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Overview of recent developments and key players in Afghanistan

1. Afghanistan following the Taliban's return to power

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"The Taliban continued to maintain and consolidate power in Afghanistan. This has created a period of relative absence of armed conflict but also a continued curtailment of Afghans' fundamental rights and freedoms, especially for women and girls. [...] The Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, exerted growing influence over governance decisions at national and subnational levels. [...] For 22 months, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has maintained internal stability, albeit with the use of repressive measures, and managed its economy, albeit at a low equilibrium level [...]. While the de facto authorities' cabinet seat remains in Kabul, overarching policy decisions are attributed to and emanate from the leader in Kandahar." (UNGA/UNSC, 20 June 2023, pp. 1, 15)

„After nearly two years of Taliban rule, the Afghan state is still in transition. Although a system in flux, the trend line so far has been consistent with a shrinking civic space and a deteriorating human rights situation. [...] It has become increasingly clear that the Amir, Hibatullah Akhundzada, and the most conservative elements of the Taliban have the upper hand in deciding the trajectory of the new state. [...] Despite any internal discontent there are currently no indications that rifts within the movement present any existential threat to its cohesion. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest a forthcoming shift in the strict and extremely conservative policies towards a more moderate direction. [...]

The Amir has a clear intention to centralise power and to increase conformity and compliance with central policies. [...] Although the Taliban have been able to achieve a degree of control not seen before in recent years, there are still local variations and different local practises." (Migrationsverket, 6 July 2023, p. 5)

"Afghanistan started 2023 facing less armed violence than it has in many years, but nevertheless in a state of crisis. Two thirds of Afghans need humanitarian aid, and with the stricken economy incapable of supporting the majority of the population, threats of famine and civil disorder remain on the horizon. A year and a half after the Taliban came to power, they continue to oppress women, journalists and political activists and to abuse the local population in areas where anti-Taliban resistance has taken up arms." (ICG, 31 January 2023)

"On 30 October, the Taliban called on the United States and other countries to recognise their authority in Afghanistan. In a joint statement at the closure of the Tehran-hosted regional talks on Afghanistan on 27 October, the foreign ministers of Iran, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Russia highlighted that forming a broad-based political structure would be the only solution to the problems in the country. While urging for the protection of the fundamental rights of all Afghans, the foreign ministers also called for a non-interference approach, reiterating the need for support of 'national sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, and non-interference in its internal affairs'. While so far no country has formally recognised the Taliban government, senior officials from a number of countries, including Iran, have met with the de facto government's leadership both in Kabul and abroad. Reportedly, the Taliban's diplomats have started working in Afghanistan's mission in Pakistan and the European Union is planning to reopen its diplomatic mission in Afghanistan in the upcoming month." (UNHCR, 2 November 2021, pp. 1-2)

"Afghanistan's Taliban government is not officially recognised by any foreign country or international organisation since seizing power in August 2021 [...]." (Al Jazeera, 22 June 2023)

"Two years after the Taliban seized back power, no state has recognized the regime despite its best efforts. The Taliban's leadership has sent representatives to numerous Afghan foreign missions, including those in China, Pakistan, Qatar, and Russia, but this diplomatic push has yet to yield results as Afghanistan remains isolated and under international sanctions. At least three reasons explain why their push for recognition has failed thus far. [...] First is the Taliban's suppression of women. The Taliban's dissolving of women's rights to education, employment, and agency makes their goal of recognition increasingly distant. [...] A second reason is the Taliban's attempt to form an exclusionary government that intentionally discriminates against Afghanistan's non-Pashtun ethno-linguistic groups. [...] The third point impeding international recognition is the Taliban's decision to grant sanctuary to a motley of terrorist groups. [...] An additional point worth noting is how the Taliban regard international recognition. Their leadership considers diplomatic recognition as a nice-to-have but not a must-have, and acknowledging this

distinction is essential for understanding their motives for international outreach.” (MEI, 14 August 2023)

“[On 7 September 2021, the Taliban] announced their new interim administration. It is all-male, almost all-Pashtun, almost all clerical and all-Taliban. Set alongside their sustained military campaign in the Panjshir, the only province that held out against the Taliban takeover, and their violent response to protests across the country, it seems the movement’s priorities have coalesced – internal cohesion, monopolisation of power, silencing of open dissent and dividing the ‘spoils of war’, in terms of government posts, between themselves.” (AAN, 15 September 2021)

„What do the new appointments signify?

On 22 September, the Taliban published several new appointments, including at ministerial levels. The announcement came a day after the Chinese, Russian and Pakistani envoys met with the head of the Taliban government, Mullah Hassan Akhund, calling for more inclusive governance. 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. Key appointees such as the ministers for trade and public health, and their deputies, do not appear to have past affiliations with the Taliban. Others with no formal connection with the movement include Nazar Mohammad Mutmaeen, head of the National Olympic Committee, and Najeebullah, head of atomic energy. Still, many of these outsiders are considered sympathetic to the Taliban.

Has the interim government now become inclusive?

Yes, slightly. With these additions, the new government now counts four Tajiks, two 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). With a total of 53 members, this expanded cabinet is a small gesture toward including ethnic minorities, though it is still dominated by Pashtuns. Several of the new names appear to have been selected, in part, because of their ethnic backgrounds or professional experience. Noorudin Azizi, the new trade minister, is from Panjshir province, where the Taliban have been fighting the remnants of the Northern Resistance Front (NRF). [...]

Do the appointments include women or former establishment figures?

Despite continued international pressure, the Taliban have so far failed to appoint any women in their cabinet. [...] Similarly, the Taliban have resisted calls from regional and Western governments to include figures from the previous Western-backed political establishment. Taliban interlocutors claim to Crisis Group that despite an internal push by some

members to include figures associated with the former system in the new government, most of the top Taliban leadership has so far opposed such a move due to the perception that former politicians were corrupt and discredited. Perhaps more importantly, there were also concerns among the Taliban that if they moved to bring in either women or former politicians, they could risk backlash from the rank and file, who might view the leadership as betraying their ideals.” (ICG, [28 September 2021](#))

“In May [2023], the Taliban announced Maulvi Abdul Kabir had replaced Akhund as the acting prime minister. [...] The Taliban political office told the press that Akhund’s replacement was due to his poor health, but analysis by the USIP points out that Akhundzada is willing to suppress any indicators of internal disobedience or challenges to organizational cohesion. The Taliban deny an internal rift precipitated Kabir’s appointment. Although the Taliban call for unity and cohesion, internal disagreements are becoming increasingly more public.” (SIGAR, [30 July 2023](#), p. 92)

“The Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, continued to increase his influence on governance decisions at national and subnational levels. He decreed new appointments and reshuffles of senior de facto officials. All appointees were male and predominantly Taliban affiliates. [...] On 16 May, the Taliban leader appointed the de facto Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Kabir Mohammed Jan as acting de facto Prime Minister, owing reportedly to the illness of the incumbent, Mohammad Hassan Akhund.” (UNGA/UNSC, [20 June 2023](#), pp. 2-3)

“Given the security and political dynamics on the ground, at least five major trends, with potential regional and global implications, are emerging in Afghanistan. These are (1) intra-Taliban fragmentation, (2) prevalence of regional and global terrorist groups, (3) rising anti-Taliban resistance, (4) thriving illicit economy and drug trade, and (5) large-scale movements of people.” (UNICRI, [25 October 2022](#), p. 4)

“The Taliban continue to face increasing challenges to their authority from the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) and anti-Taliban resistance groups, though experts maintain that no group poses an existential threat to Taliban rule.” (SIGAR, [30 July 2023](#), p. 112)

“The Taliban and non-state armed groups continued to unlawfully recruit or use children in combat and support roles.-Recruitment of child soldiers has continued to drastically increase since the Taliban takeover on August 15, 2021.-The Taliban recruit – at times through coercion, fraud, and false promises – and use children in combat roles. Groups such as ISIS-K used children in direct hostilities, to plant and detonate improvised explosive devices, to carry weapons, to spy, and to guard bases. The Taliban and groups such as ISIS-K forcibly used child soldiers and imprisoned children

associated with other armed groups without regard to their age.” ([USDOS, 15 June 2023](#))

1.1 Security Situation under the Taliban

2023

“Between the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021 and 30 May 2023, UNAMA recorded 3,774 civilian casualties (1,095 killed, 2,679 wounded), among them 233 women (92 killed, 141 wounded) and 866 children (287 killed, 579 wounded). The leading causes of civilian harm during this period were deliberate IED attacks (2,814 civilian casualties), explosive remnants of war (639 civilian casualties) and targeted killings (148 civilian casualties).” ([UNAMA, June 2023, p. 5](#))

“Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), a London-based charity monitoring the causes and consequences of explosive violence globally, released their analysis of IED incidents in the first half of 2023. [...] Afghanistan saw 22 incidents leading to 206 civilian casualties, with 63 killed and 143 injured.” ([AOAV, 14 July 2023, p. 1](#))

“Despite a significant overall reduction in civilian casualties in Afghanistan since 15 August 2021, there has not been a corresponding decrease in civilian harm caused by suicide attacks. UNAMA’s figures highlight not only the ongoing civilian harm resulting from such attacks, but an increase in the lethality of suicide attacks since 15 August 2021, with a smaller number of attacks causing a greater number of civilian casualties.” ([UNAMA, June 2023, pp. 6-7](#))

“IED attacks on places of worship caused 1,218 civilian casualties (368 killed, 850 wounded) between 15 August 2021 and 15 February 2023. [...] IED attacks on places of worship accounted for more than one third of all civilian casualties recorded during this period, with UNAMA’s figures indicating a significant increase in civilian harm resulting from IED attacks on places of worship compared with prior to the Taliban takeover [...]”

ISIL-KP was responsible for the majority of IED attacks on places of worship carried out between 15 August 2021 and 30 May 2023. [...]

Attacks on Shi’a places of worship accounted for over half of civilian casualties resulting from attacks on all places of worship during this period. Sufi, Sunni and Sikh places of worship and religious gatherings were also affected.” ([UNAMA, June 2023, pp. 8-9](#))

“Schools, places of worship and other civilian locations have continued to come under attack, causing severe harm to civilians, including children. The Taliban’s response to armed resistance by the National Resistance Front in Panjshir Province and other provinces continues to adversely impact civilians in breach of international human rights and humanitarian

laws. While both parties have committed violations, civilians have been most affected by the Taliban response.” ([HRC, 9 February 2023, p. 3](#))

“There was a slight decrease in the overall number of conflict-related security incidents between 1 February and 20 May, compared with the same period in 2022. The United Nations recorded 1,650 security-related incidents, a 1 per cent decrease from the 1,668 incidents recorded during the same period in 2022. Available data indicated that armed clashes had decreased by 50.4 per cent, from 133 to 66 incidents; suicide attacks increased from zero to three incidents; detonations from improvised explosive devices decreased by 35.8 per cent, from 92 to 59 incidents; arrests increased by 8.7 per cent, from 494 to 536; and assassinations decreased by 40 per cent, from 99 to 59. [...] The north-eastern, western and eastern regions accounted for 53 per cent of all recorded incidents, with Nangarhar, Herat and Kunduz being the most affected provinces.” ([UNGA/UNSC, 20 June 2023, p. 4](#))

“During the reporting period, the number of armed opposition attacks and armed clashes with the de facto authorities declined compared with the same period in 2022. UNAMA recorded claimed attacks by three main armed resistance groups operating in Afghanistan. The National Resistance Front, Afghanistan Freedom Front and Afghanistan Liberation Movement claimed responsibility for attacks in eight provinces.” ([UNGA/UNSC, 20 June 2023, p. 4](#))

“The Special Rapporteur remains concerned about the ongoing clashes between de facto security forces and armed opposition groups in Panjshir and other provinces. These clashes continue to result in violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. He has received credible reports and documents regarding extrajudicial executions of captured fighters, torture, arbitrary arrest and disappearance of individuals perceived to be affiliated with the National Resistance Front, the heavy suppression of communities and an information blackout. Civilians considered by the Taliban to be associated with the National Resistance Front continue to be routinely subjected to house-to-house searches, arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial killings, torture and displacement.” ([HRC, 9 February 2023, p. 14](#))

“Since the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in August 2021, they have directed collective punishment upon the residents of Panjshir province, particularly in communities where the Taliban have established and deployed their forces. In an effort to combat the National Resistance Front, an armed group that formed initially in Panjshir to oppose the Taliban, they have retaliated against captured fighters, and targeted the civilian population to force submission and compliance. [...] Over the last 18 months, the Taliban have organized village-wide arbitrary arrests of adult men and older boys, detained them without charge, and subjected many of those so detained to beatings and other abuse. The Taliban have

also burned homes, imposed the only curfew in all of Afghanistan, seized civilian homes, used schools for interrogations, and denied shepherds access to their traditional grazing lands.” (AI, [June 2023](#), p. 5)

„Meldungen vom 12.07.23 zufolge wurden in der nördlichen Provinz Panjshir dutzende Familien aufgrund des verschärften Konflikts zwischen den Taliban und der Nationalen Widerstandsfront (NRF) gewaltsam aus vier Dörfern im Bezirk Shotul der Provinz vertrieben.” (BAMF, [17 July 2023](#), p. 1)

“The number of attacks claimed by or attributed to ISIL-K decreased. Between 1 February and 20 May, the United Nations recorded 11 attacks by the group in 5 provinces, compared with 62 attacks in 12 provinces during the same period in 2022. [...] The de facto security forces continued to carry out operations to counter ISIL-K, including in Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Nimroz, Parwan, Kunduz and Takhar Provinces.” (UNGA/UNSC, [20 June 2023](#), p. 5)

“According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) published on 14.03.23, Afghanistan remains the country most impacted by terrorism for the fourth consecutive year.” (BAMF, [20 March 2023](#), p. 1)

“Member States reported that Afghanistan remained a place of global significance for terrorism, with approximately 20 terrorist groups operating in the country.” (UNSC, [25 July 2023](#), p. 15)

“The Taliban government is delegitimizing Taliban participation in attacks beyond Afghanistan, possibly in response to recent diplomatic engagement with the United States and pressure from Pakistan.” (ISW/CTP, [9 August 2023](#))

“According to media reports, a suicide bombing took place at the entrance to the military area of Kabul airport on 01.01.23, in which, according to the Taliban, 10 civilians were killed and eight were wounded. According to eyewitness reports, several Taliban insurgents were also killed. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.” (BAMF, [2 January 2023](#), p. 1)

„Islamic State said Monday its Afghanistan-based affiliate was behind Sunday's suicide bomb attack outside the military airport in the country's capital, Kabul. [...] The morning blast at the airport's entrance left several people dead and wounded, a Taliban-led Interior Ministry spokesperson said shortly after the attack. He shared no further details while Taliban forces prevented filming and photography at the crime scene. [...] The militant group posted on Telegram that Sunday's attack killed 20 people and wounded 30 others.” (VOA, [2 January 2023](#))

“A suicide bomb attack outside the Afghan foreign ministry in Kabul has caused heavy casualties. Police said at least five civilians had been killed but another Taliban official put the toll as high as 20. The local offshoot of

the Islamic State group, known as Isis-K, claimed it carried out the attack. It comes after recent blasts targeting foreign interests. Several countries, including Turkey and China, have embassies in the area.” ([BBC News, 11 January 2023](#))

“Border incidents decreased. A total of 14 incidents occurred in the area between Afghanistan and Pakistan [...]. Six incidents occurred along the border with the Islamic Republic of Iran [...]. At least four incidents were reported along the Tajik border [...].” ([UNGA/UNSC, 20 June 2023, p. 5](#))

“Iran and the Taliban rhetorically deescalated following border clashes amid an ongoing water dispute. Both sides took measures to reinforce the border and are likely prepared for future clashes but will seek to avoid instigating another round of skirmishes. The Taliban will likely seek to preserve its economic relationship with Iran by deescalating tensions along the border.” ([ISW/CTP, 31 May 2023](#))

“Recent violent clashes between Iranian and Taliban border guards brought to the fore the festering dispute over the sharing of the waters of the transboundary Helmand River. The clashes occurred amid an escalation of tensions and led to a heated exchange of threatening rhetoric between the two sides. [...] Under the current circumstances, there is little likelihood of a resolution of the dispute.” ([CACI, 5 July 2023](#))

2022

“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. [...]

There have been multiple mass-casualty terrorist attacks since the Taliban takeover, with most claimed by Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). [...] 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. [...] Kabul remains insecure and has been subject to multiple attacks. [...]

Local sources suggest parts of the country are returning to a ‘normality’ that has not been seen for many years; for example, bazaars that were closed due to war are reopening. This relative peace has meant travel by road across Afghanistan is generally safer than it has been for some time, albeit from a low base. It is likely to be less safe for women than for men.” ([DFAT, 14 January 2022, p. 10](#))

“While there has been a significant reduction in civilian casualties since the seizure of power by the Taliban on 15 August 2021, [...] the protection

of civilians remains a cause for concern". ([HRC, 4 March 2022, p. 6](#))

"Since the collapse of the Republic and the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan has experienced a period, largely at peace. Conflict violence is however still existent, albeit at significantly lower levels than before. During Taliban rule, conflict violence is primarily connected to the ISKP (Islamic State Khorasan Province) and the NRF (National Resistance Front) who challenge the new Taliban state. The violence associated with these actors is however mostly concentrated to certain provinces. Violent attacks by the ISKP have largely been staged in Nangarhar, Kabul and Kunar. However, the group has increased its activity as well as its geographic scope, and attacks are carried out sporadically also in other provinces. Furthermore, ISKP has in words as well as actions shown its continuous intention to target Afghanistan's Shia minority - the Hazaras. Since the takeover, large-scale attacks have been targeting Shia mosques in provinces not previously, in recent years, affected by such major sectarian assaults: in Kunduz, Kandahar and now recently in Mazar-e Sharif in the province of Balkh. Targeting of civilians by the ISKP has also continued in the Hazara dominated area in the west of Kabul. The targeting of ethnic and religious minorities in the country is however not limited to the targeting of Shia Muslims as evident by two recent attacks against Sufis in Kabul and Kunduz. Conflict activity connected to the NRF is primarily concentrated to Panjshir and Baghlan even though the NRF, as well as other smaller resistance groups, have some activity also in other parts of the country. At the country level, the security dynamics have changed since the takeover. While conflict violence between warring parties has significantly decreased, targeted violence against civilians largely persists, thus making up a larger proportion of the violence than before. Kandahar constitutes an example of a province where the pattern of violence is not primarily connected to conflict actors. Instead, violence is largely carried out by the Taliban authorities against civilians, primarily due to their connection with the former government. This kind of targeting is however not limited to Kandahar. Rather, it seems to occur on a country-wide scale." ([Migrationsverket, 29 April 2022, p. 6](#))

Meanwhile, armed groups continued to carry out attacks against civilians over the past two weeks, especially targeting minority Muslim communities ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid Al Fitr on 30 April. IS militants carried out deadly explosive attacks targeting Shiite Muslims in Balkh province and Kabul, killing at least 11 people in Mazar-i Sharif city on 28 April. Meanwhile, in the deadliest attack thus far in 2022, unidentified militants detonated an explosive during Friday prayers at a mosque in Kabul city on 29 April, killing 50 Sufi Muslims." ([ACLED, 12 May 2022](#))

„15. The security situation in Afghanistan is becoming increasingly fragile, after an initial period of significantly reduced conflict-related security incidents following the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021. ISIL-K and

armed groups opposed to the Taliban intensified their attacks during the reporting period. The de facto security forces responded by stepping up preventive but intrusive security measures, such as widespread house searches.” (UNSC, 15 June 2022, p. 4)

“UNAMA HRS has recorded at least 118 instances of excessive use of force by the de facto authorities between 15 August 2021 and 15 June 2022. The majority of incidents involved the shooting of civilians at checkpoints, often because they allegedly failed to stop when signalling to do so by the de facto authorities. UNAMA HRS has also recorded instances where de facto authorities have fired indiscriminately in an attempt to control a crowd, wounding and killing people, or where they have accidentally shot people in the surrounding area when conducting law enforcement operations.” (UNAMA, July 2022, p. 18)

“The unnecessary or disproportionate use of force by the de facto authorities during protests, search operations and at checkpoints also resulted in deaths and injuries. On 13 January 2022, Taliban forces shot dead a young woman returning from a wedding party at a security checkpoint in Kabul.” (HRC, 4 March 2022, p. 7)

“Between August 2021 and June 2022, the most significant contributors to civilians harm were IED attacks on ‘soft’ (non-military) targets such as mosques, public parks, schools, and public transportation, with the majority of incidents claimed by, or attributed to, ISIL-KP. In many instances, the target was ethnic and/or religious minorities – namely Hazara Shias, Shia Muslims generally and Sufi Muslims.” (UNAMA, July 2022, pp. 10-11)

“Harm caused to civilians during the reporting period [14 June 2022-14 September 2022] was mostly attributed to ISIL-K attacks on civilian targets, often ethnic and religious minorities.” (UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 8)

“Between 22 May and 16 August, the overall number of conflict-related security incidents and civilian casualties decreased significantly compared with the same period in 2021 – at the peak of the Taliban offensive. The United Nations recorded 1,642 security-related incidents, a 77.5 per cent decrease from the 7,314 incidents recorded during the same period in 2021. Available data indicate that armed clashes decreased by 97 per cent, from 4,620 to 129 incidents; air strikes fell by 99.5 per cent, from 564 to 3; detonations from improvised explosive devices decreased by 87 per cent, from 590 to 76; and assassinations decreased by 70 per cent, from 294 to 88. There has been a steady rise in security-related incidents during the first seven months of 2022, with 547 incidents recorded in July, the highest number so far in 2022, representing an increase of 33.7 per cent and 7.3 per cent compared with the incidents recorded in January and June, respectively. As a result of the deteriorating economic and

humanitarian situation, crime-related security incidents remained consistently high, with 373 such incidents reported between 22 May and 16 August, compared with 300 reported during the same period in 2021. The western, southern, eastern and north-eastern regions accounted for 62 per cent of all recorded incidents, with Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and Nangarhar the most affected provinces.” ([UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 4](#))

“According to AIHRC data, the Taliban's one-year rule in Afghanistan has been a difficult and painful year for the Afghan people. [...] According to Commission statistics, 2,626 civilians were killed or injured in Afghanistan between August 15, 2021, and August 15, 2022. (1,520 people were killed and 1,106 others were injured). We highlight once again that a number of cases in some rural areas of the country may have gone unreported in this report due to a lack of access by our human rights activists to such places.” ([AIHRC, 15 August 2022, p. 3](#))

„Armed opposition attacks and armed clashes with the Taliban intensified. New armed groups opposed to the Taliban announced their presence in Afghanistan.” ([UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 4](#))

„Armed resistance against the Taliban is on the rise.” ([UNICRI, 25 October 2022, p. 8-9](#))

“In Afghanistan, the National Resistance Front (NRF) increased attacks against the Taliban in the northern provinces over the past two weeks, especially in Baghlan, Panjshir, and Takhar. [...] Additionally, the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF), the National Liberation Front of Afghanistan (NLFA), and IS targeted the Taliban across the country. The AFF claims to have attacked Taliban forces in Kabul, Laghman, and Parwan provinces, including an operation on the Taliban intelligence headquarters in Badghis province. Meanwhile, the NLFA, an anti-Taliban group that declared its formation in February, has claimed several attacks against the Taliban in Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, and Paktia provinces. [...]” ([ACLED, 12 May 2022](#))

“The emergence of resistance groups has led the Taliban to adopt aggressive measures against populations suspected of supporting anti-Taliban elements.” ([UNSC, 26 May 2022, p. 12](#))

“IS killed at least three Taliban members and injured others in attacks in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces. In Ghazni province, the anti-Taliban Afghanistan Liberation Movement conducted a rocket attack in Waghaz district, claiming to have caused Taliban casualties. Also in Ghazni, the Watandost Front, or Patriotic Front, claimed to have seized control of a village in Ab Band district during an attack on a Taliban base – reportedly the group's first armed interaction with the Taliban” ([ACLED, 19 May 2022](#)).

“The National Resistance Front and the National Liberation Front claimed responsibility for attacks in several provinces, including Panjshir, Baghlan, Takhar and Kapisa. The National Resistance Front engaged in fighting with the Taliban, in particular in Panjshir and Baghlan Provinces, and claimed to have captured the Andarab and Khost districts of Baghlan Province on 19 July, as well as seven valleys in six districts of Panjshir in mid-August.” ([UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 4](#))

“The Taliban respond to the spring offensive and terrain gains made by the resistance movements in the north. On 10.05.22, fierce fighting was reportedly raging for about four days between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front (NRF) in Panjshir province. [...] in some cases, civilians have been detained (up to 200) and also been killed (about 40). Civilian deaths were also reported in the provinces of Takhar (Warsaj district) and Baghlan (Andarab district). The Taliban have denied the allegations.” ([BAMF, 16 May 2022, p. 1](#))

“In Afghanistan, the Taliban intensified operations against the NRF in the northern Panjshir and Baghlan provinces last week. These clashes led civilians to flee their homes, while reportedly also being targeted and tortured by the Taliban (CBS News, 16 May 2022; RFE/RL, 13 May 2022). Further clashes between the NRF and Taliban forces were reported in Parwan, Kapisa, and Warsaj district, Takhar province, after the NRF claimed to have seized key points in Warsaj from the Taliban the week prior. At least 12 civilians were killed by Taliban forces in Warsaj district, as some civilians, including the former governor of Warsaj, were tortured for information on the NRF (Subhe Kabul, 11 May 2022). Taliban forces also carried out airstrikes in Warsaj, prompting civilians to flee.” ([ACLED, 19 May 2022](#))

“Taliban forces have been locked for months in a shadowy on-again, off-again battle with opposition fighters based in the Panjshir Valley [...] the province has long been an anti-Taliban stronghold and remains the only significant pocket of resistance to the group since the fall of Kabul last August. [...] Taliban officials flatly deny there is any violence in the area, even though thousands of the group’s forces are visible across the valley. [...] Yet residents say assaults on Taliban positions are a regular occurrence, and dozens of people have been killed, with some civilians imprisoned in sweeping arrests. [...] The clashes in Panjshir are unlikely to pose an imminent threat to the Taliban’s control of the province or the country” ([The Washington Post, 8 June 2022](#)).

“Taliban forces continued to target civilians with alleged links to the NRF last week, particularly in Panjshir province.” ([ACLED, 20 October 2022](#))

“According to Afghan news sources, the Taliban sent additional forces into the northern Panjshir valley in late August, prompting the displacement of some villages’ populations in anticipation of a military operation. Armed

opposition to the Taliban appears to be escalating with attacks on Taliban outposts in Panjshir.” ([SIGAR, 30 October 2022, pp. 78-79](#))

“Within a few days, a series of large attacks was launched mainly in mosques, with many dead and injured. [...] On 22.04.22, at least 30 people were killed and about 43 others injured in a bomb attack at the Sunni Maulavi Sekandar Sufi mosque in the Imam Sahib district of Kunduz province. According to the news portal Tolonews, the ISKP has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 21.04.22, a bomb attack on a Shiite mosque in Mazar-e Sharif killed 30 people and injured about another 80. The mosque was mainly attended by ethnic Hazaras; the ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack. On the same day, ISKP launched an attack in Kunduz province, leaving four dead and 18 injured. On 19.04.22, two attacks were carried out on a boys' school and another educational institution in Kabul, in the Shiite Hazara neighbourhood of Dasht-e Barchi, with at least 22 dead and many injured. ISKP has carried out similar attacks, but has not claimed responsibility for these two assaults” ([BAMF, 25 April 2022, p. 1](#)).

“A bombing in the heart of Kabul’s Shiite minority community Saturday killed at least two people and wounded 22. It was the third terrorist attack in the area since Wednesday, and intensified fears of further violence during the final days of Muharram, the Shiite mourning period.” ([The Washington Post, 6 August 2022](#))

“Bei Anschlägen in der afghanischen Hauptstadt Kabul sind nach Angaben der Vereinten Nationen am Wochenende mehr als 120 Menschen getötet oder verletzt worden. Die Afghanistan-Mission der UN (Unama) forderte angesichts dieser Zahl mehr Sicherheit für Minderheiten, damit diese religiöse Feierlichkeiten ohne weitere Angriffe begehen könnten. Am Sonntag traf Berichten zufolge ein dritter Anschlag binnen dreier Tage einen Bus in einem mehrheitlich von Schiiten bewohnten Teil Kabuls. Die Terrormiliz ‚Islamischer Staat‘ (IS) hatte sich bereits zu zwei Bombenanschlägen am Wochenende in einem anderen schiitischen Viertel bekannt. Die Taliban-Regierung gab keine Stellungnahme ab.” ([Die Zeit, 8 August 2022](#))

“Attacks claimed or attributed to ISIL-K decreased. Between 22 May and 16 August, the United Nations recorded 48 attacks by the group in 11 provinces, compared with 113 attacks in 8 provinces during the same period in 2021.” ([UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 5](#))

“Kabul police said 25 people were killed and 31 others were injured in a suicide attack at Kaaj Education Center in Dasht Barchi area yesterday, but UNAMA put the toll at 35 dead and 82 injured in the attack.” ([Pajhwok, 1 October 2022](#))

"According to reports, 21 people lost their lives and 33 others were injured when a bomb blast ripped through a mosque in Khaikhana area of Kabul. However, Al Jazeera reported that 20 people were killed and 40 injured in the blast." ([Pajhwok, 20 August 2022](#))

"A blast inside Guzargah Mosque in Herat city killed 18 people including a prominent pro-Taliban cleric Mualvi Mujib Rahman Ansari and injured 23 others. Before the blast, security forces claimed killing three Daesh [ISIL] militants in Herat city during an operation." ([Pajhwok, 4 September 2022](#))

"On 17 August, an unclaimed attack in a Sunni Sufi mosque in Kabul city killed 20 people and wounded 57." ([UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 8](#))

"Seven people were killed and 41 others injured in a blast in front of the Wazir Mohammad Akbar Khan Mosque in Kabul on Friday, according to police." ([Pajhwok, 24 September 2022](#))

"In Afghanistan, a suicide attack targeted a mosque inside the Ministry of Interior compound in the capital Kabul, reportedly killing at least four worshipers and injuring dozens. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. Additionally, in the Hazrati Imam Sahib district of the Kunduz province, close to the border with Tajikistan, a bomb exploded inside a mosque during Friday prayers and caused an unknown number of casualties. Taliban officials denied the attack took place" ([ACLED, 13 October 2022](#))

"The ISKP claimed responsibility for [numerous bombings and armed attacks against](#) Hazaras in 2022, which killed and injured at least 700 people." ([HRW, 12 January 2023](#))

"On December 12, Islamic State (IS) militants assaulted Chinese nationals and Taliban officials inside a Kabul hotel. IS's Amaq News Agency claimed the attack shortly afterwards and eventually released photos and a video of the attackers while claiming that IS in Khorasan Province (ISKP) fighters raided "a big hotel frequented by Chinese diplomats and businessmen" ([Twitter/@abdsayed, December 13](#)). The attackers used guns, grenades, and explosives as seen in its visual propaganda, which IS said killed or wounded over 30 people ([Twitter/@war_noir, December 12](#)).

The hotel attack prompted a surge of anti-Chinese propaganda by both official and pro-IS sources in several different languages and across various social media and messaging platforms." ([JF, 6 January 2023](#))

"Since August 2021, UNAMA/OHCHR received credible allegations of the killing of more than 50 persons suspected of ISIL-KP affiliation, of which around 35 were extrajudicial killings attributed to de facto authorities. While the vast majority of these incidents occurred in Nangarhar Province in October and November 2021, with a period of no incidents in January

2022, in the second week of February 2022 there were three extrajudicial killings of persons suspected of ISIL-KP affiliation recorded in the province. Many of those killed were also subjected to enforced disappearance, torture, and ill-treatment by the de facto authorities. In a number of cases, dismembered bodies were found by the roadside.” ([HRC, 4 March 2022, p. 6](#))

“Taliban security forces throughout the year carried out arbitrary detentions, torture, and summary executions of former security officers and perceived enemies, including security personnel in the former government or alleged members or supporters of the armed group Islamic State of Khorasan Province (the Afghan affiliate of the Islamic State, known as ISKP). [...] In late 2021 and into 2022, residents in Nangarhar exhumed a mass grave in a canal that contained at least 45 bodies in various stages of decomposition, many with signs of torture or brutal executions: some had missing limbs, ropes around their necks, or had been beheaded.” ([HRW, 12 January 2023](#))

“Pakistani military forces carried out airstrikes along the Durand Line – the Afghanistan-Pakistan border – last week for the first time since the Taliban took power in August 2021. Taking place overnight on 15 April, airstrikes in Kunar, Paktika, and Khost provinces killed at least 45 civilians. While the Pakistani government did not confirm the airstrikes, it stated that it had recently asked the Taliban to secure border regions from militant groups active in Afghanistan.” ([ACLED, 20 April 2022](#))

“In the night to 16.04.22, Pakistani airstrikes targeted the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorist group in Afghanistan’s Khost and Kunar provinces, killing at least 40 civilians (among them women and children). According to the Pakistani military, the operation was successful. Pakistan accuses the Afghan Taliban of not taking action against the TTP, who apparently operate from Afghanistan. For the first time, the TTP had announced a spring offensive against the Pakistani army and had carried out an attack against security forces in Pakistan the week before.” ([BAMF, 25 April 2022, p. 1](#))

“The conflict [between Pakistan and the Taliban government] stems from disagreements over the legitimacy of the Durand Line, which is a boundary demarcation created when Afghanistan’s King Abdul Rahman Kahn and British India’s Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand signed an agreement in 1893. Since then, the 2,600-kilometer border has largely been a lawless, porous, mountainous border with largely unfrequented routes. However, the border is not without controversy. Like the previous Afghan government led by President Ashraf Ghani, the Afghan Taliban have also been against the fencing of the border along the Durand Line. If the fencing issue is not resolved diplomatically between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban government, then escalating tensions on border could eventually lead to a clash between the two sides.” ([JF, 14 January 2022](#))

"The Taliban de facto authorities faced a growing number of governance and security challenges, including [...] border tensions with several of its neighbours." ([UNGA/UNSC, 15 June 2022, p. 1](#))

"Sporadic security incidents were reported on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, including an alleged armed clash between the de facto security forces and the Pakistan army at the border in the Bin Shahi area of the Dangam district of Kunar Province, on 8 August." ([UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 5](#))

"Pakistani forces opened fire at Afghan civilians near the Durand Line in Spin Boldak district of southern Kandahar province last week, killing a woman and injuring eight others." ([Pajhwok, 23 October 2022](#))

"Afghan Taliban forces killed six civilians in Pakistan and injured at least 17 others in an 'unprovoked' bombing and gunfire attack on a border town on Sunday, Pakistan says." ([BBC, 13 December 2022](#)).#

"Border tensions endured. A total of 17 of 19 incidents occurred along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, including border clashes reported in Dand-e Patan district, Paktiya Province, on 15, 19, 20, 21 and 26 November; in Dangam district, Kunar Province, on 7 December; and in Spin Boldak district, Kandahar Province, on 11 and 15 December. A cross-border mortar round incident into Jaji Maidan district, Khost Province, was reported on 18 December. On 27 November, a joint meeting of tribal elders from both sides of the border formed a committee to address the dispute in Dand-e Patan district, Paktiya Province. On 4 January, reports were received of mortar shelling into Ghosta district, Nangarhar Province. Pakistani authorities rejected claims by the Taliban of having conducted airstrikes in Salala area in Ghosta district. On 5 January, a security incident was reported across the border from Momand Dara district, Nangarhar Province. One clash was reported at the border with the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kang district, Nimroz Province, on 8 December." ([UNGA, 27 February 2023, p. 5](#))

"Since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in August, information has trickled in about tensions building between the ethnic Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik communities in parts of northern Afghanistan and the mainly Pashtun Taliban fighters who have moved to the area in recent months. The growing animosity between those ethnic groups and the Taliban ignited briefly in Faryab's provincial capital of Maimana in mid-January when protests over the arrest of a local leader led to fighting." ([RFE/RL, 29 January 2022](#))

"In Samangan province, an Uzbek Taliban commander was arrested on 05.05.22 for allegedly helping the NRF. On 07.05.22, a total of 300 Pashtun Taliban were moved to nearby Badakhshan province to replace Tajik and Uzbek Taliban in the region." ([BAMF, 9 May 2022, p. 1](#))

"On 16.05.22, the Taliban engaged in skirmishes with Tajik border guards in the border town of Sher Khan in Kunduz province. On 19.05.22, the Tajik military launched operations on the border with Afghanistan after suspected armed groups from Afghanistan incited insurgency in Tajikistan's border provinces. On the same day, the Taliban reportedly closed the Sher Khan border crossing and confiscated Tajik trucks. Tajikistan [...] sees the Taliban's seizure of power as a threat to the region and is apparently sheltering and supporting the National Resistance Front (NRF, also Tajik)." ([BAMF, 23 May 2022, p. 1](#))

"The US has killed the leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in a drone strike in Afghanistan, President Joe Biden has confirmed. He was killed in a counter-terrorism operation carried out by the CIA in the Afghan capital Kabul on Sunday." ([BBC, 3 August 2022](#)). For more information on this incident and the Taliban's ties to al-Qaida, see section 2.3.2 of this document.

"A series of clashes between local villagers and incoming Pashtun groups in the northern province of Takhar brought the issue of conflict over land back into the spotlight. This is an age-long problem, but the collapse of the Republic shifted local power balances and brought different communities onto the winning side. As a result, many old land claims, conflicts, debts and legal accusations have been revived. The recurring conflict between nomadic Pashtun Kuchis trying to gain access to the summer pastures of Hazarajat and local residents has also resurfaced. This year, however, for the first time since 2001, it is the Taleban who have to manage the myriad competing claims with their potential for conflict. At the same time, they are seen by a number of communities across Afghanistan as supporting the Kuchis and thus a party to the conflict and not impartial mediators." ([AAN, 11 January 2023](#))

As of 31 August 2022, over 822 546 persons have been internally displaced since January 2021 ([UNHCR, 29 September 2022, p. 1](#)). Between 10 April and 13 September 2022, UNHCR documented 32,410 conflict-induced IDPs ([UNHCR, 24 July 2023, p. 1](#)).

1.2 Taliban Regulations and Policies

For detailed information on Taliban regulations and policies regarding women and girls, see [section 1.3.1](#) of this document.

"The Taliban have not adopted a formal constitution, nor is there 'any real form of written legal code.'" ([SIGAR, 30 July 2023, pp. 82-83](#))

"After taking control of the country, the Taliban suspended the 2004 constitution. No other legal framework has replaced it and there is still a legal vacuum. The amount of written regulations has increased since the takeover, but the Taliban's justice system is still in the making. Institutional structures, as well as the implementation of rules, varies

across the country. Many rules are vaguely formulated and open to interpretation. Some policies have only been communicated verbally and it is generally difficult to get a clear overview of existing rules. [...]

However, it was only after the Amir called for the full implementation of Sharia in November 2022 that the use of corporal punishment significantly increased around the country. [...]

In addition to corporal punishments within the Taliban's formal justice system, such punishments have also been handed down and imposed by non-judicial entities such as governors. Furthermore, actors of the de facto government have also carried out corporal punishments arbitrarily on an ad hoc basis. The situation is characterised by arbitrariness and a lack of rule of law." ([Migrationsverket, 6 July 2023, pp. 5-6](#))

"[A]t present the country does not have in place a clear and cohesive legal framework, judicial system, or enforcement mechanisms. According to the Taliban, laws enacted under the pre-August 2021 government remain in effect unless the laws violate sharia." ([USDOS, 15 May 2023](#))

"The Taliban takeover in August 2021 led to the dismantling of the nascent human rights regime in the country and the reinstatement of the 1964 Constitution, resulting in the recrudescence of Sharia Law, which accords no protection to many minority groups. Since then, the Taliban has reduced the judiciary to field courts and has replaced the Ministry of Women Affairs with the Ministry of Vice and Virtue. The Human Rights Commission has been dissolved and most human rights defenders and other civil society members have fled the country. Those that remain live under extreme scrutiny of the Taliban. There has been a complete abrogation of all accountability mechanisms for ensuring the protection of human rights. All of Afghanistan's minorities have faced oppression, with extrajudicial killings, forced evictions and displacement, 'redress' of past incidents committed against the Pashtuns, and a complete fettering of women and LGBTIQ+ rights." ([The South Asia Collective, February 2023, p. xi](#))

"The Taliban appear to have shut down the women's affairs ministry and replaced it with a department that once enforced strict religious doctrines. On Friday, the sign at the ministry was removed, and a sign for the ministry of virtue and vice put in its place." ([BBC, 17 September 2021](#))

"The Ministry of Vice and Virtue was included in the interim government that the Taliban announced on September 7, with a cleric appointed minister. It took over the building of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which was eliminated. During previous Taliban rule, from 1996 to 2001, the Vice and Virtue Ministry became a notorious symbol of abuse, particularly against women and girls." ([HRW, 29 October 2021](#))

“As when they were first in power, in 1996-2001, ‘promoting virtue and preventing vice’ has emerged as a top priority for the new Taliban administration. In their view, it is one of the requirements of an Islamic system of government. The Taliban re-established the Ministry of Dawat wa Ershad Amr bil-Maruf wa Nahi al-Munkar or Invitation and Guidance on Promoting Virtue and Preventing Vice – often referred to by the shorthand ‘Vice and Virtue’ or ‘Amr bil-Maruf’ – when they announced the first appointments to their post-takeover cabinet on 12 September. In the same announcement, they abolished the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. Its building was turned over to Vice and Virtue (see here). The move raised questions as to whether, despite the many changes in Afghan society since the 1990s, the Taliban intended to return to the unforgiving social policies of their first period in government when they banned women from leaving the house without a close male relative and without wearing a burqa, outlawed activities such as playing music and watching TV and imposed harsh punishments for those violating their code, including public beatings.” ([AAN, 21 June 2022](#))

“A similar entity was active during the period of Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001. The current mandate of the de facto MPVPV and of its Departments at local level seems to include a mix of policy setting, advice, monitoring, complaints management, and enforcement authority on a range of issues connected with the de facto authorities’ interpretation of what is needed to ensure the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice. While the interpretation of such broad mandate at local level may vary greatly from province to province, over the past 10 months, UNAMA has noted increasing activity by this entity in instructing on prohibitions [...], obligations [...], and ‘advice’ on a seemingly open-ended set of other issues.[...] Many of the instructions issued by the de facto MPVPV involve curtailment of fundamental human rights such as freedom of movement, freedom of expression and right to privacy. In addition the uncertain legal nature of such instructions, which are often simply announced by a spokesperson in a media interview or via Twitter, leave the system open for interpretation and abuse.” ([UNAMA, July 2022, pp. 22-23](#))

“Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is very disturbed by the ‘11 journalism rules’ that the Taliban announced at a meeting with the media on 19 September. The rules that Afghan journalists will now have to implement are vaguely worded, dangerous and liable to be used to persecute them. [...] 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, which also incorporated a requirement to comply with international norms, including article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The absence of this requirement in the new rules opens the door to censorship and repression, because 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.” ([RSF, 22 September 2021](#))

“The latest set of Taliban guidelines, which have been issued to Afghan television channels, features eight new rules. They include the banning of films considered against the principles of Sharia - or Islamic - law and Afghan values, while footage of men exposing intimate parts of the body is prohibited. Comedy and entertainment shows that insult religion or may be considered offensive to Afghans are also forbidden. The Taliban have insisted that foreign films promoting foreign cultural values should not be broadcast.” ([BBC, 21 November 2021](#))

“New guidelines from the Vice and Virtue Ministry dictate the dress of female journalists on television and prohibit soap operas and entertainment programs featuring female actors.” ([HRW, 22 November 2021](#))

“Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan’s Taliban-run government, said the country’s Independent Election Commission and Electoral Complaint Commission have been dissolved. He called them ‘unnecessary institutes for the current situation in Afghanistan.’ [...] Both elections commissions were mandated to administer and supervise all types of elections in the country, including presidential, parliamentary and provincial council elections. Karimi said the Taliban also dissolved the Ministry for Peace and the Ministry of Parliamentarian Affairs. He said they were unnecessary ministries in the government’s current structure.” ([AP, 26 December 2021](#))

“The latest directive, issued by the Taliban’s Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, [...] also bans the playing of music in vehicles.” ([BBC, 27 December 2021](#))

“Afghanistan’s Justice Ministry reiterated Monday [3 January 2022] that the country’s independent lawyers will need to re-certify under a new qualification process set 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.

On November 14, the Taliban Cabinet decreed that the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) would gain jurisdiction over AIBA affairs. On November 23, the AIBA

offices in Kabul were taken over by armed Taliban who threatened the staff and lawyers who were present with violence before ordering them to leave and installing a new president with questionable professional qualifications. 'The person appointed as the new AIBA head is said to be part of the Ministry of Justice but has no relevant experience,' according to a Kabul-based JURIST correspondent. These armed forces had apparently interpreted the Cabinet decree to indicate that the MOJ should have sole authority over licensing, as well as control of the AIBA's extensive member database and bank account." ([Jurist, 3 January 2022](#))

"The Ministry of Justice seized authority from the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association to issue licences to lawyers and appointed a caretaker for the Association on 24 November. The Ministry relayed to UNAMA that lawyers licensed by the Ministry would work independently and unimpeded and that women lawyers would be allowed to work in line with the necessary requirements." ([UNGA, 28 January 2022, p. 8](#))

"In late February 2022, the de facto ministry of interior reportedly issued a directive instructing de facto security personnel to refrain from firing at civilians at checkpoints. The directive reportedly also instructs de facto security forces to refrain from harassing, insulting, and beating suspects and states that de facto security forces have no right to conduct a house search without a court order or under the pretext of monitoring an accused person's residence. Further, it reportedly instructs the de facto security forces to perform their duties in the presence of lawyers and in broad daylight." ([HRC, 4 March 2022, p. 7](#))

"According to reports of 15.05.22, the Taliban in Panjshir province are identifying and arresting former soldiers using biometric devices. In Ghazni province, male employees in the public administration are denied access to their office unless they wear a beard and turban. In Herat province, gender segregation has reportedly been officially introduced in parks and restaurants." ([BAMF, 16 May 2022, p. 1](#))

"On 16.05.22, the Taliban by decree dissolved as "unnecessary" five important institutions of the former republic, among them the Afghan independent human rights commission, the secretariats of both the lower and upper houses of parliament, the national security council, the high council for national reconciliation and the independent commission for monitoring the implementation of the constitution." ([BAMF, 23 May 2022, p. 1](#))

"The abolition of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) during the expert's mission is a major setback for the country. Abolishing AIHRC appears to have left victims of human rights violations and abuses with few avenues for recourse." ([OHCHR, 26 May 2022, p. 4](#))

“According to one Member State, in order to confront the threat from ISIL-K, the Taliban have created three battalions of special forces. These so-called “red units” are the Badri 313 Battalion [...] the Fateh Force, [...] and the Umari Force [...]. To bolster expertise, the Taliban have attempted to recruit former Afghan National Army personnel and senior security authorities from the previous Government. A separate recruitment campaign has focused on former Afghan National Army pilots.” ([UNSC, 26 May 2022, p. 11](#))

“The findings of the 29th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities indicated that ‘there are no recent signs that the Taliban has taken steps to limit the activities of foreign terrorist fighters in the country. On the contrary, terrorist groups enjoy greater freedom there than at any time in recent history’ (S/2022/83, para. 57). The de facto authorities rejected the report’s findings. [16.]” ([UNSC, 15 June 2022, p. 4](#))

“Let me be clear: what we are witnessing today in Afghanistan is the institutionalised, systematic oppression of women. Limiting women’s freedom of movement negatively impacts almost all aspects of their lives, including the ability of women and their children to access and to participate in health services, livelihood and humanitarian aid. Afghan women are rapidly facing the worst-case scenario many feared. While Afghanistan has ratified a number of international treaties including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the de facto authorities remain far from complying with those international obligations, in both policy and practice, to respect and protect the rights of women and girls.” ([OHCHR, 15 July 2022](#))

“However, the group never committed to respecting international human rights standards, as outlined in the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Instead, they insisted that women’s rights would be observed within the framework of their interpretation of Islam. Over the past 10 months, successive Taliban decrees have indicated that this interpretation entails excluding women from public life in Afghanistan, as in their 1996–2001 rule.” ([SIGAR, 30 July 2022, p. 5](#))

“UNAMA’s monitoring over the past 10 months has revealed specific concerns with regards to human rights violations carried out by de facto General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI, also called Istikhbarat) officials in a number of provinces. [...] Arrests and detentions by de facto GDI often appear to be arbitrary. In reports received by UNAMA, individuals were not informed of the specific charges against them, family members were often unaware of their whereabouts or denied visitation. In some instances, detentions were based on an individual’s role as a media worker or civil society activist. The individuals interviewed had not been

granted access to defense lawyers and the only mention of access to a physician was in cases where people were brought to see a doctor after having been tortured or ill-treated by the de facto GDI officials.

The cases documented to date indicate a range of forms of torture and ill-treatment by de facto GDI against detainees. Kicking, punching and slapping, beating with cables and pipes, and the use of mobile electric shock devices appear to be the most common methods.” (UNAMA, July 2022, pp. 18-19)

“UN experts are deeply aggrieved about a public execution and that flogging has resumed in Afghanistan and call on the de facto authorities to halt immediately all forms of torturous, cruel and degrading forms of punishments. They said in a statement issued today:

‘Since 18 November 2022, the de facto authorities have reportedly carried out floggings of over 100 individuals, both women and men, in several provinces including Takhar, Logar, Laghman, Parwan and Kabul. [...] The flogging has been carried out in stadiums in the presence of officials and members of the public. On 7 December 2022, the Taliban publicly executed a man in Farah city, Farah province, in what appears to be the first public execution since seizing power in August 2021.’” (OHCHR, 16 December 2022)

“On 28.12.22, a woman and five men were publicly flogged for allegedly engaging in extramarital affairs in the Qarghayi district of eastern Afghanistan's Laghman province, according to a report issued by journalists of Hashte Subh, an Afghan newspaper who are living in exile. On 31.12.22, according to Hasht-e Subh, four men and one woman were lashed in Paktia province following a court order convicting them of having sex before marriage and of stealing. On 27.02.22, four men and two women facing similar charges were also flogged in Laghman province. On 26.12.22, ten men were flogged in Herat province for allegedly drinking alcohol, selling or consuming drugs, and for harassing women. As the Taliban's prospects of gaining international recognition fade, they have increasingly reverted to the repressive policies implemented during their first term (1996-2001) (cf. BN of 19.12.22).” (BAMF, 2 January 2023, p. 1)

“Nine convicted prisoners were publicly lashed on January 17 in Afghanistan's southern province of Kandahar for alleged homosexuality and theft. [...] Despite international condemnation, the Taliban has resumed the flogging and the public execution of criminals following a decree by the hard-liners' supreme leader.” (RFE/RL, 17 January 2023)

“Since their takeover of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021, the Taliban de facto authorities have implemented corporal punishment and the death penalty. In a media interview on 23 September 2021, then Acting Director of the de facto Office of Prison Administration, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi,

told Associated Press that ‘cutting off of hands is very necessary for security’ as it has a deterrent effect, but that Cabinet was still assessing whether punishments would be conducted in public. The first instance of corporal punishment recorded by UNAMA following the takeover occurred on 20 October 2021, in Kapisa province, Nijrab district. A woman and man convicted of zina by the de facto District Court were publicly lashed 100 times each by members of the de facto District Court in the presence of religious scholars and members of the local de facto authorities.

Since this first instance in October 2021, the de facto authorities have continued to implement corporal punishment – both following judicial decisions and on an ad hoc basis. The implementation of judicial corporal punishment increased significantly following a 13 November 2022 tweet by the spokesperson for the de facto authorities, Zabihullah Mujahid, which stated that the Taliban Supreme Leader had met with judges and emphasized their obligations to apply Hudūd and Qisās punishments for offences when Sharia conditions for the implementation of such punishments are met.”(UNAMA, May 2023, p. 5)

“UNAMA has documented numerous instances of corporal punishment imposed for zina/adultery/‘running away’ and homosexuality. Women who are publicly punished for zina and other moral crimes may be at increased risk of violence from their families and communities after the punishment, due to extreme levels of stigma towards women accused of extramarital relationships, deemed illegal by the de facto authorities. The prosecution of women for zina is inconsistent with Afghanistan’s international human rights obligations as it discriminates against women particularly and is a serious violation of their rights to freedom of movement, privacy, and equality before the law.” (UNAMA, May 2023, p. 19)

„Die Einschränkungen der Frauenrechte, der Medienfreiheit und des Rechts auf freie Meinungsäußerung nahmen 2022 exponentiell zu. Institutionen, die sich für Menschenrechte einsetzten, wurden massiv behindert oder ganz geschlossen. Friedlich Protestierende wurden willkürlich festgenommen, gefoltert und Opfer des Verschwindenlassens. Die Taliban verbreiteten ein Klima der Angst, indem sie vermeintliche Gegner*innen außergerichtlich hinrichteten, willkürlich festnahmen, folterten und rechtswidrig inhaftierten, ohne dafür zur Rechenschaft gezogen zu werden.“ (AI, 28 March 2023)

“3. The Taliban de facto authorities continued to tighten control over the population through the adoption of additional restrictive measures.” (UNGA, 27 February 2023, p. 1)

“7. Since the presentation of the initial report of the Special Rapporteur, the human rights crisis in Afghanistan has worsened. The systematic violation of the human rights of women and girls has deepened even

further, and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of peaceful assembly and association, expression and the rights to life and protection against ill-treatment have increasingly been flouted. The authorities have instituted hudud and qisas punishments, measures indicative of a revival of the policies of the 1990s. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned that, increasingly, the Taliban is ruling Afghanistan through fear and repressive policies aimed at suppressing communities, and women in particular. Inclusiveness is negligible; there is very little tolerance for difference, and none for dissent.” (HRC, 9 February 2023, p. 2)

“11. The 2004 Constitution remains suspended, and the authorities say that they are currently drafting a new constitution based on sharia law. Both houses of parliament have been abolished, as has the Electoral Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. The judiciary has been replaced. The media is muzzled. In sum, checks and balances on power are severely compromised.” (HRC, 9 February 2023, p. 3)

“50. There are continuing serious challenges to the rule of law in Afghanistan, with the introduction of irregular procedures, lack of clear legal authorities and the nullification of past laws. The Special Rapporteur notes that the absence of any codified law is one of the most serious concerns, while the de facto authorities reiterate that they follow sharia law (Hanafi school), it is subject to a range of interpretations. [...]. At the present time, there are no standardized procedures or substantive statutes in criminal or civil matters that police, judges or lawyers can follow in Afghanistan.

51. The 2004 Constitution, which guaranteed the separation of powers, the rights of citizens, including the right of access to justice and equality before the law and the independence of the judiciary, remains suspended. Key judicial positions have been filled with religious scholars, mainly members of the Taliban linked to high-ranking officials and active during the war, rather than legal experts. They are advised by muftis (Islamic scholars qualified to issue an opinion on a point of sharia law for specific cases), who are appointed by the Chief Justice. Since September 2022, the de facto authorities have sidelined the role and functioning of prosecutors and they had previously removed most judges systematically. Often, the judge is the investigator and adjudicator, which violates compliance with fair trial standards. In practice, it appears that the muftis have become even more powerful, being involved in pretrial and trial processes, including investigations and the provision of advice on punishment, with judges mainly following their advice. Alarmingly, there are reports that it is common for alleged perpetrators to be detained, sentenced and punished by the police and other security agencies all on the same day, without any semblance of due process or judicial review. There have also been allegations of bribes.” (HRC, 9 February 2023, p. 10)

"Afghanistan's hard-line Islamist Taliban rulers have [banned all political parties](#), saying there is 'no justification' for them under Shari'a law.

'Political parties are banned completely, we will not permit any political party to operate in the country,' Abdul Hakim Sharaee, the Taliban's de facto justice minister, said during a news conference on August 16 [...]."
([RFE/RL, 17 August 2023](#))

1.3 Vulnerable Groups

Detailed Information on the situation of vulnerable groups after the Taliban takeover can be found in the report on the COI webinar with Katja Mielke and Emran Feroz ([ACCORD, March 2022](#)).

Information on the situation of returnees, who left Afghanistan either before or after the Taliban takeover in August 2022, can be found in a report on a conference held on 28 November 2022 on the human rights situation following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) ([DRC, 30 December 2022](#)).

„The Taliban's return to power raises major concerns as regards the respect of human rights in Afghanistan. [...] Groups particularly at risk include: – people who have worked for foreign troops and diplomatic missions – as interpreters, drivers, security officers or other civilian occupations; – members of the Afghan security forces or Afghans who held political or administrative responsibilities; – women and girls – the main issues concerning the right to education, freedom of movement, access to work, to health care and the right to participate in public and political life; – children, some of whom are being recruited as child soldiers; – persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities; – journalists and human rights defenders.“ ([CoE-PACE, 28 September 2021, p. 12](#))

"The Taliban have attempted to portray to the world that they will respect human rights - however the ground reality is far from this. This briefing specifically documents the repression of the rights of women and girls, the intimidation of human rights defenders, the crackdown on freedom of expression, the reprisals on former government workers as well as the challenges faced by refugees and those who wish to leave Afghanistan. These incidents form a litany of abuses that demonstrate the need for an independent monitoring mechanism in response to the human rights situation in Afghanistan." ([Al et al., September 2021](#))

"Under the Taliban rule, the rights to freedom of expression, liberty and assembly are increasingly being curtailed, and any form of dissent is met with enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention. Enforced disappearances of women, and arbitrary arrest of journalists and civil society activists seem to be the latest tactics adopted by the Taliban to silence voices that speak out. The nine cases that we have

documented contribute to a growing pattern of arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions and enforced disappearances by the Taliban against those who have tried to question the Taliban by way of peaceful protests or by exercising their right to freedom of expression.” ([AI, 21 March 2022, p. 1](#))

“The Taliban control systems holding sensitive biometric data that Western donor governments left behind in Afghanistan in August 2021, putting thousands of Afghans at risk, Human Rights Watch said today. [...] The Taliban’s access to this data comes at a time when they are targeting individuals because of their past association with the former government, particularly members of the security forces, judges and prosecutors, and civil servants, including women working in these fields. The Taliban have also detained and abused people who have criticized their policies. Human Rights Watch in November documented the Taliban’s killing or enforced disappearance of 47 former members of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) – military personnel, police, intelligence service members, and militia – between August 15 and October 31, with the UN reporting credible allegations of the killing of at least 130 security forces members or their relatives.

The Taliban have targeted journalists and threatened human rights activists, including women’s rights activists, women working in roles the Taliban believes are unsuitable for them, and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT).

Since the Taliban takeover on August 15, many people who believe themselves to be at risk have been in hiding and moving frequently. Taliban access to these systems may make it much harder, or impossible, for these people to remain hidden. The Taliban have also taken steps to block people from fleeing the country.

The Taliban have previously used biometric data to target people. In 2016 and 2017, journalists reported that Taliban fighters were using biometric scanners to identify and summarily execute bus passengers whom they determined were security force members, all the Afghans interviewed mentioned those incidents.” ([HRW, 30 March 2022](#))

“The current climate in Afghanistan is marked by fear and worry over safety, particularly for those with specific profiles at risk. [...] The level of fear for safety is evidenced by findings from UNHCR, which received 11,281 queries through its communication channels (phones and email) from January to March 2022 from Afghans, the majority expressing safety/security concerns. The trend continued to show a high number of queries from former government officials, social activists, and journalists requesting support for evacuation due to alleged threats and fear due to their profiles, in addition to queries from individuals who have fled to neighboring countries who fear deportation back to Afghanistan.” ([GPC, 14 August 2022, pp. 3-4](#))

„The Special Rapporteur is seriously concerned about the situation of minorities since August 2021. Their places of worships, educational and medical centres have been systematically attacked, and their members have been arbitrary arrested, tortured, summarily executed, evicted, marginalised and in some cases forced to flee the country.“ ([HRC, 6 September 2022, p. 10](#))

“Journalists of the Afghan Hasht-e Subh newspaper living in exile report that they have gained knowledge of a list containing the names of 11,000 individuals whom the Taliban have banned from leaving the country. They are reportedly individuals who are members of the National Resistance Front (NRF), former national security employees, members of the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), judges, security guards and a number of political, cultural and social figures who are considered to be opponents of the Taliban.“ ([BAMF, 2 January 2023, p. 1](#))

1.3.1 Women and Girls

“While the backlash against women’s and girls’ rights has unfolded in different countries and regions in recent years, nowhere else in the world has there been an attack as widespread, systematic and all-encompassing on the rights of women and girls as in Afghanistan. [...] The pattern of large-scale systematic violations of women’s and girls’ fundamental rights in Afghanistan, abetted by the Taliban’s discriminatory and misogynistic policies and harsh enforcement methods, constitutes gender persecution and an institutionalized framework of gender apartheid.“ ([HRC, 20 June 2023, pp. 17-18](#))

“[T]he worst country in the world to be a woman or a girl,’ is how the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan recently described Afghanistan. After seizing power, the Taliban banned women from political participation and from most jobs, excluded most girls from education past grade six, and eliminated women’s right to attend higher education. They all but eliminated gender-based violence services and legal protections, and imposed mahrams, or male guardians on girls and women leaving their homes. The Taliban has also outlawed protests by women and their supporters who oppose the new restrictions.“ ([City University of New York/MADRE, March 2023, p. 2](#))

“The discriminatory denial of women and girls’ fundamental human rights may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity. The violations of the rights of women and girls, in their totality, are increasing their risk of exposure to violence and abuse and have serious physical and mental health implications.“ ([HRC, 9 February 2023, p. 3](#))

“What’s new? The Taliban have ordered the most sweeping rollbacks of women’s rights since retaking power in 2021, part of a series of escalating moves to enforce the group’s heterodox conservatism. Girls and women are losing access to education, employment and public spaces as well as

other basic freedoms.

Why did it happen? The Taliban leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, appears to insist upon these measures out of personal conviction and to assert his authority over the movement and the country.” (ICG, 23 February 2023)

“42. Women’s and girls’ enjoyment of their basic rights and freedoms continued to deteriorate. [...]

43. Incidents of violence against women and girls continued to be reported, ranging from murder and honour killings to forced marriages and beatings resulting in injuries or disabilities and suicides. Reports continued to suggest that local de facto authorities used a combination of formal and informal justice mechanisms to address civil and criminal matters, including reported cases of violence against women and girls, but the mechanisms were not available equally throughout the country and did not specifically address concerns over women’s access to justice, especially given the absence of female justice professionals.” (UNGA, 27 February 2023, pp. 8-9)

“52. Access by women to the courts continues to be severely restricted. Women generally need to be accompanied by a man, and testimony by a woman may not be allowed or may be given less weight than that by a man. Female judges and those belonging to religious minority groups, mainly Shia Muslims, have been removed. Male defence lawyers have gradually resumed their functions, with oversight from the de facto Ministry of Justice. [...]

53. The de facto authorities have dissolved the specialized courts for women and have removed all women judges, which has adversely affected women’s access to justice. Very few women defence lawyers are still working in the court system. Women’s lack of access to legal advice, combined with a general lack of awareness of how to defend their rights, continues to undermine accountability for violence, including domestic violence.” (HRC, 9 February 2023, p. 10)

“Während die aktuelle Gesetzeslage nur einzelne Bereiche abdeckt und viel Interpretationsspielraum lässt, zeichnet sich eine Steigerung von Gewalt gegen Frauen bei gleichzeitiger Verschlechterung der Schutzsituation ab. Außerdem sind Frauen und Mädchen größtenteils aus dem Bildungssystem und vom Arbeitsmarkt ausgeschlossen und ihr Zugang zu Gesundheitsversorgung und humanitärer Hilfe ist stark eingeschränkt. Auf Proteste gegen diese Politik reagierten die Taliban teilweise mit Gewalt und Verhaftungen.” (BAMF, February 2023)

“Since taking power, the Taliban have imposed a long and growing list of rules and policies that comprehensively prevent women and girls from exercising their fundamental rights, including to expression, movement,

work, and education affecting virtually all their rights, including to life, livelihood, shelter, health care, food, and water.” (HRW, 12 January 2023)

“A rapid and steep deterioration in women’s and girls’ rights has left millions of Afghan women and girls deprived of access to justice, education, employment, and healthcare. [...] The Taliban is well aware the world is watching. As a result, the group has made numerous public statements to express their commitment to the respect of women’s and girls’ rights. [...] However, women’s active participation and contribution to Afghan society is far from reality. Severe restrictions imposed by the Taliban’s on women’s rights to freedom of movement, education, health, and work are in stark contrast to the group’s statements and have had a negative impact on large segments of Afghan’s society.” (FIDH, 23 November 2021)

“Taliban leaders in Afghanistan are institutionalizing large scale and systematic gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls, a group of UN human rights experts* said today. The experts reiterated their alarm expressed since August 2021 at a series of restrictive measures that have been introduced since the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, particularly those concerning women and girls. [...] The experts also noted the increased risk of exploitation of women and girls including of trafficking for the purposes of child and forced marriage as well as sexual exploitation and forced labor.

These exclusionary and discriminatory policies are being enforced through a wave of measures such as barring women from returning to their jobs, requiring a male relative to accompany them in public spaces, prohibiting women from using public transport on their own, as well as imposing a strict dress code on women and girls. [...]

Of particular and grave concern is the continued denial of the fundamental right of women and girls to secondary and tertiary education [...]

While these measures have affected women and girls of all spheres of life, the experts highlighted their particular concerns for women human rights defenders, women civil society activists and leaders, women judges and prosecutors, women in the security forces, women that were former government employees, and women journalists, all of whom have been considerably exposed to harassment, threats of violence and sometimes violence, and for whom civic space had been severely eroded.” (OHCHR, 17 January 2022)

“Since 15 August 2021, women have been excluded from political life, as well as the workforce more broadly. They are absent from the all-male de facto administration and occupy a limited number of civil service positions. On 18 September 2021, the de facto authorities disbanded the

Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), which was established in 2001 to lead government efforts to promote gender equality. The premises of the ministry were taken over by the de facto ministry of propagation of virtue and prevention of vice. [...] The de facto authorities have repeatedly asserted commitments to uphold women's rights within the framework of Islamic shari'a law [...] The de facto authorities have imposed restrictions limiting women's freedom of movement. [...] On 27 February 2022, de facto spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid told a press conference that [...] women would not be able to fly abroad unless accompanied by a mahram [...].

38. Limitations on freedom of movement negatively impact other aspects of women's lives, such as access to health services and employment. In some provinces, women have reportedly been prevented from accessing medical care because they were not accompanied by a marham. Women-headed households are also assessed as being at increased risk of poverty due to restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement and ability to work.

39. The change in effective authority has also had adverse impacts on access to justice, protection and support for women experiencing gender-based violence. The closure of various service providers working on gender-based violence, such as women's shelters, has left a huge institutional gap to assist and protect women and girls at risk." ([HRC, 4 March 2022, pp. 8-9](#))

"Since August 2021, the Taliban have carried out a full-on assault on the rights of women and girls, including their rights to freedom of movement, expression, work, and education. Peaceful protests by brave Afghan women demanding their rights have been violently repressed in some cases. Many reports have emerged of Taliban's threats, intimidation, restrictions, arrests, forced confessions, abductions, and enforced disappearances targeting women." ([FIDH, 1 July 2022](#))

"Soon after they took control of the country's government, the Taliban said they were committed to upholding the rights of women and girls. Yet they have violated women's and girls' rights to education, work and free movement; demolished the system of protection and support for women and girls fleeing domestic violence; arbitrarily detained women and girls for infractions of the Taliban's discriminatory rules; and contributed to a surge in the rates of child, early and forced marriage in Afghanistan. Women who peacefully protested against these restrictions and policies have been harassed, threatened, arrested, forcibly disappeared, detained and tortured." ([AI, July 2022, p. 4](#))

"The Taliban have systematically closed down shelters for women and girls fleeing domestic violence. Women's sports have been banned." ([IPS, 29 October 2021](#))

“Während die aktuelle Gesetzeslage nur einzelne Bereiche abdeckt und viel Interpretationsspielraum lässt, zeichnet sich eine Steigerung von Gewalt gegen Frauen bei gleichzeitiger Verschlechterung der Schutzsituation ab.” ([BAMF, 7 February 2022](#))

“The Taliban has issued a decree barring forced marriage in Afghanistan, saying women should not be considered ‘property’ and must consent to marriage, but questions remain about whether the group [...] would extend women’s rights around work and education. The decree was announced on Friday by the reclusive Taliban chief, Hibatullah Akhunzada [...] ‘Both (women and men) should be equal,’ said the decree, adding that ‘no one can force women to marry by coercion or pressure’. The decree did not mention a minimum age for marriage, which previously was set at 16 years old.

The group also said a widow will now be allowed to re-marry 17 weeks after her husband’s death, choosing her new husband freely. [...] Longstanding tribal traditions have held it customary for a widow to marry one of her husband’s brothers or relatives in the event of his death. The Taliban leadership says it has ordered Afghan courts to treat women fairly, especially widows seeking inheritance as next of kin. The group [...] also said it had asked government ministers to spread awareness about women’s rights across the population.” ([Al Jazeera, 3 December 2021](#))

“On 3 December, the Taliban leader issued a decree on the rights of women, which included upholding their right to consent to marriage and instructing the de facto Supreme Court to adjudicate cases involving women. While welcomed by some, the decree was criticized for failing to address the full spectrum of women’s rights, including granting women the right to work and girls the right to education beyond grade six, or 11 to 12 years of age.” ([UNGA, 28 January 2022, p. 2](#))

“On 07.05.22, the Taliban passed their most restrictive decree since coming to power. All women in the country are now obliged to wear a full-body covering (burqa). If a woman is found in public without a burqa, her male guard is to be held accountable. Women who do not follow this dress code at work will be dismissed. A new department has reportedly been set up in the ministry of virtue to monitor the decree. According to reports of 02.05.22, the Taliban have also stopped issuing car driving licences to women.” ([BAMF, 9 May 2022, p. 1](#))

“[O]n 19.05.22, the Taliban’s virtue ministry issued a binding order that all female TV presenters must cover their faces and thus wear a full-body veil (burqa) in their programmes. The same applies to female employees of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).” ([BAMF, 23 May 2022, p. 1](#))

„The de facto authorities assert that women’s rights are protected under Sharia, however, measures taken thus far generates concern about what this means in practice for women and girls. The suspension of the 2004 Constitution and review of all laws throws women’s legal status into question. The dissolution of specialized courts for women and the de facto authorities’ unwillingness to let female judges serve is adversely affecting women’s access to justice. [...] The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned about numerous evolving rules that are impacting on women and girls’ rights. Examples include the suspension of girls’ secondary education, mandatory hijab wearing, stipulating women stay home unless necessary, a ban on certain travel without a close male family member (a mahram), revoking female lawyers’ licences and demanding that women not wear coloured attire. Of particular concern is the decree that male family members are punishable for women’s conduct, effectively erasing women’s agency and prompting increased domestic abuse [...] With the exception of one decree issued on 28 December 2021 (forbidding forced marriage, declaring widows have inheritance rights and the right to a dowry in a new marriage, and asserting the de facto courts will consider applications involving women), these directives violate the rights of women and girls.“ ([HRC, 6 September 2022, p. 4](#))

„Die Taleban setzten ihre repressiven Maßnahmen gegen Frauen und Frauenrechte fort. Eine neue Anordnung, dass Frauen ohne männliche Begleitung (mahram) nicht mehr öffentliche Gebäude betreten dürfn [sic], scheint landesweit umgesetzt zu werden. Andere Maßnahmen und Übergriffe scheinen lokaler Natur zu sein.“ ([Ruttig, 15 September 2022](#))

“The latest directive, issued by the Taliban’s Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, said women travelling for more than 45 miles (72km) should be accompanied by a close male family member.

The document calls on vehicle owners to refuse rides to women not wearing Islamic head or face coverings, although it does not say which type of covering to use. Most Afghan women already wear headscarves.” ([BBC, 27 December 2022](#))

“The late-night reversal of a decision by Taliban authorities in Afghanistan to allow girls from grades 7 to 12 to return to school has been met with distress from within the country and internationally – and fear that it could herald further restrictions. A Taliban spokesperson from the Ministry of Education on March 23 made the announcement reversing an earlier decision that all students would be expected to return to school, including girls.” ([IPS, 28 March 2022](#))

“What’s more, in a number of provinces local Taliban officials had already begun allowing girls’ secondary schools to re-open last year, despite the lack of a central official policy. Privately, Taliban figures admit the issue of female education is a controversial one amongst their most hardline

elements. The chaotic nature of this policy reversal, suggests the groups' central leadership decided at the last minute to overrule their own Ministry of Education, nervous about alienating their most ultra-conservative members." ([BBC, 23 March 2022](#))

"All girls' schools were expected to open at the beginning of 1401 solar year [mid-March 2022], but the Afghan caretaker government delayed the schools' opening until further notice. The Ministry of Education says it has worked on a plan to reopen the schools after approval from the leadership of the government." ([Pajhwok, 8 May 2022](#))

„Girls' secondary schools are closed in 24 of 34 provinces, forcing about 850,000 girls from school.“ ([HRC, 6 September 2022, p. 4](#))

„Die Taliban teilten per [Brief](#) ihres Bildungsministers Al-Hadsch Maulawi Habibullah Agha vom 8. Januar d.J. offiziell mit, dass staatliche Mädchenschulen bis einschließlich Klasse 6 und private Lernzentren für denselben Altersbereich weiterarbeiten sollen, ebenso alle Koranschulen (Madrassas) für Mädchen ohne Altersbeschränkung. Nicht nur das: In dem Brief, den das in Kabul tätige Nachrichtenportal Tolonews noch am gleichen Tag veröffentlichte, fordert der Minister sogar die Behörden in Provinzen, wo solche Einrichtungen geschlossen wurden, auf, sie wieder zu öffnen.

In einem gesonderten Absatz wird mitgeteilt, dass auch von Nichtregierungsorganisationen geführte Mädchenschulen bis Klasse sechs weiterarbeiten und Lehrerinnen dort tätig sein dürfen, so lange sie das Verschleierungsgebot (Hidschab) beachten und eine Genehmigung des Ministeriums besitzen.

Allerdings wird in dem Brief noch einmal darauf hingewiesen, dass Mädchenschulen ab Klasse 6 „bis auf weiteres“ nicht zugelassen sind.“ ([Ruttig, 12 January 2023](#))

"Since the Taliban takeover in mid-2022, women have been prevented from participating in sports, while secondary schools for girls have been shuttered nationwide." ([AI, 12 January 2023](#))

„The Taliban have banned women from universities in Afghanistan, sparking international condemnation and despair among young people in the country. The higher education minister announced the regression on Tuesday, saying it would take immediate effect. The ban further restricts women's education - girls have already been excluded from secondary schools since the Taliban returned last year.“ ([BBC, 21 December 2022](#))

"On 22 January, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) called on the Taliban to provide information on the whereabouts and protect rights of two women rights activists, Tamana Zaryab Paryani and Parawana Ibrahimkhel, who disappeared on 19

January from Kabul [...]. The Taliban have denied any involvement in their disappearance. Paryani was among about 25 women who took part in an antiTaliban protest on 16 January against the compulsory Islamic headscarf for women. Similar raids were reported across homes of female protesters in Kabul. Other reports claim that the Taliban's religious police have threatened to shoot women NGO workers in a north-western province of Afghanistan if they do not wear the allcovering burqa, two staff members told AFP." ([UNHCR, 23 January 2022, p. 2](#))

"There are still about 230 Afghan female judges stranded in Afghanistan, all of them now in hiding. [...] "According to reports, women who have a public profile routinely face threats, detentions, abductions and little protection in place. Women associated with the previous administration are among those who have been allegedly hunted down by the Taliban. Among those are Banu Negar, a former female police officer who was killed in Ghor Province in early September 2021, and Alia Azizi, the head of Herat Women's Prison, who remains missing since 2 October 2021 after responding to a request by the Taliban to report for work." ([AI, 1 April 2022](#))

"Women continued to hold protests across the country last week, condemning the attack that reportedly killed dozens of Hazara girl students in Kabul city [the week prior](#). Taliban forces beat and arrested demonstrators in Herat, Bamyan, Kabul, Kapisa, and Balkh provinces. The Taliban also reportedly blocked some women students from joining the demonstrations by locking some in their university dorms in Balkh [...]. They also reportedly prevented students at the university in Herat from joining the protests ([Twitter @RukhshanaMedia, 3 October 2022](#))."(ACLED, [13 October 2022](#))

"Sixteen months since its takeover of Afghanistan, the Emirate has imposed sweeping new restrictions on women's lives, kicking female students out of universities and education centres, and banning women from working for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The bans have come on top of the continuing closure of girls' high schools, the banning of female civil servants from offices, curbs on women's independent travel and what they can wear, and denying them access to parks, gyms and public bath houses." ([AAN, 28 December 2022](#))

"The announcement by the Taliban on 20.12.22 that women would no longer be allowed to attend universities until further notice was followed by an order issued on 24.12.22 that women would no longer be allowed to work for non-governmental organisations, justifying the move by claiming that some women working for NGOs were not observing the Islamic dress code. This prompted several NGOs to suspend their work. The United Nations has announced that it intends to continue implementing humanitarian aid missions despite the restrictions." ([BAMF, 2 January 2023, p. 1](#))

“Orzala Ashraf Nemat, an Afghan researcher, says the Taliban's ban on women working for NGOs will have a ‘very grave impact’ on Afghans.

She says many malnutrition and food security programs are implemented by women. That is because only they can access and distribute aid to other women and children, the most deprived segments of society.

According to a UN [survey](#), of the 151 local and international NGOs operating in Afghanistan only 15 percent said they can be fully operational without female staff. Many have urged the Taliban to overturn its ban. [...]

On January 5, tribal leaders in the southeastern province of Khost [called](#) on the Taliban to reverse its decision. The Taliban's health minister has already exempted female health-care staff from the ban.” (RFE/RL, [7 January 2023](#))

“Three months after the Islamic Emirate ordered NGOs to stop employing Afghan women until further notice, it has extended the ban, to cover women working for the United Nations.” (AAN, [April 2023](#), p. 3)

“On July 5, 2023, the Taliban spokesperson for the ministry of virtue and prevention of vice confirmed the validity of an oral edict from Akhundzada that women’s beauty salons are required to close within a month.” (SIGAR, [30 July 2023](#), p. 96)

„Am 24.08.23 haben die Taliban ca. 100 Frauen, die ein Stipendium zum Studieren in Dubai erhalten hatten und in einem gecharterten Flugzeug dorthin reisen wollten, die Ausreise verboten. Teilweise hatten die Frauen die von den Taliban vorgeschriebene männliche Begleitung. Am 26.08.23 erklärte der von den Taliban ernannte Tugendminister Mohammad Khaled Hanafi, dass es Frauen verboten sei, die als Urlaubsort sehr beliebte Seenkette Band-e Amir in der Provinz Bamyan zu besuchen.“ (BAMF, [28. August 2023](#), p. 2)

1.3.2 Members of the former government and national security forces

For detailed information on the situation of members of the former government and national security forces between 15 August 2021 and December 2021, please refer to [chapter 2.1 Developments in 2021](#).

“This quarter, Taliban members continued to target former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) and former administration officials despite the general amnesty Taliban leaders offered days after their takeover in August 2021. Between April 1 and June 8, 2023, members of the Taliban reportedly attacked or disappeared at least 32 former ANDSF or government officials, according to ACLED. The amnesty’s enforcement varied and went unheeded by some among the group’s rank and file, with lower-level Taliban members reportedly responsible for the

reprisal attacks. State informed SIGAR that there is little evidence that Taliban senior leaders directed such reprisals, though given their frequency, the senior leaders may be turning a blind eye to the practice. Former ANDSF members and officials reported living in constant fear that Taliban members will detain, torture, or kill them. Some remain in hiding and many fled the country.” (SIGAR, 30 July 2023, p. 115)

“Laut Berichten von Hasht-e Subh vom 09.08.23 wurden seit der Machtübernahme der Taliban im August 2021 mindestens 30 Staatsanwältinnen und Staatsanwälte von den Taliban oder ehemaligen verurteilten Straftätern ermordet und elf weitere verletzt.” (BAMF, 14 August 2023, p. 2)

“Following their takeover of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021, the de facto authorities announced what they termed a “general amnesty” for former officials of the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and former members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). In the almost two years since, senior de facto officials have repeatedly, publicly, expressed their commitment to the general amnesty, calling for it to be upheld and for breaches to be investigated and for those found responsible to be punished. During this period, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has recorded credible reports of hundreds of human rights violations – including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions and torture and ill-treatment – carried out by the de facto authorities against former government officials and ANDSF members. There is limited information regarding efforts by the de facto authorities to conduct investigations and hold perpetrators of these human rights violations to account.” (UNAMA, August 2023, p. 1)

“UNAMA has documented at least 218 extrajudicial killings of former government officials and ANDSF members since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. [...] The majority of violations took place in the four months following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan (15 August 2021 – 31 December 2021), with UNAMA recording almost half of all extrajudicial killings of former government officials and ANDSF members during this period. Despite this, human rights violations have continued beyond this initial period, with 70 extrajudicial killings recorded between 1 January and 31 December 2022.” (UNAMA, August 2023, p. 6)

“On 13.03.23 and 14.03.23, three former soldiers were arrested by the Taliban in Baghlan and Khost provinces. A video that has been widely circulated on social media claims to show the Taliban suffocating a former soldier by putting a plastic bag over his head and face.” (BAMF, 20 March 2023, p. 1)

1.3.3 Shiite minority and Hazara

For information on the situation of the Shiite minority and Hazara between 15 August 2021 and December 2021, please refer to [chapter 2.1 Developments in](#)

2021. Further information on marginalised groups including the Hazara can be found in a report on a conference held on 28 November 2022 on the human rights situation following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) (DRC, 30 December 2022).

“While no Hazara Shi’a were initially included in Taliban governing structures, the Taliban have now appointed three Hazara Shi’a representatives as deputy ministers, but none to a cabinet-level posting. In addition to calls for meaningful political representation, Hazara Shi’a leaders continue to seek from senior Taliban leadership legal protections for their rights and their land and property, and more decisive action by Taliban authorities to protect their mosques, educational centers, and neighborhoods from persistent attacks by extremist groups such as Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K). State told SIGAR that they are not aware of any new measures or significant actions taken by the Taliban to protect religious minority groups this quarter.” (SIGAR, 30 July 2023, p. 98)

“So far, the Taleban’s public messaging towards Shias and Hazaras has largely been conciliatory, as they sought to establish control, but has not been backed by positive action.” (AAN, February 2023, p. 2)

„Hazaras, who are overwhelmingly Shia, are historically one of the most severely persecuted groups in Afghanistan. [...] In addition, an increase in inflammatory speech is being reported, both online and in some mosques during Friday prayers, including calling for Hazaras to be killed.” (HRC, 6 September 2022, p. 10)

“According to the London-based journalist and the Afghan professor of law, however, Hazaras in Afghanistan are regarded as inferior by many Taliban members as they are Shia Muslims [source: an Afghan professor of Law; a London-based journalist]. In this relation, two sources consulted for this report stated that Hazaras in Afghanistan have faced discrimination regarding access to the legal system as well as resources, since the Taliban takeover [source: a London-based journalist; an expert in Afghan security policy]”. (DIS, December 2021, p. 28)

“The Hazara-Shia community in west Kabul city, particularly its sprawling neighbourhood Dasht-e Barchi, has been the target of some of the city’s deadliest attacks, especially since 2016. The community has particularly been hit hard in west Kabul, but Hazaras and Shias have also been persistently targeted elsewhere in Afghanistan. [...] After the Taleban first took over in August 2021, the neighbourhood experienced a short-lived respite from attacks but has since become the scene of a new cycle of assassinations and bombings, leaving its ethnic Hazara and Shia Muslim residents particularly vulnerable to an unrelenting campaign of targeted killings.” (AAN, 17 January 2022)

"In addition to attacks on Shi'a places of worship, a number of IED attacks targeting the – predominantly Shi'a Muslim – Hazara community in schools, educational facilities, crowded streets and on public transportation occurred between 15 August 2021 and 30 May 2023. [...] While the majority of attacks against the Hazara community were claimed by ISIL-KP, a number of significant incidents [...] remain unclaimed." ([UNAMA, June 2023, p. 10](#))

"Taliban tries to assure that they have done this [offered protection to vulnerable communities]. In several media they have condemned attacks and stated their responsibility to protect the Shias. But in reality; where the Hazaras live there is not much security, no protection." ([DRC, 30 December 2022, p. 31](#))

"However, mass murder is not limited to ISKP. Also, Taliban have committed mass murders against the Hazara community. Just three days ago in Daikundi, Taliban killed nine members of a Hazara family, including three children and a woman. According to Taliban they had joined the National Resistance Front, an armed group fighting against Taliban in Panjshir. This is a huge accusation for a small family far from Panjshir, in Daikundi, to be joining the National Resistance Front. But even if it was true, the massacre of an entire family including women and children is a violation of all human right standards. And it is not the only case. The same pattern was imposed on another Hazara family in Ghur province in June this year. A family of six or more members. Six were killed in their houses in cold blood. The same accusations were made against this family. [...] In April this year there was also an incident of five Hazara coal miners, who were all killed on their way home. Taliban rejected their involvement, and the incident was probably not organizational, but according to witnesses it was local Taliban members performing the killings. All these incidents were intentional. While the last incident did not seem organizational the other three incidents were confirmed by Taliban, and they appeared to be in line with the organizational policy and thus systematic in nature. I believe this could reach the level of crimes against humanity." ([DRC, 30 December 2022, p. 33](#))

1.3.4 Other religious minorities

"Members of ethnic and religious minority groups, such as Hazara Shiites, Ahmadi Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Baha'is, and Christians, are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation due to the threats and other dangers they face from the Taliban and non-state actors, such as ISIS-K." ([USDOS, 15 June 2023](#))

"Members of minority religious groups said fear of persecution and societal discrimination had prompted members of religious minorities to refrain from publicly expressing their faith. Christians, Ahmadis, Baha'is, Hindus, and Sikhs said they all had further withdrawn from participation

in public activities, with most in hiding or opting to leave the country. [...] Because religious and ethnic identities are closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many instances of discrimination or unequal treatment as solely based on religious identity.” (USDOS, 15 May 2023)

“Despite some progress over the last two decades, minorities in Afghanistan have never enjoyed full protection of their human rights, and this is the case with religious minorities in particular. Discriminatory provisions in the legal framework and inadequate recognition of group rights have led to the further marginalization of religious minorities, particularly impacting their right to participate in public and political affairs.” (HRC, 9 February 2023, pp. 6-7)

“In November and December, Taliban intelligence personnel detained 28 Ahmadiyya Muslims, including minors. According to reports from international Ahmadiyya Muslim organizations, Taliban intelligence personnel physically abused the detainees and coerced some into “confessing” membership in ISIS-K. As of year’s end, the Taliban had released 10 of the Ahmadis while 18 remained in detention. Some of the released minors reported that their release was conditioned upon “repenting” their Ahmadi beliefs and attending a Taliban-led madrassah every day.” (USDOS, 2 June 2022)

“In 2021, religious freedom conditions in Afghanistan worsened as the Taliban took control of the country on August 15. Despite initial statements from the Taliban that they had reformed some elements of their ideology, Afghans who do not adhere to the Taliban’s harsh and strict interpretation of Sunni Islam and adherents of other faiths or beliefs are at risk of grave danger. Reports indicate that the Taliban continue to persecute religious minorities and punish residents in areas under their control in accordance with their extreme interpretation of Islamic law. USCIRF has received credible reports that religious minorities, including nonbelievers and Muslims with differing beliefs from the Taliban, were harassed and their houses of worship desecrated. By year’s end, the one known Jew and most Hindus and Sikhs had fled the country. Christian converts, Baha’is, and Ahmadiyya Muslims practiced their faith in hiding due to fear of reprisal and threats from the Taliban and separately from the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISIS-K).” (USCIRF, April 2022, p. 1)

1.3.5 Journalists and media workers

For information on the situation of journalists and media workers between 15 August 2021 and December 2021, please refer to [chapter 2.1 Developments in 2021](#).

“The de facto authorities continued to target media workers and civil society members who expressed dissent with relevant policies.” (UNGA, 27 February 2023, p. 9)

"Taliban authorities should immediately and unconditionally release journalists Faisal Modaris, Idris Rahimi, and Milad Azizi, and cease detaining members of the press for their work, the Committee to Protect Journalists said today.

On January 6, armed Taliban authorities detained the three journalists, all of whom work at the Kabul Lovers YouTube-based broadcaster, along with Azizi's brother Rashid Azizi, while they were at a restaurant in the Shari Naw area of Kabul's District Four, according to three people with knowledge of the situation who spoke to CPJ on the condition of anonymity, citing fear of retaliation by the Taliban, as well as posts on Twitter by local journalists and activists." (CPJ, [11 January 2022](#))

"Taliban authorities have carried out far-reaching censorship and violence against Afghan media in district and provincial centers, drastically limiting critical reporting in Afghanistan, Human Rights Watch said today. The situation facing journalists outside Kabul appears much worse than inside the capital, particularly for women. Journalists in the provinces have described Taliban members threatening, detaining, and beating them and their colleagues who were trying to report the news. Many journalists have felt compelled to self-censor and report only Taliban statements and official events. Women journalists have faced the most intense repression. [...] Journalists throughout Afghanistan have said that the Taliban severely restrict their work in violation of the Afghan media law and international human rights standards on freedom of expression and the media. An estimated 80 percent of women journalists across Afghanistan have lost their jobs or left the profession since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, and hundreds of media outlets have closed." (HRW, [7 March 2022](#))

"The Taliban's Directorate of Intelligence engaged in a pattern of threats, intimidation, and violence against members of the media, and were responsible for targeted killings of journalists. Authorities also banned outlets in Afghanistan from broadcasting international news programs, including Voice of America and the BBC, in Dari, Pashto, and Uzbek languages. Journalists covering women's rights protests faced particular abuse. The Taliban also shut down websites of two media outlets. [...]

The Taliban have used various measures to silence media in Afghanistan, ranging from establishing restrictive guidelines to sending intelligence officials to meet with media staff and forcing media workers to confess to crimes." (HRW, [12 January 2023](#))

"Nine journalists have been arbitrarily arrested by Taliban security forces in the past ten days in Afghanistan in a crackdown without precedent this year. [...] They were arrested in raids in five of Afghanistan's provinces

without any reason being given and all but one are still being held. Where they are held is not known.” (RSF, 15 August 2023)

1.3.6 LGBTIQ individuals

“Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) people have no legal protections and face heightened danger. The Taliban’s stated policy is to flog, stone or otherwise kill people deemed ‘homosexual’.” (City University of New York/MADRE, March 2023, p. 2)

“LGBTIQ individuals punished for the offence of homosexuality are also likely to be at higher risk of harm if their punishment is known to their families and communities. All human beings, irrespective of their sexual orientation, are entitled to enjoy the protection of international human rights law.” (UNAMA, May 2023, p. 19)

“‘This is a really scary time to be in Afghanistan,’ Executive Director Kimahli Powell of Rainbow Railroad, the only international LGBT+ organisation on the ground in Afghanistan, told FRANCE 24 in a telephone interview.

‘We have received reports of names of suspected LGBTQI people circulating,’ he said. In some cases, landing on one of these ad hoc lists could even prove fatal. ‘We now know for sure the Taliban has ‘kill lists’ circulating, identifying LGBTQI+ persons.’

According to Powell, the Taliban most likely profited from the power vacuum that took place in the days and weeks leading up to the US withdrawal deadline to draw up these ‘kill lists’ by paying close attention to the names of people that foreign rights groups were trying to evacuate. [...] Powell also said 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.’” (France 24, 2 November 2021)

“Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Afghans and people who do not conform to rigid gender norms in Afghanistan have faced an increasingly desperate situation and grave threats to their safety and lives under the Taliban, Human Rights Watch and OutRight Action International said in a report released today.

The 43-page report [...] is based on 60 interviews with LGBT Afghans. Many reported that Taliban members attacked or threatened them 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 act 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 lives they had carefully built over the years disappear overnight and found themselves at risk of being targeted at any time because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. [...]

Afghanistan was a dangerous place for LGBT people well before the Taliban retook full control of the country on August 15, 2021. In 2018, the government of then-President Ashraf Ghani passed a law that explicitly criminalized same-sex sexual relations, and the previous penal code included vague language widely interpreted as making same-sex relations a criminal offense. LGBT people interviewed had experienced many abuses because of their sexual orientation or gender identity prior to the Taliban's return to power [...] However, when the Taliban [...] regained control of the country, the situation dramatically worsened. The Taliban reaffirmed the previous government's criminalization of same-sex relations, and some of its leaders vowed to take a hard line against the rights of LGBT people." (HRW, 26 January 2022)

"The journalist [Lynne O'Donnell, an Australian writer who presently writes a column for Foreign Policy magazine] said that the [Talban] disapproved of her reporting on LGBTQ persons and asserted that there were 'no gays' in the country." (KP, 21 July 2022)

2. Background information

2.1 Developments in 2021

Information on humanitarian developments after the Taliban takeover in August 2021 can be found in a December 2021 ACCORD query response. (ACCORD, 6 December 2021)

"On 14 April, United States President Joe Biden announced that 'U.S. troops, as well as forces deployed by our NATO Allies and operational partners, will be out of Afghanistan before we mark the 20th anniversary of that heinous attack on September 11th.'" (AAN, 10 June 2021)

"On 15 August, the Taliban capped their drive for power in Afghanistan by taking Kabul, the country's capital, for the first time since they ruled most of the country from 1996 to 2001. With the previous government's collapse, the group is now the de facto power throughout the country." (ICG, 26 August 2021, p. 1)

„Unprecedented numbers of civilians were killed and injured in the early months of 2021 and at least 560,000 people were displaced, including nearly 120,000 fleeing to Kabul as they sought refuge from Taliban advances." (ICG, 9. September 2021)

"Taliban forces advancing in Ghazni, Kandahar, and other [Afghan](#) provinces have summarily executed detained soldiers, police, and civilians with alleged ties to the Afghan government, Human Rights Watch said today. Residents from various provinces told Human Rights Watch that Taliban forces have in areas they enter, apparently identify residents who worked for the Afghan National Security Forces. They require former police and military personnel to register with them and provide a document purportedly guaranteeing their safety. However, the Taliban have later detained some of these people incommunicado and, in cases reported to Human Rights Watch, summarily executed them." ([HRW, 3 August 2021](#))

"Following the fall of the Spin Boldak district of Kandahar province to the Taliban and the publication of reports of the killing of civilians by the group, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) despite serious challenges in the area investigated and documented the incident and, in order to obtain reliable and accurate information, while referring to reliable local sources, it also interviewed a number of victims' families and eyewitnesses. The evidence indicates that the Taliban, in violation of international humanitarian law, committed retaliatory killings of civilians and looted the property of several local residents, including the properties related to former and current government officials." ([AIHRC, 31 July 2021](#))

"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." ([UNGA, 2 September 2021](#))

"The Taliban announced an 'interim' cabinet on 7 September, their first step since taking power on 15 August toward forming a government and signalling how they intend to rule. 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." ([ICG, 9 September 2021](#))

"Khost saw a procession on 17 August waving the black-red-green republic's flag, while on 18 August, Taleban fighters responded violently to a demonstration in Jalalabad in which the Taleban flag was replaced, killing at least three men and wounding several others. The Taleban spokesperson subsequently sought to defuse future protests responded

by saying that people could raise whatever flag they wanted.” (AAN, 19 August 2021)

“In Jalalabad, the Taliban reportedly dispersed protests by firing into crowds, resulting in the death of at least one person. Reports indicated that Taliban members had physically assaulted two local journalists taking footage of the rally. Similar incidents were reported in Kunar and Khost Provinces.” (UNGA, 2 September 2021, p. 2)

“According to media reports, peaceful protests in Kabul, Badakhshan and Herat over the past two days have been dispersed by Taliban fighters firing rifles into the air, while some female protesters have reportedly been lashed with cables.

Amnesty International has independently verified videos of Taliban fighters firing guns into the air to disperse protests in Kabul, and also verified videos of violence against women protesters between 4 and 7 September in Kabul committed by the Taliban.” (AI, 8 September 2021)

“Peaceful protesters across various provinces in Afghanistan over the past four weeks have faced an increasingly violent response by the Taliban, including the use of live ammunition, batons and whips.” (OHCHR, 10 September 2021)

“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.” (OHCHR, 10 September 2021)

“On Wednesday, 8 September, the Taliban issued an instruction prohibiting unauthorized assemblies. Yesterday, Thursday, they ordered telecommunications companies to switch off internet on mobile phones in specific areas of Kabul.” (OHCHR, 10 September 2021)

“High-profile attacks by anti-Government elements occurred countrywide prior to the Taliban takeover of major cities.” (UNGA, 2 September 2021, p. 6)

“Between 16 May and 31 July, the United Nations recorded 6,302 security-related incidents, a 25.6 per cent increase from the 5,016 incidents recorded during the same period in 2020. [...] As the Taliban progressively consolidated its territorial control since early August, conflict related types of security incidents, such as airstrikes, armed clashes and improvised

explosive devices-related incidents, decreased significantly. (UNGA, 2 September 2021, pp. 5-6)

“Between 19 August and 31 December [2021], the United Nations recorded 985 security-related incidents, a 91 per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2020. [...] 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.” (UNGA, 28 January 2022, p. 5)

“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 [2021], 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.” (UNGA, 28 January 2022, p. 5)

“A suicide bombing at a Shia Mosque in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar killed over 50 people and injured more than 80 on 15 October. A series of three explosions took place at the mosque, with one bomb detonated at the door of the mosque, and two more inside the building. [...] On 8 October a suicide attack on a Shia Mosque in the northern city of Kunduz killed at least 50 people and injured over 100, again during Friday prayers. According to CSW sources, Islamic State – Khorasan Province (IS-K), a local branch of the Islamic State group who claimed responsibility for the attack on 8 October”. (CSW, 18 October 2021)

“There has been surge in IS-K attacks against the Taliban and Afghan civilians in the past two months. Experts say the extremist group has been bolstered by the diminished U.S. counterterrorism presence in Afghanistan and the Taliban’s inadvertent release of hundreds of IS-K inmates from prisons during its sweep of the country. [...] The Taliban has tried to downplay the threat posed by IS-K, vowing to eliminate the group. But communities caught in the middle of the intensifying war between the Taliban and IS-K said they fear more violence.” (RFE/RL, 13 October 2021)

“Taliban forces unlawfully killed 13 ethnic Hazaras, including a 17-year-old girl, in Afghanistan’s Daykundi province after members of the security forces of the former government surrendered, a new investigation by Amnesty International has revealed. The killings happened in Kahor village of Khidir district on 30 August. Eleven of the victims were former members of the Afghan National Defence Security Forces (ANDSF), and two were civilians. According to eyewitness testimony gathered by Amnesty International, the Taliban extrajudicially executed nine of the ANDSF members after they had surrendered, killings that appear to be war crimes. Two civilians were killed as they attempted to flee, including a

17-year-old girl shot when the Taliban opened fire on a crowd of people.”
(AI, 5 October 2021)

“Afghan military pilots who fled to Tajikistan when the Taliban seized power in Kabul say the militant group is pressuring them to return to Afghanistan by threatening to kill their relatives. Trained by the United States, the Afghan pilots say their documents have been completed for traveling and they hope they will soon be able to go to the United States. But two Afghan pilots who are sheltering at sanatoriums on the outskirts of Dushanbe told RFE/RL's Tajik Service on October 23 that the Taliban is now trying to force them to return to Afghanistan. One Afghan pilot, speaking on condition of anonymity, told RFE/RL that his son back in Afghanistan was beaten by the Taliban and that the militants threatened to kill the boy if the pilot did not return. Another pilot told RFE/RL that Taliban militants have gone to the homes of several of his family members to demand that the pilot return to Afghanistan. He told RFE/RL that the Taliban has a list of the names of all 143 Afghan pilots now in Tajikistan. He said Taliban authorities are increasing pressure on all of the pilots by threatening their relatives in Afghanistan. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid denied that the Taliban is threatening the relatives of the pilots.” (RFE/RL, 23 October 2021)

“This report documents the summary execution or enforced disappearance of 47 former members of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)—military personnel, police, intelligence service members, and paramilitary militia—who had surrendered to or were apprehended by Taliban forces between August 15 and October 31, 2021. The report focuses on Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, and Kunduz provinces, but the cases reflect a broader pattern of abuses reported in Khost, Paktiya, Paktika, and other provinces. [...]

Summary killings and enforced disappearances have taken place despite the Taliban's announced amnesty for former government civilian and military officials and reassurances from the Taliban leadership that they would hold their forces accountable for violations of the amnesty order. In the weeks before the Taliban overran Kabul, revenge killings, including the targeting of government officials, were already on the increase in major cities and along key highways. This was evident in July, when Taliban forces escalated their operations around Kandahar city and carried out summary executions of surrendered and captured members of the security forces. Similar patterns have emerged in many other provinces, including since August 15.

The Taliban, through their intelligence operations and access to employment records that the former government left behind, have identified new targets for arrest and execution. [...]

The Taliban leadership has directed members of surrendering ANSF units to register with them to receive a letter guaranteeing their safety. Under this amnesty program, individuals who have registered have been screened for ties to particular military, police, militia, and special forces units, or to commanders or former provincial authorities, in addition to being required to surrender weapons. However, the Taliban have used these screenings to detain and summarily execute or forcibly disappear individuals within days of their registration, leaving their bodies for their relatives or communities to find.” (HRW, November 2021, p. 1-2)

“However, 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.” (DIS, December 2021, p. 24)

“Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan said they will investigate cases of former security personnel being kidnapped, tortured, and arrested by rank and file of IEA. A spokesperson of the IEA Ahmadullah Wasiq said that they are fully committed to the general amnesty announced by Supreme Leader Hebtullah Akhundzada and will not allow anyone to violate amnesty. Ahamdullah Wasiq said that all cases of the former commanders, security officials, and activists being mistreated by Taliban affiliates [sic].

It comes a day after the Supreme Leader himself in a meeting with the provincial officials of Kandahar asked the Taliban affiliates to respect his general amnesty and stop extrajudicial punishment.

‘The cases are not to that extent that is shown on social media. Places, where mistreatment is seen, will be fully under our surveillance.’ Said Wasiq.

The reactions from the IEA come after videos of a former Afghan commander being tortured by a Taliban affiliate went viral on social media.” (KP, 31 December 2021)

“Taliban fighters massacred nine ethnic Hazara men after taking control of Afghanistan’s Ghazni province last month, Amnesty International said today. On-the-ground researchers spoke to eyewitnesses who gave harrowing accounts of the killings, which took place between 4-6 July in the village of Mundarakht, Malistan district.” (AI, 19 August 2021)

"Despite repeated Taliban promises to honour minority rights, the ABC has confirmed reports of hundreds of Hazara families [...] being ordered out of their homes and off their farmlands since the Taliban took power on August 15. Many are now living in tents or sheltering under trees. Most evictions have happened in remote rural areas where population numbers are unclear and, without internet and phone services, information is difficult to confirm." ([ABC, 15 October 2021](#))

"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.' [...] The largest displacements have taken place in 15 villages in Daikundi and Uruzgan provinces, where the Taliban evicted at least 2,800 Hazara residents in September. The families relocated to other districts, leaving their belongings and crops behind. One former resident said that 'after the Taliban takeover, we received a letter from the Taliban informing us that we should leave our houses because the lands are in dispute. A few representatives went to the district officials to ask for an investigation but around five of them have been arrested.' Human Rights Watch was unable to determine if they have been released." ([HRW, 22 October 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 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." ([IPS, 29 October 2021](#))

"For women and girls, human rights defenders, journalists, and anyone daring to speak up for their rights, Afghanistan is not safe. In an attempt to forcefully suppress civil society and any form of dissent, the Taliban and its allies have carried out serious human rights violations and abuses, from arbitrary arrests and detentions, to torture, violent beatings, and house searches. [...] The rule of law in Afghanistan has fully collapsed since the Taliban takeover, creating a situation in which lack of accountability for abuses prevails. National courts are no longer functioning, while Taliban customary courts around the country continue their work. Police and other law enforcement agencies are not carrying out their duties. Judges and prosecutors live in fear of revenge attacks by former Taliban detainees, and there is no [...] indication the Taliban

intends to respect the existing legal framework and judicial processes.” (FIDH, 23 November 2021)

“Journalists and cameramen from Afghan media outlets Ariana, Tolo and Etilaat-e- Roz have said that they were beaten up and detained by Taliban fighters while trying to cover protests, before having their equipment confiscated or their footage destroyed.” (AI, 8 September 2021)

“Afghan journalists have been harassed by the Taliban, arrested and beaten with cables. Some reporters have been subjected to mistreatment amounting to torture. Incidents involving media personnel have been on the rise in both Kabul and provincial cities since the start of the week.” (RSF, 10 September 2021)

“ACLED records over a dozen incidents where Taliban members have attacked journalists and have closed radio stations since mid-August.” (ACLED, 2 December 2021)

“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. [...]

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.” (HRW, 22 November 2021)

2.2 Who are the Taliban?

Detailed Information on the structures and different factions within the Taliban can be found in the report on the COI webinar with Katja Mielke and Emran Feroz (ACCORD, March 2022) and in a report on a conference held on 28 November 2022 on the human rights situation following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) (DRC, 30 December 2022).

“The Taliban is an umbrella organization comprising loosely connected insurgent groups, including more or less autonomous groups with varying degrees of loyalty to the leadership and the idea of The Islamic Emirate of

Afghanistan. The Taliban's organisational structure is hierarchical, with an Amir ul – Muminin (Commander of the Faithful) on the top. He gives moral, religious and political statements, oversees judges, courts, and political commissions, assigns shadow governors and is in command of the military organization." ([Landinfo, 13 May 2016, p. 4](#))

"After first seizing power in the 1990s, the Taliban introduced and supported punishments according to their strict interpretation of Islamic law: they publicly executed murderers and adulterers and amputated thieves' limbs [...] the Taliban also banned television, music, movies, make-up, and stopped girls aged 10 and over from attending school." ([BBC, 7 September 2021](#))

"The death in 2013 of its original leader, Mullah Umar, was revealed in a July 2015 Taliban announcement. In a disputed selection process, he was succeeded by Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, who in turn was killed by a U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle strike on May 21, 2016. Several days later, the Taliban confirmed his death and announced the selection of one of his deputies, Haibatullah Akhonzadeh, as the new Taliban leader. The group announced two deputies: Mullah Yaqub (son of Mullah Umar) and Sirajuddin Haqqani (operational commander of the Haqqani Network)." ([CRS, 19 May 2017, p. 16](#))

"Hibatullah Akhundzada became the supreme commander of the Taliban in May 2016, and is now leader of the so-called Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. In the 1980s, he participated in the Islamist resistance against the Soviet military campaign in Afghanistan, but his reputation is more that of a religious leader than a military commander. Akhundzada worked as head of the Sharia Courts in the 1990s. ([BBC, 7 September 2021](#))

"Taliban structures are a dual system. There is a vertical dimension, and a horizontal dimension, and it's always there at the same time, influencing each other, very often creating tension amongst the diverse structures. Vertical, hierarchical, centralistic – that's the chain-of-command with the head of the Taliban, Amir al-Mu'minin the leader of the faithful, who is almost a one-mandecider about everything (since august 2021, Hebatullah Akhundzada) at the top. Han can actually make decisions on anything and everything – if he wants to. And no one is able to overrule him. He can overrule anyone in the structure below him (as we saw on the secondary girls' schools). He is also there for life. There are no mechanisms of direct succession. In case a successor is needed, there is always a big discussion among the leadership and then someone is appointed for life again, in a kind of consensus." [DRC, 30 December 2022, p. 19](#))

"Sirajuddin Haqqani, the acting interior minister, is head of the militant group known as the Haqqani network, who are affiliated with the Taliban

and have been behind some of the deadliest attacks in the country's two-decade-long war - including a truck bomb explosion in Kabul in 2017 that killed more than 150 people. Unlike the wider Taliban, the Haqqani network has been designated a foreign terrorist organisation by the US. It also maintains close ties to al-Qaeda." ([BBC, 8 September 2021](#))

More detailed information on Taliban-associated groups can be retrieved in the chapter of the same name below.

"In the year following the US-Taliban peace deal of February 2020 - which was the culmination of a long spell of direct talks - the Taliban appeared to shift its tactics from complex attacks in cities and on military outposts to a wave of targeted assassinations that terrorised Afghan civilians.

The targets - journalists, judges, peace activists, women in positions of power - appeared to suggest that the Taliban had not changed their extremist ideology, only their strategy. [...] The group is thought to now be stronger in numbers than at any point since they were ousted in 2001 - with up to 85,000 full time fighters, according to recent Nato estimates." ([BBC, 3 July 2021](#))

"Media have reported that internal tensions within the senior Taliban leadership team resulted in clashes between bodyguards on 11 September leading to deputy prime minister Abdul Ghani Baradar remaining out of the public eye until 15 September. The tensions were apparently between Baradar and Khalil ur-Rahman Haqqani, the current Taliban minister for refugees. Sources from a variety of different media sites have stated that tensions had been exacerbated over the structure of the interim government. There is a conflict between "moderates" and the more hardline element within the senior Taliban leadership team over the formation of the government." ([Insecurity Insight, 12 October 2021, p. 1](#))

"The foremost internal division within the Taliban has been defined by opposing views between moderate and hardline blocs. The moderate bloc consists of senior Taliban [...], who believe the Taliban must engage in working relationships with foreign partners and be integrated into the international system, especially global finances. The moderate bloc has strategized to keep these relationships minimally functional, with the Taliban making as few concessions as possible. The hardline bloc [...] has taken a more ideological approach, with less emphasis on relations with the international community. It views any concessions as contrary to its reasons for jihad for the past 20 years and fundamentally in opposition to its interpretation of sharia. Independent, to a degree, from either bloc are Sirajuddin Haqqani and the Haqqani Network [...] who are seen to be more closely aligned with the hardliners but adopt a pragmatic approach to securing Taliban interests." ([UNSC, 26 May 2022, p. 8](#))

"Since taking power, however, there have been many factors creating internal tensions within the [Taliban] movement, leading to perceptions that the Taliban's governance has been chaotic, disjointed and prone to reversing policies and going back on promises. [...] Further stresses revolve around power, resources, and regional and ethnic divisions. Notwithstanding some tensions, the Taliban movement remains largely cohesive and unified for the time being." (UNSC, 26 May 2022, p. 6)

"There have been several incidents of intra-Taliban fighting between Pashtun and non-Pashtun Taliban members, including in Badakhshan, Bamiyan, Sari Pul and Takhar Provinces. The most significant infighting took place between de facto security forces and Hazara Taliban fighters led by Mawlawi Mehdi Mujahid." (UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 5)

"Meanwhile, as the de facto authorities, the Taliban face widening internal fragmentation, increased desertion in their rank and file, depletion of their financial resources, thriving organized criminal activity, the presence of foreign terrorist organizations, erosion of their domestic legitimacy, and failure at gaining international recognition." (UNICRI, 25 October 2022, p. 4)

"Some dissent is apparent within the Taliban leadership, but the Taliban prioritize unity and the authority of the 'leader of the faithful' (Amir al-Mu'minin), which is increasing. Cohesion is likely to be maintained over the next one to two years. Hibatullah has been proudly resistant to external pressure to moderate his policies. There is no indication that other Kabul-based Taliban leaders can influence policy substantially. There is little prospect of change in the near to medium term." (UNSC, 1 June 2023, p. 3)

"Taliban Minister of Interior and Haqqani Network leader Sirajuddin Haqqani issued a rare public criticism of the Taliban leadership, indicating escalating tensions in the Taliban government. Tension in the Taliban movement will continue to build but is unlikely to result in an intra-Taliban civil war in the short run. However, the Taliban supreme leader's unwillingness to compromise will alienate important Taliban leaders and raise the risk of fracturing the Taliban movement over time." (ISW/CT, 16 February 2023)

"Historically, there is a rivalry (competition for positions and power) between two large regional networks within the Taliban movement. The biggest are the Kandahari Taliban from southern Afghanistan, the region the Taliban historically have emerged from. The Kandahari Taliban are numerically – by far – the largest group. Hebatullah belongs to that region. The second is known as the Haqqani-network, which is from the south-east, with a special relationship to Pakistan's intelligence service ISI, and much smaller. Its leader, Serajuddin Haqqani, is one of the three deputy-leaders of the Taliban (the two other deputy leaders, Mulla Abdul Ghani

aka Baradar and Mulla Muhammad Yaqub, son of late Taliban founder Mulla Omar, are Kandaharis.) According to some sources, it had largely expanded its influence during the insurgency years, possibly being more effective in fighting and/or more visible because it operated closer to Kabul. Currently, the Kandahari Taliban are pushing back and are consolidating and also extending their powers on the cost of the Haqqanis.” (DRC, 30 December 2022, pp. 20-22).

2.3 Taliban-associated groups

“The link between the Taliban and both Al-Qaida and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) remains strong and symbiotic.” (UNSC, 1 June 2023, p. 3)

“The Afghan Taliban continues to support the TTP by providing safe havens and rhetorical support and allowing the TTP to fundraise in Afghanistan. The group claims that the TTP is only based in Pakistan, however. [...] The TTP maintains a relationship with al Qaeda and has previously sheltered other transnational terror groups that seek to conduct attacks abroad. The TTP also shares networks with ISKP [...]” (ISW/CTP, 20 July 2023)

2.3.1 Haqqani Network

“Designated as an FTO on September 19, 2012, the Haqqani Network (HQN) was formed in the late 1980s, around the time of the then-Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan. HQN’s founder Jalaluddin Haqqani established a relationship with Usama bin Laden in the mid-1980s and joined the Taliban in 1995. After the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, Haqqani retreated to Pakistan where, under the leadership of his son Sirajuddin, HQN continued to direct and conduct terrorist activity in Afghanistan. In 2015, Sirajuddin Haqqani was appointed deputy leader of the Taliban. Following the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, Sirajuddin Haqqani was appointed as the Taliban’s so-called Minister of the Interior.” (USDOS, 22 March 2023)

“The ‘Haqqani Network,’ is often cited by U.S. officials as a potent threat to U.S. and allied forces and interests, and a ‘critical enabler of Al Qaeda.’ [...] Some see the Haqqani Network as on the decline. [...] However, the network is still capable of carrying out operations, particularly in Kabul city. [...] The group apparently has turned increasingly to kidnapping to perhaps earn funds and publicize its significance.” (CRS, 19 May 2017, p. 20)

“Strength: HQN is estimated to have between 3,000 and 5,000 fighters.

Location/Area of Operation: Afghanistan and Pakistan

Funding and External Aid: HQN is funded primarily from taxes on local commerce, extortion, smuggling, and other illicit activities and illicit business ventures. In addition to the funding it receives as part of the

broader Afghan Taliban, the group has received some funds from donors in Pakistan and the Persian Gulf region.” (USDOS, 22 March 2023)

“After the death of his father, Jalaluddin Haqqani, he [Sirajuddin Haqqani] became the new leader of the Haqqani network, which has been credited with some of the most violent attacks that have occurred in Afghanistan against Afghan forces and their Western allies in recent years. The Haqqani network is currently one of the region's most powerful and feared militant groups. Some say it is even more influential than the Islamic State group in Afghanistan.” (BBC, 7 September 2021)

Based on a Skype-interview with “Sune Engel Rasmussen (SER), a well-informed journalist with extensive and updated knowledge about the situation in Afghanistan” the Danish Immigration service (DIS) states that the Haqqani network constitutes the most anti-Western part of the Taliban and will likely outline the Taliban's policy in the future. They are further said to have a very close relationship to al-Qaeda and also have some form of connection to the Islamic State in Afghanistan (ISKP). Furthermore, they report that there is consensus between the (former) Afghan security services and Western intelligence that the Haqqani network has facilitated and contributed to the very bloody terrorist attacks carried out by the ISKP in Kabul, where the victims have primarily been Hazaras (DIS, September 2021, p. 38).

“Following the Taliban takeover, the Haqqani Network moved quickly to secure control of certain key portfolios and ministries: interior, intelligence, passports and migration. Prominent de facto ministerial positions secured by the Haqqani Network include those occupied by de facto Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani [...] and de facto Minister for Refugees Khalil Ahmed Haqqani [...]. Responsibilities associated with these roles appear carefully chosen, as the ministries encompass the issuing of identity cards, passports and the monitoring of persons entering and exiting the country. The Haqqani Network has also become the best militarily equipped faction and controls a number of armed formations, including the elite Badri 313 Battalion. The Haqqani Network now largely controls security in Afghanistan, including the security of the capital, Kabul.” (UNSC, 26 May 2022, p. 9)

“The Haqqani Network is still regarded as having the closest links to Al-Qaida [...] The Haqqani Network was not assessed to share any links, other than possibly at the local, lower levels, with ISIL-K members. [...] According to one Member State, control of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations gives the Haqqani Network further points of contact with the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) [...]. Sirajuddin Haqqani has reportedly been relied upon more than anyone else in the de facto administration to act as an intermediary between TTP and Pakistan.” (UNSC, 26 May 2022, pp. 10-11)

2.3.2 Al Qaeda

"Afghanistan's Taliban government has seized on an off-the-cuff remark by U.S. President Joe Biden to underscore its claim that there was no Al-Qaeda threat in the country. [...] On July 1, the Taliban regime's Foreign Ministry said, 'We consider remarks by U.S. President Joe Biden about the nonexistence of armed groups in Afghanistan as acknowledgement of reality.'" (RFE/RL, 1 July 2023)

"The relationship between the Taliban and Al-Qaida remains close and symbiotic. For the most part, Al-Qaida operates covertly in Afghanistan to help promote the narrative that the Taliban comply with agreements not to use Afghan soil for terrorist purposes. Under the patronage of high-ranking officials of the de-facto Taliban authorities, Al-Qaida members infiltrate law enforcement agencies and public administration bodies, ensuring the security of Al-Qaida cells dispersed throughout the country. [...] Some Member States assessed Sayf al-Adl as most likely to succeed Aiman al-Zawahiri and reportedly still in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Al-Qaida core in Afghanistan remains stable at 30 to 60 members, while all Al-Qaida fighters in the country are estimated to be 400, reaching 2,000 with family members and supporters included." (UNSC, 25 July 2023, p. 16)

"From 2001 until 2015, Al Qaeda was considered by U.S. officials to have only a minimal presence (fewer than 100) in Afghanistan itself, operating mostly as a facilitator for insurgent groups and mainly in the northeast. However, in late 2015 U.S. Special Operations forces and their ANDSF partners discovered and destroyed a large Al Qaeda training camp in Qandahar Province—a discovery that indicated that Al Qaeda had expanded its presence in Afghanistan. In April 2016, U.S. commanders publicly raised their estimates of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan to 100-300, and said that relations between Al Qaeda and the Taliban are increasingly close. Afghan officials put the number of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan at 300- 500." (CRS, 19 May 2017, p. 17)

"Al Qaeda (AQ) is still assessed to have a presence in Afghanistan and its decades-long ties with the Taliban appear to have remained strong in recent years. In May 2021, U.N. sanctions monitors reported that Al Qaeda 'has minimized over communications with Taliban leadership in an effort to 'lay low' and not jeopardize the Taliban's diplomatic position.' In October 2020, Afghan forces killed a high-ranking AQ operative in Afghanistan's Ghazni province, where he reportedly was living and working with Taliban forces, further underscoring questions about AQ-Taliban links and Taliban intentions with regard to Al Qaeda. In general, U.S. government assessments indicate that the Taliban are not fulfilling their counterterrorism commitments concerning Al Qaeda. For example, in its report on the final quarter of 2020, the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Defense relayed an assessment from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) that the Taliban maintain ties to Al Qaeda and that some AQ members are 'integrated into the Taliban's forces and command structure.' In a semiannual report released in April

2021, the Department of Defense stated, 'The Taliban have maintained mutually beneficial relations with AQ-related organizations and are unlikely to take substantive action against these groups.'" (CRS, 11 June 2021, pp. 1-2)

"As reported by the Monitoring Team in its twelfth report to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) (see S/2021/486), Al-Qaida is present in at least 15 Afghan provinces, primarily in the eastern, southern and south-eastern regions. Its weekly Thabat newsletter reports on its operations inside Afghanistan. Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) operates under Taliban protection from Kandahar, Helmand and Nimruz Provinces." (UNSC, 21 July 2021, p. 14)

"Al-Qaeda is bound to the Taliban by a pledge of allegiance - or 'bay'ah' - which was first offered in the 1990s by Osama Bin Laden to his Taliban counterpart Mullah Omar. The pledge has been renewed several times since, although it has not always been publicly acknowledged by the Taliban.

Under the 2020 peace deal with the US, the Taliban agreed not to allow al-Qaeda or any other extremist group to operate in areas under their control. They reiterated this vow days after the takeover of Kabul on 15 August. But they do not appear to have publicly rejected al-Qaeda either. [...]

And al-Qaeda reportedly maintains strong links with the Haqqani network, which is part of the Taliban." (BBC, 7 September 2021)

According to DIS, the journalist and Afghanistan expert Sune Engel Rasmussen estimates that al-Qaeda will get even firmer in the future foothold in Afghanistan either directly facilitated by the Taliban or due to the emerging lawlessness in remote parts of the country. It is already known that al-Qaeda is in Afghanistan under the Taliban's protection, and it could have an impact on the situation of the Hazaras in the future (DIS, September 2021, p. 38).

"Kahl [US under-secretary of defence for policy] also suggested that al-Qaeda in Afghanistan posed another and perhaps more complex problem, given its ties to the Taliban, adding that it could take al-Qaeda 'a year or two' to regenerate the capability to carry out attacks outside of Afghanistan." (UNHCR, 2 November 2021, p. 1)

"The makeup of the Taliban's first cabinet raises questions about the likelihood of Afghanistan becoming a base for Al-Qa'ida again. [...]

Indeed, the Taliban have proceeded to [negotiate new agreements with jihadist groups](#) after signing the deal [Doha Agreement]. According to Taliban sources, three jihadist groups (Lashkar-e Taiba, Lashkar-e Jhangvi and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) agreed to sign such deals which

placed them under greater Taliban control, restricted their freedom of movement and banned them from carrying out activities against other countries. Other groups, which are more numerous, refused to sign or indulged in protracted negotiations, clearly trying to buy time. Among the latter, the most noteworthy were Al-Qa'ida and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). [...]

Still, the pro-jihadist lobby has fairly good hopes of prevailing in Kabul. The Haqqani network has a powerful presence in the cabinet, with four ministerial posts – including the minister of the interior – and has obvious influence on government activities due to its control over Kabul. In any case, Al-Qa'ida is not trusting its fate to the uncertain outcome of power struggles in Kabul and has been preparing back-up options in case its allies within the Taliban lose out. In recent months it has encouraged the TTP to move to the Loya Paktia region, under the protection of the Haqqani network. Now old members of Al-Qa'ida are moving from Waziristan to the Afghan province of Paktia, local sources say, a further sign that it might be seeking to turn the area into its new safe haven.” ([Giustozzi, 20 September 2021](#))

“The relationship between the Taliban and Al-Qaida remains close, with the latter celebrating the former's success and renewing its pledge of allegiance to Hibatullah. Member State assessments thus far suggest that Al-Qaida has a safe haven under the Taliban and increased freedom of action. Ayman al-Zawahiri has issued more frequent recorded messages since August, and there is now proof of life for him as recently as February 2022. [...] Al-Qaida has used the Taliban's takeover to attract new recruits and funding and inspire Al-Qaida affiliates globally. [...] The core Al-Qaida leadership under Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri [...] is reported to remain in Afghanistan: more specifically, the eastern region from Zabul Province north towards Kunar and along the border with Pakistan. [...] Al-Qaida is reported to remain in the south and east of Afghanistan, where it had a historical presence.” ([UNSC, 26 May 2022, pp. 3, 12-13](#))

“The US has killed the leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in a drone strike in Afghanistan, President Joe Biden has confirmed. He was killed in a counter-terrorism operation carried out by the CIA in the Afghan capital Kabul on Sunday. [...] ‘From hiding, he co-ordinated al-Qaeda's branches and all around the world, including setting priorities for providing operational guidance and calling for and inspired attacks against US targets,’ the president said in a live television address from the White House.[...] The 71-year-old Egyptian doctor took over al-Qaeda after the death of Bin Laden in 2011. Mr Biden said he had given the final approval for the ‘precision strike’ after months of planning. Officials said Zawahiri was on the balcony of a safe house when the drone fired two missiles at him.” ([BBC, 3 August 2022](#))

“The drone attack that killed al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has plunged the Taliban into an internal crisis. The group has been humiliated by a unilateral US military action and its relentless claims that it has denied space to ‘terrorists’ have been exposed as lies. This imperils two core, and contradictory, Taliban goals: Maintaining the legitimacy of the group’s rank and file, which includes hardened armed fighters and religious ideologues and securing badly needed financial assistance from an international community already reluctant to fund the Taliban because of concerns about its ‘terrorist’ ties.” (Al Jazeera, 5 August 2022)

„Das Haus, in dem Zawahiri getötet wurde, gehört Berichten zufolge ausgerechnet einem hochrangigen Berater von Sirajuddin Haqqani, dem Innenminister der Taliban [...] Die Al-Kaida-Mitglieder sollen sich gemäss Berichten weiterhin im Süden und Osten Afghanistans aufhalten, wo die Gruppe seit jeher präsent ist. Möglicherweise haben sich einige Kernmitglieder nach Westen in die Provinzen Farah und Herat verlagert. Gemäss Experten hat sich al Kaida von einer zentral gesteuerten Terrororganisation zu einem Splinternetzwerk mit verschiedenen autonomen Ablegern entwickelt und befindet sich weiterhin in einem Umbruchprozess.“ (SFH, 2 November 2022, p. 18)

2.4 Other actors

2.4.1 Islamic State – Khorasan Province

“Members States assessed ISIL-K as the most serious terrorist threat in Afghanistan and the wider region, benefiting from increased operational capabilities inside Afghanistan. ISIL-K is estimated to have from 4,000 to 6,000 members, including family members. Sanaullah Ghafari (alias Shahab al-Muhajir, QDi.431) is viewed as the most ambitious leader of ISIL-K. One Member State reported that Ghafari was killed in Afghanistan in June. This remains to be confirmed. Mawlawi Rajab (QDi.434) is the leader of external operations for ISIL-K.

~~73.~~ISIL-K is becoming more sophisticated in its attacks against both the Taliban and international targets. The group was focused on carrying out a strategy of highprofile attacks to undermine the Taliban’s ability to provide security. Overall, ISIL-K attacks demonstrated strong operational capability.” (UNSC, 25 July 2023, p. 16)

“An Islamic State affiliate—Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP, often also referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan, ISIL-K), named after an area that once included parts of what is now Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—has been active in Afghanistan since mid-2014.” (CRS, 19 May 2017, p. 20)

“IS formally launched its Afghanistan operations on January 10, 2015, when Pakistani and Afghan militants pledged their allegiance to its so-called caliphate in Syria and Iraq [...]. Since then, IS-Khorasan has proved

itself to be one of group's most brutal iterations, attacking soft targets, targeting Shia populations, killing Sufis and destroying shrines, as well as beheading its own dissidents, kidnapping their children and marrying off their widows. [...]

IS-Khorasan chose to base itself in Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, a strategic location bordering Pakistan's tribal areas. Its recruits came from both sides of the porous border and could easily escape a surgical strike or military operation by fleeing to either side of the Durand line. [...]

From the very beginning, IS-Khorasan identified its targets—Shia communities, foreign troops, the security forces, the Afghan central government and the Taliban, who had not previously been challenged by an insurgent group.” (JF, 6 April 2018)

“At present, ISIL strongholds in Afghanistan are in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan and Laghman. The total strength of ISIL in Afghanistan is estimated at between 2,500 and 4,000 militants. ISIL is also reported to control some training camps in Afghanistan, and to have created a network of cells in various Afghan cities, including Kabul. The local ISIL leadership maintains close contacts with the group's core in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. Important personnel appointments are made through the central leadership, and the publication of propaganda videos is coordinated. Following the killing of ISIL leader Abu Sayed Bajauri on 14 July 2018, the leadership council of ISIL in Afghanistan appointed Mawlawi Ziya ul-Haq (aka Abu Omar Al-Khorasani) as the fourth ‘emir’ of the group since its establishment.” (UNSC, 1 February 2019, p. 7)

“Beyond the Taliban, a significant share of U.S. operations have been aimed at the local Islamic State affiliate, known as Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP, also known as ISIS-K). Estimates of ISKP strength generally ranged from 2,000 to 4,000 fighters until ISKP ‘collapsed’ in late 2019 due to offensives by U.S. and Afghan forces and, separately, the Taliban. ISKP and Taliban forces have sometimes fought over control of territory or because of political or other differences. A number of ISKP leaders have been killed in U.S. strikes since 2016, and Afghan forces arrested and captured two successive ISKP leaders in the spring of 2020.” (CRS, 11 June 2021, pp. 5-6)

“ISIL-K leader Sanaullah Ghafari remains alive and in control of the group, which has financial resources and has grown in strength through prison releases and new recruitments [...] While successful operations by Taliban forces may have continued to limit the ISIL-K operational tempo and territorial ambitions in the first quarter of 2022, ISIL-K recruitment has shown an upward trend [...] Member State estimates of ISIL-K strength range between 1,500 and 4,000 fighters, concentrated in remote areas of Kunar, Nangarhar and possibly Nuristan Province. Smaller covert cells are

thought to be present in the northern provinces of Badakhshan, Faryab, Jowzjan, Kunduz and Takhar.” (UNSC, 26 May 2022, pp. 3, 17-18)

“Despite territorial, leadership, manpower and financial losses during 2020 in Kunar and Nangarhar Provinces, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) (QDe.161) has moved into other provinces, including Nuristan, Badghis, Sari Pul, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Kunduz and Kabul, where fighters have formed sleeper cells. The group has strengthened its positions in and around Kabul, where it conducts most of its attacks, targeting minorities, activists, government employees and personnel of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. [...] In its efforts to resurge, ISIL-K has prioritized the recruitment and training of new supporters; its leaders also hope to attract intransigent Taliban and other militants who reject the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban and to recruit fighters from the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and other conflict zones.” (UNSC, 21 July 2021, pp. 14-15)

According to a report of the Norwegian COI entity Landinfo, in the aftermath of the attack on August 26 2021 on the Kabul airport, it is speculated whether the ISKP is capable of challenging the Taliban's control, which could lead to the continuation of hostilities in the country. Basically, ISKP pr. August 2021 is said to be an actor with limited military force in Afghanistan. They are said to have no territorial control and the number of warriors is limited. But it can still not be excluded that they may play a role in the time to come as some Taliban fighters may disagree with the direction that the Taliban chooses, especially if they settle on a moderate and inclusive line. This can lead to some Taliban changing sides and switching to ISKP. The same could happen if divisions among the Taliban appear. Furthermore, Landinfo states that in connection with the Taliban's seizure of power, many prisoners were released, among whom some may have been affiliated with ISKP, which can increase the impact of the ISKP (Landinfo, 2 September 2021).

“According to Colin Kahl, US under-secretary of defence for policy, the Islamic State in Afghanistan could have the capability of conducting ‘external operations’, including attacking the US, in as little as six months.” (UNHCR, 2 November 2021, p. 1)

“For the moment, IS does not control any territory in Afghanistan. The group had previously managed to establish bases in both Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, before being driven out by assaults from the Taliban, as well as Afghan army units backed by American airstrikes. The group has just a few thousand fighters compared to around 70,000 Taliban members, who are now equipped with American weapons.

But there are fears IS could end up recruiting some of the other Central Asian and Pakistani foreign fighters believed to be based in the country,

as well as disillusioned Taliban members if rival factions develop within the group in the future. The US is hoping to continue using so-called 'over the horizon' strikes, launched from outside Afghanistan, to target IS. The Taliban however, are bullish about being able to take on the insurgents alone." ([BBC, 29 October 2021](#))

"The ISKP armed group has repeatedly carried out devastating attacks that appear designed to spread terror and inflict maximum suffering particularly on Afghanistan's Hazara community,' said Patricia Gossman, associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. 'The numerous attacks targeting Hazaras amount to crimes against humanity, and those responsible should be brought to justice.'

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." ([HRW, 25 October 2021](#))

"IS has been conducting an intense media warfare campaign against the Taliban to delegitimize it as a governing body and discredit them as a religious authority (Terrorism Monitor, December 16, 2021). The focus of this effort is the telling of a new history of the Taliban. According to this narrative, a once pious and honourable movement has deviated from Islam, become morally corrupted, and ultimately betrayed its founding principles." ([JF, 11 March 2022](#))

"In 2022, ISKP has ramped up its outreach efforts to target potential supporters in Tajik communities throughout Afghanistan and the broader region ([Caravanseraï, May 9](#)). IS and its supporters have accordingly expanded propaganda production in the Tajik language and have framed the Taliban as Pashtun-centric and hostile toward Afghanistan's other ethnic groups. This involves specifically noting the Taliban's oppression of and violence against Tajiks, while presenting ISKP as the vehicle for smashing Central Asia's arbitrarily drawn borders, destroying the Tajik government, and forming an IS province in Transoxiana, or 'Khorasan' ([Jihadology, June 22, 2020](#))." ([JF, 15 July 2022](#))

"IS accuses the Taliban of being 'apostates' for not being sufficiently hardline; the Taliban dismiss IS as heretical extremists." ([BBC, 29 October](#)

2021)

“Taliban also tries to downplay the ISKP and their attacks, since they want to look strong. They want to appear to have control over the entire territory, and as if ISKP is not a threat to them; to show both internationally and nationally that Taliban is the only power. So, there is not much public information about incidents, the casualties or about the reasons behind these attacks. [...] it should be mentioned that the Taliban and ISKP are not friends, they are enemies. There is an ongoing bloody conflict. From Taliban top-level it has been claimed that ISKP must be destroyed to the last person. Taliban consider them Khawarej – meaning that the person must be destroyed. According to reports Taliban either kill ISKP on the spot or put them in prison under very bad conditions.” (DRC, 30 December 2022, p. 32)

“Seit der Machtübernahme der Taliban Mitte August 2021 ist der Islamische Staat der Provinz Khorasan (ISKP) aus verschiedenen Gründen in Afghanistan wieder erstarkt (siehe Abb. 1). [...] Zur Erstarkung des ISKP beigetragen hat unter anderem, dass viele ISKP-Kämpfer aus Gefängnissen befreit wurden (durch den ISKP, aber auch die Taliban) und dass nach der Machtübernahme nicht alle Taliban gleichermaßen am Gewinn beteiligt wurden und sich deshalb teilweise dem ISKP anschlossen. Auch Soldaten der ehemaligen afghanischen Armee sind zum ISKP übergelaufen, um nun weiter die Taliban zu bekämpfen. Die Taliban sind nicht in der Lage den ISKP an kleineren und größeren landesweiten Anschlägen (vor allem gegen die schiitische Minderheit der Hazara) zu hindern. Es kam zwar auch vor, dass die Taliban versucht haben den ISKP gegen einen abtrünnigen Hazara-Kommandeur zu instrumentalisieren. Dennoch verfolgen die Taliban den ISKP rigoros, da sie neben sich keinen Kontrahenten zu ihrem Machtanspruch dulden. Nach einer drei-tägigen Klerikerversammlung in Kabul wurde der ISKP in einem Erlass am 02.07.22 als „korrupte Sekte“ deklariert und der afghanischen Bevölkerung jeglicher Kontakt verboten.” (BAMF, October 2022, p. 1)

“In Afghanistan, the Da’esh affiliate Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (QDe.161) remained the Taliban’s main antagonist, demonstrating an ability to mount operations in a variety of areas.” (UNSC, 1 February 2023, p. 2)

“The Taliban have conducted more raids targeting Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) in Mazar-e Sharif, northern Afghanistan’s largest city, over the past three weeks than in the rest of 2023 combined. ISKP is expanding to areas in northern Afghanistan where CTP has not previously observed ISKP activity. The Taliban supreme leader is planning to purge suspected ISKP sympathizers in the Taliban’s ranks, which may reduce ISKP’s ability to attack high-value Taliban targets. This purge risks further marginalizing

non-Pashtun Taliban leaders and increasing support for anti-Taliban groups, including ISKP.” (ISW/CT, 5 April 2023)

2.4.2 Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM/TIP)

“Some Member States estimate that the strength of ETIM /TIP [Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement] varies between 300 and 1,200 fighters in Afghanistan. Regional countries reported that the group continued to acquire weapons and created new bases in Afghanistan. The group actively expanded the scope of its operations and built operational bases and armouries in Baghlan Province, while retaining its presence in Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, Baghlan, Logar, Kunar and Sari Pul Provinces. ETIM/TIP continues to recruit fighters of various nationalities in an effort to internationalize. [...] Some Member States reported that the group had developed links with ISIL-K, jointly publishing propaganda posters, and reported some ETIM/TIP members joining ISIL-K operations.” (UNSC, 25 July 2023, p. 17)

2.4.3 Resistance Groups

„In addition to the [National Resistance Front] NRF, new anti-Taliban armed groups have emerged, though there is limited information about the size and operational capacity of such groups. Some groups have announced their formation and name publicly. As of 25 March 2022, ACLED records six such groups, with one reported solely by APW [Afghan Peace Watch]. These groups have carried out attacks on the Taliban, inflicting casualties.” (ACLED & APW, April 2022, p. 9)

„Armed opposition attacks and armed clashes with the Taliban intensified. New armed groups opposed to the Taliban announced their presence in Afghanistan. The membership and capabilities of these groups remain difficult to assess. UNAMA is aware of at least 22 groups claiming to operate in at least 26 provinces, none having taken control of significant territory.” (UNGA/UNSC, 14 September 2022, p. 4)

„Armed resistance against the Taliban is on the rise. So far, at least 14 armed groups, including the National Resistance Front, Afghanistan Freedom Front, Supreme Resistance Council, Freedom Uprising, and others, have sprung up, many of them already conducting military operations against the Taliban in various parts of the country. While these groups are small at the moment, they could conceivably morph into a large and serious resistance movement against the Taliban [...] Sources interviewed for this research confirm that commanders in Parwan, Kapisa, Jawzjan, Faryab, Sare Pul, Baghlan, Herat, Bamiyan and Dai Kundi have already started to emerge. In the emerging resistance, known figures such as Marshal Dostom, Atta Mohammad Noor, Mohammad Mohaqqiq, Karim Khalili and others, and new and young figures within the Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek communities will be instrumental. Ahmad Masoud and his group are one such new front. The Fatemiyoun Army is another – a Shia group within the Hazaras that is reported to have already started

reorganizing itself for a war against the Taliban. Should this happen, the Taliban will find themselves in another potentially protracted conflict.” (UNICRI, 25 October 2022, p. 8-9)

“In the Panjshir Valley, the remnants of the former Afghan government and local militias had formed the National Resistance Front (NRF) led by former Vice President of the Republic, Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud. The NRF was said to consist of several thousand men with equipment from the Afghan army prior to the Taliban capture of Panjshir. In the days following the Taliban capture of Panjshir, Massoud vowed that the NRF would continue to resist the Taliban.” (DIS, September 2021, p. 12)

“In the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity, several political opposition figures announced the establishment of ‘resistance forces’ and councils to coordinate local defence efforts, often supported by members of parliament and provincial councils, community elders and religious leaders. Following the takeover of Kabul on 15 August, First Vice President Amrullah Saleh posted on social media an invitation for Afghans to join the resistance to the Taliban, announcing himself as caretaker under the constitution.” (UNGA, 2 September 2021, pp. 2-3)

On 05.05.22, National Resistance Front (NRF) leader Ahmad Massoud proposed the formation of a NRF high council, apparently designed to unite all the fragmented resistance groups. On 08.05.22, the NRF and the National Liberation Front (NLF) fought together for the first time against the Taliban in Baghlan province. On 05.05.22, the NRF reportedly captured up to ten villages (including Band Barq) in Warsaj district, Takhar province. In response, the Taliban deployed their Badri suicide bomber brigade to the area on 07.05.22. [...] On 08.05.22, Taliban intelligence chief Malik Dara defected to the NRF in Panjshir province. On the same day, about 20 Taliban were killed in fierce fighting between the NRF and the Taliban in Panjshir. The Taliban have denied all the above reports on their official Twitter page.” (BAMF, 9 May 2022, p. 1)

“Massoud, for his part, has claimed that the NRF has 4,000 fighters—not an insignificant number, but dwarfed by the nearly 100,000 fighters in the Taliban’s ranks (politicstoday.org, February 21).” (JF, 31 March 2023)

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This featured topic was prepared after researching solely on ecoi.net and within time constraints. It is meant to offer an overview on an issue and is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status, asylum or other form of international protection. Chronologies are not intended to be exhaustive. Every quotation is referred to with a hyperlink to the respective document.

4. Brief Source Descriptions

The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) is an independent non-profit policy research organisation with its main office in Kabul.

ABC News is Australia's public service broadcaster.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) was a national human rights organisation in Afghanistan, dedicated to promoting, protecting and monitoring human rights and the investigation of human rights abuses.

Afghan Peace Watch (APW) is a non-profit organization focused on the production of information and research on security, political violence, civic activism, human rights violations, humanitarian efforts and strategic developments in Afghanistan.

Al Jazeera is a Qatar-based TV news network.

Amnesty International (AI) is an international non-governmental human rights organisation. It based on London (UK).

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) collects, analyses and maps information on crisis and conflict in Africa, South & Southeast Asia and the Middle East and provides datasets on conflict-related incidents.

Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) is a London-based non-governmental organisation that collects, investigates and disseminates information on incidents of armed violence against civilians worldwide.

Associated Press News (AP) is a New York based news agency.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF) is the German authority responsible for conducting asylum procedures and protecting refugees. Furthermore, BAMF coordinates the promotion of integration and carries out research in the area of migration.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is a British public service broadcaster headquartered in London.

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (CACI), together with the Silk Road Studies Program, is a think tank with offices in Washington and Stockholm.

The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (CoE-PACE) is an interparliamentary body consisting of 318 deputies from the parliaments of its 47 member states dealing with democracy, human rights and political, economic and social issues.

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is a US-based NGO Committee to Protect Journalists.

The US Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a public policy research arm of the US Congress.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is a Christian advocacy organisation with the aim of promoting religious freedom worldwide, seeking to influence governments on religious freedom issues.

The American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project (CT) gathers security intelligence and provides intelligence analysis to continuously assess potential threats to the U.S. and its allies.

Die Zeit is a German weekly newspaper.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Australian Government.

The Danish Immigration Service (DIS) is an agency within the Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration that deals with cases concerning foreigners' right to visit and stay in Denmark.

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is an international NGO focusing on displacement.

France 24 is an international news channel in the Maghreb and in the French-speaking African countries.

Giustozzi, Antonio holds a PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science and is Senior Research Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute and visiting professor at King's College London. His areas of expertise are among others Afghanistan, Pakistan and insurgencies.

The International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme, FIDH) is an umbrella organisation of human rights NGOs.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an international non-governmental organisation, headquartered in New York City, which seeks to protect human rights worldwide.

Insecurity Insight examines threats facing people living and working in dangerous environments. The organisation's data collection and analysis methods generate insights relevant for aid workers, aid agencies and those concerned with the protection of health workers, educators, IDPs and refugees.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a Brussels-based transnational non-profit, non-governmental organization that carries out field research on violent conflict and advances policies to prevent, mitigate or resolve conflict.

The Inter Press Service – News Agency (IPS) is a global non-profit, non-governmental news agency, emphasising on issues of development, globalisation, human rights and the environment.

The U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW) is a nonpartisan military affairs research organization.

The Jamestown Foundation (JF) is a Washington, D.C.-based information platform providing media and monitoring reports aimed at informing and educating policy makers and the broader policy community about events and trends in societies that are strategically or tactically important to the United States and in which public access to such information is often restricted.

Jurist is a legal news and commentary service of a team of around 50 law student reporters, editors, commentators, designers and developers from 12 law schools in the US, the UK and India in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.

The Khaama Press News Agency (KP) is an online Afghan news agency.

The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center Landinfo is an independent body within the Norwegian immigration authorities that provides COI services to various actors within Norway's immigration authorities.

MADRE is an US-based international women's rights organization.

The Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket) is a government body responsible for decision-making and the provision of services in matters relating to asylum, migration and citizenship. The Migration Agency runs Lifos, a database on country of origin information (COI).

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is a department of the Secretariat of the United Nations, mandated to promote and protect human rights and to prevent human rights violations.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) is a broadcasting organisation created by the American anti-communist organisation National Committee for a Free Europe in 1949 and is funded by the U.S. Congress. It provides news to countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) (English: Reporters Without Borders) is a Paris-based international non-governmental organization devoted to protecting freedom of expression by reporting on violations of press freedom.

The Swiss Refugee Council (SRC), founded in 1936, is an NGO umbrella organisation for refugee assisting and human rights organisations that, amongst other activities, provides country of origin information research services.

The Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) is a US government body that provides oversight on reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

The South Asia Collective is a network of organizations and human rights activists concerned with the situation of minorities in the region.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a political UN mission established on 28 March 2002 by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1401.

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and the only one in which all member nations have equal representation.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations agency with the mandate to protect and support refugees and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country.

The UN Human Rights Council (HRC), formerly known as the UN Commission on Human Rights, is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system working to promote and protect human rights across the world.

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) is one of five research and training institutes of the United Nations.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), one of the six main organs of the UN, is primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security. The UNSC regularly publishes reports about their international missions and worldwide developments concerning politics, security, human rights etc.

The US Department of State (USDOS) is the US federal executive department mainly responsible for international affairs and foreign policy issues.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) as a bipartisan institution of the government of the United States of America monitoring the freedom of religion abroad.

Voice of America (VOA) is a US broadcast institution.

The Washington Post (WP) is a US-American daily newspaper.

This featured topic was prepared after researching solely on ecoi.net and within time constraints. It is meant to offer an overview on an issue and is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status, asylum or other form of international protection. Chronologies are not intended to be exhaustive. Every quotation is referred to with a hyperlink to the respective document.

Associated documents

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28 August 2023 | [RFA – Radio Free Asia](#) (Author)

Myanmar

According to a network of medical workers associated with the Civil Disobedience Movement, almost 90 health care workers lost their lives in military and police raids and other junta-associated violence since the military coup in February 2021

[Nearly 90 health care workers killed in post-coup military violence](#)
(Media Report, English)

en

[ID 2096720](#)

Document ID 2096722 Update of

17 May 2023 | [ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation](#) (Author)

Afghanistan

Brief compilation on recent developments and key actors in Afghanistan

[ecoi.net featured topic on Afghanistan: Overview of recent developments and key players in Afghanistan](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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Austrian Red Cross	Wiedner Hauptstraße	Contact
Austrian Centre for	32, 1041 Wien	Imprint & Disclaimer
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