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Contents

Introduction

This Country of Origin Information Report (COI Report) was drawn up on the basis of the questions asked and points for attention mentioned in the Terms of Reference (ToR) compiled by the Ministry of Justice and Security. The ToR for this COI Report were adopted on 8 April 2025. These ToR, together with the report, are available on the Dutch government's website.

This General COI Report describes the situation in Afghanistan insofar as this affects the assessment of asylum applications from persons originating from this country, and to inform decision-making regarding the repatriation of rejected Afghan asylum seekers. Whenever this COI Report mentions the Taliban or representatives of the Taliban administration, it refers to the de facto authorities and de facto representatives. The terms 'Taliban' and 'de facto authorities' are used interchangeably. 'De facto' is also abbreviated to 'df'. This COI Report is an update of the General COI Report on Afghanistan published in June 2023, and the reporting period runs from June 2023 to October 2025. Relevant developments that are important for answering the questions posed in the ToR are outlined up to the publication date. This COI Report is a factual, neutral and objective representation of the findings that were made during the period under consideration. It is not a policy document, nor does it reflect the Dutch government's vision or policy in relation to any given country or region. It does not contain any conclusions concerning immigration policy.

This COI Report has been compiled on the basis of both public and confidential sources, using carefully selected, analysed and verified information. Use was made of information from various sources, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), reports published by European and other COI organisations, specialist literature, media reports and (where applicable) relevant government agencies. The content of this COI Report is based on multiple sources, except where the facts are generally undisputed or when stated otherwise. The public sources that were consulted are listed in the annexes.

Some of the information used was obtained during a fact-finding mission to Qatar and Pakistan. This COI Report draws on information obtained from on-site interviews with relevant expert sources during this mission, as well as from other sources, who were consulted online or in person. The report also draws on information obtained through the Netherlands' diplomatic missions in Qatar (for Afghanistan), Pakistan and Iran, and through confidential conversations held and correspondence exchanged outside the fact-finding mission. The information obtained in this way was mainly used to support and augment passages based on publicly available information. The confidential sources are marked as such in the footnotes and accompanied by a date. Where possible, information obtained from confidential sources is supported by information from other sources.

1 Political and security situation, humanitarian situation

1.1 Political developments

The Taliban[1] have been in power in Afghanistan since August 2021. As the Netherlands does not recognise the Taliban as the legitimate representatives of the Afghan people, this report will refer to them as de facto authorities, using the abbreviation 'df'. Until the Taliban took power, on 1 August 2021, Afghanistan was a republic known as the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Taliban have given the country a new name: the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). With the exception of Russia, the international community does not recognise the Taliban as the legitimate representatives of the Afghan people. The 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' is a theocracy based on Sharia law. Although the Taliban have announced plans to develop a new constitution, the principles of Deobandi Islam will continue to form the basis of the state.[2]

The most important political developments in Afghanistan during the reporting period were the further consolidation of power by the Taliban; the implementation of ultra-conservative policies, for instance through the so-called 'morality law' (see Section 3.3.1.1); the deterioration of human rights, especially for women and girls; and ongoing tensions involving armed groups, terrorist organisations and opposition groups. The country experienced significant legal uncertainty, as laws were suspended while communication regarding existing decrees and legislation was unclear; moreover, interpretations of these decrees and laws varied (see Section 3.3).

Four years after taking power, the Taliban regime was firmly in control during the reporting period, with no opposition groups able to mount a serious challenge. The large-scale forced return to Afghanistan of Afghan nationals, particularly from Iran and Pakistan, sharply reduced foreign aid funding, and the effects of climate change (droughts and floods) and earthquakes resulted in a deterioration of the humanitarian situation, with severe food and water shortages in addition to unemployment and a lack of housing. This situation raised concerns that Afghanistan was increasingly facilitating armed groups (terrorist organisations and opposition groups), including Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and al-Qaeda. Afghan banks' limited access to the international market and the freezing of government assets by the United States have hampered the country's economy.[3]

It is not always clear who is a member of the Taliban. Under the Taliban regime, the civil service comprises personnel from a variety of backgrounds, who can be broadly divided into three categories:[4]

[1] NCTV, Taliban | Kennisbank Terroristische Organisaties, accessed 4 November 2025.
[2] The Deobandi movement is a school of Sunni Islam that originated in Indian madrassas around 1860. The movement is therefore broader than just the Taliban, and some Deobandi adherents have distanced themselves from the Taliban's interpretation of Islam. See Social Science Research Council, Barbara D. Metcalf, *"Traditionalist" Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs*, 1 November 2021; NPR, *Taliban ideology has surprising roots in India*, 8 September 2021.
[3] Confidential source dated 13 August 2025.
[4] Centre on Armed Groups, *Afghan women's engagement with the Taliban*, May 2025, p. 9

- Former civil servants from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004-2021) and President Karzai's transitional government (2002-2004) who have retained their positions, often with reduced powers.
- New personnel appointed after 2021, with no prior links to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan or the Taliban insurgency.
- Former Taliban insurgents who transitioned to government positions after 2021, typically holding senior ministry-level roles (director or higher).

The first category – experienced civil servants with substantive knowledge and training – were increasingly replaced by Taliban members.[5] For a description of Afghanistan's governance, please refer to the previous COI Report.[6]

Religious precepts as instruments of power
In October 2025, Afghanistan's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, called for unity and strict adherence to the precepts he had instituted from his seat in Kandahar.[7] These strict precepts, which the Taliban claim are based on Sharia law, are laid down in the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (hereafter: PVPV law or 'morality law'). In addition to promoting adherence to strict religious rules, they also aim to control both the Taliban and the population: transgressions committed under a man's authority – in the home by one's own family members, or in the community over which someone has authority – can be grounds for punishing that man. In this way, faith is being used as an instrument of power. As a result, all Taliban members, but also Afghan men in general, have an interest in enforcing the precepts in their personal lives – the former for career reasons and the latter for reasons of self-preservation and to protect their social position.[8] During the reporting period, the df Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and Complaints (hereafter: the Ministry for PVPV) was established to enforce the strict precepts laid down in the 'morality law'. This df ministry was given far-reaching powers and offered very advantageous employment conditions. The *muhtasib*[9], or 'morality police', also fall under the remit of this ministry.[10]

1.1.1 The Taliban's internal dynamics

Afghanistan is made up of many micro-societies, each of which has its own power structure[11] (see also the beginning of Section 3.1). The Taliban have historically been a fragmented, decentralised group. During the reporting period, the Taliban's internal dynamics were characterised by an increase in unity and a concentration of power around the organisation's ultra-conservative supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada. Nevertheless, tensions did linger between Akhundzada and his supporters in Kandahar, the Taliban in Kabul (who adopted more moderate positions for pragmatic reasons) and the Haqqanis.[12] To address this, Akhundzada curtailed the power of dissenting df ministers, transferred them to different roles and

[5] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[6] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023.
[7] BBC Monitoring, *Afghanistan Watchlist 8 October 2025* (subscription).
[8] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[9] Literal translation: inspector.
[10] Amu TV, *What message does the disclosure of thousands of Taliban official documents convey?*, 11 February 2025.
[11] Global Security website, *Afghanistan - Society*, accessed 9 October 2025.
[12] Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice A/HRC/58/74, paragraphs 22 et seq.

replaced them with a small group of loyalists.[13] He also appointed deputy ministers to maintain control. Some dissenting df officials decided to move abroad. For example, df interior minister Haqqani, who was seen as the face of the pragmatic, moderate Taliban, left for the UAE and Saudi Arabia in January 2025. However, in June 2025 Haqqani appeared to express support for the supreme leader, referring to him as a 'source of education and leadership' for the first time at a seminar.[14] According to media reports, df deputy foreign minister Stanikzai fled to the UAE in January 2025 following disagreements over girls' access to education.[15]

In Badakhshan province, escalating tensions resulted in an armed confrontation between local Taliban and the df authorities in July 2025. The Taliban's ban on the cultivation of cannabis and opium poppies led to significant loss of income for the local population and, consequently, protests. While the Taliban tried to suppress these protests, local Taliban leaders sided with the protesters and were themselves arrested by the df authorities.[16]

A 'purging commission', set up in early 2021 and headed by df defence minister Yaqoob, was tasked with rooting out 'undesirables' or suspected ISKP supporters among the Taliban's own members, and would subsequently fire personnel hired after the fall of Kabul who had not fought alongside the Taliban. According to media reports, there was widespread discontent regarding the non-transparent and unfair working methods of this commission.[17]

The Taliban sought to stabilise Afghanistan's security situation, eradicate corruption and establish a functioning national government. On the world stage, they tried to establish diplomatic ties.

Throughout the country, the Taliban founded religious schools (madrassas) or replaced public education with religious education. This process was referred to as 'madrassafication'. The newly established madrassas offered curricula based on the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, with staff employed by the df Ministry of Education. Teachers at existing madrassas were increasingly replaced by Islamic scholars. By founding these new schools, the Taliban sought to eliminate diversity in education and the existence of private Quranic schools.[18]

1.1.2 International recognition of df authorities as legitimate government

In July 2025, the Russian Federation became the first country to formally recognise the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. Although at the time of publication of this report, no other countries have followed suit in officially recognising the Taliban as the legitimate representatives of the Afghan people[19], there is de facto cooperation with several countries. A number of countries have

[13] Amu TV, *Hibatullah appoints nine Taliban officials to new posts in continued bureaucratic shuffle*, 7 July 2025; confidential source dated 10 March 2025. For more information about the Taliban's internal dynamics, see the General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023.
[14] Confidential source dated 5 June 2025; confidential source dated 10 March 2025; Amu TV, Sources: Haqqani warned Hibatullah of possible Taliban leadership split, 8 April 2025.
[15] Afghan Witness, *Taliban official Stanikzai reportedly flees Afghanistan amid education dispute*, 14 February 2025; The Guardian, *Taliban minister 'forced to flee Afghanistan' after speech in support of girls' education*, 3 February 2025.
[16] Afghanistan International, *Taliban Detains Own Commanders & Civilians Following Clashes In Badakhshan*, 4 July 2025; confidential source dated 5 June 2025.
[17] Hasht-e Subh, *Internal Purge of the Taliban: "Murderers" at the Helm, Fighters Warn of Chaos*, 9 December 2024; Afghanistan International, *Local Taliban Commander in Nangarhar Province Criticises Group's Purification Commission*, 3 April 2024; confidential source dated 24 April 2025.
[18] Afghan Witness, Afghanistan's madrasa system under the Taliban, 7 November 2025.
[19] The Guardian, *Russia becomes first country to recognise Afghanistan's Taliban govt*, 4 July 2025; Reuters, *Russia becomes first country to recognise Taliban government of Afghanistan*, 4 July 2025.

removed the Taliban from their list of terrorist organisations (in addition to Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).[20]

Foreign diplomatic missions in Afghanistan
There are eighteen foreign diplomatic missions in Afghanistan, some of which consist solely of temporary appointees or lower-level officials. These missions are from Azerbaijan, the EU, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Qatar, China, Kyrgyzstan, the UAE, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Japan, India, Norway and Switzerland. Of these countries, Uzbekistan, China, the UAE, Pakistan, India, Qatar and Türkiye have upgraded their diplomatic relations with Afghanistan to ambassador level. Meanwhile, Switzerland and Japan have established humanitarian aid offices in Afghanistan. There are also regional consulates in the following provinces: Herat (Iran, Türkiye and Turkmenistan), Nangarhar (Pakistan) and Balkh (Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).[21]

Afghan diplomatic missions abroad
The Taliban claim to have around forty diplomatic missions (including consulates) abroad, which report to the df Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These include missions in the UAE, Germany, China, Kazakhstan, Russia, India, Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Qatar, Oman, Malaysia, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Tajikistan.[22] Several countries, including China and the UAE, have also accredited Taliban ambassadors.[23] Although Türkiye, the UAE and Qatar maintained diplomatic relations at ambassador level, they openly distanced themselves from extremist Taliban policies, which they argued were not based on Islam. Afghanistan's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, lived in virtual isolation in Kandahar during the reporting period, making few public appearances.[24]

1.1.3 Relations with the neighbouring countries Iran and Pakistan

As a Shiite country, **Iran** is an ideological opponent of the Sunni Taliban. While Iran did not formally recognise the Taliban, it maintained pragmatic relations with the group. Mutual interests ranged from security (including border security) and water management to migration, refugees and economic development. Both countries aim to strengthen their political and economic relations.[25]

Iran tried to defend the interests of Shiite minorities such as the Hazaras, as well as those of the Tajiks, who share linguistic ties with Iranians.[26] Iran also played a significant role as a host country for Afghan refugees and migrants (the large-scale deportations from Iran to Afghanistan are discussed in Section 5.2.2).

[20] Al Jazeera, *Russia's Supreme Court suspends ban on Afghanistan's Taliban*, 17 April 2025; Jamestown, *Kazakhstan Removes Taliban from Terrorist List Amid Growing Ties with Central Asia*, 18 January 2024; VOA, *Kyrgyzstan follows regional trend, takes Taliban off terrorist list*, 7 September 2024.
[21] The Times of Central Asia, *Recognition of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan: Between Law, Diplomacy, and Pragmatism*, 20 May 2025; Amu TV, *Taliban diplomat assumes office in Uzbekistan*, 10 October 2024; confidential source dated 3 July 2025.
[22] Reuters, Taliban in control of 39 Afghan embassies globally, 19 September 2024; RFERL, *Which Countries Have Relations With The Taliban's Unrecognized Government?*, 30 May 2024.
[23] Voice of America, *Afghan Taliban say China becomes first nation to accept their ambassador*, 1 December 2023; Afghanistan International, *Taliban Ambassador Joins Female Envoy In UAE Diplomatic Ceremony, Sparking Attention*, 28 November 2024; Afghanistan International, *Norway Accepts Taliban Diplomat, Consular Services To Resume At Afghan Embassy In Oslo*, 22 March 2025.
[24] Confidential source dated 13 August 2025; CNN, *Qatar's prime minister with top Taliban leader in Afghanistan earlier this month, sources say*, 31 May 2023; KabulNow, *Qatar Promotes Charge d'Affaires in Afghanistan to Ambassador*, 21 October 2025.
[25] SpecialEurasia, Silvia Boltuc, *Iran-Afghanistan Relations: Emerging Dynamics and Challenges*, 11 November 2024; Deutsche Welle, *Iran, Afghanistan increase cooperation on migration*, 20 January 2025.
[26] See the previous COI Report on Afghanistan, June 2023, pp. 26 et seq.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a 2,700-kilometre border. Successive Afghan governments have refused to recognise the existing Durand Line (drawn by the British colonial administration in 1893) as the official border. The border has traditionally been porous, and Pashtuns living in the border region could travel between the two countries freely with a special identity card. Just under a decade ago, however, this freedom of movement was curtailed as a result of measures taken by the Pakistani government. A large section of the border has been fenced off by Pakistan. The construction of this fence led to skirmishes between the Taliban and Pakistani border guards. During the reporting period, residents of the border region and smugglers continued to use informal border crossings, such as mountain paths.[27] Pakistan hosted 1.6 million Afghan refugees.

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan were tense during the reporting period, primarily due to the activities of the armed extremist group Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani Taliban. Pakistan claims that the TTP operates from Afghanistan to carry out attacks on Pakistani soil. In response to TTP attacks in Pakistan, in 2024 Pakistani shelling and air strikes took place in the border region, with accusations being made by both sides. As a result, the border was closed for a month in early 2025 and the relationship between the two countries deteriorated. Nevertheless, ministerial-level meetings between Pakistan and Afghanistan were held in April 2025.[28] In early October 2025, there was again reciprocal shelling after Afghanistan accused Pakistan of carrying out airstrikes on Kabul and a market in eastern Afghanistan. Several hundred people were injured and dozens were killed, including civilians and military personnel. The exact number of casualties remains unclear. In mid-October, Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed on a ceasefire. After peace talks failed to yield results, new border clashes ensued.[29] At the time of publication of this COI Report, negotiations were still ongoing. Large numbers of Afghan refugees were deported back to Afghanistan from Pakistan, as they were from Iran (see Section 5.2).

1.2 Security situation

Although there have been significantly fewer security incidents in Afghanistan compared to before the Taliban came to power, the country's security situation did change during the reporting period. The United Nations Secretary-General's (UNSG) quarterly reports on Afghanistan published in December 2024 and in June and September 2025 noted year-on-year increases in security-related incidents and crime. However, the report published in March 2025 recorded an improvement. In this context, the UNSG cited offensives led by the df authorities, rising violence, a growing number of civilian casualties and serious human rights violations, in

[27] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023; EUAA, Pakistan – Situation of Afghan Refugees 2022, p. 64; EUAA, COI Report – Pakistan: Country Focus, December 2024; Robert Lansing Institute, *Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Clashes, 2025*, 20 October 2025; UNAMA, UNAMA welcomes ceasefire, 16 October 2025.
[28] Al Jazeera, *After a year of hostility, Pakistan and Afghanistan seek diplomatic reboot*, 22 April 2025; Al Jazeera, *As Pakistan, Afghanistan attack each other, what's next for neighbours?*, 30 December 2024; ICPS, *Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations Deteriorate Further*, 12 February 2025.
[29] BBC, *Afghan Taliban confirm 'retaliatory' border attacks on Pakistan*, 12 October 2025; Dutch Broadcasting Foundation, *Taliban claimt doden 58 Pakistaanse soldaten bij grens*, 12 October 2025; Al Jazeera, *Afghanistan, Pakistan enter 48-hour truce after deadly border clashes*, 16 October 2025; DW, *Pakistan and Afghanistan exchange fire after failed talks*, 6 December 2025.

addition to ongoing humanitarian, economic and political crises. In response, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid described the report's findings as misleading and distorted. Mujahid claimed that the security situation in Afghanistan was more stable than it had been at any time in recent history, and accused the UN of deliberately misrepresenting it.[30]

This section is based in part on information obtained from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)[31]. The ACLED conflict data does not provide a comprehensive overview of the number of violent incidents and fatalities. In its own explanation of the methodologies used, ACLED states that data on fatalities is often the least accurate component of conflict reports. The organisation states that it relies on the most conservative estimates and bases its figures primarily on public, secondary reporting. If the number of deaths in a reported incident of violence is unknown, ACLED records no fatalities. Reports referring to 'dozens' or 'hundreds' of deaths are translated into records of ten and one hundred deaths, respectively.[32] ACLED's data therefore reflects underreporting. In addition, ACLED only records fatalities caused by violence. Although information on injuries, victims of plundering, abduction and sexual violence may be included in the database, this does not appear in the reports and infographics published by ACLED. The humanitarian consequences of conflict, such as hunger resulting from land ownership disputes (see Section 3.1.5.2) or the disproportionate distribution of humanitarian aid (see Section 1.3), are also not included in the database. Although the ACLED data can be used to illustrate trends, it is not an exact reflection of reality.
In its statistics, ACLED does not distinguish between civilian casualties and combatants.

1.2.1 *Armed conflicts*

According to the ACLED Conflict Index, Afghanistan ranked 25th among countries and territories experiencing extreme, high or turbulent conflicts in January 2024. In 2025, Afghanistan was ranked 29th. Although this marked a sixteen-place drop compared to 2023, the situation in the country was still classified as 'consistently worrying' in 2024, and described as 'worsening' in 2025.[33] According to the Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts project of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights (RULAC), Afghanistan experienced two internal armed conflicts during the reporting period, between the Taliban and ISKP, and between the Taliban and the NRF.[34]

ACLED reports death tolls, but it does not distinguish between civilian casualties and combatants in these statistics. According to ACLED, 801 battles took place during the reporting period (the 28 months from June 2023 to November 2025), resulting in 1,407 deaths. Most of the fighting involved the National Resistance Front (NRF)

[30] UN Secretary-General, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 11 June 2025, A/79/947-S/2025/372; 17 September 2025, A/80/366 S/2025/554; December 2024, A/79/675 S/2024/876; March 2025, A/79/797 S/2025/109; confidential source dated 3 July 2025.
[31] ACLED is an NGO that collects, analyses and charts conflict data. Additional information about ACLED is available at https://acleddata.com.
[32] ACLED, *Fatalities – Uses and limitations of ACLED data*, published on 27 February 2023; last updated on 7 May 2024. ACLED, *Codebook*, published on 2 June 2023, URL.
[33] ACLED, *Conflict Index*, accessed 3 October 2025; Geneva Call website, *Afghanistan*, accessed 3 October 2025.
[34] RULAC, *Non-international armed conflicts in Afghanistan*, accessed 15 October 2025.

(353 battles and 645 deaths) and the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) (130 incidents and 284 deaths).[35] In the previous reporting period, which spanned thirteen months, there were 882 battles, resulting in 2,192 deaths. These conflict events also mainly involved the NRF (312 battles and 822 deaths), as well as Afghanistan's df military (252 battles and 806 deaths).[36] The AFF and NRF targeted the Taliban and the df authorities. For a visual representation of the developments during the current and previous reporting periods, see Section 6.4.1. For descriptions of these armed groups, see Section 1.2.4.

It is not known how many people were displaced as a result of these conflicts.

During the reporting period, fighting erupted between Afghanistan and Pakistan along the countries' shared border, resulting in dozens to hundreds of deaths. These tensions escalated against the backdrop of attacks on Pakistani soldiers in Pakistan by the TTP (the Pakistani Taliban) and the TTP's alleged presence in Afghanistan. According to the Taliban, eight people were killed in Pakistani air strikes in March 2024, which were carried out in retaliation for a TTP suicide attack in Pakistan.[37] Pakistan also carried out airstrikes in December 2024, killing 46 people, most of whom were civilians.[38] In April 2025, Pakistani forces killed 54 militants, possibly TTP fighters, who were attempting to cross the border into Pakistan.[39] Later that year, in October, there was an armed confrontation between Pakistan and Afghanistan, resulting in the deaths of 58 Pakistani and 200 Afghan soldiers, according to the warring parties.[40] A ceasefire was agreed between the two countries in mid-October. After peace talks failed to yield results, new border clashes ensued.[41] At the time of publication of this COI Report, negotiations were still ongoing.

In response to the alleged presence of TTP fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Pakistan deported Afghan refugees (see Section 5.2, Section 1.2.4.3 on the TTP and Section 1.1.3 on Afghanistan's relationship with Pakistan).

1.2.2 Landmines

Afghanistan is one of the four countries with the highest levels of landmine contamination worldwide. As of 2024, Afghanistan still had one of the highest levels of explosive munitions contamination in the world, due to the various conflicts that had taken place in the country over the previous 45 years. In 2024, more than 55 people were killed or maimed by explosive munitions every month. Most of these casualties were children. According to the HALO Trust, one in five Afghans were at an unspecified risk of injury from landmines and 80% of the victims were children,

[35] Data Export Tool | ACLED between June 2023 and September 2025, event type: *battle*.
[36] Data Export Tool | ACLED between April 2022 and May 2023, event type: *battle*.
[37] Dutch Broadcasting Foundation, *Taliban: 'Acht doden door luchtaanvallen Pakistan op Afghaans grondgebied'*, 18 March 2024.
[38] Al Jazeera, *Pakistan air strikes in Afghanistan spark Taliban warning of retaliation | Conflict News*, 25 December 2024.
[39] Dutch Broadcasting Foundation, *Pakistaanse leger doodt 54 militanten die probeerden de grens over te steken*, 27 April 2025.
[40] Dutch Broadcasting Foundation, *Gevechten Pakistan en Afghanistan in grensgebied, honderden doden gemeld*, 12 October 2025.
[41] BBC, *Afghan Taliban confirm 'retaliatory' border attacks on Pakistan*, 12 October 2025; Dutch Broadcasting Foundation, *Taliban claimt doden 58 Pakistaanse soldaten bij grens*, 12 October 2025; Al Jazeera, *Afghanistan, Pakistan enter 48-hour truce after deadly border clashes*, 16 October 2025; DW, *Pakistan and Afghanistan exchange fire after failed talks*, 6 December 2025.

some of whom were searching for metal scraps to sell.[42] In July 2025, the UN Secretary-General wrote that more than 3 million people across 1,700 communities were living next to deadly explosives, noting that children were the most vulnerable to accidents. Through efforts by UNDP and other parties, 4.4 million square metres of contaminated land were cleared of landmines between June and October 2024.[43] According to OCHA, people dependent on agriculture, such as farmers and shepherds, as well as children, displaced population groups and returning communities with limited understanding of the risks in new areas were found to be particularly vulnerable to the threat of explosions.[44]

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC)[45] reported that 133 square kilometres of farmland and 878 square kilometres of pasture land were contaminated with landmines and explosive war debris. In addition, between January and June 2025, the GPC designated 2,429 regions covering nearly 379 square kilometres as hazardous areas due to mine contamination. These included 256 areas in five northern provinces with 225,000 people within 1 kilometre of explosives, 526 areas in four northeastern provinces with 213,600 people within 1 kilometre of explosives, and 1,647 areas in ten central and southeastern provinces covering 316 square kilometres. Monthly civilian casualties exceeded 50, and 80 percent of the victims were children. The International Committee of the Red Cross reported that 434 of the 564 victims in 2024 were children. On average, every three days an injured child was hospitalised due to explosions involving war debris.[46]

1.2.3 Explosions and violence against civilians

According to ACLED, there were 80 **explosions** resulting in 633 deaths during the reporting period (the 28 months from June 2023 to November 2025). The primary actors in this type of violence were the AFF (80 incidents), followed by unidentified groups (65 incidents) and the NRF (58 incidents). Most deaths were caused by the AFF (172), followed by ISKP (166), the Pakistani military (139) and the NRF (96). ACLED's reports do not specify whether the casualties were civilians. According to ACLED, a total of 1,113 incidents of **violence against civilians** occurred during the reporting period, resulting in 603 deaths. Most of these incidents mainly involved Afghan security forces (664 incidents), followed by the df police (189 incidents) and unidentified actors (160 incidents). A majority of the deaths resulting from this type of violence were caused by Afghan security forces (313 deaths), followed by unidentified groups (159 deaths), the df police (49 deaths) and ISKP (47 deaths).[47]

In the previous reporting period (the 13 months from April 2022 to May 2023), ACLED recorded 375 **explosions** and 840 deaths. The primary actors in this type of violence were unidentified groups (216 incidents) and ISKP (76 incidents). A majority of the deaths were caused by unidentified groups (474 deaths) and ISKP (214 deaths). ACLED documented 1,417 incidents of **violence against civilians**

[42] The HALO Trust, *One in five Afghans at risk of landmines and explosives*, 10 June 2025. The HALO Trust refers to figures from the Information Management System for Mine Action, but does not provide a further definition of this risk.
[43] Report of the UN Secretary-General, Assistance in mine action in 2024, 28 July 2025, A/80/272; this report covers the period from August 2023 to July 2025.
[44] OCHA, *Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025*, December 2024.
[45] The GPC is a network of NGOs, international organisations and UN agencies dedicated to protecting the vulnerable in humanitarian crises, including armed conflicts and disasters. For more information about the GPC, see www.globalprotectioncluster.org.
[46] Global Protection Cluster (GPC), *Afghanistan Protection Analysis Update January – June 2025*, October 2025, p. 10.
[47] Data Export Tool | ACLED June 2023 to November 2025, event type: *explosions/remote violence* and *violence against civilians*.

during the previous reporting period, resulting in a total of 1,612 fatalities. Most violence against civilians was committed by the df military (708 incidents), followed by unidentified groups (188 incidents) and the df police (93 incidents). Violence perpetrated by the df army resulted in the highest number of fatalities (498 deaths), followed by unidentified groups (215 deaths) and ISKP (20 deaths).[48]

ISKP mostly sought to kill Shiites, Hazaras and Talibs[49], while AFF[50] and NRF[51] mainly targeted the Taliban. For descriptions of these armed groups, see Section 1.2.4. For more information about the reliability of these figures, see the beginning of Section 1.2. For a visual representation of the developments during the current and previous reporting periods, see Section 6.4.2.

The Afghan NGO Rawadari reported 46 civilian casualties in the first half of 2025 due to targeted suicide and explosive attacks in Kunduz, Balkh, Paktika, Kunar, Nangarhar and Nuristan provinces. Ten people were killed and 35 were injured. The total number of casualties in the first half of 2025 was a third lower than in the same period the previous year. Throughout 2024, Rawadari recorded at least 171 civilian casualties as a result of targeted suicide and explosive attacks in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Takhar, Paktika and Bamiyan provinces, including attacks by ISKP, airstrikes by Pakistani forces and an attack by the NRF; 92 people were killed and 79 others injured. In 2023, Rawadari documented 237 casualties due to targeted suicide and explosive attacks.[52]

According to the Global Terrorism Index, there were 12% fewer casualties in 2024 than in 2023, despite the fact that there were 87 incidents in 2024 vs 73 in 2023.[53]

The Economics and Peace Institute reports that most of the attacks in Afghanistan were carried out by anti-Taliban groups, including the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) and the National Resistance Front (NRF). However, the Economics and Peace Institute's Global Terrorism Index shows that Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) remained the deadliest group in the country in 2024, accounting for 57% of the 113 deaths and one-fifth of the 187 attacks.[54]

Examples of incidents include the following:

- On 7 April 2025, an IED[55] attached to a rickshaw exploded in Mazar-e-Sharif, injuring three adult men. The AFF claimed responsibility for the attack.[56]
- On 9 April 2025 in Mazar-e-Sharif, an IED explosion injured four adult men. The reported target of the attack was a parked vehicle belonging to the df security forces. The AFF claimed responsibility for the attack.[57]

[48] Data Export Tool | ACLED April 2022 to May 2023, event type: *explosions/remote violence* and *violence against civilians*.
[49] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan - Der Islamische Staat Provinz Khorasan (ISPK), October 2024; *Centre for Information Resilience/Afghan Witness*, ISKP shifts focus to northern Afghanistan - Centre for Information Resilience, 25 March 2025; Amnesty International, *Human rights in Afghanistan*, accessed 6 August 2024; confidential source dated 28 August 2025.
[50] BBC Monitoring, *Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF)*, accessed 6 August 2025 (subscription); EUAA, *Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024*, p. 112.
[51] For background information, see: BBC, *The 'undefeated' Panjshir Valley - an hour from Kabul*, 26 August 2021; CNN, *Leader of Afghanistan's resistance movement says he will defeat the Taliban 'no matter the odds'*, 1 September 2024.
[52] Rawadari, *Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024*, p. 9.
[53] Economics and Peace Institute, Global-Terrorism-Index-2025.pdf, p. 30.
[54] Economics and Peace Institute, Global-Terrorism-Index-2025.pdf, p. 7.
[55] Improvised explosive device.
[56] UNAMA, *Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: April – June 2025*.
[57] UNAMA, *Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: April – June 2025*.

- On 14 April 2025, an IED exploded in Mazar-e-Sharif, killing an adult man and injuring nine adult men and one boy. No responsibility for the attack was claimed.[58]
- On 17 May 2024, ISKP carried out an armed attack in Bamiyan province, killing an Afghan civilian and three Spanish tourists, and wounding three Afghan civilians. A spokesperson for the Taliban's Ministry of Interior Affairs said that four people had been arrested in connection with the attack.[59] For more information about ISKP, see Section 1.2.4.1.
- Afghanistan's df minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani, was killed in a suicide attack at his ministry in December 2024. The attack was claimed by ISKP. Brother of Jalaluddin (the founder of the Haqqani network) and uncle of Sirajuddin (the df interior minister), Khalil Ur-Rahman was a key figure in the Haqqani network. This suicide attack heightened internal tensions within the Taliban and demonstrated the capabilities of ISKP.[60]

1.2.4 Armed groups – terrorist organisations and opposition groups

This section discusses terrorist organisations such as ISKP, al-Qaeda and the TTP, as well as armed opposition groups such as the NRF and the AFF. None of these groups controls Afghan territory.[61]

According to the UN, the df authorities in Afghanistan continued to allow several terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda and its affiliates, to operate on Afghan soil. There were growing concerns about the possible return of foreign terrorist fighters to Central Asia and Afghanistan, who would seek to undermine regional security.[62]

As the largest armed opposition groups, the NRF and AFF regularly carry out attacks on Taliban targets in Afghanistan.[63] According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), however, the presence of these armed opposition groups did not pose an actual threat to the Taliban.[64]

Given Afghanistan's high unemployment rate and humanitarian needs, armed groups provided an attractive alternative for young men. Whereas the government cut its security budget by 20%, armed groups offered attractive salaries – in a country with a weak education system and a young population, with 63% under the age of 25. The Pakistan-Afghanistan border region in particular had a reputation as a recruiting ground for violent extremism.[65]

1.2.4.1 Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP)[66]

[58] UNAMA, *Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: April – June 2025*.
[59] NCTV, Aanslagen en interventies | Kennisbank Terroristische Organisaties | NCTV, accessed 3 October 2025; The Guardian, *Islamic state claims responsibility for deadly tourist attack in Afghanistan*, 19 May 2024; Al Jazeera, *Gunmen kill four, including three Spanish tourists, in central Afghanistan*, 17 May 2024.
[60] Al Jazeera, *Afghan refugee minister Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani killed in blast*, 11 December 2024; BBC, *Khalil Haqqani: Taliban minister killed in bombing in Kabul*, 11 December 2024.
[61] EUAA, *Country Focus Afghanistan*, November 2024, p. 52.
[62] UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, *Thirty-sixth report submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, S/2025/482, July 2025.
[63] Confidential source dated 24 April 2025.
[64] Report of the UN Secretary-General, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/79/947, June 2025, no. 20.
[65] Confidential source dated 11 June 2025.
[66] This group is also known as ISIS-K, ISIL-K or Daesh Khorasan. See also NCTV, Islamitische Staat (IS) | Kennisbank Terroristische Organisaties.

Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP) is a regional branch of IS. Khorasan refers to a historical region covering parts of present-day Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. ISKP thus operates primarily in northern Afghanistan. Supported by its 'parent organisation', IS, it has the capacity to operate across borders. The Economics and Peace Institute's Global Terrorism Index reveals that ISKP became the most active jihadist group worldwide during the reporting period, posing a transnational threat.[67] ISKP's ranks are mostly made up of foreign terrorists, including from Central Asia and Pakistan. ISKP therefore remained the most significant threat of all the armed groups in Afghanistan other than the Taliban, both regionally and internationally. The group continued to focus its attacks in Afghanistan mainly on Shiite communities, the df authorities and foreigners.[68] Led by Sanaullah Ghafari, fighters were dispersed across Afghanistan's northern and northeastern provinces. ISKP also tried to expand its operations to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, as well as to other parts of the world.[69]

The df authorities contested reports of ISKP presence in Afghanistan, dismissing them as fake news and propaganda.[70]

Partly due to actions taken by the df authorities[71] and international anti-terrorism operations, ISKP's capacity diminished, for example as a result of the arrests of leaders such as Sharifullah[72] and Al Turki[73]. Nevertheless, the terrorist organisation continued to operate in Afghanistan, largely with impunity.[74] Although the number of attacks was low, some were highly visible or resulted in many casualties. Examples include the deadly attack on Afghanistan's df minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani[75], carried out at his ministry in December 2024; a suicide bombing in Kandahar in March 2024 resulting in 21 fatalities; and an attack on the Darul Uloom Haqqania mosque in Pakistan in February 2025.[76] The number of ISKP attacks in Afghanistan continued to decline in the first six months of 2025 to a handful, and there were no major attacks in Afghanistan after March 2025.[77] Between January and November 2025, ACLED recorded 34 fatalities involving ISKP (3 due to violence against civilians, 7 as a result of fighting and 24 due to explosives).[78]

Recruitment

[67] Economics and Peace Institute, Global-Terrorism-Index-2025.pdf, p. 7.
[68] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan - Der Islamische Staat Provinz Khorasan (ISPK), October 2024; Centre for Information Resilience/Afghan Witness, ISKP shifts focus to northern Afghanistan - Centre for Information Resilience, 25 March 2025; Amnesty International, *Human rights in Afghanistan*, accessed 6 August 2024; confidential source dated 28 August 2025.
[69] UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, *Thirty-sixth report submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, S/2025/482, July 2025; Centre for Information Resilience/Afghan Witness, *ISKP shifts focus to northern Afghanistan*, 25 March 2025; BBC Monitoring, *Islamic State (Khorasan Province)*, December 2024 (subscription); International Crisis Group, *The Islamic State in Afghanistan: A Jihadist Threat in Retreat?*, 16 July 2025.
[70] Pajhwok Afghan News, *Army chief: Afghanistan secure, IS presence claims baseless*, 22 July 2025.
[71] Voice of America, *US Envoy: Taliban Kill 8 Key Islamic State Leaders in Afghanistan*, 13 September 2023; Centre on Armed Groups, *ISKP Policy Brief*, December 2024.
[72] Mohammad Sharifullah was arrested by Pakistani authorities in March 2025 and extradited to the US on suspicion of being involved in the attacks on Abbey Gate during the Kabul airport evacuations in 2021, and Crocus City Hall in Moscow in 2024.
[73] Ozgur Altun, also known as Abu Yasir Al Turki, played a key role in ISIS's media and logistics.
[74] UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, *Thirty-sixth report submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, S/2025/482, July 2025; The Diplomat, *Are Uyghur Militants Becoming ISKP's New Force?*, 7 March 2025; confidential source dated 5 June 2025.
[75] Al Jazeera, *Taliban's Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani killed: Why it matters | Taliban News*, 16 December 2024; BBC, *Khalil Haqqani: Taliban minister killed in bombing in Kabul*, 11 December 2024.
[76] Economics and Peace Institute, Global-Terrorism-Index-2025.pdf, p. 7.
[77] Confidential source dated 28 August 2025.
[78] Data Export Tool | ACLED June 2023 to November 2025, event type: *explosions/remote violence*, *battles* and *violence against civilians*. Accessed 1 December 2025.

ISKP continued to recruit both inside and outside Afghanistan, including in Central Asian countries, Türkiye and the North Caucasus in Russia. According to the Netherlands' National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV), IKSP also attempted targeted recruitment among the Afghan and Central Asian diaspora in the European Union.[79] In addition, it targeted defecting fighters from other groups. While the organisation's leadership was predominantly Afghan Pashtun, the lower ranks were mostly filled with fighters of Central Asian or Uyghur[80] origin, including women. In northern Afghanistan and areas near the Pakistani border, ISKP indoctrinated children in Quranic schools (madrassas), training minors aged around 14 to carry out suicide attacks. There were fears of an influx of terrorist fighters from Syria as well.[81]

ISKP's recruitment activities also targeted the Salafist community and university students. According to researcher Antonio Giustozzi, the recruitment process at universities involves a pre-selection based on religious rigour and adherence to Salafism, followed by a telephone call. Prospective recruits who respond positively to being approached are then sent targeted propaganda materials.[82]

1.2.4.2 Al-Qaeda[83]

Although al-Qaeda was present in Afghanistan during the reporting period, it refrained from militant activities. Consequently, the organisation's visibility was low in Afghanistan, as it was in the rest of South and Central Asia. Within the international community, there were concerns that key Taliban figures continued to offer al-Qaeda a safe haven in Afghanistan.[84]

According to a UN report, al-Qaeda in Afghanistan was no longer an immediate threat to the region due to its limited resources and significantly reduced ranks. The number of key figures was estimated to be between 30 and 60, with around 400 fighters.[85] Al-Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan was described as consisting mainly of fighters of Arab origin who had fought alongside the Taliban in the past. They were spread across six provinces: Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Kunar, Uruzgan and Zabul. Several al-Qaeda-affiliated training sites in Afghanistan were reported, and three newer sites were identified, although these were likely small and basic. Both al-Qaeda and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) fighters were purportedly trained at these sites.[86]

Recruitment

Al-Qaeda urged terrorists from around the world to travel to Afghanistan to receive training and learn from the Taliban.[87]

1.2.4.3 Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

[79] NCTV, *Dreigingsbeeld Nederland*, December 2024.
[80] The Diplomat, *Are Uyghur Militants Becoming ISKP's New Force?*, 7 March 2025.
[81] UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, *Thirty-sixth report submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, S/2025/482, July 2025; Centre for Information Resilience/Afghan Witness, *ISKP shifts focus to northern Afghanistan - Centre for Information Resilience*, 25 March 2025.
[82] RUSI, Antonio Giustozzi, *An Unfamiliar Challenge, How the Taliban are Meeting the Islamic State Threat on Afghanistan's University Campuses*, May 2023; Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, Länderinformationen Afghanistan, 31 March 2025, p. 83.
[83] See also NCTV, Al Qa'ida | Kennisbank Terroristische Organisaties.
[84] Council on Foreign Relations, *The Taliban in Afghanistan*, 14 August 2025.
[85] Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, *Länderinformationen Afghanistan*, 31 January 2025, p. 63.
[86] UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, *Thirty-sixth report submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, S/2025/482, July 2025.
[87] FDD's Long War Journal, *Analysis: Al Qaida expands its network of training camps in Afghanistan*, June 2024; AIVD, *Dreigingsbeeld Nederland*, December 2024.

The Taliban and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)[88] share close historical, ideological and familial ties, with the TTP mainly carrying out attacks in Pakistan. The TTP's presence in Afghanistan remained a contentious issue in the country's relationship with Pakistan during the reporting period. Pakistan accused the Taliban of providing the TTP with a safe base of operations in Afghan territory. Most of the TTP's actions in Pakistan were targeted at Pakistani security forces. In 2023, the TTP also began to increase its attacks on civilians linked to the Pakistani government. This happened mostly, but not exclusively, in the tribal Pashtu areas in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Through strategic attacks on civilians and propaganda capitalising on discontent among local communities, the TTP sought to challenge the Pakistani government's control over the region. Some sources suggest that the TTP did so with the aim of establishing itself as an alternative power centre in Pakistan.[89]

The TTP had around 6,000 fighters in Afghanistan and, according to the UN, continued to receive significant logistical and operational support from the df authorities. There were, however, reports of conflicting views within the df authorities on their relationship with the TTP, with some advocating that the former should distance themselves from the latter in order to improve regional relations with Pakistan. The TTP was said to maintain strategic ties with ISKP. Moreover, the organisation continued to carry out high-profile attacks in the region, which sometimes resulted in large numbers of casualties (see Section 1.2.1). It was reported that the TTP had access to an array of weapons, enabling them to kill large numbers of people. According to a UN source, the group trained terrorists in Pakistan's Baluchistan province in January 2025. This source further noted that the TTP sought close cooperation with the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)[90] in the southern part of Afghanistan.[91]

1.2.4.4 National Resistance Front (NRF)

The National Resistance Front (NRF) was established in the Panjshir Valley, about 145 km from Kabul, after the Taliban seized power in August 2021. It has been referred to as the main non-extremist armed opposition group in Afghanistan.[92] Led by Ahmed Massoud, the NRF includes civilians, former ANDSF employees[93], and former members of the government and political opposition. Many members reside outside Afghanistan, and the majority are of Tajik ethnicity. The NRF consists of several regional entities, whose commanders are loyal to Massoud. The fighters include members of the former Afghan military.[94]

Although the NRF launched fewer attacks in 2023 than in the previous year, conflicts with the Taliban continued. In November 2023, for example, the NRF and AFF

[88] Counter Extremism Project, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), accessed 15 October 2025.
[89] Confidential source dated 28 August 2025; ACLED, *The battle for the borderlands: The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan challenges the state's control*, 6 October 2025.
[90] The TTP and BLA have joined forces in their struggle against the Pakistani state. See the General COI Report on Pakistan published in July 2024.
[91] UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, *Thirty-sixth report submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, S/2025/482, July 2025.
[92] For background information, see: BBC, *The 'undefeated' Panjshir Valley - an hour from Kabul*, 26 August 2021; CNN, *Leader of Afghanistan's resistance movement says he will defeat the Taliban 'no matter the odds'*, 1 September 2024.
[93] The Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), consisting of the Afghan National Army (ANA), including the air force, the border authorities and special forces; the Afghan National Police (ANP), including local police and drug enforcement; the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the former security service and predecessor of the current General Directorate for Intelligence (GDI).
[94] BBC Monitoring, *National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF)*, 25 April 2025, accessed 2 September 2025 (subscription); Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, *Länderinformationen Afghanistan*, 31 January 2025, p. 63.

claimed to have killed at least 50 Taliban fighters.[95] ACLED reported 58 explosions and 353 battles involving the NRF throughout the entire reporting period. The explosions resulted in 96 deaths, and the battles in 645. Most of the incidents occurred in northeastern Afghanistan. Although ACLED did not record any incidents of violence against civilians, it does not distinguish between civilian casualties and combatants.[96]

1.2.4.5 Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF)

The Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) is an armed group opposed to the Taliban that announced its existence in March 2022. The AFF aims to 'end the oppressive, illegitimate and tyrannical rule of the Taliban' and 'ensure justice and equality in society' by means of 'armed resistance and civil, liberation and justice struggles'. Since June 2022, it has referred to its attacks on Taliban security personnel as 'guerrilla operations'. It also employs a media strategy in which videos are to provide evidence of its attacks against the Taliban. In April 2024, the AFF confirmed that its leader is former defence minister General Mohammad Yasin Zia. According to Zia, the AFF leadership council consists of around 50 members. Most of the AFF's attacks are reported to have taken place in Kabul, and in the northeastern provinces of Laghman, Kapisa, Parwan and Takhar.[97] ACLED documented 80 explosions and 130 battles involving the AFF throughout the entire reporting period. The explosions resulted in 172 deaths, and the battles in 284. Although ACLED did not record any incidents of violence against civilians, it does not distinguish between civilian casualties and combatants.[98]

1.2.5 Security apparatus

The security apparatus, consisting of the military, police and security service, was entirely under Taliban control. As the supreme leader of the Taliban, Hibatullah Akhundzada held the highest position of authority. He issued directives and edicts and formulated security policy, a process that also involved the df defence minister, Mohammad Yaqoub; the df interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani; and the df chief of the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI), Abdul Haq Wasiq.

During the reporting period, the Taliban cut its security budget by 20%. This affected the budgets of the GDI, the df Ministry of Defence and the df Ministry of Interior Affairs.[99]

1.2.6 Compulsory military service and recruitment

Afghanistan does not have compulsory military service.[100]

During the existence of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, before the 2021 takeover, the Taliban mostly recruited unemployed Pashtun men from rural communities, who were trained in Afghan and Pakistani mosques and camps. As

[95] Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, *Länderinformationen Afghanistan*, 31 January 2025, p. 63.
[96] Data Export Tool | ACLED June 2023 to November 2025, event type: *explosions/remote violence*, *battles* and *violence against civilians*, actor: NRF. Accessed 2 December 2025.
[97] BBC Monitoring, *Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF)*, accessed 6 August 2025 (subscription); EUAA, *Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024*, p. 112.
[98] Data Export Tool | ACLED June 2023 to November 2025, event type: *explosions/remote violence*, *battles* and *violence against civilians*, actor: AFF. Accessed 2 December 2025.
[99] Amu TV, *Exclusive: Taliban leader orders 20 percent cut in public sector workforce, sources say*, 30 April 2025; confidential source dated 24 April 2025.
[100] EUAA, *Country Focus Afghanistan*, November 2024, pp. 63 et seq.; confidential source dated 12 September 2025.

there was no shortage of volunteers, forced recruitment only occurred in exceptional cases. Any pressure or coercion to join the Taliban was often exerted through families, clans or religious communities, depending on local circumstances. The consequences of resisting recruitment were usually severe: there were reports of threats made against the families of prospective recruits, as well as serious physical injuries and killings.[101]

During the reporting period, forced recruitment by the Taliban was also exceedingly rare. In general, the Taliban had no shortage of volunteers, with people applying for ideological and financial reasons, the latter partly due to the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.[102] According to one source, there was high demand for new recruits in the first two years after the coup, after which it declined. The recent cuts to the country's security budget were said to be a factor in this development.[103]

Recruitment of minors
In the past, the Taliban recruited and deployed thousands of children from madrassas, who then served as fighters, placed and detonated IEDs[104], and carried out suicide bombings. Following the 2022 ban on the recruitment of minors, the Taliban formed a committee tasked with removing minors from their ranks, and mostly avoided recruiting boys deemed too young by rejecting those without beards.[105] In Afghanistan, boys are not considered adults when they turn 18, but rather when they show physical signs of puberty, such as the ability to grow facial hair (see Section 3.1.10.1). According to estimates, however, the Taliban's ranks still include thousands of minors, who are often used as guards.[106] The Taliban also continued to recruit minors on a small scale.[107] The UN reports that 54 children were recruited in 2022, 342 in 2023 and 11 in 2024.[108] A report by the US Department of State asserts that the Taliban forged identity documents to make minors appear old enough to be recruited.[109]

It is not known whether and on what scale ethnicities other than Pashtun men were recruited during the reporting period.

1.2.7 Surveillance methods used by the Taliban

Cameras
In August 2025, Afghanistan's df authorities installed tens of thousands of surveillance cameras in Kabul and several other areas, with the stated aim of improving public safety. These cameras use facial recognition technology and can also recognise number plates, sparking fears of increased repression among critics.

[101] EUAA, *2024 Country Guidance Afghanistan*, p. 40.
[102] EUAA, *2024 Country Guidance Afghanistan*, p. 40; EUAA Country Focus Afghanistan, *Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan – Country Focus*, November 2024, p. 63; confidential source dated 12 September 2025.
[103] Confidential source dated 12 September 2025.
[104] IED stands for 'improvised explosive device'.
[105] HRW, *This is our opportunity to end the Taliban's use of child soldiers*, September 2021; EUAA Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024; Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, Länderinformationen Afghanistan, 31 January 2025, p. 82.
[106] EUAA, Country Focus Afghanistan, 2024, p. 65.
[107] US Department of State, *Afghanistan 2024 Human Rights Report*.
[108] UN Secretary-General, Children and Armed Conflict, A/77/895-S/202, 5 June 2023; UN Secretary-General, Children and Armed Conflict, A/78/842-S/2024/384, 3 June 2024; UN Secretary-General, Children and Armed Conflict, A/79/878-S/2025/247, 17 June 2025.
[109] US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2024* – Afghanistan.

According to media reports, the government pressured Kabul residents to make an additional financial contribution towards the cost of the cameras.[110]

Human intelligence
In a context characterised by close-knit local communities in which people are intimately familiar with each other's habits and routines, the first and most important source of information for the df authorities – according to one source – is always human intelligence.[111] This does, however, create a risk of deception, as it gives people the opportunity to falsely accuse each other to the df authorities as part of personal feuds.[112] Pashtun communities in particular are often governed by traditional ethnic codes, such as *Pashtunwali*, in which honour and retribution play a significant role. Retribution was originally intended as a means to restore local balance, order and peace.[113] According to one source, the GDI's extensive network reaches deep into local communities, providing access to a wealth of information about journalists, human rights activists and others.[114]

Mobile telephony
In September 2025, Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada instructed the Ministry of Telecommunications to require telecom companies to share user data, including phone calls and personal information, with the Taliban's intelligence service, local sources told Amu TV. He also called for the use of a list of special keywords or codes that, if detected, would automatically lead to the transfer of all user data to intelligence services.[115] The exact words included in this list are not known.

For more information about the use of biometric systems, see Section 2.6 on databases. For more information about surveillance methods, see also the previous COI Report on Afghanistan.[116]

1.3 Humanitarian situation

Various sources indicate that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated compared to the reporting period of the previous COI Report, of June 2023. OCHA has described the situation in Afghanistan as one of the largest, longest-lasting and most complex humanitarian crises in the world. In 2025, an estimated 22.9 million people in Afghanistan – almost half the country's population – were in need of humanitarian assistance. Among them were 5.7 million women and 5 million men with acute vulnerabilities.[117] In addition, the country faced the consequences of four decades of war, deeply entrenched poverty and climate crises.[118] The reporting period saw further cuts to international aid, resulting in significant budget shortfalls among aid agencies.

[110] BBC, Inside the Taliban's surveillance network monitoring millions, 27 February 2025; Amnesty International, Afghanistan: Installing thousands of cameras risks creating total surveillance state - Amnesty International, 31 August 2023. Estimates of the total number of cameras range from 62,000 to 90,000.
[111] The process of gathering information or intelligence by talking to people is known as human intelligence (HUMINT). The General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) distinguishes between three categories of human sources: personal contacts, informants and agents.
[112] Confidential source dated 12 September 2025.
[113] EURAC, *A traditional code and its consequences: how Pashtunwali affects women and minorities in Afghanistan*, 25 June 2025.
[114] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025.
[115] Amu TV, *Taliban leader orders telecom firms to share user data with intelligence*, 17 September 2025.
[116] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023, p. 44.
[117] OCHA, *Afghanistan: Humanitarian Update, March 2025*, March 2025.
[118] OCHA, *Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2024*, May 2025.

Among the problems faced by the Afghan population during the reporting period were outbreaks of measles and cholera, economic decline, a lack of drinking water and acute food insecurity, partly due to the country's economic crisis and droughts. Experts estimate that around 14.8 million Afghans are affected by severe food insecurity. Meanwhile, the healthcare system is by no means able to meet the demand for care. Afghanistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world, and women's access to medical care has become even more limited since they are no longer permitted to use transport without a *mahram* (see Section 3.1.7). Women have also been barred from enrolling in medical school.[119]

Some families see no way to escape hunger other than forcibly marrying off a daughter in exchange for a dowry, or having her fed by others (see Section 3.1.7.8).

The humanitarian needs described above were made more acute by several earthquakes during the reporting period. In October 2023, the worst earthquake in twenty years hit the western province of Herat. Approximately 2,500 people were killed, and around 3,000 more were injured. A total of 2.5 million people were reported to have been affected.[120] In late August 2025, a massive earthquake in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces killed over 3,000 people and injured four thousand. Relief efforts were hampered by the region's poor accessibility and the collapse of thousands of mud houses. According to some NGOs, the lack of female aid workers and the ban on women being helped by male aid workers were also problematic for women here.[121] One source, however, noted that other organisations had stated that women received the same help as men.[122]

International humanitarian aid was distributed based on existing needs in specific areas or among specific population groups. In some instances, the provision of aid to marginalised groups was complicated by the fact that it would have to be distributed partly through local power structures, and thus effectively by the Taliban.[123] According to a Hazara advocacy group, this meant that less aid ended up reaching ethnic minorities, such as the Hazaras.[124] However, aid programmes funded by the EU, UN and Afghanistan Coordination Group donors opposed this and instead prioritised vulnerable groups, including ethnic and religious minorities.[125]

Humanitarian needs intensified further with the influx of many hundreds of thousands of returning Afghans, particularly from Pakistan and Iran.[126] For more on the return of Afghan nationals from different countries, see Chapter 5 (Return to Afghanistan).

[119] UNICEF, *Wie ist es, jetzt in Afghanistan ein Kind zu sein?*, 8 January 2025; Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan*, December 2024; Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Länderreport 72 Afghanistan*, July 2024.
[120] Dutch Broadcasting Foundation, *Half jaar na aardbevingen Afghanistan kan heropbouw worden gestart*, 11 April 2025; Red Cross, *Meerdere zware aardbevingen verwoesten West-Afghanistan, ravage groter dan gedacht*, 8 October 2023.
[121] BBC Monitoring, *Briefing: Afghan Taliban highlight relief efforts as earthquake death toll rises*, 3 September 2025 (subscription); RFERL, *Afghan Women And Girls 'Bear The Brunt' Of Earthquake Amid Taliban Restrictions*, 3 September 2025; The Independent, *UN confirms female staff being blocked from working on earthquake response in Afghanistan*, 12 September 2025.
[122] Confidential source dated 25 September 2025.
[123] EUAA, Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024, Common Analysis, Section 1.3; Afghanistan Analysts Network; *Taleban Perceptions of Aid: Conspiracy, corruption and miscommunication*, 30 July 2023; confidential source dated 18 August 2025.
[124] Bamyan Foundation, *Unfair Distribution of Humanitarian Aid in Afghanistan – Bamyan Foundation*, 12 January 2022; confidential source dated 25 March 2025, EUAA COI meeting on Afghanistan.
[125] UN press release, *UN launches new Strategic Framework for supporting Afghan people | United Nations in Afghanistan*, 3 July 2023;
[126] UNHCR, UNHCR: Needs intensify as 1.4 million people return to Afghanistan.

Economic situation

Following a sharp contraction of 27 percentage points between 2020 and 2022, the Afghan economy showed tentative signs of stabilisation, with gross domestic product (GDP) increasing by 2.7% between 2023 and 2024, marking the first growth since 2019. Nevertheless, UNDP characterised this growth as weak and noted that the economy showed signs of stagnation.[127] UNDP estimated that livelihood insecurity increased by 6% in 2024 compared to 2023. This increase cancelled out some of the improvements made in 2023, for example due to sharp declines in housing availability and the affordability of healthcare and essential household items, such as cookware and winter clothing.[128]

1.3.1 *Food supply*

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), 2025 saw the sharpest ever increase in malnutrition in Afghanistan. UNICEF predicted that 21% of the population would be affected by an acute hunger crisis, and reported that the worst-affected regions were Badakhshan and Sar-e-Pul with 40% of the population facing acute food shortages, followed by 35% in Faryab, Ghor and Samangan. This meant that 3.5 million girls and boys under the age of five were expected to be malnourished in 2025 – half a million more than in 2024. Of all malnourished children, UNICEF reported, 1.4 million suffered from life-threatening hunger. A total of 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding mothers were malnourished and in urgent need of treatment. According to WFP, women and girls were disproportionately affected by the hunger crisis due to their growing marginalisation in society.[129] In October 2025, various media reported that the situation was deteriorating rapidly. Although exact figures were unavailable, a doctor in Badakhshan province claimed that one child was dying every three days due to malnutrition.[130]

As 80% of Afghanistan's income comes from agriculture, the population is greatly affected by climate change. Unexpected droughts and heat hampered harvesting during the reporting period.[131]

1.3.2 *Drinking water*

Drought and drinking water shortages have been problems in Afghanistan for years, and these issues became more acute during the reporting period.[132] In August 2025, two hundred families in southern Kandahar were forced to move due to drought, and people in urban areas were also at risk.[133]

The water shortages resulted in a scarcity of fertile land, leading to conflicts over ownership and usage rights, for example between the Khuchis and the Hazaras (see Section 3.1.5.2).

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[127] UNDP, Afghanistan Socio-Economic Review 2023 – 2024.
[128] UNDP, Afghanistan Socio-Economic Review 2023 – 2024.
[129] Amu TV, *WFP warns of soaring malnutrition in Afghanistan, with 3.5 million children at risk*, 27 March 2025; WFP website, Afghanistan | World Food Programme, accessed 5 August 2025; UNICEF, Afghanistan Country Office Sitrep Number 5 – May 2025.
[130] Khaama Press, *Child malnutrition soars in Afghanistan's Badakhshan, one child dies every three days*, 7 October 2025; BBC, *Afghanistan malnutrition: The mother who buried three children*, 22 September 2025.
[131] OCHA, *Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2024*, May 2025; EUAA Country Guidance Common Analysis 2024, Recent developments, Section 1.3.
[132] EUAA Country Guidance Common Analysis 2024, Recent developments, Section 1.3.
[133] Pajhwok, *Severe drought uproots over 200 families in Kandahar – Pajhwok Afghan News*, 2 August 2025; Hasht-e Subh, *Water Crisis in Kabul: Six Million Residents at Risk*, 16 July 2025; The Guardian, *Kabul at risk of becoming first modern city to run out of water, report warns*, 7 June 2025.

1.3.3 *Healthcare system*

In April 2025, aid agencies warned that the Afghan healthcare system was on the verge of collapse after various sources of international funding, most notably from USAID, were suspended. By May 2025, the suspension and reduction of funding streams had resulted in the closure of more than four hundred clinics across Afghanistan, affecting an estimated 3.08 million people across 30 provinces.[134] The df authorities denied any impact on the healthcare system.[135]

The availability of natal care in particular was limited due to the closure of local clinics, resulting in patients having to travel greater distances. This was compounded by a lack of female midwives due to a Taliban training ban[136] (see also Section 3.1.7.9).

The main health problems affecting children were acute diarrhoea (especially in Nimroz, Khost, Paktia, Farah and Kabul) and increasing numbers of measles infections (especially in Nuristan, Badakhshan, Jawzjan and Uruzgan), resulting in deaths.[137] In addition, people in Afghanistan faced outbreaks of acute pneumonia, malaria and dengue fever.[138]

1.3.4 *Housing*

More than half of the population of Afghanistan live in traditional houses, which are typically made of mud and stone, especially in rural areas. While these houses can withstand harsh weather conditions, they are not resistant to earthquakes, as demonstrated by the 2023 Herat earthquake and the earthquake in August 2025. The flash floods that hit several provinces in April and May of 2024 also destroyed thousands of houses, resulting in significant population displacement. A majority of households had insufficient access to water, energy and sanitation, and no access to tap water or heating appliances for cooking. The poorest segment of the population – mostly those affected by disaster and repatriated Afghan nationals – lived in tents.[139]

1.3.5 *Aid organisations*

It is not possible to provide an exhaustive overview of aid organisations operating in Afghanistan.

Examples of active UN aid agencies include UNHCR, IOM, WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF, OCHA and UNAMA. Examples of international aid organisations include the International Red Cross Movement, Save the Children, the Danish Refugee Council, Cordaid and the Aga Khan Development Network.

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[134] WHO, *Afghanistan Health Cluster Bulletin*, September 2025; TOLOnews, *WHO Warns of Deepening Health Crisis in Afghanistan*, 6 May 2025; WHO EMRO, *Eighty percent of WHO-supported facilities in Afghanistan risk shutdown by June*, 17 March 2025; The Guardian, *Millions of Afghans lose access to healthcare services as USAID cuts shut clinics*, 3 April 2025.
[135] TOLOnews, *Deputy Health Minister: Aid Suspension Has No Impact on Afghanistan*, 13 April 2025.
[136] Amu TV, *Critically ill newborns arrive daily at Herat hospital, but many don't survive*, 23 March 2025; NPR, *A midwife says of the aid cuts in Afghanistan: 'No one prioritises women's lives'*, 31 March 2025; WHO, *Afghanistan: Suspended/Closed Health Facilities due to the U.S. Government Work-Stop Ban* (updated 31 August 2025).
[137] UNICEF, Afghanistan Country Office Sitrep Number 5 – May 2025; KabulNow, *Over 350 People, Mostly Children, Die from Measles in Afghanistan Amid Surge in Cases*, 2 August 2025.
[138] WHO, *Afghanistan Health Cluster Bulletin*, September 2025.
[139] EUAA, Country Focus Afghanistan, November 2024, p. 76.

In 2025, further cuts to international humanitarian aid resulted in budget problems for international organisations. NGOs and international organisations faced enormous additional costs due to the *mahram* requirement for female staff and the obligation to provide separate spaces for them. Meanwhile, local female staff were banned from working for international organisations, although this ban was not strictly enforced.[140]

In March 2025, Switzerland reopened the Swiss humanitarian aid office in Kabul.[141] The European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) was also present in Kabul, as were the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).[142]

Work ban for female staff at UN offices

The Taliban began enforcing the existing work ban for local female staff at UN offices in late August 2025. This ban restricted the delivery of aid to Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan, among others. Several UN offices were closed as a result.[143]

[140] UN News, *Afghanistan: New restrictions on women nationals working for UN, put aid efforts at risk*, 11 September 2025; UNAMA, *UN in Afghanistan calls for lifting of restrictions on female staff accessing UN premises | UNAMA*, 11 September 2025.
[141] Afghanistan International, *Switzerland Reopens Humanitarian Aid Office In Kabul | Afghanistan International*, 31 March 2025.
[142] ECHO website, Afghanistan - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations; JICA website, Afghanistan | Where We Work, both accessed 2 December 2025.
[143] Confidential source dated 25 September 2025; ACAPS, *Access global crisis risks real-time data*, accessed 27 September 2025.

2 Identity, nationality and documents

According to UNHCR, the management of identification documents and civil registries has traditionally been a complex problem in Afghanistan. The wide-spread lack of civil documents contributes to people's daily struggles, including limited freedom of movement and restricted access to services. Forty years of conflict have had a significant impact on governance and administration, resulting in inconsistencies in birth registrations and difficulties obtaining important civil documents. Moreover, since the Taliban came to power in August 2021, laws relating to civil registration and identification documents have been suspended, along with the constitution and other legislation. The relevant public institutions are faced with budget shortfalls, many offices have been closed, and the number of personnel in civil registry departments has been reduced. This has led to additional challenges in obtaining civil documents, such as high costs and longer travel distances to registration centres. UNHCR also reports that there is a lack of coordination, and that procedures are confusing.[144]

2.1 Compulsory identification

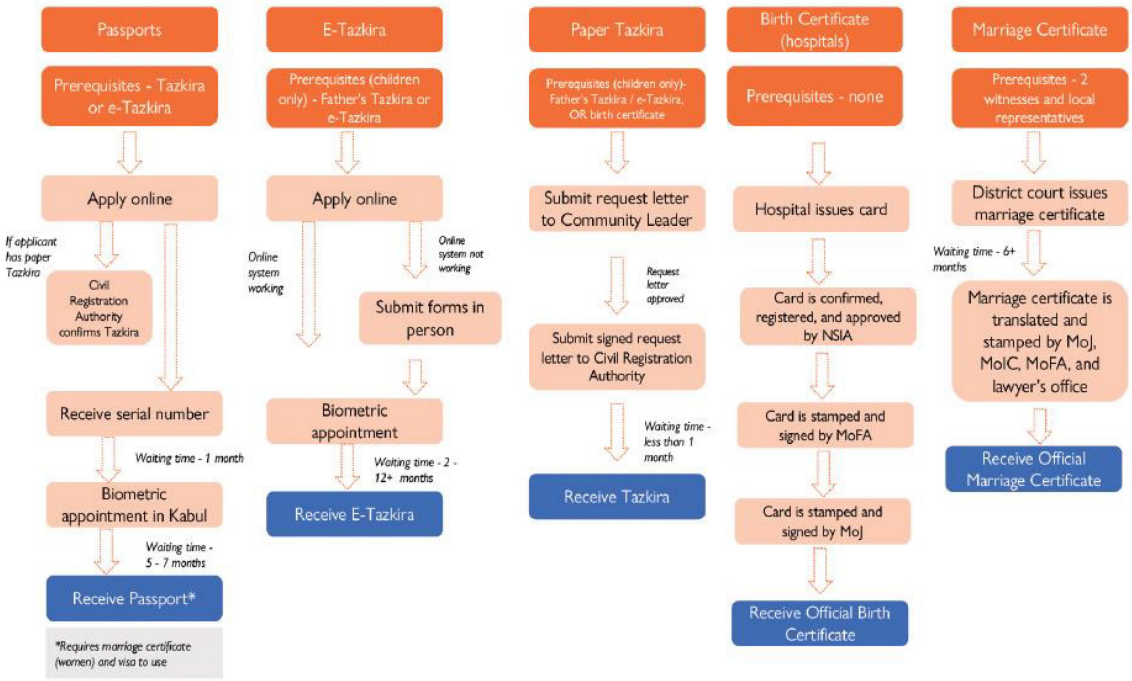
Under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, there was a legal identification obligation for every Afghan national, which meant that every citizen had to carry an identity card, known as the *tazkera*.[145] In practice, however, this obligation was not enforced.[146] After the df authorities had formally declared all existing laws, including those relating to identification, invalid following their seizure of power in 2021, no new legislation relating to documents was created. As a result, the old laws are often used if deemed appropriate by local authorities. One source noted that enforcement on the identification obligation was inconsistent, as not every citizen has a *tazkera*, particularly in rural areas.[147] According to UNHCR, obtaining a *tazkera* is especially difficult for women, unaccompanied minors, certain ethnic and religious groups, and nomadic[148] communities.[149]

A *tazkera* is required to access education[150], healthcare and other government services, and to buy or own property, open a bank account, conduct court proceedings and apply for other identity documents, such as a passport.[151]

2.2 Application procedures

[144] UNHCR, *Legal Identity and Civil Documentation in Afghanistan*, May 2024, p. 1.
[145] UNHCR, *Legal Identity and Civil Documentation in Afghanistan*, May 2024, p. 6.
[146] See the General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan 2020, p. 42.
[147] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[148] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *The Daily Hustle: How to get a national ID card in Afghanistan if you're a Kuchi*, 28 May 2025.
[149] UNHCR, *Legal Identity and Civil Documentation in Afghanistan*, May 2024, p.
[150] In some provinces, it was possible to attend education up to a certain level even without a *tazkera*. Migrationsverket, Norrköping. Afghanistan - Medborgarskap, folkbokföring och identitetshandlingar (version 2.0), 25.02.2020, p. 13. https://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentSummaryId=44055 (01.05.2025); confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[151] Migrationsverket, Norrköping. Afghanistan - Medborgarskap, folkbokföring och identitetshandlingar (version 2.0), 25.02.2020, p. 13. https://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentSummaryId=44055 (01.05.2025); confidential source dated 18 June 2025.

For an overview of the various document application procedures, see the chart below.



Source: UNHCR, *Legal identity and civil documentation in Afghanistan*, May 2024, p. 7.

2.3 Identification documents

2.3.1 Tazkera

Tazkeras are Afghanistan's ID documents. There are paper *tazkeras* and *e-tazkeras*, the latter of which contain a chip. From the age of 18, citizens can apply for a *tazkera* independently; before that, it must be applied for by a guardian or parent. According to one source, this person must be male.[152][153] Children require their father's *tazkera* to apply for a *tazkera* of their own. *Tazkeras* can be obtained from NSIA offices; *e-tazkeras* can be obtained mainly in larger cities, from NSIA[154] offices and – in Kabul, Khost and Kandahar – from Asan Khedmat offices.[155] Women can apply for a *tazkera* themselves. In practice, however, they need a companion (*mahram*) to venture out in public beyond the immediate vicinity of their home (see Section 3.1.7.3), and some husbands do not allow their wives to submit an application, as this may require interaction with a male official. Moreover, some husbands believe that their wives do not require a *tazkera*, as their *mahrams* can represent them in interactions outside the home and identify themselves. If a parent applies for a *tazkera* for a minor, the consent of both parents is required.[156]

[152] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[153] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[154] National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA).
[155] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 39; confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[156] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 44; confidential source dated 29 September 2025.

It is not known to what extent the above provisions are deviated from in practice. For more information about the *mahram* requirement, see also Section 3.1.7.3 on the Freedom of movement of women.

According to IOM, paper *tazkeras* cost AFN 100 and *e-tazkeras* cost AFN 300[157], which many Afghans could not afford.[158]

2.3.1.1 Paper *tazkera*

Paper *tazkeras* have been valid for ten years since around 2023. Before then, their validity was unlimited, and old *tazkeras* with unlimited validity are usually still recognised by the df authorities.[159] Paper *tazkeras* are printed in colour. The black-and-white version was still widely issued between 2001 and 2018; since 2018 – following the introduction of the colour *tazkera* – it has only been issued in more remote areas. While the black-and-white version was still being issued after 2021, the NSIA reports that this was no longer the case in 2025.[160]

In the summer of 2021, after the Taliban seized power, the issuance of paper *tazkeras* was briefly restricted or suspended. Since then, they have mainly been issued outside cities and in more remote areas.[161] In areas where the necessary systems were in place, the df authorities favoured issuing *e-tazkeras*.[162]

2.3.1.2 *E-tazkera*

E-tazkeras have also been valid for ten years since around 2021. Children must apply for a new *e-tazkera* at the age of seven to have a photograph inserted, and at the age of 18 to have biometric data inserted.[163]

2.3.2 Passport

Afghanistan has had machine-readable passports since 2012, which overlapped with the issuance of handwritten, non-machine-readable passports until 2015. The latter were declared invalid after November 2017. After seizing power, the Taliban did not alter the design of Afghan passports, which means that newly issued passports still feature the name 'Islamic Republic of Afghanistan' and the flag of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.[164] For a description of the passport and the application procedure, see the previous COI Report.[165]

Passports are issued by the df Ministry of Interior Affairs in Kabul, by passport departments in provincial capitals and by certain diplomatic missions abroad. Passports applied for in Iran and Pakistan are printed in Kabul, which is also listed as the place of issue. However, unlike the passports applied for in Afghanistan, these passports list the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the issuing authority.[166]

The applicable fees for passports issued in Afghanistan varied from province to province, but were typically around AFN 5,000 or AFN 10,000 for five- and ten-year

[157] EUR 1.30 and EUR 3.90, respectively, according to xe.converter on 15 October 2025.
[158] IOM, *Documentation and Legal Identification in Afghanistan*, August 2023, p. 12.
[159] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 28; IOM Afghanistan, *Kabul. Documentation and Legal Identification in Afghanistan*, p. 12.
[160] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 28.
[161] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 31.
[162] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[163] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[164] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 14.
[165] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023, p. 57.
[166] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 41.

passports, respectively. Lower fees applied to children under the age of 14.[167] The fees for passports issued abroad are discussed in the next section. Since March 2023, passport availability has improved markedly, and procedures have become less time-consuming.[168]

Passports list the number of the *tazkera* used for the application.[169]

2.3.3 Applications from abroad

Cooperation between Afghan diplomatic missions abroad and the df authorities in Kabul in terms of consular services and Taliban recognition of issued documents was subject to developments after the takeover in 2021. Documents issued by Afghan diplomatic missions abroad were generally accepted by the Taliban, but this varied by mission. Whether or not Afghanistan's df authorities recognised passports and *tazkeras* issued abroad depended on the presence of Taliban members at the issuing diplomatic missions and the missions' cooperation with the df authorities. See also Section 1.1.2 and below for document-specific information. On 30 July 2024, the df authorities in Afghanistan suspended cooperation with the consular departments of many Afghan diplomatic missions abroad. These missions had no Taliban staff and/or did not cooperate with the df authorities. Afghanistan's df authorities therefore announced that they would no longer recognise the validity of documents issued by these missions. At the time, this affected Afghan missions in the following countries: the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany (Berlin and Bonn), Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy, Greece, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Canada and Australia.[170] This list of countries has since been subject to change.

During the reporting period, the Taliban sought to improve cooperation with host countries to facilitate consular services to Afghan nationals in those countries. In July 2025, for instance, it was announced that Germany would allow two Taliban consular staff to travel to Germany for the first time since the takeover, to work in Afghanistan's consular departments. According to the German government, this development was related to the expulsion of 81 Afghan nationals in July 2025.[171] A confidential source reported that the documents issued by Afghan diplomatic missions in Germany – in Bonn, Berlin and Munich – have since been recognised again by the df authorities. The services offered by these missions were only available to Afghan nationals residing in Germany.[172] During the first half of 2025, the df authorities controlled the diplomatic missions in China, Kazakhstan, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, the UAE, Oman, India and Uzbekistan. The missions in the UAE, Uzbekistan, Türkiye, Russia and Pakistan had ambassadors appointed by the Taliban and recognised by the host countries.[173] On 24 May 2025, the Afghan embassy in Iran announced a temporary

[167] EUR 64 and EUR 128, respectively, according to xe.converter on 23 July 2025. See Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 15; confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[168] EUR 64 and EUR 128, respectively, according to xe.converter on 23 July 2025. See Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 15.
[169] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[170] Announcement by the df Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Notice of IEA-MoFA for all Afghan Nationals residing in European countries*", dated 30 July 2024, https://www.alemarahenglish.af/notice-of-iea-mofa-for-all-afghan-nationals-residing-in-european-countries/; LA Times, *The Taliban disavows many Afghan diplomatic missions abroad*, 30 July 2024; AP, *The Taliban say they no longer recognise Afghan diplomatic missions set up by former government*, 30 July 2024.
[171] Die Zeit, *Bund lässt Mitarbeiter der Taliban-Regierung nach Deutschland*, 21 July 2025; Die Zeit, *Rückkehr ins Nichts*, 18 July 2025.
[172] Confidential source dated 22 July 2025.
[173] De facto Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs on X, dated 23 July 2025.

suspension of consular services via its X account. The embassy urged Afghan nationals living in Iran not to visit the consulate until further notice. No official reason was given for the sudden suspension.[174] In early 2025, Norway granted a one-year diplomatic residence permit to Najibullah Sherkhan, a Taliban envoy, and recognised him as the first secretary of the Afghan embassy in Oslo. According to the Taliban's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, consular services for Afghan nationals in Norway officially resumed on 24 March 2025.[175]

A number of Afghan diplomatic missions were not staffed by Taliban-appointed personnel but did cooperate with the df authorities. In May 2025, for instance, the df Afghan diplomatic missions in Bulgaria, Spain and the Czech Republic cooperated with the df authorities in Kabul.[176] The diplomatic mission in the Netherlands also cooperated with the df authorities during the reporting period, which meant that documents issued by this mission were recognised as valid.[177] In May 2025, Norway recognised the Taliban's appointment of a new representative to the consular section of the Afghan diplomatic mission, making consular services available again.[178]

The following sections discuss the issuance of *tazkeras* and passports abroad.

2.3.3.1 *Tazkeras*

In the past, *tazkeras* could be applied for at, and issued by, Afghan diplomatic missions abroad. The issuing authority was the NSIA. After the coup in August 2021, it was no longer possible to apply for a *tazkera* through Afghan diplomatic missions abroad, but *tazkeras* were still issued for applications that had already been approved.[179] During the reporting period, the df authorities made efforts to make *tazkeras* – now featuring the new emblem of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan – available again to Afghan nationals abroad. The Afghan diplomatic mission in Iran, for instance, began issuing *tazkeras* again in mid-2025.[180] While *tazkeras* were not yet available in Pakistan in the summer of 2025, the aim was to resume issuance within six months.[181]

Nothing was known about the issuance of *tazkeras* by the Afghan diplomatic mission in the Netherlands.

2.3.3.2 Passports

The application fees for an Afghan passport at a diplomatic mission abroad have risen to 120 USD for a five-year passport and 240 USD for a ten-year passport.[182]

Netherlands

Passport applications can be submitted to the Afghan diplomatic mission in the Netherlands. Although the embassy does not offer online appointments and cannot

[174] Khaama Press, *Afghanistan Embassy in Tehran suspends consular services*, 24 May 2025.
[175] Afghanistan International, *Norwegian Diplomat Advises Taliban On Strengthening Ties With Europe, Group Claims*, 17 April 2025.
[176] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 12.
[177] Confidential source dated 1 October 2025.
[178] Confidential source dated 23 June 2025; Afghanistan International, *Norway Accepts Taliban Diplomat, Consular Services To Resume At Afghan Embassy In Oslo*, 22 March 2025.
[179] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 48.
[180] Confidential source dated 1 July 2025.
[181] Confidential source dated 1 July 2025.
[182] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 12.

be reached by phone, applications can be submitted in person. Applications are forwarded to Kabul, where the passports are produced before being sent to the Netherlands for issuance. This process takes several weeks. To apply for a passport, applicants require:

- an Afghan national *tazkera*, legalised and translated if necessary; or
- an electronic national *tazkera*; or
- if the applicant does not have a *tazkera*, a birth certificate that serves as a substitute for the *tazkera*. This birth certificate can be requested from the diplomatic mission abroad;[183] or
- an Afghan biometric passport.[184]

Passports issued by the diplomatic mission in the Netherlands are recognised by the df authorities in Afghanistan[185] and still bear the emblem of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.[186] Some passports issued abroad are stamped with the name 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan', others with the 'Islamic Republic of Afghanistan'.[187]

Extension

The Afghan diplomatic mission in the Netherlands will issue passport renewal stickers for renewal applications made in the last year of a passport's validity, before it expires. Until the summer of 2024, there were two types of renewal stickers in circulation: the old one featuring a QR code and a new version. From autumn 2024, only the stickers without QR codes were placed in passports. Passports are valid for five years from the date of renewal, regardless of their previous validity.[188]

Pakistan

Passport applicants must make an appointment online and report in person to the Afghan diplomatic mission in Pakistan. To apply for a passport, applicants require:

- an original *tazkera*;
- Afghan children born in Pakistan must apply for a passport at the Afghan diplomatic mission in Pakistan with a birth document from a hospital or UNHCR, which must have been legalised by the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While they do not require a *tazkera* to apply for a passport, they do require the *tazkera* of one of their parents, generally the father.[189]

According to two sources, there were no more problems in issuing passports in Pakistan during the reporting period; since 2021, 100,000 passports have been issued in the country.[190]

Türkiye

[183] Confidential source dated 1 October 2025.
[184] See the website of the Afghan diplomatic mission in The Hague, accessed 18 July 2025: https://www.afghanistanembassy.nl/passport/.
[185] Announcement by the df Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs "*Notice of IEA-MoFA for all Afghan Nationals residing in European countries*", dated 30 July 2024, https://www.alemarahenglish.af/notice-of-iea-mofa-for-all-afghan-nationals-residing-in-european-countries/; LA Times, *The Taliban disavows many Afghan diplomatic missions abroad*, 30 July 2024; AP, *The Taliban say they no longer recognise Afghan diplomatic missions set up by former government*, 30 July 2024; confidential source dated 1 October 2025.
[186] Confidential source dated 1 October 2025.
[187] Migrationsverket, Norrköping. Afghanistan: Identitetshandlingar, 16.12.2024, p. 14. https://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentSummaryId=48908
[188] Confidential source dated 1 October 2025. Please note that the Netherlands does not recognise the validity of extensions beyond ten years.
[189] Website of the Afghan diplomatic mission in Pakistan, accessed 23 July 2025.
[190] Confidential source dated 1 July 2025; confidential source dated 22 July 2025.

In June 2025, the Afghan diplomatic mission in Ankara, Türkiye, resumed issuing passports to Afghan nationals residing in Türkiye for the first time since the Taliban seized power. Applicant require a *tazkera* that has been legalised by the Afghan embassy.[191] Afghan nationals without a valid travel document or residence in Türkiye can obtain a written laissez-passer with a colour photograph and personal details. These documents are valid for 30 days and state the reason for return. The source who reported this noted that the reason given on the laissez-passers of Afghan nationals in immigration detention was 'voluntary'. The documents contained text in Turkish, English and Farsi. According to this source, the Afghan diplomatic mission in Ankara is working with the Turkish authorities to support the issuance of documents in order to facilitate the deportation of Afghan migrants.[192]

2.4 Civil documents

Civil documents such as birth, death and marriage certificates were not always issued under the Taliban. The National Statistics and Intelligence Agency (NSIA) has been responsible for citizen registration since November 2018. The NSIA was established in November 2018 through the merger of ACCRA and the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Within the NSIA, the General Directorate of Civil Registration is responsible for registering personal details and issuing documents. This directorate is still occasionally referred to as the Population Registration Department (PRD). According to one source, the NSIA was not made responsible for issuing paper *tazkeras*, *e-tazkeras* and birth certificates until July 2021. The PRD and ACCRA continued to issue documents until 2023, presumably to use up existing stocks.[193]

Besides the offices of the df Ministry of Internal Affairs, there are also so-called Asan Khedmat offices (literally: Simple Assistance). These are NSIA service desks, intended to provide Afghans with quick and easy access to government services. Asan Khedmat offices can issue the following documents on behalf of the NSIA:

- *e-tazkeras*;
- birth certificates;
- death certificates.

Although these documents can be obtained much more quickly and easily through Asan Khedmat offices than from population registration centres, the former charge AFN 200[194] more. The consular department of the df Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also present at the Asan Khedmat office in Kabul, meaning that documents can be legalised there. In total, there are eleven Asan Khedmat offices, including four in Kabul, one in Kandahar and one in Khost, and four in neighbouring countries. The offices in Kabul receive around 2,000 applicants each day. The Afghan df authorities are planning to open additional offices (in Jalalabad, Lashkargah, Mazar-i Sharif and Herat) and offer additional services (passport, marriage certificate, education certificate and driving licence applications).[195]

[191] AFG Embassy Türkiye on X: "کره پیل پیرته لرې ویش د پاسپورټ د ته وګرو افغان وروسته خنډ کلونو ځلورو له سفارت ا .ا .ا د کې ترکیه په. https://t.co/bdnhjZtt8T" / X dated 13 June 2025; confidential source dated 17 October 2025.
[192] Confidential source dated 23 October 2025.
[193] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan: Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, 20 May 2025.
[194] EUR 2.60 according to xe.com on 10 October.
[195] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan: Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, 20 May 2025; TOLOnews, *NSIA Annual Report: Progress in IDs and Vital Records*, 30 July 2025.

Marriage certificates

Marriages (*nikah*) are performed by Islamic clerics (*mullahs*) who are authorised to do so by the government. Marriage contracts between two families (*nikanameh*) are rarely registered with the authorities, but signed by a council of elders and kept by both families.[196] To obtain an official marriage certificate, couples can go to court together to have their marriage contract validated and apply for a green or white marriage booklet. This booklet contains photos of the bride, the groom and two witnesses.[197] Another type of marriage certificate is the *wasiqa khat*, which is often applied for some time after the wedding. If one or both spouses are unable to apply for a *wasiqa khat* in person, an authorised lawyer can submit the application on their behalf, supported by five witnesses. This white document has a blue or grey border, contains photos of the bride, the groom and five witnesses, and is stamped by the Supreme Court.[198] Both marriage booklets and *wasiqa khats* can be issued by courts in Afghanistan and diplomatic missions abroad, among other institutions.[199]

Birth certificates

Although it is possible to register births in Afghanistan, this is not standard practice. Consequently, people often do not know exactly how old they are, and someone's official age is considered less important than in Western cultures. In 2015, around 42% of births in Afghanistan were registered.[200] According to UNICEF, an average of 47.8% of Afghan children under the age of five were registered in 2022 and 2023. In Ghazni, the percentage was 21.2%, in Uruzgan 6.3% and in Bamyan 94.4%.[201]

Both the NSIA and hospitals can issue birth certificates.[202] Hospitals are required to issue a birth certificate. If a child was not born in hospital, the parents can obtain a birth certificate from the NSIA by providing a village elder's testimony and their *tazkeras*.[203] The government is making efforts to increase the issuance of birth certificates by establishing Asan Khedmat offices (see above).

There are two types of birth certificates: the small *kart-i tawalod* without a photo, and the larger birth registration card with a photo, which may vary in design. The *kart-i tawalod* is used to register newborns, whereas the birth registration card can be applied for retroactively by persons born before the start of birth registration in 2014.[204]

Diplomatic missions abroad can also issue birth certificates to people born in Afghanistan. This requires an interview at the mission, a central database check through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a minimum of two witnesses; if the witnesses are female, the required number doubles.[205]

[196] ODI, ODI Report, p. 10; confidential source dated 18 June 2025; UK Government website, Afghanistan: Knowledge Base profile, accessed 23 July 2025.
[197] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025; website of the US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Afghanistan, accessed 23 July 2025.
[198] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025; Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan: Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, 20 May 2025, pp. 64 et seq.
[199] Website of the US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Afghanistan, accessed 23 July 2025.
[200] UNHCR, *Document - Legal documentation and civil registration in Afghanistan*, 20 November 2024; confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[201] UNICEF, *Multiple indicator cluster service 2022-2023*, p. 53.
[202] Website of the US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Afghanistan, accessed 23 July 2025.
[203] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[204] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023, p. 62; Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan: Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, 20 May 2025.
[205] Confidential source dated 1 July 2025.

2.5 Document fraud

There are two types of 'fraudulent' documents. The first type are genuine forgeries: fake documents created by forgers using materials different to those used for real documents. The second type are real documents obtained illegally or fraudulently, through corruption or nepotism, from the authorities actually officially responsible for issuing them. Since these documents are made from the correct materials, they are practically indistinguishable from legitimately obtained documents. Both types were common in Afghanistan.[206]

There was little change regarding this issue during the reporting period compared to the previous COI Report.[207] Passports did become much easier to obtain, however, which is said to have reduced black market demand (see Section 2.3.2. The Taliban also made efforts to reduce corruption and prevent document fraud. According to media reports, the replacement of experienced staff with Taliban personnel resulted in documents containing spelling errors due to illiteracy.[208] The designs and printing techniques used to create black-and-white paper *tazkeras* were not standardised and varied by region, and the stamps used cannot be verified because of the large number of competent authorities (including local authorities). This means that these documents are easy to forge, and in most cases it is difficult to verify their authenticity.[209]

2.6 Databases

Biometric data
There is no central population register for all of Afghanistan. The following registers exist:[210]

- The paper *tazkera* register, in which each family is assigned a number that corresponds to their *tazkera* numbers. Although 95% of the register has been digitised, it cannot be accessed by authorities outside Kabul.
- *E-tazkeras* are recorded in a separate database that also includes biometric data. According to one source, the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) can also access this database. It is said that a link between this system and the passport database was established in 2025.
- Hospitals and local Internal Affairs offices submit data on births and deaths to local and provincial NSIA offices, which record this information and forward it to the central NSIA. The central NSIA then enters the data into a central digital register. There are said to be significant gaps in Afghanistan's birth records.[211] When a birth certificate is issued by a diplomatic mission abroad, it must be entered into a central database in Kabul. It is not known whether, and if so, which missions actually do this.[212]
- Since the introduction of machine-readable passports, there have been two digital passport databases: one for the issued passports and one for the

[206] CEDOCA, *Afghanistan. Corruptie en documentenfraude*, 13 September 2024.
[207] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023.
[208] Hasht-e Subh Daily, *Fighters Replacing Civil Servants: Paktika Residents Lodge Complaints of Taliban's 'Incompetence and Illiteracy'*, 31 March 2024; Hasht-e Subh Daily, *Bribery And Coercion In Herat Province: Residents Fed Up With Incompetence And Ignorance Of The Taliban - Hasht-e Subh*, 11 July 2024.
[209] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan: Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, 20 May 2025, p. 98.
[210] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan: Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, 20 May 2025.
[211] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan: Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, 20 May 2025.
[212] Confidential source dated 1 July 2025.

recorded biometric data. Passport offices in all provinces are said to have access to these databases.[213]

[213] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023, p. 62.

3 Human rights

According to EUAA, the human rights situation in Afghanistan gradually deteriorated during the reporting period, with the df authorities seeking to establish a theocratic police state characterised by an atmosphere of fear and violence.[214] The Taliban imposed far-reaching restrictions, the active enforcement of which led to fear as well as increasing self-censorship and compliance. The Taliban appeared to be committed to bringing about fundamental changes to Afghan society, primarily through the 'morality law' and educational reforms.
The arbitrary implementation of rules created significant uncertainty, but also presented opportunities for NGOs and media organisations that knew how to liaise with local df authorities, or that could align their activities with the df authorities' key objectives, such as improving healthcare and quality of life.[215]

3.1 Position of specific groups

When determining the risks faced by individuals belonging to the groups referred to in Sections 3.1.1. to 3.1.10, the following should be taken into account. The security of certain groups during the reporting period was partly determined by their place in society (see next paragraph) and the unpredictability of the authorities. According to a UNAMA report published in July 2025, the following groups are the most vulnerable: social activists; journalists (see Section 3.1.4); former government employees and security forces (see Section 3.1.1); and women and girls (see Section 3.1.7)[216]. UNHCR's September 2025 Guidance Note on Afghanistan lists the following groups as being particularly vulnerable: women and girls; Afghans with ties to the previous government; security forces or allies; journalists and other media workers; persons accused of criticising the df authorities; members of ethnic and religious minorities; members of the LGBTIQ+ community; and victims of human trafficking.[217] According to UNHCR, these groups are likely or potentially in need of international protection, depending in part on their individual situations.[218]

During the reporting period, the power structures in Afghanistan were diffuse and diverse, and only partly managed by the country's central authority. In Afghan society, an individual is first and foremost part of a collective. This community is where the individual's primary loyalty lies, but it also offers protection. An individual's security thus depends not only on their position within a particular community, but also – more importantly – on the position of their community as a whole; while belonging to a community can offer protection, it can also pose a threat. In addition, there may also be individual conflicts, which can be resolved by exploiting the dynamics between communities. During the reporting period, relevant communities within Afghan society included:[219]

- Autocratically controlled Taliban sub-groups, df authorities or armed opposition groups

[214] EUAA, Country Focus Afghanistan, December 2023, 1.2, p. 21.
[215] Confidential source dated 19 May 2025; confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[216] OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025.
[217] UNHCR, *Guidance note on Afghanistan – Update II*, September 2025.
[218] UNHCR, *Guidance note on Afghanistan – Update II*, September 2025.
[219] Confidential source dated 15 May 2025; Routledge, Timor Sharan, *Inside Afghanistan, Political Networks, Informal Order, and State Disruption*, 2023.

- Ethnic communities
- Religious communities
- Tribal communities
- Families
- Language communities.
- Communities based on personal connections (solidarity (*waseta*) and reciprocity (*andewali*) are strong unifying factors in Afghan culture) and rivalries.

The influence and cohesion of the above communities were determined by factors such as political power, financial clout, the threat of violence, local community support, and the strength of ideological or political beliefs.[220]

Individual livelihood security, the risk of Taliban repression and security were determined by belonging or having access to influential communities. For example, the ability to speak the same language as a police officer at a checkpoint could help to ensure one's safety.[221] Similarly, having the support of the local community or a personal relationship with a local Taliban leader could act as a shield against Taliban repression, even if one did not follow the Taliban's precepts.[222] Conversely, a rivalry with another tribe could lead to insecurity.[223] Given the above, local risks could be affected by conflicts, such as new rivalries between different tribes[224], or by shifting power relations, such as a loss of access to the df authorities.[225]

Unpredictability of authorities
The Taliban recognised the importance of local communities, and although they promoted – and, in some cases, strictly enforced – their laws, they also took into account the local power dynamics outlined above. During the reporting period, the enforcement of policies and regulations was unpredictable for the following reasons:

- Local power dynamics between the aforementioned different groups affected the Taliban's enforcement.[226]
- Local cultural differences between different provinces: in the more traditional Pashtun-populated provinces – such as Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul – strict precepts were already part of the culture, enabling strict enforcement by the Taliban. Meanwhile, in eastern Kabul and Hazara-dominated provinces – such as Bamyan – enforcement was more relaxed in order to avoid inciting local community revolts.
- The df authorities operated in an unpredictable manner partly due to different interpretations of decrees issued by the df central government, and the influence of local contexts and stakeholders.[227] There were also different interpretations of Sharia law, and the absence of a formal legal framework caused uncertainty among the population regarding which laws applied. While the Taliban did issue various instructions in the form of decrees and general directives, only some of these were made available in writing.

[220] Routledge, Timor Sharan, *Inside Afghanistan, Political Networks, Informal Order, and State Disruption*, 2023;
[221] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[222] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[223] 'Goede Gesprekken' podcast with Bette Dam, dated 23 August 2021, minute 34.
[224] Confidential source dated 15 May 2025; confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[225] Confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[226] EUAA, Country Focus Afghanistan, December 2023, 1.1.1., p. 18; 1.1.2., p. 19; 1.2.2., p. 24; 4.12.1., p. 101.
[227] EUAA, Country Focus Afghanistan, December 2023, 1.1.1., p. 18; 1.1.2., p. 19; 1.2.2., p. 24; 4.12.1., p. 101.

Moreover, these instructions were often vaguely worded, allowing for different interpretations.[228] See also the section on legislation (3.3.1).
- Although the highest authority lay with the supreme leader, the Taliban previously left many decisions to local military commanders. Consequently, the organisation's hierarchy remains fragmented, resulting in regional differences in policy. For instance, no clear stance was taken on issues such as violent attacks and suicide bombings.[229]
- Multiple sources reported that the actions of local Taliban groups did not align with their external messaging, and that the actual enforcement of policies and legislation did not reflect the image presented to the international community or, on the contrary, to other Taliban groups.[230]
- Internal disagreements within the Taliban and the lack of clear messaging from Taliban leaders to the outside world could also create unpredictability. For example, leaders in some provinces turned a blind eye to the existence of schools for girls and did respect women's freedom of movement, with or without a *mahram*.[231]

3.1.1 Former Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officials

During their advance in the summer of 2021, the Taliban allegedly killed dozens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF)[232] following their surrender, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW).[233] UNAMA recorded 800 cases of human rights violations against former ANDSF members in the period between 15 August 2021 and 30 June 2023, including extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, ill-treatment and threats.[234] After the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, the df authorities announced a general amnesty for all former government officials and former ANDSF members.[235] According to a Taliban spokesperson in Kandahar, Zabihullah Mujahid, this general amnesty was in full force for both civilian and non-civilian former ANDSF personnel.[236] Once in power, the Taliban called on former security forces to register and surrender their weapons in exchange for a letter of protection. However, HRW claimed that these registrations were abused, and that some people were found murdered shortly after registering their weapons. Some former security forces who failed to register their weapons reportedly faced punishment, including floggings and arrests.[237]

In the four years since the takeover of power, senior df officials repeatedly expressed their commitment to the amnesty, insisting that it was being enforced by

[228] EUAA, Country Focus Afghanistan, December 2023, 1.2.1., p. 21-22.
[229] UKRI, *A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms - Afghanistan*, June 2022; UK Government, Visas and Immigration, *Country policy and information note: fear of the Taliban, Afghanistan*, Augusts 2025, updated 4 November 2025.
[230] UKRI, *A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms - Afghanistan*, June 2022, p. 53; confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[231] EUAA, Country Focus Afghanistan, December 2023, 1.2, p. 21-22; confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[232] The Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), consisting of the Afghan National Army (ANA), including the air force, the border authorities and special forces; the Afghan National Police (ANP), including local police and drug enforcement; the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the former security service and predecessor of the current General Directorate for Intelligence (GDI).
[233] HRW, *No Forgiveness for People Like You*, November 2021; Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Situation ehemaliger Sicherheitskräfte*, October 2024.
[234] UNAMA, *A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan*, 15 August 2021 – 30 June 2023, p. 5.
[235] UNAMA, *A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan*, 15 August 2021 – 30 June 2023.
[236] Confidential source dated 18 July 2025.
[237] HRW, *No Forgiveness for People Like You*, November 2021; Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Situation ehemaliger Sicherheitskräfte*, October 2024.

all Taliban members, that violations were investigated and that those responsible were punished.[238] In addition, several Taliban representatives repeatedly confirmed that the amnesty for Afghans who had previously worked for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and/or security forces also applied to all returnees.[239] Cases where returnees were allegedly detained or threatened were said to be incidents that would be investigated internally.[240] One source confirmed that the Taliban generally left former government employees alone, as long as they abided by the rules of the df authorities, refrained from criticising the Taliban and did not join armed groups fighting the Taliban, or were not suspected of doing so.[241]

This declaration of amnesty did not align with the Taliban's narrative about fallen Taliban fighters during the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The df authorities propagated an image of Western troops in Afghanistan as the enemy, meaning that former government employees who aided foreign militaries in the fight against the Taliban were seen as collaborators.[242] Meanwhile, Taliban members who died during this struggle were praised as martyrs who should be remembered.[243] This narrative was to be disseminated through state television and print media, with coverage focusing on the civilians killed by foreign troops and the previous government, as well as the Taliban's combat efforts against US and NATO forces. There were also profiles of Taliban leaders and fighters.[244] EUAA sources noted that revenge is a common phenomenon in Afghan culture.[245] During the violent clashes with Western troops, the ANDSF and Afghan anti-Taliban fighters, the Taliban also suffered thousands of deadly casualties between 2001 and 2021.[246] Many former government employees and ANDSF members were known to the Taliban, either through personal combat contact, or government personnel records, and were thus vulnerable to reprisals.[247] The extent to which such reprisals actually occurred is discussed below. Belonging to certain ethnic or religious communities also played a role in these reprisals (see Section 3.1).

3.1.1.1 Commission for Contact with Afghan Personalities

The df authorities were pushing for the return of senior government officials and other employees who have fled abroad, among others, through the so-called Commission for Contact with Afghan Personalities. This commission claims that, between its establishment in April 2022 and August 2024, around 1,000 former senior officials returned to Afghanistan. During the reporting period, former high-ranking government officials and politicians continued to receive so-called safety cards, supposedly confirming their amnesty and safety upon return.[248] According to two sources, the promised amnesty was largely effective, with many former high-

[238] OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025, p. 9; Bakhtar News Agency, *Interior Minister Engages with Kapisa Leadership and Community Members*, 26 June 2025; The Hindu, *A top Taliban official offers amnesty to Afghans who fled the country and urges them to return*, 7 June 2025.
[239] RFERL, *UK Data Leak Spurs Costly Afghan Resettlement And Security Fears*, 24 July 2025; confidential source dated 31 July 2025.
[240] Confidential source dated 31 July 2025.
[241] Confidential source dated 14 July 2025.
[242] Confidential source dated 9 September 2025.
[243] Df Ministry of Interior Affairs on X, dated 26 June 2025.
[244] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *Taliban Narratives (2) TV documentaries: The Emirate disseminates its history to the masses*, 25 May 2025, and *Taliban Narratives (1) Books: "Who we are and why we fought"*, 16 March 2025.
[245] EUAA, *Afghanistan Country Focus*, November 2024, p. 88; confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[246] Watson School of International and Public Affairs, *Human Cost of Post-9/11 Wars*, March 2023, accessed 29 July 2025; TOLOnews, *NDS Chief Says Taliban Under Pressure on Battlefields*, 29 May 2021.
[247] ACLED, *Two Years of Repression: Mapping Taliban Violence Targeting Civilians in Afghanistan*, 11 August 2023; HRW, *No Forgiveness for People Like You*, November 2021.
[248] Pajhwok Afghan News, *Around 30 ex-officials granted safety cards in Kabul*, 8 July 2025; TOLOnews, *952 Ex-Officials Return to Afghanistan Via Contact Commission*, 20 August 2024.

ranking figures living in Afghanistan without any problems, as long as they expressed solidarity with the Taliban and renounced the beliefs they held during the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.[249] However, various media outlets and UNAMA also reported cases where these returnees were threatened, arrested and mistreated, despite having safety cards.[250]

3.1.1.2 Types of violence

Despite the amnesty and statements of support for it made by the df authorities, UNAMA has noted credible reports of human rights violations – including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary[251] arrests, detentions, torture and ill-treatment – carried out by groups within the Taliban against former government officials and ANDSF members. According to UNAMA, there is limited information regarding efforts by the df authorities to conduct investigations and hold perpetrators of these human rights violations accountable.[252] The UN has called the ongoing violence against former government employees and ANDSF members 'deeply troubling'.[253]

3.1.1.3 Causes of violence

The aforementioned violent actions against former government employees appeared not to be the result of a nationwide policy instituted by the df authorities to persecute these individuals. Rather, they were individual reprisals, carried out by groups within the Taliban, that were neither authorised nor actively punished. The Taliban claimed that instances of violence against former government employees were the result of individual acts of revenge, but generally made no effort to track down the perpetrators.[254] According to one source, however, this was disinformation spread by the df authorities to disguise the fact that these attacks were indeed being carried out by groups within the Taliban.[255] The NGO Rawadari noted that the Taliban presented these actions as personal revenge killings, but that there were no criminal prosecutions. It also claimed that the df authorities pressured the media and hospitals not to report on these cases.[256] According to critical Afghan media abroad ('diaspora media'), df interior minister Haqqani acknowledged that a group within the Taliban may be responsible for these reprisals.[257] While some violence against former government officials was related to their previous collaboration with foreign forces, other incidents involved extortion[258] and personal conflicts.[259]

3.1.1.4 Characteristics: ethnicity, region, occupational group and rank

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[249] Confidential source dated 3 June 2025; confidential source dated 17 June 2025; confidential source dated 14 July 2025.
[250] Afghanistan International, *Former Official Who Returned to Afghanistan at Taliban's Invitation Forced to Flee Again*, 16 May 2024; UNAMA, *A barrier to securing peace*, August 2023; OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025.
[251] Where this official report refers to arbitrary arrests, it follows the UN Human Rights Committee definition: 'elements of inappropriateness, injustice, lack of predictability and due process of law, as well as lack of elements of reasonableness, necessity and proportionality'. *General comment no. 35 on Article 9* (Liberty and security of person), 16 December 2014, CCPR/C/GC/35. *Arbitrary* has also been defined by Amnesty International as 'without legitimate cause or without legal process', see Woordenlijst mensenrechten in China - Amnesty International.
[252] OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025, p. 9.
[253] Report of the UN Secretary-General, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/79/947, June 2025, no. 74.
[254] UNAMA, *Impunity prevails for human rights violations against former government officials and armed force members*, 22 August 2023.
[255] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[256] Rawadari, *Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024*, pp. 11 and 13.
[257] Afghanistan International, *Haqqani Acknowledges Possible Taliban Retaliation Against Former Afghan Officials*, 26 June 2025.
[258] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[259] HRW, *Double Betrayal, Abuses against Afghan Policewomen, Past and Present*, 10 October 2024; confidential source dated 9 September 2025.

Ethnicity

As in Afghan society at large, ethnicity also plays a role when it comes to former officials. One source reported that former security service personnel of certain ethnicities – particularly Hazaras and ethnic Uzbeks – generally experienced risks based on their ethnicity, in addition to the risks associated with their professional history.[260] However, no quantitative data is available on this. See also Section 3.1.5 for more on ethnic groups.

Region

In some cases, former officials' safety was affected by their place of residence. According to one source, there was anecdotal evidence that Tajik ethnicity and roots in the Panjshir Valley in particular, combined with former membership of the security services, could indicate affiliation with an armed opposition group such as the NRF or the AFF. Consequently, this could result in poor treatment or violence at the hands of the Taliban. However, this source also reported that there was no systematic persecution.[261] See also Section 1.2.4.4 for more on the NRF, Section 1.2.4.5 for more on the AFF and Section 3.1.5.3 for more on the Tajiks.

In August 2023 UNAMA report documented human rights violations against former government officials and former members of the ANDSF between 15 August 2021 and 30 June 2023. Violations were recorded in all 34 provinces, with the majority occurring in Kabul, Kandahar and Balkh provinces. While the report notes that the above groups were threatened in all provinces, it seems that some areas experienced more targeted violence. UNAMA documented at least 33 human rights violations against former ANP members in Kandahar (accounting for more than a quarter of all such violations nationwide), as well as at least 11 cases of human rights violations in Khost against former Khost Protection Force (KPF) members, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and ill-treatment.[262]

Occupational group

[260] Confidential source dated 23 September 2025.
[261] Confidential source dated 23 September 2025.
[262] Österreichisches Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, Länderinformationen der Staatendokumentation Afghanistan, Version 12, 31 January 2025, p. 132; UNAMA, *A Barrier To Securing Peace: Human Rights Violations Against Former Government Officials And Former Armed Force Members in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021 – 30 June 2023*, August 2023.

Source: UNAMA, *A Barrier To Securing Peace: Human Rights Violations Against Former Government Officials And Former Armed Force Members in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021 – 30 June 2023*, August 2023.
Note: the percentage of incidents by professional group is not measured against the size of the relevant professional group, but against the total number of incidents. Small occupational groups may therefore appear underrepresented, whereas large occupational groups may appear overrepresented.
Note: The above percentages relate to incidents in the previous reporting period and serve only to indicate a trend, not to indicate absolute numbers.

An EUAA source and a report from the German *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (BAMF) both emphasised that it was not possible to identify patterns in the profiles of former government employees who experienced violence; like other groups, they too depend heavily on various local power structures for their safety.[263] The incidents referred to in Section 3.1.1.6 are thus mentioned for illustrative purposes, as are the numbers available on these incidents and their characteristics. Due to underreporting, it is not possible to paint a comprehensive overall picture that can be applied to each individual situation. However, multiple sources noted that the motives behind violent actions – such as revenge for previous violence against or arrests of Taliban members, and cooperation with foreign powers – make former members of the ANDSF and other armed government forces especially vulnerable to violence.[264] This group of people is therefore highly concerned about their safety.[265] According to the BAMF, people who had established working relationships with foreign troops, including those who cooperated only informally or for a short period of time, were especially at risk.[266]

[263] EUAA, *Afghanistan Country Focus*, November 2024, p. 89; Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Situation ehemaliger Sicherheitskräfte*, October 2024, p. 2.
[264] UNAMA, *A Barrier To Securing Peace: Human Rights Violations Against Former Government Officials And Former Armed Force Members in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021 – 30 June 2023*, August 2023; Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, *Situation ehemaliger Sicherheitskräfte*, October 2024; HRW, *Pakistan: Forced Returns Expose Afghans to Persecution, Destitution*, 19 March 2025; confidential source dated 19 June 2025; confidential source dated 9 September 2025.
[265] See, for example, CNN, *Afghan pilots who fought in 20-year war against Taliban in limbo after Trump blocks US resettlement plans*, 28 March 2025.
[266] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Situation ehemaliger Sicherheitskräfte*, October 2024, p. 4.

Based on – very likely understated – figures from before the reporting period (15 August 2021 – 30 June 2023), UNAMA reported threats to the following professional groups in August 2023: former members of the Afghan National Army were at the highest risk of human rights violations, followed by police personnel (of both the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan Local Police (ALP)) and officials of the former National Directorate for Security (NDS).[267] In a later report, published in July 2025, UNAMA also mentioned former judges.[268]

According to Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, former lawyers, prosecutors and judges were also at risk of retaliation.[269] Furthermore, HRW reported that female former police officers received threats from the Taliban for refusing to report to them. One woman said that her husband had been assaulted because she had not disclosed her previous police work to the Taliban. Other women were in hiding and had severed all ties with their communities. Those who did return to work out of financial necessity reported threats of honour killings from conservative family members who considered their work dishonourable, and being accused and interrogated by the Taliban. They were assigned to low-level roles requiring women, for example to search and guard female detainees. There were no internal safeguards against sexual abuse by superiors, a widespread problem even before the Taliban came to power. The fact that many of these women were ethnically Hazara made them especially vulnerable to abuse by superiors acting with impunity.[270]

Again, the principle of protection by one's social group applied, as described in Section 3.1: high-ranking members of the former security forces were not the only ones affected, although they played a greater role in fighting the Taliban and were therefore more likely to be targeted in revenge killings. However, a person's social and professional network could determine their level of protection from the Taliban.[271]

3.1.1.5 Scale of violent incidents against former government officials and ANDSF members

Given the lack of precise data on civil servants and the underreporting of incidents, it is extremely challenging to draw any meaningful conclusions about the ratio of violent incidents to the total number of civil servants. In other words, the incidence of violent attacks against former government employees is unknown. Nevertheless, the following section attempts to provide further context by discussing relevant data. It should be noted, however, that the available data is affected by underreporting.[272]

There is no reliable and accurate data on the total number of people who worked for the former government. SIGAR (US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan

[267] Österreichisches Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, *Länderinformationen der Staatendokumentation Afghanistan*, Version 12, 31 January 2025, p. 132; UNAMA, *A Barrier To Securing Peace: Human Rights Violations Against Former Government Officials And Former Armed Force Members in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021 – 30 June 2023*, August 2023.
[268] OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025.
[269] OHCHR, *UN experts: legal professionals in Afghanistan face extreme risks, need urgent international support*, 20 January 2023.
[270] HRW, *Double Betrayal, Abuses against Afghan Policewomen, Past and Present*, 10 October 2024.
[271] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Situation ehemaliger Sicherheitskräfte*, October 2024.
[272] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025; Rawadari, Annual Report Human Rights, March 2025, p. 11; confidential source dated 23 September 2025.

Reconstruction) reported that the ANDSF's ranks – according to its own records – consisted of 300,699 troops as of 29 April 2021 (182,071 military personnel and 118,628 police officers). However, SIGAR and various experts suggested that the actual number of troops was probably significantly lower.[273] According to the Taliban, there were a total of 455,000 civil servants just before the change of power.[274] Given these uncertainties, the incident data below, provided by UNAMA and Rawadari, only serves to present a rough overview.

One source reported that violence against former government officials was rare, and that the vast majority of Taliban members respected the amnesty.[275] According to some sources, the passage of time since the takeover in 2021 has also helped to reduce threat levels[276], although others noted that the Taliban have previously proven to be patient when it comes to exacting revenge.[277]

Number of incidents
Both UNAMA and the NGO Rawadari reported on former government officials and ANDSF members who became victims of arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, ill-treatment, torture, threats and extrajudicial killings. Over a two-year period prior to June 2023, UNAMA recorded at least 800 such incidents; in the current reporting period, this number appears to be lower. However, not all UNAMA reports mention this group.

With the caveat that the available data was very likely affected by underreporting, **UNAMA** reported the following figures:

- UNAMA states that there were clear examples of the amnesty not being respected in the period before 2024.[278]
- Between 1 January and 31 March 2024: at least 38 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, at least 10 cases of ill-treatment, torture and verbal threats, and at least four extrajudicial killings of former government officials and former ANDSF members.[279]
- Between 1 April and 30 June 2024: at least 60 cases of ill-treatment, torture and verbal threats, and at least five killings of former government officials and former ANDSF members (including one by the df authorities). The victims included forced returnees.[280]
- Between 1 July and 30 September 2024: 24 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, at least ten cases of ill-treatment, torture and verbal threats, and at least five killings of former ANDSF members.[281]
- Between January and March 2025: 23 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, at least five cases of ill-treatment and torture of former government officials and former ANDSF members, and six killings of former ANDSF members. Some of these arrests took place in Panjshir[282] – where

[273] Combating Terrorism Center, *Lessons from the Collapse of Afghanistan's Security Forces*, Jonathan Schroden, October 2021; SIGAR, *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction*, August 2021, p. 51; confidential source dated 14 July 2025, interview with local ZMA KAB staff; General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023, p. 70.
[274] Foreign Policy, *'I Wanted to Stay for My People'*, 9 February 2023.
[275] Confidential source dated 14 July 2025.
[276] Confidential source dated 9 September 2025; confidential source dated 9 July 2025.
[277] Confidential source dated 9 September 2025.
[278] UNAMA, Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: October – December 2023.
[279] UNAMA, Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: January – March 2024.
[280] UNAMA, Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: April – June 2024.
[281] UNAMA, Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: July – September 2024.
[282] For background information, see: BBC, *The 'undefeated' Panjshir Valley - an hour from Kabul*, 26 August 2021; CNN, *Leader of Afghanistan's resistance movement says he will defeat the Taliban 'no matter the odds'*, 1 September 2024.

the NRF traditionally had a strong presence – and Kabul, targeting former government officials suspected of involvement with the NRF.[283]
- Between June and August 2025: at least five killings, one case of arbitrary arrest and detention, and three cases of torture and ill-treatment of former ANDSF employees.[284]

It is not always possible to clearly attribute incidents to a perpetrator, particularly in the case of the extrajudicial executions.

In 2024, the NGO **Rawadari** recorded 91 cases of violence against former government officials and their family members, resulting in death and injury. There were 83 cases in 2023, with the data reflecting a 9% increase for extrajudicial killings and a 20% increase for extrajudicial detentions.[285] Rawadari also explicitly emphasised that many cases were not documented due to a lack of press freedom, people's fear of speaking out, and threats against survivors and their families.[286] In 2023, Rawadari reported on cases where the df authorities – 'especially their intelligence service' – had killed former government officials for alleged links to the ISKP. Some of these killings were falsely labelled as suicides.[287] Rawadari also documented 21 cases where family members of former government officials had been killed.[288]

In July 2025, British media revealed that a list of between 19,000 and 25,000 Afghans had inadvertently been made public in February 2022. These people had signed up for evacuation to the UK because they had previously cooperated with British troops, either by working for the government or for private companies. Around 200 former ANDSF members included on this list were allegedly killed by the Taliban or other unidentified actors.[289] In response to these reports, the df authorities stated that they did not rely on UK lists for data on former government employees, since this information was already available to them. They also reiterated that the amnesty was still in force.[290] However, one source noted that not all records relating to former security forces were still available.[291]

An investigation by British newspaper *The Independent*, which was cited by EUAA, reported ill-treatment of former NDS officers and commandos at the hands of the Taliban. The article described how 24 Afghan commandos who had received a British salary, and/or worked with Polish troops, were in hiding for fear of Taliban reprisals. It also noted that six Afghan commandos had been killed by either the Taliban or unknown assailants, and cited three cases of torture of detainees by the Taliban.[292]

3.1.1.6 Examples of violent incidents

[283] UNAMA, Human Rights Situation In Afghanistan: January – March 2025 (for the period between March and June of 2025, the UNAMA report focuses on violations of women's rights).
[284] UN Special Representative for Afghanistan, *Report of the SG*, A/80/366-S/2025/554, 5 September 2025.
[285] Rawadari, Annual Report Human Rights, March 2025, p. 11.
[286] Rawadari website, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024 – Rawadari – For an equal and peaceful Afghanistan, accessed 28 July 2025.
[287] Rawadari, *Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023*, March 2024, p. 12.
[288] Rawadari, *Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023*, March 2024, p. 16 and Rawadari, *The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report*, August 2024, pp. 99, 11 and 12.
[289] The Telegraph, *Faces of the Afghans murdered by the Taliban since kill list leak*, 16 July 2025; Afghanistan International, *Over 200 Former Afghan Troops Killed Since UK Data Leak, Says Report*, 17 July 2025; RFERL, *UK Data Leak Spurs Costly Afghan Resettlement And Security Fears*, 24 July 2025.
[290] BBC Monitoring, *Afghan Taliban reaffirm general amnesty after UK data leak*, 17 July 2025 (subscription); confidential source dated 18 July 2025.
[291] Confidential source dated 12 September 2025.
[292] EUAA, *Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan - Country Focus*, 2023, p. 64; The Independent, *Murdered, tortured or in hiding: The special forces abandoned by Britain*, 1 November 2023.

In September 2025, it was reported that a former ANDSF member had been killed by Taliban members in Nasi district in Badakhshan province. According to media reports, he had asked the governor for a declaration of amnesty several times following his forced return from Iran a few months earlier.[293]

In Herat province, at the Islam Qala border crossing, df security services arrested a former security official who had been deported from Iran and detained him for around four days, according to media reports. He was released on 5 July 2025 following intervention by local elders.[294] On 9 July, the df authorities in Kabul arrested the former deputy head of the Ulema[295] Council for Panjshir province. This individual had previously been arrested by the df security services due to his alleged association with the NRF and had been released after two years.[296]

A former intelligence officer was found dead in late July 2025 after being arrested by Taliban intelligence officers four days earlier. His body was found alongside another, unidentified body. He had been arrested twice before since 2021, and had served a six-month prison sentence.[297]

In July 2025, more than 200 police officers and security officials were dismissed in Jawzjan province.[298]

A former commander of an anti-Taliban group in Kohistan, Faryab province, who was affiliated with the Jamiat-e Islami political party, was shot dead in July 2025 after being deported from Iran. Four more former government officials were killed in the same region shortly after this incident. In August 2025, a Taliban member was arrested on suspicion of carrying out these and other killings of former government employees, marking the first such arrest. Until shortly before his arrest, the suspect had held the post of member of the Faryab provincial council (*shura*).[299]

In one case in 2022, Taliban members came across a photograph of a former Afghan soldier alongside international troops, which was sufficient reason for them to kill the former soldier on the spot.[300]

3.1.1.7 Remaining officials

As in the previous reporting period, several sources noted that the Taliban were using many officials from the previous government to transfer knowledge to new officials. Officials from the previous government were often demoted to lower-level positions with corresponding salary reductions, and were then tasked with training Taliban members to fill higher-level roles. In addition, low-level officials from the previous government were purportedly harassed and threatened, or forced to quit their jobs.[301] According to the Afghanistan Analysts Network, the replacement of

[293] Hasht-e Subh, *Taliban Torture and Kill Former Afghan Soldier in Badakhshan - Hasht-e Subh*, 24 September 2025.
[294] Confidential source dated 10 July 2025.
[295] Council of senior Islamic scholars.
[296] Confidential source dated 10 July 2025.
[297] KabulNow, *Former intelligence officer found dead after Taliban arrest in Ghor province*, 29 July 2025; Hasht-e-Subh Daily, *Taliban kill former member of security forces*, 29 July 2025.
[298] Amu TV, *Taliban dismiss more than 200 former police officers in Jawzjan: Sources*, 30 July 2025.
[299] Amu TV, *Five killed by unidentified gunmen in northern Afghanistan, sources say*, 20 July 2025; Amu TV, *Former commander killed in Faryab after return from Iran: Sources*, 19 July 2025; Amu TV, *Taliban security official in Faryab arrested over multiple targeted killings: Sources*, 6 August 2025.
[300] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Situation ehemaliger Sicherheitskräfte*, October 2024, p. 4.
[301] Hasht-e Subh, *Taliban Purge in Ghazni Province: Former Government Employees Face Insults, Dismissals, and Detentions*, 11 December 2023; confidential source dated 24 June 2025.

officials from the previous government with Taliban members occurred mainly in the security sector and the courts.[302] One source noted that it became clear during the reporting period that officials who had stayed on after the coup were dismissed after they had passed on their knowledge, and subsequently struggled to find new government jobs.[303]

3.1.1.8 Relatives of the above groups/young men

According to the BAMF report, there were instances where family members of former government officials and former ANDSF members were pressured to reveal the whereabouts of their relatives. In some cases, family members were injured or killed in revenge attacks targeting former government officials and ANDSF members. It was unclear whether relatives were also subject to retaliation if it was no longer possible to retaliate against the primary family member involved due to their death. Residing abroad did not prevent retaliations against family members in Afghanistan, according to two sources.[304]

3.1.2 Persons who were associated with/worked for Western entities

This section describes the position of individuals who were associated with or worked for Western governments without being employed by the Afghan government at the time of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Government employees, including ANDSF personnel, are discussed in Section 3.1.1.

The foreign troops and powers that were present in Afghanistan before 2021 employed numerous companies and individuals. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the sections below discuss the position of individuals who were associated with or worked for:

- foreign troops in Afghanistan, or for foreign/Western governments in general (Section 3.1.2.1)
- foreign private organisations, companies or individuals (Section 3.1.2.2)
- international/Western NGOs and UN organisations (3.1.2.3)
- Western media (Section 3.1.2.4).

3.1.2.1 Cooperation with foreign troops or foreign embassies

This section is not about former officials who worked for the Afghan government under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, but about individuals who worked with or for foreign troops or embassies in Afghanistan as contractors or salaried staff. For more information on former Afghan government officials and former Afghan military personnel, see Section 3.1.1.

During the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021, numerous Afghan companies and individuals worked for Western troops and embassies. Some worked directly for foreign powers, while others worked for logistics companies, construction companies, security companies and interpretation

[302] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *What Do The Taleban Spend Afghanistan's Money On?* March 2023, p. 36.
[303] Confidential source dated 9 September 2025.
[304] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025; confidential source dated 9 September 2025; Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Situation ehemaliger Sicherheitskräfte*, October 2024, p. 4.

agencies.[305] The exact number of people who did this kind of work is not known. Like former government officials, these people were subject to attempts by the Taliban – in accordance with their code of conduct[306] – to kill them prior to the takeover, as revenge for the killing of Taliban fighters or Afghan civilians.[307]

Following their seizure of power in August 2021, the Taliban declared a general amnesty that extended not only to former officials, but also to individuals with previous affiliations with foreign governments. Many of these people left Afghanistan during the evacuations that followed the takeover. In media interviews, those who stayed behind have stated that many of them are living in hiding, separated from their families, and that they regularly move in order to escape Taliban reprisals.[308]

Currently, there is no information available regarding any nationwide repression policies instituted by the df authorities targeting former employees or contractors of foreign troops. Furthermore, information on incidents of violence against this group was scarce.

Sources were deeply divided on whether people formerly affiliated with Western troops or embassies were at risk. According to one source, the claim that incidents of violence were not attributable to previous work activities, but rather to individual reprisals stemming from personal conflicts, was incorrect. This source argued that this was disinformation spread by the df authorities to disguise the fact that these attacks were indeed being carried out by groups within the Taliban, or by other actors, in relation to previous work activities in service of foreign troops.[309] Two sources claimed that translators[310] were at an increased risk[311], with one noting that those whose work had had limited visibility within their community were more likely to be left alone after the takeover.[312] Another source stated that any past ties to Western powers could be grounds for suspicion of espionage, even if a considerable amount of time had passed. Neighbours reporting these individuals to the df authorities remained a risk, according to this source.[313] Conversely, another source indicated that a large number of individuals who had previously worked as guards for foreign embassies were working as guards – some of them openly – for Afghan organisations during the reporting period, and were therefore easy to track down by the df authorities. Although these guards purportedly did not face harassment from the df authorities, it was still difficult for them to find government employment. They also allegedly faced the risk of being extorted through threats of reprisals.[314] Yet another source indicated that former guards and employees of foreign embassies were not at risk of reprisals from the df authorities at all.[315]

[305] Anand Gopal, *No Good Men Among the Living*, Picador USA, 2015; Andrew North, *War & Peace & War*, Bonnier Books Ltd, 2024.
[306] Outdated versions of the Taliban's code of conduct refer to 'catching drivers, contractors, or soldiers' and stipulate that demanding a ransom is prohibited; doling out punishment – for example in the form of an execution – is permitted following the intervention of a *qadi* (judge). These codes of conduct became obsolete after the amnesty was declared. For more on the Taliban's code of conduct (*Layhe* or *Layeha*) prior to the takeover, see Calhoun, Johnson, Thomas; DuPee, Matthew, *Analysing the new Taliban Code of Conduct (Layeha): an assessment of changing perspectives and strategies of the Afghan Taliban*, March 2012, pp. 83 et seq.; International Review of the Red Cross, *The Layha for the Mujahideen: an analysis of the code of conduct for the Taliban fighters under Islamic law*, Vol. 93, number 881, March 2011, p. 95; Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *The Layha*, 2012.
[307] EUAA, Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024, COI Summary *Persons affiliated with foreign forces*, May 2024.
[308] EUAA, *COI Focus Afghanistan November 2024*, p. 94; EUAA, Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024, COI Summary *Persons affiliated with foreign forces*, May 2024.
[309] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[310] In the Afghan context, this most likely refers to interpreters.
[311] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025; confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[312] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[313] Confidential source dated 14 October 2025.
[314] Confidential source dated 9 September 2025.
[315] Confidential source dated 12 September 2025.

Scale

The scale of incidents of violence against former employees or contractors of foreign troops or governments is unknown. Although many of those who previously worked for foreign troops or governments have fled abroad, tens of thousands have either remained in Afghanistan[316] or have recently returned from Pakistan and Iran. The exact size of this group is unknown, as is the precise number of individuals who experienced violence. Although there were documented cases of violence against this group, these were clearly fewer in number than those against people who worked for the Afghan government in armed professions (see Section 3.1.1).[317] There is no accurate data available, and there could be underreporting. On the other hand, several sources cited examples of individuals who had previously worked in either armed or non-armed roles for foreign troops or governments, and had since managed to establish good relations with the df authorities and live in safety.[318]

There is no clear information on the factors that put individuals who worked for foreign troops or embassies before August 2021 more or less at risk of violent attacks. According to one source, people involved in violent clashes with the Taliban during the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan were subject to targeted retaliation. This source also noted that those who worked for foreign forces that used frequent or significant violence against the Taliban or Afghan civilians were likely at a higher risk than those who worked for forces that were less often involved in combat situations.[319] People's visibility in their local community was also said to be a factor – if the community did not know who a person was working for, there was obviously less danger.[320] According to other sources, however, there were many regional differences, and reprisals were often arbitrary. It is therefore not possible to create a profile of those most at risk of attacks.[321] Given the poor economic conditions and humanitarian crisis, extortion was also reported to play an increasingly significant role; the families of individuals who were kidnapped, ostensibly in retaliation for their previous work, were forced to pay ransoms to secure their freedom. Families with insufficient financial resources had to marry off a daughter or borrow money to pay these ransoms.[322]

Examples

In a July 2025 report, UNAMA cited examples from before this reporting period. One case involved a female relative of an individual who had worked for a foreign embassy in Afghanistan during the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, who was repeatedly harassed by the Taliban with house searches and coercive marriage proposals, prompting her to leave the country. Another former employee of a foreign embassy in Afghanistan during the period of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was unjustly detained and mistreated. After his release, he too left the country.[323]

[316] EUAA, Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024, COI Summary *Persons affiliated with foreign forces*, May 2024.
[317] Confidential source dated 9 September 2025.
[318] EUAA, Country Focus Afghanistan 2023, p. 65; confidential source dated 9 September 2025; confidential source dated 12 September 2025.
[319] Confidential source dated 3 June 2025.
[320] UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, July 2025, p. 13.
[321] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025; confidential source dated 9 September 2025.
[322] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[323] UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, July 2025, p. 13.

According to one source, the fact that some former interpreters for foreign troops had moved abroad did not deter the Taliban from retaliating against their families. This source cited the example of a former interpreter for foreign troops whose family home in Afghanistan was repeatedly searched by the Taliban, even after he had fled the country. In addition to facing threats of violence from the Taliban, this family was excluded from their community, resulting in financial and humanitarian consequences.[324]

According to media reports, four former local employees of the German embassy died before they could be transferred abroad, with one of them being killed by violence. Further details, such as this individual's position, the reason for his murder and the circumstances surrounding his death, were not known.[325]

Nothing is known about any criminal proceedings relating to these violent incidents.[326]

Afghan former NDS personnel and Afghan soldiers who worked with British troops are discussed in Section 3.1.1.5.[327]

3.1.2.2 Cooperation with foreign private organisations, companies, individuals, media

Since the 'morality law' came into force in August 2024, befriending or helping non-Muslims, or imitating their appearance or 'character' has been punishable, see Article 22(20) in Annex 2: English translation of the morality law. Sources were unsure whether this rule was specifically enforced by the morality enforcers (*muhtasibs*) under the df Ministry for PVPV. See also Section 3.1.4.4 on journalists working with Western media.

3.1.2.3 Cooperation with international/Western NGOs and UN organisations

The situation of current NGO staff is discussed in Section 3.1.3.

In December 2022, the Taliban banned Afghan women from working for local and foreign non-governmental organisations. Six months later, this ban was extended to include UN organisations. Women who continued to work for UN organisations received death threats from unknown sources during the reporting period.[328] From early September 2025 onwards, the df security forces in Afghanistan denied local female staff and UN contractors access to UN offices in Kabul. This restriction was later extended to include UN offices across the country, following written or oral instructions from the df authorities. Security forces were visibly present at the entrances of UN buildings in Kabul, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif to enforce the ban.[329]

[324] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[325] Amu TV, *Dozens of Afghans approved for relocation to Germany die before departure*, 2 April 2025.
[326] Confidential source dated 14 October 2025; EUAA, Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024, COI Summary *Persons affiliated with foreign forces*, May 2024; EUAA Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan - Country Focus, 2023, p. 56.
[327] EUAA, *Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan - Country Focus*, 2023, p. 64; The Independent, *Murdered, tortured or in hiding: The special forces abandoned by Britain*, 1 November 2023.
[328] Al Jazeera, UN report says its female staff in Afghanistan have received death threats, 10 August 2025.
[329] UNAMA, *UN in Afghanistan calls for lifting of restrictions on female staff accessing UN premises*, 11 September 2025.

A freelance researcher who had worked with the German *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) reported that he had been the victim of an assassination attempt, most likely carried out by the Taliban.[330]

3.1.2.4 Cooperation with Western media

HRW reported that journalists who had previously criticised the Taliban were at risk of experiencing violence upon returning to Afghanistan.[331] According to HRW, all ties with foreign media were prohibited, and journalists were at risk of detention, aggravated assault and death threats from the df authorities if they were suspected of having cooperated with such outlets, or with opposition groups.[332]

For examples of violence against journalists, see Section 3.1.4.

3.1.3 Human rights activists

Both UNAMA[333] and other sources[334] identified human rights activists as being among the groups most at risk upon returning to Afghanistan.

UNAMA reported that the operating space for NGOs in Afghanistan had shrunk significantly since the Taliban's seizure of power, due to a combination of factors, including the withdrawal of large amounts of donor funding since 15 August 2021 and the departure of many prominent civil society figures and human rights defenders for fear of repressive actions by the df authorities. More specifically, civil society activists and human rights defenders purportedly feared arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as the use of violence to break up protests. According to UNAMA, the df authorities used arbitrary arrests and detentions as a means of suppressing dissent among the Afghan population. For example, unfounded arrests and detentions of women for participating in peaceful protests, or for otherwise criticising Taliban policies towards women and girls, were reported by UNAMA to have resulted in a steady decline in public protests related to women's rights issues.[335] For more on protests, see also Section 3.2.1.3.

In July 2025, Fazl Ahmad Paeez, the head of religious affairs for the Aga Khan Foundation in the Zebak district of Badakhshan province, was shot and killed, local sources told Afghanistan International. It is unclear whether this murder was related to his work for the Aga Khan Foundation and/or the fact that he belonged to the Shiite Ismaili community.[336]

3.1.3.1 Female activists

On 24 December 2022, the df authorities issued a decree prohibiting women from working for NGOs. In response, five leading NGOs ceased their work in Afghanistan.[337] According to HRW, the df authorities continued to detain women who criticised the df government's policies, as well as those who led underground

[330] Deutscher Bundestag, *Zeuge berichtet von Drohungen, Erpressungen und einem Mordversuch*, 19 January 2023.
[331] HRW, *Pakistan: Forced Returns Expose Afghans to Persecution, Destitution*, 19 March 2025.
[332] HRW, *Afghanistan: Taliban Tramples Media Freedom*, October 2025.
[333] OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025.
[334] Confidential source dated 23 June 2025; confidential source dated 9 October 2025.
[335] OHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025, p. 10.
[336] Afghanistan International, *Gunmen Kill Aga Khan Foundation Religious Affairs Official In Badakhshan*, 6 July 2025.
[337] Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, *Länderinformationen Afghanistan*, 31 March 2025, p. 80.

schools, for example. While in detention, they were subjected to ill-treatment and torture.[338] It is not known on what scale this occurred.

HRW also reported that women advocating for women's rights were arrested alongside their family members, including young children. They were held in harsh conditions and sometimes tortured. When they were released, the Taliban demanded property deeds from their families, threatening to confiscate them if the women continued their behaviour.[339]

3.1.4 Critical journalists

The main developments during the reporting period with regard to journalists were an increase in the number of arrests of critical journalists, an increased risk of journalists with Western ties of being labelled as spies, and increased restrictions on female journalists.[340]

3.1.4.1 Repression

According to one source, 2024 saw a rise in the number of arrests of critical journalists.[341] In July 2025, UNAMA reported that journalists and media workers had been subjected to intimidation, arbitrary arrests, detentions, ill-treatment and imprisonment while carrying out their work.[342] Another source reported that almost all openly critical journalists and their families had left Afghanistan for this reason, and that those who had stayed behind were forced into hiding if they wanted to continue their work. According to this source, the Taliban's narrative is now the only one permitted, and criticism of Pakistan is also allowed. There were no more talk shows, and all broadcasts were pre-recorded and subject to censorship.[343] Yet another source noted that analyses of social issues could only be published by media outlets with good relations with the df authorities, and that all publications had to be presented as non-critical of the df authorities. However, good personal relationships never guaranteed safety, and the level of protection they offered was subject to change.[344]

Despite the fact that content restrictions (see Section 3.1.4.3) were not formally defined, violations of red lines could lead to threats or intimidation, arbitrary arrests and detentions, ill-treatment, court proceedings and prison sentences. Detentions ranged from a few hours to several months, without due process. Some detainees were imprisoned after being sentenced by a df court.[345] Journalists who published critical articles received phone calls asking them to report to the df police, forcing them to go into hiding to escape ill-treatment and torture.[346]

There are no reliable figures on the number of incidents involving journalists. However, UNAMA did report human rights violations involving 336 journalists and media workers between 15 August 2021 and 30 September 2024: 256 cases of

[338] HRW, Women's Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023.
[339] HRW, Women's Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023.
[340] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025; AFJC, *AFJC 2024 Report Highlights Rising Media Repression and Journalist Violations in Afghanistan*, 24 December 2025.
[341] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025.
[342] OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025.
[343] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[344] Confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[345] UNAMA, *Media Freedom in Afghanistan*, November 2024.
[346] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025.

arbitrary arrest and detention (249 men, 7 women), 130 cases of ill-treatment and torture (122 men, 8 women) and 75 cases of threats or intimidation (66 men, 9 women). According to the report, journalists were sometimes replaced by their employers while they were being detained, and subsequently lost their jobs because their employers wanted to avoid further damage to their relationship with the df authorities.[347] According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), at least thirty journalists were arrested between May 2024 and May 2025, ten of whom remained in detention in May 2025. The most common charges, according to the IFJ, were 'propaganda against the emirate' and 'blasphemy'.[348] According to one source, journalists returning from abroad were also still facing threats for their reporting prior to the takeover. This source claimed that the intelligence agency GDI was behind these threats, and that people were targeted primarily on the basis of human intelligence (knowledge about active and former journalists available in society). According to this source, family members of journalists who fled or went into hiding were also threatened and mistreated in an attempt to force these journalists to report to the authorities.[349]

Examples

On 5 October 2024, Mahdi Ansari, a 27-year-old journalist with the Afghan News Agency, was arrested near his office by intelligence officers. On 1 January 2025, a court sentenced him to 18 months in prison; neither his family nor his lawyer were present during sentencing. He was accused of spreading anti-Taliban propaganda through his reporting and Facebook posts. Amnesty International claimed that Ansari was subjected to ill-treatment and solitary confinement during his detention.[350]

In May 2025, Sulaiman Rahil, a journalist for Radio Khoshhal, was arrested by the GDI, presumably because of his Facebook posts about poverty in Afghanistan and about a personal disagreement with a senior Taliban official. In late May 2025, he was sentenced to three months' detention after the GDI accused him of 'propaganda against the emirate'. He was released in July 2025. One of his former colleagues, Hekmat Aryan, had previously been sentenced to a month's detention following a similar allegation by the GDI.[351]

Shortly before this, in April 2025, freelance journalist Sayed Rashed Kashefi was also arrested, on suspicion of collaborating with Afghan media outlets based abroad ('diaspora media'). He has been missing since April 2025. Kashefi had previously been detained by the Taliban in 2021, when he was held and mistreated for five hours.[352]

In July 2025, the Taliban arrested at least seven journalists in various operations, all on suspicion of 'propaganda against the emirate' or spying on behalf of foreign entities, for example because they had received grants from UNAMA, UNESCO or the Iranian government.[353]

[347] UNAMA, *Media Freedom in Afghanistan*, November 2024.
[348] IFJ, *South Asia Press Freedom Report 2024-2025*, accessed 24 September 2025.
[349] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025.
[350] Amnesty International, *Afghanistan: release journalist convicted of propaganda*, 19 February 2025.
[351] International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), *Afghanistan: Radio director sentenced as media crackdown continues*, 7 June 2025; Committee for the Protection of Journalists, *Taliban intelligence detain journalist Sulaiman Rahil following critical Facebook posts*, 12 May 2025.
[352] CPJ, *Taliban intelligence agents detain journalist Sayed Rashed Kashefi in Kabul*, 18 April 2025.
[353] National Union of Journalists, *Afghanistan: Taliban arrests at least seven journalists in July*, 7 August 2025.

A new development during this reporting period was the emergence of videos of people expressing regret, most likely under duress and in response to threats, prior to their release.[354]

In May 2025, the pro-Taliban influencer Mobeen Khan ('General Mobeen') was sentenced to 18 months in prison by a Kabul court after previous clashes with the df authorities over critical statements about domestic politics and policies towards Pakistan and Iran.[355]

Abdul Ghafor Abed, a local reporter for Radio Television Afghanistan, was killed during the skirmishes between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He was reportedly killed in a drone attack by the Pakistani military while covering armed clashes along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Another journalist from the same media outlet was also injured in the attack.[356]

3.1.4.2 Female journalists

Although female journalists were permitted to work in theory, they encountered numerous restrictions. These restrictions were in addition to the general restrictions that applied to women (see Section 3.1.7), such as the requirement to be accompanied by a *mahram* when travelling or visiting government institutions and the prohibitions on talking to men and sharing an office with men. One source emphasised that even before the takeover, traditional social norms had limited women's ability to work as journalists.[357]

In April 2024, media outlets were given verbal instructions stating that female journalists could no longer present alongside male hosts, and that discussions about women's rights were no longer permitted.
From January 2025 onwards, women were banned outright from presenting on TV, regardless of whether they wore a hijab. Their presence alone was said to be a provocation to men.[358] One source claimed that, despite these restrictions, more women have actually started working as journalists, but that they do so while evading detection by the df authorities.[359] In June 2025, female journalists could still broadcast educational programmes for women in Afghanistan, even after the police and GDI raided the Kabul office of a radio station that facilitated this on 4 February 2025. Two male journalists employed by a partner radio station were arrested during this raid, which resulted in the temporary closure of the stations' joint office. Later, the office was allowed to broadcast again under strict conditions. In July 2025, the two male journalists were still in GDI detention.[360]

3.1.4.3 Content restrictions

The Taliban issued various directives dictating which topics could be covered and which terminology should be used. For instance, dead Taliban members had to be

[354] National Union of Journalists, *Afghanistan: Taliban arrests at least seven journalists in July*, 7 August 2025.
[355] Centre for Information Resilience, *The arrest and release of pro-Taliban influencer Mobeen Khan*, 2 July 2023.
[356] UNESCO press release, UNESCO Director-General condemns the killing of journalist Abdul Ghafor Abed in Afghanistan, 21 October 2025; Committee to Protect Journalists, *Journalist Abdul Ghafor Abed killed in clash along Afghanistan-Pakistan border*, 16 October 2025.
[357] Confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[358] US Institute of Peace (USIP), *Tracking the Taliban's (Mis)Treatment of Women*, accessed 24 September 2025.
[359] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025.
[360] CNN, *Radio Begum: Taliban raids and suspends Afghanistan's only nationwide women's radio station*, 7 February 2025; Lowy Institute, Courage is essential for Afghanistan's women of Radio Begum, 30 July 2025; Amnesty UK, *"A radio by Afghan women, for Afghan women"*, 1 July 2025; SBS Dateline, *'We're still learning': How one radio station educates millions of Afghan girls under Taliban rule*, 22 June 2025.

referred to as 'martyrs', and no images of women or female voices could be broadcast; no living beings – including animals – could be depicted at all, and criticism of the Taliban and discussions of ethnic minorities, political topics, social unrest or abuses, economic issues, hunger and poverty were prohibited.[361] However, these guidelines were not clearly formulated and remained open to interpretation by the df enforcing authorities. Moreover, some were only communicated verbally.[362]

3.1.4.4 Ban on Western cultural expressions and ties to Western media

Journalists are strictly prohibited from maintaining ties with foreign entities. Connections with media operating from abroad are prohibited, as they are seen as potentially resulting in espionage or foreign interference. This prohibition includes all forms of collaboration or contact, including financial connections.[363]
For more on journalists with ties to Western media, see Section 3.1.2.2. According to one source, the discovery of financial ties with Western media can result in prosecution.[364] Journalists accused of spreading 'Western thought' were arrested by the df authorities. In January 2025, for instance, two male radio journalists were detained for six months in a GDI prison on this charge. They were released at the end of July 2025.[365]

In July 2025, two TV station employees were arrested for translating Western television series. They later appeared in online videos in which they expressed their remorse. Such expressions of remorse were also increasingly posted by private individuals who had shared overly Western content on social media. In July 2025, three influencers were arrested; they later posted public apologies.[366]

According to media reports, the df authorities arrested dozens of people across several provinces in June 2025, including Kabul, Ghazni, Herat, Laghman, Kandahar and Sar-e-Pul. Among those detained were at least seven journalists who were reportedly arrested in connection with 'non-Islamic' content on social media, about topics such as women's rights. The Taliban purportedly established a special digital surveillance unit tasked with tracking and monitoring online activities on social media.[367]

3.1.5 Ethnic groups/minorities

[361] IFJ, South Asia report 2024-2025 *Afghanistan - 'Hitting Rock Bottom'*, accessed 23 September 2025; CPJ, *Taliban ban domestic political and economic broadcasts in Afghanistan*, 14 February 2025; Afghanistan International, *Taliban Orders Suspension Of Political Programmes On Afghan Media*, 13 February 2025; Amu TV, *Taliban halt broadcast of political programs on domestic media*, 13 February 2025.
[362] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025.
[363] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025; RSF, Afghanistan: Taliban prohibit journalists from collaborating with Afghanistan International news channel.
[364] Confidential source dated 2 June 2025.
[365] CNN, *Radio Begum: Taliban raids and suspends Afghanistan's only nationwide women's radio station*, 7 February 2025; Lowy Institute, *Courage is essential for Afghanistan's women of Radio Begum*, 30 July 2025; Amnesty UK, *"A radio by Afghan women, for Afghan women"*, 1 July 2025; IFJ, *Afghanistan: Taliban arrests at least seven journalists in July*, 5 August 2025.
[366] BBC Monitoring, Afghan Taliban arrest two for 'promoting Western culture' – BBC Monitoring, 27 July 2025 (subscription); BBC Monitoring, Explainer: Afghan 'confession' videos highlight role of new outlets, 25 July 2025 (subscription).
[367] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Briefing Notes*, 28 July 2025; IFJ, Afghanistan: Taliban arrests at least seven journalists in July, 5 August 2025.

The UN estimates that Afghanistan had a population of 43.8 million in 2025.[368] The df authorities estimate the figure to be significantly lower, at 36.4 million people.[369] However, this figure may not account for the large number of Afghan nationals who have returned from neighbouring countries. Reliable statistics on Afghanistan's various ethnic groups and languages were not available either. Although it was widely acknowledged that no single ethnic group held an absolute majority in the country, the precise proportions of each group within the total population were often heavily politicised. The largest ethnic groups were the Pashtuns (around 40%), Tajiks (around 30%), Hazaras (around 10-20%) and Uzbeks (around 9%), followed by the Turkmen and Baloch (around 2%).[370]

The two most widely spoken languages in Afghanistan were Dari and Pashto. Dari (also known as Farsi) is spoken by more than 75% of the population and functions as a common language between several ethnic groups, including the Tajiks, Hazaras and Aimaqs. Pashto, spoken by around 48% of the population, is mainly the native language of the Pashtun ethnic group in the southern and eastern regions.[371]

See also Annex 3: Map of Afghanistan showing the ethno-linguistic composition of the population.

3.1.5.1 Pashtuns

Since most Taliban members are Pashtun men, people of Pashtun ethnicity enjoy certain advantages. No other ethnic group is better represented in government jobs or political offices.[372] Nevertheless, Pashtuns are still subject to the Taliban's strict policies. Even before the Taliban seized power, Pashtun people in traditional provinces were subject to strict rules regarding dress, interaction with the opposite sex, and the participation of women. Since the takeover, these rules have been strictly enforced by both the Taliban and the Pashtun community itself, and violating them can lead to life-threatening situations. See Section 3.1.7 on women and Section 3.3 on monitoring and legal protection.

According to one source, the df authorities attempted to establish Pashto as the sole official language, for example by offering government services and interaction with authorities only in Pashto, even in regions predominantly inhabited by Dari speakers.[373]

3.1.5.2 Hazaras

The majority of Hazaras are Shiite Muslims, with most adhering to the 'Twelver' branch of Shiite Islam and a minority belonging to the Ismaili branch. For a description of Shiites, see Section 3.1.6.1. The Hazaras mainly speak Dari, or a Dari dialect called Hazaragi. A small group are adherents of Sunni Islam[374], but exact percentages are not available. Hazaras can be distinguished from other ethnic groups by their different facial features.

Adverse treatment by the df authorities in land ownership disputes

[368] UNFP, *Afghanistan Population 2025*, accessed 8 October 2025.
[369] Ariana News, *Afghanistan's population estimated at 36.4 million in 2025*, 8 July 2025.
[370] Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, Länderinformationen: Afghanistan, Version 12, p. 97; ECOI, *Country Briefing Afghanistan*, accessed 8 October 2025.
[371] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[372] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[373] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[374] Minority Rights website, *Hazaras in Afghanistan*, accessed 17 September 2025.

Although the Taliban leadership does not systematically persecute Hazaras, there is systemic discrimination by local leaders, according to one EUAA source. This is said to manifest itself through job dismissals and discriminatory justice in land ownership disputes between Hazaras and Kuchis.[375] Another source stated that Hazaras are systematically disadvantaged in land ownership disputes with Kuchis, a nomadic people composed mainly of Pashtuns. These conflicts existed prior to the coup, but they intensified after 2021, as the Pashtun Kuchis felt empowered by the Taliban. Media reported of one deadly conflict, in the Behsud district of Maidan Wardak province, where armed Kuchis shot dead a farmer so that they could graze their cattle in his fields.[376] Although the df authorities have established various legal procedures to settle these disputes, no information is available on the proportion of cases lost by the Hazaras. Based on interviews with people involved in these proceedings, a May 2025 report qualified them as 'biased, non-transparent and unfair'. The df authorities purportedly forced local elders to rule against Hazaras. This report also notes that the Taliban were involved in the expropriation of local Hazara land, designating areas as public property either to accommodate refugees returning from Pakistan or to develop new townships for nomads. In 2024, this occurred in Ghor, Ghazni and Daikundi.[377] Other research also places the recent land redistribution and resettlement of Pashtuns in Hazara-dominated areas in the historical perspective of the struggle for land between Hazaras and Pashtuns, and the Taliban's historical support to Pashtun groups such as the Kuchis.[378] In July 2025, for example, a village of 25 Hazara families was forcibly evicted when the land their village stood on was allocated to Kuchis.[379] The land of Tajik communities could also be expropriated in order to resettle Pashtun nomads or returnees (see Section 3.1.5.3).

ISKP attacks

HRW documented regular ISKP attacks on the Hazara community.[380] These attacks are probably more related to ISKP's religious extremism and aversion to Shiite Islam than to ethnic considerations. In practice, however, ISKP's attacks target predominantly Hazara neighbourhoods and are carried out without checking beforehand whether Sunnis are also among the potential victims. The Hazaras are predominantly Shiites and they have a distinctive appearance that sets them apart from the Pashtuns. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that ISKP may also target the Hazaras for ethnic reasons. See also Section 1.2.4.1 on IKSP.

Between the coup in 2021 and May 2024, at least 700 members of the Hazara community were injured or killed in ISKP attacks.[381] Between the coup and September 2025, there were at least 61 targeted attacks against Shiite Hazaras, including suicide bombings, IED detonations, shootings, armed attacks, beheadings and unexplained killings. A minimum of 473 people were killed and 681 injured in these attacks – equating to an average of one death every three days and one injury every two days. Of the 61 attacks, media outlets attributed 12 to Taliban

[375] EUAA, Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan – Country Focus 2024, p. 122.
[376] KabulNow, *Armed Kochis Kill Hazara Farmer in Behsud, Renewing Fears of Systematic Violence and Displacement*, 29 July 2025.
[377] RWI, *"Throwing Dust in Our Eyes": Nomadic-Sedentary Land Conflict in Hazarajat under the Taliban and Its Human Rights Impacts*, 30 May 2025, p. 42.
[378] EUAA Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024, COI Summary, 3.14.5 Tajiks; RWI, *"Throwing Dust in Our Eyes": Nomadic-Sedentary Land Conflict in Hazarajat under the Taliban and Its Human Rights Impacts*, 30 May 2025, p. 42.
[379] KabulNow, *Taliban Evicts Entire Hazara Village in Bamiyan After Ruling in Favor of Nomadic Kuchis*, 28 July 2025.
[380] HRW, *Attacks Target Afghanistan's Hazaras,* 3 May 2024; see also Stimson Center, Afghanistan's Evolving Terrorism Landscape under the Taliban, 21 August 2024.
[381] EUAA, Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024, COI Summary Section 3.14.2.

forces, 16 to ISKP and one to armed Kuchi nomads. The remaining 32 attacks were not claimed.[382]

A number of examples of attacks are listed below. There was no information available on ISKP attacks specifically targeting Hazaras after September 2024.

- On 12 September 2024, 14 Shiite pilgrims, all Hazaras, were shot dead by armed men. The df authorities claimed to have provided victims with financial support and accused ISKP of carrying out the attack.[383]
- On 11 August 2024, a minibus was hit by an IED explosion, leaving 13 people injured and one person dead. All of the victims were Hazaras. The Taliban assured UNAMA that the perpetrators would be prosecuted.[384]
- On 14 June 2024, a Shiite imam was shot and reportedly beheaded by unknown individuals in the Nusay district of Badakhshan province. The perpetrators left an ISKP flag at the scene.[385]
- In an attack on 29 April 2024, an armed IKSP member opened fire on worshippers at a Shiite-Hazara mosque in Herat province, killing six people, including a child.
- On 20 April 2024, a bomb attached to a bus carrying mainly Hazara passengers exploded, killing one person and injuring ten others.
- On 6 January 2024, a similar attack on a bus in Dasht-e-Barchi, a predominantly Hazara neighbourhood of Kabul, killed five people, including at least one child, and injured 14 others. Dasht-e-Barchi has been the site of numerous ISKP attacks. When the ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack on 6 January, it noted that this was part of its campaign against 'infidels', adding 'kill them wherever you find them'.[386]
- Between October and November 2023, a total of 40 people were killed and 86 wounded in a series of IED detonations in a mainly Hazara-populated district of western Kabul, Dasht-e-Barchi, and Pul-e Khumri.[387]

NGOs report that Hazaras are inadequately protected from ISKP attacks by the df authorities.[388]

According to one source, Hazaras were underrepresented in key societal positions.[389] This same source also claimed that they were overrepresented in detention centres, but this information could not be verified by other sources.[390]

3.1.5.3 Tajiks

Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, accounting for around 27% of the country's population. Whereas in the pre-Soviet era they mainly settled in and around Kabul and other cities, and in the mountainous region of Badakhshan

[382] KabulNow, *Canadian MP Marks Hazara Genocide Memorial Day, Says Victims "Not Forgotten"*, 8 October 2025; KabulNow, *Special Report: Genocidal Attacks and Hate Speech Against Shia Hazaras under Taliban Rule*, 10 November 2024.
[383] UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: July – September 2024, p. 4.
[384] UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: July – September 2024, p. 4.
[385] UN Quarterly report of the SG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security A/80/366-S/2025/554, 5 September 2025; UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan update: July – September 2024, p. 4.
[386] HRW, *Attacks Target Afghanistan's Hazaras,* 3 May 2024.
[387] UNAMA, *Human Rights situation in Afghanistan: October – December 2023*, January 2023.
[388] HRW, *Attacks Target Afghanistan's Hazaras*, 3 May 2024.
[389] Hasht-e Subh, Minimal Representation of Ethnic Groups in the Taliban Regime: 'Pro-Taliban Figures Do Not Represent Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras', 27 June 2024; EUAA, Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan – Country Focus, 2024.
[390] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025.

in the northeast, today they live in various regions across the country, but mainly in the north, northeast and west.[391]

Tajiks were often presented as a threat to law and order by the df authorities, given their alleged involvement in armed groups such as the NRF, mainly in the Panjshir valley but also in the provinces of Baghlan, Takhar and Daykundi. An unknown number of Tajik Afghans and Tajiks were killed in clashes between the df authorities and alleged Tajik NRF fighters.[392] According to media reports, Mawlawi Abdul Malik, the former deputy chair of the Council of Religious Scholars of Panjshir province, was admitted to hospital in Rokha district after his health deteriorated due to the torture he was subjected to during a two-week detention by the Taliban in July 2025. An ethnic Tajik, Abdul Malik is considered one of the most respected religious figures in Panjshir.[393]

Like the Hazaras, some Tajiks were also evicted from certain areas in order to facilitate the resettling of nomadic peoples, such as the Kuchi, or returning refugees. It is unclear whether this expulsion stemmed from ethnic motivations or local power relations.[394]

3.1.6 Religious groups

Approximately 10-15% of the population of Afghanistan are Shiite Muslims, while around 85% are Sunni Muslims. Ethnic, tribal and religious divisions are strong in Afghan society. Although ethnic communities do not always coincide entirely with faith communities, they tend to be largely homogeneous in terms of religion: the Pashtuns, Tajiks and Uzbeks are predominantly Sunni Muslims, while the Hazaras are predominantly Shiite Muslims. As ethnicity and religion are often linked, it is not always clear whether repression is based on ethnicity or religion, and ethnicity and religion should always be considered in conjunction, as both factors can determine the situation of individuals in Afghanistan.[395] For more on ethnic groups, see Section 3.1.5.

3.1.6.1 Shiites

Within the Shiite community, a distinction can be made between the Twelvers (also called *Ithna Ashri* or *Jaafari*) and the Ismailis.[396] The Ismaili community in Afghanistan is mainly made up of ethnic Hazaras (90%) and Tajiks. The Hazaras mostly live in central Afghanistan and urban areas, whereas the Tajiks primarily reside in the northeast of the country. It is not known whether the Taliban or other armed groups differentiated by ethnicity in their treatment of Shiites. Due to their appearance, Hazaras are often easily distinguishable from Pashtun Afghans, and they are more likely to live together in ethnically homogenous communities than

[391] Minority Rights Group, *Tajiks in Afghanistan*, accessed 8 October 2025.
[392] The Diplomat, *Taliban Accuse Tajik, Pakistani Citizens of Carrying out Attacks in Afghanistan*, 3 January 2024; EUAA, COI Summary Country Guidance Afghanistan, 3.14.5. Tajiks | European Union Agency for Asylum, May 2024.
[393] Federal Office for Migration and Flüchtlinge, *Briefing Notes*, 28 July 2025; Afghanistan International, *Taliban Arrest Former Deputy Head Of Panjshir Ulema Council In Kabul*, 10 July 2025; Afghanistan International, *Panjshir Cleric Hospitalised After Reported Abuse In Taliban Custody*, 23 July 2025.
[394] EUAA Country Guidance Afghanistan 2024, COI Summary, 3.14.5 Tajiks.
[395] US Department of State, *2023 Report on International Religious Freedom – Afghanistan*.
[396] The majority of Ismailis belong to the Nizaris, who recognise Aga Khan V as their 50th hereditary imam. The Twelvers and the Ismailis have different views on the succession of the sixth imam.

Tajiks.[397] For more on ethnic groups, see Section 3.1.5. The Hazaras are discussed in Section 3.1.5.2, the Tajiks in Section 3.1.5.3.

During the reporting period, the Taliban increasingly restricted the freedom of religion of Shiites, particularly with regard to practising their faith in public. There were also cases of forced conversion, and of people being forced to break their fast. During the month of Muharram, which marks the Shiite New Year, Shiites were banned from displaying religious banners, planning events, driving in convoys or performing lamentations in public.[398] In 2022, Ashura – an important day of remembrance and festivities for Shiites, traditionally celebrated outdoors and with Shiite banners – was removed from Afghan calendars as a public holiday. The Taliban publicly disparaged the festive nature of the holiday, and the df authorities imposed restrictions that meant the celebrations had to take place outside of public areas, supposedly to ensure the safety of the worshippers.[399] The df authorities also removed banners and tents.[400] Towards the end of the previous reporting period, the df authorities declared 21 April 2023 to be Eid al-Fitr, despite this being considered the last day of Ramadan according to the Shiite calendar. On this day, the df police and df PVPV officials in Nili, a city in Daikundi province, ordered members of the Shiite community to break their fasts by handing them food and drink at various checkpoints. At least 25 people were beaten for refusing to break their fast.[401] There were also forced conversions to Sunni Islam.[402] See also Section 3.2.3 on freedom of religion.

On 23 July 2025, the prominent Shiite cleric Vaezzadeh Behsoodi announced that the Taliban had closed his office in western Kabul (Dasht-e-Barchi), as well as his second office and adjoining seminary in the same district. Behsoodi had been critical of Taliban policies.[403] By contrast, a major Shiite conference was permitted to take place in Kabul in February 2025, attracting thousands of visitors. While some viewed this as a positive sign, critics dismissed it as a Taliban propaganda stunt.[404]

Despite the df authorities pledging to ensure the safety of Shiites, attacks against them on holidays continued to occur.[405] For examples of ISKP attacks on Shiite Hazaras, see Section 3.1.5.2. In 2023, Taliban fighters themselves also shot at Shiites in Ghazni and Kabul on Ashura, resulting in an unknown number of fatalities.[406] The following year, Taliban members once again committed acts of violence against Shiites during Ashura, in addition to shutting down telecommunication networks and closing roads.[407]

[397] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025.
[398] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Briefing Notes Zusammenfassung Afghanistan*, 31 December 2023 (login via Milo required).
[399] Hasht-e Subh, *Ashura Under the Shadow of the Taliban: Shiites Protest Restrictions on Religious Freedom*, 7 July 2025.
[400] Amu TV, *Taliban restrict Muharram observances in Herat: Sources*, 5 July 2025.
[401] UNAMA, *Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, p. 2.
[402] Afghanistan International, *Gunmen Kill Aga Khan Foundation Religious Affairs Official In Badakhshan*, 6 July 2025.
[403] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Briefing Notes*, 28 July 2025.
[404] Afghan Witness, *Taliban-backed Shia conference draws thousands in Kabul*, 14 March 2025.
[405] Afghanistan International, Taliban Imposes New Restrictions on Shia Practices Regarding Celebration of Muharram, 13 July 2023.
[406] Hasht-e Subh, *Taliban Shooting Target Shiites in Ghazni; Death Toll Reaches Four*, 29 July 2023.
[407] Afghanistan International, *Taliban Members Disrupt Shias' Ashura Ceremony In Western Kabul*, 16 July 2024.

The Shiite faith is gradually disappearing from schools. Shiite books have been removed from school libraries, and Shiite Jafari jurisprudence has been removed from university curricula. Shiite books were also confiscated at the border.[408]

Ismailis

One source noted a sharp increase in repression against Ismailis during the reporting period. In addition to forced conversions to Sunni Islam, this source reported instances of sexual violence against Ismaili women by local Taliban members.[409] According to reports by the NGO Rawadari, Amnesty International and UNAMA, at least 100 Ismaili Shiites in Badakhshan were forced to convert to Sunni Islam and study Hanafi jurisprudence in 2024. A further 50 such conversions occurred in the first three months of 2025. The victims were taken from their homes at night and asked questions regarding their faith. The Ministry for PVPV also established religious schools (madrassas) in several predominantly Shiite districts, where Shiite children were required to study Hanafi jurisprudence.[410] In July 2025, Fazl Ahmad Paeez, a prominent member of the Ismaili community and head of religious affairs at the Shiite NGO Aga Khan, was shot dead by unknown assailants. In June 2025, Sayed Qiyamuddin, an Ismaili who worked as a guard for the WHO, was assaulted and killed in Jalalabad, a few months after his brother, who also worked as a guard for the WHO, had been killed. According to media reports, these killings exemplified increased violence towards Ismailis.[411]

3.1.6.2 Non-practising and differently practising Muslims

Repression of religious groups mainly targeted Shiite Muslims, but Sunni Muslims were also subject to rigid regulations. Imams had to adhere to strict guidelines, for example, with the df Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs instructing imams across Afghanistan on a weekly basis regarding the topics they should cover in their Friday prayer sermons. The df authorities also issued guidelines for funerals of people who had taken their own lives.[412]

Sufism

Afghanistan has produced a rich tradition of Sufism. Sufis advocate a more spiritual and tolerant interpretation of Islam within the Hanafi school, creating room for dialogue. This interpretation of Islam is at odds with those of the Taliban and other extremist groups, such as ISKP. Following the closure of Sufi lodges (*khanaqahs*) and foundations across Afghanistan by the df authorities in 2022, Sufis continued to face repression during this reporting period. In September 2024, all forms of Sufi expression were banned from the media and confined to the private sphere, prompting strong criticism from Afghan clerics.[413] A year later, in September 2025, the df Ministry for PVPV allegedly arrested a group of Sufis for committing illegal acts.[414]

[408] Hasht-e Subh, Escalation of Attacks on Hazaras and Taliban Lawmaking: Increasing Restrictions on Shia Followers, 16 September 2024.
[409] Confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[410] Rawadari, *Annual Report Human Rights 2025*, p. 45; UNAMA, Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2025, p. 6; Amnesty International, Report 2024/2025, *Afghanistan*, accessed 17 September 2025.
[411] Afghanistan International, *Gunmen Kill Aga Khan Foundation Religious Affairs Official In Badakhshan*, 6 July 2025.
[412] Amu TV, *Sources: Taliban dictate sermon topics in mosques*, 4 August 2025; UN Secretary-General, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/80/366-S/2025/554, 5 September 2025.
[413] Amu TV, *Taliban's ban on Sufi-related broadcasts sparks backlash*, 23 September 2024.
[414] Pajhwok Afghan News, *Group arrested for committing evil acts in name of Sufism*, 6 September 2025.

On 21 November 2024, ISKP attacked the Sufi shrine of Sayed Padshah Agha in Nahrin district, Baghlan province. Ten worshippers engaged in ritual prayer (*zikr*) were killed by multiple assailants. The attack was claimed by ISKP on 23 November 2024.[415]

Salafism
There were reports from the eastern provinces that Salafist imams were banned from continuing their work, and that they were no longer permitted to lead prayers or preach in mosques. In a prominent Salafist madrassa in Jalalabad that allegedly had links with ISIS, all Salafist imams had already been replaced by Hanafi imams before the reporting period. Some unsolved killings of Salafist students were also attributed to the Taliban's fight against ISKP during this reporting period.[416]

Islamic customs and precepts
With the 'morality law', the df authorities laid down a large number of precepts in writing. The law also empowered the PVPV 'morality police' ('*muhtasib')* to enforce these rules. Many of these rules were already commonplace in parts of conservative Pashtun-dominated areas of Afghanistan: dress codes were in place, and men were required to have beards, wear traditional hairstyles, cover their knees and pray at set times. The precepts for women are discussed in Section 3.1.7. Both men and women are expected to abstain from alcohol, respect their parents and refrain from engaging in friendly relations or providing assistance to non-Muslims. Wearing non-Islamic symbols, such as crosses, is also prohibited. Other new rules appear to be partly derived from the former Taliban code of conduct, including the powers granted to the PVPV police (see Section 3.1.7.1).[417] For more information on the enforcement of precepts, see the section on less strictly practising Muslims (3.1.6.3). For a comprehensive overview of the precepts, please refer to the text of the 'morality law' in Annex 2.

3.1.6.3 Less strictly practising Muslims

It is not possible to provide an exhaustive overview of all punishments, or lack thereof, for non-compliance with precepts, as non-punishment is not reported. In general, the authorities expected strict adherence to the 'morality law'. While more relaxed enforcement was also reported, particularly in less conservative regions such as Kabul, this never guaranteed safety from the df authorities. According to UNAMA, there were many ambiguities and inconsistencies surrounding the precepts, and the unpredictability, severity and disproportionality of the imposed punishments, as well as the intrusions into people's private lives, contributed to a climate of fear and intimidation among the Afghan population.[418] The 'morality police' ('*muhtasib*') were greatly feared, and there were also cases of people being accused of non-compliance with the precepts as a result of personal conflicts. Furthermore, enforcement was tightened in waves during the reporting period. For example, young people in a Hazara-majority neighbourhood of Kabul were initially allowed to wear Western clothes, and women were permitted to go out in public without a headscarf. However, the *muhtasib* – presumably at the urging of the

[415] Amu TV, ISIS claims responsibility for deadly attack on Sufi shrine in Afghanistan, 24 November 2024.
[416] Afghanistan International, *The Fate of Salafis Under Taliban: From Imam Removal To Mysterious Killings*, 20 January 2025.
[417] Calhoun, Johnson, Thomas; DuPee, Matthew, *Analysing the new Taliban Code of Conduct (Layeha): an assessment of changing perspectives and strategies of the Afghan Taliban*, March 2012, pp. 83 et seq.; International Review of the Red Cross, *The Layha for the Mujahideen: an analysis of the code of conduct for the Taliban fighters under Islamic law*, Vol. 93, number 881, March 2011, p. 95.
[418] UNAMA, *Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, p. 2.

supreme leader – cracked down on this in June 2025, arresting women and girls for being outside without sufficient covering.[419]

Officials of the df authorities in particular were expected to adhere to religious precepts. They were required to have beards and wear traditional dress, and in some areas they were also required to attend prayers.[420] Moreover, they had to pass an exam on Islamic subjects.

Examples of enforcement of the 'morality law' and precepts for men are given below. Examples of precepts for women are provided in Section 3.1.7. In practice, corporal punishments were sometimes imposed for violations of the 'morality law' (see Section 3.3.5).

Precepts on proper beard length and hairstyles

The df PVPV minister (see Section 3.3.1.1) instructed barbers not to cut beards shorter than fist-length, and not to cut 'Western hairstyles'. Although the df PVPV minister has stated that this directive would be advisory in nature, UNAMA recorded 33 cases of enforced execution in the provinces of Badakhshan and Nangarhar, including arrests, detentions and ill-treatment of barbers who had shaved their clients' beards, and of men who had not complied with the precepts.[421]

Precepts related to prayer

Men are required to attend prayers in mosques. According to UNAMA, non-compliance has in some cases resulted in severe penalties, including fines, the closure of shops and restaurants, and corporal punishment (see also Section 3.3.5. In May 2023, in the city of Puli Khumri in Baghlan province, it was found that the df Ministry for PVPV kept an attendance list of people who had not attended prayer at various mosques. The df authorities disputed this claim. On 26 December 2023, the df authorities in the Dehdadi district of Balkh province detained dozens of men for not attending congregational prayers at their local mosque. They were released after three hours.[422] According to one source, people in Kabul were allowed to ignore imams' calls to prayer, and traffic would continue as usual despite these calls. Enforcement was said to be stricter outside Kabul.[423] Another source suggested that the freedom to deviate from principles was also heavily dependent on one's social network and position.[424] UNAMA reported that prayer rules and the obligation to fast were enforced more strictly during Ramadan.[425]

3.1.6.4 Non-Muslims

Converts

Conversion from Islam is punishable by death according to the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law. Conversion is considered apostasy according to Hanafi legal doctrine, which is followed by the courts. Attempting to convert Muslims to another religion is also illegal under Hanafi legal doctrine, and the punishments are

[419] The Independent, *UN concerned by Taliban's arrest of Afghan women and girls for dress code violations*, 21 July 2025.
[420] EUAA, Afghanistan Country Focus, December 2023, p. 84; confidential source dated 11 September 2025.
[421] UNAMA, *Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, p. 11.
[422] UNAMA, *Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, p. 11.
[423] Confidential source dated 12 September 2025.
[424] Confidential source dated 14 October 2025.
[425] UNAMA, *Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights*, July 2024, p. 11.

equally severe. Blasphemy, which can include anti-Islamic writings or utterances, is considered a serious crime under Hanafi legal doctrine as well. Those accused of blasphemy, including apostates, have three days to recant their actions, after which they face the death penalty. There is no clear procedure for recantation under Sharia law. Some *hadiths* (sayings or traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that serve as sources of Islamic law) recommend engaging in dialogue and negotiation with apostates in an attempt to persuade them to renounce their faith.[426] According to an EUAA source, there is no formal policy of actively persecuting converts, due to the general expectation that they will be killed by their own families rather than by the df authorities.[427] For this reason, there is no information available on how the Taliban deal with converts. For more on punishments for violating religious precepts and corporal punishment, see Section 3.3.5.

According to an EUAA source, individuals who were not born Muslim are permitted to continue practising their faith.[428]

Bahá'ís

Since there are no reliable recent estimates of the number of Bahá'ís in Afghanistan, it is unclear how many, if any, still live there. Followers of the Bahá'í faith who remained in Afghanistan reportedly lived mainly in Kabul and in a small community in Kandahar. In May 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that the Bahá'í faith was both a deviation from and a form of blasphemy against Islam. It also declared all Muslims who adhered to the Bahá'í faith to be apostates. According to international sources, Bahá'ís still live in constant fear of being discovered and are reluctant to reveal their religious identity.[429]

Hindus and Sikhs

Hindus and Sikhs have long faced discrimination in Afghanistan. According to the UK Home Office, only 245 Hindu and Sikh families remained in Afghanistan by 2019. Even before the Taliban's seizure of power in August 2021, they were victims of discrimination and social exclusion, while they were also at risk of being attacked by groups such as ISKP. It is not known how many Hindus and Sikhs were still living in Afghanistan during the reporting period. Following the Taliban's takeover, a new group of Sikhs fled Afghanistan, despite the Taliban's public assurances that their rights would be protected. Many Sikhs remained concerned about their safety. According to the US Department of State, only six Sikhs and Hindus remained in Afghanistan by the end of 2023, in order to protect a sacred place of worship, books and relics.[430] In April 2025, the df PVPV minister called Hindus and Sikhs 'offensive and inflammatory'.[431]

Christians

Although reliable figures are lacking, it is estimated that there are still several thousand Christians in Afghanistan.[432] In all likelihood, these are converted

[426] US Department of State, *2023 Report on International Religious Freedom – Afghanistan*.
[427] EUAA, Afghanistan Country Focus, December 2023, p. 84.
[428] EUAA, Afghanistan Country Focus, December 2023, p. 84.
[429] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan, Situation der Hindus und Sikhs*, October 2024.
[430] US Department of State, *2023 Report on International Religious Freedom – Afghanistan*.
[431] Afghanistan International, *Taliban Minister's Remarks on Non-Muslims Spark Concern Among Afghan Sikhs and Hindus*, 12 April 2025.
[432] Christelijk Nieuws, *SDOK maakt Afghaanse Christenen zichtbaar*, 18 September 2025; USCIRF United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Religious Freedom in Afghanistan, 2022; Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, Länderinformationen Afghanistan, 31 January 2025, p. 92.

Christians rather than born Christians. In 2022, a Taliban spokesperson denied the existence of any Christian communities in Afghanistan. Christian organisations therefore fear that the Taliba's goal is to drive out Christians. Christian churches in Afghanistan operate underground.[433]

Converted Christians are considered apostates. It is therefore not possible for converted Christians in Afghanistan to practise their religion openly, and the law prohibits 'non-Islamic' symbols such as crosses and neckties.[434] According to a confidential source, the discovery of tattoos of Christian symbols could lead to severe punishment. This source also stated that if such symbols were kept hidden, there was still a risk that people who had seen them would report the person in question to the df authorities.[435] Although there are no concrete examples of persecution of Christians in Afghanistan, the community remains fearful of persecution. Whereas the Taliban have made formal promises to protect Hindus and Sikhs, they take a less tolerant attitude towards converted Christians.[436]

ISKP has also claimed attacks involving members of other religious minorities. For example, on 17 May 2024 a gunman opened fire on Christians and Shiites at a market in Bamiyan province, killing two Afghan and three Spanish nationals and wounding six others. According to the df authorities, seven people were arrested in connection with the incident.[437]

3.1.7 Women

The situation for women and girls in Afghanistan has deteriorated since the previous COI Report, with their fundamental rights being seriously violated. Where reference is made below to the situation for women, this also includes girls. The UN used the terms 'gender apartheid' and 'dire' to describe the situation of Afghan women in June 2024, before the entry into force of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV) (the so-called 'morality law').[438] In his annual report for 2024, published in February 2025, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan wrote the following:

> 'The Taliban have continued to implement their deeply misogynistic system of oppression of and discrimination against women and girls that is unparalleled in any other country. The Taliban's use of gender oppression and discrimination is both widespread and systematic and may constitute crimes against humanity, in particular the crime of gender persecution, on the grounds of which the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has requested arrest warrants for two Taliban leaders. The Special Rapporteur also reiterates his support for the codification of gender apartheid as a crime against humanity.'[439]

[433] Voice of America News, *Taliban Say No Christians Live in Afghanistan; US Groups Concerned*, 16 May 2022.
[434] See Article 22 of the 'morality law', informal translation by the Afghanistan Analysts Network, also included in Annex 2.
[435] Confidential source dated 11 September 2025.
[436] Voice of America News, *Taliban Say No Christians Live in Afghanistan; US Groups Concerned*, 16 May 2022.
[437] Report of the UN Secretary-General, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/79/947, June 2025, no. 46.
[438] UN News, 'Gender Apartheid' in Afghanistan, Gender-country-profile-Afghanistan-Executive-summary-en.pdf; Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reactie op verzoek commissie over de positie van vrouwen in Afghanistan.pdf, 12 November 2024; OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25.
[439] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Situation of human rights in Afghanistan*, 20 February 2025, A/HRC/58/80.

UNHCR argued that Afghan women and girls are likely to need international protection under the UN Refugee Convention,given the wide range of increasingly restrictive measures imposed on them by the df authorities.[440] In July 2025, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada[441] and Supreme Court president Abdul Hakim Haqqani[442] on suspicion of ordering, inciting or soliciting crimes against humanity targeting girls, women and women's rights advocates.[443] Although the state of Afghanistan is a party to the ICC, the Taliban have indicated that they do not recognise the ICC.

Despite the Taliban's announcement that, following their seizure of power in 2021, women's rights would be respected in accordance with Islam[444], these rights were increasingly restricted, a process that started immediately after the takeover.[445] During the reporting period for this COI Report, women's freedoms continued to erode. Women's rights in Afghanistan are based on Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada's Decree 83/1, adopted on 2 December 2021. The Taliban claim that this decree protects women from forced marriages, as well as from marriages arranged to settle blood feuds, and that it gives women the right to inherit, to be treated the same as their husbands' other wives, and to receive a dowry.[446] According to the Taliban, this means that women's rights are protected.[447] Nevertheless, women's rights have been further curtailed by the introduction of the so-called 'morality law' in August 2024. This law prevented most women from receiving an education, working, continuing their social lives, and going out in public without a male companion. Meanwhile, economic pressures limited women's ability to choose their own spouse. Some women saw no way out other than suicide. Although exact figures are lacking, sources noted a sharp increase in the number of suicides among women and girls since the Taliban took power in 2021.[448] The curtailment of women's rights and its consequences are explained below.

Recent history of women's rights

Shortly after seizing power in Kabul in August 2021, the Taliban repealed the 2004 constitution and replaced many female officials with men. The remaining female officials were placed on paid leave. In September 2021, the Taliban closed the Ministry of Women's Affairs and replaced it with the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV), which already existed during the previous Taliban regime, to control behaviour and enforce a strict interpretation of Sharia law. After their takeover, the Taliban began to radically curtail women's rights almost immediately, just as they did during their first period in power in the late 1990s (see Section 3.1.7.2 for an overview of restrictive measures). For example,

[440] UNHCR, *Guidance note on Afghanistan – Update II*, September 2025.
[441] For a profile on Akhundzada, see the Middle East Institute (MEI) website, https://talibantracker.mei.edu/TalibanProject/Details?pageid=2227&lang=2, accessed 25 July 2025.
[442] For a profile on Haqqani, see the Middle East Institute (MEI) website, https://talibantracker.mei.edu/english/taliban/leadership-tracker/Sheikh-Mawlawi-Abdul-Hakim-Haqqani, accessed 25 July 2025.
[443] International Criminal Court, *ICC Pre-Trial Chamber II issues arrest warrants for Haibatullah Akhundzada and Abdul Hakim Haqqani*, 8 July 2025. The charges read: '*ordering, inducing or soliciting the crime against humanity of persecution, under article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute, on gender grounds against girls, women and other persons non-conforming with the Taliban's policy on gender, gender identity or expression; and on political grounds against persons perceived as "allies of girls and women"*'.
[444] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *Shaking the Sky*, February 2025.
[445] European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024, p. 7.
[446] See the Decree Concerning Women's Rights (83/Vol1), English translation by the Afghanistan Analysts Network: https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/07/Decrees-orders-of-Taleban-amir-Final-English.pdf, p. 31.
[447] Alemarah IEA The Afghanistan Official Voice, *Afghan Women Rights under Islamic Rules and Afghanistan's Culture*, 8 March 2025.
[448] Zan Times, *Why have female suicides increased in Afghanistan?*, 28 February 2024; CNN, *Oppressed by the Taliban, she swallowed acid*, 17 December 2023.

women were once again banned from travelling without being accompanied by a male family member, and they had to cover their entire body, head and face, except the eyes, when outside the home. Over the following months, women and girls were banned from secondary and then tertiary education, and they were denied access to numerous public places, including parks, gyms and bathhouses.[449] For more on the prohibition on Afghan women working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the UN, see 3.1.2.3 and 3.1.7.4.

It is important to note here, for the sake of nuance, that the poor situation for women was not solely caused by Taliban policies, and that conservative views on women have long shaped Afghan culture and Pashtun norms. In interviews, female returnees noted that their position in Afghanistan would not differ significantly from their position in Pakistan.[450]

3.1.7.1 'Morality law'

August 2024 saw the publication of the new Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV), known as the 'morality law'.
The aspects of this law that are relevant to women are outlined below. Other aspects of the law are discussed in Section 3.3.1.1. For an English translation of the legal text, see Annex 2.

In addition to codifying a number of existing restrictions[451] for women and precepts for society as a whole, the new 'morality law' further curtailed women's rights. For example, it prohibited women's voices from being heard in public, even from their home. The introduction of the law also meant that eye contact between unrelated women and men was prohibited, as were sexual relations between women.[452] Women were also required to cover their heads, faces and bodies when they left the house.[453]

Enforcement

Enforcement was carried out by the *muhtasib* and was generally strict, although there were local differences. In July 2025, the *muhtasib* and regular police arrested dozens of young girls and women in Kabul for not dressing properly. Some were detained overnight and released after signing a pledge to abide by the 'morality law'. Alternatively, their families could sign a pledge to this effect and pay a sum of money. The df authorities denied these detentions.[454] According to one source, the detentions were a response to provocations by young people, who had been flaunting the dress code for months.[455] The ban on female voices in public was at odds with the fact that women's voices could still be heard on the radio, even in conservative regions.[456] In practice, *muhtasibs* were more likely to enforce the *mahram* requirement for younger women than for older women, according to a

[449] European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024, p. 7.
[450] Confidential source dated 11 June 2025.
[451] Behavioural rules for Taliban fighters had already been laid down in the *Layha*, or *Layeha*, which is the organisation's code of conduct.
[452] European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024, p. 7.
[453] See the PVPV legal text in Annex 2.
[454] Euronews, *UN concerned by Taliban's arrest of Afghan women and girls for dress code violations*, 22 July 2025; Rukshana, *Taliban arrest dozens of young Afghan women over hijab rules*, 20 July 2025; confidential source dated 31 July 2025.
[455] Confidential source dated 12 September 2025.
[456] Amnesty UK, *"A radio by Afghan women, for Afghan women"*, 1 July 2025.

source.[457] In Kandahar province, enforcers instructed market salesmen to report women without a *mahram* and deny them access to their shops and stalls.[458]

There were also rare instances where *muhtasibs* actually prevented violations of women's rights. For example, various media outlets reported that the intervention of a *muhtasib* in Herat had prevented the detention of a woman and the forced marriage of a child.[459]

Other examples of enforcement are discussed below.

'Moral crimes'
So-called crimes against God[460], or 'moral crimes', were met with *hudud* punishments, believed to be set by God and laid down in Sharia law. These punishments, which included death, stoning and flogging, could only be imposed by a court. This meant that the PVPV police, or *muhtasib*, had to report suspects to the court, and could not impose or carry out corporal punishment themselves. In practice, however, the*muhtasib* did sometimes use violence.[461] When it came to punishing *zina* (extramarital sex), it did not matter whether there was mutual consent; in cases of rape, women were punished as harshly as in cases where there was no coercion. Although both women and men could be punished for *zina*, women were punished disproportionately.[462] There are no conclusive figures available on how many women were arrested for breaching *hudud*. There is data, however, on convictions resulting in corporal punishment (see also Section 3.1.8 for more on blood- and honour-related issues concerning women, and Section 3.3.5 for more on corporal punishment).

3.1.7.2 Restrictive measures

The restrictive measures described in the previous COI Report are still in place.[463] During the current reporting period, a number of new restrictive measures were introduced, mainly limiting freedom of movement and access to the labour market. In August 2024, the 'morality law' came into force, laying down many, but not all, of these restrictions in writing. A review of existing and new measures up to the introduction of the 'morality law' is provided below, and the legal text can be found in Annex 2: English translation of the morality law. These restrictive measures had a combined effect of curtailing freedom of movement and reducing access to healthcare and the labour market. They also led to an increase in domestic violence and poverty.

[457] Confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[458] UN News, *Afghanistan: Taliban restrictions on women's rights intensify*, 1 May 2025.
[459] Pajhwok Afghan News, *11-year-old girl's forced marriage prevented in Herat – Pajhwok Afghan News*, 5 August 2025.
[460] It is said that the punishments for *hudud* crimes, such as capital punishment, stoning and flogging, were set by God through Sharia law. *Hudud* crimes include *zina* (extramarital sex and adultery), *riddah* (apostasy), *hirabah* (waging war against God and society), *sariqa* (theft), *shurb al-khamr* (drinking alcohol) and *qadhf* (slander). *Qisas* (retribution) is based on the principle of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', and is applied in cases of murder or deliberate injury. See also HRW, *Taliban 'Tribal Version': Shari'a Is Not The Same Everywhere*, 2 October 2021.
[461] The UN Special Rapporteur notes that the morality policy 'at times' used physical violence. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 14.
[462] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 13.
[463] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023, p. 93.

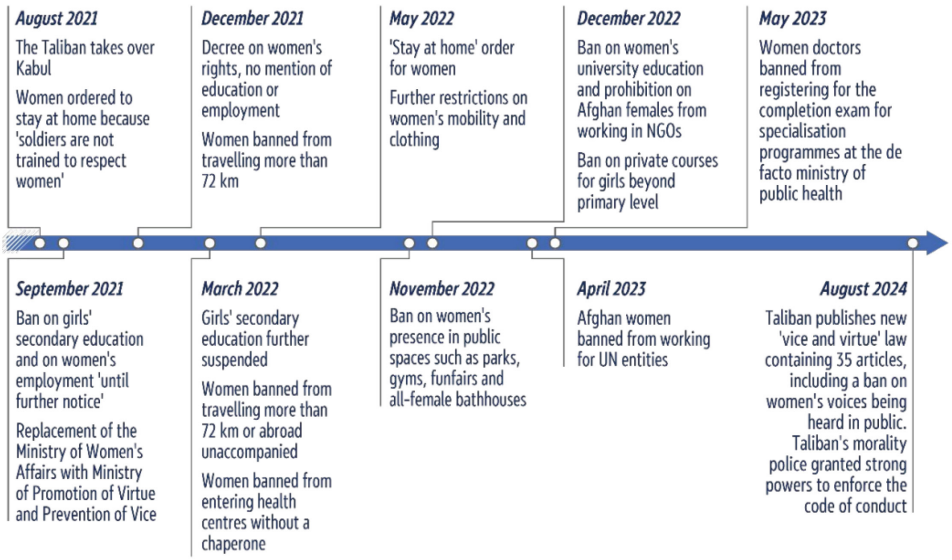
Subject	Date of introduction	Measure
General	20210917	Replacing the Ministry of Women's Affairs with the Ministry for PVPV (Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and Complaints)
Freedom of movement	20211226	Ban on women travelling more than 72 km without a *mahram* (adult male companion)
Freedom of movement	20220327	Ban on women travelling by air (domestically or internationally) without a *mahram*
Freedom of movement	20220505	Ban on issuing driving licences to women
Freedom of movement	20220507	Ban on women travelling by public transport without a *mahram*
Healthcare	20220302	Ban on women visiting a clinic without a *mahram*
Corporal punishment	20221114	*Hudud* and *qisas*[464] punishments for crimes such as robbery, kidnapping and sedition
Education	20210912	Ban on secondary education for girls
Education	20220226	Requirement for universities to use separate classrooms for men and women
Education	20220324	Announcement that schools teaching girls from Year 7 onwards will remain closed
Education	20221220	Ban on women attending university
Education	20221222	Ban on girls from Year 6 onwards from receiving private education
Labour market access	20220313	Requirement to separate men and women in offices
Labour market access	20220810	Dismissal of female flight attendants
Labour market access	20221224	Ban on women working for national and international NGOs
Labour market access	20221227	Ban on women-run bakeries in Kabul
Labour market access	20230404	Ban on women working for the UN[465]
Representation in society	20211229	Requirement to cover or remove the heads of female mannequins
Representation in society	20220507	Requirement for women to cover their faces in public

[464] It is said that the punishments for *hudud* crimes, such as capital punishment, stoning and flogging, were set by God through Sharia law. *Hudud* crimes include *zina* (extramarital sex and adultery), *riddah* (apostasy), *hirabah* (waging war against God and society), *sariqa* (theft), *shurb al-khamr* (drinking alcohol) and *qadhf* (slander). *Qisas* (retribution) is based on the principle of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', and is applied in cases of murder or deliberate injury. See also HRW, Taliban 'Tribal Version': Shari'a Is Not The Same Everywhere, 2 October 2021.
[465] UN, Press release Secretary-General, *Secretary-General Strongly Condemns Taliban Ban on Afghan Women Working with United Nations*, 5 April 2023; OHCHR, *Afghanistan: Taliban must stop targeting Afghan women*, 6 April 2023.

Representation in society	20220519	Requirement for female television presenters to cover their faces
Freedom of expression	20211122	Ban on women appearing in television series
Freedom of movement	20240821	Requirement for women to cover their faces and bodies in public (under the 'morality law') and in the presence of men who are not immediate relatives (*mahram*)[466], or of non-Muslim or licentious women[467]
Freedom of expression	20240821	Ban on women speaking in public[468]
General	20240821	Ban on eye contact between women and men outside of their immediate family[469]
General	20241228	Ban on windows in areas where women are present[470] (published on X)
Freedom of movement	202211	Ban on women visiting public places such as gyms, amusement parks and public parks
Freedom of movement and access to personal hygiene	202211	Ban on women visiting bathhouses
Labour market access	20230512	Ban on women attending medical specialisation programmes
Labour market access	20230602	Female civil servants hired by the previous administration who have been banned from working are given a standard monthly salary of AFN 5,000, regardless of their rank
General	20240821	The PVPV law is published and enters into force
Labour market access	20231202	Medical institutions are instructed to bar women and girls from their degree programmes
Labour market access	20231226	Ban on women working for national and international NGOs is reaffirmed
Labour market access and access to social contacts	20230701	Ban on beauty salons[471]
General	20250804	Requirement for shopkeepers to refuse service to unveiled women[472]

[466] The Guardian, *'Frightening' Taliban law bans women from speaking in public*, 26 August 2024; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 8.
[467] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *The Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, working translation*, August 2024.
[468] The Guardian, *'Frightening' Taliban law bans women from speaking in public*, 26 August 2024.
[469] The Guardian, *'Frightening' Taliban law bans women from speaking in public*, 26 August 2024.
[470] Le Monde, *Taliban assault on women's rights reaches a new level in Afghanistan*, 3 January 2025.
[471] The Guardian, *Taliban order closure of beauty salons in Afghanistan*, 4 July 2023; The Guardian, *They can stone us and flog us*, 1 August 2024; AP, *The Taliban are outlawing women's beauty salons in Afghanistan*, 4 July 2023.
[472] Amu TV, *Taliban warn Kandahar shopkeepers not to sell to unveiled women: Sources*, 5 August 2025.

The European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) has created the following timeline showing the implementation dates of major restrictive measures:



Source: European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, Women's rights in Afghanistan:
An ongoing battle, September 2024.
(https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747084/EPRS_BRI(2023)747084_EN.pdf)

3.1.7.3 Freedom of movement

The introduction of the 'morality law' drastically restricted women's freedom of movement during the reporting period, and with it their access to healthcare, public services, education, employment and public life.[473]

Under the new 'morality law', women are only allowed to leave the house if they are compelled to do so, and they must cover their entire face and body with fabric that is not too thin or transparent. Their clothing should be loose-fitting and sufficiently long. As well as having to cover their faces and bodies, women are not allowed to speak, sing, recite poetry or read aloud in public. Women who wish to leave the house or travel by public transport or taxi must be accompanied by a male companion. This *mahram* must be an adult male member of their immediate family.[474][475] In July 2025, Kandahar province introduced a '*mahram* card', requiring women to designate and register a permanent *mahram*.[476] Nothing is known about a potential national rollout of this requirement.

Taxi drivers are prohibited from transporting women who are not accompanied by a *mahram*. In addition, women are no longer allowed to go to gyms, amusement parks, public parks, beauty salons or bathhouses. The law does not distinguish

[473] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025.
[474] According to the df authorities, the following family members can serve as *mahram*: husband, father, grandfather, brother, son, uncle and nephew. See UNAMA, *Df Authorities' moral oversight in Afghanistan*, July 2024, p. 7.
[475] Although the Taliban do not specify an age requirement for *mahrams*, the PVPV law does stipulate that legal competence is required. As a general rule, there is no set age of majority; instead, the onset of puberty is used as a marker. See Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 8; confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[476] Amu TV, *Taliban impose 'mahram card' requirement for female employees in Kandahar*, 22 July 2025.

between women who have never been married, married women and widows. The *mahram* requirement has further restricted the freedom of movement of single women, and their ability to earn an income.[477]

The law does not specify how far a woman can travel without a *mahram*. An earlier draft of the law stated that women would need a *mahram* to accompany them on journeys of more than 72 km, but this provision was ultimately dropped. Although the final version of the law does not specify a distance, the law refers to *hadiths*[478] that mention journeys ranging from one day to three days and nights. In practice, this lack of clarity meant that any travel movement by a woman without a *mahram* could be deemed illegal, regardless of the purpose or distance.[479]

No exceptions

The law does not allow for any exceptions, not even in cases of emergency, or for health complaints or life-threatening situations. As a result, there have been instances where women died or lost their unborn babies because they could not find a *mahram* to accompany them in a taxi to hospital in time.[480] The ban on visiting bathhouses did not allow for any exceptions either, not even for those with no running water or washing facilities at home. For women without sanitary facilities at home – 79% of households, according to UN estimates – this could have serious implications for hygiene and ultimately health.[481]

Application in practice

Women who fail to completely cover their faces and bodies in accordance with the dress code, who travel without *a mahram*, or who otherwise violate the 'morality law' or other rules of conduct may be detained by the *muhtasib*. In January 2024, UNAMA reported that active enforcement was taking place in public spaces and offices, as well as at educational institutions and checkpoints in urban areas.[482]

The 'morality law' stipulates punishments ranging from verbal reprimands and threats to expropriation and deprivation of liberty. The application of the provisions varied by region and depended heavily on the local df authorities. In general, women were subjected to arbitrary checks, interrogations, threats and arrests for any violation of the 'morality law', but the enforcement of the mahram requirement was inconsistent. According to UNAMA, women who did have a *mahram* with them could also face interrogation and threats if there were doubts about whether the *mahram* was indeed a close relative. If the *muhtasib* suspected that a companion was not actually a *mahram*, or if they suspected a more serious offence, such as extramarital sex (*zina*), the case had to be transferred to a court. This could result in much harsher punishments, including corporal punishment; women were much more likely than men to be convicted in these cases. Whether the alleged sexual relationship was consensual did not influence the punishment.[483]

[477] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025.
[478] *Hadiths* are sayings that have traditionally been attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.
[479] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 10.
[480] The Guardian, *'I begged them, my daughter was dying'*, 3 April 2025.
[481] European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024, p. 7; BBC Monitoring, *Explainer: Afghan Taliban's new comprehensive morality law*, 4 September 2024 (subscription).
[482] RFERL, *'All doors are closed'*, 31 January 2024.
[483] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 10.

Various media outlets also reported that girls and young women had been arrested for violating the dress code, and that they had been sexually assaulted during their arrests, which was later denied by the df authorities.[484] It should be noted that NGOs are reluctant to report on such practices, as they do not want to add to the shame and social exclusion these women already experience.[485]

Exit

Nothing is known about exit permits. However, women who do not hold foreign citizenship or a foreign residence permit are prohibited from leaving Afghanistan without a *mahram*. In addition, women need a passport to travel abroad, which in practice requires a *mahram* (see Section 2.3.2). For passport applications, it was common for the df authorities to require women who were accompanied by a *mahram* when they submitted their application to return with their father, even if he had already died.[486]

3.1.7.4 Representation and work

Women were not represented in national or local df governments, nor did they participate in political activities.

In the public sector, women were mainly allowed to work in healthcare and primary education.[487] Work for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or the UN was no longer permitted as of September 2025 (see Section 3.1.2.3).

Although there was no formal ban on working in the private sector (for instance at women-led small- and medium-sized enterprises), this was subject to severe restrictions and therefore often impossible in practice. The *mahram* requirement and the prohibition on working with male colleagues were major barriers to accessing the labour market. For single women and single mothers, work restrictions were often the final push towards poverty.[488] [489] As early as January 2024, UNAMA reported cases in which the *muhtasib* banned unmarried women or women without a *mahram* from going to work.[490] In August 2025, the UN reported that 78% of women in Afghanistan were not in employment or training.[491] The ILO estimated Afghan women's participation in the labour market to be 5%, compared to 16%-19% before the takeover.[492]

By May 2023, beauty salons – which had previously been a rare source of income for women – had closed. Some women managed to continue operating underground beauty salons through good relations with, or corruption on the part of, the Taliban, risking their own safety.[493]

[484] The Guardian, *Afghan girls accuse Taliban of sexual assault after arrests for 'bad hijab'*, 25 June 2024.
[485] Confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[486] RFERL, *'All doors are closed'*, 31 January 2024.
[487] European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024.
[488] HRW, *For 'Bread, Work, Freedom,' Afghan Women Are Still Resisting*, 30 April 2025; UN Women, Gender Index Afghanistan 2024, June 2025; European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024.
[489] Confidential source dated 11 June 2025.
[490] UNAMA, *English HR update Jan 2024*, 22 January 2025.
[491] UN News, *Four years on, here's what total exclusion of women in Afghanistan looks like*, 11 August 2025.
[492] ILOSTAT Data Explorer, accessed 5 December 2025 (this concerns women aged 25 to 54; for the 15-24 age group, the percentage is 5.9%, compared to 3.1% for the 55-64 age group; HRW, *For 'Bread, Work, Freedom,' Afghan Women Are Still Resisting*, 30 April 2025.
[493] Afghan Witness, *Taliban allegedly raid underground beauty parlours - Centre for Information Resilience*, 14 March 2025; Afghan Witness, *Finding Alternatives: Entrepreneurship and resilience by Afghan women online*, 7 March 2025.

3.1.7.5 Education

The ban on girls receiving an education beyond primary school remained in place during the reporting period, despite internal divisions within the Taliban on this issue.[494] This ban included secondary, tertiary and vocational education.[495] Medical students were barred from taking exams, even if they were close to completing their studies. Girls who wished to continue their education after primary school could only attend madrassas, religious schools where they were mainly taught about the Quran and Islam, and about stereotypical gender roles.[496] In some madrassas, regular school curricula could still be taught to some extent, but this was heavily dependent on local power relations and the possibility of receiving protection against the Taliban from the governor or local administrators. Here too local cultural norms played a role, with Pashtun customs not favouring the education of girls.[497]

The education ban had many different consequences. Not only were girls harmed in terms of their cognitive and psychosocial development and mental health, they were also denied any future prospects other than marrying young and becoming mothers and homemakers. They were unable to provide income for their families. Given the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, many families were forced to marry off their daughters at a young age as they could no longer support them financially.

3.1.7.6 (Legal) protection against violence

Afghanistan is estimated to have one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world. Even before the Taliban came to power, violence against women was widespread, and there was no effective protection.[498]

Violence against women has only increased since the Taliban took power, partly due to their interpretation of Sharia law. For example, under Sharia law both voluntary and involuntary extramarital sexual acts, such as rape, are punishable for men and women alike. Consequently, women who sought help after experiencing sexual violence were at risk of being arrested themselves, for immoral behaviour or for running away from their husbands.[499] The perpetrators often went free, while the police instructed wives to reconcile with their violent husbands.[500] [501] The Taliban effectively suspended all institutional and legal support aimed at women facing gender-based violence. This forced many women and girls to return to or remain in home situations where they were at risk of domestic and gender-based violence. No independent statistics are available on this issue.[502]

Protection procedure

[494] Trouw, *Veel Taliban willen best meisjesonderwijs, maar luisteren naar de leider*, 17 February 2025; NBC, *Taliban officials remain divided over the ban on girls education*, 6 April 2025.
[495] BBC, *Afghanistan: Taliban ban women from universities amid condemnation*, 21 December 2022.
[496] AP News, *With no access to education beyond the 6th grade, girls in Afghanistan turn to religious schools*, 24 July 2025; European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024.
[497] BBC, Afghanistan: Madrassas the only choice for Afghan girls barred from school, 25 March 2025; confidential source dated 17 June 2025; confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[498] UNAMA, *The handling of complaints of GBVAWG*, December 2023, p. 12; EUAA, Afghanistan Country Focus, December 2023, p. 112.
[499] EUAA Afghanistan, Country Guidance 2024, pp. 76 et seq.; European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024, p. 7.
[500] UNAMA, *The handling of complaints of GBVAWG*, December 2023, p. 12; EUAA, Afghanistan Country Focus, December 2023, p. 112.
[501] European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024, p. 7.
[502] EUAA Afghanistan, Country Guidance 2024, pp. 76 et seq.

There is no clear procedure for women to report gender-based violence now that the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law has been suspended.[503] Specialised courts and female police officers no longer exist, or have been reduced to a minimum.[504]

According to a 2023 study by UNAMA, it is unclear how the df authorities interpret Sharia law when it comes to gender-based violence against women and girls. While some df officials told UNAMA that all acts considered illegal under the EVAW law were still recognised as crimes when handling complaints, the majority held a different view. Moreover, the criteria for classifying acts of gender-based violence against women and girls as either civil or criminal offences were not clear. Acts that were criminalised under the EVAW law – such as forcing a woman into marriage, preventing her from possessing personal property, depriving her of inheritance, and subjecting her to ill-treatment – were now considered civil matters. Consequently, perpetrators were not subject to criminal prosecution, and disputes were resolved through negotiation instead. The prevailing perception seems to be that a criminal case against an alleged perpetrator of gender-based violence should only be brought if the victim has suffered physical harm. The following offences were most frequently identified as crimes by the surveyed df authorities: murder, rape, injury by beating or cutting, kidnapping, causing injury or disability, *zina* (extramarital sex and adultery) and forced self-immolation or suicide.[505]

UNAMA's monitoring showed that the following four df institutions formally handled complaints of violence against women and girls: most complaints were filed with the police, followed by the courts, and to a lesser extent the Ministry of Justice and the former Attorney General's Office (which is still operational in some provinces). In some cases, as described below, complaints of gender-based violence against women and girls were also mediated by PVPV *muhtasibs*, even though they had no formal authority to do so, according to the UNAMA report.[506]

Women's access to the aforementioned four institutions was restricted by several factors. Firstly, the institutions' respective competencies were not clearly defined. Moreover, the police – the most obvious institution to turn to for women wishing to report gender-based violence – mainly employed male personnel, which in the cultural context of Afghanistan acted as a strong deterrent for women seeking to make a complaint. In addition, victims had to find a *mahram* willing to accompany them to the authorities to file a complaint, which sometimes required a village elder (*wakeel guzar*) to approve the *mahram*. Some women without a *mahram* were placed in detention 'for their protection'. It was also unclear to victims what the procedural course and outcome of a complaint would be, as no clear distinction was made between criminal offences and civil violations of women's rights. The police, the courts and the Ministry of Justice often classified crimes against women as civil matters, thus preventing criminal prosecution.[507]

[503] The Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law defined 22 types of crime against women, including rape and forced marriage. See OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25.
[504] OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25.
[505] UNAMA, *The handling of complaints of GBVAWG*, December 2023, pp. 10 et seq.
[506] UNAMA, *The handling of complaints of GBVAWG*, December 2023, pp. 10 et seq.
[507] UNAMA, *The handling of complaints of GBVAWG*, December 2023, pp. 10 et seq. OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25.

Traditional dispute resolution
Most victims sought recourse not from the above df authorities but through traditional dispute resolution, due to fear of the df authorities and of being victimised again.[508] The df authorities also referred very serious cases, such as attempted murder, to traditional dispute resolution, regardless of whether the victim wished to take the case to a public criminal court. Traditional dispute resolution bodies often ruled against women.[509]

Shelters
Women's shelters are considered a Western concept by the df authorities, and unnecessary due to the close ties of families in Afghanistan. State-run women's shelters no longer exist[510], leaving women dependent on protection from their families. However, when a woman's family believes that its honour has been compromised, she may be subjected to further violence (see Section 3.1.8). Women who could not return to a family with a *mahram* were sometimes placed in regular prisons, which the df authorities claimed was for their own protection. According to UNAMA, this was done arbitrarily.[511]

Examples
Qadriya, a 28-year-old woman from Baghlan province, became a well-known victim of domestic violence in early 2025, when her case attracted international attention. She endured prolonged violence at home and fled to her sister in Kabul after her father had repeatedly threatened to kill her and demanded that she be executed by public stoning for alleged 'moral crimes'. The Taliban arrested Qadriya and detained her in Kiligai Prison, where she reported ill-treatment and feared for her life. In a video message, she said that she was afraid she would be killed if she were to be sent back to her family. On 5 April 2025, the Taliban released her from prison and handed her over to her father. Qadriya's whereabouts following her release remain unknown.[512]

3.1.7.7 Marriage and divorce

Opportunities for divorce
During the reporting period, opportunities for women to obtain a divorce were further restricted. The social stigma surrounding divorced women remains strong, and their economic dependence has increased due to restrictions on their freedom of movement. After ruling in September 2022 that courts should suspend pending divorce proceedings until further notice, the supreme leader in January 2024 limited the legal options for women to petition for divorce to the following forms of divorce:

- A financial agreement with the husband (*khul*), whereby the wife must buy herself out by paying back at least the dowry. A *khul* can be negotiated within the local community. For women without financial means, it is almost impossible to divorce through this route.

[508] UNAMA, *The handling of complaints of GBVAWG*, December 2023, pp. 10 et seq.
[509] OHCHR, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/79/797 S/2025/109, 21 February 2025; EUAA Country Guidance, Afghanistan 2022.
[510] UNAMA, *The handling of complaints of GBVAWG*, December 2023, p. 16; Hasht-e Subh, *Taliban and Honor Killings: Legalising femicide*, 6 April 2023.
[511] UNAMA, *The handling of complaints of GBVAWG*, December 2023, p. 18.
[512] Zan Times, *What happened to Qadria and Atiq? The Crime of Love under the Taliban*, 12 February 2024; Afghanistan International, *Women's Rights Activists Urge Rescue Of Domestic Abuse Survivor In Baghlan*, 7 April 2025.

- A divorce petition can also be filed with the court in cases where the spouse is terminally ill or impotent. Although impotence can lead to the dissolution of a marriage, it is very difficult to prove.
- The husband himself files for divorce with the court. According to the Hanafi school of Sharia law, a husband can unilaterally divorce his wife, and does not have to go to court to do so. However, he must observe a three-month reflection period before the divorce becomes final.[513]
- Village elders could still pronounce divorces under traditional law ('customary law').

Ill-treatment or domestic violence did not constitute independent grounds for divorce. For more information on domestic violence, see Section 3.1.7.6.

Reversal of previous divorces
Between the seizure of power in August 2021 and January 2024, it was unclear whether divorces pronounced before the Taliban's takeover could be reversed at the request of the ex-spouse. Such reversals were possible for some time for divorces that were not pronounced based on the Hanafi school of Sharia law. According to a survey by the Afghanistan Analysts Network, divorces were indeed being reversed – a UN report[514] noted 50 reversed divorces in one district over a two-year period, while another report made reference to thousands of reversals.[515] Even in cases involving severe domestic violence, women were required to return to their ex-husbands. It has been reported that the Taliban do not systematically reverse previous divorces as a matter of policy, and that the initiative for reversing divorces lay with the ex-spouses. In January 2024, the Taliban announced that divorces performed according to one of the four main Sunni schools of Sharia law – Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali – were legally valid. This meant that divorces could only be reversed if the ex-spouse could prove that the divorce had not been pronounced in accordance with one of these schools of Sharia law, or if there had been procedural defects, such as the spouse being absent during the ruling.[516]

Divorces before the Taliban's 2021 takeover
In the past, common law did offer limited divorce options to community judges, who often ordered reconciliation instead. If a divorce was granted, the wife was required to return the dowry to her husband. During the existence of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, more lenient secular legislation based on the Maliki school of Sharia law allowed courts to grant divorces as well. Women could file for divorce in cases of domestic violence, abandonment or lack of financial support, depending on whether the relevant court chose to follow the civil code. If the court decided to follow customary law or unwritten Hanafi rules instead, divorce petitions could also be dismissed. In addition, women could be accused of moral crimes, such as abandoning their husbands or committing adultery, and prosecuted for them. The burden of proof for domestic violence was on the victim. In traditional rural areas, customary law was the primary system of justice, a role played by state courts in urban areas. The women who managed to obtain a divorce faced social exclusion, financial isolation and shame for themselves and their families. Following the

[513] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *The doors to separation are closed for women*, 4 May 2025.
[514] A/HRC/53/21, paragraph 83.
[515] OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25, paragraph 50.
[516] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *The doors to separation are closed for women*, 4 May 2025.

Taliban's seizure of power in 2021, these options for divorce have been abolished again.[517]

Divorces were increasingly difficult to obtain, and women were often advised to return to their husbands and 'fix' their marriage, even in cases of domestic violence or adultery, or when there was no prospect of reconciliation.[518]

Divorce certificate
Prior to the Taliban's rule, only divorces pronounced by a court under the Hanafi school of Sharia were considered valid. For the small group that managed to get a marriage dissolved through a court, divorce certificates were issued in accordance with the following procedure. The certificates, known as *talaq khats*, were issued by officials in the form of a booklet or two-sided document. In addition to the difficulties of dissolving a marriage, obtaining a divorce certificate is also a complicated process. The following describes a court procedure, not a procedure under traditional law. If a man in Afghanistan wants to obtain a *talaq khat*, he can apply to the Family Court, where he must submit his marriage certificate as well as his and his wife's *tazkeras* (national identity cards) and photographs. The Family Court will then issue a form, which must be taken to a police station and the applicant's regional representative for certification. After the form has been returned to the Family Court, an appointment will be scheduled for a meeting between the spouses and a judge. The judge may either decide to suspend the proceedings to encourage the couple to make a final attempt at reconciliation, or issue a divorce decree, in which case administrative staff will prepare a *talaq khat*. The husband, wife and two witnesses must then return to court to sign the *talaq khat*, after which it is submitted to the Supreme Court for final signing. Certified copies of the *talaq khat* can be provided upon request.[519]

Position of divorced women
There are no recent divorce statistics for Afghanistan, but even before the reporting period divorce was a taboo subject in most Afghan communities, especially in rural areas. Divorced women often found themselves in precarious situations, as they were not always able to return to their parental home, or were seen as a burden. Divorced women and widows faced difficulties in exercising their rights to land and property, as well as negative social attitudes and harassment.[520] The *mahram* requirement also applied to divorced women, severely restricting their freedom of movement and thus their access to employment and healthcare. See Section 3.1.7.3.

3.1.7.8 Child marriage

Child marriage is common
Child marriage is common in Afghanistan. After declining in recent years from around 38.9%[521] to 28.7%[522], various sources reported a resurgence of child marriage during the reporting period. In some cases, these marriages involved very

[517] EUAA *Country Guidance Afghanistan* Januari 2023; Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *The doors to separation are closed for women*, 4 May 2025.
[518] Zan Times, *Locked in suffering: Taliban's stance on divorce leaves Afghan women in despair*, 3 September 2024.
[519] US Department of State, *Visa Reciprocity and Civil Documents by Country – Afghanistan*, accessed 8 May 2025.
[520] EUAA Country Guidance 2022, Afghanistan.
[521] UNICEF MICS Afghanistan 2022-2023, Summary Findings Report, p. 61; UNICEF MICS Afghanistan 2022-2023, Survey Findings Report, p. 219.
[522] UNICEF MICS Afghanistan 2022-2023, Summary Findings Report, p. 61; UNICEF MICS Afghanistan 2022-2023, Survey Findings Report, p. 219.

young children, due to the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan (see below: *Reasons for child marriage*)[523]. No recent figures on this are available yet. A 2024 study by UN Women highlighted a correlation between the ban on girls' education and an expected 25% increase in child marriages, as well as a 45% increase in underage pregnancies[524], with socio-economic consequences for the girls and young women affected.[525]

According to UNICEF figures, the rate of child marriage in Afghanistan (among women aged between 20 and 24 in 2023) has recently reached 28.7%, which is above the global average of 21%. The rate of child marriage among all Afghan women (regardless of age, so including women who were married as children in the past) was 38.9%. Child marriage percentages can differ tenfold between different Afghan provinces.[526] In traditional provinces such as Kandahar, Farah, Nirmoz, Badghis, Faryab, Ghor and Herat, the child marriage rate was around 50%.[527] At the time of writing this COI Report, these provinces still had the highest incidence of child marriage.[528]

Reasons for child marriage

Child marriage can be rooted in social and religious norms, or stem from financial necessity. Moreover, some families see marriage as a way to protect girls and young women against the possibility of being forced into marriage by the Taliban in the future. It is also seen as a means of securing their financial situation, establishing or strengthening ties with other families, and resolving conflicts (now banned by the Taliban).[529] It was therefore mostly women in rural and more traditional areas, or those from poor families or without an education, who were married off as children.[530] The recent increase was primarily related to the economic and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, a lack of educational and employment opportunities, and families' belief that finding a husband for their daughter would protect her from being forced to marry a Taliban member.[531]

According to media reports, very young girls were sometimes married off in exchange for payment to secure their own livelihood (*mahr*) or that of their family (*walwar* in Pashto or *toyana*/*sherbaha* in Dari).[532]

Formal ban prior to 2021 had little effect

[523] Confidential source dated 25 March 2025; confidential source dated 24 June 2025; confidential source dated 23 June 2025; confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[524] The term 'early childbearing' is defined by UNICEF as pregnancy in mothers under the age of 18 https://data.UNICEF.org/topic/child-health/early-childbearing/.
[525] UN Women, Gender Country profile Afghanistan 2024, p. 30, and the letter from UN Women, *Projections for Afghan women and girls*, 2024 https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/05/future-projections-for-afghan-women-and-girls#view.
[526] UNICEF, *A Profile of Child Marriage in South Asia,* 5 May 2023, https://data.UNICEF.org/resources/a-profile-of-child-marriage-in-south-asia/?utm_source=IOMPress+External+Mailing+List+2022&utm_campaign=aa65d02938-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2025_07_09_12_09&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-aa65d02938-396516690.
[527] UNICEF MICS Afghanistan 2022-2023, Summary Findings Report, p. 61; UNICEF MICS Afghanistan 2022-2023, Survey Findings Report, p. 219.
[528] Girls not Brides website, *Afghanistan*, accessed 12 May 2025.
[529] ODI Report, *Changing social norms around age of marriage in Afghanistan*, February 2024, pp. 10 and 33.
[530] Zan Times, *More than one-third of Afghan girls trapped in forced marriages*, 20 January 2025; ODI Report, *Changing social norms around age of marriage in Afghanistan*, February 2024, p. 10.
[531] EUAA, Afghanistan Country Focus, December 2023, p. 80; The Washington Post, *In the new Afghanistan, it's sell your daughter or starve*, 15 January 2024; RFERL, *Afghans Increasingly Marrying Off Young Daughters To Avoid Forced Unions With Taliban*, 1 December 2022; Amnesty International, *Death in slow motion*, 27 July 2022.
[532] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Länderkurzinformation Afghanistan*, *Situation weiblicher Kleinkinder*, December 2024; Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Die Situation von Frauen, Stand 9/2024*, p. *21;* Freedom United, *Selling daughter to survive: the plight of Afghan forced marriage*, 15 January 2024*;* *RFE/RL*, *Taliban's Education Ban on Afghan Girls Fuels Spike in Child Marriages*, 13 June 2024. For explanations of different marriage traditions, see Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *The Bride Price: The Afghan tradition of paying for wives*, 25 October 2016; Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *Living in a collapsed economy*, 20 October 2022.

Following the Taliban's seizure of power, the Civil Code was replaced by the Hanafi school of Sharia law. In practice, however, the Taliban's interpretation of this legal tradition prevailed. As a result, child marriages are permitted.[533] Although the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Civil Code stipulated that marriage was illegal for girls under 16 and boys under 18, this meant little in practice. Customary law was particularly prevalent in rural areas, where knowledge of national legislation was limited and the age of girls and women often unknown due to inadequate birth registration. The physical condition of girls often determined whether they were considered ready for marriage, and setting a minimum age was even seen by family elders as contrary to Sharia law. At the same time, societal views on the appropriate age for marriage shifted towards majority in less traditional provinces and among younger generations over the past decade.[534]

3.1.7.9 Healthcare

Access to and availability of healthcare in Afghanistan clearly deteriorated for the entire population during the reporting period (see Section 1.3.3), while the situation for women became even more dire. According to UNFPA, millions of Afghan women have little or no access to healthcare. The ban on higher vocational training and medical specialisation, coupled with the suspension of all midwifery programmes in December 2023, resulted in a lack of female specialists in the healthcare sector. In addition, women had to be accompanied by a *mahram* to consult a male doctor or nurse. In practice, this meant that women were often unable to access medical care at all[535], or were afraid to ask for it. By 2024, the UN claimed that the education ban for women had led to a deterioration in women's healthcare, estimating that the already high risk of maternal mortality in Afghanistan had increased by 50%.[536] Every month, 20,781 Afghan women give birth in hard-to-reach areas of the country, facing particular challenges in accessing hospitals and other healthcare facilities. Services providing vital protection for women and girls at risk of gender-based violence, and those who have been victims of gender-based violence, have also been severely curtailed[537] (see Section 3.1.7.6). According to one source, some women could still receive basic health training from international organisations or the df Ministry of Health, but this training was inadequate for assisting with procedures such as deliveries.[538]

3.1.8 Blood- and honour-related issues

As discussed in the previous COI Report, honour killings[539]are deeply rooted in traditional Afghan patriarchal tribal culture, with violence against women widespread even before the Taliban took power. This is particularly true in the tribal regions bordering Pakistan, which are predominantly Pashtun. In Pashtun tribal law, family honour is the most important measure of a man's status in society. Any (alleged) actions by female family members that 'compromise' this family honour are considered unacceptable and a valid reason for punishing these women, with the

[533] ODI Report, *Changing social norms around age of marriage in Afghanistan*, February 2024, p. 10.
[534] ODI Report, *Changing social norms around age of marriage in Afghanistan*, February 2024, p. 10.
[535] UNFPA website, Afghanistan, accessed 7 July 2025; Arab News, *How aid cuts have brought Afghanistan's fragile health system to its knees*, 20 September 2025; confidential source dated 11 June 2025.
[536] European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing to EU Parliament, *Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle*, September 2024, p. 8; confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[537] UNFPA website, Afghanistan, accessed 7 July 2025.
[538] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025; BBC, *'If we can't speak, why live?'*, 11 September 2024.
[539] Definition of honour-based violence: honour-based violence includes any form of mental or physical violence, perpetrated based on a collective mindset in response to a (potential) violation of the honour of a man or woman, and thus that of their family, which is or could be known to the outside world. See https://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl/factsheets/eergerelateerd-geweld. Domestic violence committed due to an honour-based motive is considered honour-based violence.

aim of protecting the family's moral integrity and social status. According to Amnesty International, the following situations can be grounds for killing a female relative: talking to a man who is not a relative, rejecting a marriage partner chosen by the family, being accused of or actually committing adultery, becoming pregnant outside of marriage, not adhering to conservative dress codes, and being a victim of rape.[540]

There are no reliable figures on the incidence of blood feuds and honour killings during the reporting period. Media reports indicate that while honour killings and violence against women remain widespread, such incidents are often hidden or passed off as suicides. The Taliban do not actively prosecute or combat this type of violence.[541]

See Section 3.1.7.6 for more on (legal) protection against domestic violence. Members of the LGBTIQ+ community could also become victims of 'honour-based' violence (see Section 3.1.10).

3.1.9 LGBTIQ+ individuals

No significant changes in the position of LGBTIQ+ individuals in Afghanistan were documented during the reporting period. They remain at high risk. LGBTIQ+ individuals continued to face discrimination and other human rights violations, including threats and arbitrary detention. Same-sex sexual relations were still punishable by death.[542] For more information on this group, see the previous COI Report on Afghanistan.[543]

In his reports of 9 February 2023 and 22 February 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, expressed concern about violence and discrimination towards LGBTIQ+ individuals in Afghanistan. He had been contacted by Afghan LGBTIQ+ individuals who reported facing persecution and severe ill-treatment at the hands of the df authorities due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Bennett also noted that the Taliban's discriminatory gender ideology had exacerbated existing social stigmas and taboos regarding LGBTIQ+ individuals, making it more difficult for them to access the justice system and other services.[544]

Illegality of homosexual acts
Even before the Taliban seized power, sexual acts between two people of the same sex were punishable under Afghanistan's Penal Code.[545]

Following the takeover, the df authorities confirmed that same-sex sexual relations were illegal, as they are viewed as contrary to Sharia law.[546] A 2022 manual published by the Taliban Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV) stated that same-sex sexual relations were prohibited, and that those suspected of homosexual behaviour should be tried and punished by the ministry's

[540] See COI Report June 2023, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 102.
[541] Hasht-e Subh, *Taliban and Honor Killings: Legalizing femicide*, 6 April 2023.
[542] Amnesty International, *Human rights in Afghanistan*.
[543] See COI Report June 2023, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 103.
[544] OHCHR, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan*, Richard Bennett, A/HRC/55/80, paragraph 68, 22 February 2024.
[545] Ilga Database, *Afghanistan*, https://database.ilga.org/afghanistan-lgbti.
[546] US Department of State, *Afghanistan 2023 Human Rights Report*, 22 April 2024, p. 45.

district-level representatives.[547] The 'morality law', which entered into force on 31 July 2024, has made lesbian relationships and sodomy illegal[548], contributing to the criminalisation and persecution of LGBTIQ+ individuals. Engaging in homosexual acts is punishable by flogging, and press reports indicate that judges have actually handed down this sentence.[549] Corporal punishments were carried out in public places, such as sports stadiums. This happened, for instance, on 4 June 2024 in the city of Sar-e-Pul, where 63 people were publicly punished by flogging for homosexuality, fornication and 'immoral relations', according to various media.[550] LGBTIQ+ individuals were actively persecuted by the df authorities. In March 2025, a trans woman and a lesbian woman were prevented from leaving for Iran. They were arrested and placed in detention. While their situation is unknown, there are fears that they will face criminal prosecution, be sentenced to corporal punishment, and be subjected to severe beatings during their detention.[551]

There have been no reports of the df authorities sentencing homosexuals to death.

On 13 October, the df Supreme Court announced that it had tried eight people for 'sodomy' and other offences, sentencing them to 10 to 39 lashes. These punishments were then carried out in public. According to *KabulNow*, a news website whose editorial staff relocated to the US from Kabul after the Taliban took power, floggings became more frequent following an instruction from Hibatullah Akhundzada to impose harsh Islamic punishments (*hudud*).[552]

Homosexual men

As described in the previous General COI Report on Afghanistan, the concept of an individual having a particular sexual orientation, or of a community existing around a shared gender identity, is not recognised in Afghan society. Consequently, the vast majority of men who have sex with other men do not consider this to be part of their identity.[553] According to HRW, openly identifying as homosexual or sharing your life with a person of the same sex is not acceptable, as this goes against traditional gender norms, societal codes and tribal codes of honour. If an individual's homosexual orientation becomes known, they may be excluded, discriminated against or subjected to violence by their family, community and the df authorities.[554]

Lesbian women

Section 22 of the 'morality law' stipulates that the *muhtasib* have a duty to prevent individual unlawful acts. This includes entering into lesbian relationships and creating a platform or circumstances that promote such relationships. According to the law, a *muhtasib* may punish unlawful acts by issuing a verbal reprimand, reminding the offender that their actions will displease Allah, issuing a threat,

[547] OHCHR, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan*, A/HRC/51/6, paragraph 76, 9 September 2022.
[548] EUAA, Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan - Country Focus, p. 114; Afghanistan, df authorities, *The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law*, August 2024, Art. 22
[549] Voice of America News, *Taliban publicly flog 63 Afghan men, women for crimes such as 'immoral relations'*, 4 June 2024; COI Report June 2023, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 103.
[550] Voice of America News, *Taliban publicly flog 63 Afghan men, women for crimes such as 'immoral relations'*, 4 June 2024. See also KabulNow, *Taliban Publicly Flogs Over 60 Afghans, Including 15 Women, in Northern Afghanistan*, 4 June 2024.
[551] PinkNews, *Two LGBTQ+ women being 'tortured daily' after being detained by the Taliban*, 9 April 2025; The Independent, *Concern grows for safety of Afghan woman and trans friend detained by Taliban from Kabul airport*, 28 March 2025.
[552] KabulNow, *Taliban Publicly Flog Eight People, Including a Woman, in Eastern Afghanistan*, 13 October 2024. See also KabulNow, *Taliban Supreme Leader Stresses Enforcement of Strict Sharia Law in Afghanistan*, 25 March 2024.
[553] See the March 2022 General COI Report on Afghanistan, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pp. 143-144.
[554] HRW, *Afghanistan: Taliban Target LGBT Afghans*, 26 January 2022.

imposing a fine, or detaining the offender for a period ranging from one hour to three days. The *muhtasib* may also impose any other punishment deemed appropriate, provided it is not the exclusive prerogative of the court.[555]

The *muhtasib* were given these powers to act against so-called 'moral crimes' based on suspicions, with no requirement for evidence or due process, while ordinary citizens were encouraged to report offences. The law also gives the *muhtasib* the power to enter citizens' homes. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), this constitutes a serious invasion of privacy that will exacerbate the climate of fear and surveillance in Afghan society.[556]

In practice, however, lesbian relationships were also punished before the 'morality law' came into force. *Outright International* described a case in which a lesbian woman and her father were abused by Taliban fighters because of her sexual orientation, after which the Taliban fighters demanded that she marry one of them. The NGO indicated that – partly due to their limited freedom of movement – there is less information available on violence perpetrated by the df authorities against lesbian women.[557] In general, they seem to mainly be at risk of being pressured, discriminated against and assaulted by their own family.[558] Previous media reports have also confirmed that lesbian women fear violence from family members if their sexual orientation were to become known.[559]

Bisexuals

Information on bisexual people in Afghanistan is almost non-existent. According to *PinkNews*, many gay individuals live as bisexuals in practice. Anecdotal evidence suggests that both lesbian women and gay men feel forced into heterosexual marriages in order to conceal their sexual orientation and fulfil cultural expectations surrounding marriage.[560]

Transgender individuals

Before the Taliban took power, a community of transgender women and men existed in cities such as Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, where they reportedly mostly lived together in groups, away from their families' influence. Many of these individuals were said to be sex workers or dancers who dressed as women. They were subjected to serious discrimination and violence, sometimes resulting in death.[561] The Afghanistan LGBTIQ+ Organisation, an NGO representing LGBTIQ+ interests, documented a case from September 2023 in which a trans woman was raped multiple times by six Taliban fighters. Recent news interviews with transgender individuals reveal that they are subjected to discrimination and violence by the Taliban, as well as by their friends, neighbours and family.[562]

Outright International suggests that there is less information available on violence perpetrated by the df authorities against transgender men. In general, they seem to

[555] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *The Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law*, translated into English, 31 August 2024.
[556] OHCHR, *New morality law affirms Taliban's regressive agenda, experts call for concerted action*, 30 August 2024.
[557] Outright International, *A mountain on my shoulder*, 14 February 2023, p. 18.
[558] Washington Blade, *Taliban persecution against LGBTIQ Afghans heightens*, 20 February 2023.
[559] See the March 2022 General COI Report on Afghanistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 144.
[560] PinkNews, *Bisexual Afghan 'stuck' under Taliban rule fears he'll be executed – but 'hasn't lost hope'*, 24 August 2021; see also General COI Report March 2022, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 144.
[561] See the March 2022 General COI Report on Afghanistan, p. 145; OHCHR, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, A/HRC/52/84, paragraph 88, 9 February 2023.
[562] KabulNow, *Life for Afghanistan's LGBTs Was Already Hard, Then the Taliban Came*, 7 February 2024; Hasht-e Subh Daily, *Under The Taliban Rule: Transgender Individuals Treated as Sexual Slaves*, 24 January 2024.

mainly be at risk of being pressured, discriminated against and assaulted by their own family.[563]

Violence against LGBTIQ+ individuals

LGBTIQ+ individuals are at risk of violence at the hands of their family members, wider society and the df authorities if their sexual orientation or gender identity becomes known. This includes physical violence, sexual abuse, rape, abduction and lethal violence.[564] According to a source cited in the previous COI Report, men who are perceived as 'feminine' are most at risk of experiencing this type of violence, regardless of their ethnicity or economic position. According to Afghan LGBTIQ+ individuals interviewed by *KabulNow*, the absence of legal protection for LGBTIQ+ people increased their risk of becoming victims of violence and discrimination.[565] *KabulNow* also interviewed an LGBTIQ+ activist who was allegedly detained by the intelligence service in February 2024. He reported being tortured while in detention, with methods including 'waterboarding, electric shocks, and repeated beatings'.[566]

Since the Taliban's seizure of power, foreign NGOs focusing on LGBTIQ+ advocacy have published a number of reports. They documented cases of discrimination and violence experienced by Afghan LGBTIQ+ individuals at the hands of their own families and friends, or perceived Taliban representatives.[567] With regard to the latter group, it was often unclear whether the perpetrators were police or military personnel, members of armed groups linked to the Taliban, or local representatives.[568] These NGOs, some of which are helping Afghan LGBTIQ+ individuals flee the country, received reports from Afghan LGBTIQ+ individuals who were facing threats, searches, physical and sexual violence, detentions and abductions. Rainbow Railroad stated that it was often difficult to determine whether LGBTIQ+ individuals reported as missing had been abducted by the Taliban or had chosen to go into hiding, severing ties with friends and family.[569]

Since the Taliban takeover, LGBTIQ+ individuals in Afghanistan have indicated in interviews that they have been forced into hiding.[570] According to a source cited in the previous COI Report, most LGBTIQ+ individuals avoid trouble by not disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity, with few coming out openly or advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights.[571]

Interest groups

There are no known Afghan organisations that publicly advocate for the interests of the LGBTIQ+ community in Afghanistan. Due to the risk of prosecution by the authorities and mistreatment by other actors in society, it is impossible to establish such organisations.[572] However, there are a number of international NGOs working to promote LGBTIQ+ rights. Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, these

[563] Washington Blade, *Taliban persecution against LGBTIQ Afghans heightens*, 20 February 2023.
[564] US Department of State, *Afghanistan 2023 Human Rights Report*, 22 April 2024, p. 45.
[565] KabulNow, *Life for Afghanistan's LGBTs Was Already Hard, Then the Taliban Came*, 7 February 2024.
[566] KabulNow, *Life for Afghanistan's LGBTs Was Already Hard, Then the Taliban Came*, 7 February 2024.
[567] Rainbow Railroad, *'Annual Report 2023'*, 9 June 2024; Outright International, *A Mountain on My Shoulders: 18 Months of Taliban Persecution of LGBTIQ Afghans*, February 2023; Afghan LGBT, *In the Shadow of the Taliban: Untold Stories of LGBTIQ+ Persecution in Afghanistan*, 12 February 2024. NGOs such as Rainbow Railroad and Outright Action International are also working to help resettle Afghan LGBTIQ+ individuals in need in safe countries.
[568] Outright International, *A Mountain on My Shoulders: 18 Months of Taliban Persecution of LGBTIQ Afghans*, February 2023.
[569] Rainbow Railroad, '*No Safe Way Out*', December 2022, p. 16.
[570] Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, A/HRC/55/80, OHCHR, paragraph 65, 22 February 2024.
[571] See the June 2023 General COI Report on Afghanistan, p. 106.
[572] US Department of State, *Afghanistan 2023 Human Rights Report*, 22 April 2024, p. 47.

organisations have issued reports on the situation of Afghan LGBTIQ+, relying largely on information provided by Afghan LGBTIQ+ people. Following the takeover, the international NGO LGBT Afghanistan was established to defend the interests of Afghan LGBTIQ+ people, with a particular focus on refugees.[573] There are also other networks aimed at helping the Afghan LGBTIQ+ community through the provision of humanitarian aid, mental healthcare and assistance in fleeing Afghanistan. Behesht Collective[574] and Roshaniya LGBT[575] are two organisations that provide these services.[576]

3.1.10 Minors (including unaccompanied minors)

UNICEF has stated that the humanitarian emergency in Afghanistan has had a particularly severe impact on minors: 3.5 million children under the age of five are malnourished, with 1.4 million at risk of dying from severe and acute malnutrition.[577] Children are forced by the humanitarian situation to go in search of water or work, and therefore cannot attend school.[578]

3.1.10.1 Legal status of minors

Afghanistan has no legal age of majority. The df authorities use different criteria to assess majority for girls and boys, based on external signs of puberty. According to this method of determination, girls usually reach puberty earlier than boys.[579] An EUAA source reported that the idea that childhood ends at 18 is seen as a Western construct in Afghanistan. This source also noted that a large majority of people do not know their date of birth or their age; age is often estimated, which means that it makes 'very little sense' to link adulthood to an individual's eighteenth birthday.[580]

The minimum age at which a person is considered to be legally competent and the minimum age at which a person is considered to be criminally liable are both unclear. Both were 18 under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, but the Taliban use the more ambiguous criterion of 'visible signs of puberty'. [581] Consequently, children may receive the same sentences as adults, including corporal punishment.[582] There was no compulsory school age during the reporting period, as the compulsory education law was still suspended.[583]

One source reported that children who have not yet shown signs of puberty – and who are therefore considered minors in Afghanistan – require a male companion, such as their father, to obtain travel or identity documents. Minors also require the

[573] Afghan LGBT, *About us.* *https://afghanlgbt.com/en/info/about/*
[574] https://www.facebook.com/BeheshtLGBT/, accessed 16 September 2025.
[575] https://roshaniyalgbt.org/, accessed 16 September 2025.
[576] Arc-en-Ciel International Rainbow, *Behesht Collective*, *https://www.arcenciel-international.be/world-resources/behesht-collective*. See also: Arc-en-Ciel International Rainbow, *Roshaniya LGBT*, *https://www.arcenciel-international.be/world-resources/roshaniya-lgbt*.
[577] UNICEF, *UN calls for bold nutrition action to tackle child and women nutrition crisis in Afghanistan*, 15 June 2025; TOLOnews, *UNICEF: Over 3.5 Million Afghan Children Malnourished Amid Deepening Crisis*, 4 August 2025.
[578] Reuters, *Kabul's wells run dry, driving children out of class and into water queues*, 29 September 2025; UNICEF Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8, 31 August 2025.
[579] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[580] EUAA, Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan - Country Focus, p. 44.
[581] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 8.
[582] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 8.
[583] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.

permission of their father or another male relative to make legal decisions.[584] Another source stated that a child's mother can also obtain an identity or travel document on her child's behalf if she can present a statement from the father.[585] It is unclear how different authorities handle such cases in practice.

3.1.10.2 Legal guardianship

According to Hanafi teachings, children fall under their father's guardianship, and fathers have legal authority over their children (*wali*). If the father dies, legal guardianship is, in principle, assumed by the paternal grandfather. If both parents die and there are no surviving paternal grandparents, the provisions below apply. These provisions were in the 1977 Civil Code, in force under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and were based on Hanafi teachings. They are still used by the Taliban, according to one source.[586]

- Legal guardianship (*wilayah*) – The paternal grandfather is first in line to assume guardianship, but if he is deceased guardianship is usually transferred to other male relatives on the father's side (such as uncles) or adult brothers.
- Right to care (*hadanah*) for a child until they are old enough to care for themselves[587] – Right to care is usually granted to the child's closest maternal relatives (such as their maternal grandmother or a maternal aunt) or a sister who is able to provide care until the child reaches the age of legal competence (see above).
- Order of priority for family members – Both Sharia law and the Civil Code stipulate an order of priority. After the mother and maternal grandmother, the right of care passes to the maternal aunt, then to the sister (if she is a close relative and suitable), followed by paternal aunts, and so on.
- In the absence of suitable close relatives, the court may decide to transfer guardianship to a more distant family member or, as a last resort, to a state welfare institution, such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs or a protective agency.[588]

Female relatives may be granted right of care, but never legal guardianship. There are no procedures for the latter. According to the 1977 Civil Code and its current implementation by the Taliban, guardianship always lies with a male relative on the father's side. A father or grandfather does not require a court order to obtain guardianship, as this is granted to them by law. A court order is required, however, if guardianship is to be transferred to an adult brother or uncle, resulting in a guardian designation (*hukm-i-wilayat* or *tasdīq-nāma-ye wilāyat*). It is extremely rare for a non-relative to be appointed as legal guardian, and this person is never a woman.[589]

3.1.10.3 Institutional care

If no suitable male guardian can be found within a child's extended family, the child may, in extreme cases, be placed in state institutional care. Such care is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. However, the placement of

[584] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[585] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 14; Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan Identitäts- und Zivilstandsdokumente*, May 2025, p. 44; confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[586] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[587] *Sin at-tamyiz*, or age of discernment. Under the old Civil Code, based on Hanafi teachings, the maximum age was 7 for boys and 9 for girls.
[588] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[589] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.

children in institutional care is rare in Afghanistan. The df authorities have no public guidelines or protocols for such care facilities. Although childcare officially falls under the remit of the df Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and there is at least one state-run orphanage for boys[590], the vast majority of single children rely on the help of orphanages run by NGOs such as RRAA[591], ADNO[592] and HARO[593]. The capacity of these orphanages depends heavily on the fluctuating budgets of the organisations that run them. The care offered amounts to basic psychosocial support, and if a child has specific care needs another care facility is sought.[594]

With the help of a Turkish organisation, an orphanage with room for 500 children opened in Ghazni in August 2025. The complex will also house a madrassa, a university and a medical centre.[595]

Just as there are no official guidelines or supervision for orphanages, there is also no official foster care system with state supervision of foster parents.[596]

3.1.10.4 *Bacha bazi*

Bacha bazi (literally: 'playing with boys') is a form of child abuse in which men in positions of power, such as warlords, sexually abuse boys and force them to dance in girls' clothes. This custom persisted under the previous government, despite being illegal. The children were not seen as victims, however.[597] Men who practised *bacha bazi* were typically influential people who treated children as their property. Both perpetrators and victims of this practice were stigmatised by their communities, but there were usually more adverse consequences for the victims than for the perpetrators, due to the former's weak social position.[598]

The Taliban also outlawed *bacha bazi*. The practice was already illegal during the Taliban's first regime, and after 2021 the new df authorities reaffirmed this ban in the 'morality law'. While men have been criminally prosecuted for engaging in *bacha bazi*, the exact number of cases is unclear.[599]

Given that *bacha bazi* is a very difficult phenomenon to study[600], no reliable information is available on the scale at which it occurred. According to an EUAA source, the practice is also viewed with extreme distaste by the Taliban.[601] However, another source noted that no positive developments had occurred with regard to this issue during the reporting period.[602]

[590] US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2024* – Afghanistan.
[591] Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan https://www.rraa.org.af/
[592] Afghanistan Development National Organization https://www.adno.af/
[593] High Afghanistan Rehabilitation Organization https://www.haro.org.af/
[594] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[595] Pahjwok, *Orphanage worth 55m afs opened in Ghazni*, 26 August 2025.
[596] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.
[597] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, p. 110.
[598] EUAA *Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan – Country Focus*, 2024, p. 63.
[599] UNHCR Guidance Note on Afghanistan, Update II September 2025, UNHCR, p. 17.
[600] UN Women, *Gender Country profile Afghanistan 2024*, p. 30.
[601] EUAA *Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan – Country Focus*, 2024, p. 63.
[602] Confidential source dated 29 September 2025.

3.2 Compliance and violations

3.2.1 Freedom of expression

The 'morality law' also imposed severe restrictions on freedom of expression, including a ban on publishing content deemed contrary to the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law. These restrictions further limit freedom of the press and put journalists at increased risk, hindering independent reporting and severely restricting the flow of information inside and outside Afghanistan.[603]

For specific provisions, see also the sections on critical journalists and human rights activists.

3.2.1.1 Freedom of the press

Afghanistan's media again faced sharp restrictions in 2024 and 2025, with the country ranking third from the bottom in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index. Improvements previously achieved in terms of access to information, media funding and the financial viability of media, and with regard to gender equality and plurality in the media landscape, have virtually been undone. Nevertheless, Afghan journalists did not give up hope, navigating a media landscape that was increasingly restrictive, particularly for women. The df authorities continued to make critical reporting extremely difficult, including through censorship and limiting access to information. Furthermore, journalists and other media workers faced intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, ill-treatment and imprisonment as a result of their work.[604]

A directive issued in July 2025 by the df Ministry of Information and Culture banned all critical political discussions on television and radio without prior approval. The so-called 'Policy on the Management of Political Programs in Afghanistan' requires media to submit daily lists of programme topics and guests to a special monitoring committee. Even previously approved analysts must be re-approved for each new appearance, and any statements that do not align with Taliban policy are strictly prohibited. According to the Taliban, the measures are intended to uphold 'Islamic principles', prevent civil unrest and stop the spread of fake news. Given Afghanistan's already heavily censored press landscape, UN Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett described the new policy targeting political programming in Afghanistan as 'deeply worrying'.[605]

Radio remained the primary medium in Afghanistan, partly due to the country's high illiteracy rate.[606]

For information on journalists, see Section 3.1.4.

3.2.1.2 Internet and social media

[603] OHCHR, New morality law affirms Taliban's regressive agenda, experts call for concerted action.
[604] IFJ, *South Asia Press Freedom Report 2024-2025*, accessed 24 September 2025; OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025; UNAMA, *Media Freedom in Afghanistan*, 26 November 2024.
[605] Amu TV, *Bennett condemns Taliban's new media directive as escalation of authoritarian rule*, 7 July 2025; UN Special Rapporteur Bennett on X, 4 July 2025.
[606] Confidential source dated 19 June 2025.

Several provinces experienced frequent internet outages. Initially, it was believed that the supreme leader in Kandahar had ordered a reversion to 2G network technology in an attempt to curb moral decay resulting from the viewing of 'inappropriate/immoral material in films and videos'. Kabul appeared to suffer fewer service interruptions. Banks, government agencies and international organisations could reportedly ask to be exempted from internet restrictions.[607] However, by autumn 2025, it had become clear that the df authorities intended to restrict or ban internet access altogether; in September 2025, the Taliban restricted internet speeds in 14 provinces by banning fibre-optic connections.[608] In late September, Afghanistan experienced a nationwide internet outage that lasted around 48 hours.[609]

According to media reports, the supreme leader initially wanted to ban the use of smartphones.[610] At checkpoints, people were required to present their smartphones for a review of their social media activity. The supreme leader also called for the use of a list of special keywords or codes that, if detected, would automatically lead to the transfer of all user data to intelligence agencies.[611] The exact words included in this list and the extent to which this system is operational are not known.

3.2.1.3 Protests

Various media outlets reported on women protesting against the ban on female education being arrested and mistreated by the Taliban.[612] Protests were violently disrupted by the df authorities, which used arbitrary arrests and detentions as a means of suppressing dissent among the Afghan population. The arbitrary arrest and detention of women who participated in peaceful protests or spoke out against the df authorities' discriminatory policies towards women and girls have led to a steady decline in the number of public protests on women's rights issues.[613]

There was unrest in Badakhshan province, where the Taliban's prohibition on the cultivation of cannabis and opium poppy resulted in significant loss of income for the local population. According to media reports, at least eight people were killed during protests in July 2025. While the df authorities tried to suppress these protests, some local Taliban leaders sided with the protesters and were themselves arrested by the df authorities.[614]

3.2.2 Freedom of assembly and association

General

Individual rights and freedoms, such as the right to assembly and the right to freedom of expression, were not protected under Taliban rule. Citizens could not freely exercise their right to assembly, or their right to access information and the

[607] Confidential source dated 25 September 2025.
[608] Amu TV, *Sources: Fibre optic internet cut in Kunar as shutdowns expand to 14 provinces | Amu TV,* 18 September 2025.
[609] BBC, *Flights in Afghanistan grounded after internet shutdown*, 30 September 2025; Reuters, *Afghanistan's cellphone, internet services down after Taliban ordered cut, sources say*, 1 October 2025.
[610] Afghanistan International, Taliban Leader Sought Clerics' Ruling To Ban Smartphones Before Internet Shutdown,
[611] Amu TV, *Taliban leader orders telecom firms to share user data with intelligence*, 17 September 2025.
[612] Deutsche Welle, *Afghan women's rights activists in Pakistan fear deportation*, 17 March 2025.
[613] OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025.
[614] Afghanistan International, Taliban Detains Own Commanders & Civilians Following Clashes In Badakhshan, 4 July 2025; confidential source dated 3 July 2025.

press.[615] The Taliban continued to suppress these rights during the reporting period.[616]

Civil society organisations and activists
NGOs' freedom to operate in Afghanistan has been significantly restricted since the Taliban seized power. This can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the decline in donor funding since 15 August 2021, USAID's suspension of aid, and the departure of many prominent civil society actors and human rights defenders from the country. Those who fled did so out of fear of retaliation and repression by the df authorities, including arbitrary arrest and detention. Due to frequent raids, many NGOs have left Afghanistan and now operate from other countries. This is not the case for international NGOs and humanitarian aid organisations.[617] In 2022, the Taliban made it mandatory for NGOs operating in Afghanistan to sign memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with the relevant df ministries. This condition also existed under the previous government. NGOs that did not sign these memorandums could face sanctions, such as being banned from operating in Afghanistan.[618]

Although many initiatives are emerging from Afghan society and there is social engagement, care must be taken to ensure that these activities align seamlessly with Taliban policies. Rather than maintaining permanent organisations, these local initiatives tend to operate on an ad hoc, demand-driven basis. Some carry out a proportion of their activities underground, while others have the full approval of the df authorities. Since the Taliban want to maintain complete control when it comes to social issues such as education and women's participation, social initiatives tend to focus on more neutral topics, such as economic development, medical care and emergency relief. People involved in these initiatives often do not see themselves as activists, as activism is viewed as a Western concept.[619] According to one source, foreign organisations founded on Christian principles are permitted to work in Afghanistan, provided they refrain from proselytising.[620]

Protests
Protests are discussed in Section 3.1.2.3.

3.2.3 Freedom of religion and belief

Islam is the predominant religion in Afghanistan, with more than 99% of the population identifying as Muslim. The vast majority of Afghans are Sunni Muslims who follow the Hanafi school.[621] Estimates indicate that Sunni Muslims comprise between 84.7% and 89.7% of the population, while Shiite Muslims (primarily from the Hazara community) account for approximately 10% to 15%. Other religious groups – such as Hindus, Sikhs, Bahá'ís and Christians – together represent less

[615] General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023, p. 116.
[616] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2025: Afghanistan; Amnesty International, World Report 2024/25, Afghanistan; Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 12.
[617] OCHCHR/UNAMA, *No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks Faced By Persons Involuntarily Returned To Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025.
[618] SIGAR, *SIGAR 25-22-AR Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with Taliban-Led Ministries: State Department's Implementing Partners' MOUs Have Had Mixed Effect on Assistance Delivery*, April 2025.
[619] Confidential source dated 20 June 2025; confidential source dated 25 July 2025.
[620] Confidential source dated 25 July 2025.
[621] In Islam, a school (*madhhab*) is a formal methodology or framework through which Islamic scholars interpret, derive and apply religious laws and ethics based on primary sources such as the Quran and the Sunnah (the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad).

than 0.3% of the population and often practise their faith privately due to prolonged persecution and increased repression of religious minorities since the 2021 takeover.[622] The Taliban consider anyone who leaves Islam to be an apostate. As discussed in Section 3.3.6,[623] apostasy is punishable by death.

During the reporting period, opportunities for non-Muslims to practise their faith became increasingly limited due to social stigma, security risks, and a scarcity of places of worship. The Taliban apply their strict interpretation of Sharia law to all Afghans, including those who follow different precepts based on their beliefs or faith. Formally, the Taliban have promised religious minorities – especially the largest minority, the predominantly Shiite Hazaras – that they can continue practising their religion. In practice, however, non-Sunnis faced significant pressure, with discrimination against Shiites in particular being deeply rooted in everyday life (see Section 3.1.6.1). According to USCIRF, the Taliban also committed acts of physical and sexual violence against minorities, specifically targeting women and children. Arbitrary detention, torture and corporal punishment were reported as well.[624]

According to HRW, the Taliban did not provide religious minorities with any protection against terrorist groups such as ISKP. Since the takeover, Shiite Muslims in particular have been targeted in more than twenty suicide attacks.[625] In September 2024, for instance, fourteen people were killed in an ISKP attack in Daikundi province, an area mainly populated by Hazaras.[626] In late April 2024, a gunman opened fire on worshippers at the Shiite Sahib-u-Zaman mosque in Guzara district, Herat province. Six people were killed, including the imam and a three-year-old child.[627] On 6 January 2024, ISKP claimed responsibility for an attack on a passenger bus in Dasht-e-Barchi, a predominantly Hazara neighbourhood in Kabul, killing at least five people and injuring twenty.[628]

The 'morality law', adopted in August 2024, imposes religious customs and precepts on all residents of Afghanistan, including dress codes and beard length requirements. The Taliban have banned 'non-Islamic' religious ceremonies and gatherings, such as Nowruz and Shab-e Yalda, as well as fireworks and other festivities that they say have no Islamic basis. In addition, the law prohibits 'non-Islamic' symbols such as crosses and neckties.[629] Failure to observe Ramadan and skipping prayers are also listed in the 'morality law' as offences that should be prevented or punished by the *muhtasib*.

For the legal text of the 'morality law', see Annex 2. For concrete examples of how the law is applied in practice, see Sections 3.1.6 (religious groups) and 3.1.7 (women).

3.2.4 Freedom of movement

[622] USCIRF, *Religious Freedom Eradicated in Afghanistan*, 27 August 2025.
[623] Website Solidarity Committee, *Religion in Afghanistan*, accessed 17 September 2025; HRW, *Religious Freedom in Afghanistan: Three Years After the Taliban Takeover*, 19 March 2025.
[624] USCIRF, *Annual report 2024*, p. 12.
[625] HRW, *Religious Freedom in Afghanistan: Three Years After the Taliban Takeover*, 19 March 2025.
[626] Voice of America News, *IS-claimed attack kills 14 Shiite Muslims in Afghanistan*, 13 September 2024.
[627] Al Jazeera, *Gunman kills at least six in attack on mosque in Afghanistan's Herat*, 30 April 2024; Le Monde, *Gunman kills 6 worshippers inside a Shiite mosque, the Taliban say*, 1 May 2024.
[628] HRW, *Attacks Target Afghanistan's Hazaras*, 3 May 2024.
[629] See Article 22, paragraphs 21, 22 et seq. of the 'morality law', informal translation by the Afghanistan Analysts Network, also included in Annex 2.

Restrictions on freedom of movement within Afghanistan are primarily the result of checkpoints located throughout the country, both inside and outside cities. Checkpoints also existed before the Taliban took control of all of Afghanistan, and were traditionally used to exercise power in certain areas. Following the takeover, the Taliban reduced the number of checkpoints[630], and those that remain are now manned by various df authorities, such as the police, PVPV enforcers (*muhtasib*), other security services, or a combination of these. Checkpoints are typically located along main roads, but they can also be found in cities. In addition to permanent checkpoints, there are also ad hoc checkpoints set up for specific purposes, such as responding to a particular threat or ensuring the safety of senior officials while travelling. At these checkpoints, depending on the df authority present, mobile phones are searched for content that violates the 'morality law' or other laws, while the country's dress codes and the *mahram* requirement for women are enforced as well. The checkpoints are also used to identify people who are critical of the Taliban[631], and to collect taxes on the movement of goods and sometimes people (mainly at the border). However, the collection of such taxes was inconsistent, and it was not always clear where these revenues ended up.[632]

The greatest restriction on freedom of movement during the reporting period concerned the freedom of movement of women (see Section 3.1.7.3).

3.2.4.1 Exit

Although there is border surveillance at official border posts, many people cross the border at unofficial crossing points. Between January and May of 2025 alone, around 1.2 million Afghans passed through official and unofficial border crossings to enter Iran and Pakistan. Those travelling to Iran mainly used the official border crossings at Islam Qala, Zaranj and Abo Nasri Farahi, as well as nine irregular crossing points. To enter Pakistan, people mainly used the official border crossings at Torkham and Spin Boldak, as well as one unofficial border crossing (Bahramcha in Helmand).[633]

Irregular exit

For a variety of reasons, some Afghan citizens chose to leave the country to neighbouring Iran and Pakistan via irregular routes. These reasons included the enforcement of the *mahram* requirement for women and girls travelling alone, a lack of financial resources and limited access to visas, as well as the reduced presence of diplomatic missions in Afghanistan. According to UNHCR, some – such as members of minority groups and former government officials – also avoided official border crossings for fear of identification and possible arrest by Afghanistan's df authorities. Official border crossings were avoided by those without valid travel documents as well.[634]

Although leaving the country via unofficial border crossings from Herat province to enter Iran was common – accounting for around 80% of exits – this was made more difficult due to increased surveillance on the Afghan side through new checkpoints, and the construction of a barrier wall on the Iranian side. On 18 January 2025, the

[630] For an overview of permanent checkpoints before and after the coup, see: Danish Institute for International Studies, Roadblocks And Revenues # 02: The border business, p. 27.
[631] Bundesamt für Fremdwesen und Asyl, *Länderinformationen: Afghanistan, Version 12*, p. 140; IOM, *Socioeconomic+Information+Update+Afghanistan.pdf*, 22 February 2024.
[632] Danish Institute for International Studies, Roadblocks And Revenues # 02: The border business, p. 27.
[633] UNHCR Afghanistan - Border Monitoring Report January - May 2025.
[634] UNHCR Afghanistan - Border Monitoring Report January - May 2025.

irregular border crossing at Dak in Nimroz was closed to pedestrians by the df authorities. Irregular exit to Pakistan was far less common than to Iran, as the authorities on both sides had previously allowed the free movement of Afghan and Pakistani citizens without passports and visas. However, following the introduction of the visa requirement for travel to Pakistan in 2023, the irregular entry rate was around 17%.[635]

[635] UNHCR Afghanistan - Border Monitoring Report January - May 2025.

3.3 Supervision and legal protection

3.3.1 Afghan law

Applicable law
Before the Taliban seized power in 2021, there were several sources of law in Afghanistan, some of which conflicted with each other. These included:

- International law and international treaties;
- Formal law introduced by the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan or dating from a more distant past;
- The Hanafi school of Sharia law;[636]
- Shia Personal Status Law, based on the Shiite Jafari school;
- Customary law.

After coming to power, the Taliban gradually suspended many of the laws in force and designated the Hanafi[637] school of Sharia as the sole source of law, supplemented by instructions from Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. The supreme leader was the only designated policymaker. His laws[638] and decrees are the only source of law besides Sharia, and he is the sole supreme judge.[639] In addition to being published on the government website, laws and decrees were disseminated partly through verbal statements by the supreme leader[640], through X (formerly Twitter)[641] and through imams or *muhtasibs* in mosques. Given the high rate of illiteracy among the population, it is common for laws to be transmitted verbally in Afghanistan. As one source noted, however, this creates a high risk of legal uncertainty, as different speakers may interpret laws differently.[642]

In September 2021, the Taliban announced the suspension of the 2004 constitution and all other laws adopted under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. New laws could only enter into force once they had been checked for compliance with Hanafi teachings.[643] This process is not yet complete, but progress is being made, as the Taliban are finalising new legislation based on the Quran, the Sunnah (the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad) and the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. Prominent religious figures and legal scholars were involved in drafting these laws.[644]

Enforcement of laws
There were significant differences not only in how laws were announced, but also in how they were enforced. From the time before they seized power, the Taliban are accustomed to operating in a fragmented manner. Before the takeover in 2021,

[636] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *Shaking the Sky*, February 2025.
[637] Sunnis adhere to the Hanafi school, while Shiites adhere to the Jafari school. See ODI, ODI Report, p. 10.
[638] While the drafting of laws may be initiated by a df ministry, the supreme leader has the final say.
[639] See Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *Shaking the Sky*, February 2025; Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *Policing Public Morality: Debates on promoting virtue and preventing vice in the Taleban's second Emirate*, 15 June 2022.
Decree Concerning Women's Rights (83/Vol1), English translation by the Afghanistan Analysts Network: https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/07/Decrees-orders-of-Taleban-amir-Final-English.pdf p. 31.
[640] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025; EUAA *Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan – Country Focus*, 2024, p. 28.
[641] Le Monde, *Taliban assault on women's rights reaches a new level in Afghanistan*, 3 January 2025.
[642] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[643] UN SG, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/76/667-S/2022/64, 28 January 2022.
[644] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025; Amu TV, *Taliban near completion of legal code rooted in religious law*, 18 June 2025; confidential source dated 26 June 2025.

there were no official policy strategies or precise guidelines. The absence of uniform policies meant that the personal attitudes of individual Taliban commanders were the deciding factor in shaping and enforcing policy, resulting in significant variation between different regions. [645] During the reporting period, the Taliban attempted to enforce laws more consistently. For example, the supreme leader decreed stricter enforcement of the 'morality law', more public punishments[646] and the establishment of provincial morality police offices in 28 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, staffed by a total of 3,300 'morality police officers' (*muhtasibs)*.[647]

The differences in the enforcement of laws, and the resulting scope for authorities to act arbitrarily, are also discussed at the beginning of Chapter 3.

Shia Personal Status Law
The 2009 Shia Personal Status Law governed marriage, divorce and inheritance within Afghanistan's Shiite community. In addition, the law stipulated that women were required to ask permission to leave the house except for urgent matters, to 'wear makeup' for their husbands upon request, and to submit to intercourse at their husbands' demand. In the months following their seizure of power, the Taliban abolished the Shia Personal Status Law and dismissed all Shiite judges from their courts. In August 2024, the NGO Rawadari reported that, in practice, all court cases relating to Shiite personal status were tried according to Hanafi jurisprudence. This forced Shiites to have their cases settled through customary law.[648]

3.3.1.1 'Morality law'

August 2024 saw the publication of the new Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV), known as the 'morality law'. The associated Ministry for PVPV replaced the Ministry for Women's Rights and was given far-reaching powers to control the population (see Section 1.1 and below). In addition to codifying a number of existing restrictions[649] for women and precepts for society as a whole, the new 'morality law' further curtailed women's rights. The precepts for women are discussed in Section 3.1.7.1.
For an English version of this text, see Annex 2: English translation of the morality law.

Powers of the 'morality police'
The new 'morality law' grants more extensive discretionary powers to the Ministry for PVPV's morality police officers (*muhtasibs*), introducing a range of punitive measures, including reprimands, verbal threats, confiscation of property and three days' imprisonment. The *muhtasibs* impose punishment on the offender themselves or, in some cases, on a male relative if the offender is a woman. The punishment should fit the severity of the offence, according to the assessment of the relevant *muhtasib*. Under the law, the confiscation of property and imprisonment require consultation with local MPVPV representatives at director level. Other punishments can be imposed by commanders of the morality police (*muhtasib*) without further consultation. The *muhtasib* also have the discretion to impose punishments that are

[645] Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), *Policing Public Morality: Debates on promoting virtue and preventing vice in the Taleban's second Emirate*, 15 June 2022.
[646] Amu TV, *Taliban leader orders increase in public punishments, sources say*, 5 April 2025.
[647] UNAMA, *Report On The Implementation, Enforcement And Impact Of Propagation Of Virtue And Prevention Of Vice Law In Afghanistan*, 10 April 2025; Amu TV, *What message does the disclosure of thousands of Taliban official documents convey?*, 11 February 2025; confidential source dated 24 April 2025.
[648] Rawadari, *Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report 2024*, p. 35; General Country of Origin Information Report – Afghanistan, June 2023, p. 126; EUAA, Country of Origin Information: Afghanistan – Country Focus, p. 46.
[649] Behavioural rules for Taliban fighters had already been laid down in the *Layha*, or *Layeha*, which is the organisation's code of conduct.

not the court's prerogative. For instance, the law criminalises extramarital sex (*zina*), but as this is considered a crime against God, only the courts can hand down punishments for it (*hudud*).[650] For figures on corporal punishment and the death penalty, see Section 0. These punishments are imposed by the courts, not by the Ministry for PVPV or the *muhtasib*.

As male family members can be held accountable or punished if their female relatives do not adhere to the precepts of the 'morality law', women are under pressure to comply with this law not only from the df authorities, but also from within their own communities and families, as well as from religious leaders and neighbours.
According to research by the UN, enforcement by male family members has doubled from 22 percent to 44 percent, as has enforcement by community and religious leaders.[651] In August 2024, the df authorities announced that the *muhtasib* had arrested 13,000 people for violating the 'morality law' since August 2023.[652]

Besides the 'morality law', Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada has issued numerous other rules and decrees. On 28 December 2024, for instance, he announced on X (formerly Twitter) that spaces where women are often found, such as kitchens, should be obscured from view by building owners, for example by walling off windows, so as to protect neighbours from temptation.[653]

The implications of the 'morality law' for women's rights are discussed in Section 3.1.7.1.

3.3.2 Judicial process

Legal system
Since taking power, the Taliban have transformed Afghanistan's legal system. Although the Taliban have retained some of the structures from the time of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – namely a three-tier system of jurisdiction consisting of the District Court, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court – these have been reformed to fit the Taliban's ideological model of governance and control. Taliban-controlled courts now administer 'justice' in accordance with the Taliban's extreme interpretation of Sharia law.[654]

According to OHCHR, the judiciary has been 'turned upside down'. All judges appointed under the previous government, including around 270 women, were dismissed and replaced by Taliban-affiliated, exclusively male judges, many of whom had no professional legal training and made decisions based on edicts issued by the Taliban rather than established legal principles. Most judges were ethnic Pashtuns, which, in OHCHR's assessment, contributed to the increased marginalisation of other ethnic groups. Judges are supported by muftis and clerks (*muharers*), who are also appointed based on their connections to the Taliban. Muftis are Islamic scholars whose role is to advise judges. They had very wide-

[650] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 10.
[651] A/HRC/57/22, paragraph 17.
[652] Amnesty International, *The State of the World's Human Rights: Afghanistan 2024*, 29 April 2025; UNHCR, *Guidance Note on Afghanistan*, Update II, September 2025.
[653] Le Monde, *Taliban assault on women's rights reaches a new level in Afghanistan*, 3 January 2025.
[654] OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25.

ranging and subjective discretionary powers to interpret Sharia law and issue religious rulings.[655]

OHCHR reports that there are no standardised court procedures, with courts across the country experiencing significant backlogs and functioning inadequately. There are consistent reports of bias in cases involving Taliban associates, and appellate bodies often uphold the decisions of primary courts, regardless of the reasoning – or lack thereof – behind them. The result has been the establishment of a Taliban-controlled legal system characterised by a profound lack of independence that is distrusted by large sections of the population, as well as the inconsistent, arbitrary and often discriminatory application of Taliban-imposed laws and edicts.[656]

The risks faced by former legal professionals under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are discussed in Section 3.1.1.

3.3.2.1 Military justice vs civil justice[657]

Alongside the civil justice system, the military justice system was further developed during the reporting period. Military courts have jurisdiction over army, police and GDI personnel, as well as over civilian personnel working for these agencies. Unlike during the time of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the personnel of almost the entire security apparatus are now subject to the jurisdiction of military courts. These military courts fall under the Supreme Court's Directorate of Military Affairs, and a deputy chief justice was appointed to oversee them in October 2023. Like civilian courts, military courts apply Sharia law, Hanafi jurisprudence, decrees issued by the Taliban's supreme leader, the Ottoman civil code and the df court's procedural manual. Both civil and military justice have a three-tiered structure. There are 27 df primary courts; five courts of appeal in Balkh, Kabul, Herat, Kandahar and Nangarhar; and two cassation courts (the highest courts) in Kabul and Kandahar, which hear appeals from the provinces assigned to them. During the period of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, judges were required to meet stricter training requirements. Currently, df military judges are primarily required to have received a secondary education in Sharia law.

Although criminal lawyers are permitted to practise in both the civil and military justice systems (see also Section 3.3.2.1 on lawyers), they reportedly have more rights in civilian courts than in military courts.[658]

3.3.2.2 Traditional justice

In Afghanistan, besides the official justice administered by public courts, there is also traditional justice, which is practised in so-called *shuras* (local councils) and *jirgas* (assemblies of local elders informally authorised to make decisions for families or individuals, often for the purpose of resolving disputes or community issues), and by *ulemas* (religious scholars).[659] During the reporting period, it remained unclear which types of cases were heard by which courts.[660] According to UNAMA, however,

[655] OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25.
[656] OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25.
[657] The term 'civil justice' here denotes jurisdiction over civilians, as distinct from jurisdiction over military personnel.
[658] Confidential source dated 28 August 2025.
[659] UNAMA, *Divergence of Practice: The Handling of Complaints of Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls by Afghanistan's de facto Authorities*, December 2023.
[660] Confidential source dated May 2025.

people arrested by the police were always tried by a public court.[661] Nevertheless, traditional justice at *shuras* and *jirgas* remained commonplace; according to one source, it was even the most common form of justice. This form of justice was not centralised, and applied a mix of Sharia and customary law. Both civil and criminal cases could be referred to this traditional form of dispute resolution, including by senior Taliban officials or public courts. Among the factors that contributed to the frequent use of traditional justice were the significant lack of capacity in public courts, and the effectiveness of traditional dispute resolution methods, which also involved local communities. In family law cases, *shuras* and *jirgas* dealt with issues such as inheritance disputes, divorce petitions and domestic violence (see Section 3.1.7.6). Conflicts over land ownership and access to water resources could also be dealt with by these legal bodies.[662] In addition, traditional dispute resolution methods were used to mediate between the families of the victims and alleged perpetrators of serious crimes, such as murder, rather than criminal proceedings in a public court.[663]

3.3.2.3 Ad hoc justice

Currently, various actors – including the police, the intelligence service, the 'morality police' (*muhtasib*) and local officials – have taken on investigative and quasi-judicial roles. This includes questioning suspects, determining their guilt and imposing punishments, in some cases all within a single day. This ad hoc system lacks both opportunities to appeal decisions and procedural safeguards, resulting in widespread violations of due process rights.[664] The 'morality police', for instance, can impose punishments even for mild offences (see Section 3.1.7.1 on the 'morality law').

3.3.2.4 Lawyers

The Afghan Independent Bar Association was abolished in 2021, resulting in the disbarment of hundreds of lawyers. Only after passing an examination on Sharia law were some reinstated, but none of these individuals were women. Criminal lawyers in particular faced threats, or they were simply not allowed to work on cases. [665]

Independent legal assistance by lawyers in criminal proceedings was under severe pressure during the reporting period. The Ministry of Justice has complete control over the selection and admission of criminal lawyers, and there is no independent bar association. The total number of lawyers has decreased by around half. Lawyers in training were selected for admission based on their knowledge of Sharia law, the Quran and Hanafi jurisprudence, as well as their adherence to rules regarding beard length and clothing. While there were instances of hostile treatment by judges, this did improve during the reporting period. Another improvement was the increase in the number of female criminal lawyers who, despite not being officially admitted, were in practice allowed by some judges to represent female clients, especially in family law cases.[666]

[661] Report of the UN SG/UNAMA, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/79/947 S/2025/372, 11 June 2025, paragraph 12.
[662] Confidential source dated December 2024.
[663] Confidential source dated May 2025.
[664] OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25, paragraphs 28 et seq., paragraph 33.
[665] OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25, paragraphs 28 et seq., paragraph 33.
[666] Confidential source dated 19 June 2025.

UNAMA reported that male criminal lawyers in Kandahar were receiving fewer cases, due in part to clients' limited financial resources, restricted access to detained suspects and the arbitrary nature of legal proceedings. In Farah and Herat provinces, lawyers reported that judges were pushing for confessions, thereby limiting the defence options available to lawyers and their clients. In Herat, criminal lawyers complained that they were being replaced by lawyers admitted after 2021.[667]

3.3.3 Reporting to the police

The reporting procedure has not changed significantly since the previous COI Report. However, women's ability to interact with the df authorities has been further curtailed by the introduction of the 'morality law' (see Section 3.1.7).

3.3.4 Arrests, custody and detention

3.3.4.1 Numbers of arrests

The number of arrests increased during the reporting period, partly due to the introduction of the 'morality law'. Rawadari reported a 42% increase in arrests in 2024 compared to 2023[668], while Amnesty International documented 13,000 arrests by the *muhtasib* in one year.[669] According to Rawadari, the *muhtasib* and the GDI are responsible for most of the arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial punishments.[670]

According to the US Department of State, the Taliban frequently detained civilians without a clear legal basis, disregarding material and procedural safeguards.[671]

3.3.4.2 Detention conditions

In late 2023, OHCHR published a report on detention conditions in Afghanistan between 1 January 2022 and 31 July 2023, a timeframe that partly overlaps with this reporting period. A total of 1,600 human rights violations were identified, 11% of which were against women; 50% of these violations involved torture or other forms of severe ill-treatment. This ill-treatment was typically part of the interrogation process during pre-trial detention.[672]

The df Office of Prison Administration (OPA) oversaw 34 provincial detention centres in Afghanistan, not including the 187 district-level detention facilities or the 30 juvenile rehabilitation centres.[673] According to a report by UNAMA, the GDI was responsible for more than half of all human rights violations in detention, with the police responsible for 42% and OPA for only 1%.[674] The UN Special Representative noted that while much remained to be done with regard to the rights and treatment of detainees, there had been constructive cooperation between UNAMA human rights teams and OPA. UNAMA investigators were granted access to all 34 OPA

[667] UN SG, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/79/947-S/2025/372, 11 June 2025.
[668] Rawadari, *Annual Human Rights Report 2025*.
[669] Amnesty International, *Human rights in Afghanistan 2024*.
[670] Rawadari, *Annual Human Rights Report 2025*.
[671] US Department of State, Afghanistan Human Rights Report 2024, p. 4; Rawadari, *Annual Human Rights Report 2025*.
[672] UNAMA Human Rights Service, *The treatment of detainees in Afghanistan*, September 2023.
[673] Prisonstudies.org/Afghanistan, accessed 7 October 2025.
[674] UNAMA Human Rights Service, *The treatment of detainees in Afghanistan*, September 2023, p. 5.

detention centres across the country, where they made regular visits and interacted with detainees.[675]

It is not known whether there were any unofficial detention centres or GDI detention centres, in addition to the aforementioned facilities, that fell outside the scope of the cooperation with UNAMA.[676] In July 2025, the df justice minister was accused by diaspora media of operating a secret prison.[677]

Furthermore, while detention conditions in Afghanistan were qualified as very poor by the UN, they could not be assessed comprehensively because human rights organisations only had intermittent access to facilities. There were no national detention standards, nor any mechanisms to challenge detention conditions. Financial constraints often prevented prison administrators from meeting international standards, including with regard to the provision of food, hygiene products, vocational training and education. In addition, various media outlets reported dire detention conditions, including inadequate food and the shackling of detainees[678] (see also Section 3.3.7).

The exact number of detainees currently being held in Afghan detention centres is unclear. Upon enquiry with the df authorities, Austrian researchers were informed that some 19,300 people were still in detention in September 2024, including 800 women. This figure was later revised to 23,000, with the clarification that around half of these individuals were being detained pending their trial.[679] On the occasion of Eid-al-Fitr, the df authorities announced that 3,152 convicted detainees had been released, and that the same number had received sentence reductions. In March 2025, the total number of convicted detainees was reported to be 5,615.[680]

3.3.4.3 Female detainees

During this reporting period, female detainees also faced ill-treatment and sexual abuse while in detention.[681]

HRW also reported that women advocating for women's rights were arrested alongside their family members, including young children. They were subjected to violence and, in some cases, torture. When they were released, the Taliban demanded property deeds from their families, threatening to confiscate them if the women continued their behaviour.[682]

Some women were detained due to accusations such as 'leaving the house' or 'unauthorised telephone contact with a man'. While in detention, they were called prostitutes and treated with contempt. Once released, they faced shame, low social status and the risk of being killed by their family in an honour killing.[683] In January 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan deemed reports of rape and other

[675] UN Special Representative for Afghanistan, Briefing to the UN Security Council, 17 September 2025; UN Special Representative for Afghanistan, Report of the SG, A/80/366-S/2025/554, 5 September 2025.
[676] OMCT, Factsheet Afghanistan 2025.
[677] Afghanistan International, Taliban Justice Minister Accused Of Operating Secret Detention Centre, 22 July 2025.
[678] The Guardian, *Briton held by Taliban with wife describes dire conditions in Kabul jail*, 6 April 2025; Rawadari, *Torture and Ill-Treatment: The state of prisons in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan*, 25 June 2025.
[679] Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl, *Länderinformationen: Afghanistan, Version 12*, p. 90.
[680] Pajhwok, *Over 2,400 prisoners freed across Afghanistan – Pajhwok Afghan News*, 29 March 2025.
[681] Hasht-e Subh, *From Sexual Assault to Torture: Women's Plight in Taliban Prisons Across Northeastern Provinces of Afghanistan*, 6 February 2025.
[682] HRW, Women's Rights Activists Under Attack in Afghanistan, 30 November 2023.
[683] Hasht-e Subh, *The Horrific State of Women in The Taliban Prisons Across Western Afghanistan*, 4 March 2024.

forms of sexual violence during arrests to be credible. At the time, the Taliban were arresting large numbers of women for not adhering to traditional dress codes.[684]

3.3.5 Corporal punishment

3.3.5.1 Different types of punishments and different offences

Corporal punishments in Afghanistan can be divided into three categories: judicial corporal punishment, corporal punishment facilitated by non-judicial df authorities, and ad hoc corporal punishment imposed by a non-judicial df authority (mainly PVPV *muhtasibs*). According to one source, the majority of corporal punishments were imposed by non-judicial df authorities, including *muhtasibs*.[685]The powers of the *muhtasib* are discussed in Section 3.3.1.1.

3.3.5.2 Rising trend

During the reporting period, courts increasingly imposed corporal punishment. The UN described this trend as an alarming rise, especially in view of the lack of due process and judicial transparency.[686] In April 2025, OHCHR called on the Taliban to immediately cease public corporal punishments and executions.[687]

Frequency

Since the takeover in 2021, there has been a growing trend of public corporal punishment. According to research by Amu TV, at least 858 people – including 148 women – were publicly flogged in 2022, 2023 and 2024:

- in 2022: 298 people, including 74 women;
- in 2023: 44 people, including 6 women;
- in 2024: 580 people, including 42 women;[688]
- in 2025 (until April): 56 people including 8 women according to Amu TV, but the exact figures are unclear.[689]

In June 2024, the UN Secretary-General reported that corporal punishment (*hudud*) was carried out by the df authorities in at least one province every week.[690]

Convictions

As corporal punishment was not always carried out immediately, there were more convictions than instances of corporal punishment. Between January and April 2025, for instance, at least 213 people were sentenced to corporal punishment (169 men and 44 women). Of those convicted, 19 were sentenced to flogging (14 men and 5 women).[691]

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[684] Afghanistan International, *Women 'Raped' Inside Taliban Detention Centres, Reveals Report By UN's Richard Bennett*, 29 October 2024.

[685] USCIRF, Country Update: Religious Freedom under Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan, August 2024.

[686] Afghanistan International, *Taliban Publicly Flog Two for Alcohol & Drug Offences In Faryab | Afghanistan International*, 13 April 2025.

[687] OHCHR, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, *Study on the so-called law on the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice*, A/HRC/58/74, 12 March 2025, p. 4; Amu TV, *Taliban flog 13 people, including five women, in Khost and Jawzjan*, 12 April 2025; OHCHR, *Afghanistan must immediately stop public executions and corporal punishment: UN experts*, 17 April 2025; confidential source dated 24 April 2025.

[688] Amu TV, *Taliban flog over 580, including 42 women, in 2024*, 1 January 2025.

[689] Amu TV, *Taliban flog two in Sar-e-Pul as public lashings continue*, 29 April 2025.

[690] General Assembly Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, Report of the Secretary-General*, A/78/914-S/2024/469, paragraph 34, 13 June 2024.

[691] OHCHR, *Afghanistan must immediately stop public executions and corporal punishment: UN experts*, 17 April 2025; confidential source dated 24 April 2025.

While the majority of those sentenced to flogging are men, women and girls are disproportionately affected by the punishment of adultery, as they are much more likely to be accused of *zina* (extramarital sex), often based on little or no evidence. Women who flee forced marriages, domestic violence or sexual abuse are often wrongly labelled as adulterers or prostitutes. Such allegations have also been used to damage the reputations of individuals and families, with serious consequences for women and girls.[692] For instance, courts regularly imposed around 39 lashes for 'moral crimes' such as running away from home.[693]

3.3.5.3 Examples

The Taliban sometimes carried out collective corporal punishment in public places, such as sports stadiums. This happened, for instance, on 4 June 2024 in the city of Sar-e-Pul, where 63 people were publicly punished by flogging for homosexuality, fornication and 'immoral relations', according to various media.[694] These punishments were often reported on in the media and proactively published by the Taliban to increase deterrence.

Amu TV reported the highest number of public corporal punishment cases in Faryab, Paktia, Khost, Helmand, Jawzjan, Uruzgan, Farah, Ghazni, Kabul, Parwan, Kandahar, Paktika and Ghor provinces.[695]

In April 2025, 13 people, including five women, were publicly flogged in Khost and Jawzjan provinces on charges ranging from 'illicit relations' and 'fleeing their homes' to blasphemy, bribery and making false reports. This is according to a statement published by the df Supreme Court.[696] Other charges for which people were sentenced to corporal punishment in 2024 included adultery, sodomy, theft and other acts contrary to Sharia law.[697] Insulting religious symbols was also punished by flogging[698], as were alcohol and drug offences.[699]

3.3.6 Death penalty

The death penalty remained in place in Afghanistan during the reporting period, and was imposed for 'ordinary crimes'.[700] It is not known how often the death penalty was imposed. Amnesty International reported that the number of executions increased between 2023 and 2024, from four to eight.[701]

During the reporting period, the Taliban continued to carry out public executions of individuals sentenced to death by courts, despite serious concerns regarding the right to a fair trial. UNAMA reported that three men were publicly executed in February 2024, and one man in November. In March 2024, various media outlets reported that the Taliban might reinstate 'stoning' as a punishment for alleged

[692] OHCHR, *Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, June 2025, A/HRC/59/25, paragraphs 28 et seq., paragraph 27.
[693] HRW, *Extend Norway's Support for International Law to Afghan Women*, 18 October 2024.
[694] Voice of America News, *Taliban publicly flog 63 Afghan men, women for crimes such as 'immoral relations'*, 4 June 2024. See also KabulNow, *Taliban Publicly Flogs Over 60 Afghans, Including 15 Women, in Northern Afghanistan*, 4 June 2024.
[695] Amu TV, *Taliban flog over 580, including 42 women, in 2024*, 1 January 2025.
[696] Amu TV, *Taliban flog 13 people, including five women, in Khost and Jawzjan*, 12 April 2025.
[697] Amu TV, *Taliban flog over 580, including 42 women, in 2024*, 1 January 2025.
[698] Afghanistan International, *Taliban Publicly Flog Two for Alcohol & Drug Offences In Faryab | Afghanistan International*, 13 April 2025.
[699] Afghanistan International, *Taliban Flog Five, Including Woman, Over Morality Charges*, 29 July 2025.
[700] 'Ordinary crimes' are crimes committed by one individual against another, as opposed to crimes against humanity or crimes against public order. See, for example, Distinction between ordinary crimes and serious violations of international humanitarian law » ICTR/ICTY/IRMCT Case Law Database.
[701] Amnesty International, Death sentences and executions in 2024.

adultery.[702] On 11 April 2025, the Taliban carried out four public executions in Badghis, Farah and Nimroz, bringing the total number of public executions since August 2021 to at least ten. Those convicted had been found guilty of murder; in at least one case, the victim's family had refused compensation and insisted on retribution.[703]

Most death sentences were handed down for murder, since a murder conviction opens up the possibility of retribution (*qisa*). Death sentences must be confirmed by the supreme leader.[704] Reports from 2024 indicate that between 300 and 600 prisoners had been sentenced to death by Taliban courts.[705] According to the media, at least one person was sentenced to death for blasphemy in Paktika in July 2025.[706] Although apostasy is punishable by death under the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law, there are no known examples of a death sentence actually being imposed for this offence. The Taliban's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, has stated that adultery is also punishable by death by stoning, particularly for women.[707] However, there is no evidence to suggest that this actually took place during the reporting period.

In response to a post on X, the df authorities warned UNAMA not to interfere with executions, arguing that death sentences/*qisas* were based on a 'fundamental Islamic legal principle' and claiming that UNAMA had no mandate to comment on Islamic legal rulings.[708] According to reports received by UNAMA, the Taliban did encourage families of victims to forgive the perpetrators, but not all families could be persuaded. According to the Taliban, death penalties are only carried out after a third instance conviction by the highest court. OHCHR and various NGOs have contested the existence of due process in Afghanistan[709] (see also Section 3.3.2 on the judicial process).

3.3.7 Ill-treatment and torture

Data on cases of ill-treatment and torture, extrajudicial executions, killings of prisoners and enforced disappearances was not openly shared. As a result, there is insufficient reliable information on the scale at which these things occur. According to the NGO Rawadari, the Taliban actively employed tactics to prevent such information from being made public, including silencing and intimidating victims and their families. In its 2024 annual report, Rawadari reported that the number of prisoners who had died as a result of torture had increased from at least 16 in 2023 to at least 20 in 2024.[710]

The Taliban did note that they aimed to eliminate and punish ill-treatment and torture. In 2022, the Taliban's supreme leader issued several documents whose

[702] Amnesty International, *Human Rights Report 2024*, Afghanistan.
[703] Le Monde, *In Afghanistan, four men publicly executed in crowded stadiums*, 11 April 2025; RFERL, *Public Executions By Taliban Spark Global Outcry*, 11 April 2025.
[704] Confidential source dated 18 June 2025.
[705] Amnesty International, *Human Rights Report 2024*, Afghanistan.
[706] KabulNow, *Taliban Sentence Teacher to Death in Paktika for Alleged Blasphemy*, 17 July 2025; Amu TV, *Afghanistan: Paktika teacher sentenced to death over alleged blasphemy, sources say*, 17 July 2025.
[707] NPR, *Taliban leader affirms stoning for adulterers — especially women: Goats and Soda*, 8 May 2024.
[708] OHCHR, *Afghanistan must immediately stop public executions and corporal punishment: UN experts*, 17 April 2025; Amu TV, Taliban leader defends public executions amid international condemnation, 13 April 2025; confidential source dated 24 April 2025.
[709] OHCHR, *Afghanistan must immediately stop public executions and corporal punishment: UN experts*, 17 April 2025; Amnesty International, *Human Rights Report 2024*, Afghanistan.
[710] Rawadari, *Annual_Report_Human_Rights_Report 2025*, p. 25.

contents were consistent with certain international human rights obligations, including decisions to ban torture and statements emphasising the right to representation by an attorney. In early 2025, the Ministry of Defence announced that illegal arrests, the unlawful detention of suspects, and all forms of physical and psychological torture had been 'completely eradicated' by internal monitoring mechanisms and dedicated units, in accordance with decrees issued by the Supreme Leader. The df authorities claimed that, in rare cases where violations did occur, offenders were tried in special military courts and punished accordingly. The df Ministry of Defence also stated that significant progress had been made by dismissing 'a substantial number' of individuals who had been involved in harming civilians or committing various crimes.[711] The results of these efforts are not known.

For more on torture and ill-treatment in detention, see Section 3.3.4. For examples of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials, see Section 3.1.1.6.

3.3.8 Disappearances and abductions

The Taliban continued to employ arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and unlawful detention of perceived political opponents, including former government officials, religious scholars who were critical of Taliban policies, civil society activists, human rights defenders, and a large number of journalists. Rawadari documented 51 enforced disappearances in 2024, compared to 30 cases in 2023.[712]

3.3.9 Extrajudicial executions/killings

Access to information on extrajudicial killings is very limited, and it is difficult to conduct research into this issue.

Unclaimed murders and disappearances
Although the Taliban claimed to represent a new order and stability – and there was indeed a decline in armed clashes and terrorist attacks compared to when foreign troops were still present – murders and disappearances still occurred. According to Rawadari, there was an increase in the number of extrajudicial killings of former ANDSF members (see Section 3.1.1) and a slight uptick in the total number of extrajudicial killings carried out by the Taliban and unknown perpetrators (435 cases in 2024 compared to 428 cases in 2023). Media outlets referred to these killings as a 'wave' of murders. In August 2025, a female doctor was shot dead by unknown assailants in Jalalabad, Nangarhar. There is no indication that this killing was investigated.[713] In May 2025, a local elder in Samangan was kidnapped, tortured and killed by unknown assailants. Three GDI officers and a senior Taliban member were arrested in connection with this murder.[714]

See also Section 1.2.4.1 on ISKP.

[711] UNAMA, *Update on the Human Rights situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2025*, p. 8.
[712] Amnesty International, *Human rights in Afghanistan 2024*, accessed 7 October 2025; Rawadari, *Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024*, p. 15.
[713] KabulNow, *Female Doctor Shot Dead in Eastern Afghanistan Amid Surge in Mysterious Killings*, 3 August 2025; Rawadari, *Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024*, p. 10.
[714] Afghanistan International, *Tribal Elder Abducted, Killed By Unidentified Gunmen In Samangan*, 11 May 2025; Rdabe, *Taliban Intelligence Agents Implicated in the Murder of Prominent Tribal Elder in Samangan*, 4 June 2025.

4 Refugees and displaced persons

In December 2024, an estimated 6.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) were living in Afghanistan.[715] During the reporting period, people were displaced within Afghanistan due to multiple, partly interconnected causes: fear of the Taliban and other armed groups; the curtailment of women's rights; economic conditions; and natural disasters such as droughts, floods and earthquakes. An earthquake in late August 2025 is estimated to have destroyed over 8,000 houses, forcing around 3,000 families to live in facilities for displaced people.[716] Some of these factors drastically worsened the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, with half the population relying on humanitarian aid[717] (see also Section 1.3 on the humanitarian situation). This caused people to leave their homes, displacing them internally or prompting them to leave the country. Meanwhile, the return of a large group of Afghans to their native country, primarily from Pakistan and Iran, put additional pressure on local host communities, which were already taxed by the presence of IDPs.[718]

4.1 Movements of displaced persons and refugees

During the reporting period, there were many travel movements between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran.

Exits to Pakistan and Iran

As of August 2025, an estimated 4.4 million Afghans resided in Iran, and 2.4 million in Pakistan.[719] The exact number of Afghan nationals who migrated to Pakistan and Iran during the reporting period is not known. IOM does count cross-border travel movements, which is why the figures provided do not refer to unique travellers (multiple border crossings by the same person are counted as separate border crossings). The picture may therefore be distorted by circular migration, which is when the same individuals enter and exit a country repeatedly. Between the beginning of July 2023 and the end of September 2025, IOM recorded 4.3 million travel movements from Afghanistan to Iran or Pakistan. During the same period, there were 7.9 million travel movements from those countries to Afghanistan. According to IOM, 3.9 million Afghans returned from Pakistan and Iran. The number of expulsions from Pakistan and Iran began to increase in April and May 2025, respectively, with a large peak in the summer months of that year.[720] For more on this, see Chapter 5 on returning to Afghanistan.

[715] IOM, Crisis in Afghanistan, figures as of 18 December 2024.
[716] OCHA, *Afghanistan: Eastern Region Earthquake Response, Situation update no. 7*, 25 September 2025.
[717] https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2025-december-2024
[718] Confidential source dated 15 November 2024.
[719] UNHCR Operational Data Portal, *Afghanistan situation*, accessed 4 November 2025.
[720] IOM, Afghanistan - Flow Monitoring 2025 | Displacement Tracking Matrix, 'Returnees IRN/PAK' tab, accessed 4 November 2025.

UNHCR Afghanistan faced major financial shortfalls. By the end of July 2025, it had only secured enough funding to cover 30% of its 2025 budget.[721]

5 Return to Afghanistan

5.1 Return figures

Political developments in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran contributed to a return crisis in Afghanistan, which peaked in late 2024 and early 2025. The largest flow of returnees came from Iran, followed by Pakistan. UNHCR has published the following return figures for the period between January 2025 and late September 2025: 2.1 million people from Iran, 707,000 people from Pakistan and 32,000 people from other countries. In the month of July alone, more than 460,000 people were deported from Iran to Afghanistan.[722] Initially, the majority of returnees were male solo travellers, whereas returning families consisted primarily of women and children. Eventually, however, the proportion of returning families increased sharply: in January 2025, families accounted for 11 percent of returnees, but by May this figure had risen to around 44 percent, compared with 26 percent in April, when the majority of returnees were single men.[723]

Most returnees sought to return to their original home regions, or to areas populated by people of the same ethnicity or faith. One source reported that around a third of returnees were unable to reach their province of origin and were forced to settle elsewhere, away from the support of their original communities.[724] IOM and UNHCR estimated this group of people to be smaller, at around 13%. According to UNHCR, deteriorating living conditions due to the collapse of Afghanistan's economy, lack of income and insufficient government services, including healthcare, were the main reasons why some people were unable to reach or settle in their province of origin.[725] Most of those returning from Iran intended to reach the provinces of Herat, Farah and Kabul, whereas most of those returning from Pakistan aimed to resettle in Paktika, Helmand, Nangahar and Kandahar.[726] As many returnees had lived outside Afghanistan for years, they also relied on local communities and aid organisations for shelter in their provinces of origin. According to UNHCR, some returnees were displaced as a result of the df authorities destroying informally created residential areas. This added thousands of vulnerable families to the existing group of several million displaced persons.[727]

For more on the importance of local communities for safety and livelihood security, see Section 3.1.

[721] UNHCR Afghanistan Funding Update as of 30 April 2025: Afghanistan Situation Funding Update - 2025 | Global Focus
[722] UNHCR Operational Data Portal, *Afghanistan situation*, accessed 3 October 2025; IOM, *IOM Assists One Million Afghan Returnees Amid New Waves of Mass Forced Returns from Pakistan*, 15 April 2025.
[723] UNICEF, *Afghanistan Country Office Sitrep Number 5*, May 2025; confidential source dated 23 June 2025.
[724] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[725] IOM, Afghanistan - Flow Monitoring 2025 | Displacement Tracking Matrix, accessed 3 October 2025.
[726] IOM, Afghanistan - Flow Monitoring 2025 | Displacement Tracking Matrix, accessed 3 October 2025.
[727] Protection Cluster, *Protection Analysis Update January - June 2025*, October 2025, p. 9.

A large proportion of Afghans who returned to Afghanistan emigrated again, mainly to Iran (51%) and Pakistan (40%), as they had contacts, homes and work there. The vast majority of Afghans who were deported from or left their host country voluntarily had either resided outside Afghanistan for decades or were born outside the country. Returning to Afghanistan did become increasingly difficult during 2025 due to the large number of deportations.[728]

5.2 Return cooperation between Afghanistan and other countries

The SSAR (Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees) platform provides regional assistance to Afghan refugees. Established in 2012 and chaired by the Netherlands since 2024, the SSAR platform consists of three elements:

- The Quadripartite Steering Committee, which brings together Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and UNHCR.
- The Global Core Group, comprising 16 members and three development partners, which discusses regional priorities and solutions.
- The Country Core Groups, in which Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan discuss country-specific priorities and solutions.

The members of the SSAR platform are: the Asian Development Bank, Denmark, Germany, the European Union, Italy, IOM, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Qatar, Türkiye, UNDP, the United Kingdom, the United States, the World Bank and Switzerland.[729]

This platform is designed to provide sustainable solutions for Afghan refugees in the region by supporting voluntary returns, sustainable reintegration and host countries. Key components include promoting refugee rights and access to services, economic inclusion for both refugees and host communities, and an integrated approach combining humanitarian and development efforts. The SSAR platform was established to mobilise political coordination and financial support for these activities.[730]

5.2.1 Return from Pakistan

When it comes to deportations, there is no active cooperation between the Pakistani authorities and the Afghan df authorities. Afghanistan's diplomatic mission in Pakistan was under Taliban control and had a Taliban-appointed ambassador. See also Section 2.3.3, which discusses document applications abroad.

The 2003 Tripartite Agreement between Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR was last renewed in 2019. Since then, there has been some coordination with Afghanistan's df authorities on return policy, but not consistently.[731] Pakistan is seeking to regulate circular migration and restrict visa issuance. Meanwhile, visas for transport companies were issued with a longer validity period of one year.[732]

[728] Confidential source dated 21 May 2025.
[729] SSAR Support Platform | Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, accessed 4 November 2025.
[730] SSAR Support Platform | Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, accessed 4 October 2025.
[731] Confidential source dated 23 June 2025; CONCLUSIONS OF THE 30th TRIPARTITE COMMISSION MEETING | UNHCR Pakistan; Afghanistan tripartite agreement with Pakistan | UNHCR. TOLOnews, *PoR Card Revocation Triggers New Migrant Crisis in Pakistan*, 4 August 2025.
[732] Amu TV, *Pakistan halts visa extensions for Afghan nationals, escalates arrests: Sources*, 22 July 2025.

In September 2023, Pakistan unilaterally announced that Afghan nationals would be permitted to return to their country of origin under the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan (IFRP), either voluntarily or forcibly. Under the IFRP, undocumented migrants were given the opportunity to return voluntarily before 1 April 2025. This option was later extended to include Afghan Citizenship Card (ACC) holders.[733] Between September 2023 and April 2025, some 850,000 Afghans left of their own accord. After 1 April 2025, Pakistan began arresting and deporting Afghan immigrants, especially in Islamabad, Punjab and Karachi. Around half of Afghan returnees left of their own accord, fearing deportation. Many also travelled to Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, where local authorities had announced that they would not cooperate with the deportations. The validity of the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards[734] held by 1.35 million Afghans was originally set to expire at the end of June 2025, but this was extended by another three months.[735] From 1 September, PoR card holders were also deported.[736]

5.2.2 *Return from Iran*

There is no known cooperation between the Iranian authorities and the Afghan df authorities when it comes to deportations of Afghan nationals to their country of origin. Afghan diplomatic missions in Iran were under Taliban control (see also Section 2.3.3, which discusses document applications abroad).

According to one source, around 6.1 million Afghan migrants resided in Iran during the reporting period, making it the largest host country in the world.[737] In the absence of official data from the Iranian authorities, UNHCR estimated that there were 4 to 6 million Afghan migrants in Iran, or possibly much more. Given the dire situation in Afghanistan, it was expected that this number would continue to increase.[738]

For many years, Iran maintained a largely generous policy of welcoming Afghan migrants, 99% of whom were housed in host communities in urban areas. Access to education and healthcare for both boys and girls was guaranteed as well.[739] Afghan nationals in Iran often worked in construction or outside cities under poor conditions, in some cases as child labourers.[740]

Many Afghan migrants in Iran had already obtained Amayesh residence cards before 2001, or through one of the amnesty rounds. This group of Afghan nationals in Iran also included around 750,000 de facto refugees, who were provided with annually renewed Amayesh cards (temporary residence permits that allow the holder to stay in the country); 627,000 holders of Afghan passports (or family passports) with valid visas and residence permits; and around 2.6 million people who were

[733] Between 2017 and 2018, an estimated 800,000 ACC holders were registered by the Pakistani authorities, with the assistance of IOM. Although the card conferred few rights, its holders were permitted to remain in Pakistan until conditions were favourable enough for them to return home with dignity. According to Pakistan, this was the case on 1 April 2025. See confidential source dated 10 April 2025.
[734] Pakistan issued Proof of Registration (PoR) Cards to around 1.35 million Afghan refugees in 2007. These cards were initially issued for a specific period of time, which was later extended several times, albeit intermittently. PoR holders have access to primary and secondary education and healthcare, and are allowed to open a bank account. Accessing these services is often difficult once the PoR expires. See confidential source dated 15 November 2024.
[735] Confidential source dated 10 April 2025; confidential source dated 19 June 2025.
[736] Pakistan - Afghanistan: Returns Emergency Response #42 (as of 4 September 2025) - Afghanistan | ReliefWeb.
[737] Al Jazeera, *Inside Iran's crackdown on Afghan migrants after the war with Israel*, 22 July 2025.
[738] Deutsche Welle, *Iran, Afghanistan increase cooperation on migration*, 30 January 2025; TOLOnews, *Afghan Child Laborers Deported from Iran Without Education*, 7 July 2025; confidential source dated 15 November 2024.
[739] General Country of Origin Information Report – Iran, September 2023.
[740] Deutsche Welle, *Iran, Afghanistan increase cooperation on migration*, 30 January 2025; TOLOnews, *Afghan Child Laborers Deported from Iran Without Education*, 7 July 2025; confidential source dated 15 November 2024.

categorised as 'headcounted' following a census conducted by the Iranian authorities in 2022.[741] For more information on residence permits, see the General COI Report on Iran.[742]

The deadline for the 2 million undocumented Afghan nationals in Iran to return expired at the end of March 2025. UNHCR data shows that 2.2 million people returned from Iran to Afghanistan in 2025, 1.05 million of whom were forced to return.[743] In 2024, there were 1.8 million returnees, with 800,000 people being forced to return and 1 million doing so voluntarily. According to one source, however, returns were never actually voluntary, nor were they safe or dignified.[744] Although the number of 'self-organised' returns to Afghanistan increased sharply after the twelve-day war between Iran and Israel, IOM labelled these as 'spontaneous returns'[745] and in June 2025 called on countries to halt deportations until returns could take place voluntarily, safely and with dignity.[746] The Iranian authorities temporarily exempted several categories of people[747] from forced return.[748]

Iranian state media portrayed Afghans as Israeli spies and accused them of complicity in the attacks carried out by Israel in June 2025. Anti-Afghan sentiment in Iran also increased due to the country's deteriorating socioeconomic situation, mounting pressure on its water and energy infrastructure, and political and media rhetoric.[749] Over the course of 2025, around 60 Afghans in Iran were sentenced to death and executed for crimes such as drug trafficking, undermining public security and rape.[750] Afghan nationals without valid residency rights in Iran were also prevented from travelling by bus, and their legal status was weakened, meaning they were not entitled to compensation in the event of a road accident.[751] Some were arrested during raids and then deported.[752]

5.2.3 Return from Türkiye

The number of deportations of Afghan nationals from Türkiye to Afghanistan also increased during the reporting period.[753]There is no known cooperation between the Turkish authorities and the Afghan df authorities. There were two Taliban-approved staff at the Afghan consulate in Ankara in October 2023, and there has been a Taliban-appointed ambassador in Türkiye since November 2024. Most of the

[741] Deutsche Welle, *Iran, Afghanistan increase cooperation on migration*, 30 January 2025; TOLOnews, *Afghan Child Laborers Deported from Iran Without Education*, 7 July 2025; confidential source dated 15 November 2024.

[742] General Country of Origin Information Report – Iran, September 2023.

[743] UNHCR Returns Emergency Response Iran – Afghanistan as of 30 July 2025, https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/117857.

[744] Confidential source dated 11 June 2025.

[745] Afghanistan - Flow Monitoring 2025 | Displacement Tracking Matrix, 'Returnees IRN/PAK' tab, accessed 4 November 2025.

[746] IOM, *Sharp Rise in returns from Iran*, 2 June 2025.

[747] *These categories reportedly included: Amayesh cardholders (refugee status), unregistered relatives of Amayesh cardholders, persons with expired visas, persons with work permits, former officials of the previous Afghan authorities and persons with valid passports. Later, a six-month temporary status was added for the following profiles: 'i) sensitive profiles (former government civil servants, military, etc.), ii) those with critical, life-saving medical conditions, and iii) the very vulnerable.'*

[748] UNHCR, Situation Afghanistan, accessed 4 October 2025; confidential source dated 10 April 2025.

[749] The New Humanitarian, *Afghans say they were scapegoated in Iran during Israeli bombardment*, 5 August 2025; Le Monde, *Millions of Afghans living in Iran are threatened with expulsion*, 5 June 2025.

[750] KabulNow, *Five Afghans Among Nearly 100 Executed in Iran Last Month, Rights Group Says*, 4 August 2025; Hengaw, *At least 96 executed in Iranian prisons in July 2025*, 3 August 2025; OHCHR, *UN experts appalled by unprecedented execution spree in Iran with over 1000 killed in nine months*, 29 September 2025.

[751] Afghanistan International, *Iran bans bus ticket sales to Afghan migrants, tightens travel restrictions*, 3 August 2025; Afghanistan International, *Iran Moves To Deny Compensation For Undocumented Afghan Migrants Injured In Accidents*, 2 August 2025

[752] NPR, *Afghans caught in mass deportations in Iran face an uncertain future at home*, 29 July 2025.

[753] RFERL, *Turkey Steps Up Deportation Of Afghans Amid Similar Moves By Pakistan And Iran*, 13 November 2023;

diplomatic personnel in Türkiye have been replaced by the Taliban.[754] Afghan nationals were deported from Türkiye on a daily basis during the reporting period.[755]See also Section 2.3.3, which discusses document applications abroad.

5.2.4 Return fromother countries

In October 2025, several European countries, including the Netherlands, requested that the European Commission take on a coordinating role in the return of Afghan nationals with criminal records to Afghanistan.[756]

According to media reports, **Germany** sought de facto cooperation with the Taliban in order to facilitate deportations, with Qatar acting as mediator. In August 2024, a flight carrying 24 Afghan nationals with criminal records who had been refused asylum departed from Germany for Kabul. A further 81 Afghan nationals with criminal records were deported in July 2025.[757] In the same month, Germany accredited two Taliban representatives (one in Berlin and one in Bonn) to facilitate returns.[758]

In October 2025, **Austria** deported an Afghan migrant with a criminal record to Afghanistan for the first time. The previous month, the country had hosted an Afghan delegation in Vienna to discuss consular services. This delegation included members of the Taliban.[759]

Switzerland deported two Afghan migrants with criminal records to Afghanistan in October 2024.[760] This was followed by other deportations of Afghan migrants, most of them criminal convicts who had served their sentences. In 2025, various media reported that the Swiss authorities were cooperating with Taliban df officials for identification purposes.[761]

Tajikistan deported Afghan migrants with some regularity[762], expelling 12 in 2023 and 99 in 2024. In April 2025, 47 Afghans – all recognised as refugees by the UN – were deported from Tajikistan.[763] In July of 2025, Tajikistan initiated large-scale deportations of Afghan migrants and refugees.[764]

A report by the Swiss government provides a list of countries that have deported Afghan migrants.[765] It does not mention whether these countries cooperated with the df authorities to facilitate these expulsions.

5.3 Return procedure

[754] Confidential source dated 15 November 2024; AP News, *Turkey ends former Afghan government's diplomatic tenure, paving way for Taliban-appointed mission | AP News*, 7 February 2025.
[755] Confidential source dated 15 November 2024; AIDA and ECRE, *Removal and Refoulement, Türkiye*, 29 July 2025.
[756] See https://www.eerstekamer.nl/eu/overig/20251103/joint_letter_return_afghanistan/document.
[757] Die Zeit, *Bund lässt Mitarbeiter der Taliban-Regierung nach Deutschland*, 21 July 2025; Die Zeit, *Rückkehr ins Nichts*, 18 July 2025; Deutsche Welle, *Germany seeks direct talks with Taliban on deportations*, 7 March 2025; Euractiv, Germany resumes deportations to Taliban-run Afghanistan | Euractiv, 18 July 2025.
[758] DW, *Germany allows Taliban envoys to facilitate deportations*, 21 July 2025.
[759] Euractiv, *Austria deports convicted Afghan national for the first time since 2021*, 21 October 2025; Amu TV, *Taliban delegation visits Austria for talks on political missions: Sources*, 13 September 2025.
[760] Swissinfo.ch, *Switzerland deports two Afghan criminals to Afghanistan*, 13 October 2024.
[761] Amu TV, *Taliban officials visit Switzerland to identify Afghans for deportation: Report*, 23 August 2025.
[762] RFERL, *Deportation Of Afghans Sparks Rare Outrage In Tajikistan*, 11 January 2025.
[763] Azda.tv, *Tajikistan deports nearly 50 Afghan refugees* (via BBC Monitoring), 24 April 2025.
[764] The Times of Central Asia, *Tajikistan Escalates Deportations of Afghan Refugees Amid Growing Concerns*, 25 July 2025; Amu TV, *Tajikistan confirms expulsion of Afghan migrants, citing security concerns: Report*, 22 July 2025.
[765] Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), *Focus Afghanistan - Return from abroad*, 14 February 2025, p. 12.

Biometric data
While biometric data collection is part of the standard return procedure[766], one source claimed that, given the large number of border crossings, it was unlikely that this data was consistently collected.[767]

The GDI is present at all official border crossings between Afghanistan and Iran. It checks all returnees and conducts interrogations if it sees reason to do so. Assistance from the df authorities, international organisations and NGOs can only be obtained by sharing biometric data. Biometric data is recorded by several entities, including the df Ministry of Refugees, the df Ministry of Economic Affairs and the GDI. The primary targets for interrogation at the Afghan-Iranian border are single women, women with families, former employees of the security apparatus (see Section3.1.1) and former activists.[768]

The return procedure was less standardised at the border with Pakistan, but the GDI was present at most border crossings and conducted brief interrogations. In some cases, additional checks for drug use were carried out. Drug users travelling alone were denied entry to Afghanistan. At some border crossings with Pakistan, biometric data was recorded twice: once by the df border police and again by the df Ministry of Defence. Biometric data was collected at four official border crossings and recorded in two separate databases, which were linked to a central database and accessible to certain df authorities.[769]

While there are no known cases of people encountering problems immediately upon return, it should be noted that aid organisations do not have direct access to the border procedure. It is therefore possible that people were taken for questioning and detained without the knowledge of aid agencies and other observers.[770] One source stated that people at an increased risk of repression by the authorities only became aware of this once they had returned to their own communities.[771] Another source reported that women travelling alone – without a *mahram* – were questioned and sometimes detained in a separate detention facility upon returning from Iran. According to the df authorities, this was done for their own protection. However, little information is available on this practice.[772]

5.4 Humanitarian needs of returnees and aid organisations

5.4.1 Humanitarian needs of returnees

Aid organisations have sounded the alarm about the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan (see also Section 1.3). While nearly half the population – some 22.9 million people – required humanitarian assistance to survive in 2025, hundreds of thousands of Afghan nationals returned to their country of origin during the reporting period (see Section 5.1). Consequently, the humanitarian needs of

[766] Confidential source dated 23 June 2025.
[767] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025; confidential source dated 14 July 2025; confidential source dated 29 July 2025.
[768] Confidential source dated 9 October 2025.
[769] Confidential source dated 9 October 2025.
[770] Confidential source dated 9 October 2025.
[771] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[772] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.

returnees were significant. Many had been unable to take many possessions with them, had lost them along the way or had been robbed. According to one source, the humanitarian needs of these people were 'beyond description' and 'catastrophic'.[773] Some aid organisations reported that only 10% of returnees could be provided with support such as food parcels and hygiene products.[774] In addition to material shortcomings, hunger and inadequate healthcare, many returnees suffered from psychosocial problems, with their stress and social isolation exacerbated by limited access to mental health services. Women and children in particular experienced severe psychological problems, while social stigma and financial constraints made it difficult for them to access help.[775]

When crossing the border from Pakistan, returnees were allowed to bring PKR 50,000 (around EUR 166). It was unclear whether this was the limit per family or per individual.[776] Reports from returning Afghan nationals indicated that Pakistani taxi drivers were charging exorbitant fees for transport to the border.[777]

According to Afghanistan's df authorities, many returnees from Iran informed border officials that they were returning empty-handed as they had lost all their belongings due to the Israeli attacks, which led to increasing pressure from the Iranian government on Afghans.[778]

5.4.2 *Aid organisations*

Along the Afghan border, **UN humanitarian agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement** have set up mobile health clinics, established food and employment programmes, and created reception sites to provide safe shelter for returnees. This aid has provided an essential lifeline for hundreds of thousands of returning refugees. Nevertheless, the situation remains precarious due to budget constraints, and it is uncertain whether a new group of returnees would have access to the same support.

None of the aid organisations were present during border controls; only after passing border control do returning Afghans receive assistance.[779]

UNHCR and IOM were present and provided support at the following border crossings: Islam Qala (Herat) and Milak (Nimroz) on the Afghan-Iranian border, and Torkham (Nangarhar) and Spin Boldak (Kandahar) on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. UNHCR and IOM personnel at these sites navigated highly volatile operational conditions while providing life-saving assistance, protection and coordination, and had to adapt quickly to the rapidly rising number of returnees. They also encountered restrictions in their work, including limited access to female staff and internet blackouts.[780] At the end of March 2025, UNHCR Afghanistan indicated that, although there was sufficient human and logistical capacity to provide aid to up to 8,000 people per day, the cash assistance system at the border

[773] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[774] Confidential source dated 24 June 2025.
[775] Confidential source dated 15 November 2024.
[776] Confidential source dated 10 April 2025.
[777] TOLOnews, *Pakistan Deports 40,000 Afghans in Just 11 Days*, 13 April 2025.
[778] Confidential source dated 27 June 2025.
[779] Confidential source dated 23 June 2025.
[780] UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation: Afghan Returns from Iran and Pakistan Emergency Update #12*, 3 October 2025; UNHCR and IOM, *UNHCR-IOM Pakistan Flash update # 62 on Arrest and Detention/Flow Monitoring, 15 Sep 2023 to 27 September 2025*, 3 October 2025; IOM, Afghanistan - Flow Monitoring Snapshot (04 - 10 May 2025).

would only be sustainable for 9 days without additional funding should such high numbers of returnees continue to arrive.[781] By July 2025, UNHCR had secured 29% of the funding it required.[782]

Other national and international non-governmental aid organisations also played a role in providing initial reception and humanitarian assistance to returnees. Examples include Relief International, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Dutch Relief Alliance and the Afghan Red Crescent.[783]

The df authorities themselves also provided initial reception services and assistance to returnees. In recent years, 75 townships have been established, with more to follow. These communities are primarily intended for returnees, but can also accommodate displaced persons and marginalised groups. While the establishment of new townships is seen as a positive step by both UNHCR and IOM, it is unclear whether they offer a sustainable solution. Neither the df authorities nor the UN or other aid organisations have the resources to maintain these townships, some of which are located in desert-like areas.[784] Many returnees ended up living in informal housing with very poor facilities.[785] The df authorities also supported returnees by offering practical assistance, such as cash for transport costs, one-off cash support and SIM cards. This assistance was available upon successful completion of ARIS[786] and biometric registration, after which returnees were referred to a UNHCR or IOM reception centre for further support. The cash support provided by the df authorities was equivalent to that provided by UN organisations UNHCR and IOM (USD 150). This support offered by the UN was seven times lower than what was offered to families prior to recent cuts by almost all donors, primarily due to the suspension of assistance from USAID. These reduced cash amounts made available by UN organisations meant that families could only cover short-term needs, such as food and shelter, but were not able to make long-term investments, such as purchasing a plot of land. It was unclear to what extent the df authorities offered support and protection to returnees upon arriving in their area of origin.[787]

5.5 Treatment of returnees

Treatment on arrival

In general, the df authorities try to support returnees when they arrive at the border, working in cooperation with international organisations. See Section 5.4.2. There are no known cases of large-scale or systematic arrests or ill-treatment at the border upon return. While a Swiss report does mention 'exceptions', it does not provide further details.[788]

Long-term treatment

[781] Confidential source dated 11 June 2025.
[782] UNHCR, Situation Afghanistan, accessed 4 November 2025.
[783] RI, *A new humanitarian crisis is unfolding at the border in Afghanistan. - Relief International*, 21 July 2025; NRC, *Four years later: Afghanistan since the return of the Taliban*, 29 August 2025; NRC, *Afghans are no longer welcome in neighbouring countries, but 'home' is hardly shelter*, 13 July 2025; Dutch Relief Alliance, *Afghanistan Returnee Acute Joint Response*, accessed 4 November 2025.
[784] Confidential source dated 11 June 2025.
[785] UN Habitat, *Improving housing conditions in Kabul's informal settlements | UN-Habitat*, 27 June 2025.
[786] The Afghan Returnee Information System (ARIS) is managed by the df Ministry of Refugees and Returnees. It was established in 2016 with assistance from IOM. See IOM Assessment Aims to Improve Afghan Border Management as Thousands Return from Pakistan | IOM Afghanistan.
[787] Confidential source dated 11 June 2025.
[788] SEM (Switzerland) Focus. Return from abroad, p. 4.

Little is known about any long-term negative treatment of returnees by the df authorities.[789] The df authorities emphasised that they welcomed all returnees, provided they did not turn against the Taliban, their religion or their regime.[790] In October 2024, the UNHCR conducted post-return monitoring of 4,220 returnees. The results revealed that 98% of these individuals had not experienced any problems relating to their physical safety since returning.[791] For its post-return monitoring in April 2025, UNHCR surveyed 2,868 households; 96% of respondents had not experienced any issues relating to their physical safety since returning. UNHCR did point out other, more general security risks in the country, such as border conflicts, internal displacement, attacks involving explosives and the presence of explosive remnants of war. It also highlighted 24 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, 10 cases of intimidation, ill-treatment and torture, and five murders of former ANDSF members[792] (see also Section 3.1.1).

A UNAMA report, based on interviews with 49 involuntary returnees to Afghanistan carried out in 2024, confirmed the organisation's earlier suspicions that certain groups of people were at risk of human rights violations, including reprisals by the df authorities, upon their return. This included women and girls, individuals with ties to the former government and its security forces, media workers and employees of civil society organisations.[793] According to the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and another source, single mothers face the greatest challenges. Due to their time spent abroad, they have less access to community support. Furthermore, they have no male family members to rely on and are less likely to have access to shelter or income.[794]

See also Sections 3.1.7 (women), 3.1.1 (former government officials), 3.1.4 (critical journalists), 3.1.2 (persons who were associated with Western entities, including media) and 3.1.3 (human rights activist).

Voluntary return from Europe

In general, Western clothing styles and Western thought are frowned upon by traditional local communities and the Taliban. For more on punishments under the 'morality law', see Section 3.1.7.1 et seq. (restrictions specific to women) and 3.3.1.1 ('morality law' in general). No general information is available on how individual people were treated after having lived in a Western country. This depends on a multitude of factors, such as their clothing style, lifestyle habits and religion. However, their social position and thus their security also depends on other factors, such as their ethnicity, connections, work history and wealth. For a description of the stratification of Afghan society, see Section 3.1.

[789] SEM (Switzerland) Focus. Return from abroad, p. 5.
[790] Confidential source dated 11 September 2025.
[791] UNHCR Afghanistan, *Post-return monitoring report*, October 2024, p. 43.
[792] UNHCR Afghanistan, *Post-return monitoring report*, April 2025, p. 50.
[793] UNAMA/OHCHR, *No safe haven: Human rights risks faced by persons involuntarily returned to Afghanistan*, 24 July 2025.
[794] GPC, *Protection Analysis Update* January – June 2025, October 2025, p. 9.

6 Annexes

6.1 Annex 1: Abbreviations and foreign terms

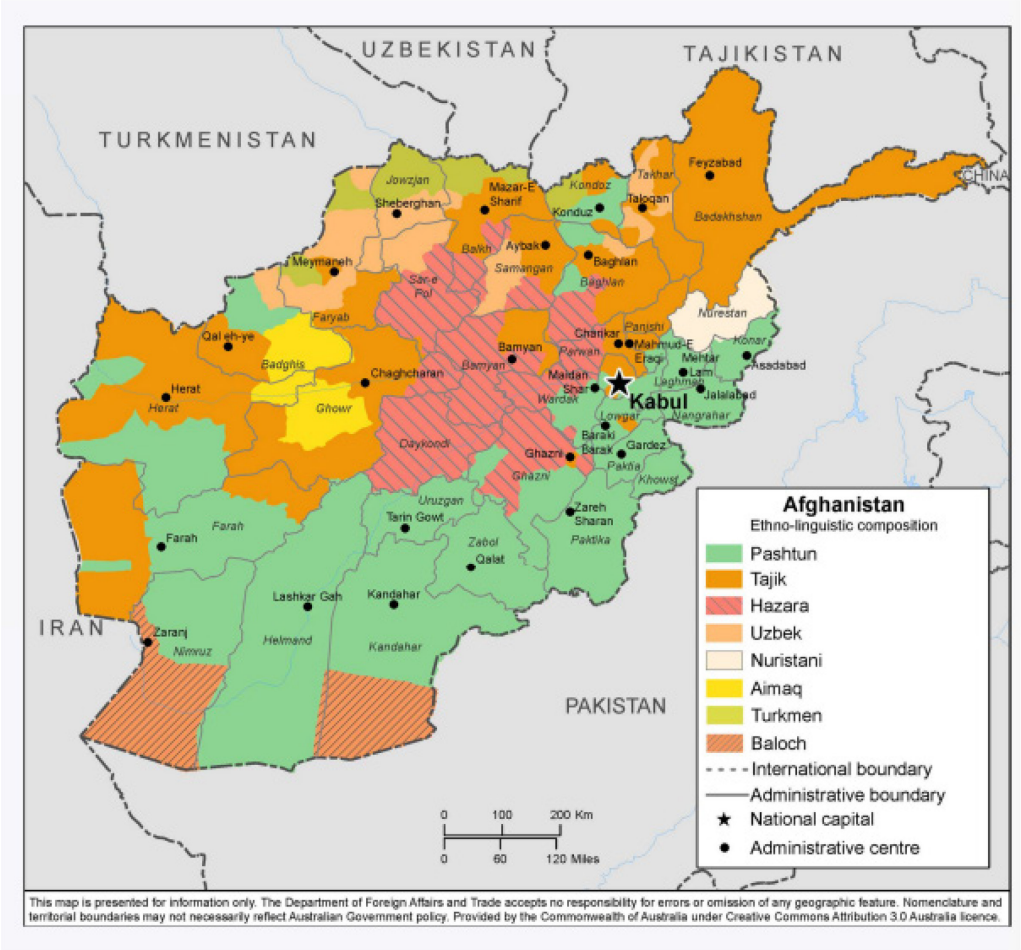
- ACLED – Armed Conflict Location and Event Data
- AFF – Afghanistan Freedom Front
- ANDSF – Afghan National Defense and Security Forces at the time of the Islamic Republic, consisting of:
- GDI – General Directorate of Intelligence
- *Hadiths* – sayings that have traditionally been attributed to the Prophet Muhammad
- *Hudud* – it is believed that the punishments for 'moral' crimes were set by God through Sharia law; they include capital punishment, stoning and whipping
- IOM – International Organization for Migration
- ISKP – Islamic State in Khorasan Province
- *Mahram – a male relative who accompanies a woman*
- Ministry for PVPV – Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice; also known as the *Ministry of Dawat wa Ershad Amr bil-Maruf wa Nahi al-Munkar* or the Ministry of Invitation and Guidance on Promoting Virtue and Preventing Vice – often referred to by the shorthand 'Vice and Virtue' or '*Amr bil-Maruf*'
- *Muhtasib* – 'morality police' (*muhtasib* literally means inspector, but *muhtasibs* are also known as 'enforcers'); the *muhtasib* fall under the Ministry for PVPV
- NRF – National Resistance Front
- NSIA – National Statistics and Information Authority
- *OCHA* – UN office for the coordination of humanitarian aid
- OCHCR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
    - The Afghan National Army (ANA), including the air force, border authorities and special forces
    - The Afghan National Police (ANP), including local police and drug enforcement
    - The National Directorate of Security (NDS), the former security service and predecessor of today's GDI
- TTP – Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
- UNAMA – United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
- UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
- UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
- UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
- USCIRF – United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
- WFP – World Food Programme
- *Zina* – extramarital sex

6.2 Annex 2: English translation of the morality law

This translation was taken from the Afghanistan Analysts Network website.[795] The original text was published in Dari and Pashto; the English translation is based on the Dari version.[796]

[795] https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/08/Law-on-Virtue-and-Vice-Basic.pdf
[796] Website of Afghanistan's df Ministry of Justice, see http://old.moj.gov.af/Content/files/OfficialGazette/01401/OG_01452.pdf.

6.3 Annex 3: Map of Afghanistan showing the ethno-linguistic composition of the population



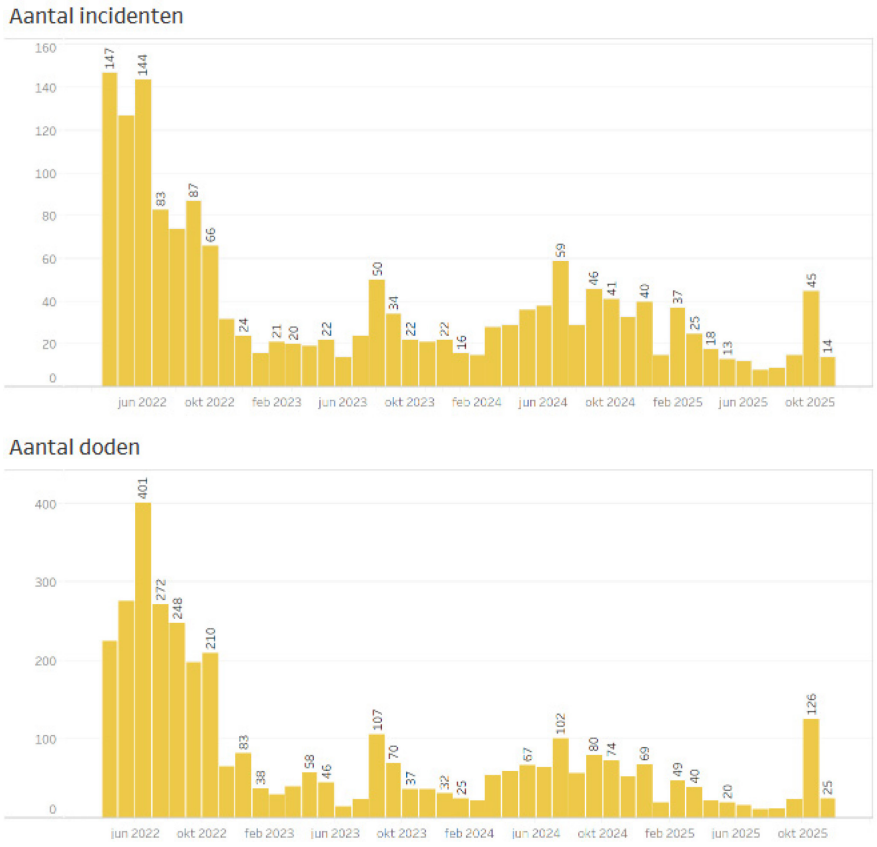
Source: DFAT Thematic Report - AFGHANISTAN - Political and Security Developments Aug 21 to Jan 22

The borders and names on this map and the designations used should not be construed as an endorsement or acceptance thereof by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

6.4 Annex 4: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) charts

As ACLED data is based on very conservative estimates, the figures below can only be used to identify trends. For comparison, the previous reporting period (April 2022 – May 2023) is also included in the charts below:

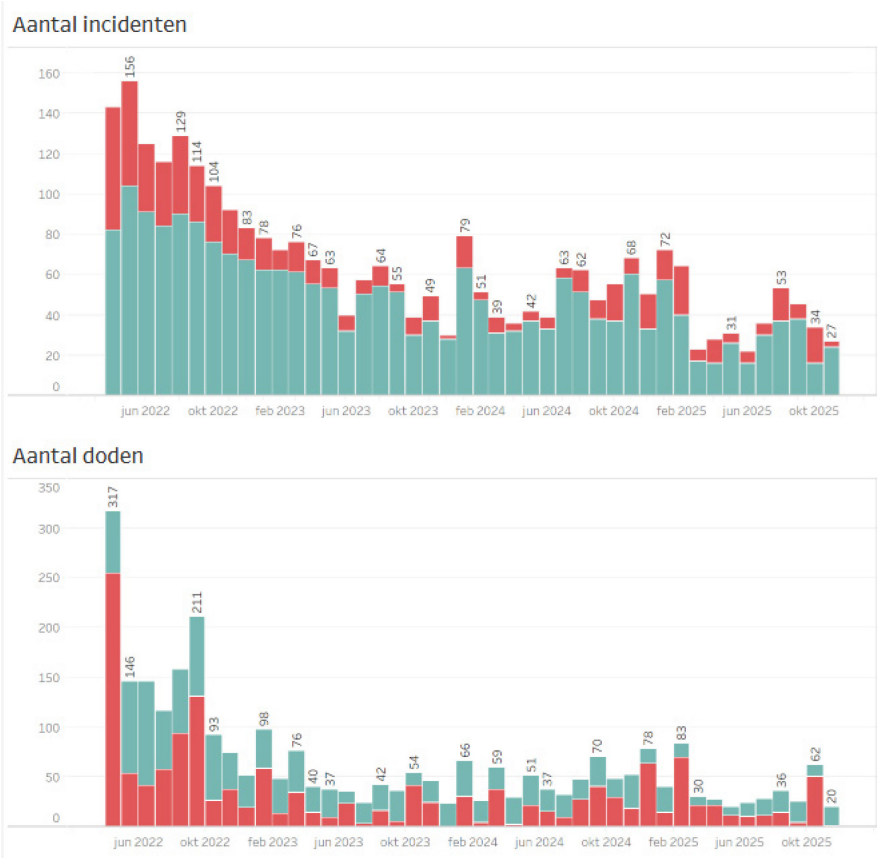
6.4.1 Battles



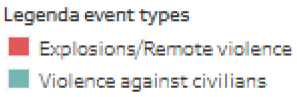
Source: ACLED data, accessed 11 December 2025, for the period from April 2022 to November 2025.

6.4.2 *Attacks – 'explosives' and 'violence against civilians'*

The categories 'explosives' and 'violence against civilians' may overlap.



Source: ACLED data, accessed 9 October 2025.



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