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Afghanistan: Hazaras

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Preface

Purpose

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

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis of COI; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Analysis

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment on whether, **in general:**

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- Claims are likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

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

Country of origin information

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

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

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

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion.

Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

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

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

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

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

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the Country Policy and Information Team.

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

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

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

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

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Analysis

Updated: 22 August 2018

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by state or non-state actors because the person is of Hazara ethnicity.

1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 In the context of Afghanistan, ethnicity and religion are often interlinked. The majority of ethnic Hazaras are Shia Muslims and 90% of Shia Muslims are Hazaras. Hazaras can usually be recognised by their physical appearance (see Background and Demography).

1.2.2 For information on the general security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, see the Country Policy and Information Note on Afghanistan: Security and humanitarian situation.

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants).

2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis).

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2.2 Exclusion

2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

2.2.2 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention and the Instruction on Restricted Leave.

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2.3 Convention reason

2.3.1 Race, religion, and/or in the case of risk from anti-government elements (AGEs), (imputed) political opinion.

2.3.2 Establishing a convention reason alone is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed in each case is whether the person

will face a real risk of persecution on account of their actual or imputed convention reason.

2.3.3 For further guidance, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status and Gender issues in the asylum claim.

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2.4 Assessment of risk

2.4.1 In the country guidance case MI (Hazara, Ismaili, associate of Nadiri family) Afghanistan CG [2009] UKAIT 00035 (27 August 2009), heard on 18 December 2008, the Upper Tribunal held that:

'A person of Hazara ethnicity or of the Ismaili [Shia] faith or who is associated with the Nadiri family is not likely to be at a real risk of serious harm in Afghanistan by reason of any of these factors alone or a combination of any of them, although different considerations would apply if an Ismaili's own home area were to be in an area controlled by the Taliban, given the large scale massacre of Ismailis [the majority of Ismailis are Hazara] which took place when the Taliban took over the province of Baghlan in 1998. In such a case, however, he would ordinarily be safe in Kabul' (paragraph 55).

2.4.2 Although not taking into account a person's ethnicity or religion, in the country guidance case AS (Safety of Kabul) Afghanistan CG [2018] UKUT 118 (IAC) (28 March 2018), heard on 25th & 27th September; 24th October; 20th November and 11th December 2017, the Upper Tribunal held that 'A person who is of lower-level interest for the Taliban (i.e. not a senior government or security services official, or a spy) is not at real risk of persecution from the Taliban in Kabul' (paragraph 241(i)).

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a. Treatment by the state

2.4.3 Hazaras are recognised as an ethnic group under the Constitution of Afghanistan. The Shia Personal Law regulates marriage, divorce, and inheritance and some provisions are discriminatory towards women (see Legal context).

2.4.4 Although Shia Muslims hold senior positions in government, they are more likely to be excluded from senior civil service positions, or are assigned to symbolic positions, which lack authority. Some Hazara activists say Hazara political leaders and parties face discrimination as they are excluded and given little influence over government policies (see Political and economic participation). However, there are no reports of ill treatment by the state (see State treatment and attitudes).

2.4.5 in general, the level of state discrimination faced by Hazaras does not amount to a real risk of persecution and/or serious harm. However, decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors specific to the person which would place them at real risk. Each case must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to show that the levels of discrimination they will face would amount to a real risk of persecution and/or serious harm if returned to Afghanistan.

2.4.6 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status and Gender issues in the asylum claim.

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b. Societal treatment

2.4.7 Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Hazaras' position in society has improved and, in general, Hazaras do not face targeted abuse or violence from societal actors because of their ethnicity or faith. However, societal discrimination based on ethnicity remains widespread at a local level, generally manifested in the form of nepotism and/or positive discrimination in favour of family, tribal or ethnic group members but may also include extortion through illegal taxation, forced recruitment, forced labour and physical abuse (see Societal treatment and attitudes – Discrimination and harassment).

2.4.8 Hazaras are regarded as progressive in relation to women's rights and Hazara girls and women are more likely to access education and employment than other ethnicities. However, despite this, Hazara women, like all women generally in Afghanistan, face high levels of societal discrimination, restrictions and gender-based violence (see Women and Education and employment).

2.4.9 In general, the level of societal discrimination faced by Hazaras does not amount, by its nature or repetition, to a real risk of persecution and/or serious harm. However, decision makers must consider whether there are factors specific to the person which would place them at real risk. Each case must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to show that the levels of discrimination they will face would amount to a real risk of persecution and/or serious harm if returned to Afghanistan.

2.4.10 For further information and analysis on the situation for women in general, see the country policy and information note on Afghanistan: women fearing gender-based violence.

2.4.11 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status and Gender issues in the asylum claim.

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c. Treatment by anti-government elements (AGEs)

2.4.12 The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) deem Shia apostates and reportedly target the Hazara due to their perceived affiliation to the Afghan government or perceived support for Iran and the fight against the Islamic State in Syria. Attacks on Hazara by insurgent groups (mostly ISKP) have occurred, especially in places where Hazara/Shia gather, such as religious commemorations or political demonstrations. At least 8 attacks on Shia places of worship and/or the Hazara community were recorded in 2017, and a further 3 in the first quarter of 2018 – a significant number of attacks took

place in Kabul. The Taliban have condemned sectarian attacks against Hazara communities (see Targeted attacks and Perpetrators and motives).

2.4.13 The number and scale of attacks in 2017 and the first half of 2018 indicate that Shia Muslims, both Hazara and non-Hazara, face a relatively low risk of being attacked by insurgent groups – most commonly ISKP – based on their religious affiliation. Between January 2017 and June 2018, UNAMA recorded 917 Shia casualties compared to a total of 15,575 civilian casualties for the same period. This represents 5.8% of all casualties over the same period, or 0.0183% of the Afghan Shia population or 0.002% of the total Afghan population. Shia are more susceptible to attacks when gathering in large and identifiable groups, such as demonstrations or when attending mosques or cultural centres (see Targeted attacks and Perpetrators and motives).

2.4.14 There are instances of Hazara civilians being abducted or killed, including while travelling in Afghanistan; however, these are relatively low and have been decreasing in recent years. According to UNAMA, in 2016 there were 350 abduction incidents by AGEs involving 1,858 civilians. Of the civilians abducted, 85 were Hazaras (representing 4.57% of the total civilians abducted that year). The reasons for the targeting vary and do not appear to always be specifically because of the person's Hazara ethnicity or their faith but include non-political communal disputes, the individual having connections to the government or international community, and some abductions are linked to ransom or prisoner exchange (see Abductions).

2.4.15 In general, the treatment of Hazara Shia Muslims by AGEs does not, by its nature and repetition, reach the threshold of persecution and/or serious harm. Decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the specific person, which would establish a well-founded fear of persecution and/or serious harm. The onus on the person to show that the treatment they will face would amount to a real risk of persecution and/or serious harm if returned to Afghanistan.

2.4.16 Hazaras who are openly or perceived to be affiliated with the government or the international community face a high risk of being targeted by anti-government elements. This is also the case for other ethnicities in a similar situation (see the Country Policy and Information Note on Afghanistan: fear of anti-government elements (AGEs)).

2.4.17 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status and Gender issues in the asylum claim.

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2.5 Protection

2.5.1 If the person's fear is of persecution/serious harm by the state, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.

2.5.2 Where the person's fear is of persecution and/or serious harm from non-state actors, decision makers must assess whether the state can provide effective protection.

2.5.3 The Afghan government has denounced the mass attacks on Hazara mosques and deployed additional police around Shia places of worship in

the run up to the Ashura celebrations (the holiest day in the Shia Muslim calendar) in October 2017. Whilst no violent incidents on Ashura processions were recorded, an attack on a mosque during Ashura commemorations occurred on 29 September 2017 (see Government action and Targeted attacks).

2.5.4 The Ministry of Interior sanctioned arming Shia civilians to protect their own places of worship and gatherings, although these security measures did not appear in all regions with sizeable Shia populations. In rural areas, many Afghan groups, including Hazaras, maintain their own local militias to protect themselves from criminals and insurgents (see Government action).

2.5.5 The Afghan government has taken measures to improve its law enforcement and justice system and its presence and control are generally stronger in the cities. Although these systems are still weak, in general the state appears willing and able to offer effective protection and the person will be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities. In areas controlled by AGEs, the state will be unable to provide effective protection. Each case must, however, be considered on its facts.

2.5.6 For information on the general protection of persons who are openly or perceived to be affiliated with the government or the international community see the Country Policy and Information Note on Afghanistan: fear of anti-government elements (AGEs).

2.5.7 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status and Gender issues in the asylum claim.

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2.6 Internal relocation

2.6.1 When considering internal relocation, decision makers must take into account the general security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan (see the Country Policy and Information Note on Afghanistan: Security and humanitarian situation).

2.6.2 If the person's fear is of persecution/serious harm by the state, they will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.

2.6.3 It should be noted that the territorial reach of ISKP – the perpetrators of most attacks against Hazara Shias – is limited mostly to a few districts in southern Nangarhar province and some operational presence in Kabul and Herat (see Perpetrators and motives, and the Country Policy and Information Notes, Afghanistan: Fear of Anti-Government elements and Afghanistan: Security and humanitarian situation).

2.6.4 Although not specifically considering a person's ethnicity or religion, in the country guidance case AS (Safety of Kabul) Afghanistan CG [2018] UKUT 118 (IAC) (28 March 2018), the Upper Tribunal held that:

'… it will not, in general, be unreasonable or unduly harsh for a single adult male in good health to relocate to Kabul even if he does not have any specific connections or support network in Kabul

'However, the particular circumstances of an individual applicant must be taken into account in the context of conditions in the place of relocation, including a person's age, nature and quality of support network/connections with Kabul/Afghanistan, their physical and mental health, and their language, education and vocational skills when determining whether a person falls within the general position set out above.

'A person with a support network or specific connections in Kabul is likely to be in a more advantageous position on return, which may counter a particular vulnerability of an individual on return' (paragraph 241(ii-iv)).

2.6.5 In AS, the Upper Tribunal upheld the finding in AK (Article 15(c)) Afghanistan CG [2012] UKUT 163 (IAC) (18 May 2012), heard on 14 and 15 March 2012, in relation to the (un)reasonableness of internal relocation to Kabul (and other potential places of internal relocation) for certain categories of women (paragraph 241 (vii)).

2.6.6 For further guidance on internal relocation and the factors to be considered, see the Asylum Instruction, Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status and Gender issues in the asylum claim.

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2.7 Certification

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

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

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Country information

Updated: 2 August 2018

3. Background

3.1.1 A September 2017 report on Afghan Hazaras, by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which was based on a DFATs on-the-ground knowledge alongside a range of other sources, both within and outside of Afghanistan, noted:

'[Hazara] is Persian for "one thousand", and relates to a myth that the Hazara descended from 1,000 troops that accompanied Genghis Khan during the Mongol conquest of Eurasia. The Hazaras tend to have distinct Asiatic features, which makes them visually distinguishable from other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Hazaras living in rural Afghanistan tend to speak Hazaragi, a dialect of Persian that is mutually intelligible with Dari (Afghan Persian), the more commonly used of Afghanistan's two official languages. Hazaras residing in urban areas are likely to speak Dari as a first language, and may speak other languages such as Pashto, English, and regional varieties of Persian.'[1]

3.1.2 Citing a range of sources, a European Asylum Support Office (EASO) report, dated December 2017, noted:

'Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Hazara have improved their position in society … Benefitting from migration and rapid developments in education and work opportunities in Afghanistan, Hazara have advanced their position strongly after 2001. However, two professors interviewed by the Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) stated that other groups in society may look at this fast paced social and economic progress with suspicion, jealousy and resentment.'[2]

3.1.3 The DFAT report noted

'Hazaras have made significant social, political and economic gains in Afghanistan since 2001, albeit from a low base. However, the continuing armed insurgency conducted by the Taliban and other groups, including in recent months a local affiliate of the Islamic State terrorist organisation, has raised questions over the sustainability of Afghanistan's progress. While Afghans of all ethnicities feel uncertain about Afghanistan's future, DFAT assesses that the Hazaras' previous experience of life under the Taliban and earlier episodes of discrimination have caused many to feel particular concern about the long-term prospects for their community. This concern is an important factor contributing to the decision of many Hazaras to leave Afghanistan.'[3]

See Education and employment, Societal treatment and attitudes and Treatment by anti-government elements (AGEs).

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[1] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 2.1), 18 September 2017, url.
[2] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (pages 53-54), December 2017, url.
[3] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 2.7), 18 September 2017, url.

4. Legal context

4.1 Constitution

4.1.1 Hazaras are recognised as an ethnic group under the Constitution of Afghanistan[4], and the Constitution allows courts to apply Shia law in cases involving followers of the Shia sect[5].

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4.2 Shia Personal Status Law

4.2.1 The US Agency for International Development (USAID) provided an English translation of Afghanistan's Shiite Personal Status Law, dated April 2009. The law regulates marriage, divorce, and inheritance for Afghanistan's Shia community[6].

4.2.2 In 2009, Human Rights Watch (HRW) called for repeal or reform of the law, stating that 'The provisions of the Shia Personal Status Law directly contradict the Afghan constitution, which bans any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan…. It includes provisions that require a woman to ask permission to leave the house except on urgent business, a duty to "make herself up" or "dress up" for her husband when demanded, and a duty not to refuse sex when her husband wants it.'[7]

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5. Demography

5.1 Population and religion

5.1.1 The majority of Hazaras are Shia Muslim[8] [9]. The population of Afghanistan was estimated to be 34.1 million population (July 2017), approximately 10-15% of whom were reported to be Shia Muslim[10], although Shia leaders estimated Shia made up about 20-25% of the population[11].

5.1.2 An estimated 90% of the Shia population were purported to be ethnic Hazara[12] primarily of the Twelver (Jafari[13]) sect[14]; a minority of Hazaras were Ismaili and Sunni Muslims[15]. The majority of Ismaili were Hazara[16] (Ismaili is a Shia branch of Islam[17]). Hazaras were generally accepted to be the third largest ethnic group (at 9%[18]) in Afghanistan[19].

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[4] Constitution, (Article 4), 26 January 2004, url.
[5] Constitution, (Article 131), 26 January 2004, url.
[6] USAID, 'Shiite Personal Status Law', April 2009, url.
[7] HRW, 'Afghanistan: New Law Threatens Women's Freedom', 14 April 2009, url.
[8] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 3.4), 18 September 2017, url.
[9] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Section I), 29 May 2018, url.
[10] CIA World Factbook, 'Afghanistan', (People and society), 19 June 2018, url.
[11] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Section I), 29 May 2018, url.
[12] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Section I), 29 May 2018, url.
[13] Islamic Insights, 'Jafari school of thought', nd, url.
[14] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 53), December 2017, url.
[15] World Hazara Council, 'Who are the Hazaras?', nd, url.
[16] Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 'Religion in Afghanistan', 22 May 2018, url.
[17] The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 'The Ismaili Community', nd, url.
[18] USCIRF, 'Annual Report 2018', (page 131), 15 June 2018, url.
[19] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 2.2), 18 September 2017, url.

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5.2 Hazara communities

5.2.1 Hazaras principally live in the central and western provinces of Afghanistan[20], with a sizeable population in Kabul and other major cities[21] (see Hazaras in Kabul). Their traditional homeland is the Hazarajat, a mountainous region consisting of the provinces of Bamiyan [Bamiyan city, the province's capital, was cited in an article in Al Jazeera, as being the unofficial Hazara capital[22]] and Daykundi, and parts of the provinces of Ghazni, Ghor, Uruzgan and Wardok[23]. Hazaras also resided in Mazar-i-Sharif (in northern Afghanistan) and in Herat, where they formed a significant immigrant population[24] (approximately 25% of the estimated 477,452 to 730,000 inhabitants[25]). Small groups of Hazara live in other parts of the country[26].

See also Security situation in areas with a Hazara majority population – Hazarajat.

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5.3 Hazaras in Kabul

5.3.1 In April 2016, the Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) cited several sources in relation to the situation of Hazaras living in Kabul city. The IRB noted:

'… an analyst with the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), an independent non-profit organisation based in Kabul that provides research and analysis on contemporary Afghan affairs…, stated that the "situation of Hazara living in Kabul varies depending on social class and background" and that "more so than other ethnic groups, Hazara tend to live in areas which tend to be on the outskirts of the city," although they are interspersed throughout other neighbourhoods, with Ismaili Hazara living closer to Kabul centre… In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Deputy Director of the Civil Society & Human Rights Network (CSHRN), a network of 164 human rights organisations headquartered in Kabul …, indicated that the Hazara typically live in the "West and central part of Kabul city" …'[27]

5.3.2 The IRB response continued:

'Sources report that Dashte Barchi [Dasht-e-Barchi] is a Hazara-majority neighbourhood in Kabul… The Associated Press (AP) reports that the Dasht-e-Barchi neighbourhood is located in western Kabul and "[h]undreds of thousands" of Hazaras from outside the city moved to Dasht-e-Barchi, which "sprang virtually out of the desert 10 years ago, and now is home to an estimated 1.5 million Hazara" … The Washington Post also notes that

[20] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Section I), 29 May 2018, url.
[21] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 2.4), 18 September 2017, url.
[22] Al Jazeera, 'Afghanistan: Who are the Hazaras?', 27 June 2016, url.
[23] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 2.3), 18 September 2017, url.
[24] Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 'The Afghan Population', 22 May 2018, url.
[25] EASO, 'Afghanistan – Key socio-economic indicators…', (page 17), August 2017, url.
[26] Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 'The Afghan Population', 22 May 2018, url.
[27] IRB, 'Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City', 20 April 2016, url.

there are “more than one million Hazaras living in the capital” … According to the Deputy Director, the majority of the Hazara living in Kabul are displaced people that have recently settled in the city… AP reports that, according to some estimates, the Hazara “now comprise half the population of the capital” …’[28]

5.3.3 The IRB further added:

‘AP cites a Hazara community leader in Dasht-e-Barchi as stating that “Hazaras are treated like “third-class citizens” in Kabul” and that areas of the city dominated by other ethnic groups “have more paved roads and access to schools, clinics and services” … According to Mothers for Peace, a Belgium-based international NGO that advocates for women's rights …, which opened a health centre in Dasht-e-Barchi in 2011, the majority of the residents in Dasht-e-Barchi are “deprived of basic facilities,” such as adequate water and sanitation, and suffer “from high levels of unemployment and poverty,” with a “very small minority” being employed by the government or an NGO … The AAN analyst similarly stated that Dasht-e-Barchi is relatively poor, overcrowded, offers few work opportunities, and lacks sufficient government infrastructure, such as schools and roads…’[29]

5.3.4 According to Reuters, there were more than 400 Shia mosques in Kabul[30].

5.3.5 The DFAT report assessed that, ‘Hazaras, like other Afghans, are vulnerable to the threat posed by indiscriminate methods of attack against specific targets in Kabul. However, ordinary Hazaras who reside in Hazara-majority areas of Kabul and do not have open affiliations with the government or international community…are unlikely to face any greater threat than are Afghans of other ethnicities.’[31]

See also Treatment by anti-government elements (AGEs), Political and economic participation and Employment.

5.3.6 For information on the general security situation in Kabul, see Country Policy Information Note on Afghanistan: security and humanitarian situation, and the EASO COI Reports on the security situation in Afghanistan.

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6. Security situation in areas with a Hazara majority population

6.1 Hazarajat

6.1.1 According to the DFAT report:

‘International and domestic observers agree that the security situation in the Hazarajat, particularly Bamiyan province, has been considerably better than in most other parts of Afghanistan in recent years. Hazaras comprise the vast majority of the population in most districts in these provinces, which reduces ethnic tension. As Hazaras are visually distinct, non-Hazaras have found it difficult to infiltrate these areas without detection. The mountainous

[28] IRB, ‘Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City’, 20 April 2016, url.
[29] IRB, ‘Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City’, 20 April 2016, url.
[30] Reuters, ‘Afghan Shi'ites fear further attacks on Ashura celebrations’, 30 September 2017, url.
[31] DFAT, ‘Hazaras in Afghanistan’, (paragraphs 2.26), 18 September 2017, url.

terrain of the Hazarajat also offers a form of natural protection, with few routes for outsiders to traverse these provinces.

'Some areas of the Hazarajat are more secure than others. The southern areas of Daykundi province bordering Uruzgan province tend to be less secure than the rest of Daykundi province as this area forms an unofficial border between majority Hazara and Pashtun communities, increasing localised ethnic violence. There is reportedly a greater Taliban presence in these areas, as is also the case (to a far lesser extent) in the north-eastern areas of Bamiyan province.'[32]

6.1.2 The DFAT report assessed that as of September 2017 'Bamiyan and [D]aykundi provinces continue to remain safer for Hazaras than most other parts of Afghanistan. Insurgent attacks that occur within these areas tend [to] target government and international interests rather than being ethically motivated.'[33]

6.1.3 In 2017, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) noted a significant decline in civilian casualties in the provinces of Bamiyan and Daykundi compared to 2016[34].

6.1.4 For information on the general security situation in the provinces within the Hazarajat region, Balkh province (Mazar-i-Sharif) and Herat province, see the EASO COI Reports on the security situation in Afghanistan.

See also Treatment by anti-government elements (AGEs).

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7. State treatment and attitudes

7.1 State position

7.1.1 DFAT observed that:

'… Article 22 of the Constitution forbids any kind of discrimination or distinction between the citizens of Afghanistan. DFAT is not aware of any official policy of discrimination against Hazaras or any other group based on ethnicity. Hazaras are active in the Afghan community, particularly in politics, education, sport, and civil society. At the date of publication [September 2017], the Governors of Bamiyan and Daykundi provinces were both Hazaras, and Ghor and Samangan provinces have previously had Hazara Governors. Kabul University has previously had a Hazara chancellor… DFAT assesses that Hazaras are more likely than other ethnic groups to be excluded from senior civil service positions due to their ethnicity, even if there is no official policy of discrimination against them.'[35]

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7.2 Government action

7.2.1 The EASO report, dated December 2017, noted:

[32] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraphs 2.18-2.19), 18 September 2017, url.
[33] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 2.22), 18 September 2017, url.
[34] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2017', (page 67), February 2018, url.
[35] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraphs 3.1 and 3.3), 18 September 2017, url.

'According to the AIHRC [Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission], the Afghan government, the Afghan population, civil society, human rights organisations and victims' families and security forces all have denounced the mass attacks on Hazara mosques and shrines as attempts to create ethnic and religious tensions, and called upon not further exacerbating these tensions. Indeed, attacks have been followed by calls on all sides for national unity and Muslim brotherhood. That includes the Taliban. However, many Afghan Shia and Hazaras have complained about the government's failure to protect them, some alleging indifference or collusion. To counter such feelings and allegations, the Afghan government has deployed additional police around places of worship of the Shia community in the run up of the Ashura commemorations in October 2017.'[36]

7.2.2 The Norwegian country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo, noted in its report on Afghan networks, dated August 2017, regarding Afghans in general, that 'The Afghan state is weak and Afghans cannot count on assistance and support from public authorities, including when it comes to resettlement. It is the networks, and not the state, which are essential for the security, protection and care of Afghans.'[37]

7.2.3 Reuters reported in September 2017 that, ahead of Ashura celebrations (the holiest day in the Shia Muslim calendar), '[…] signs of increased security were in evidence across Kabul, with extra police checkpoints and roadblocks in many areas, while security was also increased in other cities.'[38] According to the US IRF Report 2017, there were no violent incidents reported during the Ashura processions – a sharp contrast from recent years[39]. However, sources cited by EASO noted that on 29 September 2017, during Ashura commemorations, an armed civilian (protecting a Shia mosque in Kabul) stopped a suicide bomber before he could reach the mosque; although at some distance from the mosque, the bomber still detonated his explosives and the explosion killed 6 people[40].

7.2.4 The EASO report continued:

'[…], the Ministry of Interior has been arming Shia civilians in order to protect their own places of worship and gathering. The Afghan Minister of Interior, himself a Hazara, reportedly considered this a '"medium-term policy… for across the country… [and for] one to two years," depending on how security conditions develop'. The security measures are concentrated in those big cities that have seen large scale attacks on Shia – Kabul, Herat and possibly Mazar-e Sharif – while cities such as Ghazni and Kandahar, with sizeable Shia population, did not receive the same attention.'[41] According to the DFAT report, 'In rural areas, many Afghan groups, including Hazaras, maintain their own local militias to protect themselves from criminals and insurgents…'[42]

[36] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 76), December 2017, url.
[37] Landinfo, 'Afghanistan: Nettverk', (page 4), 28 August 2017, url.
[38] Reuters, 'Afghan Shi'ites fear further attacks on Ashura celebrations', 30 September 2017, url.
[39] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Section II), 29 May 2018, url.
[40] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 76), December 2017, url.
[41] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 76), December 2017, url.
[42] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 4.1), 18 September 2017, url.

See also Treatment by anti-government elements (AGEs) – Targeted attacks.

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7.3 Freedom of assembly

7.3.1 The DFAT report noted 'Since 2001, Hazara groups have been able to assemble and demonstrate freely in Kabul and other major urban centres. For example, hundreds of protesters gathered in Kabul and Ghazni city in March 2015 in an attempt to pressure authorities to rescue a group of Hazaras kidnapped the previous month. Neither the government nor insurgent groups have disrupted previous Hazara demonstrations.' However, the report added that the ability to conduct peaceful protests was reduced, for all groups, owing to the threat of violence and attacks by extremists[43]. (See also Targeted attacks).

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7.4 Political and economic participation

See also the section on Employment.

7.4.1 In April 2016, the IRB's Research Directorate noted that according to an International Development Consultant, '… the Hazara participate in "local and national governments, institutions of higher education, civil society groups, media outlets, parliament and political parties".'[44] Freedom House noted in its Freedom in the World report for 2018 that since 2001, ethnic Hazaras, have enjoyed increased levels of political representation and participation in national institutions[45]. However, in a feature on Hazaras dated June 2016, Al Jazeera noted '… despite their growing political clout, many Hazaras continue to feel discriminated against.'[46]

7.4.2 DFAT noted that Hazaras tended to be under-represented in senior civil service positions[47]. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in its 2018 Annual Report (USCIRF Report 2018) that, according to Hazara advocates, '… the country's current leadership has sidelined Hazara political leaders and parties and left them with little influence over government policies.'[48] The US Department of State's Human Rights Report for 2017 (USSD HR Report 2017) noted 'According to NGOs, the government frequently assigned Hazara ANP [Afghan National Police] officers to symbolic positions with little authority within the Ministry of Interior. NGOs also reported Hazara ANDSF [Afghan National Defence and Security Force] officers were more likely than non-Hazara officers to be posted to insecure areas of the country.'[49]

7.4.3 According to the US IRF Report 2017:

[43] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraphs 3.12-3.13), 18 September 2017, url.
[44] IRB, 'Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City', 20 April 2016, url.
[45] Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World 2018 – Afghanistan', 28 May 2018, url.
[46] Al Jazeera, 'Afghanistan: Who are the Hazaras?', 27 June 2016, url.
[47] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 3.2), 18 September 2017, url.
[48] USCIRF, 'Annual Report 2018', (page 132), 15 June 2018, url.
[49] USSD, ''Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017', (Section 6), 20 April 2018, url.

'Although Shia Muslims held senior positions in government, they continued to state the number of their appointments to government administrative bodies was not proportionate to the percentage of Shia they estimated to compose the country's population. Sunni members of the Ulema Council [a group comprised of Islamic scholars, imams and Muslim jurists] continued to assert, however, that Shia remained overrepresented in government based on Sunni estimates of the percentage of Shia in the population. Other non-Shia observers said the issue of employment of Shia was more related to their largely Hazara ethnicity than religion.'[50]

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8. Societal treatment and attitudes

8.1 Discrimination and harassment

8.1.1 The DFAT report noted:

'Because Hazaras have traditionally had a low social status in Afghanistan they are therefore less likely than members of other ethnicities (Pashtuns in particular) to be in positions whereby they are able to positively discriminate in favour of other Hazaras (outside of the Hazarajat). […] The historical enmity between Afghanistan's Pashtun and Hazara communities has contributed to the Hazara community's strong perception that they are subject to continuing discrimination and are targeted for violence.'[51]

8.1.2 According to the August 2017 EASO report 'Sources report that … Hazara people encounter societal discrimination from the Sunni majority.'[52] The USSD HR Report 2017 stated that 'Societal discrimination against Shia Hazaras continued along class, race, and religious lines in the form of extortion of money through illegal taxation, forced recruitment and forced labor, physical abuse, and detention.'[53] DFAT noted '… societal discrimination based on ethnicity remains widespread at the community level in Afghanistan. … this discrimination most commonly manifests in the form of nepotism and/or positive discrimination in favour of family, tribal or ethnic group members, including when making hiring decisions for both private sector and government positions.'[54] (See Employment and Political and economic participation).

8.1.3 According to Melissa Chiovenda, an anthropology doctoral candidate at the University of Connecticut, quoted in Al Jazeera's feature on Hazaras in June 2016, '"Even open-minded non-Hazaras with a high degree of education have admitted to me that they feel a certain discomfort when they encounter Hazaras in certain positions of authority in Afghanistan, […] They feel they should still be servants and labourers".'[55]

8.1.4 However, the US Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 (US IRF Report 2017) noted 'Observers reported societal

[50] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Section III), 29 May 2018, url.
[51] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 3.2), 18 September 2017, url.
[52] EASO, 'Afghanistan – Key socio-economic indicators…', (page 113), August 2017, url.
[53] USSD, ''Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017', (Section 6), 20 April 2018, url.
[54] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 3.2), 18 September 2017, url.
[55] Al Jazeera, 'Afghanistan: Who are the Hazaras?', 27 June 2016, url.

discrimination against the Shia minority by the Sunni majority continued to decline, although there were reports of discrimination in some localities, especially in regard to employment opportunities [see Employment]. There were also instances, however, where Sunnis and Shia came together for prayer or to donate blood in the aftermath of terrorist attacks.'[56]

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8.2 Women

8.2.1 As noted in the DFAT report:

'Hazaras are regarded as progressive by Afghan standards in relation to women's rights. […] Hazara girls are far more likely to be able to access education than girls are of other ethnicities [see Education]. Hazara women and girls are also far more likely to be able to participate in sport and the workforce than women and girls of other ethnicities. Because of their educational qualifications and the support of their community, Hazara women are particularly likely to be able to pursue employment opportunities with the international community, or with the government, police and army […]. The current governor of Daykundi province is a Hazara woman, and Bamiyan has previously had a female Hazara governor. The Independent Election Commission also includes a female Hazara commissioner.'[57]

8.2.2 In the opinion of Neamat Nojumi, a scholar at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Hazara women were more active in the public sphere than, for example, Pashtun, Uzbek or Turkmen women[58].

8.2.3 DFAT assessed that, despite their relatively strong position within their own community, 'Hazara women – like all women in Afghanistan – experience high levels of societal discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual assault and domestic violence, irrespective of where they live. Hazara women and girls living outside the Hazarajat are subject to the same societal restrictions as other Afghan women […].'[59]

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9. Treatment by anti-government elements (AGEs)

9.1 Perpetrators and motives

9.1.1 According to UNAMA, the main perpetrator of attacks against Shia Muslim communities was the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)[60]. This was also stated by sources consulted by EASO for its December 2017 report, which noted 'The ISKP itself claimed most of the attacks targeting Hazara.'[61]

9.1.2 According to the DFAT report, due to improvements in the overall situation for Hazaras since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, most Afghans perceived Hazaras to be affiliated with the government. The report added '… many

[56] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Section III), 29 May 2018, url.
[57] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 3.14), 18 September 2017, url.
[58] EASO, 'Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms', (page 35), December 2017, url.
[59] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 3.15), 18 September 2017, url.
[60] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2017', (page 3), February 2018, url.
[61] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 56), December 2017, url.

Hazaras have employment with either the government or the international community. … In addition, the large Hazara communities residing outside of Afghanistan mean that a higher percentage of Hazaras are likely to have an international connection of some kind than Afghans of other nationalities.'[62] In April 2016, an International Development Consultant told the IRB's Research Directorate that '… persons, including Hazara, that are perceived to be involved in "any activity that is not supportive of the militants' destructive and violent agenda," such as working with the government, NGOs, or humanitarian groups, "are at risk from the Taliban, foreign militants and Taliban splinter groups".'[63] (See also Societal treatment and attitudes, Political and economic participation and Employment).

9.1.3 The EASO report cited reasons for ISKP targeting Hazaras included: their perceived closeness to Iran and for supporting Iran its fight against Islamic State in Syria; the belief it was morally right to kill a Shia; Shia were deemed apostates; on charges of 'sorcery'; and ISKP's general sectarian hatred against Shias. The report went on to note that whilst some murders and kidnappings of Hazaras have been attributed to the Taliban, the Taliban were reported to have condemned sectarian attacks, and some Hazara communities have assisted the Taliban in fighting against the Islamic State[64]. (See also Abductions and Recruitment by the Taliban).

9.1.4 In October 2017, The Christian Science Monitor reported:

'Afghanistan's 16-year war has been political, not sectarian. But the Afghan branch of ISIS is trying to drive a different dynamic, related to its view of Shiites as infidels and the participation of some Afghan Shiites in fighting ISIS in Syria. […]

'Throughout Afghanistan's 16-year war, the primary fight has been between the Taliban insurgency and the government and US and NATO forces, as well as Taliban expansion across one-third of Afghan territory. The fight has been political, not sectarian, with even the Taliban seeing a sectarian conflict as counterproductive to its ultimate aims. […] The Taliban, who draw the bulk of their support from ultra-conservative Sunni Pashtuns, have their own reasons for not wanting to spark sectarian war at home, not least because they see the Hazaras and other Shiites as part of a nation they want to fully control.'[65]

9.1.5 Citing a range of sources, the EASO report noted:

'… according to the 2016 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Report to the Human Rights Council, discriminatory intent based upon ethnicity or religion was not documented among the motives for the many instances of targeting the Hazara. With regards to the targeting of the mostly Hazara village in Sar-e Pul in August 2017, AAN [Afghanistan Analyst Network] co-director notes that the motive seemed to be the fact that the village was harbouring a local uprising force against the Taliban. UNAMA did not receive

[62] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 3.16), 18 September 2017, url.
[63] IRB, 'Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City', 20 April 2016, url.
[64] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (pages 56-57), December 2017, url.
[65] CS Monitor, 'ISIS attacks Shiites', 5 October 2017, url.

"information supporting the claims that the attack on the village had a sectarian or ethnic motivation" [although anti-Shia statements were reported to have been made during the attack[66]]. In the attack on a Hazara village in Baghlan in May 2016, the Obaid Ali described the motive as being the Hazara support for a military operation against the Taliban, in breach of an agreement between the Taliban and the Hazara community.

'Analysts Osman [ICG] and Qayoum [Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit – AREU] gave the opinion that the reporting on these incidents is often "full of mistakes with assumptions relayed as facts", and risks being "misleading", partly because of a very vocal Hazara activism. Anand Gopal [journalist and author] was of the view that because most Hazara live in non-contested areas (except for certain areas in Ghazni), they are currently "probably the least targeted community in Afghanistan in those areas," compared to the Pashtun in heavily contested areas. UNHCR noted however that "the Shia community is disproportionately represented among civilian casualties in Kabul and Herat".'[67]

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9.2 Areas of control

9.2.1 On 31 January 2018, the Kabul office of the BBC World Service issued a report on the extent of Taliban control in Afghanistan. The report found that the Taliban was active in 70% of Afghanistan, with full control of 14 districts (4% of the country) and an active and open physical presence in a further 263 districts (66%). The Afghan government disputed the findings, stating the government was in control of most areas[68]. However, the BBC report was reviewed by the Kabul-based Afghanistan Analysts Network, which stated the findings '… ring true as an accurate mapping of the extent of the conflict'.[69]

9.2.2 The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) quarterly report to US Congress noted regarding district control that:

'According to RS [Resolute Support], using Afghanistan's 407 districts as the unit of assessment, as of May 15, 2018, there were 229 districts under Afghan government control (74) or influence (155), 56.3 percent of the total number of districts. This represents no change in district control since last quarter, but it is a slight decline from the 57 percent reported in May 2017. The number of contested districts – controlled by neither the Afghan government nor the insurgency – increased by three this quarter to 122 districts, which means 30 percent of Afghanistan's districts are now contested.'[70]

9.2.3 Regarding ISKP presence in Afghanistan, the EASO report noted '… the territorial reach of ISKP, or affiliated groups, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), is limited. ISKP is based in essentially a few districts in

[66] UNAMA, 'Special Report: Attacks in Mirza Olang: 3 - 5 August 2017', (page 6) url.
[67] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 55), December 2017, url.
[68] BBC, 'Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds', 31 January 2018, url.
[69] BBC, 'Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds', 31 January 2018, url.
[70] SIGAR, 'Quarterly Report to the United States Congress', (page 68), 30 July 2018, url.

southern Nangarhar and has some operational presence in Kabul and Herat that enables them to execute high profile attacks.'[71] The BBC noted the presence of ISKP in 30 districts, largely confined to a relatively small stronghold on the border with Pakistan in the eastern province of Nangarhar but also in Khanabad (Kunduz province), Kohistanat (Sar-e-Pul province) and Darzab (Jowzjan province) in the north.'[72]

9.2.4 For further information on areas of control see the Country Policy and Information Note on Afghanistan: fear of anti-government elements (AGEs).

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9.3 Targeted attacks

9.3.1 In its 2017 Annual Report, UNAMA stated that throughout the year it '… noted an increasing pattern of deliberate sectarian-motivated attacks against the Shi'a Muslim religious minority, most of whom also belong to the Hazara ethnic minority, nearly all attributed to and claimed by Daesh/ISIL-KP [Islamic State in Khorasan Province – ISKP].'[73]

9.3.2 The US Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in its 2018 Annual Report (USCIRF Report 2018) that, 'Extremist groups, including ISKP and the Taliban, targeted one specific ethnic group in particular: the overwhelmingly Shi'a Hazaras.'[74]

9.3.3 According to a December 2017 EASO report, 'Several instances were found in the media where Hazara Afghans alleged they were targeted because of having spent time in the West. … However, in contrast, IOM's Masood Ahmadi explained in email correspondence with EASO for this report that based on his information on returnees to Afghanistan, there have been no ethnically-based killings of returnees coming back from Western countries, unless someone becomes caught in a crossfire between government forces and insurgents.'[75]

See also the Country Policy and Information Note on Afghanistan: Afghans perceived as "Westernised".

9.3.4 The EASO report, of December 2017, noted that, according to Borhan Osman, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group (ICG):

'… incidents where Hazara or other Shia have been targeted can … be categorised in two main types:

- Attacks on places where Shia gather in the cities, such as mosques in the cities of Kabul or Herat, during religious commemorations in the cities of Kabul or Mazar e Sharif or during a political demonstration in Kabul;
- Instances where Hazara were singled out from buses. Such incidents occurred in more rural areas in the provinces like Baghlan, Sar-e Pul,

[71] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 56), December 2017, url.
[72] BBC, 'Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds', 31 January 2018, url.
[73] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2017', (page 41), February 2018, url.
[74] USCIRF, 'Annual Report 2018', (page 132), 15 June 2018, url.
[75] EASO, 'Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms', (page 94-5), December 2017, url.

Ghor, Balkh, Wardak, Ghazni and Zabul. Similar in nature are cases where Hazara villages have been attacked in Sar-e Pul or Baghlan.'[76]

9.3.5 In correspondence with the IRB Research Directorate in April 2016:

'The AAN analyst stated that because of their identifying physical features, Hazara are "more likely to be targeted" when traveling outside of Kabul city, including neighboring districts; insecurity while travelling by road "to their final destination is often the biggest [security] concern" for the ethnic group ... The source further specifies that travelling from "Kabul to Ghazni, Kabul to Daykundi and Bamyam often pose a significant security challenge" … According to the Professor at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, the areas outside Kabul, such as the road to Ghazni, are "extremely unsafe" … The Deputy Director [of the Civil Society & Human Rights Network (CSHRN), a network of 164 human rights organisations headquartered in Kabul] similarly stated that it is "not safe" for Hazara living in Kabul to travel outside to their province of origin and they have been "targeted by Taliban and ISIS while travelling" … According to sources, the Taliban have support among the population living in the areas outside of Kabul …'[77] (See Abductions).

9.3.6 In contrast to the views cited by the IRB above, which indicated Hazara were "more likely to be targeted" targeted whilst travelling, the EASO report noted 'Analyst Borhan Osman gave the opinion that the main risk for Hazara or Shia of being targeted, merely for their ethnicity or sectarian lines, is in the attacks on gatherings, religious commemorations or demonstrations in the cities. This pattern of attacks point to new dynamics emerging in the conflict in Afghanistan for which, according to Osman, it is too early to draw any conclusions from. However, Anad Gopal said that this pattern is increasing.'[78]

9.3.7 The EASO report further noted 'While Hazara may seem more at risk while travelling on the roads, sources of the Canadian IRB and the Norwegian Landinfo related this enhanced risk to elements such as the fact that Hazara travel more frequently and are therefore overrepresented on the roads, and that they also often have found jobs in the NGO-sector or as high ranking officials in the government.'[79]

9.3.8 The USCIRF Report 2018 noted 'There were at least two major incidents of these extremist groups targeting Hazara Shi'a in 2017, one that involved the murder of thirteen coal mine workers and another in which ISKP beheaded three victims.'[80]

9.3.9 As reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in January 2017, Faiz Mohammad Amiri, governor of Tala wa Barfak District, Baghlan Province, where the attack occurred, stated unidentified gunmen killed 7 coal miners, revising the death toll, earlier cited as 13. According to Amiri, although no group had claimed responsibility for the murders, the likely

[76] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 54), December 2017, url.
[77] IRB, 'Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City', 20 April 2016, url.
[78] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 54), December 2017, url.
[79] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (page 55), December 2017, url.
[80] USCIRF, 'Annual Report 2018', (page 132), 15 June 2018, url.

culprit was ISKP[81]. On 16 March 2017, Pajhwok news reported that 3 Hazara elders attended a turban-wearing ceremony at the invitation of the Taliban. According to Asadullah Khurram, a member of the provincial council (Sayyad district, Sar-i-Pul province), whilst returning home the elders were shot and beheaded by Daesh (ISKP) militants. However, a media cell at the provincial police headquarters claimed the men were killed by the Taliban. Pajhwok news stated no one had claimed responsibility for the deaths[82]. Hazara.net stated the Taliban were accountable[83].

9.3.10 The US IRF Report 2017 stated that the media reported at least 13 attacks on Shia places of worship or communities in 2017 resulting in more than 500 casualties [84]. UNAMA recorded 8 sectarian-motivated attacks against Shia places of worship and/or worshippers in 2017, resulting in 418 civilian casualties (161 deaths and 257 injuries); ISKP claimed responsibility for 6 of these, 4 of which occurred in Kabul, and 2 in Herat. The Taliban were attributed to the remaining 2 attacks, both in Herat[85].

9.3.11 In December 2017, 2 further attacks, attributed to ISKP, took place in predominantly Hazara neighbourhoods in Kabul and Herat causing 133 civilian casualties (46 deaths and 87 injured)[86].

9.3.12 According to the USSD HR Report 2017 noted 'During the year [2017] there was a marked rise in violence, principally carried out by ISIS-K [Islamic State in Khorasan Province], against the Hazara community. In August ISIS-K attacked Shia Hazara mosques in Herat and then Kabul, killing more than 100 persons.'[87]

9.3.13 UNAMA's mid-year report for 2018 noted 'Consistent with the disturbing trends observed in 2016 and 2017, Anti-Government Elements also continued to direct attacks against the Shi'a Muslim population, most of whom are ethnic Hazara, causing 366 civilian casualties (115 deaths and 251 injured), nearly all from suicide and complex attacks claimed by Daesh/ISKP.'[88] Between January 2017 and June 2018, UNAMA recorded 917 Shia casualties compared to a total of 15,575 civilian casualties for the same period[89] [90].

9.3.14 The Associated Press (AP) reported on targeted attacks against Shias and ethnic Hazaras in 2017:

- 15 March – Islamic State militants killed three Shiite elders as they were returning home from a graduation ceremony at a local religious school;

[81] RFE/RL, 'Gunmen Kill 13 Miners in Northern Afghanistan', 6 January 2017, url.
[82] Pajhwok, '3 Hazara elders allegedly beheaded in Sar-i-Pul', 16 March 2017, url.
[83] Hazara.net, '3 Hazara social activists beheaded by Taliban terrorists', 17 March 2017, url.
[84] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Executive summary), 29 May 2018, url.
[85] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2017', (page 41), February 2018, url.
[86] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2017', (page 41), February 2018, url.
[87] USSD, ''Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017', (Section 6), 20 April 2018, url.
[88] UNAMA, 'Midyear update 2018', (page 5), 15 July 2018, url.
[89] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2017', (page 1 and 41), February 2018, url.
[90] UNAMA, 'Midyear update 2018', (pages 1 and 5), 15 July 2018, url.

- 15 June – A suicide bomber killed four people at a Shiite mosque in the capital. Among the dead was a leader of Afghanistan's ethnic Hazaras, who are mostly Shiite Muslims;
- 31 July – Islamic State militants attacked the Iraq Embassy in central Kabul. The gun battle lasted for hours before the militants were killed. Two employees died in the attack. IS vowed to continue targeting Shiites;
- 1 August – A suicide bomber stormed into the largest Shiite mosque in the western Herat province, opening fire on worshippers before blowing himself up, killing at least 90 people. Hundreds more were wounded in the attack, which happened during evening prayers;
- 25 August – Militants stormed a packed Shiite mosque in Kabul during Friday prayers. The attack lasted for hours and ended with at least 28 worshippers killed and another 50 seriously wounded, many of them children. Two of the assailants blew themselves up and another two were shot to death by Afghan security forces;
- 29 September – A suicide bomber blew himself up outside a Shiite mosque in the Afghan capital, killing five people and wounding 29 others. The attack took place as worshippers were leaving the mosque after Friday prayers;
- 20 October – A suicide bomber killed 31 people after entering a Shiite mosque in Kabul. The Islamic State claimed the attack, which wounded more than 45 worshippers;
- 28 December – A suicide bomber and other explosions at a Shiite cultural centre in Kabul killed at least 41 people, in an attack that may have been aimed at a pro-Iran news outlet based in the building[91].

9.3.15 EASO's report on the security situation in Afghanistan, dated May 2018, cited a range of sources, which reported on targeted attacks in Kabul city against Shia Muslim civilians, including Hazaras, between September 2017 and March 2018. Almost all were claimed by ISKP:

- 29 September – During the preparations of Ashura commemorations, a suicide bomber disguised as a shepherd targeted a Shia mosque in Kabul. At least five people were killed and 20 more injured, among which children, in the attack claimed by ISKP.
- 20 October – in an attack claimed by ISKP, a suicide attacker lobbed a grenade into the women's section of an Imam-e-Zaman Shi'a mosque in Kabul city and detonated his suicide vest in the second row of worshippers, according to UNAMA, killing 69 worshippers and injuring another 60, including women and children.
- 28 December – a suicide bomber targeted a Shia education centre in the Hazara dominated area of Dasht-e Barchi of Kabul, killing 41 mainly young Shia civilians and wounding 80 more.
- 9 March – a suicide bomber tried to enter a commemoration of the 23rd death anniversary of Hazara leader Abdullah Mazari in Dasht-e Barchi.

[91] AP, 'A look at Islamic State attacks in Afghanistan', 28 December 2017, url.

When intercepted by the police, he detonated his explosives, killing seven to ten persons, including policemen, and wounding 22 more.

- 18 March – a suicide bomber targeted a learning centre in Dasht-e Barchi. Wearing a suicide vest, the attacker first tried to throw a hand grenade into a class with 600 students. This grenade exploded in his hand, killing only the assailant and injuring six to eleven students.
- 21 March – In a suicide attack near a hospital, the Kabul University and a Shiite shrine in March 2018, 29 civilians celebrating Newroz were reportedly killed and 52 wounded. The attack was claimed by ISKP[92].

9.3.16 On 22 April 2018, Al Jazeera reported on a suicide bomb attack, attributed to ISKP, against civilians waiting to obtain identity documents and register for upcoming elections. The attack took place in the Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul, a district where many Shia Hazara reside. According to the report, at least 57 people were killed[93].

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9.4 Abductions

9.4.1 According to UNAMA, in 2016 there were 350 abduction incidents by AGEs involving 1,858 civilians. Of the civilians abducted, 85 were Hazaras (representing 3.1% of the civilians abducted). UNAMA documented a decline in the number of Hazara civilians abducted in 2016 compared to 2015, in which AGEs abducted 224 Hazara civilians. In 2016, UNAMA recorded the abduction of Hazara civilians in Baghlan, Uruzgan, Sari Pul, Daikundi, Maidan Wardak and Ghor provinces. Anti-Government Elements released most Hazara abductees unharmed, while five were killed including three in Sari Pul, one in Ghor, and one in Baghlan[94]. In its 2017 Annual Report, UNAMA continued to record abductions by AGEs, victims of whom included Government workers and their family members, off-duty and former Afghan National Police officers, civilians perceived as opposing Anti-Government Element values, relatives of Afghan national security forces, and civilians deemed spies for the Government. However, unlike its 2016 report, UNAMA did not cite Hazaras as specific targets of abductions during 2017[95].

9.4.2 Pajhwok news reported on 13 January 2018 that Taliban militants kidnapped 11 Hazara tribesmen after receiving complaints by Pashtuns following a dispute over land and water between Pashtuns and Hazaras in Qarabagh district, Ghazni province[96].

9.4.3 According to UNAMA and other international sources' assessments, the primary motivations for abductions included taking hostages for ransom or prisoner exchange, or to target those with connections to the government or

[92] EASO, 'Afghanistan: Security situation', (page 30), May 2018, url.
[93] Al Jazeera, 'Afghanistan: 63 dead in attacks on voter registration centres', 22 April 2018, url.
[94] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2016', (page 67), February 2017, url.
[95] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2017', (page 35), February 2018, url.
[96] Pajhwok news, 'Taliban out to foment ethnic trouble in Ghazni: Governor', 13 January 2018, url.

international community. Ethnicity was not necessarily the motivating factor for abductions[97] [98] [99].

9.4.4 The pro-Hazara website, Hazara.net, a non-profit website focussing on the human rights of the Hazara community, tracked Hazara abductions in Afghanistan, obtaining information from social media and news sources. It recorded 1 incident of Hazara abduction between January 2017 and June 2018[100].

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9.5 Recruitment by the Taliban

9.5.1 For information on the risk of forced recruitment, and Hazara in the Taliban, see the Country Policy and Information Note Afghanistan: fear of anti-government elements (AGEs), and the September 2016 EASO COI Report: Afghanistan – Recruitment by armed groups (page 19, section 1.3.2. Hazaras in the Taliban's ranks).

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10. Education and employment

10.1 Education

10.1.1 According to the constitution, 'The state shall devise and implement a unified educational curricula based on the tenets of the sacred religion of Islam, national culture as well as academic principles, and develop religious subjects curricula for schools on the basis of existing Islamic sects in Afghanistan.'[101] The US IRF Report 2017 noted 'The national curriculum includes materials designed separately for Sunni-majority schools and Shia-majority schools, as well as textbooks that emphasize nonviolent Islamic terms and principles.'[102]

10.1.2 In April 2016, the IRB's Research Directorate stated that an Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) analyst indicated that '… the Hazara are "disproportionately represented" in schools and universities, and are often "the largest groups of enrolled students at state universities". However, she noted that in some areas of Kabul, there are not enough state schools to accommodate them and private schools are not affordable for large parts of the Hazara population.'[103]

10.1.3 The DFAT report noted:

'Hazaras have traditionally placed a high value on educational achievement, including for girls […], which has represented a means to escape marginalisation in Afghan society. While reliable statistics are unavailable, credible sources report that a considerably higher percentage of Hazara children receive formal education than do the children of other Afghan ethnicities. Hazara children are generally encouraged to consider further

[97] UNAMA, 'Annual Report 2017', (pages 34-35), February 2018, url.
[98] EASO, 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict', (pages 54-55), December 2017, url.
[99] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 2.28), 18 September 2017, url.
[100] Hazara.net, 'Tracking Hazara kidnappings in Afghanistan region', 9 July 2018, url.
[101] Constitution, (Article 45), 26 January 2004, url.
[102] USSD, 'International Religious Freedom Report 2017', (Section II), 29 May 2018, url.
[103] IRB, 'Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City', 20 April 2016, url.

education options where family circumstances allow. There are currently more than 350 schools operating in Bamiyan and Daykundi, attended by approximately 160,000 students of whom almost 50 per cent are girls. Bamiyan also hosts a small university with approximately 3,600 students, although the university has struggled to attract qualified lecturers.

'Hazaras operate a number of private schools in Kabul for the benefit of their community. The quality of these schools tends to be higher than many other schools in Afghanistan, demonstrated by relatively high university acceptance rates. Some families from the Hazarajat reportedly send their children to Kabul for instruction during the winter months.'[104]

10.1.4 DFAT assessed that 'All Afghan girls attending school face a risk of violent attack, although this risk is likely to be lower for Hazara girls attending schools in the Hazarajat.'[105]

See also Women.

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10.2 Employment

10.2.1 In April 2016, the IRB Research Directorate, citing a range of sources about Hazaras in Kabul. Concerning travel related to employment:

'… the AAN analyst stated that many Hazaras have found work in the NGO sector…this type of work frequently requires some sort of travel to districts and provinces outside of Kabul City… during their work trips, they are often more at risk than their colleagues from other ethnic groups. Hazara have reported that they have quit jobs that required them to travel to areas deemed as unsafe, in particular if repeat trips were required ...

'AFP reports that "[w]est of the Afghan city of Maidan Shar is a 40-kilometre stretch of paved highway known as "Death Road", where drivers say the country's ethnic Hazara minority are slaughtered by militants "like sheep and cows" … According to Spiegel Online, a German news website, Maidan Shahr is a town located 30 kilometers southwest of Kabul and is one of two roads used to travel to Bamiyan [Bamyan] … Sources state that Bamyan is a Hazara-majority area … AP reports that the Kabul-Beshud Highway is the "main route" between the capital and "Hazar[a]jat, the informal name" of the area where "Hazaras have traditionally settled" … According to the AAN analyst, Hazara working in Kabul often only travel to Bamyam by air "as the road through Wardak is perceived as too dangerous".'[106]

10.2.2 According to the DFAT report:

'The Hazarajat's mountainous terrain, geographic isolation and lack of arable land have combined to limit economic and employment opportunities. The Hazarajat depends heavily on agriculture for economic and employment opportunities, and is highly vulnerable to droughts and floods. Infrastructure in the region is severely underdeveloped – around 80 per cent of roads in Bamiyan province are unpaved, restricting the movement of goods and

[104] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraphs 2.15-2.16), 18 September 2017, url.
[105] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 3.15), 18 September 2017, url.
[106] IRB, 'Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City', 20 April 2016, url.

people. Access to electricity remains limited, despite construction of solar and hydroelectric facilities in the region… Road transportation links between the Hazarajat and major cities are far from secure ... This limits Hazarajat producers' access to large markets. It also affects Hazaras seeking to travel for seasonal work in other provinces, which is common for poor Afghans of all ethnicities.'[107]

See also Targeted attacks and Abductions.

10.2.3 The IRB Research Directorate stated regarding employment for Hazaras:

'In 2014 article, AP reports that in the past, the Hazara had "taken the lowest-status jobs in Afghan cities," however, they have done "far better" since the removal of the Taliban regime, enrolling in universities and finding employment with international agencies … Agence France-Presse (AFP) reports in a 2015 article that "[e]ducated and hard-working, the Hazaras have formed a new Afghan middle class" … According to the AAN analyst, Hazara "overall have the same access to jobs as other groups," however they have been "more affected" from the general economic decline as it is more difficult to access government employment "unless a Hazara is in the leadership of the department" … The source further states that, while NGOs had been a source of employment for the Hazara, with less aid going to Afghanistan, many NGOs are cutting wages and jobs, which disproportionately affect the Hazara ...

'According to the Deputy Director, there is a "perception" that other ethnic groups give lower paid positions to Hazara ... The same source further notes that an ethnicity quota system, as opposed to a merit-based system, is used for hiring processes in Afghanistan, which increases the risk of unemployment for the Hazara ... The AAN analyst states that the Hazara "sometimes report discrimination during the hiring process because they can be easily identified by their names…except for NGO or IO positions, where merit-based hiring is actually enforced" … According to the City University Professor, job recruitment is "overwhelmingly conducted through personal networks," which "disproportionally impacts groups who have traditionally been excluded from education and employment…Hazaras have limited access to professional networks because of historical and current discrimination".'[108]

10.2.4 The DFAT report noted:

'Hazaras living in Kabul participate in a wide variety of economic roles. Because of their traditional focus on education, Hazaras tend to be relatively well qualified for roles in the public service and the international community. However, Hazaras tend to be under-represented in senior civil service positions. This is largely due to the importance of familial, ethnic and tribal connections in Afghanistan: those making hiring decisions for both government and private sector positions commonly place more importance on such connections than on merit.'[109]

[107] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraphs 2.9-2.10), 18 September 2017, url.
[108] IRB, 'Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City', 20 April 2016, url.
[109] DFAT, 'Hazaras in Afghanistan', (paragraph 2.12), 18 September 2017, url.

10.2.5 In correspondence with the IRB Research Directorate in April 2016, '… a Kabul-based international development consultant stated that the high rate unemployment in Afghanistan, approximately 40 percent, "negatively affects all Afghans equally, including but not limited to, Hazaras".'[110]

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[110] IRB, 'Situation of Hazara people living in Kabul City', 20 April 2016, url.

Terms of Reference

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

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

- Background
- Legal context
- Demography
    - Population and religion
    - Hazara communities
    - Hazaras in Kabul
- Security situation in Hazarajat
- State treatment and attitudes
    - State position
    - Government action
    - Freedom of assembly
    - Political and economic participation
- Societal treatment and attitudes
    - Discrimination and harassment
    - Women
- Treatment by AGEs
    - Perpetrators and motives
    - Areas of control
    - Targeted attacks
    - Abductions
    - Taliban recruitment
- Employment and Education

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **22 August 2018**

Changes from last version of this note

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