the province of Panjsher and the district of Andarab (Baghlan Province) the situation had calmed. According to the same source, the *de facto* authorities’ treatment of civilians in these areas had ‘improved significantly’, although individuals suspected of being affiliated with armed groups still faced significant challenges – such as 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 being arrested and mistreated at the hands of the *de facto* GDI, just because they had been travelling with a

⁹⁰⁷ Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

⁹⁰⁸ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), pp. 12, 17

⁹⁰⁹ Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 18

⁹¹⁰ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, [url](#), p. 15

⁹¹¹ Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁹¹² International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹¹³ 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

⁹¹⁴ Al, Afghanistan: Taliban’s cruel attacks in Panjshir province amount to war crime of collective punishment – new report, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹⁵ 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](#)

⁹¹⁶ UNICEF, [X], posted on: 25 November 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Survivors Of Deadly Taliban Raid On Hazara Village In Afghanistan Demand Justice, 20 December 2022, [url](#)



suspect.⁹¹⁷ Latifi stated in 2023 that the *de facto* police was adamant about searching for vehicles and pedestrians that they believed were operating as ‘gun runners’ for armed opposition groups. The local population in Panjsher has been met with suspicion from the *de facto* authorities and ‘[s]uch suspicion and questionings by [the] Taliban’ had forced thousands to move to Parwan (if they had fewer financial means) or to Kabul (if they had better financial means).⁹¹⁸ In the period 13 June–9 September 2024, UNAMA recorded ‘one extrajudicial killing and seven arbitrary arrests and detentions’ of suspect NRF affiliates.⁹¹⁹

Family members of individuals 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 them.⁹²⁰ According to an anonymous human rights expert interviewed by Norwegian Landinfo in 2023, a whole family was reportedly killed due to suspicions of having links to NRF. It is however unclear whether each of them had such links, or if they were killed because of one single relative linked to NRF.⁹²¹

4.3.2. Suspected ISKP affiliates

Killings and abuses of suspected ISKP affiliates and supporters were especially reported in October and November 2021 in the provinces of Nangarhar⁹²² and Kunar.⁹²³ In their efforts to restrain the ISKP, the *de facto* authorities conducted arrests and killings of Salafist communities in these areas⁹²⁴ and, in that period, there were reports of extrajudicial killings, beheadings, mutilation and severe torture.⁹²⁵ The situation had reportedly calmed down by the second half of 2022,⁹²⁶ although an international journalist reported on the repression being intermittent in 2023, with the issue being addressed to temporarily stop, to later resume again. Local Salafists told this journalist that the situation was ‘much better’ and ‘liveable again’ in 2022, although the source noted that this issue was heavily underreported, making it hard to follow.⁹²⁷ Another source, the international analyst, stated that violations against Salafists still occurred in 2023. As an example, the source mentioned women and children arrested without charges.⁹²⁸ In 2024, an Afghan researcher stated that there were still reports of young Salafists, believed to work for or being part of the ISKP, being kidnapped from their homes, beheaded and killed in extrajudicial killings in the province of Nangarhar. The researcher however confirmed that the number of casualties were now much lower than in 2021–2022, partly due to the fact that most targets had already been killed or relocated to

⁹¹⁷ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

⁹¹⁸ Latifi A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁹¹⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2024, [url](#), para. 30

⁹²⁰ 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

⁹²¹ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Familiemedlemmer til personer med tilknytning til republikke, 20 November 2023, [url](#), p. 3

⁹²² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 26

⁹²³ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Execute, ‘Disappear’ Alleged Militants, 7 July 2022, [url](#)

⁹²⁴ RFE/RL, Senior Clerics Caught In The Crossfire Of The Taliban’s Intensifying War With IS-K, 24 August 2022, [url](#)

⁹²⁵ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Execute, ‘Disappear’ Alleged Militants, 7 July 2022, [url](#); EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 49–50

⁹²⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2022, [url](#), para. 36; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁹²⁷ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁹²⁸ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023



other provinces.⁹²⁹ As reported by Rahimi and Watkins, by 2023, the ISKP's capacity in the province of Nangarhar had been 'severely degraded, with very little reported activity' during that year. According to the same sources, *de facto* officials from south Afghanistan had been appointed to key positions in Nangarhar in 2022, due to concerns of the ISKP's presence 'and possible infiltration of local rank-and-file.' *De facto* officials from the south remained in charge, and locals spoke 'openly about financial incentives as the likely reason that "outsiders" remain in control of their province'.⁹³⁰

According to the international journalist and the Afghan researcher, the situation in Kunar has not been as bad as in Nangarhar, since the great majority of the local population is Salafi in Kunar,⁹³¹ including most of the Taliban rank-and-file, as reported by the journalist.⁹³²

The Afghan researcher divided Salafists into two different groups: those being part of the Jamaat al-Dawah party, which pledged allegiance to the Taliban in 2020 (which involves most Salafis in Kunar, and some Salafis in Nangarhar), and those not being part of it. The latter group has been targeted, while Salafists under Jamaat al-Dawah have not been targeted by the Taliban, according to this source.⁹³³ The Danish COI unit reported that also '[m]any Ahl-e Hadith scholars have declared allegiance to the Taliban', and although the Ahl-e Hadith branch of Islam preceded Salafism in Afghanistan, the general public, including Salafis, do not differentiate between Salafi communities and the Ahl-e Hadith community – the two have become more or less synonymous. According to an anonymous researcher interviewed by the Danish COI unit, members of Ahl-e Hadith have in general been 'met with suspicion' because of the overlap with the Salafi community, and due to the terrorism campaigns carried out by the ISKP. This source had however not documented any killings by the Taliban of 'Ahl-e Hadith members based on their faith'.⁹³⁴ The Afghan researcher stated that the Ahl-e Hadith community was interchangeable with the Salafi community, and that the same applied to them; those being part of the Jamat-e Dawah party had not been targeted, while those not belonging to the party had been targeted in Nangarhar and Kunar.⁹³⁵

The Afghan researcher reported that Salafists (that are not part of Jamaat al-Dawah) have been targeted in other provinces than Nangarhar, such as in Kabul and Badakhshan. Furthermore, some Salafists have moved from Nangarhar to escape the Taliban, including the mosques' imams in Jalalabad. They now lived elsewhere, concealing their identity.⁹³⁶ In

⁹²⁹ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency

⁹³⁰ Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, CTC Sentinel, January 2024, [url](#), p. 5

⁹³¹ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁹³² International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁹³³ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency

⁹³⁴ Denmark, Centre for Documentation and Counter Extremism, Afghanistan, Ahl-e Hadith, October 2023, [url](#), pp. 4, 6–7

⁹³⁵ Afghan researcher, email communication, 11 October 2024

⁹³⁶ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency



October 2023, the international journalist mentioned the case of a man who had been arrested for about two weeks for praying ‘Salafi style’ in a Hanafi Mosque (e.g. raising their hands and holding them higher up on their chest than Hanafi Muslims, and doing more repetition of prayers) – which he described as an ‘almost provocative’ act, and ‘asking for trouble’.⁹³⁷ UNAMA has also recorded cases of individuals being assaulted in Badakhshan for performing *Tarawih* prayers ‘Salafi style’, and noted that the *de facto* provincial governor had reportedly asked the *de facto* Department of Hajj and Religious Affairs to identify individuals praying in this manner and referring them to the local *de facto* MPVPV and *de facto* GDI.⁹³⁸ The Afghan researcher confirmed that some people had been arrested for praying ‘Salafi style’ in some parts of Afghanistan, and mentioned a particular antagonism among southern Taliban commanders, heavily influenced by Sufism, in southern Afghanistan (e.g. Paktya, Paktika, Khost, Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz). For example, according to this source, to pray the way Salafists do in Kandahar would not be acceptable, and such an individual would not even be allowed to enter the mosque. The Afghan researcher further stated that in other areas where Salafists are in minority, they are in general not allowed to do their prayer as they want.⁹³⁹ Afghanistan expert Antonio Giustozzi, as cited by the Danish COI unit, also described ‘a hostility towards the Salafis in general’, primarily from the Deobandi and Sufi communities in the southern parts of Afghanistan.⁹⁴⁰

4.4. Women and girls

4.4.1. General situation under Taliban rule

Several edicts, decrees and declarations have been issued restricting women’s and girls’ rights since the Taliban takeover. Women and girls have faced limitations on their freedoms of movement, expression and behaviour, as well as their access to education, employment, healthcare, justice, and social protection.⁹⁴¹ The Taliban have held the position that they do protect the rights of women and girls, but in line with *sharia* and Afghan societal norms.⁹⁴² In September 2024, UN OHCHR reported that *de facto* authorities had ‘effectively erased opportunities for women and girls in public and political life’⁹⁴³ and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan stated that women and girls were

⁹³⁷ International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

⁹³⁸ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 13

⁹³⁹ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency

⁹⁴⁰ Denmark, Centre for Documentation and Counter Extremism, *Afghanistan, Ahl-e Hadith*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 11

⁹⁴¹ 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*, 15 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](#)

⁹⁴² UN Human Rights Council, *The phenomenon of an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls*, 13 May 2024, [url](#), para. 18

⁹⁴³ UN Human Rights Council, *The human rights situation in Afghanistan*, 3 September 2024, [url](#), para. 6



‘systematically oppressed’ and facing ‘gender apartheid’, due to the institutionalised, systematic and widespread nature of restrictions on their fundamental rights.⁹⁴⁴

The enforcement of issued edicts and instructions has not been consistent.⁹⁴⁵ As reported by International Crisis Group, ‘compromises in parts of the country have softened the blow’ of some restrictions, and in some rural areas the enforcement has reflected the common practice of those areas.⁹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, women’s rights have overall seen a drawback⁹⁴⁷ and their participation in political, economic and social life has largely been curtailed in comparison to their situation under the previous government.⁹⁴⁸

A compilation of 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 Taliban Supreme Leader issued a ‘Morality law’ on 31 July 2024 instructing the following:

- women should cover their entire body and cover their faces to prevent *ftina* [‘social disorder or chaos, which can itself facilitate sin’];
- women’s clothes ‘should not be thin, short or tight’;
- it is the responsibility of women to ‘hide their body and their face from men who are not their *mahram*’;
- Muslim and righteous women are obliged to ‘cover themselves in front of non-believing or loose women’ to prevent *ftina*;
- for a woman to not cover herself ‘properly’, is a ‘wrongful act’;
- the sound of a woman’s voice ‘in a song, a hymn, or a recital out loud in a gathering’ is a ‘wrongful act’;
- ‘women are not allowed to look at strange men’;
- an adult woman leaving her home ‘because of some urgent need’ is ‘duty-bound to hide her voice, face and body’;
- the *de facto* MPVPV shall ensure that staff and drivers of commercial vehicles do not transport uncovered or unaccompanied women, or ‘allow women to sit or mingle with an unrelated man’.⁹⁴⁹

More detailed information on the nature and enforcement of instructions on dress codes and gender segregation (including the restriction on women’s voices) is available in section: [1.2.4. Enforcement of select restrictions on personal freedoms](#).

⁹⁴⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 23 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 30, 32

⁹⁴⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 19–20; Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁹⁴⁶ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan Three Years after the Taliban Takeover, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan Three Years after the Taliban Takeover, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴⁸ 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](#)

⁹⁴⁹ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13, 20, 22



4.4.2. Freedom of expression and assembly

After the Taliban took power, women staged peaceful protests⁹⁵⁰ against the restrictions imposed on their rights. The *de facto* security forces responded to some of these protests with force, intimidations, arrests, arbitrary detentions and ill-treatment.⁹⁵¹ Some of the women activists that were detained were subjected to ill-treatment such as sexual violence and torture.⁹⁵² By 2024, women protests had decreased significantly,⁹⁵³ and were only occasionally reported.⁹⁵⁴ More information on demonstrations and women activists is available in sections [1.1.3. Political opposition and civic space](#) and [4.8. Human rights defenders and activists](#).

On 31 July 2024, the *de facto* authorities issued a ‘Morality law’ which described that the sound of a woman’s voice ‘in a song, a hymn, or a recital out loud in a gathering’ as a something that ‘should be concealed’ and as a ‘wrongful act’.⁹⁵⁵ Some foreign media outlets have reported that, following the announcement of the ‘Morality law’, women have been banned from speaking in public in Afghanistan. According to some testimonies, Afghan women were now unable or afraid of speaking outside their homes.⁹⁵⁶ The Afghan analyst however believed that this paragraph has been generally misunderstood, arguing that the law does not apply to speaking in public in everyday situations.⁹⁵⁷ Although the law does say that the sound of a woman’s voice is a ‘wrongful act’ and should be concealed⁹⁵⁸ it provides examples of situations where women are performing, reciting in public or ‘drawing attention to themselves’.⁹⁵⁹ This was already being enforced before the adoption of the new law, according to the Afghan analyst.⁹⁶⁰ Rahimi also stated that although the law could be read as

⁹⁵⁰ Reuters, Protests get harder for Afghan women amid risks and red tape, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁵¹ 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, 15 June 2023 [url](#), paras. 29, 30; CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30; EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 171; Afghan analyst, interview, 25 April 2024

⁹⁵³ Al Jazeera, Afghan women stage rare protests, braving Taliban reprisals, 8 March 2024, [url](#); AFP, Afghan women stage rare protests on International Women’s Day, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁴ Al Jazeera, Afghan women stage rare protests, braving Taliban reprisals, 8 March 2024, [url](#); DW, Afghan women taking the initiative against the Taliban, 13 July 2024, [url](#); AW, Afghan women protest Taliban’s policies on International Women’s Day, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁵ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13, 22

⁹⁵⁶ New York Times (The), With New Taliban Manifesto, Afghan Women Fear the Worst, 4 September 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The), ‘Frightening’ Taliban law bans women from speaking in public, 26 August 2024, [url](#); BBC News [YouTube], Women banned from speaking in public by Afghanistan’s Taliban rulers, 10 September 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵⁷ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁹⁵⁸ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13, 22

⁹⁵⁹ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13

⁹⁶⁰ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with



an absolute prohibition of women's voices in public spaces, the provided examples indicate that the intention for it is not to apply to women speaking in public, for example when running everyday business.⁹⁶¹ The director of the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO), Diana Nammi, however told the New Arab that the law prohibits women from speaking in public 'in all forms'; 'at forums, gatherings, and even in shops'.⁹⁶² The Afghan analyst noted that women were still 'out and about' in Kabul and Herat in September 2024, and running their everyday business as before the 'Morality law' was announced.⁹⁶³

The Afghan researcher stated in September 2024 that some news channels had removed woman news anchors, and that women were disappearing from television.⁹⁶⁴ AW also noticed that TOLONews seemed to no longer have women news anchors presenting as of July 2024,⁹⁶⁵ although women were still hosting TV shows as of August 2024.⁹⁶⁶ Women media workers had since before been instructed to wear *hijab* and cover their faces on air.⁹⁶⁷ More information on the situation of women journalists is available in section [4.7. Journalists and media workers](#).

According to Zan Times, the *de facto* authorities tortured and killed a female YouTuber in August 2023. Hora Sadat had released 'cheerful, happy and entertaining videos', but was arrested together with her sisters for 'moral corruption'. She was later released but killed soon thereafter after having been 'ordered to visit the Kabul Police Headquarters'. In the days following her family announcing that Sadat was dead, the *de facto* authorities reportedly released a 'documentary' claiming that she was killed by her friends with rat poison.⁹⁶⁸ The information provided by Zan Times has not been possible to corroborate with other sources.

4.4.3. Freedom of movement

Unlike the 1990s, the *de facto* authorities have not banned women from leaving the house without a *mahram*,⁹⁶⁹ but in a decree issued in December 2021, women were instructed not to travel more than 72 km without an accompanying *mahram*.⁹⁷⁰ In March 2022, women were further barred from boarding domestic or international flights without a *mahram* and without

the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁹⁶¹ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁹⁶² New Arab (The), Did the Taliban ban women from speaking in public?, 29 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶³ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁹⁶⁴ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.

⁹⁶⁵ AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 11

⁹⁶⁶ New Humanitarian (The), Three years on, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate is full of contradictions, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁷ AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 10

⁹⁶⁸ Zan Times, The Taliban killed a female Youtuber, then invented a story to cover up the murder, 5 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁶⁹ ACAPS, Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting humanitarian actors, 21 April 2023, [url](#), p. 7

⁹⁷⁰ 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](#)



wearing a ‘proper *hijab*’.⁹⁷¹ Women and girls have moreover been restricted from accessing public spaces such as public bathhouses,⁹⁷² gyms and parks.⁹⁷³ Drivers of commercial vehicles have also been instructed not to pick up female passengers without a *hijab* covering their hair (26 December 2021),⁹⁷⁴ and the *de facto* MPVPV has been ordered to ensure that staff and drivers of commercial vehicles do not transport uncovered or unaccompanied women, or ‘allow women to sit or mingle with an unrelated man’ (31 July 2024).⁹⁷⁵

The restriction on women not to travel long distances alone has sometimes been enforced for shorter distances than 72 km.⁹⁷⁶ As pointed out by an Afghan researcher interviewed by the Swedish Migration Agency’s COI unit, the *mahram* restrictions have been difficult to enforce, as it is hard to know what distance a women has travelled or intend to travel.⁹⁷⁷ In 2023, Latifi stated that the restriction on women travelling domestically had been implemented inconsistently, and that ‘thousands of women’ had ignored it and still went ‘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 Bamyan, as well as within the city of Kabul, he was also aware of women who travelled to Mazar-e Sharif faced issues when trying to return to Kabul without a *mahram*. Another incident he mentioned took place in Bamyan, where a group of women was not given a hotel room because they were not accompanied.⁹⁷⁸ In 2024, the Afghan analyst stated that the *de facto* authorities do enforce the restriction for women to be accompanied by *mahram* during long-distance travel. For example, a woman would not be able to travel from Herat to Kabul on her own, according to the source.⁹⁷⁹ Agence-France Presse (AFP) also reported on the restriction being ‘compulsory’, and several women told the media outlet that travelling without a *mahram* could result in ‘arrest, with rigorous inspections, particularly at checkpoints in towns and rural areas’.⁹⁸⁰ UNAMA further reported that the *de facto* MPVPV in Kandahar had inspected a bus terminal to ensure that women were not travelling long distances without a *mahram* and instructed the bus drivers not to allow unaccompanied women to board.⁹⁸¹

⁹⁷¹ 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](#)

⁹⁷² 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](#)

⁹⁷³ Bjelica J., What Do Young Afghan Women Do? A glimpse into everyday life after the bans, ANN, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁴ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 43–45, 100

⁹⁷⁵ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 20

⁹⁷⁶ UN Human Rights Council, The phenomenon of an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls, 13 May 2024, [url](#), para. 34; HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁷⁷ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 14

⁹⁷⁸ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

⁹⁷⁹ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁹⁸⁰ AFP, Afghan women struggle under male guardian rules, 10 May 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸¹ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2



Women told AFP that they were barred from entering *de facto* government offices without a *mahram*,⁹⁸² which was confirmed by the Afghan analyst, explaining that women often faced the question ‘Where is your *mahram*?’ when trying to enter a *de facto* government office.⁹⁸³

Some women have in practice been confined to their home due to the requirement of being accompanied.⁹⁸⁴ The situation however differed across the country.⁹⁸⁵ A consultant for women entrepreneurs told AFP that the situation in Kabul was very different compared to the provinces; in the capital women could go out shopping while in more conservative rural areas the *mahram* requirement was ‘strictly enforced’.⁹⁸⁶ The Afghan analyst’s general impression was that women were still ‘out and about’ in the cities of Herat and Kabul. When driving around Kabul City, one could see ‘quite a lot’ of women being out in the streets, marketplaces, or restaurants. Women even had their own shops in mixed shopping malls. As mentioned, the source noted that less women were present in the national park Shar-e Naw in 2024 compared to 2023. The source thought that this was due to the increased presence of *de facto* MPVPV officials in Kabul following the announcement of the ‘Morality law’. According to the same source, women still took taxis alone in Kabul City and still showed some level of defiance; businesswomen had told the source that they were frequently stopped and questioned by *de facto* MPVPV officials, and repeatedly had to argue with them and explain why their husband could not accompany them all the time.⁹⁸⁷ Azizi had not noted an immediate impact of the new restrictions in the big cities either. He thought that the *de facto* authorities would have a hard time implementing the restrictions on women in Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Badakhshan and Kabul as they would face a lot of opposition there. According to Azizi, women in Herat City were still going outdoors alone, and were able to travel within the city – although from time to time, they were stopped and questioned.⁹⁸⁸ Women for Women International described how the *de facto* authorities’ restrictions have had a major impact on women who were once an active part of society, although some women have been finding ways to adapt to the restrictions; some continued to go out walking alone or in groups, continued to go to work and to ‘socialise in the public spaces available to them’.⁹⁸⁹

In 2023, Latifi stated that the restriction on Afghan women travelling abroad without a *mahram* had been strictly enforced (whereas during 2021 and 2022, it was more lax).⁹⁹⁰ According to sources consulted by the Swedish Migration Agency’s COI unit, there have been cases where women have been hindered from leaving the country by plane despite having a *mahram*

⁹⁸² AFP, Afghan women struggle under male guardian rules, 10 May 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸³ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁹⁸⁴ UN Women, Photo essay: A glimpse into the lives of Afghan women, 7 March 2024, [url](#); AFP, Afghan women struggle under male guardian rules, 10 May 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, ‘All Doors Are Closed’ For Single And Unaccompanied Afghan Women Under The Taliban, 31 January 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁵ AFP, Afghan women struggle under male guardian rules, 10 May 2024, [url](#); Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 15

⁹⁸⁶ AFP, Afghan women struggle under male guardian rules, 10 May 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸⁷ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

⁹⁸⁸ Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024

⁹⁸⁹ Women for Women, 5 Ways Women’s Lives Have Changed Since the Taliban Takeover, 21 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁰ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023



accompanying them, as well as cases where women were able to travel abroad alone.⁹⁹¹ A western security expert interviewed by Cedoca in March 2023 also stated that some women manage to leave Afghanistan without a *mahram*, for example students leaving on foreign study visas and women with dual citizenship, although the majority of women are accompanied by relatives.⁹⁹²

4.4.4. Access to education

Following the Taliban takeover, primary and elementary schools were reopened for both boys and girls⁹⁹³ after having been closed since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.⁹⁹⁴ According to a study carried out by the World Bank, the number of girls between the ages 7–12 had increased to 60 % by June 2023, in contrast to the situation before the Taliban takeover when 36 % of girls in these ages attended primary school classes.⁹⁹⁵ International Crisis Group observed that this rise appeared to be a ‘by-product of the war’s end’, but also due to ‘the fact that some families view Taliban-run schools as more religiously or culturally acceptable than those of the previous system’.⁹⁹⁶

Girls have however been denied education beyond primary level,⁹⁹⁷ as girls’ secondary schools were ordered to remain closed.⁹⁹⁸ As some sources noted, Taliban policies towards education, including towards girls’ secondary education, have been inconsistent.⁹⁹⁹ Some secondary schools for girls were able to open¹⁰⁰⁰ in at least 13 provinces during the 2021–2022 school year.¹⁰⁰¹ Private secondary schools were moreover reportedly allowed to offer education for girls in all provinces,¹⁰⁰² 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.¹⁰⁰³ However, sources indicated in 2023 that most secondary schools had

⁹⁹¹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 14

⁹⁹² Belgium, Cedoca, COI Focus, Afghanistan. Migration movements of Afghans since the Taliban takeover of power, 14 December 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁹⁹³ TOLONews, Afghan Students Anxious as Schools Remain Closed, 16 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁴ Al Jazeera, The Taliban closes Afghan girls’ schools hours after reopening, 23 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁵ World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey (AWMS), Round 3, October 2023, [url](#), p. 16

⁹⁹⁶ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan Three Years after the Taliban Takeover, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁹⁷ 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

⁹⁹⁸ 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](#)

⁹⁹⁹ HRW, Four Ways to Support Girls’ Access to Education in Afghanistan, 20 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁰ 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](#)

¹⁰⁰¹ 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](#), paras. 33, 36

¹⁰⁰² Rubin, B., 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](#)

¹⁰⁰³ Salaam Times, Poverty, restrictions on girls shutter 400 Afghan private schools, 17 August 2022, [url](#)



closed¹⁰⁰⁴ in all provinces, including private secondary schools.¹⁰⁰⁵ Moreover, women's university studies were 'suspended' until further notice on 20 December 2022.¹⁰⁰⁶ The suspension was reportedly still in place by September 2024.¹⁰⁰⁷ Women have however not been restricted from pursuing an education as nurses and midwives,¹⁰⁰⁸ but according to an Afghan researcher, the access to nursing school differed across Afghanistan and is only available in some provinces.¹⁰⁰⁹

There have been initiatives to provide girls with education online,¹⁰¹⁰ but these methods have not been 'equally accessible or sustainable'¹⁰¹¹ *inter alia* due to the unstable internet connection across the country.¹⁰¹² Foreign media, UN Women and Human Rights Watch reported on underground secret schools running despite the ban.¹⁰¹³ However, in a closed workshop hosted by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies (CHS), and the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) in Doha on 12–13 November 2023, experts 'warned against describing girls' schools as secret or underground, as these were all known and generally accepted by the authorities as local education facilities in their communities'. Furthermore, girls' education was described as 'informally permitted' in some provinces.¹⁰¹⁴ Photojournalist Kiana Hayeri and researcher Mélissa Cornet documented a class for teenage girls in Kabul City in February 2024, following the American curriculum in English. These girls would not receive any official education certificate. It was described as a 'rare instance' in which the school had managed to secure the local *de facto* authorities to 'shut a blind eye'.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰⁰⁴ 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](#), paras. 33, 36

¹⁰⁰⁵ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023

¹⁰⁰⁶ Reuters, Taliban-led Afghan administration suspends women from universities, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁷ Eurasia Review, Afghanistan: Critical Review Of Taliban Policy On Third Anniversary Of Girls' School Closures – OpEd, 17 September 2024, [url](#); Assembly, From Afghan girls, to you, 11 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰⁸ Reuters, FEATURE-Shut out of jobs, Afghan women retrain as nurses, 8 August 2023, [url](#); Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency

¹⁰¹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 33, 36

¹⁰¹¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 33, 36

¹⁰¹² International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023; Reuters, Afghan girls struggle with poor internet as they turn to online classes, 28 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹³ RFE/RL, Secret Schools Offer 'A Ray Of Hope' For Rural Afghan Girls, 20 December 2023, [url](#); CNN, 'The school is like a light for me:' The secret classrooms giving Afghan girls a chance to learn despite Taliban rules, 5 October 2023, [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](#); UN Women, Photo essay: A glimpse into the lives of Afghan women, 7 March 2024, [url](#); HRW, Women's Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁴ PRIO et al., Pathways towards Strengthening Girl's Education in Afghanistan, December 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁰¹⁵ Huck, A glimpse of life for women in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, 6 September 2024, [url](#)



Women and girls have not been barred from accessing education in *madrassas*,¹⁰¹⁶ which have seen an increase in female pupils.¹⁰¹⁷ Some women and girls have also opened their own *madrassas*.¹⁰¹⁸ *Madrassas* provide religious education, but generally teach also non-religious subjects,¹⁰¹⁹ such as mathematics, science, physics, geography, and languages, including Arabic, Pashto, and Dari/Farsi as reported by AW.¹⁰²⁰ According to Rahimi, English and computer skills have always been provided in more successful or ‘high-profile’ *madrassas*, but now female *madrassas* in particular try to include mathematics, social sciences and other subjects as well.¹⁰²¹ According to an AAN article, many girls have found the quality of the teaching in some *madrassas* rudimentary and poor, sparking initiatives to start up their own *madrassas*.¹⁰²² According to Rahimi, the *de facto* authorities have approved a curriculum for both male and female *madrassas*, but have not outlined any general subject to be included in it. Some *madrassas* have therefore been able to adapt their curriculum to include more non-religious and scientific subjects, as girls cannot access secondary school. However, this has not taken place in a uniform way, according to Rahimi, who further explained that there are a lot of variations. Some *madrassas* have included modern subjects as a way to attract students, and to mitigate against what they consider to be an unjust policy towards general education. Some *madrassas* also advertise in social media that they teach a specific subject, according to the same source.¹⁰²³ AW reported on private schools in Kabul announcing on social media that they would provide classes for women ‘under the name of Madrassa’ amid the start of the academic school year in March 2024, and also noted that these schools emphasised that their curriculum combined religious and secular education, and that graduates will receive the same 12th-grade certificates as those from other types of schools offering secular education.’ AW further reported that ‘these private education centres added secular subjects such as science and mathematics to their curriculum, effectively operating girls-only *madrassas* as private schools for girls above grade six, to attract more students and reassure parents of a comprehensive education’.¹⁰²⁴

¹⁰¹⁶ Sabawoon, A. M. and Shapoor, R., The Daily Hustle: Why one Afghan girl decided to open her own madrasa, AAN, 2 June 2024, [url](#); Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; AP, Taliban official says Afghan girls of all ages permitted to study in religious schools, 21 December 2023, [url](#); PRIO et al., Pathways towards Strengthening Girl’s Education in Afghanistan, December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰¹⁷ AFP, Banned from school, Afghan girls turn to madrassas, 16 March 2023, [url](#); Amu TV, Inside Taliban religious schools: What girls are taught, 2 October 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰¹⁸ Sabawoon, A. M. and Shapoor, R., The Daily Hustle: Why one Afghan girl decided to open her own madrasa, AAN, 2 June 2024, [url](#); Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre

¹⁰¹⁹ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; AW, Afghanistan’s madrasa system under the Taliban, 7 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁰ AW, Afghanistan’s madrasa system under the Taliban, 7 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²¹ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹⁰²² Sabawoon, A. M. and Shapoor, R., The Daily Hustle: Why one Afghan girl decided to open her own madrasa, AAN, 2 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰²³ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹⁰²⁴ AW, No reopening: Taliban disputes claims of girls’ schools allowed in Kabul, 16 July 2024, [url](#)



4.4.5. Access to employment

Unlike the 1990s, the *de facto* authorities have not outright banned paid employment for women.¹⁰²⁵ However, women public officials working for the previous government were instructed to stay home after the Taliban takeover, and have been cut-off from working in most of the *de facto* government entities.¹⁰²⁶ Some were however allowed to continue working in some roles within the *de facto* ministries of Public Health, Interior and Education, at airports and in security.¹⁰²⁷ In June 2024, the *de facto* government issued a decree cutting the monthly salaries of all women government employees who also served the former government,¹⁰²⁸ to 5 000 afghanis (approximately EUR 65, as of 30 September 2024), meaning that women in some professions lost 75 percent of their wages.¹⁰²⁹ In a subsequent audio message on social media, Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahed stated that the order only applied to women who had not been actively working during the past two years but were still on the *de facto* government's payroll. According to the same message, women teachers, doctors and others currently working would continue to receive their salaries as before.¹⁰³⁰ However, as of 29 July 2024 no official written statement or new clarifying order had been issued, and it was reportedly still unclear whether it only applied to public officials who had been barred from coming to work, or if it extended to all women working in the public sector.¹⁰³¹

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 for the UN. Most foreign embassies were also informed that Afghan women could no longer work in their offices, as reported by the UN.¹⁰³² Although not officially acknowledged by the *de facto* authorities, many NGOs reported that exemptions of such ban were negotiated with local authorities for women working in health, nutrition and education sectors.¹⁰³³ Latifi also reported on 'workarounds' where some NGOs received permission allowing female staff to continue working.¹⁰³⁴ However, both UNAMA and the Afghan researcher noted that women health workers had been barred from travelling to their duty stations without a *mahram*.¹⁰³⁵ UNAMA recorded three cases in which female health workers had been arrested for not being accompanied, and released after their families guaranteed in writing that it would not be

¹⁰²⁵ Bjelica J., What Do Young Afghan Women Do? A glimpse into everyday life after the bans, AAN, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 27; Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹⁰²⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 27; Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹⁰²⁸ AW, Confusion after Taliban decree to cap women's salaries, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰²⁹ RFE/RL, 'Systematic Discrimination': Taliban's Drastic Cut In Salaries Of Female State Employees Triggers Anger, 18 June 2024, [url](#); Amu TV, Taliban's wage cuts for female employees deemed 'unjust', 10 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁰ AW, Confusion after Taliban decree to cap women's salaries, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³¹ Bjelica, J. and Shapour, R., A Pay Cut for Afghan Women Working in the Public Sector: "What can you do with 5,000 afghanis?", 29 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 47–48

¹⁰³³ 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

¹⁰³⁴ New Humanitarian (The), Three years on, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate is full of contradictions, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁵ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2; Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.



repeated in the future.¹⁰³⁶ Meanwhile, Latifi noted women doctors travelling unaccompanied to the province of Herat to support earthquake victims. Although this would be ‘technically forbidden’, exceptions were made in this crisis situation. Women doctors told Latifi that *de facto* officials had applauded them for travelling far to provide care.¹⁰³⁷

According to AW, the private sector remained one of the few areas for women to work.¹⁰³⁸ Latifi stated in 2023 that women were still allowed to work in private businesses, such as airlines, banks (including government-run banks), stores, travel agencies, cell phone and production companies.¹⁰³⁹ Women entrepreneurs have moreover been encouraged by the *de facto* authorities,¹⁰⁴⁰ and female entrepreneurship summits have taken place, with *de facto* officials often promoting these events.¹⁰⁴¹ 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,¹⁰⁴² being requested to operate in a gender segregated environment and to cater to female consumers only.¹⁰⁴³ A research study carried out by UNDP found that most women entrepreneurs faced operational challenges due to gender discrimination, including ‘prohibitions against women to travel to local markets, other provinces or abroad, or attending exhibitions without a mahram’. Some suppliers, shopkeepers, traders and wholesalers were moreover reluctant to interact with women entrepreneurs due to the ‘implicit pressures of the current policy environment’ as well as ambiguities in the *de facto* authorities’ policy towards women.¹⁰⁴⁴ UNAMA reported on women-run shops being ordered to close in some provinces, such as in the province of Balkh: in Mazar-e Sharif, women were told to close their shops on 5 January 2023 and to relocate to a new marketplace with separate sections for women and men. In December 2023, this market was however closed, due to owed taxes, and reopened again in January 2024 with only some of the women-led shops returning.¹⁰⁴⁵ According to the Afghan analyst, women were still running shops in Kabul and Herat in September 2024. The source noted that both men and women ran shops in a bazaar in Kabul City despite the *de facto* authorities’ strict gender segregation policy. Meanwhile, women-run shops had been segregated to designated areas in Herat City. Women used to have shops in the main bazaar in Herat City before, but they had all been closed down, shuttered and told to move to women’s bazaars, for example, the Khadija-tul Kubra Bazaar which is run by women only.¹⁰⁴⁶ The World Bank reported that female labour force participation had three-folded when comparing the situation in 2020 with the situation in April/June 2023.¹⁰⁴⁷ However the lack of job opportunities has been a driving factor pushing women to engage in small-scale home-

¹⁰³⁶ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰³⁷ New Humanitarian (The), Why I’m hopeful for Afghanistan, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰³⁸ AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁰³⁹ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹⁰⁴⁰ 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; AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁰⁴¹ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹⁰⁴² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 48, 49; UNDP, Listening to Women Entrepreneurs in Afghanistan: Their Struggle and Resilience, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰⁴³ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹⁰⁴⁴ UNDP, Listening to Women Entrepreneurs in Afghanistan: Their Struggle and Resilience, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁰⁴⁵ UNAMA, *De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁰⁴⁶ Afghan analyst, online interview, 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹⁰⁴⁷ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 14



based business.¹⁰⁴⁸ A survey carried out by WFP showed that the Taliban's restrictions on women's access to work had led to significantly less households having a female member engaging in any type of wage labour or salary employment. By March 2024, the number of women engaging in small businesses had decreased by 13 %, and women with salaried employment had decreased by 16 %, compared to the situation before the restrictions.¹⁰⁴⁹ More information on how the humanitarian situation has impacted women's participation in the labour market is available in section [3.2. Poverty, basic subsistence and employment](#).

Women have been limited in carrying out various professions.¹⁰⁵⁰ For instance, former women security personnel reportedly lost their jobs amid the Taliban takeover,¹⁰⁵¹ while women lawyers and judges have been barred from practicing,¹⁰⁵² women journalists have been banned from working for state-run media outlets, and those in the private sector have been allowed to work within certain restrictions.¹⁰⁵³ Since the Taliban takeover, 80 % of women journalists are estimated to have lost their jobs.¹⁰⁵⁴ The number of female teachers has also decreased due to the restrictions on secondary education for girls, on women teaching male students and other restrictions targeting women and girls.¹⁰⁵⁵ (More information on the situation of women legal professionals and women working in media is available in sections [4.1.6 Former judges and prosecutors](#) and [4.7. Journalists and media workers](#).) Moreover, in July 2023, beauty salons were shut down, which reportedly left some 60 000 women without an income.¹⁰⁵⁶

The lack of employment prospects has increasingly pushed more women living in the main cities to stroll the streets, pushing carts and selling second-hand goods or simple food goods from the carts.¹⁰⁵⁷ On 18 May 2024, the *de facto* authorities adopted a law prohibiting 'healthy' people that are able to secure one meal a day from begging, as well as the use of children and disabled people for begging.¹⁰⁵⁸ There have been reports of beggars being 'rounded up' by the *de facto* authorities.¹⁰⁵⁹ According to women beggars interviewed by a research fellow with the Afghanistan Programme at Raoul Wallenberg Institute, the *de facto* police is 'known

¹⁰⁴⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update - Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 23; World Bank, Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey (AWMS), Round 3, October 2023, [url](#), p. 14

¹⁰⁴⁹ WFP, Afghanistan Food Security Update - 1st Quarter (January-April) 2023, 5 July 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰⁵⁰ UN Women, FAQs: Afghan women three years after the Taliban takeover, 12 August 2024, [url](#); CARE, A 'window of hope' for the women of Afghanistan: business training to address missing jobs, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵¹ 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](#)

¹⁰⁵² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 23

¹⁰⁵³ 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

¹⁰⁵⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 46; RSF, Afghan journalism still resisting after two years of Taliban persecution, 10 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁵ Foschini, F., Education in Hibernation: The end of a virtuous cycle of literacy and empowerment for women in Shughnan?, AAN, 17 September 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁶ 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](#)

¹⁰⁵⁷ 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](#)

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ariana News, IEA leader approves law on prevention of begging, 19 May 2024, [url](#); Amu TV, Taliban leader approves law to curb begging, 18 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Drive to round up beggars kicks off in Laghman, 21 May 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, 'I Have No Choice': Cleared From The Streets, Kabul's Poorest Go Door-To-Door In Search Of Alms, 23 February 2023, [url](#)



to beat begging widows for violating gender segregation and movement policies’. Some of the general public were also reported to spit on and kick women beggars, being perceived as ‘nuisances’.¹⁰⁶⁰

4.4.6. Access to healthcare and basic services

Women and girls have been facing difficulties in accessing critical and routine healthcare due to the strains put on the health system because of the economic crisis, as well as to the limitations on their freedom of movement.¹⁰⁶¹ The requirement for women to be accompanied by a *mahram* when travelling has impacted both women seeking¹⁰⁶² and providing care.¹⁰⁶³ In some areas, women have also been prevented from accessing health facilities without a *mahram*.¹⁰⁶⁴ Such instances occurred in the province of Paktya according to UNAMA,¹⁰⁶⁵ and in Jalalabad (Nangarhar Province) according to the Afghan researcher.¹⁰⁶⁶ The Afghan analyst had not noted a similar issue in Kabul City, and as far as this source was aware, women could access healthcare there without a *mahram*.¹⁰⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch reported on some female health workers being required to have a *mahram* at work,¹⁰⁶⁸ and according to the UN Human Rights Council, male healthcare staff have been restricted from checking female patients.¹⁰⁶⁹ Although some women are still able to pursue an education as nurses¹⁰⁷⁰ and midwives,¹⁰⁷¹ the general restrictions on women’s access to education will enhance the shortage in women medical staff in the future, as reported by Human Rights Watch.¹⁰⁷² The bans on women from

¹⁰⁶⁰ RWI, Unprecedented Levels of Poverty – Widows Hardest Hit, 14 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 57, 61

¹⁰⁶² UNAMA, *De Facto* Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024, [url](#), p. 3; HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶³ HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#); Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency.

¹⁰⁶⁴ UN Human Rights Council, The phenomenon of an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls, 13 May 2024, [url](#), para. 40

¹⁰⁶⁵ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰⁶⁶ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency

¹⁰⁶⁷ Afghan analyst, online interview 1 October 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹⁰⁶⁸ HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 57, 61; UN Human Rights Council, The phenomenon of an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls, 13 May 2024, [url](#), para. 40

¹⁰⁷⁰ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency; HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷¹ Afghan researcher, online interview, 12 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI units at the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and the Swedish Migration Agency; HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#); UNHCR, UNHCR Afghanistan [X], posted on: 26 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷² HRW, “A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future”, Afghanistan’s Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)



working for international and national NGOs and the UN has moreover jeopardised the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to women.¹⁰⁷³

In 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan reported that 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 faced additional challenges in accessing services.¹⁰⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch confirmed that women with disabilities were facing additional challenges in accessing healthcare.¹⁰⁷⁵

Shortfalls in international funding of aid have also negatively impacted women's access to healthcare.¹⁰⁷⁶ More information on this topic is available in 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,¹⁰⁷⁷ and it was widespread already before the Taliban takeover.¹⁰⁷⁸ According to an investigation by Zan Times, as reported by AW, social media accounts suggest that gender-based violence, femicide and suicide among women were on the rise in 2024.¹⁰⁷⁹ UN Women also noted an increase in suicides,¹⁰⁸⁰ *inter alia* referring to a survey carried out by the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS), in which about 170 women across Afghanistan (8 % of the survey population) knew at least one woman or girl who had attempted suicide. In the same survey, mental health decline was connected to restrictions on women's and girls' access to education.¹⁰⁸¹ According to AW's records, suicides among women have been connected to domestic violence, forced marriage, rape and detention, and restrictions on education.¹⁰⁸² AW moreover recorded 143 killings of women in 2023, although pointing out that many other cases probably go unreported and also that deaths reported online 'are extremely hard to verify'. The most common perpetrators were family members (45.4 %), including brothers, husbands, sons, fathers, brothers-in-law and sons-in-law. Meanwhile, unknown actors made up 39.7 %, while 12.1 % of the cases were attributed to Taliban members.¹⁰⁸³ In interviews conducted by UNAMA, *de facto* public and security officials stated that the most reported types of gender-based violence included murder (notably honour killings), rape, causing injury or disability, or depriving women from

¹⁰⁷³ International Crisis Group, Taliban Restrictions on Women's Rights Deepen Afghanistan's Crisis, 23 February 2023, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 11

¹⁰⁷⁴ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 87–88

¹⁰⁷⁵ HRW, "A Disaster for the Foreseeable Future", Afghanistan's Healthcare Crisis, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁶ New Humanitarian (The), Three years on, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate is full of contradictions, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁷ 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](#), p. 809

¹⁰⁷⁸ HRW, No Shelter in Afghanistan, 19 March 2018, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷⁹ AW, Rising reports of femicide: new digital map documents cases of violence and repression of Afghan women in 'public' roles, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸⁰ UN News, Afghanistan: Taliban rule has erased women from public life, sparked mental health crisis, 13 August 2024, [url](#); UN Women, Afghanistan, Gender Country Profile 2024, June 2024, [url](#), p. 36

¹⁰⁸¹ DROPS, Women's Peace Brief – March 2023, [2023], [url](#) pp. 1–3

¹⁰⁸² AW, Surge in female suicides linked to forced marriages, Taliban violence, and arrests, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸³ AW, Rising reports of femicide: new digital map documents cases of violence and repression of Afghan women in 'public' roles, 23 April 2024, [url](#)



inheritance. The *de facto* MPVPV also received complaints of prohibition of marriage, choosing a spouse, forced marriage, battery and laceration.¹⁰⁸⁴

Corporal punishments inflicted by *de facto* courts for both men and women have increased under Taliban rule,¹⁰⁸⁵ including many cases related to *zina* (adultery or ‘running away from home’).¹⁰⁸⁶ More information is available in section [1.2.6. Corporal and capital punishments.](#)

4.4.8. Access to justice

The Taliban’s exclusion of female judges and lawyers from practicing the law¹⁰⁸⁷ has negatively impacted women’s access to justice, including their ability to obtain legal aid and equality before the law.¹⁰⁸⁸ For certain issues such as domestic violence women’s access to justice is very limited.¹⁰⁸⁹ According to UNAMA, there is a lack of female *de facto* police officers in some provinces. In other areas, female police staff has not been included in investigations of gender-based violence.¹⁰⁹⁰ Moreover, a *de facto* Department of Justice official in the Central Region of Afghanistan told UNAMA that ‘mediation is preferred’ in domestic violence cases. The same source reported that *de facto* officials sometimes rely on sworn statements from the perpetrator’s close relations, assuring that the survivor of gender-based violence will not be harmed, and also made use of prisons to harbour female victims.¹⁰⁹¹ According to UNAMA, as of December 2023, there were no state-sponsored specialised women’s protection centres or shelters remaining in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁹²

In December 2021, the *de facto* authorities issued a decree on Women’s Rights,¹⁰⁹³ 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.¹⁰⁹⁴ Despite the decree, cases of gender-based violence have been treated inconsistently by the *de facto* authorities,¹⁰⁹⁵ and, in many instances, resolved through informal means such as mediation.¹⁰⁹⁶ Moreover, although outlawing forced marriage,¹⁰⁹⁷ the decree does not set a minimum age for marriage.¹⁰⁹⁸ UNICEF data indicated that 28.7 % of girls under 18 were

¹⁰⁸⁴ UNAMA, Divergence of Practice: The Handling of Complaints of Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls by Afghanistan’s *de facto* Authorities, December 2023, [url](#), p. 10

¹⁰⁸⁵ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹⁰⁸⁶ UNAMA, Corporal Punishment in Afghanistan, May 2023, [url](#), pp. 13–14

¹⁰⁸⁷ 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](#)

¹⁰⁸⁸ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 23

¹⁰⁸⁹ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹⁰⁹⁰ UNAMA, Divergence of Practice: The Handling of Complaints of Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls by Afghanistan’s *de facto* Authorities, December 2023, [url](#), p. 18

¹⁰⁹¹ UNAMA, Divergence of Practice: The Handling of Complaints of Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls by Afghanistan’s *de facto* Authorities, December 2023, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁰⁹² UNAMA, Divergence of Practice: The Handling of Complaints of Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls by Afghanistan’s *de facto* Authorities, December 2023, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁰⁹³ Zabihullah [X], posted on: 3 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁴ Barnett, R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 27

¹⁰⁹⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 11 September 2023, [url](#), para. 27; UN Women, Afghanistan, Gender Country Profile 2024, June 2024, [url](#), p. 30

¹⁰⁹⁷ Barnett, R., Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹⁸ UN Women, Afghanistan, Gender Country Profile 2024, June 2024, [url](#), p. 29



married in Afghanistan in 2023, as well as 9.6 % of girls under 15 years.¹⁰⁹⁹ As reported by UN Women, early, forced and child marriages have been increasing due to the economic challenges faced by many families, and according to a study by Spotlight Initiative Afghanistan (as cited by UN Women), the practice of *baad* was still ‘deemed acceptable’ among many respondents if the involved families drew benefits from the marriage (among 25 % of respondents in Kandahar, 17 % in Paktya, and 15 % in Herat). Moreover, UN Women stated that girls from poor families in rural areas had been disproportionately affected by *baad*.¹¹⁰⁰

Women seeking divorce were reportedly routinely forced to return to violent relationships.¹¹⁰¹ In 2023, foreign media reported on divorced women being forced back to their ex-husbands by the local *de facto* authorities. Some women have voiced concerns that divorces pronounced under the previous government would not be seen as valid by the Taliban, as senior *de facto* officials had not given clear answers on whether judgements made under the previous government would be accepted.¹¹⁰² In 2024, BBC News reported on such a divorce decision being revoked by a *de facto* court, as the husband had not been present and, as explained by a media officer of the *de facto* Supreme Court, the previous administration had not handled the case in line with *sharia* and ‘rules of marriage’.¹¹⁰³ Zan Times reported on a number of women facing difficulties when applying for a divorce at the *de facto* courts, they were for example told not to apply for divorce or had their case ignored.¹¹⁰⁴

4.5. LGBTIQ persons

Initially after the Taliban takeover, the legal situation of LGBTIQ¹¹⁰⁵ persons was unclear, although reports suggested that a strict interpretation of *sharia* was being implemented.¹¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch described how the Taliban ‘echoed the previous government’s support for the criminalisation of same-sex relations’, with some Taliban leaders ‘vowing to take a hard line’ against the rights of the ‘LGBT’ community.¹¹⁰⁷ The ‘Morality law’ of 31 July 2024 contains prohibitions of ‘lesbianism’ and anal sex.¹¹⁰⁸ These articles ‘strictly prohibited’ Afghan citizens from engaging in same-sex relationships according to an interpretation by the NGO Afghan LGBT.¹¹⁰⁹ According to Amnesty International, same-sex relations were punishable by death.¹¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹⁹ UNICEF, Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2022-202, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁰ UN Women, Afghanistan, Gender Country Profile 2024, June 2024, [url](#), p. 29

¹¹⁰¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 82

¹¹⁰² 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](#)

¹¹⁰³ BBC News, A child bride won the right to divorce - now the Taliban say it doesn't count, 29 September 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁴ Zan Times, Locked in suffering: Taliban’s stance on divorce leaves Afghan women in despair, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁵ This term is used in accordance with the EU policy strategy, available at [url](#), which refers to sexual and gender minorities as: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons. In line with EUAA COI Research Guide on LGBTIQ, available at: [url](#). Other acronyms are used when referenced sources refer to other acronyms.

¹¹⁰⁶ Human Dignity Trust, Types of Criminalisation, 14 August 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁷ HRW, “Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You”, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁰⁸ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

¹¹⁰⁹ Afghan LGBT, Taliban's New Legal Measures Escalate Persecution of LGBTQ+ Community, 25 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁰ AI, The State of the World’s Human Rights 2023 – Afghanistan, 24 April 2024, [url](#)



There were reports of people being flogged for ‘immoral relationships’ referred to as ‘sodomy’ and ‘adultery’ by the *de facto* authorities.¹¹¹¹ There were media reports across Afghanistan of people being lashed and sentenced to prison for alleged ‘sodomy’,¹¹¹² but only one media report specified that the ‘sodomy’ charges were imposed on a man for homosexuality.¹¹¹³ Although not specifying what the term ‘sodomy’ entailed in recorded cases, a compilation of cases by Hasht-e Subh, based on data from the Taliban Supreme Court and Hasht-e Subh’s own reporting, reports on 85 individuals being flogged for ‘sodomy’ since the Taliban takeover (reporting on 17 August 2024). So far in 2024, 55 individuals had been flogged for ‘sodomy’ in the provinces of Kandahar, Kabul, Khost, Parwan, Logar, Uruzgan, Sar-e Pul, Farah, and Kunduz. According to the same report, 10 individuals had been flogged for ‘sodomy’ in 2023, and 20 in 2022.¹¹¹⁴ Speaking for the UN Human Rights Council, the NGO Afghanistan LGBTIQ+ Organisation stated that at least 20 individuals had been lashed for engaging in same sex acts, and also reported on the abduction and sexual assault of a trans woman by five Taliban soldiers and their commander.¹¹¹⁵ In May 2023, exile Afghan media claimed that the *de facto* Supreme Court had handed down and enforced the punishment of ‘wall-toppling’, which is a punishment used for ‘sodomy’.¹¹¹⁶ Rahimi however stated that a number of stoning sentenced were still pending approval from the Taliban supreme leader by September 2024.¹¹¹⁷

There were no laws in force offering protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics.¹¹¹⁸ Furthermore, there were no registered interest groups in the country advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ persons.¹¹¹⁹ As reported by USDOS, LGBTIQ persons ‘could not assemble, associate, or express themselves publicly due to fear of being killed, attacked, or outed by the Taliban’.¹¹²⁰ In February 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur recounted ‘disturbing accounts’ of LGBTIQ persons being ‘subjected to physical and sexual violence in prisons, possibly amounting to torture, based on their sexual orientation or gender identity’.¹¹²¹

¹¹¹¹ Afghan LGBT, Flogging 63 people on charges of "Sodomy" and "Adultery" by the Taliban, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹² See for example: Amu TV, Taliban publicly whip man in Kabul, 14 May 2024, [url](#); Amu TV, Taliban publicly flogs six in Ghazni, Kandahar, 4 July 2024, [url](#); Amu TV, Taliban flogs man in Paktika, 3 July 2024, [url](#); Ariana News, Six people, including a woman, publicly flogged in Logar, 6 April 2024, [url](#); TOLONews, 63 Sentenced Men, Women in Sar-e-Pul Receive Lashings, Imprisonment, 5 June 2024, [url](#); TOLONews, 22 Court-Ordered Punishments Implemented in One Month: Supreme Court, 5 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹³ Afghanistan International, Taliban Publicly flogs man in Parwan for Homosexuality, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁴ Hasht-e Subh, The Taliban’s Vigilante Justice: 715 Public Floggings in Under Three Years, 17 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁵ Afghan LGBT, Artemis Akbary’s remark at the UN Human Rights Council, 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁶ Amu TV, Taliban issues 37 stoning orders since takeover of Afghanistan, 25 July 2024, [url](#); Afghanistan International, Taliban Publicly Flogs Man In Parwan For Homosexuality, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹¹⁷ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹¹¹⁸ ILGA World Database, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 46

¹¹¹⁹ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 47; The Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General country of origin information report Afghanistan, June 2023, [url](#), p. 100

¹¹²⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 47

¹¹²¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 29 February 2024, [url](#), para. 66



Having a norm-breaking sexual orientation or gender identity entails taboos and social stigma in the general Afghan society,¹¹²² and already before the Taliban takeover, members of the LGBTIQ community were reported to have faced threats and harassment from the general society.¹¹²³ Social norms do not recognise ‘[t]he idea that an individual may have a particular orientation or that a community could exist around a common orientation or gender identity’, as reported by the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs in June 2023. The same source reported that it is not acceptable to ‘[o]penly identifying as gay and putting into practice the desire to share your life with a person of the same sex’, as it ‘goes against traditional gender norms, societal codes and tribal and other codes of honour.’¹¹²⁴ Many LGBTIQ persons conceal their gender identity or sexual orientation¹¹²⁵ and some live in hiding.¹¹²⁶ USDOS described Afghan culture as insisting on ‘compulsory heterosexuality’,¹¹²⁷ and some LGBTIQ persons felt pressure to enter heterosexual marriages to conceal their orientation and to conform with cultural expectations.¹¹²⁸

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan reported, in May 2024, that the Taliban had both committed and condoned violence against LGBTIQ persons, and that he had received reports of people being attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, mainly from family members. These reports included attempted murder, rape and beatings.¹¹²⁹ The UN Special Rapporteur also noted accounts shared of LGBTIQ persons being subjected to sexual assaults by relatives and Taliban members, ‘as punishment for their sexual orientation and/or gender identity’.¹¹³⁰ In a report from 14 February 2023, Outright International noted that most cases of violence against LGBTIQ persons documented after the Taliban takeover initially involved those closest to the victims, such as family members, partners and neighbours. However, the organisation stated that they had noted a trend by February 2023, where Taliban officials seemed to increasingly target LGBTIQ persons – including collecting intelligence on activists and community members, ‘hunting them down’ and ‘subjecting them to violence and humiliation’.¹¹³¹

Under the traditional practice of *bacha posh* (‘dressed as boys’¹¹³²), a daughter is picked to live her life as a boy. The decision to make a daughter *bacha posh* can be made for various

¹¹²² UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 29 February 2024, [url](#), para. 66; USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 46; Germany, BAMF, Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan SOGI (Sexuelle Orientierung und geschlechtliche Identität): Situation von LGBTIQ-Personen, March 2024, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹²³ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 183

¹¹²⁴ The Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General country of origin information report Afghanistan, June 2023, [url](#), p. 98

¹¹²⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 29 February 2024, [url](#), para. 65; HRW, “Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You”, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹²⁶ AI, Afghanistan 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#); HRW, HRW, World report 2024: Afghanistan, Events of 2023, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

¹¹²⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 47

¹¹²⁸ The Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General country of origin information report Afghanistan, June 2023, [url](#), p. 99; HRW, “Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You”, 26 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹²⁹ UN Human Rights Council, The phenomenon of an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls, 13 May 2024, [url](#), para. 55

¹¹³⁰ UN Human Rights Council, The phenomenon of an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls, 13 May 2024, [url](#), para. 83

¹¹³¹ Outright International, A Mountain on My Shoulders 18 Months of Taliban Persecution of LGBTIQ Afghans, 14 February 2023, [url](#), pp. 5–6

¹¹³² RWI, Vicious Cycle of Women’s Rights Violations in Afghan, 2023, [url](#), p. 12



reasons; including social stigma around only having daughters, circumventing barriers for women in society, or poverty (in order to send the child to work). It is usually occurring in families without sons. Girls raised as *bacha posh* typically resume their life as a girl when entering puberty.¹¹³³ On 16 January 2022, NBC News reported that the Taliban's stance as regards *bacha posh* remained unclear.¹¹³⁴

4.6. Ethnic and religious groups

4.6.1. General situation under Taliban rule

The *de facto* government is led by a thirty-three-member caretaker cabinet, composed of men who are predominantly ethnic Pashtuns.¹¹³⁵ Non-Pashtun members of the cabinet include:

- *de facto* deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Mullah Abdul Salam Hanafi¹¹³⁶ (ethnic Uzbek from Jawzjan Province);¹¹³⁷
- *de facto* Minister of Agriculture, Mawlawi Atullah Omari¹¹³⁸ (ethnic Uzbek from Faryab Province);¹¹³⁹
- *de facto* Minister of Economy, Qari Din Mohammad Hanif¹¹⁴⁰ (ethnic Tajik from Badakhshan Province);¹¹⁴¹
- *de facto* Army Chief of Staff, Qari Fasihuddin¹¹⁴² (ethnic Tajik from Badakhshan Province);¹¹⁴³
- *de facto* Minister of Trade, Hajji Norruddin Azizi¹¹⁴⁴ (ethnic Tajik from Panjsher Province);¹¹⁴⁵
- *de facto* Minister of the MPVPV, Mohammad Khaled,¹¹⁴⁶ (ethnic Nuristani from Nuristan Province).¹¹⁴⁷

¹¹³³ NBC News, Some Afghan girls can wrestle, play sports, and work — but only if they live as a boy, 16 January 2022, [url](#); Pursuit, Girls forced to act as boys in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹³⁴ NBC News, Some Afghan girls can wrestle, play sports, and work — but only if they live as a boy, 16 January 2022, [url](#)

¹¹³⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, The Taliban in Afghanistan, January 2023, [url](#)

¹¹³⁶ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Deputy PM Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi Reaffirms Support for Private Sector Growth and Investment, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁷ AA, Who's who in Taliban interim government?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³⁸ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#); RTA English [X], posted on: 24 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹³⁹ 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](#)

¹¹⁴⁰ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Economy Minister Hanif and UNDP Collaborate to Shift Focus from Humanitarian to Development Aid, 4 June 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴¹ AA, Who's who in Taliban interim government?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴² BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#); MEMRI, In Dari-Language TV Interview, Afghan Taliban's Chief Of Army Staff Qari Fasihuddin Fitrat Warns: 'If Someone Wants To Invade And Occupy Afghanistan Again, All Our Forces Are Istishhadi [Martyrdom-Seeking Fighters] Against Them', 11 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴³ AA, Who's who in Taliban interim government?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁴ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#); Afghanistan, *de facto* Ministry of Commerce, Mr. Azizi meets Kazakhstan's ambassador, 11 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁵ Agenzia Nova, Afghanistan: the Taliban appoint a UN representative and ask to speak to the General Assembly, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁶ BBC Monitoring, Government List, Afghanistan, 17 July 2023, [url](#); TOLONews, Hanafi: Islamic Emirate Engages with World Within Sharia Framework, 26 August 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁷ Afghanistan, *de facto* MOPVPE, Biography of the ministry leadership, *n.d.*, [url](#)





Three Hazaras have been appointed *de facto* deputy ministers of Economy, Public Health and Urban Development and Land after the takeover,¹¹⁴⁸ and were reported to still be in office on these post in 2024.¹¹⁴⁹ At provincial level, ethnic groups other than Pashtuns have been represented to a somewhat higher degree.¹¹⁵⁰ An international analyst however pointed out that the local communities do not necessarily feel represented by these individuals solely by sharing the same ethnicity.¹¹⁵¹ According to Foschini, the common practice of the *de facto* authorities is to try not to appoint *de facto* officials to their areas of origin (i.e. *de facto* district governors should not be appointed to their home district, and *de facto* provincial governors should not be appointed to their province of origin). In Badakhshan however, where the local population is predominantly Tajik, appointments to the local *de facto* governance did instead rely on high-ranking Badakhshi Taliban members, probably due to the fact that the province had never been under Taliban control before. Foschini found that nearly all *de facto* district governors and security commanders in Badakhshan had been appointed to their home districts, which indicated a ‘hands off’ approach, ‘allowing local cadres to strengthen their status at home’. External *de facto* officials were not appointed until summer 2023, and there were cases of local *de facto* officials rebelling after they or their forces were dismissed under the ongoing purges of the *de facto* security forces.¹¹⁵²

According to one source interviewed by the Swedish Migration Agency’s COI unit, there seemed to be no Hazaras serving in the *de facto* MPVPV in Kabul or other cities, while another source said that Hazaras were in fact working within this *de facto* ministry in some provinces – although it was clear that the ministry is only to enforce *sharia* in line with the Sunni Hanafi school of thought.¹¹⁵³ ACAPS reported on job opportunities in the province of Bamyan being restricted to Taliban members and members of the Hazara community, limiting job opportunities for other ethnic groups.¹¹⁵⁴ In October 2023, a representative of the Hindu and Sikh communities was appointed to Kabul’s *de facto* municipality council.¹¹⁵⁵

Minorities have been marginalised in decision-making processes due to their decreased representation in public positions.¹¹⁵⁶ Sources observed that, in theory, the Taliban leadership

¹¹⁴⁸ Kabul Now, Taliban Appoint a Shia-Hasara as Deputy Minister, 2 December 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁴⁹ TOLONews, Economy Ministry: Making Aid Conditional Against Intl Rights, Ethics, 26 September 2024, [url](#); Bakhtar News Agency, Urban Development Ministry Approves Orphanage Township Plan in Helmand, 8 June 2024, [url](#); Afghanistan, *de facto* Ministry of Health, Deputy Minister of Health Development and Policy meets with member of the Red Cross Committee, 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁵⁰ 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

¹¹⁵¹ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹¹⁵² Foschini, F., Ruling Uncharted Territory: Islamic Emirate governance in northeastern Afghanistan, AAN, September 2024, [url](#), pp. 22, 23, 25–26, 28, 38

¹¹⁵³ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 10

¹¹⁵⁴ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Understanding the key human safety and security issues that returnees to Afghanistan are facing, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹¹⁵⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 29 February 2024, [url](#), para. 53

¹¹⁵⁶ 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](#); Afghanistan, *de facto* Ministry of Health, Deputy Minister of Health Development and Policy meets with member of the Red Cross Committee, 2024, [url](#)





generally respected minorities,¹¹⁵⁷ but in practice, Taliban rank-and-file often do not.¹¹⁵⁸ ACAPS noted ‘anecdotes of discriminatory activities’ against non-Sunni religious groups and non-Pashtun ethnic groups, and mentioned restrictions on religious events due to security concerns and the exclusive Sunni education provided in schools.¹¹⁵⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung did not observe any ‘explicit violent discrimination against specific minority groups’ in 2022–2024, although describing ethnic cleavages as ‘still highly salient’.¹¹⁶⁰ A research study of Biruni Institute described how, in Kabul City, racial and linguistic discrimination had been enhanced within the public sector and at *de facto* government offices, although many interviewees pointed out that ‘Afghanistan has always struggled with racial and linguistic based tensions’ and that the current situation was a ‘continuation of similar problems from the Republic period’.¹¹⁶¹

The Taliban’s treatment of ethnic and religious groups has also been determined by the reality of the past wars and of Afghan society.¹¹⁶² Since having connections to government bodies is key to obtain services,¹¹⁶³ ethnic and religious minorities have become more vulnerable in terms of accessing state service and justice.¹¹⁶⁴ Farsi signs have reportedly been replaced with Pashto signs in predominantly Farsi-speaking cities such as Herat and Mazar-e Sharif,¹¹⁶⁵ and Pashto is increasingly being used in *de facto* government offices, which creates further obstacles to those who do not speak the language.¹¹⁶⁶

After the Taliban takeover, the *de facto* authorities started to reclaim government land. As explained by AAN expert Ali Mohammad Sabawoon, each shift in power in modern Afghan history has introduced ‘a new set of actors’ in power that ‘could seize or redistribute land’, making the current issues of land disputes very complex.¹¹⁶⁷ The international analyst stated that ethnicity has become more important, adding that there are multiple examples of the *de facto* authorities supporting Pashtun communities, especially in conflicts with their non-Pashtun neighbours over property and land claims.¹¹⁶⁸ Other reports have suggested that

¹¹⁵⁷ 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

¹¹⁵⁸ 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

¹¹⁵⁹ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Understanding the key human safety and security issues that returnees to Afghanistan are facing, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹⁶⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 28

¹¹⁶¹ Rahimi, L., The Silent Erosion of Afghanistan’s Urban Middle Class: A Neglected Crisis, *The Diplomat*, 24 February 2024, [url](#), p. 38

¹¹⁶² Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023; Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taliban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶³ 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

¹¹⁶⁴ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹¹⁶⁵ 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](#)

¹¹⁶⁶ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹¹⁶⁷ Sabawoon, A. M., Land in Afghanistan: This time, retaking instead of grabbing land?, AAN, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁶⁸ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023



forced evictions and displacement of minority groups, including Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks, have been facilitated or tolerated by the *de facto* authorities.¹¹⁶⁹

In 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan noted that the ‘ripple effects’ of efforts to solve land disputes and to reclaim government-owned land had ‘surfaced most clearly in land disputes between Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik landowners and communities who are regarded as having closer ties to the Taliban.’¹¹⁷⁰ Land disputes have also involved Pashtun returnees from Pakistan, most of whom are Kuchis, reclaiming land upon their return.¹¹⁷¹ According to the Afghan analyst, these conflicts are based on complex land dispute dynamics between different 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 had ‘become more brazen, especially on claiming lands.’¹¹⁷² Foschini also identified motivations other than ethnicity behind the *de facto* authorities’ general siding with Kuchis in land disputes, such as seeking political and military control in affected areas.¹¹⁷³ The same source however stated that ‘Hazara communities find themselves vanquished and disarmed while the Kuchis, [are] usually on better terms with the [de facto] security and administrative officials who are often fellow ethnic Pashtuns’.¹¹⁷⁴ ACAPS noted that Hazara communities perceived the *de facto* authorities’ siding with Kuchis as ‘ethnically charged’.¹¹⁷⁵

Some ethnic and religious communities have been targeted due to their perceived affiliation to armed groups opposing the Taliban.¹¹⁷⁶ More information on this topic is available in section [4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to armed groups](#).

4.6.2. 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’.¹¹⁷⁷ The ‘Morality law’ of 31 July 2024 specifies general dress codes for men and women, and a number of ‘wrongful acts’ related to neglecting one’s prayer and

¹¹⁶⁹ 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

¹¹⁷⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 29 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 61, 62

¹¹⁷¹ Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁷² Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹¹⁷³ Foschini, F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁴ Foschini, F., The Pastures of Heaven: An update of Kuchi-Hazara disputes as spring approaches, AAN, 24 February 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁷⁵ ACAPS, Afghanistan, Understanding the key human safety and security issues that returnees to Afghanistan are facing, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹⁷⁶ 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

¹¹⁷⁷ Rehman, R., Taliban 2021: Mujahid, Munafiq? - Protecting Islam or undermining it?, Human Rights in Context, 26 August 2021, [url](#)



congregational prayer, neglecting fasts, and observing holidays that have ‘no Islamic foundation’, such as *Nawruz*, *Shab-e Yalda*, fireworks night and other festivals. The same law specifies the wrongful act of befriending and assisting non-Muslims, and ‘imitating them in one’s appearance or character’.¹¹⁷⁸ More information on the enforcement of these instructions is available in section [1.2.4. Enforcement of select restrictions on personal freedoms](#).

The *de facto* government have allowed for Shia ceremonies and celebrations to take place. According to sources consulted by the Swedish Migration Agency’s COI unit, Shia Muslims may still practice their religion in Shia Mosques.¹¹⁷⁹ However, Shia Ja’fari jurisprudence has been removed from the school curriculum as well as from the *de facto* judiciary,¹¹⁸⁰ and on 14 December 2023, the *de facto* authorities issued an instruction to all universities and private education institutions to remove books ‘against’ Hanafi jurisprudence from their libraries.¹¹⁸¹ Some religious celebrations have moreover been restricted, such as the *Ashura* commemoration in 2023 for which it was announced that large gatherings would not be allowed out of security reasons,¹¹⁸² following a string of attacks targeting Shia Hazaras amid the celebrations the year before.¹¹⁸³ In 2024, the *de facto* authorities imposed restrictions on *Muharram* celebrations, instructing Shias to refrain from organising gatherings in public and to hold ceremonies in designated places of worship.¹¹⁸⁴ The *Ashura* commemoration could however be held without any reported incidents, and *de facto* security forces reportedly provided safety during the event.¹¹⁸⁵ Telecom networks were reportedly shut down in Kabul City as a security measure.¹¹⁸⁶ However, Shias have reportedly been prevented from celebrating *eid al-ghadir*.¹¹⁸⁷ In 2023, the day of breaking the fast of Ramadan took place on different days according to the respectively Sunni and Shia calendars,¹¹⁸⁸ and there were reports of some Shia Hazaras in the provinces of Balkh¹¹⁸⁹ and Daykundi, being forced to perform *Eid* prayers one day earlier than their religious practice foresaw, and *de facto* officials beating those who refused.¹¹⁹⁰

¹¹⁷⁸ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

¹¹⁷⁹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 25

¹¹⁸⁰ Zan Times, I saw them execute the others: How 14 Hazara men were killed by terrorists, 19 September 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸¹ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6;

RFE/RL, Taliban Bans Books From Minority Muslim Sects In Private University Libraries, 22 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸² 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

¹¹⁸³ 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](#)

¹¹⁸⁴ Kabul Now, Taliban Impose Restrictions as Shias Begin to Observe Muharram, 7 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁵ TOLONews, Shia Scholars Thank Islamic Emirate Forces for Security During Muharram, 28 July 2024, [url](#);

Pajhwok Afghan News, ‘Ashura brings message of unity to Islamic Ummah’, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, ‘Ashura brings message of unity to Islamic Ummah’, 16 July 2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁸⁷ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 25

¹¹⁸⁸ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan. Restriktioner och begränsningar av personlig frihet under talibanstyret, 16 April 2024, [url](#), p. 25

¹¹⁸⁹ Afghanistan International, Taliban Forced Shia Clerics To Offer Eid Prayers On Friday in Balkh, 22 April 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁰ Kabul Now, Taliban in Daikundi forces residents to celebrate Eid a day earlier, 21 April 2023, [url](#)





Conversion from Islam to another religion is considered as apostasy and is punishable by death, according to the Taliban's interpretation of *sharia*.¹¹⁹¹ As noted by the international analyst, people born into another faith and who have not converted from Islam are allowed not to be Muslims. The same source noted that there was no formal policy on 'hunting down' converts, due to a general expectation that converts will be killed by their own families, rather than by the *de facto* authorities.¹¹⁹²

4.6.3. Hazaras and other Shia groups

(a) Background

Most Hazaras in Afghanistan are Shia Muslims,¹¹⁹³ although a significant number follow the Ismaili Shia school of thought, while others are Sunni Muslims.¹¹⁹⁴ Most Hazaras are Dari speakers.¹¹⁹⁵ As described by experts Niamatullah Ibrahim and Melissa Chioyenda, Hazaras experience a 'collective trauma' due to the oppression they have faced in Afghan history, including under the rule of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan in the 19th century¹¹⁹⁶ when Hazaras were enslaved, subjected to mass killings, and pushed to mass exodus from Afghanistan.¹¹⁹⁷ The Taliban also engaged in massacres of Hazara civilians during their previous rule in 1996–2001, and killed senior officials of the *mujahedin* group Hezb-e Wahdat.¹¹⁹⁸ Many Hazaras got an improved socio-economic situation under the Islamic Republic.¹¹⁹⁹ More background information is available in the [EUAA COI Report Targeting of Individuals](#).

(b) Policies and discrimination by the *de facto* authorities

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 their willingness to avoid sectarian divisions.¹²⁰⁰ As mentioned, three Hazara deputy ministers have been appointed to posts within the *de facto* government.¹²⁰¹ Some restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities on the Hazara and Shia communities include a prohibition to teach Shia jurisprudence in some universities,¹²⁰² a local ban on marriages among

¹¹⁹¹ USCIRF, Religious Freedom and Women's Rights in Afghanistan, 30 August 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹¹⁹² International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹¹⁹³ Mohammadi, M., Human Rights Conditions for Hazaras in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime, SJSU, 7 February 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹¹⁹⁴ MRG, Hazaras in Afghanistan, December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁵ MRG, Hazaras in Afghanistan, December 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁹⁶ Kerr Chioyenda, M. S., Cultural Trauma, History Making, and the Politics of Ethnic Identity among Afghan Hazaras, University of Connecticut, 15 December 2016, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹⁹⁷ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 130–131

¹¹⁹⁸ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 131–132

¹¹⁹⁹ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Hazaraer og afghansk opprørsbevegelse, 3 October 2016, [url](#)

¹²⁰⁰ USDOS, Afghanistan 2021 Human Rights Report, 12 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 38, 51

¹²⁰¹ 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

¹²⁰² 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





Shia and Sunni individuals in the district of Nusay in Badakhshan Province (February 2023),¹²⁰³ and restrictions on group movements and large gatherings during the *Ashura* in July 2023.¹²⁰⁴

However, sources noted a discrepancy between the Taliban leadership's public stance towards Shia Hazaras and the actual treatment of these communities by the Taliban rank-and-file.¹²⁰⁵ The international analyst explained that, while the Taliban leadership does not perceive 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 the Taliban do not usually attack Hazara and Shia communities and had not, as of October 2023, documented any confrontations in provinces where Hazara leaders had been appointed, such as in the provinces of Bamyan and Daykundi. However, 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.'¹²⁰⁶

Hazaras/Shias have moreover faced discrimination.¹²⁰⁷ As pointed out by the Afghan analyst, Hazaras have historically faced societal discrimination from other ethnic groups such as Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and others, and such discrimination has persisted. Under the current *de facto* administration however, the analyst pointed out that Hazaras have not been facing systematic 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.¹²⁰⁸ Some sources reported on many individuals from the Hazara communities being dismissed or replaced in *de facto* government jobs.¹²⁰⁹ The Afghan analyst stated that since Hazaras have been disproportionately underrepresented within the *de facto* government, they tend to have fewer connections in positions of power. As a result, their access to government services has been negatively impacted.¹²¹⁰ For example, Hazaras faced more barriers in obtaining passports to go abroad.¹²¹¹

¹²⁰³ 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](#)

¹²⁰⁴ 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](#)

¹²⁰⁵ 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

¹²⁰⁶ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹²⁰⁷ 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](#)

¹²⁰⁸ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹²⁰⁹ 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

¹²¹⁰ Afghan analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹²¹¹ 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



(c) Land disputes

Since the Taliban takeover, ‘a greater number’ of Kuchi nomads, compared to previous years, moved into Hazarajat (the central region of the country which has historically been disputed between the Kuchis/local Pashtuns and the Hazara people),¹²¹² resulting in the forced evictions and displacement of local Hazara populations.¹²¹³ 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.¹²¹⁴ The same source stated in 2024 that ‘Hazara communities find themselves vanquished and disarmed while the Kuchis, [are] usually on better terms with the [de facto] security and administrative officials who are often fellow ethnic Pashtuns’. Although acts of violence have occurred less frequently than during the Islamic Republic, Kuchis have been granted to hold weapons for their own security, and have engaged in more ‘subtle forms of violence’ and intimidations. Meanwhile, Hazaras have often not cooperated and have avoided the local conflict resolutions mechanisms set up by the *de facto* authorities.¹²¹⁵ More information on land disputes is available in section [4.6.1. General situation under Taliban rule](#).

(d) Reported attacks and other incidents

There have been claims of the *de facto* MPVPV disproportionately targeting Hazara young women in their crackdown, in January 2024, to enforce the *hijab* decree.¹²¹⁶ The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan noted that these operations ‘initially surfaced’ in predominantly Hazara populated areas in western Kabul, but then ‘swiftly extended’ to other primarily Tajik-populated areas in the city as well as other provinces.¹²¹⁷ Three women told *Zan Times* that the *de facto* officials had beaten them while in detention, including with cables. They also shared details of having their heads drowned in water, and being subjected to derogatory language on Hazaras not being Muslims and ‘nasty’.¹²¹⁸

Between August and September 2023, local media reported that the Taliban killed several Hazara residents in the district of Khas Uruzgan in Uruzgan Province,¹²¹⁹ and that hundreds of Hazara families could face forced eviction.¹²²⁰ UNAMA informed that a delegation of the *de facto*

¹²¹² Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹³ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 January 2022, [url](#), paras. 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

¹²¹⁴ Foschini F., Conflict Management or Retribution? How the Taleban deal with land disputes between Kuchis and local communities, AAN, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

¹²¹⁵ Foschini, F., The Pastures of Heaven: An update of Kuchi-Hazara disputes as spring approaches, AAN, 24 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹⁶ Just Security, Hazara Women: How Gender and Ethnicity Intersect in the Taliban’s Repression, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 16

¹²¹⁸ *Zan Times*, ‘I was arrested for the crime of being a Hazara and a woman’: The Taliban’s ‘bad hijab’ campaign targets Hazara women, 22 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²¹⁹ 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](#)

¹²²⁰ Kabul Now, Hundreds of Hazara families risk forced eviction in Khas Uruzgan district, 14 August 2023, [url](#)



government visited the 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 against Hazara residents in the district of Khas Uruzgan between January and September 2023 committed by 'unknown perpetrators': at least six killings, at least five cases of destruction of property (including vehicles, houses and agricultural crops) and at least two incidents of beatings.¹²²¹

The *de facto* authorities have allegedly not provided the Shia Hazara community with sufficient protection from targeted attacks.¹²²² In 2022, attacks claimed by the ISKP against Hazaras and Shias killed and injured at least 700 people, according to some estimates.¹²²³ A number of attacks have targeted the Hazara-dominated neighbourhood Dasht-e Barchi in Kabul City.¹²²⁴ In 2023, the number of attacks targeting Hazaras and Shias went down, following Taliban operations against the ISKP and a shift of focus of the ISKP to Taliban targets.¹²²⁵ Such attacks resurfaced again in October and November 2023 when the ISKP launched three IED attacks targeting Shia Hazaras.¹²²⁶ Within the reference period of this report the ISKP claimed the following attacks:

- 13 October 2023: a suicide bomber attacked a Shia Mosque in Pul-e Khumri, killing 21 persons and wounding 30 others, according to UNAMA.¹²²⁷
- 26 October 2024: an IED explosion targeted a sports club in Dasht-e Barchi in Kabul City.¹²²⁸ Casualty estimates varied from 4 deaths and 7 injured (as stated by the *de facto* authorities),¹²²⁹ to 8 deaths and 35 injured as reported by UNAMA.¹²³⁰
- 7 November 2023: an explosion targeted a minibus. According to the *de facto* authorities, it caused 7 deaths and around 20 injured,¹²³¹ while UNAMA reported slightly higher figures (11 deaths, 21 injured).¹²³²
- 6 January 2024: an explosion targeted another minibus.¹²³³ Casualty estimates varied.¹²³⁴ Initially, UNAMA reported that at least 25 Hazaras were killed and wounded¹²³⁵ but later reported on 5 civilians being killed and that at least 20 others were wounded.¹²³⁶

¹²²¹ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan: July - September 2023 update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 5, 6

¹²²² HRW, Attacks Target Afghanistan's Hazaras, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²²³ 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](#), section 1 (g)

¹²²⁴ BBC News, Kabul blast kills teenager sitting practice exam, 1 October 2022, [url](#); EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 77, 88; EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 138–140

¹²²⁵ 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

¹²²⁶ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹²²⁷ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹²²⁸ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹²²⁹ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Afghanistan: Angrepp mot shiamuslimers sista kvartalet 2023, 19 December 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹²³⁰ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹²³¹ TOLONews, 7 People Killed, 20 Wounded in Blast in Kabul, 7 November 2023, [url](#)

¹²³² UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹²³³ VOA, Bomb Hits Minibus in Kabul, Killing 2 Afghan Civilians, 6 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²³⁴ RFE/RL, Islamic State Claims Responsibility For Deadly Minibus Blast In Kabul, 7 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²³⁵ UNAMA News [Twitter], posted on: 7 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²³⁶ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 2



- 20 April 2024: an IED attack targeted a minibus, wounding four adult men.¹²³⁷ According to AW, the attack took place in the Hazara-dominated area Pul-e-Sokhta in Kabul City, although this location is close to the entrance of Dasht-e-Barchi. According to the ISKP, a ‘sticky bomb’ attached to a vehicle transporting Shias exploded while passing a Taliban checkpoint.¹²³⁸
- 29 April 2024: a shooting attack targeted a Shia mosque in the district of Guzara, Herat Province¹²³⁹ killing 6 persons according to the *de facto* government.¹²⁴⁰ Before this incident, as noted by AW, ISKP had not claimed any attacks in Herat since March 2023 when a local *de facto* official was assassinated.¹²⁴¹
- 12 September 2024: 14 Hazara men were killed when travelling between the provinces of Daykundi and Ghor. They were shot dead by four armed men, claimed to be ISKP.¹²⁴²

There have also been unclaimed attacks targeting Shia Hazaras, including the killings of five Shia religious leaders in three targeted attacks in the outskirts of Herat City on 22 October 2023, 23 November 2023, and 1 December 2023.¹²⁴³ Moreover, an explosion took place at a commercial centre in Dasht-e Barchi on 11 January 2024, killing at least three persons and wounding 35 others, according to UNAMA.¹²⁴⁴ Moreover, on 29 April 2024, a gunman fired at worshippers inside the Shi Mosque Sahib-u-Zaman in Herat Province.¹²⁴⁵

AW recorded claims of followers of the Ismaili Shia school of thought facing repression by the *de facto* authorities in the province of Badakhshan (which is predominantly inhabited by Tajiks¹²⁴⁶) including conversion attempts, notably through the setting of a conversion school for Ismaili children. One unverified report also claimed that a Taliban commander had beaten an Ismaili religious teacher in Badakhshan ‘for alleged ties with the NRF’.¹²⁴⁷ This information could not be corroborated with other sources. Foschini however reported that ‘[t]he battle for local influence and political survival’ in Badakhshan ‘also plays out in the field of education’, and according to this source the *de facto* authorities have especially emphasised control of religious schools in this province, ‘arguably because of concerns about rival or untrusted groups promoting ‘wrong’ tenets or loyalties’. Several *de facto* state-funded *madrassas* have been established.¹²⁴⁸

¹²³⁷ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹²³⁸ AW, ISKP: Group re-emerges after two-month gap in activity, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²³⁹ AW, ISKP: Group re-emerges after two-month gap in activity, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁰ Al Jazeera, Gunman kills at least six in attack on mosque in Afghanistan’s Herat, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴¹ AW, ISKP: Group re-emerges after two-month gap in activity, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴² Zan Times, I saw them execute the others: How 14 Hazara men were killed by terrorists, 19 September 2024, [url](#);

HRW, Afghanistan’s Hazara Community Needs Protection, 13 September 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴³ EUAA, COI Query, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 2 February 2024, [url](#), p. 7

¹²⁴⁴ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 2

¹²⁴⁵ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 3

¹²⁴⁶ Foschini, F., Ruling Uncharted Territory: Islamic Emirate governance in northeastern Afghanistan, AAN, September 2024, [url](#), p. 5

¹²⁴⁷ AW, Minority rights: Torture of an Ismaili man and recent arrest of 15 Ismailis in Badakhshan, 24 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁴⁸ Foschini, F., Ruling Uncharted Territory: Islamic Emirate governance in northeastern Afghanistan, AAN, September 2024, [url](#), pp. 28–29



4.6.4. Hindus and Sikhs

Many Sikhs and Hindus sought to resettle outside of Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover.¹²⁴⁹ In January 2024, a community representative told Ariana News that only 45 Hindu and Sikh families remained in the country.¹²⁵⁰ In an earlier report from February 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan expressed concern about verbal and physical threats and attacks against religious minorities, including Sikhs, forcing some to flee the country.¹²⁵¹ In March 2024, the *de facto* authorities stated that their commission to prevent land-grabbing was handling a case in which Hindus had been deprived of their land.¹²⁵² TOLONews later reported on another announcement of the *de facto* authorities saying that the case would be handed over to the *de facto* courts.¹²⁵³

No attacks targeting Hindus or Sikhs were found within the reference period of this report. Two attacks have been reported earlier, in June 2022, when a Sikh place of worship was attacked by the ISKP, killing two individuals and wounding three¹²⁵⁴ and an explosion targeting a Sikh shop close to a Sikh place of worship in Kabul City on 27 July 2022.¹²⁵⁵

4.7. Journalists and media workers

This section should be read in conjunction with section [221.3. Political opposition and civic space](#).

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.¹²⁵⁶ Media has also been called upon not to criticise the *de facto* authorities¹²⁵⁷ and to produce reports in coordination with the *de facto* media office.¹²⁵⁸ Since the Taliban takeover, the *de facto* authorities have issued several verbal and written instructions further limiting the work of Afghan media,¹²⁵⁹ including prohibitions of publishing content that is indecent, profane,¹²⁶⁰ that insult national figures,¹²⁶¹ that is considered

¹²⁴⁹ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 151

¹²⁵⁰ Ariana News, Afghan Sikhs and Hindus call on IEA to return their usurped houses, 7 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), paras. 36, 41

¹²⁵² Khaama Press, Land Grabbing Commission in Afghanistan investigates land grabbing of Hindu citizens, 9 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵³ TOLONews, Ministry of Justice: No Decree for Establishing a Constitution Received Yet, 4 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁴ CNN, Islamic State says attack on Sikh temple is revenge for Prophet insults, 19 June 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Deadly attack on Sikh temple in Kabul leaves community in fear, 18 June 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁵ 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](#)

¹²⁵⁶ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban’s first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁷ Zabihullah [X], posted on: 21 July 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Bans ‘Unproven Allegations’ Against Members, 22 July 2022, [url](#); TOLONews, Nadim Warns of Consequences for Opponents of Interim Govt, 12 March 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵⁸ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), pp. 34, 48

¹²⁵⁹ AFJC, The Taliban’s Directives on Freedom of Media and Access to Information, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁰ 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

¹²⁶¹ AFJC, The Taliban’s Directives on Freedom of Media and Access to Information, 28 September 2023, [url](#)





defamation and ‘unproven criticism’ of [*de facto*] government officials,¹²⁶² or against Islamic values.¹²⁶³ 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](#).

Within the reference period of this report, the *de facto* authorities issued a law on 31 July 2024, instructing media:

- not to publish reports that ‘contradict Islamic law and religion’ or ‘deride or humiliate Muslims’ (31 July 2024);¹²⁶⁴
- not to publish reports that ‘contain pictures of animate object’ (31 July 2024).¹²⁶⁵

Moreover, according to Afghanistan Journalist Center (AFJC) media were also instructed:

- not to use ‘foreign terms’, to preserve the Afghan languages and culture (9 December 2023);¹²⁶⁶
- to broadcast the five daily calls to prayer and respect Islamic occasions, such as Ramadan (9 December 2023);¹²⁶⁷
- not to broadcast discussions live, such program shall instead be recorded (21 September 2024);
- invite experts according to a list with approved individuals, or seek prior approval from the *de facto* Directorate of Media Supervision before inviting other individuals [according to AFJC the Taliban has shared a list with 68 names] (21 September 2024);
- seek prior approval every morning for programs and guests for political debates from the *de facto* Directorate of Media Supervision (21 September 2024);
- to remove ‘weak points, sensitive topics, and criticism’ of the *de facto* government and its officials (21 September 2024);
- that ‘[c]hallenging the laws, policies, and decisions of the Taliban government and criticizing Taliban officials without proof is prohibited’ (21 September 2024).¹²⁶⁸

Instructions issued at local level included the following examples:

- in Kandahar, filming or photographing in official or unofficial meetings involving local *de facto* officials was prohibited.¹²⁶⁹

¹²⁶² TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Bans ‘Unproven Allegations’ Against Members, 22 July 2022, [url](#); Zabihullah [Twitter], posted on: 21 July 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁶³ AFJC, The Taliban's Directives on Freedom of Media and Access to Information, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁴ Afghanistan, *De facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 17

¹²⁶⁵ Afghanistan, *De facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 17

¹²⁶⁶ AFJC, AFJC: The Ministry of Information and Culture should respect media freedom in the use of official languages, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁷ AFJC, AFJC: The Ministry of Information and Culture should respect media freedom in the use of official languages, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁸ AFJC, Taliban Imposes Stricter Regulations on Afghan Media, Raising Concerns Over Press Freedom, 23 September 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶⁹ AFJC, The Taliban's Directives on Freedom of Media and Access to Information, 28 September 2023, [url](#); UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March Update, 1 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4





- in Khost, the *de facto* police prohibited phone calls by girls to radio and television programmes. (24 February 2024);¹²⁷⁰

Issued restrictions on media have been vague, and difficult for media workers to follow in practice.¹²⁷¹ According to a compilation of AFJC, the *de facto* authorities have issued a number of directives that run in parallel with official laws. Although these directives have not been ‘issued by a single authority or following proper legal procedures’, they have restricted the work of journalists and media personnel.¹²⁷² Covering events such as women’s protests was described as a ‘major red line’ by Latifi,¹²⁷³ and it has been leading to abuse of media workers.¹²⁷⁴ Coverage of such events had become ‘much rarer’ by 2023, according to Latifi¹²⁷⁵ Based on interviews with 270 journalists across Afghanistan, Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) observed that the top three underrepresented topics in Afghan media were women’s issues, human rights, and political criticism.¹²⁷⁶ Other sources described several topics as ‘off limits’, including human rights¹²⁷⁷ as well as the status of women and minorities, as reported by RSF,¹²⁷⁸ and insecurity and corruption as reported by a Kabul-based editor interviewed by RFE/RL.¹²⁷⁹

After the Taliban takeover, there was a large exodus of journalists,¹²⁸⁰ and some went into hiding.¹²⁸¹ Many media outlets moreover closed.¹²⁸² Out of the roughly 12 000 journalists – male and female – active in Afghanistan in 2021, more than two thirds were estimated to have quit the profession after the Taliban takeover, and among women journalists, more than 80 % had stopped working.¹²⁸³ In 2024, JHR reported that 91 % of women journalist had stopped working, and that only 194 women journalists and 355 women media workers remained active.¹²⁸⁴ Women journalists and media workers have faced various obstacles since the takeover, including the instruction to observe *hijab* and cover their faces while on air¹²⁸⁵ and the *mahram* requirement which has also impacted their work.¹²⁸⁶ According to a study carried out in 2022 by the Afghan National Journalists’ Union (ANJU), 87 % of women journalists had

¹²⁷⁰ AFJC, The Taliban's Directives on Freedom of Media and Access to Information, 28 September 2023, [url](#); Salam Watandar, Females barred from calling local radio stations in Khost, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷¹ JHR, Freedom of the Afghan Media, August 2024, [url](#), pp. 15–16, 20; 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](#)

¹²⁷² AFJC, AFJC: The Ministry of Information and Culture should respect media freedom in the use of official languages, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷³ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹²⁷⁴ HRW, World report 2023, Afghanistan, Events of 2022, 12 January 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁵ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹²⁷⁶ JHR, Freedom of the Afghan Media, August 2024, [url](#), p. 17

¹²⁷⁷ RFE/RL, This Is What It's Like To Be A Journalist Under Taliban Rule, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁷⁸ RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹²⁷⁹ RFE/RL, This Is What It's Like To Be A Journalist Under Taliban Rule, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁰ RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹²⁸¹ RFE/RL, This Is What It's Like To Be A Journalist Under Taliban Rule, 3 May 2024, [url](#); RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹²⁸² 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](#)

¹²⁸³ RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹²⁸⁴ JHR, Freedom of the Afghan Media, August 2024, [url](#), p. 24

¹²⁸⁵ AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), p. 10

¹²⁸⁶ International Media Support [YouTube], Unveiling the Resilience of Afghan Women Journalists, 8 March 2024, [url](#)



been subjected to gender discrimination since the Taliban takeover, and 79 % had been insulted or threatened by *de facto* officials.¹²⁸⁷

Only a few independent media outlets still operate in the country,¹²⁸⁸ and self-censorship has become widespread,¹²⁸⁹ driven by a fear of retribution.¹²⁹⁰ Reporters who cross a ‘red line’ have been subjected to arrests, detention, beatings while in detention, threats and harassment.¹²⁹¹ AFJC also noted that, although issued restrictions do not explicitly mention consequences of non-compliance, journalists disregarding them have faced ‘threats, imprisonment, or punitive measures such as temporary or permanent termination of media operations’.¹²⁹² According to RSF, ‘journalists working with foreign media or those in exile are particularly targeted, accused of spying and of giving a negative image of the Taliban.’¹²⁹³ AFJC also reported that journalists had been arrested for collaborating with exiled media outlets.¹²⁹⁴ UNAMA reported that the *de facto* authorities continued to limit the activities of Afghan media in exile, and suspended several domestic media outlets ‘with alleged political affiliations’.¹²⁹⁵

According to RSF, 141 journalists were detained and arrested in the first three years of Taliban rule (15 August 2021–15 August 2024). The same source described the repression of Afghan journalists as having ‘steadily escalated’ in this period.¹²⁹⁶ According to IFJ, 37 journalists were arrested or imprisoned in the 12-month-period 1 May 2023–30 April 2024. Most had been released within a week, although there were a number of cases where journalists were held in detention for months – including the case of French-Afghan journalist Mortaza Behboudi who was released on 18 October 2023.¹²⁹⁷ In the first six months of 2024, the AFJC recorded 89 violations of press freedom in Afghanistan, including 60 threats and 29 arrests.¹²⁹⁸ There were no reports of journalists being killed within the reference period of this report.¹²⁹⁹ The most recent case in available records concerns journalist Hosein Naderi who was killed in an ISKP bomb attack on 11 March 2023 in Mazar-e Sharif, during an event marking National Journalists Day.¹³⁰⁰ According to Latifi, while journalists have not actively been killed, they have been intimidated, pressurised and forced 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 them, ‘especially when reporting in English’. There have even been instances where media permits issued by the *de facto* Ministry of Information and Culture or *de facto* Ministry of Foreign Affairs have not been recognised by the *de facto* police and other *de facto* officials on the ground in Kabul and

¹²⁸⁷ IMS, For women journalists in Afghanistan, showing up for work is an act of resistance! , 11 March 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁸ RFE/RL, This Is What It's Like To Be A Journalist Under Taliban Rule, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁸⁹ JHR, Freedom of the Afghan Media, August 2024, [url](#), p. 13; RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹²⁹⁰ JHR, Freedom of the Afghan Media, August 2024, [url](#), p. 19; RFE/RL, Watchdog Accuses Taliban Of Censorship, Violence Against Afghan Media, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁹¹ RFE/RL, This Is What It's Like To Be A Journalist Under Taliban Rule, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹² AFJC, AFJC Releases 2023 Annual Report on Media Freedom in Afghanistan, 29 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁹³ RSF, Afghanistan, [2024], [url](#)

¹²⁹⁴ AFJC, Press Freedom Violations 2024, 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁵ UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April – June 2024, 24 July 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹²⁹⁶ RSF, Three years of Taliban rule: the violent persecution of 141 journalists detained and arrested in Afghanistan, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁷ IFJ, Journalists Detained and Jailed in South Asia, May 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024, 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁸ AFJC, Press Freedom Violations 2024, 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁹⁹ CPJ, 3 Journalists Killed in Afghanistan, 2024, [url](#); AFJC, Observatory of Killed Journalists, 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁰ CPJ, Hosein Naderi, 11 March 2023, [url](#); AFJC, 2023: 1 Death, 2024, [url](#)



other provinces. Latifi said to be aware of frequent reports of journalists 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.¹³⁰¹ JHR reported that physical abuse of journalists has been ‘a widespread and well-documented issue’, including beatings, torture and physical abuse in custody. The same source stated that abuse has been used to deter other journalists from reporting on ‘sensitive’ or ‘inappropriate’ issues. According to the same source, families have not been informed when journalists have been detained, making them ‘vanish without a trace’, and the problem is compounded by the fact that there is no official process for investigating such disappearances.¹³⁰²

4.8. Human rights defenders and activists

This section should be read in conjunction with section [221.3. Political opposition and civic space](#).

After the Taliban takeover, the space for Afghanistan’s civil society narrowed down significantly.¹³⁰³ Already in the first weeks after their takeover, the Taliban introduced restrictions on demonstrations, requiring them to have prior official approval by the *de facto* authorities.¹³⁰⁴ Existing protection bodies were moreover dissolved.¹³⁰⁵ Many civil society organisations (CSOs) had their offices raided by the *de facto* government, their bank accounts frozen,¹³⁰⁶ and were forced to close down.¹³⁰⁷ Human rights defenders and civil society actors also largely halted their activities in most provinces, out of fear of repercussions¹³⁰⁸ or sought to leave Afghanistan.¹³⁰⁹

According to Bertelsmann Stiftung, reporting in 2024, civil society activities have nearly vanished, and the only remaining groups are international NGOs and humanitarian aid organisations.¹³¹⁰ Some of the human rights defenders that have remained active operate ‘undercover’, have narrowed down their scope of work or have shifted focus to aid distribution.¹³¹¹ Some critics have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, harassment, intimidation, violence and killings.¹³¹² There are moreover no protection mechanisms or protective laws in place for human rights defenders under the *de facto* government,¹³¹³ which

¹³⁰¹ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹³⁰² JHR, Freedom of the Afghan Media, August 2024, [url](#), p. 25

¹³⁰³ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 4 March 2022, [url](#), para. 52; Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), p. 6

¹³⁰⁴ Guardian (The), Taliban ban protests and slogans that don’t have their approval, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁵ Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), p. 14

¹³⁰⁶ CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁰⁷ CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#); Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), p. 15

¹³⁰⁸ UNAMA, Human Rights in Afghanistan, 15 August 2021–15 June 2022, July 2022, [url](#), p. 20

¹³⁰⁹ Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), p. 13; Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 28

¹³¹⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11, 15

¹³¹¹ Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), pp. 11, 14

¹³¹² CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Continued raids on and detention of activists, journalists, and crackdown on peaceful protests, 25 October 2023, [url](#)

¹³¹³ Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), p. 7



controls and monitors ‘any remnant of civil society’, according to Freedom House.¹³¹⁴ According to the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, women-led NGOs and CSOs might ‘require a male sponsor to resume their operations, and it is currently impossible to set up new women-led organizations’.¹³¹⁵ According to UNAMA, the *de facto* MPVPV personnel has visited *inter alia* NGOs to monitor compliance with decrees restricting women’s employment in NGOs.¹³¹⁶

In 2021–2022, many women took the streets to protest the Taliban’s restrictions on women’s and girls’ rights.¹³¹⁷ Some of these protests were dispersed with force¹³¹⁸ and in early 2022, the *de facto* authorities rounded up and arrested several of this movement’s ringleaders.¹³¹⁹ Some activists were subjected to torture while in detention.¹³²⁰ In a joint report, Freedom House and other human rights organisations recorded 85 such cases in the first half of 2022, in which well-known human rights defenders, male and female, were arrested and subjected to torture.¹³²¹ According to Latifi, the situation for activists and protestors deteriorated following the protests against the decree banning women from university in December 2022. Those protests were suppressed with force.¹³²² In July 2023, there was another round of demonstrations that were violently struck down, this time against the Taliban’s ban of beauty salons.¹³²³ By 2024, women-led street demonstrations had become a rare sight,¹³²⁴ and such protest actions have largely moved indoors.¹³²⁵ Some smaller street protests organised by women have still occasionally been reported.¹³²⁶ Arrests of female protesters continued in 2023,¹³²⁷ and women’s rights activists faced months in detention.¹³²⁸ According to Rawadari,

¹³¹⁴ Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), p. 14

¹³¹⁵ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 55

¹³¹⁶ UNAMA, De Facto Authorities’ Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Right, July 2024, [url](#), p. 17

¹³¹⁷ CIVICUS, Protests Escalate in Afghanistan as Frustration with Taliban Rule and Abuses Grow, 28 November 2022, [url](#)

¹³¹⁸ BBC News, BBC meets women suffering under Taliban’s new law, 10 September 2024, [url](#); EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, pp. 38–39

¹³¹⁹ France24, Afghanistan marks muted women’s day under Taliban eyes, 8 March 2022, [url](#); EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, December 2023, [url](#), p. 39

¹³²⁰ BBC News, What happened to the women who took on the Taliban?, 14 June 2024, [url](#); BBC News, BBC meets women suffering under Taliban’s new law, 10 September 2024, [url](#); EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, p. 171

¹³²¹ Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), p. 15

¹³²² 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

¹³²³ BBC News, Afghanistan: Women protest against beauty salon closures, 19 July 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, Taliban Violently Disperses Protest Against Closure Of Beauty Salons In Afghanistan, 19 July 2023, [url](#)

¹³²⁴ Al Jazeera, Afghan women stage rare protests, braving Taliban reprisals, 8 March 2024, [url](#); AFP, Afghan women stage rare protests on International Women’s Day, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁵ AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 12–13; HRW, Women’s Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023, [url](#); CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Taliban continues its persecution of women’s rights activists, journalists and artists, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁶ Al Jazeera, Afghan women stage rare protests, braving Taliban reprisals, 8 March 2024, [url](#); DW, Afghan women taking the initiative against the Taliban, 13 July 2024, [url](#); AW, Afghan women protest Taliban’s policies on International Women’s Day, 10 April 2024, [url](#); Zan Times, ‘We will not surrender to oppression’: Women’s chants heard again in Kabul, 13 September 2024, [url](#)

¹³²⁷ AW, Afghan women protest Taliban’s policies on International Women’s Day, 10 April 2024, [url](#); HRW, Women’s Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³²⁸ EUAA, COI Query, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 2 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4; Al, Afghanistan: Further information: Four women protestors released: Zholia Parsi, Neda Parwani, Parisa Azada, and Manizha Seddiqi, 3 May 2024, [url](#)



dozens of women and men involved in organising demonstrations have left Afghanistan. ‘Fewer people now take the risk of expressing their criticism and opposition’, according to the same source.¹³²⁹ According to CIVICUS, the Taliban ‘tracked down women who appeared in photos or videos of indoor protests and targeted them for harassment and detentions’.¹³³⁰

In a joint statement issued in August 2024, on the three-year anniversary since the Taliban takeover, a coalition of civil society organisations called Alliance for Human Rights in Afghanistan, described how Afghans speaking out against abuses committed by the Taliban ‘face arbitrary arrest, physical and sexual violence, arbitrary and indefinite detention’, as well as ‘torture and other ill-treatment’.¹³³¹ Activists, especially women rights defenders, have faced arbitrary arrest and detention.¹³³² Four women activists, Munizha Sediqi, Parisa Azadi, Neda Parwani, and Zholia Parsi were all arrested in the period September–November 2023, and were detained for months until their release in May 2024.¹³³³ Parsi later described how she was abducted by *de facto* officials placing a hood over her head and forcing her in to a military vehicle. While in detention, she was ‘routinely interrogated’ and forced to sit upside down with her hands tied to the arms of the chair. She was moreover punched and kicked by *de facto* prison guards and placed close to the ‘men’s torture chambers’, so that she could hear their screams for days. After her release, Parsi felt confined to her home, as Taliban fighters kept her under watch.¹³³⁴ There have also been reports of sexual violence, and other forms of ill-treatment of detained women activists.¹³³⁵ According to the Afghan analyst, the *de facto* GDI is active in suppressing non-violent opponents to the *de facto* regime, and described the *de facto* institution as ‘ruthless’, having ‘secret black sites’ with little accountability on what is taking place there. According to the same source there are credible reports of the *de facto* GDI subjecting opponents to torture, beatings, rape and sexual violence – including of pregnant women.¹³³⁶ Some women have faced stigmatisation after being released from detention,¹³³⁷ and some have attempted to or committed suicide.¹³³⁸

Men publicly advocating or protesting in support of women’s rights, have been subject to repression.¹³³⁹ Matiullah Wesa, prominent Afghan education activist, and founder of a local

¹³²⁹ Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

¹³³⁰ CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Taliban continues its persecution of women’s rights activists, journalists and artists, 7 February 2024, [url](#)

¹³³¹ Front Line Defenders, Joint Statement by the Alliance for Human Rights in Afghanistan: Need for an Urgent Rethink of International Response to the Human Rights Crisis in Afghanistan, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³³² CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Assault on civic space persists two years after Taliban takeover, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

¹³³³ Al, Afghanistan: Further information: Four women protestors released: Zholia Parsi, Neda Parwani, Parisa Azada, and Manizha Seddiqi, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

¹³³⁴ Parsi, Z., I was imprisoned and tortured by the Taliban for protesting gender apartheid in Afghanistan, Atlantic Council, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³³⁵ Afghan analyst, interview, 25 April 2024; AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 17–18; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30; EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 171

¹³³⁶ Afghan analyst, interview, 25 April 2024

¹³³⁷ AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 17–18; Freedom House, Three Years after the Fall of Kabul, Afghan Activists Remain in Hiding or Await Resettlement Abroad, 15 August 2024, [url](#); UNAMA, UNAMA deeply concerned over detentions of Afghan women and girls, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹³³⁸ Amu TV, Women’s rights activist Bibi Gul dies by suicide after Taliban custody, 6 January 2024, [url](#); AW, The Erasure of Women, 15 August 2024, [url](#), pp. 17–18; UN OHCHR, Human Rights Council Hears that the Severity of Violations against Women and Girls in Afghanistan Might Amount to Crimes against Humanity, and that Nearly 18 Million Individuals Face Acute Hunger in Sudan Amidst Looming Famine, 18 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³³⁹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30



NGO,¹³⁴⁰ was arrested on 27 March 2023 on unspecified charges.¹³⁴¹ During the same month, university lecturer, Islamic scholar and activist Rasool Parsi was also arrested, after having criticised the Taliban on social media.¹³⁴² In October 2023, Wesa was released after seven months in detention, while Parsi was sentenced to 16 months in prison for ‘blasphemy’ and propagandising against the regime.¹³⁴³ Wesa has not publicly commented on his arrest.¹³⁴⁴

A joint research study by Freedom House and other human rights organisations found that 90 % of human rights defenders interviewed across Afghanistan in May and June 2022, had experienced ‘some sort of violence or threat’. 20.2 % had experienced destruction of property and financial losses, and another 17 % had experienced arbitrary arrest and torture, 11.9 % had experienced physical and psychological harm and 10.9 % had experienced physical attacks by the Taliban. 37.2 % in total had experienced threats to their family members.¹³⁴⁵ More information about the treatment of family members is available in section [4.11. Family members of dissenting voices](#).

4.9. Humanitarian workers

Following the Taliban takeover, some humanitarian aid workers were evacuated from Afghanistan.¹³⁴⁶ 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.¹³⁴⁷ The pledges ‘to safeguard humanitarian aid workers’ were reiterated in February 2022.¹³⁴⁸ For many years, Afghanistan was ranked as one of the most dangerous countries for aid workers, due to the number of hazards.¹³⁴⁹ Violence has however significantly decreased since the conflict between the Taliban and the previous government ended in August 2021,¹³⁵⁰ but ‘new challenges have emerged’ as aid workers constantly have to ‘navigate a difficult environment’ under the *de facto* authorities, as described by the UN OCHA.¹³⁵¹ The *de facto* authorities have been restricting and interfering with humanitarian operations¹³⁵² and further complicated the situation for aid workers by banning women from

¹³⁴⁰ 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](#)

¹³⁴¹ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 30

¹³⁴² HRW, Taliban Expand Civil Society Crackdown, 29 March 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁴³ EUAA, COI Query, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 2 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 3–4

¹³⁴⁴ Independent (The), The women’s rights activist abducted, jailed and tortured by the Taliban, 27 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁵ Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), pp. 7, 20

¹³⁴⁶ DW, Afghanistan: Aid workers in need, 24 August 2021, [url](#); FAO, A humanitarian worker in Afghanistan, through thick and thin, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁷ UN, Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General – on Afghanistan, 5 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁸ AP, Swiss group: Taliban make pledges on education, aid workers, 11 February 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁴⁹ UN OCHA, 5 things to know about aid workers in Afghanistan, 19 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁰ Insecurity Insight, Afghanistan, Violence Against Health Care in Conflict, 2023, [url](#), p. 4; UN OCHA, 5 things to know about aid workers in Afghanistan, 19 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵¹ UN OCHA, 5 things to know about aid workers in Afghanistan, 19 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵² US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 11–15; Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), pp. 19–21

working for NGOs¹³⁵³ and for UN offices in 2023.¹³⁵⁴ Some organisations have continued some operations with female staff,¹³⁵⁵ but the situation remains ‘delicate’, as described by the NRC.¹³⁵⁶ More information about aid delivery is available in section [3.6. Aid delivery](#).

The UN noted an increase in the number of arrests of humanitarian workers after the Taliban takeover (from 3 cases in 2020 to 76 cases in 2022).¹³⁵⁷ Although Insecurity Insight noted a general decrease in the frequency and severity of violence targeting humanitarian healthcare personnel compared to the years of conflict, the organisation did record ‘109 incidents of violence against or obstruction of healthcare in Afghanistan in 2023, compared to 87 in 2022’. Out of these incidents, 65 consisted of arrests of healthcare personnel by the *de facto* authorities, which was almost twice as many arrests as those recorded in 2022. Often the arrests took place at healthcare facilities motivated by the lack of gender segregation or other accusations of lack of morality. Out of the 45 other incidents, most concerned armed *de facto* officials beating healthcare personnel.¹³⁵⁸ In 2023, the UN Secretary-General noted 1 775 ‘access incidents’ and a ‘notable increase in bureaucratic and administrative impediments’, as well as restrictions on female aid workers.¹³⁵⁹ In January – June 2024, WHO’s Health Cluster recorded two attacks on healthcare in Afghanistan, in which seven healthcare providers were detained and one was assaulted.¹³⁶⁰

The Aid Worker Security Database recorded five attacks against aid workers in 2023 and 2024 (as of 21 September). All attacks concerned national staff working for the UN, other international NGOs and national NGOs. A male employee of an international NGO was killed in the province of Faryab, and four individuals were wounded in the other recorded events. The *de facto* authorities were not identified as perpetrators in these cases.¹³⁶¹

4.10. Education personnel

Since the Taliban took power, only *madrassa*-educated men were appointed to senior positions at 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.¹³⁶² Male teachers have in general been kept, but for new appointments, the *de facto* authorities have been favouring ‘*madrassa* graduates and those

¹³⁵³ 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](#); US, SIGAR, Testimony of John F. Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 7; Jackson, A., Aid Diversion in Afghanistan: Is it time for a candid conversation?, AAN, 1 October 2023, [url](#), p. 17

¹³⁵⁴ UN News, Taliban order bars Afghan women from working with UN, 4 April 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁵ NRC, Can the world afford another crisis?, 13 June 2024, [url](#); UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 70

¹³⁵⁶ NRC, Can the world afford another crisis?, 13 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, [url](#), paras. 31, 66

¹³⁵⁸ Insecurity Insight, Afghanistan, Violence Against Health Care in Conflict, 2023, [url](#), pp. 3–5

¹³⁵⁹ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2024, [url](#), para. 65

¹³⁶⁰ WHO, Health Cluster, Attacks on Health Care in Afghanistan (January - July 2024), 25 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶¹ AWSD, 2024, Security incident data, 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶² 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](#)



with affiliation with the *jihad*, according to Rahimi.¹³⁶³ Other sources also noted that religious school teachers were recruited in high numbers in 2023.¹³⁶⁴ Female primary school teachers have been allowed to continue to teach,¹³⁶⁵ whereas female staff for higher grades have been told to stay home while receiving a reduced salary.¹³⁶⁶ There is also a lack of teachers due to the fact that many professionals left Afghanistan or were killed during decades of war preceding the Taliban takeover.¹³⁶⁷ According to AAN, referring to the *de facto* governments statistical yearbook, 71 000 women served as teachers in 2023/2024.¹³⁶⁸

According to Rahimi, who has carried on research on *madrassas* in Afghanistan, women teach at *madrassas* and some even created their own *madrassas*. Rahimi believed that the *de facto* authorities might not be comfortable with this, as women have to leave their spaces, their homes, and enter public spaces when going to the *madrassas*. According to him, it is a form of public participation of women that the *de facto* authorities are generally trying to discourage, although it is more difficult for them to argue that the *madrassas* would not be an appropriate environment for women or that the curriculum would not be conducive to create ‘good Muslim women’.¹³⁶⁹

The Taliban reportedly have the aim to ‘purify’ Afghan society¹³⁷⁰ and eject foreign influence.¹³⁷¹ They have invested vast resources in building mosques and *madrassas* across the country,¹³⁷² and some changes have been introduced to the education system including the revision of school *curriculum*, to make it ‘compatible’ with *sharia*.¹³⁷³ 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 Yaqoob (son of the founder of the Taliban movement Mullah Omar¹³⁷⁴) being described as ‘the historical character who made the infidels leave the country.’¹³⁷⁵ Some girls seeking education opportunities beyond the sixth grade, have resorted to *madrassa* education.¹³⁷⁶ Some *madrassas* have

¹³⁶³ Rahimi, H., email communication 19 September 2024

¹³⁶⁴ AW, Taliban Management of the Education Sector, February 2024, [url](#), p. 15; van Bijlert, M., How The Emirate Wants To Be Perceived: A closer look at the Accountability Programme, AAN, July 2024, [url](#), p. 51 [footnote 26]

¹³⁶⁵ Rahimi, H., email communication 19 September 2024; Bjelica, J. and Shapour R., A Pay Cut for Afghan Women Working in the Public Sector: “What can you do with 5,000 afghanis?”, AAN, 29 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁶ Rahimi, H., email communication 19 September 2024

¹³⁶⁷ HRW, “Schools are Failing Boys Too”, The Taliban’s Impact on Boys’ Education in Afghanistan, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁸ Foschini, F., Education in Hibernation: The end of a virtuous cycle of literacy and empowerment for women in Shughnan?, AAN, 17 September 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁶⁹ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹³⁷⁰ 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

¹³⁷¹ Watkins, A., The Taliban one year on, CTC Sentinel, August 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹³⁷² Sweden, Swedish Migration Board, Afghanistan. Styre och rättskipning, 6 July 2023, [url](#), p. 14

¹³⁷³ USCIRF, Religious freedom and women’s rights in Afghanistan, [url](#), 30 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](#)

¹³⁷⁴ NPR, We visited a Taliban leader’s compound to examine his vision for Afghanistan, 5 August 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁵ Durrani, P., online interview, 19 October 2023

¹³⁷⁶ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 September 2023, [url](#), paras. 3, 11, 12; AW, Taliban Management of the Education Sector, February 2024, [url](#), p. 15;





adjusted their content to introduce more secular subjects as girls have been barred from secondary education and seek such education prospects.¹³⁷⁷ According to Rahimi, this has however not taken place in a uniform way across the country; some *madrassas* have included modern subjects as a way to attract students and as a way to mitigate against what they consider to be an unjust policy as regards girls' education. They even promote on social media that they teach specific subjects. English and computer science have always been part of the curriculum of more high-profile *madrassas*, but some female *madrassas* have been trying to also introduce mathematics, social sciences and other subjects. Some *madrassas* have been funded by high-ranking *de facto* officials, and the curriculum tend to reflect their personal views; some being 'very modernist' and others more conservative.¹³⁷⁸ More information on *madrassas* is available in section [4.4.4. Access to education](#).

According to a survey conducted by the organisation Education International, some of the interviewed teachers (particularly in the Southeast) encountered harassment, detention or were 'forced to resign due to security issues and fear of prosecution'.¹³⁷⁹ Earlier in 2022, USIP also reported on teachers facing harassment and intimidation by the *de facto* MPVPV.¹³⁸⁰ There have been cases of education personnel being arrested for criticising the Taliban's ban on education for women and girls.¹³⁸¹ An Afghan journalist, who was imprisoned in Herat, told RSF in 2024 that he had been put in a block of 'political prisoners' where the other inmates were teachers, ISKP recruits and NRF members.¹³⁸² In 2022, male university teachers, students and staff were called upon to wear the traditional *shalwar kameez*, and AW noted reports of the *de facto* authorities issuing letters warning teachers that those not abiding to this instruction would get fired.¹³⁸³ Another challenge for teachers was the low salaries that did not cover basic expenses, according to Education International.¹³⁸⁴ In June 2024, the Taliban supreme leader moreover decided to cut the salaries of women public officials, which included the salaries of female teachers.¹³⁸⁵ A female teacher in the province of Farah told the AAN that the local *de facto* authorities were pushing teachers to travel and teach in remote areas, despite the cut in wages.¹³⁸⁶

¹³⁷⁷ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre; CBS News, The Taliban banned Afghan girls from school 1,000 days ago, but some brave young women refuse to accept it, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷⁸ Rahimi, H., online interview, 11 September 2024. The interview was conducted by the EUAA in cooperation with the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency and Landinfo – the Norwegian COI Centre.

¹³⁷⁹ EI, Afghanistan: Survey provides meaningful insights into the experiences of teachers and students under the Taliban regime, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁰ USIP, Taking a Terrible Toll: The Taliban's Education Ban, 13 April 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁸¹ 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](#)

¹³⁸² RSF, Three years of Taliban rule: the violent persecution of 141 journalists detained and arrested in Afghanistan, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸³ AW, Taliban Management of the Education Sector, February 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁴ EI, Afghanistan: Survey provides meaningful insights into the experiences of teachers and students under the Taliban regime, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁵ Bjelica, J. and Shapour R., A Pay Cut for Afghan Women Working in the Public Sector: "What can you do with 5,000 afghanis?", AAN, 29 July 2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁶ Bjelica, J. and Shapour R., A Pay Cut for Afghan Women Working in the Public Sector: "What can you do with 5,000 afghanis?", AAN, 29 July 2024, [url](#)



AW recorded four claims of poisoning attacks in 2023, in Sar-e Pul, Farah, Faryab and Takhar. Based on local media reports, at least 137 students and teachers had been poisoned in these attacks. AW noted that such attacks are not unique to the situation under Taliban rule, as they took place during the previous rule as well.¹³⁸⁷

As mentioned, (section [4.4.4. Access to education](#)), foreign media, UN Women and Human Rights Watch reported on underground secret schools for girls.¹³⁸⁸ However in a closed workshop hosted by PRIO, CHS, and CMI in Doha on 12–13 November 2023, experts stated that such initiatives were in fact known and generally accepted by the *de facto* authorities.¹³⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch on the other hand reported on women’s rights activists, including women running underground schools, being targeted by the *de facto* authorities.¹³⁹⁰

4.11. Family members of dissenting voices

Family members of activists and journalists have reportedly been targeted by the *de facto* authorities as a way to obtain information, and to scare and to intimidate them.¹³⁹¹ 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.’¹³⁹² A human rights activist interviewed by Landinfo also stated that family members have been under pressure in order to prevent criticism of the *de facto* authorities, and to silence critics.¹³⁹³ Rahimi also noted that ‘if you resist in a softer way, you get intimidated, harassed and your family gets questioned to make you stop resisting.’¹³⁹⁴

Amnesty International reported on cases of arrests of family members of individuals participating in women’s right protests in 2022.¹³⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch described the Taliban as ‘terrorising’ the families of women rights activists.¹³⁹⁶ In 2023, some cases of family members being detained together with female activists were documented.¹³⁹⁷ 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

¹³⁸⁷ AW, Taliban Management of the Education Sector, February 2024, [url](#), p. 20

¹³⁸⁸ RFE/RL, Secret Schools Offer ‘A Ray Of Hope’ For Rural Afghan Girls, 20 December 2023, [url](#); CNN, ‘The school is like a light for me.’ The secret classrooms giving Afghan girls a chance to learn despite Taliban rules, 5 October 2023, [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](#); UN Women, Photo essay: A glimpse into the lives of Afghan women, 7 March 2024, [url](#); HRW, Women’s Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁸⁹ PRIO et al., Pathways towards Strengthening Girl’s Education in Afghanistan, December 2023, [url](#), p. 8

¹³⁹⁰ HRW, Women’s Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁹¹ 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

¹³⁹² Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹³⁹³ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Familiemedlemmer til personer med tilknytning til republikke, 20 November 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹³⁹⁴ Rahimi, H., online interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 4 October 2023

¹³⁹⁵ AI, Afghanistan 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁶ HRW, Women’s Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁹⁷ CIVICUS, Afghanistan: Continued raids on and detention of activists, journalists, and crackdown on peaceful protests, 25 October 2023, [url](#)



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.¹³⁹⁸ A former guard who used to work at a Swedish military camp in Mazar-e Sharif, interviewed by Radio Sweden, explained that male family members might be held accountable for their female family members' actions, as the Taliban perceive it as their task to make sure that women behave appropriately.¹³⁹⁹ Their family members may also face repercussion, according to Alliance for Human Rights in Afghanistan, and men may be held accountable for women who do not follow the Taliban's edicts.¹⁴⁰⁰ Some family members have been arrested together with women activists.¹⁴⁰¹ For example, an activist arrested in September 2023 was detained together with her husband and four-year-old child.¹⁴⁰² Activist Zholia Parsi also recounted how the Taliban threatened to torture her children while she was in detention, and stated that they also arrested her 19-year-old son.¹⁴⁰³ According to Latifi, family members of male activist Wesa (who has been advocating for women's and girls' right to education) were also targeted. Wesa's house was raided and at least two of his brothers were briefly detained, while another brother fled the country.¹⁴⁰⁴

Human rights defenders residing outside Afghanistan limited their work and self-censored as they had family members remaining in Afghanistan, according to Freedom House.¹⁴⁰⁵ A human rights expert also told Landinfo that Afghan abroad refrain from commenting in international and national media out of concern for their relatives that remain in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁰⁶ Azizi stated that two Afghans based in Germany had close relatives arrested in Afghanistan by the *de facto* authorities, who pressured them to return. In one of these cases, a person had criticised the Taliban, and the *de facto* authorities subsequently arrested his son and demanded his father to return in order to release the son. This person did so and disappeared soon after his return.¹⁴⁰⁷ It has not been possible to corroborate this information with other sources.

¹³⁹⁸ International analyst, interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023

¹³⁹⁹ Radio Sweden, Konflikt: Dödshoten mot Sveriges medarbetare i Afghanistan, 12 January 2024, [url](#), 17:58–18:25

¹⁴⁰⁰ Front Line Defenders, Joint Statement by the Alliance for Human Rights in Afghanistan: Need for an Urgent Rethink of International Response to the Human Rights Crisis in Afghanistan, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰¹ HRW, Women's Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023, [url](#); EUAA, COI Query, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 2 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 3–4

¹⁴⁰² EUAA, COI Query, Afghanistan – Major legislative, security-related, and humanitarian developments 2 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁴⁰³ Parsi, Z., I was imprisoned and tortured by the Taliban for protesting gender apartheid in Afghanistan, Atlantic Council, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰⁴ Latifi, A., interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 9 October 2023

¹⁴⁰⁵ Freedom House, A Needs Assessment of Afghan Human Rights Defenders, 2023, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁴⁰⁶ Norway, Landinfo, Afghanistan: Familiemedlemmer til personer med tilknytning til republikke, 20 November 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁴⁰⁷ Azizi, H., PhD Candidate, Flinders University, online interview, 9 September 2024





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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Background

The reference period should be 1 October 2023–30 September 2024.

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, including on social media
- The Taliban's implementation of *sharia*, including pressure to attend congregational prayer, enforcement of dress codes, and other restrictions on personal freedom, and impact on the education sector
- Capital and corporal punishments
- Treatment of individuals returning from abroad, in particular individuals returning from western countries, and reactions to Afghans' behaviour abroad (including on social media)

Security situation

This part should provide a country-wide overview, 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 and in relation to population data
- Crime trends and crime prevention under the Taliban, including a geographical overview of trends, and information on whether the practice of *bacha bazi* (or 'dancing boys') has continued under Taliban rule



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
- Access to aid

Treatment of persons formerly affiliated with security institutions of the former government (including military units, police units, NDS), and treatment of their family members

Treatment of persons formerly affiliated with foreign forces, and treatment of their family members

Treatment of public officials and servants of the former government (including judicial workers), and treatment of their family members

Treatment of lawyers, and treatment of their 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
- Violence against women and girls, including forced marriage and child marriage, sexual violence and rape, domestic violence and honour violence
- Access to justice

Treatment of religious and ethnic minorities

- Religious freedom under Taliban rule (including aspects related to forced religious practice)
- Representation in the *de facto* authorities
- Treatment of Hazaras and Shias, including reports on discrimination and attacks
- Treatment of other ethno-religious groups, including reports on discrimination and attacks

Treatment of LGBTIQ persons

- Social norms on gender identity and expression
- Taliban instructions or comments on LGBTIQ rights
- Violence against LGBTIQ persons





Treatment of individuals with a perceived affiliation to armed groups (such as the NRF and ISKP, and other 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, including child recruitment

Treatment of individuals living with disabilities, focusing on mental disability

- Position in society and social stigma
- Access to healthcare
- Legal framework and treatment by the *de facto* state
- Treatment by family members and society





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, and previous reporting by the EUAA. The list aims to provide an overview of national restrictions relevant for this report, but is not exhaustive.

Media and freedom of expression

- Prohibition of indecency and profanity in the media, communications and letters (6 May 2017);¹⁴⁰⁸
- 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);¹⁴⁰⁹
- women news presenters “must” wear headscarves when appearing on screen, and men “must” wear proper clothes (22 November 2021);¹⁴¹⁰
- prohibition of foreign drama series (March 2022);¹⁴¹¹
- a ban of defamation and unproven criticism of [*de facto*] government officials (21 July 2022);¹⁴¹²
- media professionals are not to publish reports that ‘contradict Islamic law and religion’, ‘deride or humiliate Muslims’ or ‘contain pictures of animate object’ (31 July 2024);¹⁴¹³
- the ‘wrongful use of tape recorders or radio; making pictures or videos of any animate object on computers or mobile phones, or any other such device’ is a ‘wrongful act’.¹⁴¹⁴

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’;¹⁴¹⁵
- secondary education for girls was not reopened (September 2021);

¹⁴⁰⁸ 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

¹⁴⁰⁹ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), pp. 34, 48

¹⁴¹⁰ 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](#)

¹⁴¹¹ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 44

¹⁴¹² TOLONews, Islamic Emirate Leader Bans ‘Unproven Allegations’ Against Members, 22 July 2022, [url](#); Zabihullah [Twitter], posted on: 21 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹³ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 17

¹⁴¹⁴ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

¹⁴¹⁵ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 43





- 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 property;¹⁴¹⁶
- women barred from appearing in television dramas, soap operas and entertainment shows (November 2021);
- 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 *de facto* Health Ministry should gender-segregate employees by separating male and female offices (16 March 2022);
- secondary education for girls is 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);¹⁴¹⁷
- women are not allowed to visit recreational parks,¹⁴¹⁸ public baths¹⁴¹⁹ and gyms;¹⁴²⁰
- university education for women was suspended (December 2022);¹⁴²¹
- national and international NGOs were instructed to suspend female staff members, or risk losing their licences (24 December 2022);¹⁴²²
- women were prohibited to work for UN organs (5 April 2023);¹⁴²³
- beauty salons were ordered to close within one month (24 June 2023);¹⁴²⁴
- women should cover their entire body and cover their faces to prevent *ftina* ['social disorder or chaos, which can itself facilitate sin'] (31 July 2024);
- women's clothes 'should not be thin short or tight' (31 July 2024);
- it is the responsibility of women to 'hide their body and their face from men who are not their *mahram*' (31 July 2024);

¹⁴¹⁶ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), pp. 38–39

¹⁴¹⁷ EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), pp. 43–45, 100

¹⁴¹⁸ RFE/RL, Banned From Public Parks And Bathhouses, Afghan Women Say Life Under Taliban Is Like A 'Prison', 10 November 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Afghanistan: Taliban ban women from visiting popular national park, 27 August 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴¹⁹ RFE/RL, Banned From Public Parks And Bathhouses, Afghan Women Say Life Under Taliban Is Like A 'Prison', 10 November 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban stop Afghan women from using bathhouses in northern provinces, 7 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴²⁰ France24, Taliban bans Afghan women from gyms, public baths, 13 November 2022, [url](#); Reuters, Afghan women defy Taliban gym ban with secret fitness clubs, 21 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴²¹ 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](#)

¹⁴²² TOLONews, Ministry Orders NGOs to Suspend Female Staff, 24 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴²³ UN News, Excluded from Education, Public Life, Women, Girls Facing 'Gender Apartheid' in Afghanistan, Delegate Tells Security Council, 21 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴²⁴ AP, The Taliban are outlawing women's beauty salons in Afghanistan, 4 July 2023, [url](#)





- Muslim and righteous women are obliged to ‘cover themselves in front of non-believing or loose women’ to prevent *fitna* (31 July 2024);
- ‘women not covering themselves properly’, is a ‘wrongful act’ (31 July 2024);
- ‘women are not allowed to look at strange men’ (31 July 2024);
- an adult woman leaving her home ‘because of some urgent need’ is ‘duty-bound to hide her voice, face and body’ (31 July 2024);¹⁴²⁵
- the *de facto* MPVPV shall ensure that staff and drivers of commercial vehicles do not transport uncovered or unaccompanied women, or ‘allow women to sit or mingle with an unrelated man’ (31 July 2024).¹⁴²⁶

Men

- Men are forbidden from looking at an unrelated woman’s body or face (31 July 2024);
- men should cover their bodies from the waist down to the knees, knees included (31 July 2024);
- when ‘pursuing pastimes and exercise, men are obliged to wear clothes that conceal the required parts of the body, and that are not very tight or make certain parts of the body apparent (31 July 2024).

Prayers and religious conduct

- Prayers in congregation in the mosque shall be observed by ‘traders, artisans and farmers, when conducting their affairs and carrying out their functions’, at set times (31 July 2024);¹⁴²⁷
- the *de facto* MPVPV shall ensure that staff and tourists at sightseeing and recreation spots observe congregational prayer (31 July 2024);¹⁴²⁸
- ‘not praying’, delaying one’s prayers, ‘omitting mandatory and obligatory prayers’, and ‘not praying in congregation’, are ‘wrongful acts’ (31 July 2024);
- neglecting obligatory fasts, is a ‘wrongful act’ (31 July 2024);
- observing holidays that have ‘no Islamic foundation’, including *Nawruz*, *Shab-e Yalda*, fireworks night and other festivals, are ‘wrongful acts’ (31 July 2024);
- befriending non-Muslims and assisting them, imitating them in one’s appearance or character, are ‘wrongful acts’ (31 July 2024);¹⁴²⁹
- wearing and popularising crucifixes, neckties and other such un-Islamic symbols’, are ‘wrongful acts’ (31 July 2024).¹⁴³⁰

¹⁴²⁵ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13, 22

¹⁴²⁶ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 13, 20

¹⁴²⁷ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 18

¹⁴²⁸ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 19

¹⁴²⁹ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

¹⁴³⁰ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 14, 22





Other

- Leadership approval needed for *hudud* and *qisas* punishments (6 May 2017);¹⁴³¹
- 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);¹⁴³²
- people were called on to avoid celebrating Valentine’s Day (14 February 2023);¹⁴³³
- celebrations of *Nowruz* were condemned by some members of the *de facto* authorities (March 2023);¹⁴³⁴
- a ban of poppy cultivation (5 April 2022);¹⁴³⁵
- restricted access to the social media platform TikTok and the online game PlayerUnknown’s Battleground, closure of channels with ‘immoral programs’ (21 April 2022);¹⁴³⁶
- sorcery is prohibited (7 August 2023);¹⁴³⁷
- ‘wrongful acts’ include (31 July 2024):
 - adultery (‘whether forced or consensual’);
 - temporary marriage;
 - fornication;
 - lesbianism;
 - anal sex, (‘even if it is with one’s own wife’);
 - paedophilia;
 - creating ‘a platform or circumstances conducive to adultery, fornication, lesbianism, anal sex, paedophilia or gambling’.¹⁴³⁸
- a law to prevent begging, which prohibits ‘healthy’ people that are able to secure one meal a day from begging, as well as the use of children and disabled people for begging (18 May 2024);¹⁴³⁹
- an instruction to all universities and private education institutions are to remove books considered against Hanafi jurisprudence from their libraries (14 December 2023).¹⁴⁴⁰

¹⁴³¹ 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

¹⁴³² EASO, Afghanistan – Targeting of Individuals, August 2022, [url](#), p. 45

¹⁴³³ 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](#)

¹⁴³⁴ 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](#)

¹⁴³⁵ 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

¹⁴³⁶ EASO, Afghanistan – Country focus, January 2022, [url](#), p. 44

¹⁴³⁷ UNAMA, Human Rights situation in Afghanistan, July – September 2023 Update, 23 October 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁴³⁸ Afghanistan, *de facto* authorities, The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law [unofficial translation by the AAN], August 2024, [url](#), art. 22

¹⁴³⁹ Ariana News, IEA leader approves law on prevention of begging, 19 May 2024, [url](#); Amu TV, Taliban leader approves law to curb begging, 18 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴⁰ UNAMA, Human rights situation in Afghanistan, October – December 2023 Update, 22 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6; RFE/RL, Taliban Bans Books From Minority Muslim Sects In Private University Libraries, 22 December 2023, [url](#)





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