



Home Office

# Country Policy and Information Note

## Afghanistan: Security situation

Version 2.0

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: 5 April 2022

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 That the security situation in Afghanistan 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](#).

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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 In cases where there are doubts surrounding an person's claimed place of origin, 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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#### **Official – sensitive: Start of section**

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

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

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## 2.3 Convention reason(s)

- 2.3.1 A state of civil instability and/or where law and order has broken down does not of itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.3.2 In the absence of a link to one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds necessary to be recognised as a refugee, the question to address is whether the person will face a real risk of serious harm in order to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).
- 2.3.3 However, before considering whether a person requires protection because of the security situation, decision makers must consider if the person faces persecution for a Refugee Convention reason. Where the person qualifies for protection under the Refugee Convention, decision makers do not need to consider if there are substantial grounds for believing the person faces a real risk of serious harm meriting a grant of HP.
- 2.3.4 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.3.5 For general guidance on humanitarian protection see the Asylum Instruction on [Humanitarian Protection](#).

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## 2.4 Risk

### a. Security situation

- 2.4.1 Paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules - which set out that a real risk of serious harm as a serious and individual threat by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict - **only** apply to civilians who must be non-combatants. This could include former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.
- 2.4.2 The ECtHR, in [Diakité \(C-285/12\)](#), concluded that ‘The usual meaning in everyday language of ‘internal armed conflict’ is a situation in which a State’s armed forces confront one or more armed groups or in which two or more armed groups confront each other.’ (para 28) but that  
  
‘...internal armed conflict can be a cause for granting subsidiary protection only where confrontations between a State’s armed forces and one or more armed groups or between two or more armed groups are exceptionally considered to create a serious and individual threat to the life or person of an applicant for subsidiary protection for the purposes of Article 15(c) of Directive 2004/83 because the degree of indiscriminate violence which characterises those confrontations reaches such a high level that substantial grounds are shown for believing that a civilian, if returned to the relevant country or, as the case may be, to the relevant region, would – solely on account of his presence in the territory of that country or region – face a real risk of being subject to that threat’ (para 30).
- 2.4.3 In the country guidance case of [AK \(Article 15\(c\)\) Afghanistan CG \[2012\] UKUT 00163\(IAC\)](#) (18 May 2012), heard on 14 and 15 March 2012, the Upper Tribunal, which considered evidence up to early 2012, held that

'...the level of indiscriminate violence in that country taken as a whole is not at such a high level as to mean that, within the meaning of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive, a civilian, solely by being present in the country, faces a real risk which threatens his life or person' (paragraph 249B(ii)).

- 2.4.4 In 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, the UT, which considered evidence up to January 2020, held 'There is widespread and persistent conflict-related violence in Kabul. However, the proportion of the population affected by indiscriminate violence is small and not at a level where a returnee, even one with no family or other network and who has no experience living in Kabul, would face a serious and individual threat to their life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence.
- '... the level of indiscriminate violence in Kabul is not sufficient to meet the threshold in Article 15(c) QD' (paragraphs 253(ii) and 255).
- 2.4.5 The Upper Tribunal in [AS \(Safety of Kabul\)](#) also held that the country guidance promulgated in [AK](#) in relation to Article 15(c) remained unaffected by its decision (paragraph 253(vi)).
- 2.4.6 Following changes in the political and security situation since the Taliban takeover of the country in August 2021, the number of security incidents (such as armed clashes and improvised explosive devices (IEDs)) and conflict-related civilian casualties has reduced significantly (see [General security](#)).
- 2.4.7 The Taliban is now in de-facto control of the whole country and fighting with the former government's security forces has ceased, though clashes with the National Resistance Front (NRF) occur. The Taliban's main military rival is the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), an offshoot of the Islamic State (ISIS), which has different teachings of strict Sunni beliefs (see [Actors](#) and [Nature and levels of violence](#)).
- 2.4.8 Whilst a number of sources have stopped reporting on the security situation, available data indicates a decrease of over 90% for all security incidents. The United Nations recorded 985 security-related incidents between 19 August and 31 December 2021, a 91% decrease compared to the same period in 2020. After 15 August 2021, security incidents fell from 600 to fewer than 100 per week. Armed clashes decreased by 98%, from 7,430 to 148 incidents, air strikes by 99%, from 501 to 3, detonations of IEDs by 91%, from 1,118 to 101, and assassinations by 51%, from 424 to 207. Data provided by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) recorded 269 incidents between 1 September and 10 December 2021 compared to 3,133 in the same period of 2020. Most ACLED-recorded security incidents between 1 September and 10 December 2021 took place in the provinces of Nangarhar (considered a stronghold of ISKP) and Kabul, although the capital still saw a nearly 50% decrease in security incidents (44) compared to the same period in 2020 (82) (see [Security incidents](#)).
- 2.4.9 Attacks by ISKP that target civilians, particularly Shia Hazaras, have increased since the Taliban takeover. This has especially been the case in northern and southern provinces and in Kabul City, although they do not

control any territory. Clashes between ISKP and Taliban forces also occur, which have resulted in casualties on both sides, as well as civilians caught in the crossfire. However, as indicated by the overall decline in security incidents, armed battles in general have dramatically reduced since the Taliban takeover. Although the ability of the Taliban to contain ISKP remains unclear, the Taliban controls the whole country with far superior numbers of military forces, weapons, supplies and use of infrastructure, and attacks by ISKP are isolated (see [Actors](#) and [Nature and levels of violence](#)).

- 2.4.10 Although ISKP have mounted a number of high profile attacks against civilians, they generally concentrate IED and small arms attacks against Taliban military forces. The security situation for the general population has improved since the Taliban takeover and, in particular, rural areas are considered much safer with people now travelling to districts deemed too dangerous for the past 20 years. There have been reports of areas once considered too risky to negotiate now being ‘clogged with traffic’ (see [General security](#)).
- 2.4.11 Whilst country information indicates an internal armed conflict continues between the Taliban and ISKP, it is only in some areas and is to a far lesser extent following withdrawal of international forces. The Taliban generally maintains control of all areas of the country. Since August 2021, the levels of indiscriminate violence arising out of conflict have significantly diminished in all areas of the country. Although there remain hotspots in Kabul and Nangarhar, even here levels are lower than they once were (see [Nature and levels of violence](#)). The levels of violence are significantly lower than was prevailing at time of the CG cases of [AK](#) and [AS \(Safety of Kabul\)](#).
- 2.4.12 Given the significant decrease in the levels of violence, there is no part of Afghanistan where, in general, conditions are such as to result in serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian’s life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence generally across the country. Comparable to the Upper Tribunal’s findings in [AK](#). Indiscriminate violence is not at such a high level that it represents, in general, a real risk of harm contrary to paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules.
- 2.4.13 Even where there is not, in general, a real risk of serious harm by reason of indiscriminate violence, decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person’s circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk. The more a person is able to show that they are specifically affected by factors particular to their personal circumstances, the lower the level of indiscriminate violence required for them to be at a real risk of serious harm.
- 2.4.14 Therefore, a person may still face a real risk of serious harm, even where generally there is not such a risk, if they are able to show that there are specific reasons over and above simply being a civilian for being affected by the indiscriminate violence (see also the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban](#)).
- 2.4.15 For guidance on considering serious harm where there is a situation of indiscriminate violence in an armed conflict, including consideration of enhanced risk factors, see the Asylum Instruction, [Humanitarian Protection](#).

- 2.4.16 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.5 Internal relocation

- 2.5.1 In [AK](#), the Upper Tribunal held that internal relocation to Kabul was reasonable, bar some limited categories (lone women and female heads of household). This was confirmed in [AS \(Safety of Kabul\)](#).

- 2.5.2 In [AS \(Safety of Kabul\)](#) the Upper Tribunal held that:

‘There is widespread and persistent conflict-related violence in Kabul. However, the proportion of the population affected by indiscriminate violence is small and not at a level where a returnee, even one with no family or other network and who has no experience living in Kabul, would face a serious and individual threat to their life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence.

‘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 [tazkira].

‘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(ii) to 253(v)).

- 2.5.3 Whilst there continues to be some indiscriminate violence, the widespread and persistent conflict-related violence in Kabul, as well as elsewhere in the country, all but ceased following the Taliban takeover. The security situation has improved since [AK](#) and [AS \(Safety of Kabul\)](#) were promulgated and it remains the case that a single, adult male may be able to relocate to Kabul depending on his circumstances. As the conflict has diminished across the country and indiscriminate violence is not at such a high level that it represents, in general, a real risk of harm contrary to paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules, a single adult male may also be able to relocate to areas outside of Kabul.

- 2.5.4 For further guidance on internal relocation see [Country Policy and Information Notes on Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban](#), and [Humanitarian situation](#).
- 2.5.5 See also the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and [Humanitarian Protection](#).

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## 2.6 Certification

- 2.6.1 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.
- 2.6.2 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: 9 February 2022

## 3. Conflict background

- 3.1.1 For a brief recent history of conflict in Afghanistan, from the Soviet invasion to the Taliban (Taleban) insurgency and subsequent US-led military operations, see the [BBC News timeline of events](#) (up to September 2019)<sup>1</sup>, and the PBS News Hour's [A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan](#) (up to end of August 2021)<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.1.2 For information on the general security situation before and leading up to the Taliban takeover in August 2021, including parties to the conflict, intensity level of the violence, nature of the violence, regional spreading of the violence, targets of the violence, risk of collateral damage, use of arms and tactics, possibility to reach areas – security of transport (roads and airports), and indirect effects of the violence/conflict, see:
- the COI sections of previous versions of [CPINs](#) on the security and humanitarian situation.
  - European Asylum Support Office (EASO) Reports on the [Afghanistan Security situation](#), dated between January 2016 and September 2021.
  - United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) [Reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict](#).
- 3.1.3 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](#).
- 3.1.4 For information on district control see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban v2.0](#).

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Section 4 updated: 9 February 2022

## 4. Maps

- 4.1.1 For detailed maps of administrative divisions and districts see the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): [Afghanistan Administrative Divisions - January 2014](#) and [Maps/Infographics](#).

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Section 5 updated: 5 April 2022

## 5. Security situation: September 2021 to January 2022

### 5.1 Actors

- 5.1.1 Al Jazeera described the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) in an article dated 27 August 2021:

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<sup>1</sup> BBC News, '[Afghanistan profile – Timeline](#)', 9 September 2019

<sup>2</sup> PBS News Hour, '[A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan](#)', 30 August 2021

'ISKP is known as an offshoot of the ISIL (ISIS) armed group that claimed to be seeking to establish an Islamic "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria. Khorasan refers to a historical region under an ancient caliphate that once included parts of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan. The armed group was formed in 2014 by breakaway fighters of the Pakistan Taliban and fighters from Afghanistan who pledged allegiance to the late ISIL leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. ISKP has strong roots in northeastern Afghanistan but set up sleeper cells in Kabul and other provinces. They are adversaries of the Taliban, with different teachings of strict Sunni beliefs...

'While it is not clear how many fighters have joined the group, ISKP has been responsible for some of the worst attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan in recent years, killing people at mosques, public squares and even hospitals...

'At a news briefing on Friday [27 August], Pentagon spokesman said that the Taliban released "thousands" of ISIS-K fighters from US prisons at Bagram in Afghanistan.'<sup>3</sup>

#### 5.1.2 In October 2021, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that:

'The ISKP has posed a serious threat to Hazaras and other Afghan civilians since at least 2015, when the Islamist armed group began attacks on mosques, hospitals, schools, and other civilian facilities, especially in predominantly Shia neighborhoods. These attacks have killed at least 1,500 civilians and injured thousands more, mostly religious minorities.

'ISKP attacks have taken place in Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, and other cities. Some have targeted Hindu and Sikh religious minorities, as well as Hazara. The ISKP has also killed journalists, civil society activists, and health workers, and targeted schools, particularly girls' schools in Nangarhar in 2018. Their attacks first surged in 2016-2018 and then ebbed after the group suffered military setbacks in 2019. Since 2020, attacks have again increased.'<sup>4</sup>

#### 5.1.3 Bill Roggio, editor of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) Long War Journal (LWJ), stated on 23 November 2021:

'After defeating the Islamic Government of Afghanistan and taking control of the country on Aug. 15, the Taliban is beginning to ramp up its fight against the Islamic State's Khorasan Province.

'The Islamic State's Khorasan Province or ISKP, which is often referred to as ISIS-K, has increased attacks against the Taliban over the past two months. ISKP has orchestrated a handful of high-profile suicide attacks on soft targets such as mosques and hospitals, and conducted smaller but more numerous IED [improvised explosive device] and small arms attacks against Taliban military forces. In response, the Taliban has sent more than 1,000 fighters to battle the group in Nangarhar province, the hub of ISKP operations, according to [The Washington Post](#).

'Much of the reporting from Afghanistan has boosted the threat of ISKP while ignoring the Taliban's very real advantages in the fight. The Taliban has the

<sup>3</sup> Al Jazeera, '[What we know about Islamic State in Khorasan Province \(ISIS-K\)](#)', 27 August 2021

<sup>4</sup> HRW, '[Afghanistan: Surge in Islamic State Attacks on Shia](#)', 25 October 2021

advantage in all of the key areas, save one. The Taliban has state sponsors, terrorist allies, regional support, a marked superiority in weapons and numbers, and controls all of Afghanistan. ISKP can only match the Taliban in one area, and this their will to fight and persevere.<sup>5</sup>

- 5.1.4 Listing the advantages the Taliban had over ISKP, Bill Roggio noted the ISKP had limited resources (the core group in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces retains an estimated 1,500 to 2,200 fighters, according to the UN in June 2021<sup>6</sup>), whilst the Taliban forces ranged between 70,000 and ‘well over 100,000’, the higher estimate of which was most likely, according to the LWJ<sup>7</sup>.
- 5.1.5 Referring to the UN figures on the estimated number of ISKP fighters, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) noted on 8 September 2021 that, ‘These fighters are dispersed into relatively autonomous cells operating under the Islamic State banner and ideology. While these groups lack the capability, coordination, or local support to control significant territory, they retain the ability to launch individual attacks, such as the 26 August 2021 attack on Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul that killed approximately 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. military personnel.’<sup>8</sup>
- 5.1.6 In a January 2022 article for the CTC Sentinel, a monthly publication by the Combating Terrorism Center, contributors Amira Jadoon, Abdul Sayed and Andrew Mines present a slightly less optimistic view of the Taliban’s ability to contain ISKP:
- ‘...the recent wave of attacks conducted by ISK, including the Kabul airport attack and attacks against the region’s Shi’a communities, have highlighted the severe implications of ISK’s resurgence and continued survival on the Taliban’s ability to govern as a state actor...
- ‘ISK’s sources of strength are drawn from across the region, and its survival is likely to exacerbate violence across the region and disrupt any plans for Afghanistan’s stability rooted in geo-economics. It also opens up the country for renewed proxy warfare. Given that the Taliban have so far been incapable of delivering proper security to Afghan citizens and have yet to receive necessary levels of foreign assistance to stem the growing humanitarian crisis, the Taliban’s control and power may erode quickly.’<sup>9</sup>
- 5.1.7 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 presence of ISKP:
- ‘According to the expert in Afghan security policy, ISKP have in recent months been able to bolster their ranks by recruiting both from abroad as well as from within Afghanistan. In this relation, there have been reports of ISKP recruiting former members of the ANDSF [Afghan National Defence and Security Forces] as well as Taliban fighters due to safety and monetary concerns. Furthermore, “hundreds” of ISKP prisoners were released by the

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<sup>5</sup> FDD LWJ, ‘[In fight against Islamic State, the Taliban holds major advantage](#)’, 23 November 2021

<sup>6</sup> UN Security Council, ‘[Twelfth report of the Analytical Support...](#)’ (paragraph 62), 1 June 2021

<sup>7</sup> FDD LWJ, ‘[In fight against Islamic State, the Taliban holds major advantage](#)’, 23 November 2021

<sup>8</sup> CSIS, ‘[Examining Extremism: Islamic State Khorasan Province \(ISKP\)](#)’, 8 September 2021

<sup>9</sup> CTC Sentinel, ‘[The Islamic State Threat in Taliban Afghanistan...](#)’, January 2022

Taliban as they captured Afghan cities during the summer of 2021. Afghanistan analyst Antonio Giustozzi estimated the current number of ISKP fighters in Afghanistan to be approximately 4,000.<sup>10</sup>

5.1.8 The 29th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the UN Security Council, published 3 February 2022, noted that ‘Member States assess that the strength of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan (ISIL-K)... has now risen from earlier estimates of 2,200 to approaching 4,000, following the release of several thousand prisoners... Although the group controls limited territory in eastern Afghanistan, it is capable of conducting high-profile and complex attacks.’<sup>11</sup>

5.1.9 The LWJ report noted:

‘The Taliban is fully in control of all of Afghanistan 34 provinces while the Islamic State does not control any ground. The Taliban can muster the resources of all of Afghanistan’s provinces; troops, weapons, ammunition, fuel, food, and other supplies. The Taliban can operate hospitals, recruiting and training centers, and base troops. It can tax the local population and border crossings. ISKP must operate clandestinely and is extremely limited in how it can support its forces.’<sup>12</sup>

5.1.10 Reporting on ISIS activity around the world in 2021, the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC), part of the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center (IICC), a national site dedicated to the memory of fallen of the Israeli intelligence community<sup>13</sup>, noted:

‘It is difficult to determine whether ISIS’s Khorasan Province is stronger at the end of 2021 than at the beginning of the year. The opening of the prisons, following the fall of the previous regime, did indeed bring about the release of ISIS operatives. However, the Taliban government is determined to fight against ISIS, and hundreds of operatives have been arrested or turned themselves in due to the Taliban activity against ISIS. According to terrorism researcher Rita Katz, ISIS’s situation in Afghanistan is grave and it is even fighting for its life following the Taliban takeover of the country. According to Katz, the fact that Al-Qaeda, another ISIS rival, is close to the Taliban, doesn’t make it easier for ISIS. However, since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August, no tension is evident between Al-Qaeda and ISIS in Afghanistan.’<sup>14</sup>

5.1.11 In slight contrast, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ms Deborah Lyons, expressed the view in her address to the UN Security Council on 17 November 2021 that, ‘Another major negative development has been the Taliban’s inability to stem the expansion of the Islamic State in Iraq and in Levant Khorasan Province. Once limited to a few

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<sup>10</sup> DIS, ‘[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)’ (page 16), December 2021

<sup>11</sup> UN Security Council, ‘[Letter dated 3 February 2022 from the...](#)’ (paragraph 60), 3 February 2022

<sup>12</sup> FDD LWJ, ‘[In fight against Islamic State, the Taliban holds major advantage](#)’, 23 November 2021

<sup>13</sup> ITIC, ‘[About us](#)’, no date

<sup>14</sup> ITIC, ‘[Summary of ISIS Activity around the Globe in 2021](#)’ (page 22), 25 January 2022

provinces and Kabul, ISILKP now seems to be present in nearly all provinces and increasingly active.<sup>15</sup>

- 5.1.12 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) referred to Deborah Lyons comments on the presence of ISKP, noting:

'In email correspondence with EASO, Abdul Sayed, security specialist and researcher of radical militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan, commented that he did not "understand the barometers behind this assessment". According to Sayed, ISKP members could possibly have spread across Afghanistan individually, particularly escaped prisoners, but this did not mean that they "posed a threat in those areas". Based on ISKP attacks and Taliban raids against hideouts, Sayed stated that ISKP had a strong presence in Eastern Afghanistan (Nangarhar and Kunar provinces), as well as Kabul and northern Afghanistan.'<sup>16</sup>

- 5.1.13 The EASO report also noted:

'According to media reports, ISKP used "the same hit-and-run tactics" until recently practiced by the Taliban against the previous Afghan government, including roadside explosions and targeted killings. The security incidents were particularly reported in northern and southern provinces as well as in Kabul City. Attacks were particularly reported to take place in Nangarhar province, defined as a "stronghold" of ISKP, and its capital, Jalalabad. On several instances, ISKP targeted the Shia (Hazara) community. Researcher Antonio Giustozzi told Reuters in early November 2021 that ISKP "had been carrying out a campaign of targeted killings since around the summer of 2020 and had continued since the Taliban victory in August 2021 on a "roughly comparable scale".'<sup>17</sup>

- 5.1.14 The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) noted on 6 December 2021 that, 'Credible reports have already emerged of [ISKP] openly recruiting both Taliban fighters and former members of the Afghan intelligence agencies and special forces in several provinces.'<sup>18</sup> The same source added 'While the Taliban have no funds to even pay their own fighters, IS-K is allegedly offering between US\$300 and US\$1,000 for recruits, an enticing offer for a starving population. The Taliban's own brutality towards the Afghan population and complete lack of interest in governing will likely fuel recruitment or at least reduce the ranks of those willing to provide information to the Taliban.'<sup>19</sup>

- 5.1.15 In January 2022, France24 reported that:

'Once a fringe force in Afghanistan, analysts say the local chapter of IS has been increasingly active since the United States agreed to a deal in 2020 with the Taliban to withdraw foreign troops from the country... The latter group was "strengthened" as the Taliban took control of the country and

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<sup>15</sup> UNAMA, '[SRSB Lyons Briefing to the UNSC on the Situation in Afghanistan](#)', 17 November 2021

<sup>16</sup> EASO, '[COI Report Afghanistan - Country focus](#)' (page 59), 7 January 2022

<sup>17</sup> EASO, '[COI Report Afghanistan - Country focus](#)' (page 59), 7 January 2022

<sup>18</sup> ASPI, '[The Taliban are losing the fight against Islamic State](#)', 6 December 2021

<sup>19</sup> ASPI, '[The Taliban are losing the fight against Islamic State](#)', 6 December 2021

opened prisons, releasing many battle-hardened IS fighters, says Ibraheem Bahiss, an Afghanistan specialist at the International Crisis Group... Since then, “violence against the Taliban has increased”, even if they try to play it down, Bahiss says... “These days, there is at least one attack a week,” said Sajjad, a Taliban unit leader, adding his men are on high alert “at all times”. The attackers, he told AFP, “come in twos or threes... in a [motorised] rickshaw... and shoot at us with Kalashnikovs or pistols”. According to Abdul Sayed, an academic specialising in jihadist networks, the group is responsible for nearly 100 attacks since mid-September – some 85 percent aimed at the Taliban – and Jalalabad is the front line.<sup>20</sup>

See also [Security incidents](#) and [Nature and levels of violence](#).

5.1.16 The DIS report noted in regard to the presence of other non-state armed actors:

‘According to an assessment from the UNSC from June 2021, the number of al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan ranges between “several dozen to 500 persons” operating in at least 15 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, primarily in the east, southern and south-eastern regions. As part of the Doha Peace Agreement of February 2020, the Taliban had committed to preventing al-Qaeda from operating on Afghan soil. Following their conquest of Afghanistan, the Taliban reportedly received “congratulatory messages from al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates.” Furthermore, according to the UNSC, there are close ties between especially the Haqqani-network – whose leader Sirajuddin Haqqani currently serves as interim minister of interior – and al-Qaeda.’<sup>21</sup>

5.1.17 The EASO report also referenced al-Qaeda, noting:

‘Regarding al-Qaeda’s presence in Afghanistan, US Defence Secretary Lloyed Austin stated that the group “may attempt to regenerate” in the country. In June 2021, the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team estimated the human capacity of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan as ranging “from several dozen to 500 people.” While during the negotiations of the peace agreement with the US the Taliban stated it would not allow al-Qaeda or any other extremist group into areas under its control and renewed this statement after the takeover of 15 August 2021, it was reported that the Taliban received “congratulatory messages from al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates.” Following the Taliban takeover, sources referred to reported relations between al-Qaeda and the Haqqani network, whose leader, Sirajuddin Haqqani, was appointed interior minister in the interim government. In September 2021, Zabihullah Mujahid rejected accusations that al-Qaeda maintained presence in Afghanistan.’<sup>22</sup>

5.1.18 The 29th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the UN Security Council, published 3 February 2022, noted that ‘Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)... retains a presence in Afghanistan, in the Provinces of Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimruz, Paktika and Zabul, where the group fought alongside the Taliban against the ousted Government.

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<sup>20</sup> France 24, [‘Fears stalks city in Islamic State’s Afghan heartland’](#), 21 January 2022

<sup>21</sup> DIS, [‘Afghanistan: Recent events’](#) (page 16), December 2021

<sup>22</sup> EASO, [‘COI Report Afghanistan - Country focus’](#) (page 61), 7 January 2022

AQIS is estimated to have between 200 and 400 fighters, mainly from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Pakistan.<sup>23</sup>

#### 5.1.19 The DIS report noted:

‘Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) consists of up to 700 people, including family members of fighters located in Faryab, Sar-e Pul and Jawzjan Provinces. Prior to the Taliban conquest, IMU reportedly relied on local branches of the Taliban for financial backing.

‘Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) consist of “several hundred members” and primarily operates in Badakhshan and neighboring provinces.’<sup>24</sup>

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## 5.2 General security

### 5.2.1 The DIS report noted in regard to the security situation that:

‘Since the Taliban takeover of Kabul on 15 August 2021, the overall security situation in the country has changed. According to the UN, conflict related security incidents such as armed clashes, air strikes and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have decreased significantly since the Taliban conquered the country. In this relation, two of the sources consulted for this report echoed that certain elements of the security situation for the general population in Afghanistan have improved because fighting has ceased. Especially the rural areas are safer, and people can travel to districts that were deemed too dangerous or inaccessible for the past 15-20 years, as the security on the roads have improved due to the drop in IEDs. Although it is safer for children to go to school, two sources describe how other aspects of security for the civilian population have deteriorated since the Taliban’s takeover. The Kabul-based journalist emphasised that the fear of Taliban, coupled with the absence of clear laws and policing, has created insecurity and local acts of unpunished vigilantism.’<sup>25</sup>

### 5.2.2 On 19 October 2021, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said ‘The overall security situation in the country remains relatively calm, though isolated but violent incidents continue to take civilian lives.’<sup>26</sup>

### 5.2.3 On 29 October 2021, BBC News reported:

‘Afghanistan is now more peaceful, following the end of the Taliban's insurgency. In Jalalabad, however, their forces are facing a near-daily stream of targeted attacks. IS, known locally as “Daesh,” is using some of the same hit-and-run tactics that the Taliban so successfully employed against the previous government, including roadside bombs and stealthy assassinations. IS accuses the Taliban of being “apostates” for not being sufficiently hardline; the Taliban dismiss IS as heretical extremists.’<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> UN Security Council, ‘[Letter dated 3 February 2022 from the...](#)’ (paragraph 59), 3 February 2022

<sup>24</sup> DIS, ‘[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)’ (page 16), December 2021

<sup>25</sup> DIS, ‘[Afghanistan: Recent events](#)’ (page 17), December 2021

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR, ‘[Afghanistan Situation Update](#)’, 19 October 2021

<sup>27</sup> BBC News, ‘[The Taliban’s secretive war against IS](#)’, 29 October 2021

- 5.2.4 In her address to the UN Security Council on 17 November 2021, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ms Deborah Lyons, recognised that since the conflict had mostly ended, the overall security situation in Afghanistan had improved<sup>28</sup>. However, on a less positive note, she cited attacks by ISKP, 'The number of attacks has increased significantly, from last year to this year. In 2020 – 60, so far this year – 334 attacks attributed to ISILKP or, in fact, claimed by ISILKP. ISILKP continues to target the Shi'ite communities.'<sup>29</sup>
- 5.2.5 The EASO report of January 2022 noted:  
 'As reported by international media sources in mid-September, a considerable decrease in conflict-related violence was seen in most parts of Afghanistan's countryside. Farmers in Mizan district of Zabul province told WSJ [Wall Street Journal] that they could water their fields at night with a flashlight without a risk of being shot, and in Qalat, the capital of Zabul, young men had started with overnight picnics in the desert...  
 'Travelling by road was reported to have become safer in certain areas. According to WSJ, commuting from Kandahar city to Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand, previously considered too dangerous, was reportedly "clogged with traffic" in September 2021.'<sup>30</sup>
- 5.2.6 In a report published in January 2022 by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), covering political and security developments between August 2021 and January 2022 and drawing on a range of sources, it was stated that:  
 'Afghanistan is volatile but the country as a whole is (relatively) less dangerous than before August 2021 for many Afghans, due to the cessation of most armed conflict after the Taliban claimed victory. It nevertheless remains a dangerous country with ongoing threats of terrorism and kidnapping and other forms of violence. The Taliban asserted control over the entire country quickly and with relatively little opposition following the announcement of the US-led withdrawal of foreign forces.'<sup>31</sup>
- 5.2.7 The same report noted that 'There have been multiple mass-casualty terrorist attacks since the Taliban takeover, with most claimed by Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). ISKP carried out dozens of terrorist attacks in 2020 and 2021 against the erstwhile Afghan national government and also the Taliban. Terrorist attacks remain possible anywhere in the country, but major attacks are most likely in key cities given the increased profile ISKP gets from such attacks.'<sup>32</sup>
- 5.2.8 In relation to the security situation in Kabul, the same report observed, 'Kabul remains insecure and has been subject to multiple attacks. On 2 November 2021, for example, at least 25 Afghans were killed and more than 50 injured when two large explosions hit Kabul's largest hospital,

<sup>28</sup> UNAMA, '[SRSG Lyons Briefing to the UNSC on the Situation in Afghanistan](#)', 17 November 2021

<sup>29</sup> UNAMA, '[SRSG Lyons Briefing to the UNSC on the Situation in Afghanistan](#)', 17 November 2021

<sup>30</sup> EASO, '[COI Report Afghanistan - Country focus](#)' (page 58), January 2022

<sup>31</sup> DFAT, '[DFAT Thematic Report on Political and Security...](#)' (paragraph 2.18), 14 January 2022

<sup>32</sup> DFAT, '[DFAT Thematic Report on Political and Security...](#)' (paragraph 2.20), 14 January 2022

immediately followed by an assault by a group of gunmen. The attack was claimed by ISKP.<sup>33</sup>

#### 5.2.9 The same DFAT report stated that:

‘The cessation of conflict between the Taliban and the former administration has made many parts of the country, especially rural areas, effectively free from armed conflict; however, the situation is highly volatile. The ability of the Taliban to control violent actors is not currently clear. This applies particularly to ISKP but also its related entity, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, which targets Pakistan. There is significant potential for violence across the country, especially in the eastern provinces where ISKP is strongest.’<sup>34</sup>

#### 5.2.10 In a briefing to the UN Security Council on 26 January 2022, published by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ms Deborah Lyons, stated:

‘Since my previous briefing it appears that the de facto authorities have attempted to constrain the Islamic State’s ability to carry out major attacks, and yet small-scale attacks are still being carried out, particularly against religious minorities. The existence of numerous terrorist groups in Afghanistan remains a broad international and especially regional concern. The desire of the de facto authorities to take on this threat across the board remains to be convincingly demonstrated. And yet at the same time, a certain amount of realism is required regarding its capacity to do so...’<sup>35</sup>

See also [Security incidents](#) and [Civilian casualties](#).

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### 5.3 Security incidents

5.3.1 Some sources have ceased publishing data on security incidents. For example, Reports on protection of civilians in armed conflict by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)<sup>36</sup>, Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan<sup>37</sup>, and United States Department of Defense’s (USDOD) Reports on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan<sup>38</sup> have all ceased to exist.

5.3.2 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) continued to collect coded data on security incidents from reports in open sources, though noted that following the fall of Kabul, ‘sourcing events in Afghanistan has become increasingly difficult.’<sup>39</sup>

5.3.3 According to data collected by ACLED and obtained by CPIT using ACLED’s export data tool, between 1 September and 10 December 2021 there were a total of 269 security incidents across Afghanistan, with 44 in Kabul city, (coded as ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against

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<sup>33</sup> DFAT, [‘DFAT Thematic Report on Political and Security...’](#) (paragraph 2.21), 14 January 2022

<sup>34</sup> DFAT, [‘DFAT Thematic Report on Political and Security...’](#) (paragraph 2.26), 14 January 2022

<sup>35</sup> UNAMA, [‘Briefing to the United Nations Security Council...’](#), 26 January 2022

<sup>36</sup> SIGAR, [‘Quarterly Report to the United States Congress’](#) (page 78), 30 October 2021

<sup>37</sup> SIGAR, [‘Quarterly Report to the United States Congress’](#) (page 78), 30 October 2021

<sup>38</sup> USDOD, [‘Publications’](#), no date

<sup>39</sup> ACLED, [‘ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions...’](#) (pages 12 to 13), September 2021

civilians’) compared to 3,133 security incidents (82 in Kabul city) in the same period of 2020<sup>40</sup>, a decrease of over 90% for all security incidents, and a nearly 50% decrease in Kabul.

5.3.4 ACLED data for the period 1 September to 10 December 2021 showed the majority of security incidents, number in parentheses, were in the provinces of Nangarhar (66) and Kabul (50), followed by Kandahar (18) and Panshir (15)<sup>41</sup>.

5.3.5 A report of the UN Secretary General to the UN Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, published on 28 January 2022, summarised the security situation:

‘There has been a significant decline in the overall number of conflict-related security incidents as well as civilian casualties since then. Between 19 August and 31 December, the United Nations recorded 985 security-related incidents, a 91 per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2020. The number of security incidents fell significantly after 15 August, from 600 to fewer than 100 incidents per week. Available data indicate that armed clashes decreased by 98 per cent, from 7,430 to 148 incidents; air strikes by 99 per cent, from 501 to 3; detonations of improvised explosive devices by 91 per cent, from 1,118 to 101; and assassinations by 51 per cent, from 424 to 207.’<sup>42</sup>

5.3.6 The same source added:

‘There has been an increase in other types of security incidents such as crime amid a rapid deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation. The eastern, central, southern and western regions accounted for 75 per cent of all recorded incidents, with Nangarhar, Kabul, Kunar and Kandahar the most conflict-affected provinces. Despite the reduction in violence, the de facto authorities encountered several challenges, including an increase in attacks against their members. Some of the attacks are attributed to the National Resistance Front comprising some figures from the former Government and opposition...’<sup>43</sup>

5.3.7 With regard to ISK the same report summarised:

‘Attacks claimed by or attributed to ISIL-KP increased and expanded beyond the movement’s previous areas of focus in Kabul and eastern Afghanistan. Between 19 August and 31 December, the United Nations recorded 152 attacks by the group in 16 provinces, compared to 20 attacks in 5 provinces during the same period in 2020. In addition to the de facto authorities, the group also targeted civilians, in particular Shia minorities, in urban areas...’<sup>44</sup>

5.3.8 The same source also noted an increase in security incidents directly affecting the UN, ‘Between 19 August and 31 December, the United Nations documented 196 incidents directly affecting the United Nations, primarily its personnel, including 111 cases of intimidation, 39 crime-related incidents, 10 arrests and 30 incidents affecting United Nations compounds, offices and

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<sup>40</sup> CPIT analysis based on [ACLED](#) data

<sup>41</sup> CPIT analysis based on [ACLED](#) data

<sup>42</sup> UNGA, ‘[The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for...](#)’ (paragraph 15), 28 January 2022

<sup>43</sup> UNGA, ‘[The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for...](#)’ (paragraph 15), 28 January 2022

<sup>44</sup> UNGA, ‘[The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for...](#)’ (paragraph 17), 28 January 2022

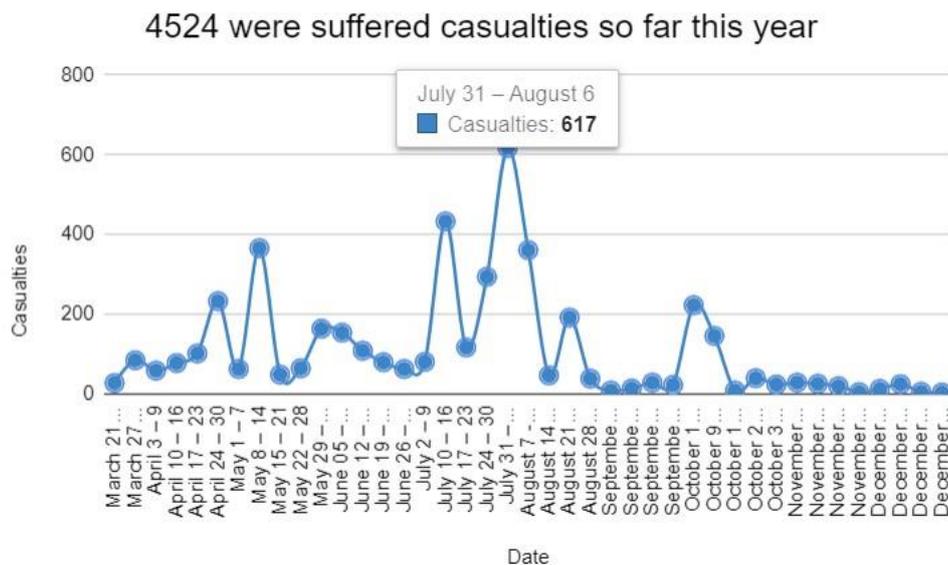
property. The total represents a significant increase from the 34 incidents recorded during the same period in 2020.<sup>45</sup>

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## 5.4 Civilian casualties

5.4.1 UNAMA figures on civilian casualties, in its mid-year update published in July 2021, recorded 5,183 civilian casualties (1,659 killed and 3,524 injured) between 1 January and 30 June 2021<sup>46</sup>. Data on civilian casualties is no longer provided by the Resolute Support (RS) Mission following its withdrawal<sup>47</sup>. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) commented on 18 September 2021 that it was unable to fulfil its duties [which had included collecting casualty data] after the Taliban occupied its offices<sup>48</sup>.

5.4.2 According to Pajhwok Afghan News, an Afghan based independent news agency with no claimed political affiliations, there were 4,524 casualties in 2021. Casualties peaked during the week of 31 July and 6 August 2021 to 617, following which figures fluctuated, and by the last week of December had dropped to 4 reported casualties. Pajhwok News produced an [interactive graph](#) showing the number of casualties [methodology unknown and therefore it is unclear whether these figures refer to civilians only, or a mix of civilians and combatants]<sup>49</sup>:



5.4.3 Pajhwok Afghan News reported that the second week of September could be ‘marked as the second week in the past decade in which no civilian was killed or injured or no conflict related incidents happened’, although other incidents took place, including explosions and targeted attacks, which resulted in deaths and injuries<sup>50</sup>. On 23 October 2021, the same source

<sup>45</sup> UNGA, ‘[The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for...](#)’ (paragraph 18), 28 January 2022

<sup>46</sup> UNAMA, ‘[Mid-Year update](#)’, July 2021

<sup>47</sup> SIGAR, ‘[Quarterly Report to the United States Congress](#)’ (page 78), 30 October 2021

<sup>48</sup> AIHRC, ‘[Statement on the status of the Afghanistan Independent Human...](#)’, 18 September 2021

<sup>49</sup> Pajhwok, ‘[Last week was good in terms of security, economy for Afghanistan](#)’, 1 January 2022

<sup>50</sup> Pajhwok, ‘[Afghan conflict ends but economic problems surging](#)’, 18 September 2021

reported on 'record low' levels of casualties, recording 6 deaths and 3 injured during the past week, compared to 56 killed and 90 injured the week before, when most casualties were caused in an attack on a Shia mosque in Kandahar<sup>51</sup>.

- 5.4.4 ACLED data recorded 270 civilian fatalities across Afghanistan between 1 September and 10 December 2021, This was compared to 763 civilian fatalities during the same period in 2020<sup>52</sup>, indicating a decrease in civilian deaths of over 65%.
- 5.4.5 ACLED also recorded 12 civilian fatalities in Kabul between 1 September and 10 December 2021 compared to 123 in the same period of 2020<sup>53</sup>, a decrease of over 90%.
- 5.4.6 The Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation, dated 4 March 2022, noted the significant reduction in civilian casualties since the Taliban takeover, 'In the period between 15 August 2021 and 15 February 2022, UNAMA/OHCHR documented at least 1153 civilian casualties (at least 397 killed and 756 wounded), including 173 child casualties (55 killed, 118 wounded) and 25 civilian casualties among women (11 killed, 14 wounded).'<sup>54</sup>
- 5.4.7 Reporting on ISIS activity around the world in 2021, the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC), noted that, 'During the year [2021], the Khorasan Province [ISKP] carried out 365 terrorist attacks resulting in 2,210 casualties (compared to 2020, when the province carried out 82 attacks resulting in 835 casualties). The increase in ISIS activity in Afghanistan (especially in the second half of the year) came in the wake of the pullout of US forces from the country, the disintegration of the old regime and the takeover of the country by the Taliban movement.'<sup>55</sup>
- 5.4.8 ACLED noted on 6 October 2021 that it recorded:  
'... at least seven attacks targeting members of the Hazara community in Afghanistan, perpetrated by IS or the Taliban, since the start of 2021, with even more perpetrated by other, unknown militants; over 100 Hazara people have been killed during these attacks. This marks a significant increase in violence towards Hazaras; the number of events targeting this community in 2021 is higher than the total number of events recorded between 2017 (the beginning of ACLED's Afghanistan coverage) and 2020 combined.'<sup>56</sup>
- 5.4.9 For data on attacks against Hazaras post-6 October 2021 see [Nature and levels of violence](#).
- 5.4.10 For further information on the situation for Hazaras, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban](#).

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<sup>51</sup> Pajhwok, '[Last week, casualties in Afghanistan fall to record low](#)', 23 October 2021

<sup>52</sup> CPIT analysis based on [ACLED](#) data

<sup>53</sup> CPIT analysis based on [ACLED](#) data

<sup>54</sup> UNHRC, '[Situation of human rights in Afghanistan; Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \[A/HRC/49/24\]](#)' (paragraph 22), 4 March 2022

<sup>55</sup> ITIC, '[Summary of ISIS Activity around the Globe in 2021](#)', 25 January 2022

<sup>56</sup> ACLED, '[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 25 September...](#)', 6 October 2021

## 5.5 Nature and levels of violence

5.5.1 In its regional overview for the week 18 to 24 September 2021, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) noted:

'In Afghanistan, IS claimed responsibility for several explosions in the center of Jalalabad city of Nangarhar province on 18 and 19 September. The explosions killed at least three people and injured over two dozen. Taliban fighters are reported to be amongst the casualties. Later clashes between IS and Taliban forces in Jalalabad also resulted in multiple fatalities. Further unattributed explosions and shootings targeting the Taliban also took place in the city throughout last week. Since the Taliban came to power, IS has conducted several attacks killing over a hundred civilians.'<sup>57</sup>

5.5.2 According to Amaq News Agency, a media arm for the Islamic State, cited by the LWJ on 20 September 2021, '... seven bombings were carried out on Sept. 18 and 19, with the final explosion occurring outside of the Indian consulate in Jalalabad... [ISKP] claims that 35 Taliban members were killed or wounded in the attacks, though the casualty figures could not be independently verified.'<sup>58</sup>

5.5.3 Reporting on the week 25 September to 1 October 2021, ACLED noted:

'... the Taliban and IS clashed in Parwan and Ghor provinces... with the Taliban claiming to have killed a number of IS militants. Meanwhile, four Taliban members died in an IS landmine explosion in Charikar city, Parwan. The Taliban was also targeted in Kapisa, Nangarhar, and Kunar provinces with armed attacks and explosions, though the perpetrators of those attacks remain unknown. At least seven Taliban members were killed in these attacks. Several civilians were amongst the casualties in the attacks in Jalalabad city in Nangarhar province, and in Asad Abad city in Kunar province.'<sup>59</sup>

5.5.4 ACLED noted that ISKP staged attacks against the Taliban and civilians in the week of 2 to 8 October 2021. In its regional overview for that week, ACLED noted:

'In Kunduz city, at least 43 Hazara Shiites, a minority sporadically targeted by Sunni armed groups, were killed by an IS suicide bomber. Under the latest Taliban rule, this has been the second deadliest after the Kabul airport attack on 26 August, where IS killed at least 170 people. In another suicide attack in Kabul last week, an IS suicide bomber targeted a prayer ceremony for the deceased mother of Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. At least five civilians and Taliban members were killed, with dozens more wounded. Meanwhile, the Taliban conducted several operations against IS in Parwan and Kabul provinces, killing at least eight militants.

'Unclaimed attacks on civilians and the Taliban also continued last week. Unidentified armed groups ambushed Taliban forces twice in Jalalabad city and targeted Taliban forces with two explosions in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. At least three Taliban members were killed in these unclaimed

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<sup>57</sup> ACLED, '[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 18-24 September...](#)', 29 September 2021

<sup>58</sup> FDD LWJ, '[Islamic State bombs Taliban convoys in eastern Afghanistan](#)', 20 September 2021

<sup>59</sup> ACLED, '[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 25 September...](#)', 6 October 2021

attacks and several civilian bystanders were also injured. Separately, an unidentified group targeted the Sikh community in Kabul. The group ransacked a Sikh temple, attacking some people inside, although no major injuries were reported.<sup>60</sup>

- 5.5.5 Afghan Voice Agency (AVA) reported on 10 October 2021 that during the previous week, ‘... 58 people were killed and 165 others injured in different incidents of violence in the country. The deadliest incident last week happened in Kunduz province where 46 civilians were killed and 143 others injured in a suicide attack. Daesh or Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attack.’<sup>61</sup>
- 5.5.6 Attacks by ISKP continued in the week 9 to 15 October 2021, noted ACLED: ‘In Nangarhar province, IS militants killed three civilians in individual attacks, including a former government employee and a civil society activist. The group also conducted a deadly suicide attack on a Shiite mosque for the second consecutive week. On 15 October, IS suicide bombers killed at least 47 people and injured over 60 others in Kandahar city’s largest Shiite mosque during Friday prayer... It is the fourth IS suicide attack – and the second to directly target Shiite Muslims – since the Taliban takeover of Kabul.’<sup>62</sup>
- 5.5.7 A Taliban spokesman said that Taliban special forces arrived at the scene of the Shia mosque attack in Kandahar to determine the nature of the incident and to bring the perpetrators to justice<sup>63</sup>, and pledged to increase security around Shia mosques<sup>64</sup>.

For further information on the situation for Hazaras and Sikhs, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban](#).

- 5.5.8 ACLED also noted that during the week of 9 to 15 October 2021, the anti-Taliban military alliance, the National Resistance Front (NRF), clashed with the Taliban in the Andarab district of Baghlan province, resulting in fatalities on both sides. Also, ACLED added that, ‘Several clashes between the Taliban and NRF forces were reported after the Taliban took over the NRF’s base of operations in Panjshir district on 6 September [2021].’<sup>65</sup>
- 5.5.9 The following week (16 to 22 October 2021) ACLED noted ongoing clashes between the Taliban and the NRF, stating ‘Clashes were reported in the Pul-e-Hisar, Andarab, and Deh Sala districts of Baghlan province. While the exact number of casualties remains unknown, several NRF and Taliban fighters were reportedly killed, including two NRF commanders.’<sup>66</sup>

For further information on the NRF, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban](#).

- 5.5.10 Clashes continued between ISKP and the Taliban in Nangarhar and Herat provinces during the week of 23 to 29 October 2021, reported ACLED, as

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<sup>60</sup> ACLED, ‘[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 2-8 October 2021](#)’, 14 October 2021

<sup>61</sup> AVA, ‘[Last week was again deadliest for Afghans](#)’, 10 October 2021

<sup>62</sup> ACLED, ‘[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 9-15 October 2021](#)’, 21 October 2021

<sup>63</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Deadly explosion hits Shia mosque in Afghanistan’s Kandahar](#)’, 15 October 2021

<sup>64</sup> Reuters, ‘[Taliban pledge to step up security as Shi’ite victims buried...](#)’, 16 October 2021

<sup>65</sup> ACLED, ‘[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 9-15 October 2021](#)’, 21 October 2021

<sup>66</sup> ACLED, ‘[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 16-22 October 2021](#)’, 27 October 2021

well as attacks against the Taliban by unidentified armed groups in Faryab, Kunar, Jowzjan, and Nangarhar. At least 5 civilians were killed during the clashes<sup>67</sup>.

- 5.5.11 UNHCR reported on 2 November 2021 that ‘On 30 October, at least three persons were killed when gunmen presenting themselves as the Taliban attacked a wedding in Nangarhar province, in eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, denied they were acting on behalf of the de facto authorities.’<sup>68</sup>
- 5.5.12 BBC News reported on 2 November 2021 that over 20 people were killed in a gun and bomb attack at a military hospital in Kabul. An affiliate of the ISKP claimed responsibility<sup>69</sup>. ACLED indicated at least 25 Taliban and civilians were killed during the attack, as well as 5 ISKP militants following an exchange of gunfire with the Taliban<sup>70</sup>.
- 5.5.13 On 12 November 2021, an explosion at a mosque during Friday prayers, in Spinghar district, Nangarhar, killed at least 3 people, including the Imam, and injured 15 others, according to reports, who also stated that no one had claimed responsibility<sup>71 72 73</sup>.
- 5.5.14 On 17 November 2021, Reuters reported that, ‘Islamic State claimed responsibility for two explosions that hit a heavily Shi’ite Muslim area of the Afghan capital Kabul on Wednesday, killing at least one person and wounding at least six others including three women. The blasts were the latest in a series of attacks in Kabul claimed by the militant Sunni group in recent days, with Shi’ite areas in the west of the city targeted several times.’<sup>74</sup>
- 5.5.15 ACLED also cited the attacks in Kabul in its regional overview covering the week 13 to 19 November 2021, in which it stated:  
‘... IS conducted six remote explosive attacks in Kabul city last week, targeting both civilians and Taliban forces. In Kabul’s Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood, an area populated mostly by the Hazara community..., at least two Hazaras were killed and several wounded in two explosive attacks targeting passenger vehicles. IS also detonated two IEDs near Taliban checkpoints in Kabul city. In Jalalabad city, IS militants killed a Taliban member in a gunfire exchange. In response to heightened IS activity, the Taliban conducted operations targeting IS hideouts in Kabul and Kandahar provinces, killing at least six IS members.’<sup>75</sup>
- 5.5.16 ACLED reported on events between 20 November and 3 December 2021, noting clashes between the Taliban and/or unidentified armed groups in the cities of Kabul and Jalalabad (Nangarhar), as well as in the provinces of

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<sup>67</sup> ACLED, ‘[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 23-29 October 2021](#)’, 3 November 2021

<sup>68</sup> UNHCR, ‘[Afghanistan Situation Update](#)’, 2 November 2021

<sup>69</sup> BBC News, ‘[More than 20 killed in attack on Kabul military hospital](#)’, 2 November 2021

<sup>70</sup> ACLED, ‘[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 30 October...](#)’, 11 November 2021

<sup>71</sup> TOLO News, ‘[Officials: 2 Killed in Blast at Nangarhar Mosque](#)’, 12 November 2021

<sup>72</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Afghanistan: Mosque in Nangarhar province hit by blast](#)’, 12 November 2021

<sup>73</sup> Khaama Press, ‘[Explosion in Nengarhar killed three and wounded 15...](#)’, 12 November 2021

<sup>74</sup> Reuters, ‘[Islamic State claims twin blasts in Afghan capital Kabul](#)’, 17 November 2021

<sup>75</sup> ACLED, ‘[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 13-19 November...](#)’, 25 November 2021

Kandahar, Kunar, Takhar and Helmand<sup>76 77</sup>. The report for the week 27 November to 3 December also noted that 'Taliban forces ... launched an operation against the NRF in areas surrounding Aybak city, Samangan province, which have reportedly been under NRF control for the past three months...'<sup>78</sup>

- 5.5.17 ISKP attacks on the Taliban more than doubled during the week of 4 to 10 December 2021, according to ACLED reporting, which noted 'In addition to ongoing attacks in Kabul and Nangarhar provinces, IS also attacked the Taliban in Logar and Takhar provinces, killing one Taliban member and injuring another... Since the Taliban takeover, ACLED records more than a dozen IS attacks in Afghanistan that have directly targeted civilians.'<sup>79</sup>
- 5.5.18 Two separate explosions on 10 December 2021 in the predominantly Hazara neighbourhood of Dasht-e-Barchi in Kabul killed 2 people and injured another 4, reported Gandhara, an English language news hub affiliated to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty<sup>80</sup>. Although there was no immediate claim of responsibility, a similar attack in the same area on 17 November 2021 was claimed by ISKP<sup>81</sup>.
- 5.5.19 Reporting on events between 11 December 2021 and 7 January 2022, ACLED noted that:
- 'IS carried out attacks against the Taliban in Logar, Nangarhar, and Kunar provinces over the past month, claiming to kill and injure over a dozen Taliban members. The Taliban also attacked IS militants in urban areas like Kabul, Jalalabad, and Kandahar cities. In Kabul, Taliban forces killed an IS suicide bomber before he could detonate himself in front of the passport department, where large civilian crowds have been gathering to receive travel documents to flee the country...'<sup>82</sup>
- 5.5.20 ACLED also reported on clashes between the Taliban and NRF in Baghlan, Kapisa, Parwan, and Laghman, as well as the western province of Badghis, with clashes increasing over the past month compared to previous months<sup>83</sup>. Clashes along Afghanistan's borders with Pakistan, Iran, and Turkmenistan were also noted<sup>84</sup>.
- 5.5.21 ACLED reported that
- '...attacks on civilians represent the majority of violent events in the country over the past month, as both the Taliban and unknown groups targeted civilians across 22 provinces. Similar to prior weeks, victims include former security officials... IS militants also continue to target civilians, killing several people across Kandahar and Kabul, including members of the Hazara ethnic group and Shiite Muslims. Additionally, IS militants killed a civilian in Farah

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<sup>76</sup> ACLED, '[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan, 20-26 November...](#)', 2 December 2021

<sup>77</sup> ACLED, '[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 27 November...](#)', 9 December 2021

<sup>78</sup> ACLED, '[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 27 November...](#)', 9 December 2021

<sup>79</sup> ACLED, '[Regional overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 4-10 December...](#)', 16 December 2021

<sup>80</sup> Gandhara, '[Two Killed, Four Wounded After Blasts Hit Kabul Shi'ite...](#)', 10 December 2021

<sup>81</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Deadly blasts hit Afghan capital Kabul](#)', 10 December 2021

<sup>82</sup> ACLED, '[Regional Overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 11 December 2021-...](#)', 13 January 2022

<sup>83</sup> ACLED, '[Regional Overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 11 December 2021-...](#)', 13 January 2022

<sup>84</sup> ACLED, '[Regional Overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 11 December 2021-...](#)', 13 January 2022

city. This is the first report of an IS attack in Farah province in ACLED data.<sup>85</sup>

- 5.5.22 Reporting on the situation in Afghanistan between 8 and 14 January, ACLED stated that there had been four clashes between different Taliban factions, women's rights protests in Baghlan, Kapisa, Jowzjan, and Kabul provinces last week in response to restrictive Taliban policies, and the continued targeting of former security and government personnel by the Taliban<sup>86</sup>.
- 5.5.23 On 11 January 2022, UNICEF issued a statement regarding an explosive remnant of war that had detonated near a school, killing 8 children, and injuring a further 4. All 12 casualties were boys<sup>87</sup>.
- 5.5.24 Reporting on events in Afghanistan between 15 and 21 January 2022, ACLED noted that there had been women's protests in Kabul city in response to the killing of a woman at a Taliban checkpoint in Kabul<sup>88</sup>. A Taliban spokesperson said that the killing was 'a mistake'<sup>89</sup>. ACLED reported that a number of other protests took place, including protests by health workers and teachers that ended peacefully and protests by cart pushers and prisoners during which the Taliban opened fire<sup>90</sup>. The Taliban came under attack from IS in Kunar and Kabul provinces, were targeted by the NRF in Balkh, Kapisa, and Panjshir provinces, and were involved in clashes with the Pakistani military in Kunar province<sup>91</sup>.
- 5.5.25 On 31 January 2022, ANI News Agency noted that, following the roadside bombing of a Taliban convoy of security vehicles, the Taliban acknowledged the NRF resistance and urged them to stop fighting and to not make Panjshir province insecure<sup>92</sup>. The Economic Times also cited fighting between the NRF and the Taliban in Khost Haa District of Baghlan Province<sup>93</sup>.

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Section 6 updated: 9 February 2022

## 6. Law and order

- 6.1.1 The Taliban provide the de facto security for the country. For more detail on law, order and security, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban](#).

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<sup>85</sup> ACLED, '[Regional Overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 11 December 2021-...](#)', 13 January 2022

<sup>86</sup> ACLED, '[Regional Overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 8-14 January 2022](#)', 20 January 2022

<sup>87</sup> UNICEF, '[Statement by Alice Akunga, UNICEF Afghanistan Representative...](#)', 11 January 2022

<sup>88</sup> ACLED, '[Regional Overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 15-21 January 2022](#)', 20 January 2022

<sup>89</sup> Al Jazeera, '[Taliban arrests fighter who shot dead Hazara woman at checkpoint](#)', 19 January 2022

<sup>90</sup> ACLED, '[Regional Overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 15-21 January 2022](#)', 20 January 2022

<sup>91</sup> ACLED, '[Regional Overview: South Asia and Afghanistan 15-21 January 2022](#)', 20 January 2022

<sup>92</sup> ANI, '[Taliban police official acknowledges NRF resistance, urges not to make...](#)', 31 January 2021

<sup>93</sup> Economic Times, '[NRF denounces Taliban for war crimes, lambasts...](#)', 30 January 2022

## **7. Conflict-induced displacement**

- 7.1.1 For information on internally displaced persons (IDPs), see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Afghanistan: Humanitarian situation](#).

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# 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:

- Security situation
  - actors in conflict – number, size, intent and capacity
  - geographical scope of conflict
  - nature of violence - methods and tactics, including targeting of groups (age, sex, ethnicity, religion, disability)
  - number of security incidents
  - frequency and density in relation to local population
  - variation by place, time and groups affected
- number of civilian casualties, including
  - fatalities and injuries (also as a proportion of total population)
  - variation by place, time and group
  - conflict-induced displacement
- indirect impact of violence on
  - law and order
  - prevalence of crime

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# Version control

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- 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 in March 2022.

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