

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	951
Land:	Afghanistan
Kilde:	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Titel:	Human Rights and Democracy: the 2018 Foreign and Commonwealth Office report
Udgivet:	5. juni 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	11. december 2019

FCO – UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Human Rights and Democracy: the 2018 Foreign and Commonwealth Office report

CHAPTER 5: HUMAN RIGHTS PRIORITY COUNTRIES

Afghanistan

The ongoing conflict continued to be the greatest barrier to improving the human rights situation in Afghanistan. The most pressing human rights issues concerned civilian casualties in the conflict, women's rights, the situation of religious minorities, media freedom, and torture and ill-treatment in detention.

In 2018, the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 10,993 civilian casualties. Of these, 3,804 represented civilian deaths; an increase in 11% as compared to 2017.²² Anti-government elements – predominantly the Taliban and Daesh – were responsible for the majority of casualties. In October, UNAMA released a special report expressing particular concern over the increased use of deliberate and indiscriminate attacks by anti-government elements against the civilian population.²³

2018 also saw an increase in mass casualty attacks directed specifically at the Shi'a Muslim religious minority, many of whom are ethnic Hazara.²⁴ UNAMA documented 705 civilian casualties resulting from such attacks in the first 9 months of the year. Attacks also targeted the Sikh and Hindu community; an attack in Jalalabad in July killed 19 people, including the sole Sikh candidate in the parliamentary elections. Daesh claimed responsibility for the majority of attacks against religious minorities. British Embassy staff in Kabul maintained regular engagement with Hazara and Sikh representatives in the Afghan parliament and with members of their wider communities. The UK government continued to highlight the need to enhance the Afghan government's capacity to counter such attacks on freedom of religion or belief.

Although significant progress has been made on women's rights since the end of the Taliban regime in 2001, women continue to face major challenges, primarily in relation to gender-based violence, access to education, political participation, and economic empowerment. In May, UNAMA highlighted how violence against women remained widespread, and access to justice for victims continued to be inhibited.²⁵ The UK provided funding to improve the health sector response to gender-based violence. We also carried out work to widen access to education among the most marginalised girls. The UK's Girls' Education Challenge has helped over 300,000 Afghan girls attend primary school. A second phase will support over 70,000 highly marginalised girls to go on to secondary education. Afghanistan remains a focus country in the UK's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). We will continue to work with the Afghan government in implementing its own National Action Plan on WPS to ensure that women have a meaningful role in Afghan society.

The Afghan government has been able to reduce, but not eliminate, instances of torture and ill-treatment of people detained by the Afghan National Police and National Directorate of Security, since the publication of UNAMA's 2017 Treatment of Detainees report. The death penalty also remains a legal punishment in Afghanistan. The UK continues to express its strong opposition to the use of the death penalty, including with the EU on the World Day Against the Death Penalty and when Minister for Human Rights Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon met Afghanistan's Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah.

Modern slavery remains a problem in Afghanistan, despite the Afghan government making efforts to improve the situation through a revised penal code. This increases the penalties for human trafficking crimes, and criminalises

activities relating to ‘bacha bazi’, a practice whereby men exploit boys for social and sexual entertainment. The most common forms of modern slavery include labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage.

Despite the media’s greater independence and diversity than under the Taliban regime, Afghanistan still ranked only 118 in the World Press Freedom Index.²⁶ The safety of journalists remained a critical problem. Reporters without Borders describe Afghanistan as one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work. The high and growing number of journalist deaths continued, with 14 journalists being killed during 2018.²⁷ The security challenges faced by journalists put freedom of expression under serious threat.

Parliamentary elections took place in October, with high numbers of Afghan people, including women, turning out to exercise their right to vote. This was despite a difficult backdrop of security threats and organisational challenges. UNAMA documented 56 deaths and 379 injuries among civilians resulting from violence against polling centres and voters during the three days in which voting took place.²⁸

In 2019, we will continue to encourage progress on human rights in Afghanistan, particularly in the priority areas of civilian casualties, women’s rights, media freedom, the protection of minorities, and torture and ill-treatment in detention. We will do so bilaterally and with international partners, through our excellent relationship with the Afghan government, and in partnership with key civil society organisations.