



Home Office

# Country Policy and Information Note

## Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban

Version 3.0

April 2022

# Preface

## Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

## Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note - that is information in the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw - by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iii\) of the Immigration Rules](#) / Article 3 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iv\) of the Immigration Rules](#)
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

## Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the bibliography.

### **Feedback**

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the Country Policy and Information Team.

### **Independent Advisory Group on Country Information**

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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# Assessment

Updated: 4 April 2022

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by the Taliban because the person has opposed, is perceived to have opposed, or does not conform with its moral, religious or political views. In practice, the reasons for fearing persecution or serious harm are potentially wide-ranging (see [Convention reason\(s\)](#)).

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### 1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 Where the person made an asylum and/or human rights claim before the Taliban had taken de facto control of Afghanistan, decision makers should (where appropriate) provide them with the opportunity to explain what or whom they fear on return given the significantly changed country circumstances.

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## 2. Consideration of issues

### 2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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**2.2 Exclusion**

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 2.2.3 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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**2.3 Convention reason(s)**

- 2.3.1 The person's actual or imputed political opinion – most likely due to their actual or perceived support for the former government and/or international forces – and/or, depending on the person's individual profile, their race, religion or particular social group (PSG).

- 2.3.2 In the country guidance case, [NS \(Social Group - Women - Forced marriage\) Afghanistan CG \[2004\] UKIAT 00328](#), heard 21 September 2004 and promulgated 30 December 2004, the Tribunal found that women in Afghanistan form a PSG within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. The country conditions have not significantly changed with regard to the status of women and as such this still remains the case.
- 2.3.3 Unaccompanied children could also form a PSG. For further guidance see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Unaccompanied children](#).
- 2.3.4 Establishing (a) convention reason(s) is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution because of that/those convention reason(s).
- 2.3.5 For further guidance on Convention reasons see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.4 Risk

- 2.4.1 The Taliban assumed de facto control of the country on 15 August 2021 (see [Taliban – background](#)). Between September and October 2021, the Taliban appointed a cabinet to act in its interim government. The cabinet is all male, made up of mostly religious clerics affiliated to the Taliban and has little representation from ethnic minorities (see [Governance](#)). The Taliban also announced that Sharia law regulates all matters of governance and re-established the Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, often referred to as the ‘religious’ or ‘morality’ police. Whilst enforcement may vary by region, guidance issued by the ministry:
- orders women to be escorted by a close male relative (mahram) if travelling over 72km (45 miles), and to wear the hijab,
  - prohibits the broadcast of entertainment shows featuring women,
  - advises barbers against shaving or trimming beards, and
  - bars other acts deemed unIslamic by the Taliban such as gambling, cinemas and listening to music audible outside the home.
- Adultery, sex outside of marriage and same-sex relationships are also banned, the same as under the former government’s penal code, although the punishments for transgression may be more severe (see [Rule of law](#), [‘Religious’ police](#), [Women](#) and [LGBTI persons](#)).
- 2.4.2 After gaining control, the Taliban announced a ‘general amnesty’ for anyone who had fought against them. However, there are reports indicating this amnesty and other guidance and policy announced by the Taliban leadership has not been followed across the country and that some Taliban members are acting in revenge, arbitrarily and under their own authority. Reports indicate that the Taliban have conducted door to door house searches to find former security forces personnel or those who have worked for international organisations, and those deemed to be critical of the Taliban regime (see [Taliban’s ‘general amnesty’](#) and [Taliban justice](#)).



- 2.4.3 Although Taliban soldiers have been instructed not to impose arbitrary penalties and to await a court's judgment, acts of punishment have been reported in some areas, including public shaming of men accused of petty crimes, executions of persons accused of kidnap, whose bodies are then publicly displayed with signs warning other criminals of the same fate, and public stoning (see [Taliban justice](#)).
- 2.4.4 There are reports of human rights abuses, including targeted killings, torture, threats and intimidation, against civilians associated with, or perceived to have supported, the former government or international community, former members of the security forces (which may depend on their previous role), women (particularly in the public sphere), LGBTI persons, ethnic and religious minorities, journalists, human rights defenders, members of the judiciary, persons deemed to have transgressed cultural or religious mores (which may include those perceived as 'Westernised'), and persons deemed to have resisted or opposed the Taliban.
- 2.4.5 Access to independently verified information is limited, often conflicting, and the scale of targeting is unclear. Reports are subject to claim, denial and counterclaim (see [Limits on reporting, propaganda and misinformation](#) and [Potentially vulnerable groups](#)).
- 2.4.6 Other groups, though not exhaustive, may include: civilians accused of spying, teachers and those involved in the education sector including students, tribal elders and religious leaders who resist the Taliban's doctrine, and family members supporting or perceived to be associated with the above profiles (see [Potentially vulnerable groups](#)).
- 2.4.7 The country guidance case [AS \(Safety of Kabul\) Afghanistan \(CG\) \[2020\] UKUT 130 \(IAC\)](#) (1 May 2020), heard on 19 and 20 November 2019 and 14 January 2020 held that 'A person who is of lower-level interest for the Taliban (i.e. not a senior government or security services official, or a spy) is not at real risk of persecution from the Taliban in Kabul' (paragraph 253(i)).
- 2.4.8 Given the significant change in country circumstances, at the time of writing there are – as per [46] and [47] of [SG \(Iraq\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2012\] EWCA Civ 940 \(13 July 2012\)](#) – very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to justify a departure from [253(i)] of [AS \(Safety of Kabul\)](#). However, each case must be considered on its facts.
- 2.4.9 The current evidence suggests that persons likely to be at risk of persecution, because they may be considered a threat or do not conform to the Taliban's strict interpretation of Sharia law, include but are not limited to:
- Former government employees and members of the Afghan National Armed Forces (ANSF), including the police
  - Former employees/those linked to international forces and organisations, including interpreters
  - Women, particularly those in the public sphere
  - Ethnic/religious minorities, in particular Hazara
  - Persons who have credibly resisted or opposed, or are perceived to resist or oppose, Taliban requests or control

- Persons who do not conform to, or are perceived to not conform to, strict cultural and religious expectations/mores, in particular women, and which may also include persons perceived as ‘Westernised’ after having spent time in the West, though no clear definition of what ‘Westernised’ means or entails is available.
  - Journalists critical of the Taliban
  - Human rights defenders, lawyers and judges
  - LGBTI persons
- 2.4.10 However, not all incidents committed by the Taliban should be considered a systematic campaign of targeting and may be due to Taliban members settling old disputes. Each case must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they would be at real risk on return.
- 2.4.11 On risk relating to unaccompanied children, see the Country Policy and Information on [Afghanistan: Unaccompanied children](#).
- 2.4.12 The country guidance case of [AJ \(Risk to Homosexuals\) Afghanistan CG \[2009\] UKAIT 00001 \(5 January 2009\)](#), heard on the 28 October 2008, focussed on the situation for gay men. The findings in [AJ](#) pre-date [HJ \(Iran\)](#). The Upper Tribunal in [AJ](#) applied the ‘reasonably tolerable’ (to act discreetly and conceal identity) test, which was found to be incorrect and rejected by [HJ \(Iran\)](#), and so much of AJ’s findings cannot now be relied on.
- 2.4.13 The Upper Tribunal’s conclusions in [AJ \(Risk to Homosexuals\)](#) in Headnotes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 and related paragraphs should therefore not be followed. The test that should be adopted is in paragraphs 35 and 82 in [HJ \(Iran\)](#).
- 2.4.14 If a person does not live openly as LGBTI, consideration must be given to the reasons why they do not. Each case must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they would be at real risk on return. [HJ \(Iran\)](#) provides that, even if a person would not be open about their sexuality, if the reason why they would not do so is fear of persecution then they will still be a refugee.
- 2.4.15 Furthermore, if a person chooses to change their behaviour on return to Afghanistan, by modifying their political beliefs, denying their religious faith (or lack of one) or feigning belief, decision makers must consider the reasons why. If it is to avoid persecution then they are likely to require protection. Each case must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they would be at real risk on return.
- 2.4.16 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 The Taliban have taken control of every major city in Afghanistan, have re-established the Islamic Emirate and implement (their version of) Sharia law. Given the Taliban have de facto control of the country, where a person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the Taliban, they will not be able to obtain protection.

- 2.5.2 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the Taliban, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.

- 2.6.2 In regard to internal relocation to Kabul, the country guidance case [AS \(Safety of Kabul\) Afghanistan \(CG\) \[2020\] UKUT 130 \(IAC\)](#) (1 May 2020), held that:

‘Having regard to the security and humanitarian situation in Kabul as well as the difficulties faced by the population living there (primarily the urban poor but also IDPs and other returnees, which are not dissimilar to the conditions faced throughout many other parts of Afghanistan) it will not, in general, be unreasonable or unduly harsh for a single adult male in good health to relocate to Kabul even if he does not have any specific connections or support network in Kabul and even if he does not have a Tazkera.

‘However, the particular circumstances of an individual applicant must be taken into account in the context of conditions in the place of relocation, including a person’s age, nature and quality of support network/connections with Kabul/Afghanistan, their physical and mental health, and their language, education and vocational skills when determining whether a person falls within the general position set out above. Given the limited options for employment, capability to undertake manual work may be relevant.

‘A person with a support network or specific connections in Kabul is likely to be in a more advantageous position on return, which may counter a particular vulnerability of an individual on return. A person without a network may be able to develop one following return. A person’s familiarity with the cultural and societal norms of Afghanistan (which may be affected by the age at which he left the country and his length of absence) will be relevant to whether, and if so how quickly and successfully, he will be able to build a network’ (paragraphs 253(iii) to 253(v)).

- 2.6.3 Decision makers must give careful consideration to the relevance and reasonableness of internal relocation taking full account of the individual circumstances of the particular person. While the onus is on the person to establish a well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of serious harm, if there is a safe place that the person can relocate to escape that risk, decision makers must demonstrate that internal relocation is reasonable having regard to the individual circumstances of the person.

- 2.6.4 In the country guidance case of [AK \(Article 15\(c\)\) Afghanistan CG \[2012\] UKUT 00163\(IAC\)](#), heard on 14-15 March 2012 and promulgated on 18 May 2012, the Upper Tribunal held that it would be unreasonable to expect lone women and female heads of household to relocate internally without the support of a male network (paragraph 249B (v)). This was confirmed in the country guidance case [AS \(Safety of Kabul\) Afghanistan \(CG\) \[2020\] UKUT 130 \(IAC\)](#) (1 May 2020) and continues to apply.

2.6.5 For further guidance on internal relocation see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.7 Certification

2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

Section 3 updated: 13 December 2021

## 3. Taliban – background

### 3.1 Peace talks and Taliban takeover

- 3.1.1 For details on the peace talks and the events leading up to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, see section 3.1 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

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### 3.2 Ideology, aims, structure and strength

- 3.2.1 For details on the Taliban's ideology, aims and objectives; organisational structure and command, and their strength, see sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

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Section 4 updated: 4 April 2022

## 4. Limits on reporting, propaganda and misinformation

- 4.1.1 For details on limits on reporting leading up to and following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, see section 4.1 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).
- 4.1.2 In her book, 'Negotiating Survival: Civilian–Insurgent Relations in Afghanistan', published in August 2021 and based on extensive research in-country (including over 400 interviews conducted between July 2017 and February 2019 in 15 different provinces), Ashley Jackson noted that '... much of what we think we know about the Taliban relies on reportage or indirect research which has often turned out to be either incorrect, misleading or incomplete'<sup>1</sup>
- 4.1.3 This was preceded by her own conclusions that 'For observers and analysts, the Taliban's use of violence... has had a blinding effect,' but that this '... is only useful if it is situated in a broader understanding of the political, administrative and ideological aspects of how they exercise power.'<sup>2</sup>
- 4.1.4 She argued that, 'One way to understand the Taliban's power is to examine it from the vantage point of those over whom that power is exercised. Looking at the Taliban through the eyes of the civilians they live among is the fastest way to shake loose faulty but persistent assumptions. Few of the generalisations that proliferate about the Taliban hold up when examined through the lens of civilian experiences.'<sup>3</sup>
- 4.1.5 On 19 September 2021, the Taliban's 'Government Media and Information Centre' (GMIC) announced 11 media regulations or 'journalism rules' for Afghan journalists, various sources reported, including the International

<sup>1</sup> Jackson A, '[Negotiating Survival: Civilian–Insurgent Relations in...](#)' (page 213), August 2021

<sup>2</sup> Jackson A, '[Negotiating Survival: Civilian–Insurgent Relations in...](#)' (page 213), August 2021

<sup>3</sup> Jackson A, '[Negotiating Survival: Civilian–Insurgent Relations in...](#)' (page 213), August 2021

Federation of Journalists (IFJ)<sup>4</sup>, Reporters Without Borders (RSF)<sup>5</sup>, and Al Jazeera<sup>6</sup>.

- 4.1.6 According to sources, the rules did not comply with international norms, including Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>7,8</sup>. The IFJ said that the rules ‘... are binding and apply to all journalists and media organisations across Afghanistan and place restrictions on independent media and freedom of expression more broadly.’<sup>9</sup>
- 4.1.7 Relaying the rules, RSF said ‘The first three rules, which forbid journalists to broadcast or publish stories that are “contrary to Islam,” “insult national figures” or violate “privacy,” are loosely based on Afghanistan’s existing national media law...’, but added, ‘... there is no indication as to who determines, or on what basis it is determined, that a comment or a report is contrary to Islam or disrespectful to a national figure.’<sup>10</sup>
- 4.1.8 RSF continued ‘Three of the rules tell journalists to conform to what are understood to be ethical principles. They must “not try to distort news content,” they must “respect journalistic principles” and they “must ensure that their reporting is balanced.” But the absence of reference to recognised international norms means that these rules can also be misused or interpreted arbitrarily.’<sup>11</sup>
- 4.1.9 Citing the remaining rules, the RSF report stated:
- ‘Rules 7 and 8 facilitate a return to news control or even prior censorship, which has not existed in Afghanistan for the past 20 years. They state that, “Matters that have not been confirmed by officials at the time of broadcasting or publication should be treated with care” and that “Matters that could have a negative impact on the public’s attitude or affect morale should be handled carefully when being broadcast or published.”
- ‘The danger of a return to news control or prior censorship is enhanced by the last two rules (10 and 11), which reveal that the GMIC has “designed a specific form to make it easier for media outlets and journalists to prepare their reports in accordance with the regulations,” and that from now on, media outlets must “prepare detailed reports in coordination with the GMIC.” The nature of these “detailed reports” has yet to be revealed.
- ‘The ninth rule, requiring media outlets to “adhere to the principle of neutrality in what they disseminate” and “only publish the truth,” could be open to a wide range of interpretations and further exposes journalists to arbitrary reprisals.’<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> IFJ, [‘Afghanistan: Draconian media rules set to further strangle media’](#), 28 September 2021

<sup>5</sup> RSF, [‘Afghanistan: “11 journalism rules” imposed by Taliban open way...’](#), 22 September 2021

<sup>6</sup> Al Jazeera, [“‘Death knell’: Afghan journalists fear new Taliban media rules’](#), 29 September 2021

<sup>7</sup> IFJ, [‘Afghanistan: Draconian media rules set to further strangle media’](#), 28 September 2021

<sup>8</sup> RSF, [‘Afghanistan: “11 journalism rules” imposed by Taliban open way...’](#), 22 September 2021

<sup>9</sup> IFJ, [‘Afghanistan: Draconian media rules set to further strangle media’](#), 28 September 2021

<sup>10</sup> RSF, [‘Afghanistan: “11 journalism rules” imposed by Taliban open way...’](#), 22 September 2021

<sup>11</sup> RSF, [‘Afghanistan: “11 journalism rules” imposed by Taliban open way...’](#), 22 September 2021

<sup>12</sup> RSF, [‘Afghanistan: “11 journalism rules” imposed by Taliban open way...’](#), 22 September 2021



- 4.1.10 In relation to the new media regulations, Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that '[the] provisions are so broad and vague as to prohibit virtually any critical reporting about the Taliban.'<sup>13</sup>
- 4.1.11 According to the IFJ, the Taliban's Ministry of Virtue and Prevention of Vice announced 8 'religious guidelines' on 21 November 2021 which restrict the broadcasting of media that contravenes Islamic values, with several edicts exclusively targeting women journalists and media workers. Hakif Mohajir, a Taliban spokesperson, stated that
- '... the "religious guidelines" prohibit the screening of films or television programmes "against Islamic or Afghan values". The rules also called on broadcasters to cease airing soap operas or dramas featuring women. All female journalists will also be required to wear an "Islamic hijab" whilst at work, an unclear edict subject to interpretation by the Taliban. In addition to the restrictions on women, the guidelines also prohibit any media that shows imagery of the prophet Muhammad or revered persons, comedic programs that "humiliate people", and any films that contravene "Afghan" law.'<sup>14</sup>
- 4.1.12 In a special report for the online news site Deadline, dated 20 September 2021, war and foreign policy journalist, Hollie McKay, wrote 'A month into the Taliban takeover of Kabul, and the misinformation and disinformation continues to soar into dizzying territory – driven not only by both clumsy, opportunistic social media sharing, but also seemingly structured propaganda initiatives both inside and outside Afghanistan.'<sup>15</sup> McKay referred to 'fake social media accounts... set up to mimic major news organizations' spreading misinformation and disinformation, as well as 'images that are either doctored, fake, or entirely out of context or without context.'<sup>16</sup>
- 4.1.13 The report also cited Emerson Brooking, a resident senior fellow at the Digital Forensic Research Lab of the Atlantic Council, who said:
- "Afghanistan has fallen into a chaotic and global information war. Taliban spokespeople have issued statements that are revealed to be lies by either open-source evidence or the candid testimony of other Taliban... Meanwhile, a surreal coalition of opposition groups – among them members of the Afghan diaspora, Iranian exile organizations, Indian ultranationalists and Western military veterans – have pushed back against the Taliban. In the process, they have spread falsehoods of their own".<sup>17</sup>
- 4.1.14 According to a 23 November 2021 report by Tolo News, 'NAI'<sup>18</sup>, an organization supporting media in Afghanistan, said that since the Islamic Emirate rule, over 257 media outlets have ceased operating in the country due to financial challenges as well as restrictions. This includes print, radio

<sup>13</sup> HRW, '[Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media](#),' 1 October 2021

<sup>14</sup> IFJ, '[Afghanistan: Taliban's new directives will further muzzle press freedom](#),' 30 November 2021

<sup>15</sup> Deadline, '[Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem](#),' 20 September 2021

<sup>16</sup> Deadline, '[Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem](#),' 20 September 2021

<sup>17</sup> Deadline, '[Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem](#),' 20 September 2021

<sup>18</sup> Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, '[About us](#),' no date

and TV stations. According to NAI, over 70 percent of media workers have become jobless or left the country.<sup>19</sup>

See also [Journalists and human rights defenders, incl. lawyers and judges](#)

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Section 5 updated: 4 April 2022

## 5. Life under the Taliban

### 5.1 Life in previously-held Taliban territory

- 5.1.1 For information on the life in previously-held Taliban territory, see section 4.5 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

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### 5.2 Territorial control

- 5.2.1 By 16 August 2021, Kabul and 32 other provinces were reported to be under Taliban control, reported the Long War Journal (LWJ), a project by the non-profit policy institute, the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD)<sup>20</sup>. On 6 September 2021, the Taliban announced they had taken control of Panjshir province, which had been under the resistance of the National Resistance Front (NRF)<sup>21</sup>. However, on 5 October 2021, France24 cited an interview with Ali Maisam Nazary, head of foreign relations for the NRF, who said the resistance in Panjshir was continuing and that the NRF was in control of 'more than half' of Panjshir<sup>22</sup>.
- 5.2.2 On 29 November 2021, France 24 reported on the Taliban in Panjshir valley, noting 'Once a bustling hub of activity, Panjshir is now largely deserted. The few residents who have stayed are now under constant surveillance, and are struggling to survive amid a crippling economic crisis.' In the video report, correspondents noted a number of check points on the road to the province's capital, Bazarak. Taliban Chief of Security in Panjshir indicated that due to their vigilance, the province was the safest in Afghanistan. The Taliban claimed the NRF had been neutralised and, whilst the Chief of Security had heard that there was resistance on the ground, he had not encountered any and did not believe they (NRF) existed<sup>23</sup>.
- 5.2.3 On 30 December 2021, the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) published a [map](#) by Roger Helm detailing when Afghanistan's districts and provincial capitals fell to the Taliban, based on research carried out by Roger and the AAN team between May and September 2021. The map also indicated the districts that were under Taliban control during the Republic-era<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Tolo News, '[257 Media Outlets Closed in 100 Days Since Takeover](#)', 23 November 2021

<sup>20</sup> FDD, LWJ, '[Taliban completes conquest of Afghanistan after seizing Panjshir](#)', 6 September 2021

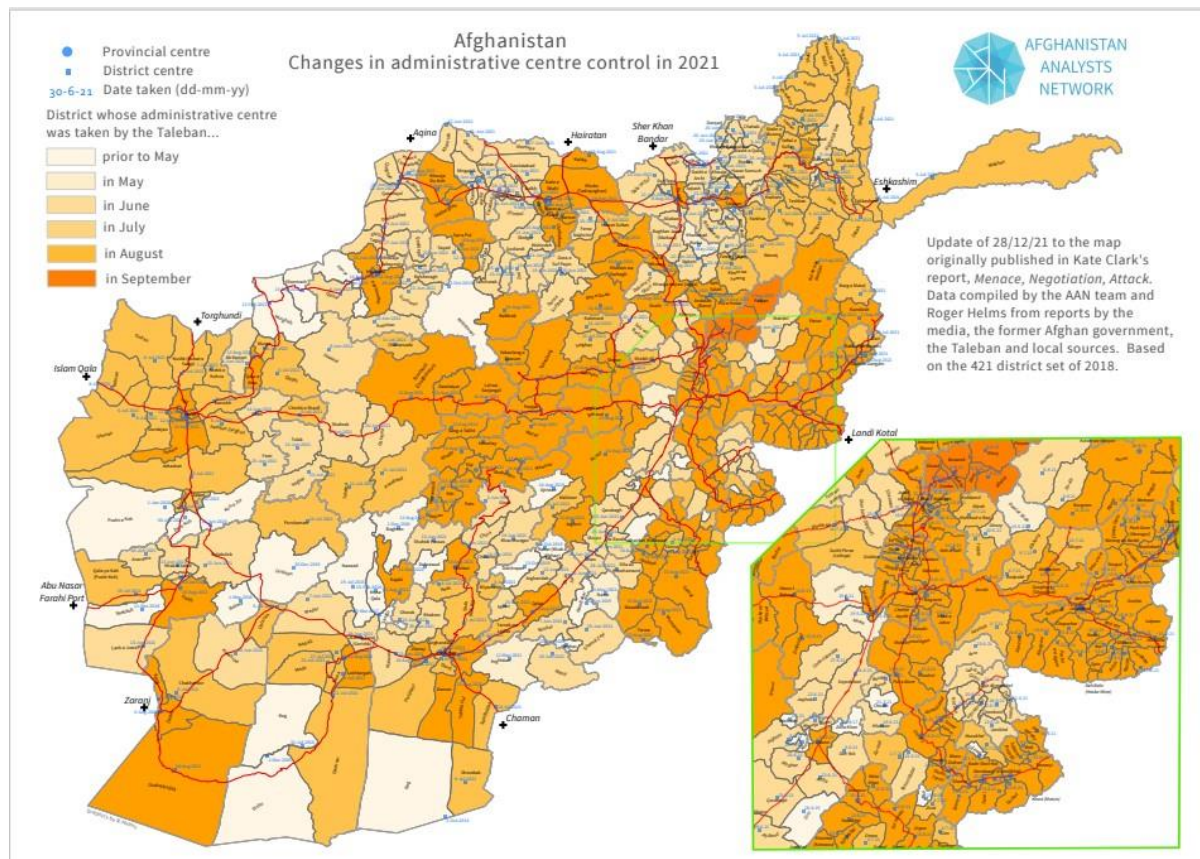
<sup>21</sup> FDD, LWJ, '[Taliban completes conquest of Afghanistan after seizing Panjshir](#)', 6 September 2021

<sup>22</sup> France24, '[Taliban "not victorious" in Afghanistan's Panjshir region...](#)', 5 October 2021

<sup>23</sup> France 24, '[Panjshir after the Taliban takeover: An occupied, impoverished...](#)', 29 November 2021

<sup>24</sup> AAN, '[Afghanistan's conflict in 2021 \(2\): Republic collapse and Taleban...](#)', 30 December 2021





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### 5.3 Governance

- 5.3.1 The supreme leader of the Taliban (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan – IEA) is Hibatullah Akhundzada, though he remains out of the public eye<sup>25,26,27</sup>. There was some speculation as to whether Akhundzada was alive or dead<sup>28</sup>. AAN noted, however, that ‘Whether alive or not, he does not seem to have much of a concrete role beyond providing the illusion of a centre of gravity and a leader who transcends worldly affairs.’<sup>29</sup>
- 5.3.2 On 7 September 2021 the Taliban announced an all-male interim 33-member government, drawn from its own ranks<sup>30,31,32</sup>. Commenting on the appointments, the International Crisis Group (ICG) said ‘The cabinet is filled with long-time key Taliban figures from their days as a government and later an insurgency, and it bears a strong resemblance to their former regime of the 1990s.’<sup>33</sup> A Taliban spokesman stressed that the appointments were temporary, but did not indicate when or how they would change<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> BBC News, ‘[Afghanistan: Who's who in the Taliban leadership](#)’, 7 September 2021

<sup>26</sup> CFR, ‘[The Taliban in Afghanistan](#)’, 15 September 2021

<sup>27</sup> AAN, ‘[The Taliban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments](#)’, updated 9 October 2021

<sup>28</sup> Hindustan Times, ‘[Dead or alive? On the trail of Taliban's supreme leader...](#)’, 3 December 2021

<sup>29</sup> AAN, ‘[The Taliban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments](#)’, updated 9 October 2021

<sup>30</sup> AP, ‘[Taliban form all-male Afghan government of old guard members](#)’, 8 September 2021

<sup>31</sup> AAN, ‘[The Focus of the Taliban's New Government: Internal cohesion...](#)’, 12 September 2021

<sup>32</sup> Shaheen, S (@SuhailShaheen1), ‘[List of Acting Ministers and Heads...](#)’, 8 September 2021

<sup>33</sup> ICG, ‘[Who Will Run the Taliban Government?](#)’, 9 September 2021

<sup>34</sup> AP, ‘[Taliban form all-male Afghan government of old guard members](#)’, 8 September 2021

- 5.3.3 The AAN noted on 12 September 2021 ‘The list of ministers and other senior officials is almost exclusively Pashtun, with just two Tajiks and one Uzbek, and no Hazaras, Shia Muslims or members of Afghanistan’s smaller minorities. The list is further all-male and made up mostly of clerics, either mullahs or mawlawis (who have a higher Islamic madrassa education).’<sup>35</sup>
- 5.3.4 On 21 September 2021, the Taliban expanded its cabinet although, like its initial announcement of ministers, the list did not include any women<sup>36,37</sup>.
- 5.3.5 A September 2021 policy brief published by the research institute Swisspeace noted:
- ‘The Taliban have deliberately remained vague in their response when it comes to their policy direction on women, with the women’s ministry more or less also disbanded. When asked to clarify their policy on the matter, the Taliban’s generic answer is their “support for women’s rights under the Sharia law”. No further explanation is provided on what that means in practice. In a recent interview with the BBC, Taliban leader Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai had clearly indicated that “women will not be in the cabinet or top government positions [in their government]. But they could work at a lower level”. This statement reaffirms that the Taliban’s perception of women in Afghanistan has not changed.’<sup>38</sup>
- 5.3.6 The ICG stated in regard to the new appointments that ‘The list of new appointees very slightly broadens the new government’s makeup, as the interim administration is no longer composed entirely of Taliban stalwarts. Most of the new appointees either have no prior affiliation with the group or are not prominent members of it.’<sup>39</sup> However, ‘... many of these outsiders are considered sympathetic to the Taliban.’<sup>40</sup>
- 5.3.7 In regard to ethnic minority inclusion, the ICG noted that the cabinet now had ‘... four [4] Tajiks, two [2] Uzbeks, one Turkmen, one Hazara, one Nuristani (an ethnic group native to Nuristan province) and one Khwaja (claiming Arabic lineage, Khwajas generally speak Dari as their native tongue).’<sup>41</sup>
- 5.3.8 A third round of appointments were made on 4 October 2021, adding to the all-male cabinet<sup>42</sup>. The AAN listed the caretaker cabinet and other senior appointments as at 5 October 2021<sup>43</sup>.
- 5.3.9 In her address to the UN Security Council on 17 November 2021, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ms. Deborah Lyons, viewed that the Taliban was:
- ‘... making genuine efforts to present itself as a government. These efforts are partly constrained by the lack of resources and capacity, as well as a political ideology that in many ways clashes with contemporary international

<sup>35</sup> AAN, [‘The Focus of the Taleban’s New Government: Internal cohesion...’](#), 12 September 2021

<sup>36</sup> Republic World, [‘Afghanistan: Taliban Sacks Last Remaining Minister...’](#), 22 September 2021

<sup>37</sup> Hasht-e Subh Daily, [‘The Taliban announce remaining cabinet members’](#), 21 September 2021

<sup>38</sup> Swisspeace, [‘US withdrawal and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan...’](#) (page 3), September 2021

<sup>39</sup> ICG, [‘Afghanistan’s Taliban Expand Their Interim Government’](#), 28 September 2021

<sup>40</sup> ICG, [‘Afghanistan’s Taliban Expand Their Interim Government’](#), 28 September 2021

<sup>41</sup> ICG, [‘Afghanistan’s Taliban Expand Their Interim Government’](#), 28 September 2021

<sup>42</sup> AP, [‘Taliban appointments add to all-male Afghan government team’](#), 4 October 2021

<sup>43</sup> AAN, [‘The Taleban’s caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments’](#), updated 9 October 2021

norms of governance so present in this chamber. The Taliban have not yet established full trust with much of the Afghan population or convinced them of their capacity to govern. The movement is also struggling to manage some serious internal divisions. Ultimately, however, the Taliban must decide on whether to govern according to the needs and the rights of the diverse Afghan population, or whether to rule on the basis of a narrow ideology and an even narrower ethnic base.<sup>44</sup>

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## 5.4 Rule of law – Sharia

- 5.4.1 On 7 September 2021 the Taliban supreme leader Haibatullah Akhundzada announced that Sharia Law would ‘regulate all matters of governance and life in the country.’<sup>45</sup>
- 5.4.2 In August 2021, Al Jazeera cited an independent Afghan analyst who said ‘... while the “theoretical interpretation of the Sharia would remain by and large the same as the 90s”, the prevailing circumstances – which are usually taken heavily into account to arrive at legal judgements – are different... “Whilst a fully democratic system is unlikely, it is plausible that features of the previous regime [Ghani’s] would remain, so long as these complied with the general ethos of the new, Taliban-approved ‘Islamic system’”.’<sup>46</sup>
- 5.4.3 In January 2022, France 24 showed the differences in the way Sharia law was imposed in different regions, indicating that Taliban applied the law more harshly in Herat than in Kabul, though it was evident that not everyone adhered to the restrictions<sup>47</sup>. For example, despite orders, some shop owners in Herat refused to remove the heads of their manequins, and women in Kabul were seen entering cafes without full face coverings even though posters at the door instructed otherwise<sup>48</sup>.
- 5.4.4 On 28 September 2021, Pajhwok News reported that the Taliban’s Ministry of Justice ‘... said the caretaker government would adopt the constitution of King Mohammad Zahir Shah era without the parts which are in conflict with Islamic Sharia,’ and added that the Taliban respected ‘... any international documents which were not in conflict with Sharia and Emirate rules...’<sup>49</sup> Zahir Shah ruled Afghanistan from 1933 to 1973, when he was ousted in a bloodless military coup<sup>50</sup>.
- 5.4.5 However, speaking to Tolo News, an anonymous government source said that the decision to enforce that constitution, which was ratified in 1964, had not been finalised<sup>51</sup>. Tolo News also noted that, according to a number of lawyers, ‘... most parts of Zahir Shah’s era constitution are not compatible with the current situation.’<sup>52</sup> The article added:

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<sup>44</sup> UNAMA, ‘[SRSG Lyons Briefing to the UNSC on the Situation in Afghanistan](#)’, 17 November 2021

<sup>45</sup> Gandhara, ‘[Leader Of Taliban’s New Afghan Regime Says Shari’a Law...](#)’, 7 September 2021

<sup>46</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Explainer: The Taliban and Islamic law in Afghanistan](#)’, 23 August 2021

<sup>47</sup> France 24, ‘[In Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, some resist Sharia law](#)’, 26 January 2022

<sup>48</sup> France 24, ‘[In Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, some resist Sharia law](#)’, 26 January 2022

<sup>49</sup> Pajhwok News, ‘[Taliban to temporarily adopt Zahir Shah era constitution](#)’, 28 September 2021

<sup>50</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, ‘[Mohammad Zahir Shah](#)’, 11 October 2021

<sup>51</sup> Tolo News, ‘[Use of Shah-Era Constitution Not Final: Source](#)’, 29 September 2021

<sup>52</sup> Tolo News, ‘[Use of Shah-Era Constitution Not Final: Source](#)’, 29 September 2021

'Meanwhile, officials from the Cultural Commission of the Ministry of Information and Culture said if articles of the constitution which was enstated [sic] in 2004 (current constitution) are not in conflict with Sharia Law, they will remain in use until a new constitution is promulgated. Anaamullah Samangani, a member of the commission, said efforts have started to draft a new constitution based on the Quran and Sunnah.'<sup>53</sup>

- 5.4.6 A report by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, dated 28 September 2021, noted:

'The Taliban's return to power raises major concerns as regards the respect of human rights in Afghanistan. These concerns are twofold: that the progress which has been achieved in the past twenty years, especially in areas such as women's rights, is dismantled; and that the Taliban, even when holding de facto power, continue to pursue the same methods they used as an insurgent group, including summary and targeted killings, torture, and other human rights and humanitarian law violations.'<sup>54</sup>

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## 5.5 'Religious' police

- 5.5.1 The Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice was re-established under the newly formed government, which under previous Taliban rule punished behaviour deemed un-Islamic, reported The Washington Post on 8 September 2021<sup>55</sup>. Actors under the Ministry are often referred to in the media as the 'religious' or 'morality' police<sup>56 57</sup>. Al Jazeera stated on 18 September 2021 that the new ministry was located in the building that once housed the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Kabul<sup>58</sup>.
- 5.5.2 On 27 September 2021, it was reported that the Taliban had issued a decree banning barbers in Helmand province from shaving or trimming beards. As reported in an article attributed to the AP, the order stated "If anyone violates the rule (they) will be punished and no one has a right to complain", although it was not clear what penalties would be faced by barbers if they ignored the order<sup>59</sup>. On 12 October 2021, CNN reported 'When asked about a recent edict in Helmand province that barber shops could be punished for shaving men's beards, he [Mawlawi Abdullah Mohammad, Director of the Ministry of Virtue and Prevention of Vice] presented a document from the Taliban's leadership, condemning the decree.'<sup>60</sup>
- 5.5.3 A December 2021 article by Voice of America (VOA) indicated that a new decree issued by the Taliban '... appears to stop short of the outright ban on trimming beards...'<sup>61</sup>
- 5.5.4 On 17 January 2022, RFE/RL's Radio Azadi, cited by Gandhara, reported

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<sup>53</sup> Tolo News, '[Use of Shah-Era Constitution Not Final: Source](#)', 29 September 2021

<sup>54</sup> CoE-PACE, '[The situation in Afghanistan: consequences...](#)' (paragraph 55), 28 September 2021

<sup>55</sup> Washington Post, '[The Taliban is bringing back its feared ministry of "vice..."](#)', 8 September 2021

<sup>56</sup> CNN, '[Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate...](#)', 12 October 2021

<sup>57</sup> Washington Post, '[The Taliban is bringing back its feared ministry of "vice..."](#)', 8 September 2021

<sup>58</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Taliban replaces ministry for women with "guidance" ministry](#)', 18 September 2021

<sup>59</sup> AP, '[The Taliban Order Barbers Not To Shave Beards In Afghan Province...](#)', 27 September 2021

<sup>60</sup> CNN, '[Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate...](#)', 12 October 2021

<sup>61</sup> VOA, '[Taliban Call on Barbershops to Not Shave, Trim Beards](#)', 30 December 2021



that officials from the Taliban in the country's southern Uruzgan Province had ordered male employees to stop trimming their beards and wear a turban at work. A senior Taliban official in Uruzgan, Mulawi Taib, told a gathering on 16 January 2022 that the group wanted people to obey Islamic law. Taib stated that, "All employees... should understand that the policy of the Islamic Emirate [of Afghanistan] is based on Shari'a law. All employees are forbidden to shorten their beards and must come to work wearing turbans".<sup>62</sup>

- 5.5.5 Reuters reported on 28 March 2022 that government employees were instructed by the Taliban not to shave their beards and '... to wear local clothing consisting of a long, loose top and trousers, and a hat or turban.'<sup>63</sup>
- 5.5.6 On 12 October 2021, CNN reported that in Ghazni, the religious police were encouraging residents to follow sharia law. Director of the Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Ghazni, Mawlavi Abdullah Mohammad, told CNN "We [act] with accordance to Sharia law... Firstly, we inform people about good deeds. We preach to them and deliver the message to them in a nice way; the second time we repeat to them, again; the third time we speak to them slightly harshly".<sup>64</sup>
- 5.5.7 CNN noted that guidelines on how to work have been issued to the religious police in the form of a blue booklet. Mohammad said "We abide by laws and rules. We give advice, but to grab someone's hand, to beat him up, to send them notice or to send them a warning letter, is against the Emirate's policy. If anyone has done this, it is a self-assertive act".<sup>65</sup>
- 5.5.8 Posters put up outside cafes and shops in Kabul ordering women to cover up, reported VOA News on 7 January 2022. A spokesman for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice said, "If someone does not follow it, it does not mean she will be punished or beaten, it's just encouragement for Muslim women to follow Sharia law".<sup>66</sup> VOA added that the Taliban, eager for international recognition, '... have so far refrained from issuing national policies. Instead, they have published guidance for men and women that has varied from province to province.'<sup>67</sup>
- 5.5.9 In an article discussing the guidelines, HRW stated on 29 October 2021 that 'The Taliban issued the "By-Law of the Commission for Preaching and Guidance, Recruitment and Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice" in 2020, and a revised version in February 2021 when it was controlling growing areas of the country. The ministry has used it in a number of provinces since the Taliban took over Kabul on August 15.'<sup>68</sup>
- 5.5.10 HRW referred to some of the chapters, opining:  
  
'The manual is largely devoted to enforcing rules against "vice," but its final chapters set out guidelines for all Afghans and for Taliban members,

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<sup>62</sup> Gandhara, '[Regional Taliban Officials Ban Beard Trimming, Impose Turbans...](#)', 17 January 2022

<sup>63</sup> Reuters, '[Taliban bars government employees without beards from work](#)', 28 March 2022

<sup>64</sup> CNN, '[Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate...](#)', 12 October 2021

<sup>65</sup> CNN, '[Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate...](#)', 12 October 2021

<sup>66</sup> VOA, '[Taliban Religious Police Issue Posters Ordering Women to Cover Up](#)', 7 January 2022

<sup>67</sup> VOA, '[Taliban Religious Police Issue Posters Ordering Women to Cover Up](#)', 7 January 2022

<sup>68</sup> HRW, '[Afghanistan: Taliban "Vice" Handbook Abusive](#)', 29 October 2021

including tough restrictions on the conduct of women and girls. It instructs religious leaders to teach people about which male family members can act as a mahram (a chaperone) for women and older girls and states that women “shall be commanded to put on a veil when faced with non-mahrams.” Another provision states: “Women shall be prohibited from not wearing hijab and veil in public and against non-mahrams,” but adds that these mandates should be enforced in “an easy and kind way.”

5.5.11 On 26 December 2021, Al Jazeera reported that guidance issued by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice stated that women must be accompanied by a mahram only if they are travelling for more than 72km (45 miles)<sup>69</sup>.

5.5.12 HRW noted other restrictions cited in the manual:

‘The manual also imposes abusive restrictions on personal autonomy and other liberties. It prohibits sex outside of marriage – which the penal code adopted by the previous government also prohibited – along with adultery, same-sex relations, and “immorality and vice.” “Strong allegations” of adultery or homosexuality must be reported to the ministry’s district manager for further action, presumably punishment. When the Taliban were previously in power, they executed women and men for adultery and there were reports that they executed some men found to have engaged in same-sex relations.

‘In the manual, the Taliban discourages people from “helping, befriending...infidels” and instructs religious leaders to advise men on growing their beards. Those who fail to pray or fast as required by religious obligations are to be reported. It prohibits parties and listening to music audible outside a home, cinemas, gambling, and “inappropriate use of tape cassettes, dish antenna, computer and mobile.”

‘The Taliban also condone abusive responses to so-called “vice.” The manual sets out five stages for people to respond to prohibited acts, beginning with educating the person and graduating to guidance, then prohibiting the vice in “an aggressive, angry and scary manner,” prohibiting the action “physically,” and finally reporting it to the district manager for action.’<sup>70</sup>

See also [Women](#) and [Transgressors of religious, cultural and social norms](#).

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## 5.6 Law, order and security

5.6.1 AP News reported on 4 October 2021 from Kabul and stated, in regard to law and order, that residents said some security had returned to the city since the Taliban took over. The report noted, ‘Under the previous government, gangs of thieves had driven most people off the streets by dark. Several roads between cities are again open and have even been given the green light for travel by some international aid organizations.’<sup>71</sup> The report also noted ‘Gun-toting Taliban have taken up positions at checkpoints across

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<sup>69</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[No long-distance travel for women without male relative: Taliban](#)’, 26 December 2021

<sup>70</sup> HRW, ‘[Afghanistan: Taliban “Vice” Handbook Abusive](#)’, 29 October 2021

<sup>71</sup> AP, ‘[Taliban-style security welcomed by some, feared by others](#)’, 4 October 2021

Kabul and gradually some have been made to wear uniforms – the beginnings of a new national security force, officials say.<sup>72</sup>

- 5.6.2 The AP reported that Taliban fighters, now acting as a police force, were seen as less corrupt than their predecessors, who demanded bribes<sup>73</sup>. Al Jazeera noted on 5 October 2021 that the Taliban undertook daily street patrols, adding they ‘... halt street fights, summon suspected criminals to police stations and chase those who do not heed their call.’<sup>74</sup>
- 5.6.3 The AP noted a queue outside a police station in Kabul’s District 8, where men were ‘bringing their complaints and demands for justice...’<sup>75</sup> Al Jazeera referred to the queue and stated it led to 2 rooms – one for criminal cases and one for civil disputes, adding ‘Victims of stabbings, robbery and other misdeeds sit in the same room as alleged perpetrators, ... until it is their turn to plead their case. For lesser crimes, Taliban police offer the accused three days to show up at the station. After that, they go after them.’<sup>76</sup>
- 5.6.4 Al Jazeera also posted images of the Taliban operating in Kabul, detainees at police stations, and prisoners held at Pul-e-Charkhi prison, which was previously the main government prison for holding captured Taliban<sup>77</sup>.
- 5.6.5 However, on 29 October 2021, Foreign Policy (FP) reported on a wave of crime as the economic situation worsened, ‘Sources in the capital, Kabul, said kidnappings and extortion are daily occurrences, with Taliban foot soldiers killing on contract to earn cash as they are not being paid... Kabul residents said gangs roam the streets, stopping, searching, and robbing people at random. They say armed men routinely stop cars and rob the occupants.’<sup>78</sup>
- 5.6.6 Tolo News said on 28 October 2021 that, according to the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), more than 40 businessmen had been kidnapped since the Taliban takeover in Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Herat and Balk provinces<sup>79</sup>.
- 5.6.7 On 16 November 2021, Qantara.de, a project run by Deutsche Welle, cited Kabul-based economic expert Khanjan Alokozay who claimed that more than 40 shopkeepers and businessmen had been kidnapped across the country over the past 2 months, some of whom had been killed<sup>80</sup>.
- 5.6.8 On 9 February 2022, ANI news agency reported that, according to local media, ‘An Afghan businessman from Faryab province was killed by his kidnappers three months after receiving USD 50,000 of ransom...’ Hafizullah was a carpet seller and his body was found inside a well in the Andkhoy district of Faryab province<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> AP, ‘[Taliban-style security welcomed by some, feared by others](#)’, 4 October 2021

<sup>73</sup> AP, ‘[Taliban-style security welcomed by some, feared by others](#)’, 4 October 2021

<sup>74</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Taliban: From Afghanistan’s rugged mountains to policing streets](#)’, 5 October 2021

<sup>75</sup> AP, ‘[Taliban-style security welcomed by some, feared by others](#)’, 4 October 2021

<sup>76</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Taliban: From Afghanistan’s rugged mountains to policing streets](#)’, 5 October 2021

<sup>77</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Taliban: From Afghanistan’s rugged mountains to policing streets](#)’, 5 October 2021

<sup>78</sup> FP, ‘[Afghan Crime Wave Adds to Taliban Dystopia](#)’, 29 October 2021

<sup>79</sup> Tolo News, ‘[Kidnapping Cases Surge in Afghanistan](#)’, 28 October 2021

<sup>80</sup> Qantara.de, ‘[Can the Taliban avert a food crisis without foreign aid?](#)’, 16 November 2021

<sup>81</sup> ANI, ‘[Afghan businessman killed in Faryab province](#)’, 9 February 2022

- 5.6.9 On 26 November 2021, Tolo News reported on insecurity in Kabul, stating that residents had ‘... expressed concerns over the surge in criminal activity in various parts of the city and urged the government to take the necessary steps to counter the criminal issues... The Kabul security department said that over 90 people were arrested on charges of murder, kidnapping, and robbery.’<sup>82</sup> Similar reports of rising crime were reported from Kunduz<sup>83</sup>.
- 5.6.10 On 24 October 2021, Ariana News reported that acting minister of defence, Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, announced plans to establish a new army. He said “‘We intend to create a national and independent army under MoD [Ministry of Defence] to defend the country with high values. We will attempt to equip the IEA army with modern weapons. The army should have ground and airspace capabilities”.’ However, no information was given on how the army would be financed or whether it would include soldiers from the former government<sup>84</sup>.
- 5.6.11 Associated Press (AP) reported on 8 December 2021 that ‘Many Taliban foot soldiers now have new jobs: manning checkpoints on the streets and carrying out security patrols in and around Afghan cities and towns.’ The AP published several photos of Taliban on night time patrol in the city of Herat<sup>85</sup>.
- 5.6.12 iNews reported on 24 January 2022 that, according to Teun van Dongel of the International Centre for Counter Terrorism, crime rates had gone ‘through the roof’, adding that it was ‘... often Taliban fighters themselves looting and extorting people. They’re shooting themselves in the foot because they’re showing themselves not to be who they pretended to be.’<sup>86</sup>
- 5.6.13 On 7 February 2022, Sky News reported on a Taliban jail in Herat where it was claimed inmates were being held with ‘no proof, no evidence and no trials’. The Sky News team, who were given exclusive access, saw children as young as 12 inside Herat’s prison, some of whom claimed they were there for ‘stealing bicycles.’<sup>87</sup>
- 5.6.14 On 9 February 2022, The Diplomat reported that members of the Haqqani Network, ‘a notorious terrorist organisation accused of indiscriminately attacking and murdering innocents by suicide bombings and other attacks for many years’ now serve as police officers in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. That report added that there was no ‘effective command and control over Taliban militias’ and claimed that ‘Every Taliban member can take the law into his own hands and do whatever he wants.’<sup>88</sup>
- 5.6.15 Tolo News reported on 25 February 2022 that the Taliban were conducting house-to-house searches in Kabul and neighbouring provinces to ‘detain the robbers, kidnappers and other criminals who have been already recognized by the intelligence service’, said Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid<sup>89</sup>. According to the Taliban, ‘Daesh fighters, robbers and kidnappers’ were

<sup>82</sup> Tolo News, ‘[Kabul Residents Urge Govt to Tackle Crime](#)’, 26 November 2021

<sup>83</sup> AVA, ‘[Kunduz Residents Complain of Assassinations and Kidnappings...](#)’, 5 December 2021

<sup>84</sup> Ariana News, ‘[MoD to form a new, independent national army](#)’, 24 October 2021

<sup>85</sup> AP, ‘[AP photos: Afghan Taliban fighters now man urban checkpoints](#)’, 8 December 2021

<sup>86</sup> iNews, ‘[Life under the Taliban five months on: Aid agencies warn of extreme...](#)’, 24 January 2022

<sup>87</sup> Sky News, ‘[Afghanistan: Inside prison where children as young as 12 are held...](#)’, 7 February 2022

<sup>88</sup> The Diplomat, ‘[An Urgent Need for Justice: Expediting the International...](#)’, 9 February 2022

<sup>89</sup> Tolo News, ‘[Kabul Residents Panicked by House-to-House Searches](#)’, 25 February 2022



captured during the searches<sup>90</sup>. On 2 March 2022, the same source reported that searches continued for a sixth day and drew international criticism<sup>91</sup>. Andreas Von Brandt, the ambassador and head of the EU delegation to Afghanistan, said ‘The intimidations, house searches, arrests and violence against members of different ethnic groups and women are crimes and must stop immediately...’<sup>92</sup> On the ninth day of searches, a spokesman for the Ministry of Defense said “‘We have found many light and heavy weapons, and ammunition – Kalashnikovs, M4s, M16s, rockets, PK machine guns and rocket launchers and even Humvee tanks”.’ Some residents welcomed the searches, which occurred in Kabul, Parwan, Panjshir, Kapisa, and some other provinces, while others criticised the arbitrary searches<sup>93</sup>.

- 5.6.16 According to ANI News Agency, the Taliban had ‘increased the presence of forces in Tajik and Hazara minority-dominated areas of the country’ during its house-to-house searches<sup>94</sup>.

See also [Ethnic and religious minorities](#).

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## 5.7 Taliban justice

- 5.7.1 For information on the Taliban’s justice system that operated in areas under its control and influence prior to the takeover, see section 4.6 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

- 5.7.2 On 23 September 2021, the Associated Press (AP) cited its interview with Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, one of the founders of the Taliban who acted as justice minister and head of the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice during the Taliban’s previous rule. The AP reported that the Taliban ‘... will once again carry out executions and amputations of hands, though perhaps not in public.’<sup>95</sup> The AP added that Turabi:

‘... dismissed outrage over the Taliban’s executions in the past, which sometimes took place in front of crowds at a stadium, and he warned the world against interfering with Afghanistan’s new rulers.

“Everyone criticized us for the punishments in the stadium, but we have never said anything about their laws and their punishments,” Turabi told The Associated Press, speaking in Kabul. “No one will tell us what our laws should be. We will follow Islam and we will make our laws on the Quran.”<sup>96</sup>

- 5.7.3 According to Turabi, ‘... judges – including women – would adjudicate cases, but the foundation of Afghanistan’s laws will be the Quran. He said the same punishments [as under the previous regime] would be revived. “Cutting off of hands is very necessary for security,” he said, saying it had a deterrent effect. He said the Cabinet was studying whether to do punishments in

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<sup>90</sup> Tolo News, [‘Islamic Emirate’s Mujahid Comments on House-to-House Searches’](#), 27 February 2022

<sup>91</sup> Tolo News, [‘House-to-House Searches Enter 6th Day Despite Intl Criticism’](#), 2 March 2022

<sup>92</sup> Tolo News, [‘House-to-House Searches Cause Intl Outcry’](#), 28 February 2022

<sup>93</sup> Tolo News, [‘Officials: Weapons Found in House-to-House Searches’](#), 5 March 2022

<sup>94</sup> ANI, [‘Taliban increases presence in Tajik, Hazara areas, conducts house-to-house searches’](#), 1 March 2021

<sup>95</sup> AP, [‘Taliban official: Strict punishment, executions will return’](#), 23 September 2021

<sup>96</sup> AP, [‘Taliban official: Strict punishment, executions will return’](#), 23 September 2021

public and will “develop a policy”.<sup>97</sup> However, he added that ‘... if punishments are made public, then people may be allowed to video or take photos to spread the deterrent effect.’<sup>98</sup>

- 5.7.4 Although Turabi claimed that women judges would adjudicate cases, Sky News reported on 25 December 2021 that over 100 female judges and their families had left Afghanistan in fear of their lives<sup>99</sup>.

See also [Journalists and human rights defenders, including lawyers and judges](#).

- 5.7.5 The AP report noted:

‘In recent days in Kabul, Taliban fighters have revived a punishment they commonly used in the past – public shaming of men accused of small-time theft.

‘On at least two occasions in the last week, Kabul men have been packed into the back of a pickup truck, their hands tied, and were paraded around to humiliate them. In one case, their faces were painted to identify them as thieves. In the other, stale bread was hung from their necks or stuffed in their mouth. It wasn’t immediately clear what their crimes were.’<sup>100</sup>

- 5.7.6 Similar public shaming was reported on 17 November 2021 by Jurist, a law-school based legal news and commentary service under the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, which received reports from law students and lawyers in Afghanistan. A staff correspondent in Kabul reported that in Badakhshan province, ‘The Taliban arrested three men accused of theft... shaved the three accused men’s beards and hair and forced them to carry the stolen items on their shoulders in public display... Similar acts by the Taliban have been witnessed in Herat, Mazar, Takhar, and other provinces.’<sup>101</sup>

- 5.7.7 On 15 September 2021, BBC News reported from Mazar-e-Sharif and stated that as they left the city’s Blue Mosque they saw a crowd gathered round 4 dead bodies with bullet wounds, one of which had ‘... a small handwritten note on top of it describing the men as kidnappers, warning other criminals their punishment will be the same.’<sup>102</sup> A similar incident was reported on 25 September 2021, when 4 men, accused of kidnap, were killed by the Taliban, who then put their bodies on public display in the city of Herat<sup>103 104</sup>. According to sources speaking to CNN, after the kidnappers were shot by the Taliban in a gun battle, their bodies were hanged in four different locations of Herat city<sup>105</sup>. BBC News stated that in a video, one of the bodies displayed a sign saying, ‘Abductors will be punished like this.’<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> AP, [‘Taliban official: Strict punishment, executions will return’](#), 23 September 2021

<sup>98</sup> AP, [‘Taliban official: Strict punishment, executions will return’](#), 23 September 2021

<sup>99</sup> Sky News, [‘Afghanistan: More than 100 female judges and their families...’](#), 25 December 2021

<sup>100</sup> AP, [‘Taliban official: Strict punishment, executions will return’](#), 23 September 2021

<sup>101</sup> Jurist, [‘Afghanistan dispatches: Taliban reintroduce public shaming...’](#), 17 November 2021

<sup>102</sup> BBC News, [‘Afghanistan: Life under Taliban rule one month on’](#), 15 September 2021

<sup>103</sup> CNN, [‘Taliban put alleged kidnappers’ bodies on display’](#), 25 September 2021

<sup>104</sup> BBC News, [‘Afghanistan: Taliban hang bodies as warning in city of Herat’](#), 25 September 2021

<sup>105</sup> CNN, [‘Taliban put alleged kidnappers’ bodies on display’](#), 25 September 2021

<sup>106</sup> BBC News, [‘Afghanistan: Taliban hang bodies as warning in city of Herat’](#), 25 September 2021

- 5.7.8 Referring to the justice system, AP News stated on 4 October 2021:  
 ‘As in the past, the Taliban have turned to tribal elders to settle disputes. Last week, a group of elders gathered in a Kabul mosque to adjudicate a stabbing attack that caused minor injuries. The elders ordered the culprit’s father to pay the victim the equivalent of nearly \$400, enough to cover the medical expenses. Muhammed Yousef Jawid accepted his punishment. “It’s fast, and much less expensive than it was under the previous system,” he said.’<sup>107</sup>
- 5.7.9 Referring to rules set out for the Taliban to follow, HRW noted on 29 October 2021 that ‘... Taliban fighters are instructed not to engage in kidnapping for ransom or “amputation such as removing the eyes, cutting ears and noses of the people” and to await a court’s judgment before punishing prisoners. Several provisions ban authorities from entering people’s homes and from destroying their property.’<sup>108</sup>
- 5.7.10 However, on 26 October 2021, Jurist, cited a staff correspondent in Kabul who indicated the complexities within the Taliban, which resulted in them not always following leadership policy:  
 ‘They [Taliban] are not one group. Haqqani network, Al-Qaeda, and many other militants assisted the Taliban throughout the last two decades. Each and every one of these groups follows their own agenda and policy at the moment.  
 ‘Haqqani network are the most dangerous and extremist group within the Taliban. They have said that anyone who stood against them during the past 20 years should be prosecuted by the Taliban. Therefore, when it comes to targets and threats every one of the groups listed above has their own agenda – they look at people as their own enemies. They do not hold the same opinions. They do not follow one single policy.’<sup>109</sup>
- 5.7.11 Actions by some Taliban appeared to confirm that official policy was not always followed when a Jurist staff correspondent referred to an incident of public shaming in Badakhshan province even without any judicial proceeding or official order from the Taliban<sup>110</sup>. According to the same report, ‘... the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice released statements against the imposition of such punishments without a competent court order. However, it appears that some of the group’s members are not following such advisory or are violating official orders.’<sup>111</sup>.
- 5.7.12 In a similar vein, on arbitrary acts of justice, a civil activist in Ghor province told the independent Afghan newspaper, Hasht-e Subh, in regard to Taliban seeking revenge from those who fought against them, that ‘The Taliban doesn’t have a specific leadership, but their members act arbitrarily in areas, and each of them has their own rule...’<sup>112</sup>

<sup>107</sup> AP, [‘Taliban-style security welcomed by some, feared by others’](#), 4 October 2021

<sup>108</sup> HRW, [‘Afghanistan: Taliban “Vice” Handbook Abusive’](#), 29 October 2021

<sup>109</sup> Jurist, [‘Afghanistan dispatches: “Anyone on the Taliban’s blacklist...”](#), 26 October 2021

<sup>110</sup> Jurist, [‘Afghanistan dispatches: Taliban reintroduce public shaming...’](#), 17 November 2021

<sup>111</sup> Jurist, [‘Afghanistan dispatches: Taliban reintroduce public shaming...’](#), 17 November 2021

<sup>112</sup> Hasht-e Subh, [‘Taliban Fighters Collect Blood Money in Ghor Province’](#), 18 October 2021

5.7.13 In a December 2021 report, the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) reported on recent events in Afghanistan, citing a range of sources, and noted in regard to the Taliban's actions:

'All the consulted sources... explained that many of the incidents committed by Taliban members toward members of the civilian population since the Taliban conquest should not be viewed as a systematic campaign against adversaries and enemies of the Islamic Emirate. Rather, these incidents should be understood as individual Taliban members settling old personal disputes and feuds. In this relation, both the London-based journalist and the Afghan professor of law pointed out that many Taliban members have in the past been treated poorly by officials of the former government, such as members of the security forces or the previous judiciary. Taliban members are now taking advantage of the current situation in Afghanistan to resolve personal disputes and revenging themselves or family members, who have been treated poorly by Afghans employed by the former government. Other incidents can be explained as a manifestation of individual Taliban members or ethnic Pashtuns not affiliated with the Taliban taking advantage of the current situation in Afghanistan in order to advance their own agenda and personal interests.'<sup>113</sup>

5.7.14 The DIS report added:

'According to the Afghan professor of law, this disconnect between statements from the Taliban leadership and the actions on the ground have occurred in part because of the Taliban's highly decentralised composition. This means that the Taliban leadership are not able to control the Taliban fighters' actions. This assessment was echoed by the London-based journalist, who argued that the Taliban leadership does [not] have the capacity to ensure that every Taliban member with a weapon follows their commands, and that they might not be willing to either.'<sup>114</sup>

5.7.15 In a statement, the Taliban warned of rogue elements in their ranks, acting in their own interests in an attempt to harm the image of the group, reported Al Jazeera on 4 November 2021<sup>115</sup>. Following reports of Taliban fighters abusing journalists and seizing property, a decree issued in late September by the office of supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhunzada said the Taliban was banned from entering homes or offices '... in Kabul or its surroundings under the pretext of checking vehicles or equipment. No one is allowed to take vehicles or equipment.'<sup>116</sup> However, in apparent defiance of this decree, The Guardian reported in January 2022 that, 'Taliban gunmen have raided the homes of women's rights activists in Kabul, beating and arresting female campaigners in a string of actions apparently triggered by recent demonstrations.'<sup>117</sup>

5.7.16 Emphasising the need for good behaviour of Taliban fighters, 'The Purification Commission of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan ordered a ban on arbitrary military operations and courts and warned that those

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<sup>113</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 23), December 2021

<sup>114</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 23), December 2021

<sup>115</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Afghanistan: Taliban leader warns of infiltrators](#)', 4 November 2021

<sup>116</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Afghanistan: Taliban leader warns of infiltrators](#)', 4 November 2021

<sup>117</sup> Guardian, '[Taliban launch raids on homes of Afghan women's rights activists](#)', 20 January 2022

accountable will be brought to justice or dissolved,' reported Khaama Press on 13 November 2021<sup>118</sup>. Afghan Voice Agency (AVA) reported on 14 November 2021 that, following accusations of abuse, 'The Taliban interim government has reported that the Filtration Commission has dismissed more than 400 security forces from their duties and jailed many of them.'<sup>119</sup>

5.7.17 AVA reported on 23 November that the Taliban said prisoners should not be detained beyond a certain period of time and that all cases should be referred to the judiciary and dealt with according to Sharia law. The report added that 'In the past, most [prisoners] during the previous regime repeatedly claimed to have been detained for no reason or for too long. Moreover, the process has continued since the Taliban took control, and many people have been arrested or imprisoned without knowing their fate.'<sup>120</sup>

5.7.18 Jurist, a law-school based legal news and commentary service under the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, received reports from law students and lawyers in Afghanistan. On 25 November 2021, a staff correspondent for Jurist in Kabul expressed concern at the Taliban's Ministry of Justice hiring policy, which stipulated the following conditions on hiring officials for the Ministry:

'1. Should be a scholar (they mean that applicants should have Islamic knowledge);

'2. Should be honest, have good reputation, and be faithful to the Taliban's values and principles;

'3. Should not have worked in the former government;

'4. Have taken part in the war in the past two decades;

'5. Have professional knowledge and serve the people in a good way.'<sup>121</sup>

5.7.19 The staff correspondent regarded that, 'The Taliban are finding ways to hire their own soldiers into the different governmental organizations and because these soldiers have no skills and academic background, such actions mean that the Taliban are paving the way for their own.'<sup>122</sup>

5.7.20 Reporting on 1 December 2021, Gandhara, an English language news hub affiliated to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), noted 'Taliban Justice Minister Mullah Abdul Hakim also declared that only Taliban-approved lawyers can work in their Islamic courts, effectively revoking the licenses of some 2,500 lawyers in Afghanistan. His order has raised deep concerns about the impartiality and fairness of criminal trials under the Taliban...'<sup>123</sup>

5.7.21 On 3 January 2022, Jurist staff reported:

'Afghanistan's Justice Ministry reiterated Monday that the country's independent lawyers will need to re-certify under a new qualification process

<sup>118</sup> Khaama Press, '[Taliban bans arbitrary operations and courts](#)', 13 November 2021

<sup>119</sup> AVA, '[Numerous Taliban Members Jailed and Dismissed](#)', 14 November 2021

<sup>120</sup> AVA, '[Handle the Prisoners' Cases Based on Sharia Law, Says Taliban...](#)', 23 November 2021

<sup>121</sup> Jurist, '[Afghanistan dispatches: new Taliban justice ministry rules...](#)', 25 November 2021

<sup>122</sup> Jurist, '[Afghanistan dispatches: new Taliban justice ministry rules...](#)', 25 November 2021

<sup>123</sup> Gandhara, '[Judge, Jury, And Executioner: Taliban Brings Afghanistan's...](#)', 1 December 2021



ser by the Ministry, signaling the intent of the Taliban authorities to plough ahead with plans to strip the country's legal profession of its independence.

According to the statement, the country's lawyers will be authorized to continue practicing with their previous licenses until the new certification process has been finalized.

This was the latest step in a series of efforts by the new regime to crack down on the activities of the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA), an organization established in 2008 to oversee the licensing of new lawyers, and to champion the rule of law and social justice.<sup>124</sup>

- 5.7.22 On 7 December 2021, Hasht-e Subh Daily, an independent Afghan newspaper, reported on the arrest of 4 people for the rape of 2 women. The report noted that the 4 accused were publicly stoned in Uruzgan province but Hasht-e Subh was not able to confirm if they were alive or dead<sup>125</sup>.

See also [Potentially vulnerable groups](#).

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Section 6 updated: 4 April 2022

## 6. Potentially vulnerable groups

### 6.1 Taliban's 'general amnesty'

- 6.1.1 For background on the Taliban's announcement of a 'general amnesty' against 'all those who had fought against us'<sup>126</sup>, see sections 4.2 and 4.3 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

- 6.1.2 In her book, 'Negotiating Survival: Civilian–Insurgent Relations in Afghanistan', published in August 2021 and based on extensive research in-country (including over 400 interviews conducted between July 2017 and February 2019 in fifteen different provinces), Ashley Jackson explained that this policy was not new.

'The Taliban also made concerted efforts to "demobilise" Afghan forces rather than simply kill them, though targeted killings continued alongside this. In 2016, the practice became an official policy whereby the Taliban offered amnesty to anyone associated with the government or international forces. For example, Afghan security forces were allowed to return to civilian life, provided they surrendered their arms, apologised for the harm done and had a trusted elder vouch for them.'<sup>127</sup>

- 6.1.3 A joint report, dated September 2021, by Amnesty International (AI), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation against Torture (OMCT) cited a range of sources and noted:

'Although the Taliban had assured a general amnesty for all previous government workers, there was no formal decree to this effect – and to protect the rights of journalists. Contrary to this reassurance, the Taliban

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<sup>124</sup> Jurist, '[Taliban proceed with plans to strip independence of Afghanistan lawyers](#)', 3 January 2022

<sup>125</sup> Hasht-e Subh, '[Four People Stoned to Death in Urozgan Over Rape Accusation](#)', 7 Dec 2021

<sup>126</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Transcript of Taliban's first news conference in Kabul](#)', 17 August 2021

<sup>127</sup> Jackson A, '[Negotiating Survival: Civilian–Insurgent Relations in...](#)' (page 95), August 2021

continued to crackdown on journalists and tortured them for reporting about protests in the country. Female protestors took to the streets demanding equality and freedom in Nimroz, Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and other cities and provinces in Afghanistan – despite violent crackdowns on protestors on 2 and 6 September in Mazar-e-Sharif. Reporters were threatened by the Taliban to not report the protest in Mazar-e-Sharif.<sup>128</sup>

- 6.1.4 The Report of the Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan, published on 2 September 2021, said that:

‘After seizing Kabul, Taliban fighters erected checkpoints throughout the capital and increased patrols, without uniforms. Reports also suggested that some people had been shot after having crossed checkpoints without approval. While statements by the Taliban included instructions not to enter anyone’s house without permission and that “life, property and honour” would be protected, numerous reports emerged of the Taliban conducting house-to-house searches for government personnel, weapons and property, and in some cases confiscation of the latter. Some reports indicated that the Taliban were allegedly searching for people who had “worked with foreigners” and at times, beating them.’<sup>129</sup>

- 6.1.5 A report on political, security-related and humanitarian developments in Afghanistan and consequences for Europe, as well as the region, by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, dated 28 September 2021, noted that, ‘While in their public discourse, the Taliban have pledged to respect human rights – within the framework of Sharia law – the reality on the ground contradicts these statements, as reported by the United Nations, NGOs and media sources.’<sup>130</sup>

- 6.1.6 The Jurist’s Staff Correspondent in Kabul said in a report dated 26 October 2021 that:

‘The Taliban announced that there would be no revenge and no one would be targeted – even those who worked with foreign forces in Afghanistan – but reality reports otherwise. There is a gap between what they said and what they are actually doing.

‘Many individuals have reported that they have been threatened by the Taliban since they seized power in August in Afghanistan. But the Taliban themselves have not commented on any incident reported by the media. Many others fear to report any warnings from the Taliban to the media.

‘It’s mostly social activists, former military and government officials, CSOs, and traders who have been targeted, warned, and even affected by the Taliban...’<sup>131</sup>

- 6.1.7 Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported on 30 November 2021 that, despite a general amnesty, more than 100 members of the former security services have been killed or disappeared in 4 provinces between 15 August and 31

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<sup>128</sup> AI and others, ‘[The fate of thousands hanging in the balance...](#)’ (page 4), September 2021

<sup>129</sup> UNGA: ‘[Report of the Secretary General](#)’ (paragraph 20), 2. September 2021

<sup>130</sup> CoE-PACE, ‘[The situation in Afghanistan: consequences...](#)’ (paragraph 55), 28 September 2021

<sup>131</sup> Jurist, ‘[Afghanistan dispatches: “Anyone on the Taliban’s blacklist...”](#)’, 26 October 2021

October 2021. The report also indicated family members of former security forces had also been targeted<sup>132</sup>.

- 6.1.8 On 31 January 2022, Al Jazeera reported that UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, when referring to the deaths of over 100 Afghan government and security force personnel, said in a report addressed to the UN Security Council that:
- ‘... “more than two-thirds” of the victims were allegedly killed extrajudicially by the Taliban or its affiliates. “Despite announcements of general amnesties for former members of the Government, security forces and those who worked with international military forces, [the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan] UNAMA continued to receive credible allegations of killings, enforced disappearances, and other violations” against former government and coalition members, the report said. The UN mission also documented 44 cases of temporary arrests, beatings and threats of intimidation, 42 of them by the Taliban.’<sup>133</sup>
- 6.1.9 A joint statement by numerous foreign governments, including the US, UK and EU, expressed concern at findings in the HRW report and called on the Taliban to enforce the amnesty<sup>134</sup>.
- 6.1.10 Responding to the HRW report, the Taliban’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said ‘... any Islamic Emirate member “found breaching the amnesty decree will be prosecuted and penalized”... whilst the Taliban’s reform commission said it had ‘... not registered any cases of killings of former members of the security forces.’<sup>135</sup>
- 6.1.11 AVA reported on 1 December 2021 that in contrast to some statements announcing that Taliban soldiers would be held accountable for breaching the amnesty, ‘... the Taliban prime minister implicitly legitimized the targeted assassinations of former government employees. He said the Taliban were committed to the principle of amnesty but were punishing those who acted against them.’<sup>136</sup>

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- 6.2 **Persons associated with the former Afghan government or international community**
- 6.2.1 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.2 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).
- 6.2.2 Reuters reported on 10 September 2021 that Rohullah Azizi, brother of the former Afghan vice president, had been killed by the Taliban. A text received by Reuters from Azizi’s nephew said ‘They [Taliban] executed my uncle... They killed him yesterday and would not let us bury him. They kept saying his body should rot.’<sup>137</sup> Deutsche Welle (DW) said that another nephew told the AP that Rohullah and his driver were stopped at a Taliban checkpoint, in

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<sup>132</sup> HRW, ‘[Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan...](#)’, 30 November 2021

<sup>133</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Taliban killed dozens of former Afghan officials: UN report](#)’, 31 January 2022

<sup>134</sup> USSD, ‘[Joint Statement on Reports of Summary Killings...](#)’, 4 December 2021

<sup>135</sup> Tolo News, ‘[Violators of “Amnesty Decree” Will Be Prosecuted: MoFA](#)’, 6 December 2021

<sup>136</sup> AVA, ‘[Taliban Must Be Accountable for the Targeted Killings of Civilians](#)’, 1 December 2021

<sup>137</sup> Reuters, ‘[Brother of Afghan opposition figure executed by Taliban, family says](#)’, 10 Sept 2021



Khanez village in Panjshir province, and shot. The Taliban claimed he was killed during fighting in the province<sup>138</sup>.

- 6.2.3 According to DW, reporting on 11 September 2021, 'Videos circulating on social media purportedly show the Taliban opening fire on anti-Taliban fighters in Panjshir whom they have arrested. The videos could not be verified independently.'<sup>139</sup> (see also [Territorial control](#)).
- 6.2.4 Hasht-e Subh Daily reported on 18 October 2021 that according to sources in Ghor province, '... the Taliban has demanded blood money from people in some villages of the province. The Taliban in Ghor province has reportedly demanded the members of the former government and public uprising to pay a ransom for the blood of Taliban fighters killed in the past.' The Taliban denied the accusations, saying that any past animosity between the Taliban and residents was under 'the mediation of influential and local elders.'<sup>140</sup>
- 6.2.5 On 12 October 2021 it was reported that Patricia Gossman, associate director for the Asia division of Human Rights Watch, told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) that there were many reports of people being arrested '... purely for having any association with the former security forces and family members being interrogated or beaten by Taliban looking for former officials,' and according to the same source, 'The Taliban forces carrying out these abuses appear to have been given a free hand while officials at the top deny it is happening.'<sup>141</sup>
- 6.2.6 In a meeting on 23 October 2021 with the UN Secretary-General's special representative to Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, the Taliban's Deputy Prime Minister gave assurances that UN organisations and staff would be protected in the country<sup>142,143</sup>.
- 6.2.7 Citing the Financial Times, Khaama Press reported on 24 October 2021 that the EU were making plans to reopen its diplomatic representation in Kabul<sup>144</sup>. In response, the Taliban's foreign ministry spokesman, Abdul Qahar Balkhi, welcomed the move and said, 'Just as security of other embassies in Kabul is guaranteed, the security of EU embassy & personnel will also be guaranteed', reported Afghan Voice Agency (AVA)<sup>145</sup>. However, prior to this promise of security, The Guardian reported on 5 October 2021 that a former British Embassy driver in Kabul was attacked at home by 5 armed men, whom he believed were affiliated to the Taliban and which he said was linked to his employment at the embassy<sup>146</sup>.
- 6.2.8 On 26 October 2021, the Jurist's Staff Correspondent in Kabul gave their '... observations on the Taliban's targeting of perceived or potential opponents in Afghanistan who publicly object to their policies, who were associated with

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<sup>138</sup> DW, '[Brother of former Afghan VP killed by Taliban](#)', 11 September 2021

<sup>139</sup> DW, '[Brother of former Afghan VP killed by Taliban](#)', 11 September 2021

<sup>140</sup> Hasht-e Subh, '[Taliban Fighters Collect Blood Money in Ghor Province](#)', 18 October 2021

<sup>141</sup> Gandhara, '[Taliban Takes Revenge On Former Afghan Security Forces](#)', 21 October 2021

<sup>142</sup> Ariana News, '[IEA pledges to safeguard all UN operations and staff](#)', 24 October 2021

<sup>143</sup> Khaama Press, '[Taliban assure UN of protecting their administrations...](#)', 24 October 2021

<sup>144</sup> Khaama Press, '[EU to reopen diplomatic office in Kabul within a month](#)', 24 October 2021

<sup>145</sup> AVA, '[Islamic Emirate Welcomes Possible EU Office Reopening](#)', 26 October 2021

<sup>146</sup> The Guardian, '[Former British embassy driver badly beaten in Kabul](#)', 5 October 2021

the previous government, or who worked with foreign forces prior to the Taliban takeover.’ They said:

‘... former government officials in Panjshir, Mazar, and Samangan provinces have been targeted, leading to the death of one in Samangan province. A few weeks ago the Taliban even went farther and stated some specific individuals – especially those who worked with the foreign forces – should give themselves up to be prosecuted or they will prosecute their family members if they find them. Anyone on the Taliban’s blacklist is in great danger.

‘The Taliban are using different techniques in targeting people. They have issued warning letters to some former government officials stating that if they do not give themselves to them then their families would be arrested. Several officials of the central bank received warning letters in the last three weeks. They all received written warning letters signed and stamped by the Taliban. One of the warning letters shared with me said “You should have stopped working with a slave government under control of Americans; we shall punish you so others take a lesson.” Fortunately, the target of this letter is already out of the country. In another incident from the central bank, the Taliban went to check the former Chief of Staff of the central bank who was said to have worked with the ex-governor of the bank too closely. However, they could not find him.

‘The Taliban appear to have monitored government officials closely before they seized power in August. Most of the people who got killed by them were government officials. I myself lost three friends in a car bombing several months ago.’<sup>147</sup>

#### 6.2.9 The DIS report of December 2021 noted:

‘... according to the Afghan professor of law, the treatment of Afghans associated with the previous government by the Taliban has varied depending on their professions and previous tasks. As an example hereof, he explained that health workers and people employed in the health sector have largely not been targeted by the Taliban. The same is true for people employed in the education sector, although there have been restraints on the curricula in some parts of the country, because education has been regarded as somewhat controversial. The London-based journalist and the Kabul-based journalist shared this view that the treatment Afghans associated with the previous government has varied depending on what job they previously held.’<sup>148</sup>

#### 6.2.10 The DIS report also noted in regard to persons associated with the international community:

‘One source stated that the lack of empirical data makes it very difficult to assess how Taliban regards Afghans previously employed by international organisations or foreign states in Afghanistan, and how they have been treated.

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<sup>147</sup> Jurist, [‘Afghanistan dispatches: “Anyone on the Taliban’s blacklist...”](#), 26 October 2021

<sup>148</sup> DIS, [‘Afghanistan: Recent events’](#) (page 24), December 2021

'All sources consulted assessed that the Taliban members regard Afghans previously employed by international organisations or foreign states in Afghanistan in a similar fashion to how they approach Afghans employed by the former government. As such, whether or not an Afghan previously employed by international organisations or foreign states risks being targeted by the Taliban may depend on their previous tasks and their previous employers. The Afghan professor of law elaborated that the number of Afghans who have worked for either an international organisation or a foreign country in Afghanistan is so high that the Taliban does not possess the capacity to target all of them even if they wanted to.'<sup>149</sup>

- 6.2.11 In slight contrast, the DIS report noted that '... the expert in Afghan security policy stated that Afghans who have worked at embassies of Western states in recent years are... at risk, because it is difficult to conceal ones occupation in Afghanistan.'<sup>150</sup>
- 6.2.12 The DIS report also added, 'Regarding Afghans employed by Western NGOs, two sources stated that whether or not such individuals would be at risk of persecution by members of Taliban depended on what work the NGO carries out and not from what country the NGO originates.'<sup>151</sup>
- 6.2.13 BBC News reported on 13 January 2022 that ex-British Council teachers 'who were employed to spread British values and teach English in Helmand province', were living in hiding in fear of reprisals by the Taliban<sup>152</sup>.

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### 6.3 Persons associated with international military forces, including interpreters

- 6.3.1 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.3 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).
- 6.3.2 The DIS report of December 2021 noted that sources consulted, '... agreed that Afghans previously employed by Western militaries, and especially the American military, top the hierarchy of risk. The expert in Afghan security policy elaborated that Afghans previously working at enclosed military facilities would be of less risk of being targeted, as this occupation is easier to conceal...'<sup>153</sup>
- 6.3.3 The DIS report cited incidents against former interpreters:
- '15 September: an Afghan interpreter was reportedly killed by the Taliban in Nangarhar province.
- '1 October: interpreters employed by Dutch military summoned in court by Taliban and their family members threatened.
- '20 October: an Afghan army officer previously working as an interpreter for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) was killed by Taliban fighters in Uruzgan.'<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 26), December 2021

<sup>150</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 26), December 2021

<sup>151</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 26), December 2021

<sup>152</sup> BBC News, '[Afghanistan: "Terrified" British Council teachers still in hiding](#)', 13 January 2022

<sup>153</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 27), December 2021

<sup>154</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 26), December 2021

## 6.4 Members of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

- 6.4.1 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.4 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).
- 6.4.2 In the weeks following the Taliban takeover there were reports of threats and executions of former police and army officials, noted BBC News on 31 August 2021<sup>155</sup>. In one example, the BBC noted ‘Several sources confirmed that Taliban fighters last week executed two senior police officials - Haji Mullah Achakzai, the security director of Badghis province, and Ghulam Sakhi Akbari, security director of Farah province.’<sup>156</sup>
- 6.4.3 Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that, despite a general amnesty, more than 100 members of the former security services have been killed or disappeared in 4 provinces between 15 August and 31 October 2021<sup>157</sup>.
- 6.4.4 In its report dated 30 November 2021, HRW documented the arrest and enforced disappearance of 47 former members of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), including Afghan Police, Army, and members of the National Directorate of Security, who had either surrendered or been apprehended by the Taliban between 15 August and 31 October 2021. Though the report focused on Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, and Kunduz provinces, there were more such cases in Khost, Paktia, Paktika, and other cities, according to the report<sup>158</sup>.
- 6.4.5 HRW indicated that the Taliban used intelligence and access to government records to identify former ANSF members. Furthermore, the Taliban directed former ANSF to register with them to receive notification guaranteeing their safety. According to HRW, persons have been detained, executed or forcibly disappeared within days of their registration. The report also noted that the Taliban undertook house to house searches or night raids looking for former ANSF members ‘... often threatening and abusing family members to reveal the whereabouts of those in hiding.’<sup>159</sup>
- 6.4.6 Referring to Afghan military pilots who had fled to Uzbekistan and, according to one pilot, feared returning to Afghanistan for fear of reprisals by the Taliban, Reuters reported on 3 September 2021 that the Taliban said there would be no reprisal killings and that they ‘... will be inviting former military personnel, including pilots, to join their new security forces.’<sup>160</sup>
- 6.4.7 Citing various sources, a joint report by Amnesty International (AI), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation against Torture (OMCT) said, ‘In an attack on 4 September [2021], the Taliban were accused of killing Banu Negar, a former woman police officer, in front of her children. She was eight months pregnant at the

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<sup>155</sup> BBC News, ‘[Amid violent reprisals, Afghans fear the Taliban's “amnesty”...](#)’, 31 August 2021

<sup>156</sup> BBC News, ‘[Amid violent reprisals, Afghans fear the Taliban's “amnesty”...](#)’, 31 August 2021

<sup>157</sup> HRW, ‘[Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan...](#)’, 30 November 2021

<sup>158</sup> HRW, ‘[Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan...](#)’, 30 November 2021

<sup>159</sup> HRW, ‘[Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan...](#)’, 30 November 2021

<sup>160</sup> Reuters, ‘[Exclusive: “They’ll kill us” - Afghan pilots at Uzbek camp fear...](#)’, 3 September 2021

time. She had worked for the police force in Ghor for 15 years. The incident took place in the night, at 10 PM local time, in her home.<sup>161</sup>

- 6.4.8 On 23 October 2021, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (RFERL) reported that 2 Afghan military pilots, who had fled to Tajikistan following the Taliban takeover, told RFERL's Tajik service that the Taliban were trying to force them to return to Afghanistan. The 2 pilots said the Taliban were threatening their Afghanistan-based families and those of over 100 other pilots in Tajikistan, demanding they return to the country. The Taliban denied the allegations and suggested that the stories were a ruse to gain refugee status<sup>162</sup>.
- 6.4.9 Discussing the establishment of a new army under the Taliban's Ministry of Defence, but without firm details on how it would be formed, some Taliban officials indicated that the way was open for former government soldiers to join, adding that some had already returned, reported Ariana News on 24 October 2021<sup>163</sup>.
- 6.4.10 On 9 November 2021, Hasht-e Subh Daily reported on 3 former soldiers who were shot dead by the Taliban in Takhar province in northern Afghanistan<sup>164</sup>. On 13 November 2021, the same source reported on the deaths of 2 female officers affiliated to the former army, found shot dead in Paktia province on 12 November. The Taliban made no comment on the incident<sup>165</sup>. AVA reported on the killing of a former police chief in Kapisa's Kohistan district, shot by the Taliban, according to relatives, also on 12 November<sup>166</sup>. On 3 December 2021, Hasht-e Subh Daily reported that 2 Taliban officials had been charged with the murder of a former soldier in Daikundi, after his body was found 3 months after his arrest and disappearance<sup>167</sup>.
- 6.4.11 In response to its findings of killings and disappearances, HRW revealed that '... the Taliban said they had removed from their ranks 755 members found to have committed such acts and had established a military tribunal for those accused of murder, torture, and illegal detention. They also said that executions of people taken into custody were not allowed unless decided by a Sharia court.'<sup>168</sup>
- 6.4.12 On 13 November 2021, Khaama Press reported that, where referring to the behaviour of Taliban fighters, members of the Purification Commission of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan '... warned that no one is allowed to abuse or beat the former security personnel and that the culprits will be brought to justice.'<sup>169</sup>
- 6.4.13 In a speech on 14 December 2021 to the UN Human Rights Council, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights in Afghanistan, Nada Al-Nashif, said that they had received 'credible allegations' during the last 3

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<sup>161</sup> AI and others, '[The fate of thousands hanging in the balance...](#)' (page 19), September 2021

<sup>162</sup> RFERL, '[Afghan Pilots Who Fled To Tajikistan Say Taliban Is Threatening...](#)', 23 October 2021

<sup>163</sup> Ariana News, '[MoD to form a new, independent national army](#)', 24 October 2021

<sup>164</sup> Hasht-e Subh, '[The Taliban Shot Dead Two Former Army Commanders...](#)', 9 November 2021

<sup>165</sup> Hasht-e Subh, '[Two Former Female Officers Found Dead in Paktia](#)', 13 November 2021

<sup>166</sup> AVA, '[Pull Afghanistan Back from the Precipice](#)', 14 November 2021

<sup>167</sup> Hasht-e Subh, '[Two Taliban Officials Arrested in Daikundi for Killing...](#)', 3 December 2021

<sup>168</sup> HRW, '[Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan...](#)', 30 November 2021

<sup>169</sup> Khaama Press, '[Taliban bans arbitrary operations and courts](#)', 13 November 2021



months of extrajudicial killings of more than 100 former Afghan national security forces and others associated with Afghanistan's former government of which at least 72 killings were 'attributed to the Taliban'<sup>170</sup>.

- 6.4.14 In a December 2021 report, the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) reported on recent events in Afghanistan, citing a range of sources, and noted in regard to targeting members of the former ANSF:

'All of the sources consulted for the report stated that the Taliban have engaged in some degree of systematic targeting, especially of Afghans with links to the security sector of the previous government, since their conquest of Afghanistan. The London-based journalist stated that the Taliban have launched raids on employees of the former government by going from door to door in cities. The expert in Afghan security policy echoed this, and further advised that the Taliban have engaged in low intensity retribution campaigns against former members of the security sector and especially former members of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) since assuming power. All consulted sources agreed that the scale of the systematic targeting as well as who is subjected to this form of targeting remained unclear.'<sup>171</sup>

- 6.4.15 The same report added:

'All consulted sources for this report agreed that Afghans previously employed in the security forces generally face a greater risk of being targeted than Afghans employed as civilians at the former government. The sources further agreed that Afghans previously employed in the security forces also faced a varying degree of risk depending on their previous job. The London-based journalist stated that he had spoken to Taliban members who argued that former soldiers and police officers could be forgiven, but that former intelligence officers could not.'<sup>172</sup>

- 6.4.16 On 31 December 2021, it was reported that the Taliban would investigate the torture of a former member of the Afghan security forces<sup>173</sup>, after a video appearing to show their torture went viral on social media<sup>174</sup>.

- 6.4.17 See also [Taliban's 'general amnesty'](#) and [Taliban justice](#).

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## 6.5 Women

- 6.5.1 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.5 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

- 6.5.2 Reporting on the loss of women's rights since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, HRW reported on 1 November 2021:

'Secondary schools have reopened for boys but remain closed to the vast majority of girls. Women are banned from most employment; the Taliban government added insult to injury by saying women in their employ could

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<sup>170</sup> UN Web TV, '[High Commissioner Update on Afghanistan...](#)', 14 December 2021

<sup>171</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 22), December 2021

<sup>172</sup> DIS, '[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)' (page 24), December 2021

<sup>173</sup> Khaama Press, '[Taliban to investigate torture of former security personnel](#)', 31 December 2021

<sup>174</sup> WION, '[Taliban member brutally tortures Afghan army official](#)', 29 December 2021

keep their jobs only if they were in a role a man cannot fill – such as being an attendant in a women’s toilet. Women are mostly out of university, and due to new restrictions it is unclear when and how they can return. Many female teachers have been dismissed.

‘The policy of requiring a mahram, a male family member as chaperone, to accompany any woman leaving her home, is not in place according to a Kabul official but Taliban members on the street are still sometimes enforcing it, as well as harassing women about their clothing. The Taliban have systematically closed down shelters for women and girls fleeing domestic violence. Women’s sports have been banned.’<sup>175</sup>

6.5.3 Former female Afghan lawyers and judges claim that ex-prisoners, freed by the Taliban, have been searching for them to take revenge for their convictions and imprisonment. The women have been unable to return to work following the Taliban takeover and now live in fear of reprisals from both the Taliban and convicted criminals, some saying they received death threats on a daily basis<sup>176 177 178 179</sup>.

6.5.4 HRW indicated in a report on women in the city of Herat, dated 23 September 2021, that, ‘Since taking over the city on August 12, 2021, the Taliban have instilled fear among women and girls by searching out high-profile women; denying women freedom of movement outside their homes; imposing compulsory dress codes; severely curtailing access to employment and education; and restricting the right to peaceful assembly.’<sup>180</sup>

6.5.5 Regarding high-profile women, the HRW report noted:

‘The women interviewed said that they had heard reports that the Taliban had searched for at least some women’s rights activists and high-profile women in Herat, and one of the women had seen her own name on a Taliban flyer. One woman said that elders in her neighborhood told her that the Taliban had come to them with a list of 25 high-profile women, including her, and had asked them for help finding those women. The elders said they protected her by saying they did not know her. “Those 25 were with big organizations, government offices, and were reporters, civil society activists, and those who spoke against the Taliban in the media or criticized the Taliban – they said all were listed there.” She named several high-ranking female members of the former provincial government whom she said were also reportedly listed.’<sup>181</sup>

6.5.6 Protests by women demanding their basic rights took place in Herat, Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif in early September 2021, reported HRW. Taliban reacted violently, beating some of the protesters and firing indiscriminately into the crowd<sup>182 183</sup>. Women also protested in Kabul on 21 October 2021,

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<sup>175</sup> HRW, ‘[From Taliban to Taliban: Cycle of Hope, Despair on Women’s Rights](#)’, 1 November 2021

<sup>176</sup> CNN, ‘[Afghanistan’s women judges are in hiding, fearing reprisal attacks...](#)’, 20 September 2021

<sup>177</sup> BBC News, ‘[Afghanistan’s female lawyers are on the run from men...](#)’, 6 October 2021

<sup>178</sup> BBC News, ‘[Fleeing Afghanistan: “Women are imprisoned, while the...”](#)’, 26 October 2021

<sup>179</sup> Gandhara, ‘[Women Judges In Afghanistan Face Threats...](#)’, 12 October 2021

<sup>180</sup> HRW, ‘[Afghanistan: Taliban Abuses Cause Widespread Fear](#)’, 23 September 2021

<sup>181</sup> HRW, ‘[Afghanistan: Taliban Abuses Cause Widespread Fear](#)’, 23 September 2021

<sup>182</sup> HRW, ‘[Afghan Women Protest Against Taliban Restrictions](#)’, 7 September 2021

<sup>183</sup> HRW, ‘[Afghanistan: Taliban Abuses Cause Widespread Fear](#)’, 23 September 2021

demanding the return of their rights after the Taliban curtailed women from working and high school girls' education following their takeover, reported Gandhara. According to the report, which documented the protest in pictures, 'The women's march was allowed to continue for around 90 minutes before the Taliban began attacking journalists covering the event.'<sup>184</sup>

See also [Journalists and human rights defenders, including lawyers and judges](#).

- 6.5.7 In a report dated 31 October 2021, Abdul Hakeim, chief of staff for the Minister of Education, was quoted as saying in regard to girls' education "Amendments will be made based on our new laws. Islamic scholars will make the decisions... We want an Islamic perspective, and this means separate classes and transport. Once this is sorted out, girls can continue education for a lifetime"<sup>185</sup>.
- 6.5.8 Media guidelines issued by the Taliban on 21 November 2021 called on female television journalists to wear the hijab and urged TV stations not to show soap operas or dramas featuring women actors, or other content that was deemed unIslamic<sup>186 187</sup>.
- 6.5.9 On 9 January 2022, TOLO News stated that female reporters said they were not allowed to attend press conferences held by Taliban officials. A TOLOnews reporter, Amina Hakimi, stated that, 'We went to cover two events; one event was organised by the Kabul governor and the other was by the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum. We were not allowed to attend the events.'<sup>188</sup>
- See also [Journalists and human rights defenders, including lawyers and judges](#).
- 6.5.10 On 7 January 2022, VOA News reported that the Taliban's religious police put up posters around the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul, ordering women to cover up. The report noted 'The poster, which includes an image of the face-covering burqa, was placed on cafes and shops this week by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. "According to Sharia law, Muslim women must wear the hijab," the poster reads...'<sup>189</sup> A spokesman was cited as saying "If someone does not follow it, it does not mean she will be punished or beaten, it's just encouragement for Muslim women to follow Sharia law"<sup>190</sup>.
- 6.5.11 Despite the order, which France 24 noted in a report dated 22 January 2022, some women in Kabul were shown entering a café wearing headscarves as they refused to fully cover their faces<sup>191</sup>.

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<sup>184</sup> Gandhara, "["Women Prefer To Die Than Live Like Slaves": Kabul Protest...](#)", 22 October 2021

<sup>185</sup> Deadline, "[U.S. Exit Leaves Afghan Women's Education In Limbo Despite...](#)", 31 October 2021

<sup>186</sup> DW, "[Afghanistan: Taliban issue guidelines against women actors](#)", 21 November 2021

<sup>187</sup> Al Jazeera, "[Afghan women speak up against new Taliban media guidelines](#)", 25 November 2021

<sup>188</sup> TOLO News, "[Afghan Female Reporters Fear Increased Restrictions](#)", 9 January 2022

<sup>189</sup> VOA, "[Taliban Religious Police Issue Posters Ordering Women to Cover Up](#)", 7 January 2022

<sup>190</sup> VOA, "[Taliban Religious Police Issue Posters Ordering Women to Cover Up](#)", 7 January 2022

<sup>191</sup> France 24, "[In Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, some resist Sharia law](#)", 26 January 2022



- 6.5.12 On 3 December 2021, the Taliban issued a Special Decree on women's rights, which referred to marriage, property and inheritance<sup>192</sup>. However, as noted by CNN, the decree '... failed to mention access to education or work and was immediately panned by Afghan women and experts, who said it was proof that the militant group was uninterested in upholding basic freedoms for millions of Afghan women who have largely been constrained to their homes in recent months.'<sup>193</sup>
- 6.5.13 On 6 December 2021, Amnesty International reported on the closure of women's shelters, causing some women to return to their families in which the abuse they were escaping had occurred or facing fear from prisoners released by the Taliban who were convicted of gender-based violence<sup>194</sup>.
- 6.5.14 On 10 December 2021, VOA News reported that, since 6 August 2021, the Taliban had shut 32 shelter homes. The report noted:  
 'These shelters, which were supported by international donors, had long provided a safe haven to thousands of victims of domestic violence, mental torment and abuse... Kevin Schumacher, deputy executive director of the U.S.-based Women for Afghan Women (WAW), told VOA that members of the acting Taliban government physically went to the shelters, closing them one by one. "They verbally and physically abused our staff, shouted at them and threatened to skin them alive," he said. "We tried to negotiate, argue and reason with them, but it did not work".'<sup>195</sup>
- 6.5.15 For information on the general treatment of women before the Taliban takeover in August 2021, see the COI section in the [Country Policy and Information Note: Women fearing gender-based violence](#), March 2020.

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## 6.6 LGBTI persons

- 6.6.1 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.6 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).
- 6.6.2 The US Department of State (USSD) noted in its 2020 Human Rights report on Afghanistan that 'Under Islamic sharia law, conviction of same-sex sexual activity is punishable by death, flogging, or imprisonment. Under the penal code, sex between men is a criminal offense punishable by up to two years' imprisonment and sex between women with up to one year of imprisonment.'<sup>196</sup>
- 6.6.3 In July 2021, German newspaper, Bild, met with a Taliban judge in the borderlands who spoke of punishments under Sharia law, and told Bild 'For homosexuals, there can only be two punishments: either stoning, or he must stand behind a wall that will fall down on him. The wall must be 2.5 to 3 metres high.'<sup>197</sup>

<sup>192</sup> Bakhtar, '[Women's Rights in Afghanistan: A Woman is Not a Property...](#)', 4 December 2021

<sup>193</sup> CNN, '[Taliban decree on women's rights, which made no mention of school...](#)', 4 December 2021

<sup>194</sup> Amnesty International, '[Afghanistan: Survivors of gender-based violence...](#)', 6 December 2021

<sup>195</sup> VOA, '[Taliban Closure of Domestic Abuse Shelters Leaves Thousands at...](#)', 10 December 2021

<sup>196</sup> USSD, '[2020 Human Rights Report](#)' (section 6), 30 March 2021

<sup>197</sup> Bild, '[This Taliban judge orders stoning, hanging, hands chopped of \[sic\]](#)', 13 July 2021

- 6.6.4 Reports following the Taliban takeover indicated that LGBTI persons were being forced to live in hiding in fear of their lives from the Taliban<sup>198 199 200</sup>.
- 6.6.5 On 18 September 2021, CNN reported, ‘The LGBTQ people in Afghanistan CNN spoke with said they had heard reports of friends, partners and members of their community being attacked and raped. And they were terrified that Islamic fundamentalists and vigilante groups emboldened by the new regime could do the same to them – or worse.’<sup>201</sup>
- 6.6.6 France 24 noted on 2 November 2021 that ‘Although the militant group has not yet officially said how it plans to deal with acts of homosexuality, reports are increasingly suggesting that the Taliban is applying a strict interpretation of Sharia law, under which same-sex relations may be punishable by death.’<sup>202</sup>
- 6.6.7 Speaking to France 24, Canadian NGO Rainbow Railroad, the only international LGBT+ organisation on the ground in Afghanistan, said they had received reports that the Taliban was circulating ‘kill lists’ containing names of persons identified as LGBTIQ+. According to the NGO, identities may have been exposed as foreign rights groups drew up lists of potential evacuees following the Taliban takeover. Citing Rainbow Railroad Executive Director, Kimahli Powell, France 24 reported ‘the Taliban seem to have complemented these lists through active persecution, by means of “entrapment” and data leaks. “[Some] individuals who have reached out to us have told us about how they’ve received a mystery email from someone claiming to be connected with Rainbow Railroad asking for their information and passport. That’s how we know the information has been leaked.”’<sup>203</sup>
- 6.6.8 Announcing the UK-arrival of LGBT Afghans who were supported to leave Afghanistan by the UK Government, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development (FCDO) said on 30 October 2021 that, ‘Under Taliban rule, LGBT people are among the most vulnerable in Afghanistan, with many facing increased levels of persecution, discrimination, and assault.’<sup>204</sup>
- 6.6.9 HRW and OutRight Action International conducted research for a report between October and December 2021, which included 60 LGBT interviewees who came from at least 11 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. In its summary, HRW stated:
- ‘Many of those interviewed reported being attacked, sexually assaulted, or directly threatened by members of the Taliban because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Others reported abuse from family members, neighbors, and romantic partners who now support the Taliban or believed they had to take action against LGBT people close to them to ensure their own safety. Some fled their homes from attacks by Taliban members or supporters pursuing them. Others watched as lives they had carefully built

<sup>198</sup> CNN, ‘[Afghanistan's LGBTQ community say they're being hunted down...](#)’, 18 September 2021

<sup>199</sup> DW, ‘[Trans in Afghanistan: A mortal danger under the Taliban](#)’, 2 October 2021

<sup>200</sup> Guardian, ‘[“The Taliban will have no mercy”: LGBTQ+ Afghans go into hiding](#)’, 20 September 2021

<sup>201</sup> CNN, ‘[Afghanistan's LGBTQ community say they're being hunted down...](#)’, 18 September 2021

<sup>202</sup> France 24, ‘[The Taliban has a hit list for the Afghan LGBT community...](#)’, 2 November 2021

<sup>203</sup> France 24, ‘[The Taliban has a hit list for the Afghan LGBT community...](#)’, 2 November 2021

<sup>204</sup> FCDO, ‘[UK Government helps LGBT Afghans start new life in Britain](#)’, 30 October 2021

over the years disappeared overnight and found themselves at risk of being targeted at any time because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>205</sup>

- 6.6.10 For general information on the treatment of LGBTI persons prior to the Taliban takeover in August 2021, see the COI section within the previous Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Sexual orientation and gender identity or expression](#), February 2020.

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## 6.7 Ethnic and religious minorities

- 6.7.1 For general information on Hazara in Afghanistan, who are predominantly Shia Muslim, see the COI section in the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Hazaras](#). For information on Sikhs and Hindus, see the COI section in the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Hindus and Sikhs](#).

- 6.7.2 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.7 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

### a. Hazaras

- 6.7.3 The day of Ashura, which honours the martyrdom of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Muharram, and is a major religious commemoration for Shia Muslims<sup>206</sup>, took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, reported Al Jazeera on 19 August 2021<sup>207</sup>. The day normally sees thousands of people visit the Kartei Sakhi shrine in west Kabul. Despite Taliban assurances, many Shia Muslims stayed away although Al Jazeera reported that ‘... attendees in Kartei Sakhi said the Taliban have left them to themselves on this day. When the Taliban first arrived in Kabul, the city was already full of Ashura flags, banners and gateways, all of which remained standing.’<sup>208</sup>
- 6.7.4 The Institute of Development Studies (IDS)-led Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID) reported that ‘Pictures circulated on social media in which Taliban were seen to be [attending](#) a Sh’ia Muharram majlis in Kabul. In an incident where some Taliban fighters took down the Muharram [flags](#), these were reinstated again.’<sup>209</sup>
- 6.7.5 On 5 October 2021, Amnesty International reported on the unlawful killing of 13 Hazaras in Daikundi province, 11 of whom were former members of the ANSF. Following an investigation, Amnesty International said the killings occurred on 30 August 2021 when 9 of the former ANSF members were shot after surrendering to the Taliban, whilst others, including 2 civilians, were killed as they attempted to flee<sup>210</sup>.

See also [Members of Afghan National Security Forces \(ANSF\)](#).

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<sup>205</sup> HRW, “[Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You](#)”: LGBT People in Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover”, 26 January 2022

<sup>206</sup> BBC News, “[What is Ashura](#)”, 6 December 2011

<sup>207</sup> Al Jazeera, “[Afghanistan: A subdued Ashura under Taliban rule](#)”, 19 August 2021

<sup>208</sup> Al Jazeera, “[Afghanistan: A subdued Ashura under Taliban rule](#)”, 19 August 2021

<sup>209</sup> IDS-CREID, “[Scared and hiding: Shi’a Hazaras of Afghanistan fear...](#)”, 15 September 2021

<sup>210</sup> Amnesty International, “[Afghanistan: 13 Hazara killed by Taliban fighters...](#)”, 5 October 2021

- 6.7.6 In an opinion piece published on 15 September 2021, the Institute for Development Studies – Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (IDS-CREID) said that it ‘... recently spoke to a number of members of the Shi’a Hazara community both within Afghanistan and abroad.’ The report noted that despite assurances to the contrary:
- ‘... the Taliban have continued their persecution and harassment of Shi’a Hazaras outside Kabul even since the takeover. The statue of Abdul Ali Mazari, an anti-Taliban Shi’a Hazara leader who was later tortured and killed by the Taliban, was destroyed. A Shi’a cleric based in Kabul told us that the situation in Jaghori, a district in Ghazni province, is disturbing and the local Shi’a Hazara population is being harassed and threatened by the local amir whom the cleric defined as “very extremist”.
- ‘Even if one were to believe that the Taliban leadership has changed, it does not mean that their fighters and commanders on the ground will conform to their “new” vision, particularly on Shi’a Hazaras. In a recently posted video on Twitter, two Taliban fighters can be heard saying that if their amir allows, not a single Hazara will [survive](#).’<sup>211</sup>
- 6.7.7 HRW reported on 22 October 2021 on forced evictions by the Taliban, many of whom targeted Hazaras:
- ‘In early October 2021, the Taliban and associated militias forcibly evicted hundreds of Hazara families from the southern Helmand province and the northern Balkh province. These followed earlier evictions from Daikundi, Uruzgan, and Kandahar provinces. Since the Taliban came to power in August, the Taliban have told many Hazaras and other residents in these five provinces to leave their homes and farms, in many cases with only a few days’ notice and without any opportunity to present their legal claims to the land. A former United Nations political analyst said that he saw eviction notices telling residents that if they did not comply, they “had no right to complain about the consequences”.’<sup>212</sup>
- 6.7.8 Reports indicated that members of the Hazara community were in hiding following the Taliban takeover, believing that their pledges of amnesty and inclusiveness was propaganda<sup>213 214</sup>. The appointment of Hazara military commander, Maulavi Mahdi, as the Taliban’s intelligence chief in the mostly Hazara Bamian province, was also viewed by some as a public relations attempt<sup>215</sup>. Mahdi’s previous post under the Taliban was as shadow district governor in his district of origin, Balkhab, Sar-e Pul province in April 2020, though his influence appeared to be limited<sup>216</sup>.
- 6.7.9 Despite deep mistrust, there were elements of hope, as indicated in a report by the Independent on 16 November 2021, “In comparison to their previous rule, the Taliban are a little better,” said Mohammed Jawad Gawhari, a Hazara cleric who runs an organization helping the poor. “The problem is

<sup>211</sup> IDS-CREID, ‘[Scared and hiding: Shi’a Hazaras of Afghanistan fear...](#)’, 15 September 2021

<sup>212</sup> HRW, ‘[Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Evict Minority Shia](#)’, 22 October 2021

<sup>213</sup> IDS-CREID, ‘[Scared and hiding: Shi’a Hazaras of Afghanistan fear...](#)’, 15 September 2021

<sup>214</sup> Qantara, ‘[Afghanistan's repressed Hazaras face a hostile Taliban](#)’, 7 September 2021

<sup>215</sup> Washington Post, ‘[The Taliban is trying to win over Afghanistan's Shiites...](#)’, 1 November 2021

<sup>216</sup> AAN, ‘[The case of Mawlawi Mehdi and Balkhab District: Are the Taleban...](#)’, 23 May 2020

that there is not a single law. Every individual Talib is their own law right now," he said. "So people live in fear of them".<sup>217</sup>

6.7.10 The report added:

'The Taliban initially confiscated weapons that Hazaras had used, with permission from the previous government to guard some of their own mosques in Kabul. But after devastating IS bombings of Shiite mosques in Kandahar and Kunduz provinces in October, the Taliban returned the weapons in most cases, Gawhari and other community leaders said. The Taliban also provide their own fighters as guards for some mosques during Friday prayers.

"We are providing a safe and secure environment for everyone, especially the Hazaras," Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.<sup>218</sup>

6.7.11 The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed responsibility for attacks against Hazaras in October 2021, including '... suicide bombings that killed at least 72 people at the Sayed Abad mosque in Kunduz on October 8, and a bombing that killed at least 63 people at the Bibi Fatima mosque in Kandahar on October 15,' reported HRW<sup>219</sup>. HRW further added 'After the Kandahar attack, ISIS issued a statement saying it would target Shia in their homes and centers "in every way, from slaughtering their necks to scattering their limbs... and the news of [ISIS's] attacks...in the temples of the [Shia] and their gatherings is not hidden from anyone, from Baghdad to Khorasan."'<sup>220</sup> Following the attacks, the Taliban pledged to increase security at Shia mosques<sup>221</sup>.

6.7.12 On 31 January 2022, Sky News reported that:

'A mother killed by a car bomb is believed to be the latest victim in a concerted and systemic persecution of the Hazara ethnic group... The bomb was planted in the centre of the Hazara community in Herat City, a few yards away from the Hazara community office... Although the Islamic State in Khorasan (IS-K) said they'd planted the latest bomb in Herat City, the Hazaras around the area believe it could just as easily have been left by the Taliban. "They don't like us either," one Hazara woman told Sky News.'<sup>222</sup>

6.7.13 Al Jazeera reported on 19 January 2022 on the arrest of a Taliban fighter for shooting dead a Hazara woman at a checkpoint in Kabul in the predominantly Hazara neighbourhood of Dasht-e-Barchi. A Taliban spokesman said the woman was 'killed by mistake' and said the perpetrator would be punished<sup>223</sup>.

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b. Hindus and Sikhs

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<sup>217</sup> Independent, '[Despite mistrust, Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection](#)', 16 November 2021

<sup>218</sup> Independent, '[Despite mistrust, Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection](#)', 16 November 2021

<sup>219</sup> HRW, '[Afghanistan: Surge in Islamic State Attacks on Shia](#)', 25 October 2021

<sup>220</sup> HRW, '[Afghanistan: Surge in Islamic State Attacks on Shia](#)', 25 October 2021

<sup>221</sup> Khaama Press, '[Taliban pledge to man security of Shi'ite mosques](#)', 17 October 2021

<sup>222</sup> Sky News, '[Afghanistan: Orphaned and terrified – persecuted Hazara minority...](#)', 31 January 2022

<sup>223</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Taliban arrests fighter who shot dead Hazara woman at checkpoint](#)', 19 January 2022



- 6.7.14 For general information on Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan see the COI section in the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Hindus and Sikhs](#).
- 6.7.15 Very few Hindus and Sikhs remain in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover<sup>224 225</sup>
- 6.7.16 On 22 August 2021, the Hindustan Times reported that a group of nearly 70 Sikhs and Hindus were turned back from the airport by the Taliban as they attempted to leave the country on a flight sent by Indian Air Force (IAF) to Kabul to evacuate the Indian nationals. According to the report, the Taliban sent the group back to the Kart-e Parwan gurdwara and told them the flight was meant for Indian nationals, not Afghans<sup>226</sup>. The Indian Express said that the number who were prevented from boarding flight was 'at least 72.'<sup>227</sup>
- 6.7.17 On 25 August 2021 it was reported that former Afghan Sikh MP, Narendra Singh Khalsa, who had recently arrived in India, mused on what would happen to the gurdwaras in the country as the few Sikhs remaining attempted to leave the country, whilst adding '... the Taliban has said no harm will be done to them.'<sup>228</sup>
- 6.7.18 On 30 August 2021, English-language daily Indian newspaper, The Tribune, reported on a planned trip to India by around 150 Afghan Hindus and Sikhs to mark the 400th anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur's Prakash Parv. According to Gurnam Singh, chairman of the Kabul-based Parwan Committee, the group were prevented from entering the airport. However, the report added 'Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told Afghan media that there were no obstacles to their trip to India. "There is no obstacle to the travel of Hindus and Sikhs, and they can go to Kabul airport and travel to India to travel and attend religious ceremonies," he added. Referring to the security of the Hindus and Sikhs, he said that the Taliban had no problem with them as also with other minorities.'<sup>229</sup>
- 6.7.19 Reporting shortly after the Taliban takeover, Turkish news agency, Anadolu Agency (AA), spoke to members of the Sikh community in Afghanistan on 6 September 2021, who indicated they did not wish to leave the country regardless of Taliban rule, as long as their rights were protected. The AA report noted:
- 'As the Taliban made its recent lightning advances across the country, the majority of the two communities came to Kabul and stayed at a temple in the Katre Pawran neighborhood. After the capital also fell, however, a team of the Taliban went to the temple and assured them of their safety. "I'm in constant contact with the President of the Gurdwara Committee in Kabul ... Even today, Taliban leaders came to Gurdwara Sahib and met the Hindus

<sup>224</sup> DW, '[Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?](#)', 8 September 2021

<sup>225</sup> Telegraph, '[Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist...](#)', 13 October 2021

<sup>226</sup> Hindustan Times, '[Taliban don't allow 70 Afghan Sikhs, Hindus to board flight...](#)', 22 August 2021

<sup>227</sup> Indian Express, '[Taliban stop 72 Afghan Sikhs, Hindus headed to India...](#)', 22 August 2021

<sup>228</sup> PTI, '[Taliban said no harm will be done to gurdwaras, but who will take care...](#)', 25 August 2021

<sup>229</sup> The Tribune, '[Afghan Sikhs, Hindus to be allowed to travel: Taliban](#)', 30 August 2021

and Sikhs and assured them,” said [Sikh community member Talwinder Singh Chawla].<sup>230</sup>

- 6.7.20 In a short video, AA spoke to Manmohan Singh Sethi, vice president of the local Gurdwara Committee of Kabul, who said the Taliban had not interrupted their morning and evening prayers, and had even provided their phone numbers, saying the community should call if there were any problems<sup>231</sup>.
- 6.7.21 On 8 September 2021, the Times of India reported on a small community of Afghan Sikhs in Jalalabad who celebrated first Prakash Purb (enshrinement day) of Guru Granth Sahib by holding a congregation at the gurdwara. Sikhs in Kabul said they were unable to organise an event due to their ‘busy schedules’ and because the granthi (principle religious official) was not in Kabul. A community member added that many Sikhs in Kabul were waiting for flights to resume so they could make a pilgrimage to India<sup>232</sup>.
- 6.7.22 Deutsche Welle reported on 8 September 2021 that ‘... even as Sikhs and Hindus leave Afghanistan in large numbers, some families have decided to stay back in the country as caretakers of their places of worship.’<sup>233</sup>
- 6.7.23 On 5 October 2021, news agency ANI reported that the Kart-e Parwan gurdwara in Kabul was vandalised by unidentified armed Taliban officials<sup>234</sup>. Also reporting on the incident, Gandhara stated that the gurdwara leader was unclear who the perpetrators were and, whilst some commentators claimed it was the Taliban and that they beat worshippers, those allegations could not be confirmed and there were no reports of any serious injuries<sup>235</sup>. Referring to the same incident, the Times of India said the group who entered the gurdwara were identified as thieves after they were arrested by Taliban police<sup>236</sup>.
- 6.7.24 ANI also reported on 5 October 2021 that in Paktia province, the Sikh holy flag (Nishan Sahib) was removed by the Taliban from the roof of a gurdwara<sup>237</sup>.
- 6.7.25 The Kart-e Parwan gurdwara in Kabul was again forcibly entered by armed men on 15 October 2021, reported the Times of India. The men searched the premises and demanded they take the bullet-proof land cruiser. According to sources at the gurdwara, the incident was reported to the Taliban who said they would investigate<sup>238</sup>. According to President of the Indian World Forum, Puneet Singh Chandhok, who had received ‘distressed phone calls from Kabul’s Sikh community’, it was the Taliban’s Special Forces who entered the gurdwara. Chandhok added ‘They have also simultaneously raided the erstwhile residence and office of MP Narinder

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<sup>230</sup> AA, ‘[Sikh community to stay in Taliban-led Afghanistan](#)’, 6 September 2021

<sup>231</sup> AA, ‘[Sikh community to stay in Taliban-led Afghanistan](#)’, 6 September 2021

<sup>232</sup> Times of India, ‘[Afghanistan: Jalalabad Sikhs celebrate first Prakash Purb...](#)’, 8 September 2021

<sup>233</sup> DW, ‘[Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?](#)’, 8 September 2021

<sup>234</sup> ANI, ‘[Taliban vandalises Karte Parwan Gurdwara in Kabul, takes people...](#)’, 5 October 2021

<sup>235</sup> Gandhara, ‘[Kabul Sikhs Fear For Safety After Armed Men Attack Temple](#)’, 6 October 2021

<sup>236</sup> Times of India, ‘[Armed men enter Kabul gurdwara, intimidate staff](#)’, 15 October 2021

<sup>237</sup> ANI, ‘[Taliban vandalizes Karte Parwan Gurdwara in Kabul, takes people...](#)’, 5 October 2021

<sup>238</sup> Times of India, ‘[Armed men enter Kabul gurdwara, intimidate staff](#)’, 15 October 2021

Singh Khalsa located adjacent to the gurdwara. The community has expressed serious concerns and fears for their lives.<sup>239</sup>

6.7.26 On 13 October 2021, The Telegraph reported on the ‘exodus’ of Sikhs following the Taliban takeover, stating ‘Decades of persecution and discrimination have since caused almost all to flee and the arrival of the Taliban and an uptick in violence from the Islamic State group have proved the final straw.’<sup>240</sup> One Sikh from Jalalabad, who had left Afghanistan for India, told The Telegraph:

‘The Taliban told me I should become a Muslim or be ready for death... They had threatened to blow up our Gurdwaras and houses if we stopped paying them protection money... Even before the Taliban took over Jalalabad, two men came to my shop and told me I should stop selling herbs as that business only belongs to Muslims... Then, they became more confident, breaking into my shop and stealing money. On the night of August 14, I received another death threat and so we decided to leave Afghanistan to a safe country.’<sup>241</sup>

6.7.27 Former Afghan Sikh MP, Narendra Singh Khalsa was cited by The Telegraph, ‘For Sikhs, Afghanistan is no longer safe. There is no government to protect us and there is no peace. I began getting constant death threats from ISIS-K and I still have their letters, I still don’t know the reason they want to kill us.’<sup>242</sup>

6.7.28 Canadian think tank, the International Forum for Right and Security (IFFAS), suggested in a report dated 17 October 2021 that Sikhs in Afghanistan ‘... practically have to make a choice between options of converting to Sunni Islam or run away from Afghanistan’, as they did not follow the Taliban’s religious doctrine<sup>243</sup>. Some media sources relayed this message, as well as citing attacks against Sikhs that had occurred in the past<sup>244 245</sup>.

6.7.29 On 25 October 2021, the Times of India reported that Afghan Sikhs and Hindus were urging members of their community not to spread rumours about their relationship with the new Taliban government. The report quoted an Afghan Muslim married to an Indian national, who said ‘A few organisations and politicians are spreading fake news of atrocities being committed on the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs along with Indian Muslims stranded in Afghanistan...’, adding ‘We have security concerns in Afghanistan... but not the kind being made out.’ The report also cited an Afghan Hindu shopkeeper in Kabul, who said ‘Some people allegedly bought their freedom by spreading fake news about us.’<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> India Today, ‘[Taliban’s special forces “forcibly” enter Kabul Gurdwara...](#)’, 15 October 2021

<sup>240</sup> Telegraph, ‘[Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist...](#)’, 13 October 2021

<sup>241</sup> Telegraph, ‘[Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist...](#)’, 13 October 2021

<sup>242</sup> Telegraph, ‘[Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist...](#)’, 13 October 2021

<sup>243</sup> IFFAS, ‘[The Dilemma of Sikh Community in Afghanistan: Convert or Face...](#)’, 17 October 2021

<sup>244</sup> ANI, ‘[Afghanistan’s Sikhs to “make choice between converting to Islam...”](#)’, 22 October 2021

<sup>245</sup> Republic World, ‘[“Atrocity on minority” Afghan Sikhs Receive Ultimatum...](#)’, 23 October 2021

<sup>246</sup> Times of India, ‘[Don’t spread fake news about us, say Afghan Hindus, Sikhs](#)’, 25 October 2021

## 6.8 Journalists

- 6.8.1 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.8 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).
- 6.8.2 Afghan journalists covering protests in Kabul in September and October 2021 were arrested and assaulted by the Taliban, according to reports<sup>247 248 249</sup>. Pictures later emerged of 2 journalists displaying welts and bruises after they were beaten with electrical cables following their arrest and detention for reporting on a women's rally<sup>250 251</sup>. See also [Women](#).
- 6.8.3 Reporting on 8 September 2021, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said:  
  
'Over the last two days, the Taliban detained and later released at least 14 journalists covering protests in Kabul, the capital, against the group, according to various news reports and people familiar with the incidents who spoke with CPJ via phone and messaging app. At least nine of these journalists were subject to violence during their arrests or detention, according to those sources. Some journalists, including those with the BBC, were also prevented from filming the protest yesterday, according to the BBC.'<sup>252</sup>
- 6.8.4 Reporting on 27 October 2021, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported, 'Since the Taliban came to power in August 2021, at least six journalists have lost their lives, with many more suffering threats, harassment, intimidation and violence.'<sup>253</sup> Citing some of the deaths, the IFJ said 2 journalists were killed in the bomb blast outside Kabul airport on 26 August 2021, a journalist was killed during clashes between the NRF and the Taliban in Panjshir on 5 September, and another in a drive-by shooting in Jalalabad by unknown perpetrators on 2 October<sup>254</sup>.
- 6.8.5 The IFJ noted in October 2021 that, 'At least 153 media organisations have been forced to cease operations, with women journalists barred from working, telecommunication shutdowns and the introduction of draconian media regulations that aim to quash freedom of the press.'<sup>255</sup> NDTV noted on 24 December 2021 that, according to a survey conducted by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA), more than 6,400 journalists have lost their jobs and at least 231 media outlets have had to close since the Taliban takeover<sup>256</sup>.
- 6.8.6 On 25 October 2021, the CPJ reported on an arbitrary attack by a Taliban soldier against a journalist reporting at the Torkham border crossing. Despite gaining permission to report from the Taliban commander overseeing the area, the soldier broke his equipment and repeatedly beat him. After

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<sup>247</sup> OHCHR, '[Press briefing notes on Afghanistan](#)', 10 September 2021

<sup>248</sup> CPJ, '[Taliban fighters detain, flog, and beat journalists covering protests...](#)', 8 September 2021

<sup>249</sup> CPJ, '[Taliban fighters assault at least 3 journalists covering women's protest...](#)', 21 October 2021

<sup>250</sup> Yam M @yamphoto, '[Painful. Afghan journalists from @Etilaatroz...](#)', 8 September 2021

<sup>251</sup> RSF, '[Are the Taliban now showing their true face to journalists?](#)', 10 September 2021

<sup>252</sup> CPJ, '[Taliban fighters detain, flog, and beat journalists covering protests...](#)', 8 September 2021

<sup>253</sup> IFJ, '[Impunity: Afghanistan](#)', 27 October 2021

<sup>254</sup> IFJ, '[Impunity: Afghanistan](#)', 27 October 2021

<sup>255</sup> IFJ, '[Impunity: Afghanistan](#)', 27 October 2021

<sup>256</sup> NDTV, '[Over 6,400 Journalists In Afghanistan Lost Jobs Since Taliban...](#)', 24 December 2021

reporting the incident to the commander, the soldier was ordered to leave the area<sup>257</sup>.

- 6.8.7 On 22 November 2021, HRW reported ‘Taliban intelligence officials have made death threats against journalists who have criticized Taliban officials and have required journalists to submit all reports for approval before publication.’<sup>258</sup> According to the report:

‘Several journalists said that they have been summoned by local officials immediately after publishing reports on Taliban abuses. One journalist who had reported complaints about Taliban searching houses and beating people said that the deputy governor called him into his office and told him that if he broadcast anything like that again, “He would hang me in the town square.”

‘Other media staff have reported that heavily armed Taliban intelligence officials visited their offices and warned journalists not to use the word “Taliban” in their reporting but to refer to the “Islamic Emirate” in all publications. In one province, intelligence officials ordered local media to replace the word for suicide bomber with the word for martyr after a published report mentioned that Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani had honored the families of suicide bombers.’<sup>259</sup>

- 6.8.8 On 19 January 2022, the IFJ reported that, ‘Several Afghan journalists have been attacked and detained in the first weeks of 2022, as the Taliban assures press freedom organisations of its commitment to an independent and free media.’<sup>260</sup> For example, on 6 January 2022, Taliban authorities detained 3 journalists at a restaurant in Kabul, all of whom worked at YouTube broadcaster Kabul Lovers, a channel covering current affairs and daily life in Kabulhad. They had recently covered protests in the Panjshir province, ‘... reporting residents’ harsh criticism of the Taliban militia’s killing of a civilian in the area. The report was cited by international media organisations and accrued over 120,000 views.’<sup>261</sup>

- 6.8.9 On 4 February 2022, RSF condemned a surge in threats, summonses for interrogation and arbitrary arrests of journalists and media workers. RSF stated that ‘The Taliban intelligence agency known as the “Istikhbarat” and the Ministry for Promoting Virtue and Suppressing Vice are directly implicated in this harassment, which violates Afghanistan’s press law.’ The report added:

‘Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021, at least 50 journalists and media workers have been detained briefly or arrested by the police or Istikhbarat. These arrests, which are often accompanied by violence, have lasted from several hours to nearly a week. They usually occur when journalists are covering street demonstrations by women in the capital, Kabul, and show the increasingly important role that the Istikhbarat is playing in the harassment of the media.’<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> CPJ, [‘Taliban fighter beats freelance journalist Sadagat Ghorzang...’](#), 25 October 2021

<sup>258</sup> HRW, [‘Afghanistan: Taliban Crackdown on Media Worsens’](#), 22 November 2021

<sup>259</sup> HRW, [‘Afghanistan: Taliban Crackdown on Media Worsens’](#), 22 November 2021

<sup>260</sup> IFJ, [‘Afghanistan: Attacks and detainments of journalists continue to escalate’](#), 19 January 2022

<sup>261</sup> IFJ, [‘Afghanistan: Attacks and detainments of journalists continue to escalate’](#), 19 January 2022

<sup>262</sup> RSF, [‘Afghan journalists increasingly harassed by Taliban intelligence...’](#), 4 February 2022



- 6.8.10 Media guidelines issued by the Taliban on 21 November 2021 called on female television journalists to wear the hijab<sup>263</sup> <sup>264</sup>. For information on other restrictive media rules announced by the Taliban in September 2021 see [Limits on reporting, propaganda and misinformation](#).

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## 6.9 Human rights defenders, including lawyers and judges

- 6.9.1 On 3 November 2021, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders (HRDs) indicated that HRDs were ‘living under a climate of fear, threats, intense insecurity and growing desperation...’ According to the report:

“The threat is very real,” said Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders. “Defenders tell me of direct threats, including gendered threats against women, of beatings, arrests, enforced disappearances, and of defenders being killed. They describe living in a climate of constant fear.

“Among those most at risk are defenders documenting alleged war crimes, women defenders, in particular criminal lawyers, cultural rights defenders, especially those working in banned sectors such as music, and defenders from minority groups. Defenders tell me that some have erased their online data history to evade identification, and that the Taliban are resorting to other ways of finding them - for example that one HRD was identified by an injury to his leg.”

‘Lawlor said she had received online testimonies from around 100 human rights defenders, including those in rural provinces, detailing specific tactics used against them. The Taliban have raided the offices of human rights and civil society organisations, searching for the names, addresses and contacts of those who used to work there, she said.’<sup>265</sup>

- 6.9.2 In its ‘Afghanistan: Country Focus’, dated January 2022 and based on a range of sources covering events between 15 August and 8 December 2021, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) noted:

‘IAJ [International Association of Judges] and IAWJ [International Association of Women Judges] published a joint statement in which judges were stated to be in “very grave danger”, and stressed that revenge killings might occur, and that judges had been subjected to house-searches, threatening messages and physical harassment, and had their bank accounts suspended. Also, family, friends and neighbours were said to have been pressed to reveal judges’ whereabouts. A similar account was published by Business Insider quoting a former judge, who claimed that “Taliban fighters went into his house looking for him and searched the homes of his families, friends, and colleagues.” Another former judge in hiding told Business Insider that some Taliban fighters were pursuing ‘personal vendettas’ against judges, and could not be controlled by the Taliban leadership.’<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> DW, ‘[Afghanistan: Taliban issue guidelines against women actors](#)’, 21 November 2021

<sup>264</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Afghan women speak up against new Taliban media guidelines](#)’, 25 November 2021

<sup>265</sup> OHCHR, ‘[Afghanistan: Human rights defenders living under “climate of fear”...](#)’, 3 November 2021

<sup>266</sup> EASO, ‘[COI Report Afghanistan - Country focus](#)’ (page 48), January 2022

- 6.9.3 On 25 December 2021, Sky News reported:  
 ‘More than 100 female Afghan judges and their families have been rescued by a team of pro-bono lawyers in the UK following the Taliban takeover.  
 ‘The women held senior roles in the Afghanistan judiciary and were vital in upholding the equal rights of women and girls. They were judges and prosecutors in the courts of domestic violence, rape cases, forced and child marriages and in cases involving the trafficking of women.’<sup>267</sup>
- 6.9.4 The same source noted that Baroness Helena Kennedy, an expert in human rights law who arranged the rescue, said ‘The women who were contacting me were terrified for their lives, they were hiding with their families, with their children in basements. They had moved out of their houses and gone to stay with relatives and they were getting these threats on their phones, and through relatives they would be receiving threats...’<sup>268</sup>
- 6.9.5 On 25 November 2021, the Jurist published an English translation of a warning issued by the Taliban to human rights and civil society workers in Panjshir province, an area that resisted the Taliban takeover. The warning said that persons or organisations working under the name of civil society or human rights activists were considered illegal and that the Taliban were therefore ‘... instructed to seriously find and pursue them and arrest them as soon as possible to stop their false and anti-religious activities. In case of any violations and their resistance, they should be dealt with seriously in order to be a lesson for others.’<sup>269</sup>
- 6.9.6 The Jurist reported on 24 November 2021 on an appeal for help made by President of the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA), Rohullah Qarizada, who said that, on 23 November, “fifty armed Taliban came in AIBA and forcibly took over Bar.” The Jurist added ‘The incursion occurred... in the wake of a Taliban cabinet directive authorizing the Ministry of Justice to strip the AIBA of its lawyer licensing authority and vest that instead in the Ministry.’ According to the Jurist, ‘... before the Taliban takeover, the Association had more than 2,500 registered lawyers practicing in the Afghan courts.’<sup>270</sup>
- 6.9.7 A lawyer in Kabul gave the Jurist an eyewitness account of the raid, which occurred when he went to the AIBA office to renew his license. He said that the Taliban demanded entry and once inside searched the offices and evicted everyone inside. When a colleague protested the invasion, the lawyer said the Taliban made threatening remarks, saying “It is enough for you that we do not kill you now.” The lawyer added ‘... all the lawyers information is in databases and files, and they can easily access that information. This access and identification of the lawyers is a serious risk for all of us.’<sup>271</sup>
- 6.9.8 The Jurist reported on 5 December 2021 that a press conference at a Kabul hotel, organised by Afghan lawyers to protest against the Taliban takeover of

<sup>267</sup> Sky News, [‘Afghanistan: More than 100 female judges and their families...’](#), 25 December 2021

<sup>268</sup> Sky News, [‘Afghanistan: More than 100 female judges and their families...’](#), 25 December 2021

<sup>269</sup> Jurist, [‘Afghanistan dispatches: Taliban warning calls rights activists...’](#), 25 November 2021

<sup>270</sup> Jurist, [‘Afghanistan bar association head pleads for international help...’](#), 24 November 2021

<sup>271</sup> Jurist, [‘Afghanistan dispatches: eyewitness at the AIBA takeover...’](#), 25 November 2021

the AIBA, was called off after armed Taliban arrived and ordered proceedings to stop. Lawyers at the conference were arrested and held for a brief time before release<sup>272</sup>.

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## 6.10 Transgressors of religious, cultural and social norms

6.10.1 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.9 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

6.10.2 On 23 August 2021, the New York Post cited an article by The Telegraph, which indicated Afghans were being beaten for wearing Western-style clothes:

‘A group of young Afghan men claim Taliban fighters beat, whipped and threatened them at gunpoint for wearing jeans and other Western-style clothes in Kabul, the Telegraph reports.

‘The young men said the insurgents accused them of disrespecting Islam with their clothing choices.

‘A reporter with Afghan newspaper Etilaatroz also said he was beaten over the weekend for not wearing “Afghan clothes.”

‘Similar reports have emerged on social media of young Afghan men being targeted for wearing T-shirts.’<sup>273</sup>

6.10.3 A video dated 9 September 2021 of clothes merchants in Kabul, posted by the South China Morning Post (SCMP) on 11 September, indicated a rise in the purchase of traditional clothing, whilst the sale of jeans and t-shirts had fallen since the Taliban takeover<sup>274</sup>.

6.10.4 Reporting on life in Kabul following the Taliban takeover, and questioning whether the harsh laws under previous Taliban rule would be imposed, Al Jazeera noted on 29 September 2021 that ‘... young men still play cricket and watch traditional wrestling matches in the city’s Chaman-e-Hozori Park. Under their previous rule, the Taliban banned many sports, but so far have not done so this time.’<sup>275</sup> Women’s sports have been banned<sup>276 277</sup>.

6.10.5 Al Jazeera noted that in beauty salons, ‘... some advertisements on the windows had been defaced or covered to scratch out images of women, but some of the ads were untouched.’ According to Al Jazeera, some women were seen wearing longer coats and headscarves, or the burqa, and fewer men were wearing Western dress, ‘Government employees were the ones who most often wore Western-style clothes, and they have now switched over to the traditional shalwar-kameez combination of long shirt and baggy pants.’<sup>278</sup>

See also [Women](#).

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<sup>272</sup> Jurist, [‘Taliban justice ministry summons protesting lawyers after AIBA...’](#), 5 December 2021

<sup>273</sup> New York Post, [‘Taliban are reportedly beating Afghans for wearing Western...’](#), 23 August 2021

<sup>274</sup> SCMP, [‘Afghans adjust to traditional clothes as new Taliban regime begins’](#), 11 September 2021

<sup>275</sup> Al Jazeera, [‘In Kabul, life changing slowly under Taliban’](#), 29 September 2021

<sup>276</sup> HRW, [‘From Taliban to Taliban: Cycle of Hope, Despair on Women’s Rights’](#), 1 November 2021

<sup>277</sup> Guardian, [‘Afghan women to be banned from playing sport, Taliban say’](#), 8 September 2021

<sup>278</sup> Al Jazeera, [‘In Kabul, life changing slowly under Taliban’](#), 29 September 2021

6.10.6 On 12 October 2021, CNN reported on the Taliban's religious police and noted that despite being issued rules to follow, '... not every Taliban fighter is following the new guidelines and abuses are common.' Reporting from Kabul, CNN cited 'Wahid', who said he was 'stopped by a group of Taliban fighters at a busy roundabout for wearing western-style clothing.' He also claimed he was beaten after the Taliban found photos on his phone indicating he was gay<sup>279</sup>.

See also [LGBTI persons](#)

6.10.7 On 17 November 2021, the AAN reported on the Taliban's unofficial ban on music, noting:

'Until the eve of the Taleban's takeover, the impression was that traditional Afghan music would be tolerated and that their censorship would largely affect more modern forms of music and instruments... In December 2020, a Taleban representative reportedly told a delegate representing the media at the Doha peace talks that "they wanted [the western-style music competition television show] Afghan Star closed down for good"...

'However, a clearer glimpse of their future attitudes to music emerged once they consolidated their hold on towns which fell during their 2021 spring-summer offensive. In Balkh, for example, which they captured on 21 June, the Taleban implemented a ban on music. Local radio stations were only allowed to play religious chants and men caught listening to music in the bazaar were reportedly subjected to corporal punishments....

'The days following the fall of the Republic on 15 August were marked by the destruction of musical instruments, either as a political message or acts of vandalism... Music shops across the country were closed down within days and have remained so ever since.'<sup>280</sup>

6.10.8 Gandhara reported on 29 November 2021 that 'Afghans across the country have complained that Taliban fighters are prying into the personal photos and videos, contacts, and social media accounts on their smartphones. The presence of music or videos that the Taliban deems to be violating its strict moral code has often led to harassment and violence, residents said. In many cases, Taliban fighters have confiscated, broken, or erased data from smartphones.'<sup>281</sup> Gandhara referred to 2 incidences in which men were beaten following Taliban searches of their phones<sup>282</sup>.

6.10.9 The Taliban denied the allegations, although in a speech on 23 November 2021, Gandhara reported that 'Mufti Lutfullah Hakimi, the head of a Taliban commission established to weed out "undesirable" individuals within the group's ranks, rejected that denial', as he questioned why people's privacy was being infringed upon<sup>283</sup>.

6.10.10 On 27 November 2021, the Jurist cited its staff correspondent in Kabul, who said '... local media are reporting that the Taliban connected to the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice have examined people on

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<sup>279</sup> CNN, '[Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate...](#)', 12 October 2021

<sup>280</sup> AAN, '[Music Censorship in 2021: The silencing of a nation and its cultural...](#)', 17 November 2021

<sup>281</sup> Gandhara, '[Afghans Complain Of Beatings, Harassment As Taliban...](#)', 29 November 2021

<sup>282</sup> Gandhara, '[Afghans Complain Of Beatings, Harassment As Taliban...](#)', 29 November 2021

<sup>283</sup> Gandhara, '[Afghans Complain Of Beatings, Harassment As Taliban...](#)', 29 November 2021

whether or not they can and know how to pray in Uruzgan province. This ministry – in that province – have announced that people who do not wish to learn daily prayers will be punished.<sup>284</sup>

6.10.11 On 6 December 2021, AVA reported that the Taliban seized 800 litres of alcohol in the province of Parwan and 10 sellers were arrested<sup>285</sup>.

6.10.12 Hasht-e Subh Daily reported on 11 December 2021 on the arrest of 18 persons for ‘immorality’ in Herat, including 9 women for alleged prostitution<sup>286</sup>.

6.10.13 In its ‘Afghanistan: Country Focus’, dated January 2022, EASO referred to persons seeking asylum or living abroad, noting:

‘According to an Afghan human rights expert, there was a negative narrative on Afghans that had left Afghanistan among Taliban sympathizers and some Taliban segments. According to the source, people who had left were seen as not having any Islamic values or being on the run from things they have done. On the other hand, the Taliban have prioritised passports for Afghan labours [sic] working abroad as that would mean an income for the country. So, on one level the Taliban might understand the economic aspect, but on another level, know that many abroad disagree with them.

‘An Afghan law professor described two narratives of the Taliban on persons leaving Afghanistan to live in Western countries. In one narrative the Taliban said that people flee due to poverty and that it has nothing to do with any fear of the Taliban, but life is better economically in the West. The other narrative was about the elites that left: they were not seen as “Afghans”, but as corrupt “puppets” of the “occupation”, opposed to the population. They were said to have no “roots” in Afghanistan, so as soon as “the foreigners” left, they took this group with them. This narrative could also include, for example, activists, media workers and intellectuals, and not only former government officials. According to the source the Taliban often said that a “good Muslim” would not leave and that many who left for the West were not “good enough Muslims”.

‘Dr. Andrea Chiovenda and Dr. Melissa Kerr Chiovenda, anthropologists at Zayed University, described a similar narrative that people who wants to leave are not “the right kind of person” and not perceived as “good Muslims”. However, they separated the tradition of Pashtun men going abroad for periods to work, which is a long tradition, from other Afghans who go away and stay in non-Muslim countries – which is not “the right way to do it”. They further stated that in rural Pashtun areas a person wanting to leave for Europe or the US would in general be perceived with suspicion, and even persons having Western contacts.’<sup>287</sup>

6.10.14 The EASO report also cited Austrian newspaper Kronen Zeitung, which published an interview on 30 August 2021 with Taliban spokesperson Zabihulla Mujahid, which stated, ‘When asked whether Afghan asylum seekers in Germany or Austria with rejected asylum claims and who had

<sup>284</sup> Jurist, ‘[Afghanistan dispatches: Taliban killings belie announced amnesty...](#)’, 27 November 2021

<sup>285</sup> AVA, ‘[Taliban Forces Confiscated 800 Liters of Wine in Parwan](#)’, 6 December 2021

<sup>286</sup> Hasht-e Subh, ‘[Taliban Detain 18 Civilians, Including 9 Women, in Herat...](#)’, 11 December 2021

<sup>287</sup> EASO, ‘[COI Report Afghanistan - Country focus](#)’ (pages 56 to 57), January 2022



possibly also committed crimes would be accepted back into the country, Mujahid replied that they would be accepted if deported, and presented to a court to decide on how to proceed.<sup>288</sup> The EASO report added 'It was not clear whether Mujahid referred to returnees in general or only returnees who had committed crimes in this statement.'<sup>289</sup>

See also ['Religious' police](#) and [Taliban justice](#).

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## 6.11 Persons who are critical of or oppose the Taliban

6.11.1 For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.10 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).

6.11.2 On 10 September 2021, Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ravina Shamdasani, called on the Taliban to '... cease the use of force towards, and the arbitrary detention of, those exercising their right to peaceful assembly and the journalists covering the protests.' The call came in light protests that had been taking place since the Taliban takeover and the increasingly violent response by the Taliban<sup>290</sup>.

6.11.3 In the press briefing, Shamdasani said:

'From 15 to 19 August, people gathered in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces to mark national flag-raising ceremonies. According to credible reports, during these three days when protests took place, the Taliban reportedly killed a man and a boy, and injured eight others, when firing in an apparent attempt to disperse the crowds. On Tuesday this week (7 September), during a protest in Herat, the Taliban reportedly shot and killed two men and wounded seven more. That same day in Kabul, credible reports indicate that the Taliban beat and detained protesters, including several women and up to 15 journalists.' On 8 September the Taliban issued an instruction banning unauthorised assemblies<sup>291</sup>.

6.11.4 See also [Women](#) and [Journalists and human rights defenders, including lawyers and judges](#).

6.11.5 On 27 September 2021, BBC News reported that, 'Before the Taliban took power in Afghanistan last month, there were numerous influential social media users in the country who were strong opponents of the group's policies. But since 15 August, Afghans have been deleting photos and tweets from their past - and many have turned away from social media altogether for fear of being targeted by Taliban forces.'<sup>292</sup>

6.11.6 Hasht-e Subh Daily reported on 7 November 2021 on what appeared to be a revenge killing, noting that 'Sources in Takhar told Hasht-e Subh that a young man had been shot dead by a Taliban commander. According to locals, the man had a record of joining the public uprising forces against the

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<sup>288</sup> EASO, '[COI Report Afghanistan - Country focus](#)' (page 56), January 2022

<sup>289</sup> EASO, '[COI Report Afghanistan - Country focus](#)' (page 56), January 2022

<sup>290</sup> OHCHR, '[Press briefing notes on Afghanistan](#)', 10 September 2021

<sup>291</sup> OHCHR, '[Press briefing notes on Afghanistan](#)', 10 September 2021

<sup>292</sup> BBC News, '[Afghanistan: Social media users delete profiles over fear...](#)', 27 September 2021

Taliban in the province. According to sources, the young man, named Nematullah, had killed the Taliban commander's son in the past.<sup>293</sup>

- 6.11.7 On 11 November 2021, AVA reported that a 19 year old man was shot by the Taliban for listening to music in a village in Badakhshan. According to sources, '... the Taliban first checked his cell phone, and when they found out that he was listening to music they beat and shot him.'<sup>294</sup>
- 6.11.8 Gandhara reported on 3 December 2021 on the alleged torture and murder of a Facebook user who criticised the Taliban in a Facebook post. The report noted 'Taliban fighters detained Naweed Azami after he made a Facebook post criticizing the militant group. Three days after he was taken into custody, the 30-year-old's body was found along a riverbank on the outskirts of the southern Afghan city of Lashkar Gah. The Taliban claimed that Azami escaped detention. But his family has accused the militant group of torturing and killing him.' The Taliban said the death was being investigated<sup>295</sup>.

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## 6.12 Persons who refuse to join the Taliban as fighters

- 6.12.1 CPIT was not able to find relevant information on Taliban recruitment, or the consequences of refusing to join the group, since their takeover of Kabul in August 2021 (see [Bibliography](#)). For information up to 31 August 2021, see section 5.11 of the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v1.0](#).
- 6.12.2 For information on recruitment by the Taliban prior to their takeover see the COI section in the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: unaccompanied children](#).

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<sup>293</sup> Hasht-e Subh, '[Taliban Commander in Takhar Shot Dead a Man for Killing...](#)', 7 November 2021

<sup>294</sup> AVA, '[A Young Boy Killed for Listening to Music in Badakhshan](#)', 11 November 2021

<sup>295</sup> Gandhara, '["Tortured From Head To Toe": Taliban Accused Of Killing...](#)', 3 December 2021

# Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Updates on key developments since 1 September 2021
  - New Taliban Govt.
  - Territorial control
  - Taliban's "General Amnesty"
  - Religious police
  - Law, order and security
  - Application of the Taliban's justice system
- Brief update on levels of access to enable independent and/or corroboration of reporting
- Updates on potentially vulnerable groups

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# Version control

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **3.0**
- valid from **19 April 2022**

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### **Official – sensitive: Start of section**

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

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### **Official – sensitive: End of section**

## Changes from last version of this note

Updated COI following the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI)-commissioned review of March 2022.

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