

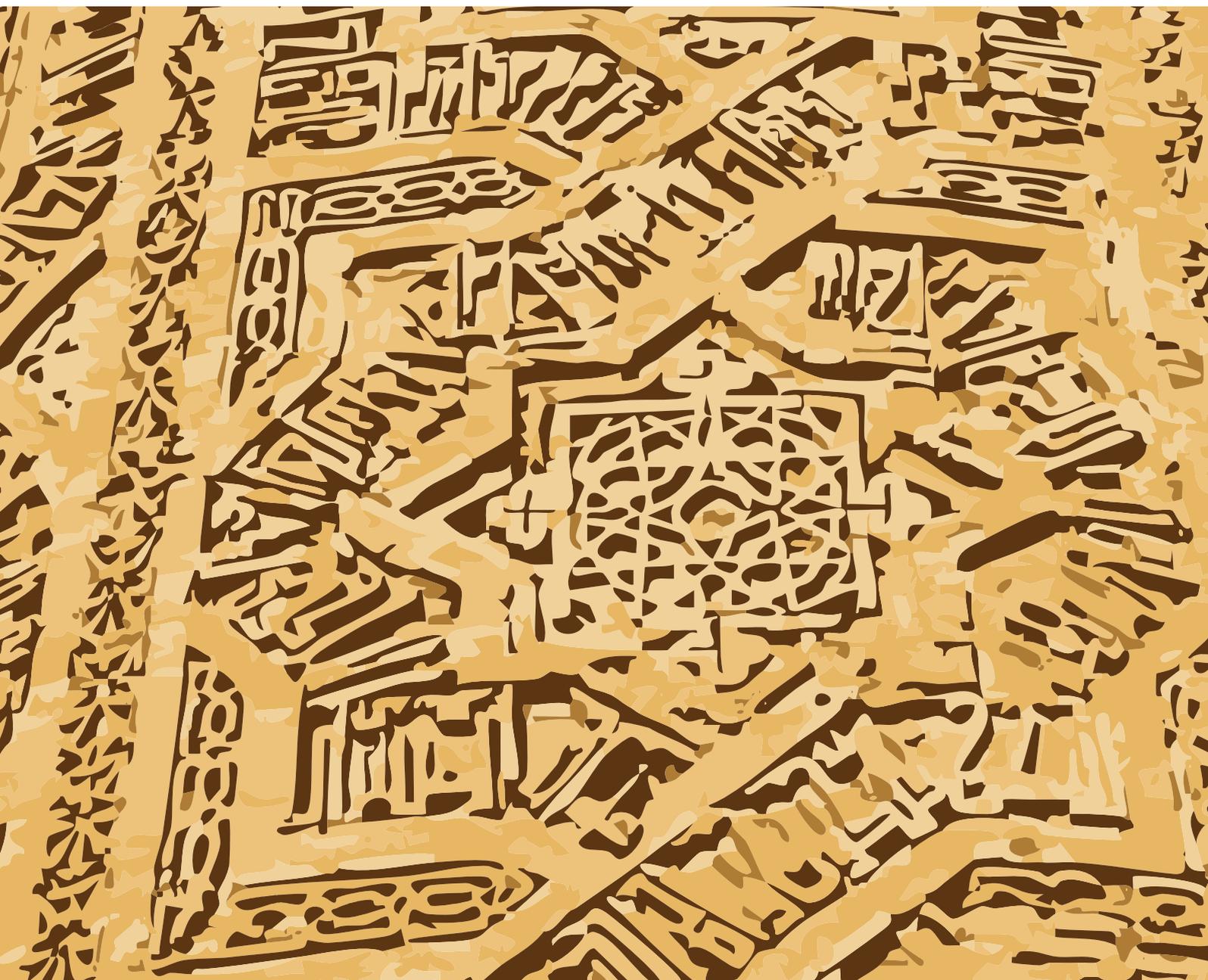
**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

<b>Bilagsnr.:</b>	<b>1715</b>
Land:	Afghanistan
Kilde:	Rawadari
Titel:	The Human Rights Situation of Ismaili Shias in Afghanistan
Udgivet:	december 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2. februar 2026



# The Human Rights Situation of Ismaili Shias in Afghanistan

*December 2025*



Rawadari is an Afghan human rights organisation that aims to deepen and grow the human rights culture of Afghanistan, ultimately reducing the suffering of all Afghans, especially women and girls. Rawadari helps build an Afghan human rights movement, monitors human rights violations, and pursues justice and accountability for violations. Rawadari works with individuals and collectives inside and outside Afghanistan.

*This report has been machine translated from Farsi/Dari to English and has been reviewed by human editors for accuracy and verification. Illustrations for this report are generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI).*

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Research Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Research Limitations</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Legal Framework</b>	<b>10</b>
A. Guarantees for the Rights of Religious Minorities	<b>10</b>
B. State Obligations Regarding Religious Minorities	<b>11</b>
<i>Protection and Guarantee of Minority Rights in National Laws</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>Executive and Administrative Measures</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>The Ethno-Social Structure of Ismailis in Afghanistan</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Examination and Analysis of Report Findings</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Right to Self-Determination</b>	<b>13</b>
A. Deprivation of Political Participation and the Right to Work	<b>13</b>
<i>Systematic Exclusion from Power and Decision-Making Levels</i>	<b>14</b>
<i>Dismissal and Deprivation of the Right to Work Based on Religious Identity</i>	<b>16</b>
<i>Concealing Identity or Converting to Retain Employment</i>	<b>18</b>
B. The Right to Form Unions and Associations	<b>19</b>
The Right to Religious Identity and Freedom of Expression	<b>21</b>
Fear of Expressing Religious Identity	<b>22</b>
Verbal Discrimination, Hate Speech, and the Takfir (labelling as infidels) of Ismaili Shias	<b>24</b>
<i>Hate Speech and Public Promotion of Takfir</i>	<b>24</b>
<i>Verbal Discrimination and Derogatory Labelling</i>	<b>26</b>
<i>Refusal to Eat Food Prepared by Ismailis</i>	<b>28</b>
<i>Considering the Slaughter of Animals by Ismailis as Forbidden (Haram)</i>	<b>29</b>
<i>Prohibition of Marriage and Kinship Ties with Ismaili Families</i>	<b>30</b>
<i>Forced Annulment of Marriages between Ismaili Men and Sunni Women</i>	<b>32</b>
<b>Freedom to Perform Religious Rituals</b>	<b>34</b>
Coercion to Participate in Others' Religious Ceremonies	<b>37</b>
<b>Imposition of Restrictions on Educational Institutions and Places of Worship</b>	<b>39</b>
Labelling Ismaili Places of Worship as "non-Islamic"	<b>40</b>
<b>Forced Conversion and Imposition of Hanafi Jurisprudence Education</b>	<b>41</b>
Compulsory Education of Hanafi Jurisprudence for Ismaili Children	<b>41</b>
<i>Threats, Torture, and Fines</i>	<b>43</b>
<i>Inducement to Learn Hanafi Jurisprudence</i>	<b>44</b>
Compelling Ismailis to Change Their Religion	<b>45</b>

<b>Consequences of Forced Conversion and Educating Ismaili Children in Taliban Madrasas</b>	<b>47</b>
Threats, Fear, and Security Concerns	<b>48</b>
<b>Suspicious and Extrajudicial Killings</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Gender and Religion-Based Discrimination Against Ismaili Women</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Forced Displacement and Seizure of Ismaili Property</b>	<b>55</b>
Forced Displacement	<b>56</b>
Seizure of Property Belonging to Ismailis	<b>57</b>
<b>Restrictions on Access to Justice</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>63</b>

## List of Acronyms

- CIA: Central Intelligence Agency (United States).
- MI6: Military Intelligence Section 6 (United Kingdom).
- DFA: De Facto Authorities (Refers to the Taliban administration currently in power in Afghanistan).
- ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- IRC: International Rescue Committee.
- MI6: Secret Intelligence Service (United Kingdom).
- MPVPV: Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (Amar-bil-Ma'ruf).
- OHCHR: Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights
- UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
- UDHR: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund.

## Glossary of Terms (Alphabetical)

- Ahl al-Tashayyu (Shia): The second largest branch of Islam. Ismaili faith is a sub-branch of Shia Islam.
- Amar-bil-Ma'ruf (Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice): The Taliban ministry responsible for enforcing their specific interpretation of Islamic morality and social codes
- Beit-ul-Ilm: Ismaili religious education centres that provide spiritual instruction; these currently face significant access restrictions, particularly for girls.
- Chadari (Burqa): A full-body garment covering the face and body; the report documents the Taliban beating Ismaili women for not wearing it, even in regions where it is not a local custom.
- Crimes Against Humanity: A legal classification for widespread or systematic attacks against a civilian population; the report suggests the organized persecution of Ismailis may fulfil this threshold
- Darwazha: A collective name for five districts in Badakhshan (Shaki, Mayami, Nasi, Kuf Ab, and Khwahan) where the most severe documented abuses, such as forced conversion and land seizures, occur
- Extrajudicial Killings: Executions carried out by or with the consent of authorities without any legal process or judicial proceeding
- Hanafi Jurisprudence (Fiqh): The specific school of Sunni Islamic law that the Taliban has mandated as the sole national standard, forcing Ismaili children to learn it in place of their own beliefs
- Ismaili Shia: A branch of Shia Islam that follows a living hereditary Imam; in Afghanistan, they are a religious minority primarily residing in central and northeastern provinces
- Jafari or Twelver Imam Shia: Both these terms refer to Jafari shia which is the bigger branch of Shia Islam. Afghanistan has a bigger population of Jafari Shias compared to Ismailis
- Jamatkhana: The communal place of worship, gathering, and prayer specifically for Ismaili Muslims
- Kalima (Profession of Faith): The fundamental declaration of belief in Islam; the report documents Ismailis being forced to recite it to be recognized as "Muslim"
- Madrassa: Place of learning. Educational institution. In the context of this report, madrassa primarily refers to religious schools teaching Hanafi jurisprudence
- Mortad (Apostate): A person who has abandoned their religion; the report notes instances where the Taliban's Ministry of Education has allegedly labelled the Ismaili community as apostates
- Moshrek (Polytheist): A derogatory label used by authorities to describe Ismailis, implying they worship more than one god
- Nowruz Diwaneh Shah: A traditional Ismaili cultural and religious festival in Badakhshan that has been banned

- Personal Status (Ahwal-e-Shakhsia): Laws governing family matters like marriage and inheritance; Ismaili rulings on these matters are currently overridden by Taliban courts using Hanafi law
- Rawofiz / Rafidi: A term used by extremists against Shia Muslims, meaning “those who reject”
- Saqafat e Islami. Translated as Islamic Culture. It is a key subject in school and university curriculum in Afghanistan that focuses on religious teaching.
- Takfir: The practice of declaring another Muslim an “infidel” or “non-believer” (kafar); the report describes this as a systematic tool of persecution

## Introduction

This report is about the human rights situation of the Muslim Ismaili Shia religious minority in Afghanistan following the Taliban's return to power in August 2021. The report covers restrictions and discrimination by the Taliban, the de-facto authorities (DFA), against the Ismaili community on their right to public and social participation and freedom of religion and worship, including limitations on worship, exercise of religious rituals and attempts at forced conversion. The report is based on 25 interviews with victims and survivors, their family members, civil society activists, and human rights defenders from the Ismaili community, both inside and outside Afghanistan. The primary objective of this report is to document prominent patterns of human rights violations against the Ismaili community in Afghanistan, raise public awareness, and support advocacy efforts to address the grievances experienced by this community.

The findings indicate that since returning to power, the Taliban have imposed widespread and discriminatory restrictions on the lives of this religious minority, resulting in systematic religious persecution. Over the past four years, Afghan Ismailis have been completely excluded from political, administrative, and social participation. Furthermore, the DFA have taken steps to weaken and suppress Ismaili religious and cultural identity, directly threatening their security, human dignity, and fundamental rights.

While discrimination against the Ismaili community is not new and has historical roots in Afghanistan, this research demonstrates that under the Taliban, these practices have become more organized and have expanded into every area of life. The restrictions and attempts to conversion affect all Ismailis, including Ismaili children who are being forcibly educated in Sunni, Taliban-run madrassas. Our findings indicate that in certain areas of Badakhshan, individuals who refused to transfer their children to Taliban religious schools (madrassas) faced fines, torture, death threats, and the burning of their homes and property.

Through public takfir (accusations of apostasy), intimidation, death threats, detention, and torture, the Taliban have coerced members of this community to abandon their faith and convert to Sunni sect of Islam.

The testimonies included in the report show a significant increase in the fear of expressing religious identity due to rising negative propaganda, takfir and hate speech. Other serious violations documented include:

- Strict restrictions on the freedom to perform religious rituals.
- Coercion to attend the religious ceremonies of other sects.
- Dismissal from government offices and deprivation of jobs due to religious identity.
- Prohibition of marriage and kinship ties with Ismaili families.
- Restrictions on educational centres and places of worship of Ismailis.
- Threats, extrajudicial killings, forced displacement, and the usurpation of Ismaili properties.

The findings illustrate that the Ismaili community is being subjected to systematic religious

persecution that may be considered an instance of crimes against humanity. The report calls for prompt immediate, effective, and targeted measures from the de facto authorities and relevant international bodies to protect the existence and fundamental rights of this religious minority in Afghanistan.

## Research Methodology

This research involved online interviews with 25 individuals (including five women), ranging from victims and their families to human rights defenders. The participants represent a wide geographical, social, and age diversity. Some were identified by the Rawadari research team, while others were introduced through a snowball method by the interviewees.

Interviews were conducted between October 3 and November 20, 2025, using a uniform, semi-structured questionnaire. Given the severity of the situation in Badakhshan province, a major portion of the interviewees were purposefully selected from that region; however, the report is inclusive of other provinces with Ismaili populations, including Kabul, Parwan, Bamyan, Balkh, and Baghlan. The timeframe examined is August 2021 to December 2025.

All interviews were conducted in Farsi/Dari, lasting between 90 minutes and two hours, with the informed consent of the participants. Researchers provided detailed information regarding the research objectives and security measures. Information was analysed using qualitative methods and categorized by key themes. Statistics in this report are used to identify patterns of violations as described by the interviewees.

## Research Limitations

During the research, Rawadari reached out to 53 members of the Ismaili community; however, 28 individuals declined to participate primarily due to security concerns and fears of reprisal by the DFA. It was particularly difficult to interview individuals who had been coerced into changing their religion, as they are under continuous Taliban surveillance and live in fear. Additionally, limited internet access in remote villages hindered outreach to more victims and witnesses.

Some individuals stated that reporting on the situation is the responsibility of the Ismaili religious authorities and leaders. They also mentioned, without naming individuals, that Ismaili religious authorities had advised followers to avoid protesting or speaking out to prevent endangering the community.

Furthermore, the Taliban have imposed strict restrictions on access to information and documentation of human rights violations. Independent monitoring of human rights violations is currently prohibited by the Taliban. Despite these challenges, this report provides a factual picture of the situation based on survivor testimonies and detailed interviews with members of the affected community. To protect the safety of interviewees, names of provinces and specific dates or other identifying details have occasionally been removed.

## Legal Framework

To ensure the realization of the principle of equality in the enjoyment of human rights—regardless of any racial, gender, religious, political, or other status—and in light of the vulnerable condition of minorities, numerous international instruments have recognized and guaranteed the rights and freedoms of religious minorities.

### A. Guarantees for the Rights of Religious Minorities

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) recognizes the principle of equality in the enjoyment of legal protections and all rights acknowledged within this Covenant for all individuals<sup>1</sup>. It prohibits any discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions. Furthermore, this Covenant guarantees freedom of thought and the freedom to have a religion or belief of one's choice, the freedom to manifest one's religion, and the performance of religious rites and teachings, whether individually or collectively, in public or private. According to the Human Rights Committee's interpretation of the right to freedom of thought and religion, an individual's freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief is an absolute right that must not be restricted under any circumstances<sup>2</sup>.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), while emphasizing non-discrimination in the enjoyment of the rights set forth in the declaration, proclaims freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for all individuals<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Declaration on Rights of Minorities) recognizes the right to existence, the provision of conditions to promote and enhance religious identity, the freedom to perform religious ceremonies and rituals, the establishment of religious institutions, and the participation of religious minorities in public life<sup>4</sup>.

Concurrently, the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan, while recognizing the freedom to perform religious rituals, stipulates: "Any kind of discrimination and privilege between the citizens of Afghanistan is prohibited. The citizens of Afghanistan, whether men or women, have equal rights and duties before the law." Additionally, in Article 131 of the Constitution, the adjudication of cases related to the personal status of followers of the Shia faith is guaranteed to be based on the jurisprudence of that sect<sup>5</sup>.

---

1 International Convent on Civil and Political Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

2 United Nations Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (1993), Paragraph 8

3 United Nations. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

4 United Nations. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic>

5 The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. 2004. Articles 2, 22 and 131.

## **B. State Obligations Regarding Religious Minorities**

In view of the points raised in the previous section—that the rights of religious minorities are guaranteed in numerous international human rights instruments, especially binding ones—member states have an obligation to adopt and implement the following measures to promote, protect, and respect the rights of religious minorities.

### ***1. Protection and Guarantee of Minority Rights in National Laws***

Pursuant to the ICCPR, member states are duty-bound to take legislative measures to guarantee and recognize the rights set forth in this Covenant, including the rights of religious minorities. These rights include possessing a religion and expressing it individually or collectively through worship, education, and the performance of rituals. Furthermore, states must prohibit any discrimination against individuals based on religious affiliations through their domestic laws.

The Declaration on the Rights of Minorities also calls upon countries to enact and implement appropriate legislative and other measures aimed at promoting religious identity and protecting the existence of religious minorities within their territories.

### ***2. Executive and Administrative Measures***

Another obligation of member states is to implement measures that guarantee the enjoyment of rights and freedoms for all individuals against interference by others. Based on this type of obligation, states must take effective actions to protect followers of different religions and beliefs against any hostile acts by groups, individuals, or other institutions that disrupt their freedom to have or manifest their religion. States must also prevent forced conversion or the imposition of a religion on children contrary to the beliefs of their parents. The Human Rights Committee has also specified that preventing attacks against religious groups, the legal prosecution of hate speech, and guaranteeing safe access to religious sites fall under these state obligations.

The Declaration on the Rights of Minorities also requests that states implement measures to encourage public knowledge regarding the history, traditions, language, and culture of minorities existing within their territory. They should also design and implement national policies and programs with due regard for the interests of minorities and their full participation in the economic progress and development of their country.

Afghanistan has acceded to numerous binding international instruments that guarantee the rights of religious minorities, including the ICCPR, and is obligated to implement the provisions and regulations contained therein. Therefore, the Taliban, as the de facto authority, are duty-bound to protect religious minorities in Afghanistan by adhering to the obligations resulting from the country's accession to these instruments. They must also adopt the necessary legislative, administrative, and executive measures to provide the ground for minorities' access to human rights and freedoms.

## Socio-Ethnic Structure of Ismailis in Afghanistan

While precise official data regarding the Ismaili population and their ethnic composition in Afghanistan is unavailable, unofficial estimates and research suggest that Ismailis represent approximately 2–3% of the total Shia population in the country. Followers of the Ismaili faith are primarily located in the provinces of Bamiyan, Badakhshan, Kabul, Baghlan<sup>6</sup>, Takhar<sup>7</sup>, Uruzgan, Ghor, the Sheikh Ali district of Parwan, the Behsud district of Maidan Wardak<sup>8</sup>, Tashqurghan in Samangan, Kunduz, and Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh<sup>9</sup>.

In Badakhshan province, Ismaili Shias mainly reside in the areas of Shughnan, Wakhan, Zebak, Yamgan, Jurm, Roshan, Karan wa Manjan, and Darwaz<sup>10</sup>. Outside of Badakhshan, roughly 90% of the Ismaili population is ethnically Hazara, living mostly in the central regions of Afghanistan, whereas the Ismailis of Badakhshan are ethnically Tajik<sup>11</sup>. Some of these figures are disputed due to lack of an official census in Afghanistan in recent decades.

## Review and Analysis of Report Findings

This section analyses the human rights situation of Ismaili Shias in Afghanistan based on interviews and international human rights standards. It examines first the right to self-determination and then the right to religious identity and its expression. This section includes our findings on access to religious education, freedom to exercise religious practice, the state of religious education centres and places of worship, as well as forced displacement and illegal and forceful seizure of property of the Ismaili community by the DFA.

---

6 Faruk Mergen, 'Ismailis as a Minority Group in Afghanistan: A Study of their History and Contemporary Religious Life,' *Kader*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2013, pp. 159–180

7 Hafizullah Emadi, "Afghanistan: The Tajik-Ismailis of Takhar — Ending an Isolation," *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 291, No. 1694 (2009), p. 288.

8 Yahya Baiza, "The Shi'i Orientation of the Hazaras of Afghanistan: A Historical Analytical Survey," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2014), pp. 151-171

9 Robert L. Canfield, "Faction and Conversion in a Plural Society: Religious Alignments in the Hindu Kush," *Anthropological Papers*, No. 50, Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 1973

10 Sheroz, Jaborshaevich Khunshae, 'Characteristics of the Pamir Ismaili Community,' in *Proceedings of the 2021 Science and Innovation Conference: Orientations and Development Priorities*. Melbourne, Australia, (2021).

11 Ismaili Heritage Society. *The Ismailis of Afghanistan*. <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/29909>

# Right to Self-Determination

---



International human rights instruments mandate that all citizens, without discrimination, have the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs and have equal access to public services. However, research findings indicate that the Taliban have deprived Ismaili Shias of these fundamental rights, including political and social participation and equal employment opportunities, solely due to their religious identity.

## A) Deprivation of Political Participation and the Right to Work

Despite international standards that protect the right of minorities to participate in public and economic life, Ismailis have been extensively excluded from decision-making levels and government institutions over the past four years. Additionally, members of the Ismaili community have been deprived of access to employment opportunities and forming collectives and associations with other Ismailis.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan has expressed concern about the absence of minorities from the current DFA administration. The report confirms that ethnic and religious minorities are absent from the administration and decision-making processes<sup>12</sup>.

### *Systematic Exclusion from Power and Decision-Making Levels*

All 25 interviewees reported that Ismailis have been removed from security, legal and judicial institutions at the national, provincial, and district levels. Even in areas where Ismailis form the majority or a significant part of the population, they hold no positions in local administrations, such as in key positions in districts or directorates and other local decision-making roles. Their presence is limited to minor roles in the education and health sectors as teachers and healthcare workers, that too in areas populated by the Ismaili community.



*One interviewee noted:*

*“From the Prime Minister’s office to deputy ministries and large directorates, 34 governors, 364 district governors, and independent directorates that exist in the formation of government institutions, no Ismaili youth and no member of this community is present. This explicitly shows that Ismailis have been deliberately deprived of national participation and presence in government offices<sup>13</sup>.”*

Another interviewee highlighted the loss of representation compared to the previous government:



*“We had many individuals at the decision-making level of the government, provinces, cultural and academic institutions, including 4-5 members of the previous parliament were of the Ismaili faith. We had representatives in the provincial councils of Badakhshan, Bamiyan, Baghlan, and Kabul; the deputy governor of Kabul was a member of this same community; the chancellors/*

<sup>12</sup> Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. Richard Bennett. 9 September 2022. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/51/6>

<sup>13</sup> Rawadari. Interviewee No 11. 9 November 2025

*heads of Samangan and Baghlan universities was also from our people. We were present in human rights institutions and judicial and legal institutions, but unfortunately, currently, all these individuals have been sent home<sup>14</sup>.*

Some of the other interviewees emphasized that even in districts with majority Ismaili residents, the members of this religious community have no role and place in the local administration.



*An interviewee explained the current criteria for employment:*

*“Currently, right here in Badakhshan, in all directorates, mudiriyat levels (mid-level management in local government bureaucracy), and at decision-making levels of local administrations, we do not witness the presence of even a single Ismaili. The Taliban’s criterion for hiring and firing employees of government offices is being a follower Hanafi sect and being affiliated to Deobandi school of thought, and this privilege goes to individuals who fought alongside them in the trenches. Based on these criteria, even other individuals from the Sunni sect are not given the opportunity to participate, let alone Ismailis whom they constantly call infidels (kafir) and polytheists (mushrik). The Taliban even tell Ismailis that they must either recite the Kalima (profession of faith) and become Muslims or you do not have the right to live in the geography under our control<sup>15</sup>.*



*Others pointed out that decisions regarding their future are now made without their input:*

*“...Now a regime rules Afghanistan that makes all decisions related to the lives and future of minorities itself. It interferes even in the smallest local issues, including issues related to the beliefs and religious rituals of minorities. Therefore, if Ismailis’ rights are violated, they have neither the right to make decisions nor can they protest<sup>16</sup>.*



*Another interviewee stated:*

*“Over the past 20 years, instead of participating in destruction or collaborating with the Taliban, the Ismaili community of Afghanistan strove to pursue education and knowledge. Now, the Taliban say: ‘Since you did not participate in Jihad, you have no right to hold positions in government offices. Either come and recite the Kalima (profession of faith), become Muslims, and repent—or prove to us that you have become Muslims. Only then will we decide what role you may have in government administration.<sup>17</sup>”*

A number of interviewees also pointed to the role of ethnic identity in the exclusion of Ismailis from Taliban-controlled government offices:



*“Our people in the Baghlan province have been deprived of political and social participation not only for being Ismaili, but also for being Hazara. In the current situation under Taliban rule, only those who are members of the Taliban or who have been connected with the group over the past 20 years have a share in decision-making. Ismailis have no role in local governance or major national*

14 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 30 October 2025

15 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

16 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025

17 Rawadari. Interviewee No 21. 26 October 2025

decisions.<sup>18</sup>”



Regarding this issue, another interviewee said:

*“Currently, there is not a single Ismaili individual in leadership levels of government offices, nor even in lower-level positions within judicial, legal, or security institutions. We, especially the Ismaili Hazaras, are exposed to discrimination more than any other group due to our ethnic and religious identity... While every human being has the right to live according to their own religious beliefs and convictions, the current situation is such that Ismailis are forced to live according to Hanafi jurisprudence, and the Taliban decide the lives and futures of Ismailis based on their own strict interpretation of Islam.”<sup>19</sup>*

The intentional exclusion of Ismailis from decision-making levels of government administration has been repeatedly highlighted as a common pattern in the accounts of all interviewees. This indicates a targeted policy by the Taliban and serves as an instance of discrimination based on religion.

## 2. Dismissal and Deprivation of the Right to Work Due to Religious Identity

Six of the 25 interviewees reported deprivation of the right to work due to religious identity and 16 of the interviewees said they know individuals who have been removed from jobs in the government due to being Ismailis.

One interviewee with higher education and years of experience described his dismissal:



*“When the Taliban returned to power, my former colleagues from other ethnic and religious groups returned to their jobs, so I also went back to continue my work. While my other colleagues signed the attendance sheet and entered their respective departments, I was not allowed to sign in. When I asked for the reason, they said this order was issued by the head of the department.*

Later, through local elders, we spoke with the head of the department and asked what the problem was. He replied that the first principle in the Islamic Emirate is that all employees must be Muslims. He even told the local elders that Ismailis are not Muslims, and added that if they consider them [Ismailis] to be Muslims, it means their own faith is incomplete.

The Director General of Human Resources for this department also replied to my complaint by saying that in an Islamic government, those who enforce the laws must be Muslims. I then visited the complaints office of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Kabul; the official there told me: ‘The fact that the Emirate is not causing you trouble and that you are still alive is enough.’ Later, the provincial complaint commission repeated the same sentiment, adding that for the Shia, and specifically for Ismailis who are followers of the Aga Khan—and who, according to their claims, do not pray, do not fast, and have no

18 Rawadari. Interviewee No 12. 27 October 2025

19 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

mosques—there is no place within the judicial, legal, or security institutions<sup>20</sup>



*Another interviewee recounted the dismissal of a relative in Bamiyan: “One of my relatives in Bamiyan province worked in a government post. The Taliban treated him badly from the start because they knew he was Hazara and they assumed he was Shia. But they kept him at the job because in that district everyone is Hazara and they thought his presence is necessary for the work. As soon as they found out that besides being Hazara and Shia, he is also Ismaili, that very day they dismissed him from his position in a very insulting manner and told him that during this time we didn’t know you were a cursed infidel (kafir-e-la’een); pack your things right this moment and leave here. They made him sign a paper and dismissed him from the job”<sup>21</sup>.*



*Another interviewee stated: “I cannot share his name with you, nor can I say what our relationship is, but he is very close to me. He held a good position in one of the local offices and had served there for over 15 years. With the arrival of the Taliban, he continued his work, but was constantly subjected to humiliation and insults. Especially in recent months, the head of that department harassed him specifically for being Ismaili. Even though he prayed and participated in congregational prayers five times a day—and despite his religious knowledge, education level, work experience, and activities being exceptional... finally, two months ago, he was dismissed from the post he had held for fifteen years. He was told: ‘You are Ismaili and you cannot be among us’<sup>22</sup>.”*

Another interviewee said that the Taliban labelled one of their friends as infidel due to differences in religious rituals and dismissed him from work:



*“One of my friends, who held a Master’s degree, worked in a high-ranking government office and had continued his work after the Taliban returned to power. One day, the Taliban summoned him because they noticed he did not go to the mosque at prayer time. In a meeting, they even stated that this person does not pray, is a Kafir (infidel), and that such individuals have no place in the administration. He explained that he is not an infidel, that he prays according to his own tradition, and that he does not go to the mosque due to these religious differences. However, the Taliban pressured him and ultimately forced him to resign.”<sup>23</sup>*

---

20 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025  
21 Rawadari. Interviewee No 10. 4 October 2025  
22 Rawadari. Interviewee No 8. 1 November 2025  
23 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025



*Another interviewee stated:*

*“I know someone who worked in the healthcare sector. He told me that once the Taliban realized he was Ismaili, their behaviour changed and they harassed him under various pretexts. They would ask why he didn’t pray five times a day [in their manner] and told him: ‘God willing, we will make a [proper] human out of you.’ These pressures eventually forced him to leave his job<sup>24</sup>.”*



*In the private sector, one participant reported:*

*“21 employees of a private institution in Kabul city, who were all followers of the Ismaili faith, were all forced to leave their duties within one week due to their religious identity. It is interesting that the most important supporting organizations of this private institution are international organizations”<sup>25</sup>.*

## Concealing Identity or Converting to Retain Employment

Nine of the 25 interviewees stated that a limited number of Ismailis, in order to keep their jobs—specifically in lower-level government positions—have been forced to conceal their religious identity or change their religion. One interviewee recounted:



*“Currently, there is not even a single soldier among us, and we have no presence in any government bodies. If anyone is there, they work by hiding their identity and do not dare to express their religious affiliation. There is one person in a district of Badakhshan province who announced he is no longer Ismaili. A number of others are teachers remaining from the previous government who work in Ismaili-populated areas.”<sup>26</sup>*



*Another interviewee narrated:*

*“One of my neighbours works in a government office. The Taliban told him: ‘If you pray according to our method and attend the congregational prayer, you are an employee of this office and the government; otherwise, you must resign.’ To provide for his family’s livelihood, he was forced to comply with the Taliban’s demands.”<sup>27</sup>*

Similarly, some other interviewees reported that a number of Ismailis were hired in Taliban-controlled government offices after converting:



*“Three or four Ismailis who had committed crimes during the Republic era and joined the Taliban are now working in government offices after changing their religion. One of these individuals even changed his name and treated his family members and relatives very poorly.”<sup>28</sup>*

24 Rawadari. Interviewee No 22. 20 November 2025

25 Rawadari. Interviewee No 25. 26 November 2025

26 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 29 October 2025

27 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025

28 Rawadari. Interviewee No 5. 14 November 2025



Another interviewee stated:

*“Juma Khan Fateh<sup>29</sup> has hired a number of Ismailis who changed their religion as his armed guards, effectively granting them privileges (for conversion).<sup>30</sup>”*

Based on the regulations set forth in the ICCPR, which prohibits any discrimination based on religion, the systematic deprivation of Ismailis’ right to work and their dismissal from government offices due to their religious identity constitutes discrimination and a severe violation of human rights.

## B) The Right to Form Unions and Associations

The formation of unions and associations is a tool for protecting the identity of religious minorities and supporting them against discrimination and human rights violations. This right, as stipulated in the ICCPR, ensures the empowerment of a social group to protect its interests and cannot be subject to any restrictions except those prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society.

However, 19 of the interviewees stated that since the Taliban’s return to power, the Ismaili community has been deprived of the possibility of forming any unions, associations, or other social institutions. Likewise, a number of interviewees spoke of threats against members of social and religious institutions to halt their activities.

Regarding the ban on the work of active institutions within the Ismaili community, one interviewee said:



*“The academic and educational sectors, ethnic networks, and other institutions that operated extensively and were rooted across all fields were shut down by the Taliban. The Taliban banned the activities of all these institutions, claiming that the Ismaili community is ‘too free’ and ‘excessive’... all institutions were closed one after another.”<sup>31</sup>*



Another interviewee stated:

*“Not only has it been impossible to form an institution, council, or association over the past four years, but the Taliban also abolished pre-existing institutions or forced their members to cease their activities. Previously, there was a council or an Ismaili institution in every region and village, and its members worked actively. But after the Taliban’s return to power, these institutions were closed, and their members were threatened directly or indirectly... My father, who is an elder in our region, was under various pressures to leave the council and local institutions and to stop his social and civic activities.”<sup>32</sup>*

29 “Juma Khan Fateh is a local Taliban commander in Badakhshan province. All 25 interviewees spoke of his prominent role in the harassment and suppression of Ismailis. He serves as the general military commander for the five Darwaz districts in this province.”

30 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

31 Rawadari. Interviewee No 8. 1 November 2025

32 Rawadari. Interviewee No 5. 14 November 2025

Although the Taliban have banned the formation of such institutions and unions for other ethnic and religious groups as well, the imposition of this restriction on Ismaili Shias—as one of the vulnerable and at-risk groups—has resulted in the loss of their collective ability to defend their human rights and freedoms. This action is considered an explicit violation of human rights according to international treaties.

# The Right to Religious Identity and the Freedom of Religious Expression

---



The right to religious identity is one of the most vital components of the freedom of religion and belief, protected by international human rights instruments in both individual and collective dimensions. According to these treaties, every person has the right to freely express their belief and religion, individually or collectively, in public or private spaces. The Human Rights Committee emphasizes that the freedom to manifest or express a religion or belief—through worship, rituals, customs, and teaching—encompasses a broad and diverse range of religious acts and behaviours.

In Afghanistan, since the Taliban's return to power, the space for religious freedom for Ismailis and the possibility of publicly performing religious programs and rituals has been significantly restricted. Persecution, humiliation, the spread of negative propaganda, verbal discrimination, and accusations of apostasy (Takfir), coupled with threats and intimidation, are the most significant factors that interviewees believe have intensified these restrictions.

## Fear of Expressing Religious Identity

All participants in this research stated that Ismaili Shias cannot reveal their religious identity and beliefs due to fear of discrimination, humiliation, harassment, security concerns, fear of harm to their families, and the risk of losing their jobs. Among them, 15 individuals stated that they have personally experienced hiding their religious identity.

The concealment of religious identity among members of the Ismaili community is not a new phenomenon but has a long history in the country; however, according to the interviewees, this situation has worsened following the Taliban's return to power over the last four years. One interviewee recounted:



*"In a society where it is said that an Ismaili's bread is haram (forbidden), that Ismailis smell bad, and that Ismailis are infidels, how can they express their religious identity freely and without fear? Of course, in districts where Ismailis form the majority, this problem does not exist; but when they travel to other areas, they hide their religious identity for fear of discrimination and humiliation, so that no one tells them Ismailis are bad, infidels, or godless, or, for example, that their food is not halal. I have hidden my own religious identity many times."<sup>33</sup>*



*Another interviewee stated:*

*"Ismailis have experienced all kinds of oppression and tyranny throughout history, and that historical fear still exists; it has increased especially since the Taliban returned to power. For this reason, a large number of Ismailis, including students studying at universities, cannot express their identity or hold their religious ceremonies. I personally have many experiences where, whenever Islamic Culture (Saqafat-e Islami) professors at the university realized I was Ismaili, they would mock our religious leader."<sup>34</sup>*

33 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

34 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025

Similarly, another interviewee spoke about the reasons for concealing Ismaili identity:

“I had a young student in an online class for a while. One day, because I had posted a message on my Facebook story for an Ismaili religious occasion, he asked if I was Ismaili. When I replied ‘yes,’ he was very surprised and said: ‘You have this freedom because you live abroad.’ He said that he is also Ismaili but is afraid to reveal his religious identity. We talked; he had a lump in his throat and said: ‘How good it is that you can post messages freely on religious occasions; but we cannot do this, we are afraid for our family, for our jobs, and for everything. If anyone asks about my religion, I say I am Sunni.’”<sup>35</sup>

Another interviewee, regarding the fear of expressing her religious identity, stated:

“If they ever asked about my religion, I would hide it because I was afraid. It was terrifying for me to be a journalist, a woman, and a Hazara, and then to add another factor—that I am Ismaili—on top of that. I didn’t want to do that.”<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, another interviewee explained that due to pressure and fear of interrogation, he cannot reveal his identity and religious beliefs:

“Currently, the situation is such that Ismailis perform prayers according to the Sunni method—at the same time as Sunnis and with folded hands. Due to pressure, they are secretive about their religious rituals and methods of worship... There have been times when I went to the Taliban’s offices for the Promotion of Virtue or Ministry of Education and it coincided with prayer time; being the only Shia among the Taliban, I was forced to pray with folded hands and according to the Sunni method to hide my identity, so as not to be subjected to interrogation.”<sup>37</sup>

Another interviewee said:  
“Local youths have told me many times in phone calls that we are mocked by the local Taliban, our Imam is insulted, and we are not considered Muslims. These issues cause Ismailis to hide their religious identity when traveling to other areas.... In villages and other regions, we cannot perform our worship freely. Of course, these issues existed in the past and exist now as well. In the past, when we went from one area to another, because of extremism that generally views Shias poorly, we couldn’t say we were Ismaili. That same situation has re-emerged, and what the Taliban say in the media about there being religious freedom is not true.”<sup>38</sup>

According to a number of interviewees, Ismaili families in some areas send their children to local madrasas to learn the essential matters of jurisprudence (fiqh) of other Islamic denominations. This is done primarily to protect them from discrimination in society or to prevent potential harm and risks.

35 Rawadari. Interviewee No 8. 1 November 2025

36 Rawadari. Interviewee No 10. 4 October 2025

37 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025

38 Rawadari. Interviewee No 17. 13 November 2025

“There are local madrasas and schools that teach us the religious matters of both Sunnis and Twelver Shias (Jaafari sect) from childhood. The emphasis is on learning both so that we can protect ourselves in specific times and conditions. For example, [learning] both Tarawih and Twelver Shia topics. If we are among the Twelver Shia community, we say we are Twelver Shia, and if we are among Sunnis, we say we are Sunni...”<sup>39</sup>

## Verbal Abuse, Hate Speech, and the Takfir of Ismaili Shias

The ICCPR mandates that states protect religious freedom through legal and executive measures and prevent any incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence based on religion. The Human Rights Committee has also specified that preventing attacks against religious groups and the legal prosecution of hate speech are fundamental duties of the state. However, an analysis of the data from this research shows that over the past four years, various forms of verbal discrimination against Ismaili Shias—including hate speech and public Takfir (labelling them as infidels)—have significantly increased. The evidence obtained indicates that the Taliban and extremist religious groups have played a key role in exacerbating this situation.

## Hate Speech and the Public Promotion of Takfir

All 25 interviewees emphasized that hate speech and the public Takfir of the Ismaili community have noticeably increased since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan. According to the collected information, this propaganda is primarily carried out by officials from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV), local Taliban commanders, extremist clerics, and pro-Taliban imams during classroom lectures, public programs, and various public occasions.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan has also stated in a report that he has had reports indicating the Taliban’s Ministry of Education has declared the Ismaili community to be apostates (Murtad)<sup>40</sup>.



*Furthermore, an interviewee who witnessed such propaganda recounted: “I personally witnessed the Imam of the Karte-e Itefaq Grand Mosque in Pul-e-Khumri, Baghlan province, attributing unjust labels to Ismailis during a Friday prayer sermon; things I had never heard in my 30 to 35 years of life. He stated not once, but many times, that anyone who gives their daughter in marriage to an Ismaili is equivalent to dragging seven generations of their family into the fires of hell... On another occasion, he claimed in the Friday sermon that Ismailis do not pray or face the Qibla, and anyone who does not face the Qibla or pray is not considered a Muslim. Although the Ismaili Council (Consul) shared this with officials from the Taliban’s Department of Hajj and Religious Affairs and warned them of the dangerous consequences of such propaganda, the mentioned Imam*

39 Rawadari. Interviewee No 19. 14 November 2025

40 Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. Richard Bennett. 9 February 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5284-situation-human-rights-afghanistan-report-special-rapporteur>

continues his negative campaign against Ismailis."<sup>41</sup>



Another interviewee shared information regarding the experience of a relative: "My uncle's daughter studies at a Sunni religious school (Madrassa) in Kabul. She once shared that during a class discussion about Shias, they were labelled absolute infidels (Kafir). They said another sect of Shias who call themselves Ismailis do not align with any of the divine religions; their rituals and methods of worship cannot be categorized within any of these faiths, and for this reason, they cannot be considered part of the Abrahamic religions."<sup>42</sup>



Another interviewee spoke about their experience during university studies: "When the Taliban returned to power, I had two semesters left until graduation. At that time, they taught us a book for the 'Islamic Culture' (Saqafat-e Islami) subject in which parts described the Ismaili faith as one of the 'hated' religions and sects. The book claimed that followers of the Ismaili faith are 'misguided' and have been cursed by God since the time they supposedly called Ali their god."<sup>43</sup>



Regarding the content of this curriculum, another interviewee narrated: "In this Islamic Culture textbook, about 35 pages are written about the Ismaili faith, of which only two points are correct: one, that the Imam of the Ismailis is named Karim, and two, that he is a Harvard graduate. Every other detail is utter slander and accusation. For example, it claims the Ismaili faith was fabricated by foreigners, as if the British and British colonialism created it. It also claims that the Aga Khan, the Imam of the Ismailis, is actually British and that Ismaili religious matters were designed by intelligence agencies like MI6 and the CIA with the goal of creating division among Muslims... This book was previously one of the sources for the Islamic Culture subject, but now it has become a formal part of the curriculum."<sup>44</sup>



Additionally, numerous cases of public Takfir of Ismailis by local Taliban commanders have been reported. One interviewee stated: "With the Taliban coming to power, propaganda and hate speech against Ismailis have increased. For example, a local commander of this group in Badakhshan province said in an audio clip addressed to Ismailis: 'No matter what you say, we do not accept you within the circle of Islam, and in our view, you are not Muslims, whether you like it or not.'"<sup>45</sup>



Similarly, another interviewee remarked: "In an audio recording shared on social media, a Taliban member tells the Department of Promotion of Virtue: 'Why are you implementing the Promotion of Virtue in Kabul? You must implement it in Badakhshan. Ismailis are infidels and you must do something about this.'"<sup>46</sup>

41 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

42 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025

43 Rawadari. Interviewee No 21. 26 October 2025

44 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

45 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025

46 Rawadari. Interviewee No 18. 28 October 2025

Explaining the consequences of these experiences, one interviewee said:

“Such encounters have a deep and negative impact on our psychological security. We do not feel like members of this society and always feel like ‘others.’ A sense of fear and insecurity is always with me, and those around me, especially the children, live in constant fear.”<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, another interviewee stated that individuals who previously held negative and Takfiri views toward the Ismaili community have now risen to power and are using force to pressure members of the community:

“The negative narrative and mindset against the Ismaili faith that has existed for years—calling them godless and infidels—is now armed and holds power. This same mindset has now intensified the pressure on the Ismaili community through the power of the gun and force. The Taliban’s Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue has become the authority for enforcing this negative narrative; an institution that possesses weapons, power, and executive authority. Additionally, the imams of mosques connected to the Taliban play an active role in reinforcing and promoting this discriminatory and negative view.”<sup>48</sup>

## Verbal Discrimination and Humiliating Labels

All interviewees stated that various forms of verbal discrimination and humiliating labels against followers of the Ismaili faith have long existed in society, but have become more widespread and prevalent over the past four years. According to the statements of the interviewees, labels such as “Kafir” (infidel), “Murtad” (apostate), “Rawafidh” (rejectionists), “Mushrik” (polytheist), “Ghali” (extremist/exaggerator), “godless,” “Cheragh-Kush” (lamp-extinguishers), “Cheragh-Gulak,”<sup>49</sup> “Ghalat,” “a fabricated sect fostered by the West and Britain,” “incestuous marriage,” and “users of hashish and drugs” are among the most significant terms used in public, as well as in work and educational environments, to humiliate and insult followers of this faith.

“One of the interviewees stated:  
“There are numerous negative labels and interpretations against Ismailis that have become more common since the Taliban’s arrival. Words like Rawafidh, Mushrik, Ghali, Kafir, and Cheragh-Kushak have existed regarding followers of this faith since ancient times, but they are used much more frequently now.”<sup>50</sup>

Another interviewee, who experienced constant humiliation in the workplace due to their religious identity, recounted:

“A few years ago, during the Taliban’s rule, I was working at Kabul Airport. When my religious identity was exposed, one of the airport officials summoned me and asked, ‘Are you a polytheist?’ I said, ‘No, I believe in God and I am a Muslim.’ He

47 Rawadari. Interviewee No 25. 26 November 2025

48 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

49 The context to both these terms that mean those who turn off/extinguish lights comes from a sinister and inaccurate accusation towards the Ismaili community that accuses them of collective improper sexual conduct among men and women in places of worship.

50 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

*insisted, 'No, you Ismailis are polytheists and infidels.' During the Republic era, I also worked at this same airport and became known as 'Nour Mohammad the Shia' (pseudonym) and 'Nour Mohammad the Infidel'; they generally called me by these names."<sup>51</sup>*

Similarly, some interviewees noted that these humiliating labels are sometimes even applied to the religious leader of the Ismailis:

“A series of unjust labels have always been raised against the religious leader of the Ismailis, including the claim that he is a product of the West and Britain, has no connection to Islam, and various immoral behaviours are attributed to him.”<sup>52</sup>

Another interviewee said:  
“Both some of the people and the Taliban call us Ismailis infidels and subject us to humiliation and insults. They even humiliate my children at school, telling them they are not Muslims.”<sup>53</sup>

Another interviewee explained their experience:  
“Even some of the Twelver Shias are prejudiced against us. I used to travel to various places for work, and whenever religion was discussed, some of them would say there is another sect called Ismaili whose followers are disciples of 'Sayed Kayan,' and when they marry, they take the bride to their disciple-leader on the first night. They also claimed that Ismailis are 'lamp-extinguishers,' their food is not halal, and entering their homes is not right. I heard these words with my own ears from a Twelver Shia mullah.”<sup>54</sup>

Another interviewee stated:  
“I attended a wedding ceremony in the city of Faizabad, Badakhshan province; everyone was Sunni and knew nothing of my religious identity. During the conversation and debate with one another, several of them said quite explicitly that Ismailis are infidels. They said, 'If they go to the mosque, it is out of fear of us; if they pray, they do not do it correctly, they do not perform ablutions, and they only come for show and to deceive others.’”<sup>55</sup>

Another interviewee said:  
“In public spaces, I have repeatedly faced ridicule, insults, and even threats. For example, once I was with a few ordinary people and during the conversation, after they realized I was Ismaili, one of them said: 'You are not Muslims and you must be killed.’”<sup>56</sup>

51 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 29 October 2025

52 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

53 Rawadari. Interviewee No 3. 16 October 2025

54 Rawadari. Interviewee No 23. 5 November 2025

55 Rawadari. Interviewee No 15. 28 October 2025.

56 Rawadari. Interviewee No 25. 26 November 2025

The information obtained shows that such labels even exist in academic institutions and are used to humiliate followers of the Ismaili faith. As one interviewee explained:



*“Professors of the ‘Islamic Culture’ subject, both during the Republic and under the Taliban, repeatedly asked me: ‘Do you have a ceremony called Cheragh-Kushak? Meaning you go to the Jamatkhana, turn off the lights, and then men perform immoral acts with women, and it doesn’t matter to them if it is their sister, mother, or wife.’ These words were very ugly and distressing; it was the first time I had heard them. No matter how much I swore and tried to explain to the professors that such a thing could not exist in the Ismaili community—nor in any other culture—they would not accept it. I explained to them that men and women praying in one place does not mean immoral behaviour; rather, the simultaneous presence of men and women in such programs reflects the humanistic outlook of the Ismaili community.”<sup>57</sup>*

During the past four years, the Taliban have not only failed in their responsibility to prevent religious discrimination and prosecute those responsible for hate speech against Ismailis, but according to several interviewees, they have played a role in exacerbating this situation. Public Takfir, negative propaganda, and the humiliation and insulting of Ismaili Shias—which on one hand has severely restricted their freedom to perform religious rituals and acts, and on the other has led to increased psychological insecurity, fear, and social isolation—are among the most severe forms of human rights violations.

## Refusal to Eat Food Prepared by Ismailis

The data from this research indicates that another serious form of religious discrimination against the Ismaili community in Afghanistan is the propagation of a boycott against eating food prepared by members of this community. Twenty-two of the interviewees in this study stated that propaganda regarding the “forbidden” (haram) nature of Ismaili food and the avoidance of its consumption has increased, particularly over the last four years. However, according to them, this belief has a long history and has persisted from the distant past to the present day.

The interviewees further emphasized that such an attitude currently exists both among a segment of the public and among members of the Taliban—a factor that has paved the way for the further expansion of discriminatory behaviour against this religious minority. One interviewee, who personally experienced such behaviour, recounted:



*“...One day, I was sharing a meal with a member of the Taliban. During the conversation, he stated that Ismailis are infidels. I replied that I myself am Ismaili and a Muslim. He immediately stopped eating and refused to continue the meal with me.”<sup>58</sup>*

57 Rawadari. Interviewee No 21. 26 October 2025

58 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 29 October 2025



Similarly, another interviewee said:

*“Ismailis also live in one of the districts of Kabul province. A friend from there told me that they are constantly subjected to humiliation and insults from others; people call Ismailis Ghali (extremists/exaggerators) and say, ‘Do not bring bread from their homes’ and ‘Do not eat their bread, because it is haram.’”<sup>59</sup>*

Based on the points raised by the interviewees, there are cases where followers of other Islamic denominations, despite living in the same neighbourhood as Ismailis, still refuse to eat their food. In this regard, one interviewee stated:



*“I haven’t had this experience personally, but my relatives and fellow Ismailis in Afghanistan were not accepted by their neighbours over the past four decades, nor would [the neighbours] eat with them, because they believed we were infidels.”<sup>60</sup>*



Another interviewee stated:

*“There are two serious beliefs prevalent among some people: first, that the bread baked by Ismailis is not halal and should not be eaten; and second, it is claimed that because Ismailis do not bathe or wash their bodies, they smell bad. When such beliefs are told to someone from childhood, they become a mental pattern by adulthood. Even if Ismailis were to bathe ten times a day, that person’s mindset would not change.”<sup>61</sup>*



Another interviewee explained:

*“A number of local youths collected money to repair the village school. They organized a large event for its inauguration and invited local Taliban officials from the district and province. Local officials came from Pul-e-Khumri, the centre of Baghlan province, but the district education director and his staff—the majority of whom are locals—not only refused to attend our program but also campaigned, saying, ‘We won’t go because Ismaili food is haram.’”<sup>62</sup>*

## Regarding the Slaughter of Animals by Ismailis as Haram

Twelve out of the 25 interviewees in this research stated that a common misconception among parts of society, the Taliban, and fundamentalist religious groups is considering the slaughter of animals by Ismailis to be haram. As one interviewee noted:



*“If an Ismaili individual owns a butcher shop, no one buys meat from him, saying that animal slaughter by Ismailis is not halal. There is a butcher in our village, but the slaughtering is done by a Sunni individual so that people will buy meat from him.”<sup>63</sup>*

---

59 Rawadari. Interviewee No 18. 2 November 2025  
60 Rawadari. Interviewee No 19. 14 November 2025  
61 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025  
62 Rawadari. Interviewee No 13. 27 October 2025  
63 Rawadari. Interviewee No 12. 13 October 2025



*Another interviewee recounted:*

*“Unfortunately, in some regions and at a societal level, discrimination against Ismailis exists. In my place of residence, there are people who believe Ismailis are not Muslims. For example, if an Ismaili slaughters a sheep, they will not eat the meat and do not consider the slaughter to be halal.”<sup>64</sup>*

Another interviewee stated that the Taliban are publicly fuelling this propaganda and encouraging people not to purchase meat from Ismaili Shia butcher shops:



*“...A year ago, in the Kishm district of Badakhshan province, the Taliban announced that people should not buy meat from Ismaili Shias because the slaughter of animals by them is neither halal nor permissible (ja’iz).”<sup>65</sup>*

Propagating the idea that Ismaili food is haram and refusing to eat it is a clear example of discrimination based on religion and a violation of their right to human dignity. According to the findings of this report, the promotion of such stereotypes and mindsets has led to the intensification of religious hatred, the application of psychological pressure, and the subsequent social isolation and rejection of members of this religious minority over the past four years. Despite this, the Taliban have not only neglected their legal duty to prevent such discriminatory religious behaviour but have directly played a role in making the situation worse.

## Prohibition of Marriage and Kinship Ties with Ismaili Families

The prohibition of marriage and kinship ties with religious minorities is considered one of the most serious forms of religious discrimination and a human rights violation. International human rights instruments, including the ICCPR, recognize the right to marry and form a family for men and women—subject to consent and legal age—regardless of religious affiliation or any other distinction.

However, 24 of the total interviewees in this research stated that the prohibition of marriage and the establishment of kinship ties with Ismaili families have significantly increased. According to the interviewees, the Taliban and their affiliated clerics publicly propagate the ban on forming kinship with Ismaili families. One interviewee stated:



*“Juma Khan Fateh and others like Mawlawi Iqrar have announced several times in mosques that no one has the right to have friendship or kinship with Ismaili families. They emphasized that marriage (nikah) with Ismaili men and women is haram; neither should you give your daughters to them, nor should you take daughters from them.”<sup>66</sup>*

64 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025

65 Rawadari. Interviewee No 3. 16 October 2025

66 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025



Another interviewee said:

*“A member of the Taliban’s Ulema Council in Baghlan province, during a speech at a funeral, said that no type of marital union between Sunnis and Shias is permissible. He said that Twelver Shias are ‘polytheists’ and ‘rejectionists’ (Rafidi), and Ismaili Shias are ‘Dahri’ (atheists), and it is not even proper to speak about them. Dahri means someone who recognizes neither God, nor the Prophet, nor the principles of Islam.”<sup>67</sup>*

Another interviewee, while noting the public propaganda by the Taliban to ban kinship with Ismaili families, also stated that in some cases, Ismaili girls are pressured to change their religion after marriage:



*“The Taliban openly say that the marriage of Sunni men to Ismaili girls, and vice versa, is not allowed. An Ismaili woman had married a Sunni man, and her husband pressured her to change her religion. When she refused, she was divorced by her husband. He had committed extreme violence against her—they had even removed and sold her kidney.”<sup>68</sup>*

Another interviewee described the forced conversion of Ismaili men after marrying Sunni women:



*“A young Ismaili man from our village married a Sunni girl. The Taliban forced him to recite the Kalima [to convert] and changed his name. They forbade him from going to the Jamatkhana and told him he must go to the mosque and pray five times a day.”<sup>69</sup>*



Another interviewee, noting that the ban on kinship with Ismaili families has a long history in Afghanistan, stated:

*“This issue existed before the Taliban during the twenty years of the Republic; it is true that the Taliban were not in power then, but their mindset dominated society. A marriage between a Sunni girl and a Shia or Ismaili man was considered improper and forbidden. However, since the Taliban’s return to power, this issue has reached its peak.”<sup>70</sup>*

---

67 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025  
68 Rawadari. Interviewee No 12. 13 October 2025  
69 Rawadari. Interviewee No 17. 13 November 2025  
70 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

## Forced Annulment of Marriages between Ismaili Men and Sunni Women

According to the interviewees, in some cases, the MPVPV and Taliban courts have even ordered the annulment of marriages between Hanafi women and Ismaili men. This situation demonstrates the direct interference of the Taliban's religious and judicial institutions in family relations and the commission of discrimination based on religious affiliation.



*One interviewee recounted:*

*"In Baghlan province, six months ago, an Ismaili man became engaged to a girl from the Sunni faith. This engagement took place with the will and consent of both parties. However, when the Taliban's Department of Virtue and Vice found out, they annulled the engagement and subjected the Ismaili man to humiliation and insults. The officials told him: 'You went to school and got an education to become a human, but you became a four-legged animal (beast) and believe in a religion compared to which fire-worshipping and cow-worshipping are better, and Hindus have much more honour than you.' They threatened him, and until the engagement was annulled, officials from this department went to his house every day. This is what the man himself told me."<sup>71</sup>*

Several interviewees pointed to cases where Taliban courts ruled to annul marriages between Ismaili men and Sunni women. One interviewee stated:



*"When the Taliban learned of a marriage between a Sunni girl and an Ismaili man, they referred the case to court. The court in the centre of Badakhshan province decided that the marriage was invalid and that the nikah of a Sunni girl to an Ismaili boy is not permissible. Of course, such cases existed in the past—meaning it was said that a Sunni girl marrying an Ismaili boy is not allowed, but a Sunni man marrying an Ismaili girl was fine because the man could later exert influence over her and 'invite' her to Islam. Thus, this view existed to some extent during the Republic, but now that the Taliban hold power and there are no media, questioning, or protests, they explicitly say a Sunni girl has no right to marry an Ismaili boy."<sup>72</sup>*



*Another interviewee stated:*

*"A few months ago, a Sunni woman who is my friend and with whom I studied, became engaged to an Ismaili man in Badakhshan. Only a month had passed when the Taliban found out and took both to court. They pressured the man to either change his religion or abandon the marriage, because according to the Taliban, the marriage of a Muslim woman to an Ismaili Shia man is haram. Both sides insisted they wanted this union, but the Taliban refused, saying: 'It is not up to your own hearts; Islamic laws govern here.' When the couple refused to annul the engagement, they were both imprisoned for a month. During this time, the man was tortured so severely that he was forced to forfeit his expenses (dowry/dowry-related costs) and consent to the annulment. Now, both families are under Taliban surveillance to ensure they have no contact."<sup>73</sup>*

71 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

72 Rawadari. Interviewee No 15. 28 October 2025

73 Rawadari. Interviewee No 21. 26 October 2025



*Another interviewee said:*

*“Recently, an Ismaili man married a Sunni woman, but the woman’s family complained to the Taliban court that because the man is an Ismaili Shia, he is not a Muslim and the marriage must be annulled. The court ruled for annulment. In many cases, if an Ismaili Shia goes to propose to a Sunni family, the woman’s family must seek permission from the Taliban.”<sup>74</sup>*

The prohibition of marriage and kinship ties with Ismaili families, while a clear violation of the right to marry and form a family, is not limited to family relations. In practice, it leads to the reproduction and deepening of discrimination against this religious minority in all other social spheres. The Taliban have not only failed in their legal duty to combat such discriminatory stereotypes but have actively used their judicial institutions to annul marriages, an act that clearly contradicts international human rights standards and violates the principles of equality and non-discrimination based on religion and gender.

---

74 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025

# Freedom to Perform Religious Rituals

---



Article 27 of the ICCPR stipulates that in those states in which religious minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right to enjoy their own culture and to profess and practice their own religion. Furthermore, Article 18 of this Covenant emphasizes that the freedom to manifest religion or belief, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, is a right for all individuals. This right includes worship, observance, practice, and teaching.

Despite this, 20 out of the total interviewees stated that during the past four years, following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, the freedom of Ismailis to perform religious rituals has been severely restricted. According to their statements, the Taliban have imposed and enforced extensive and stringent restrictions on the cultural and religious ceremonies of this community. The data obtained further indicates that these restrictions vary by provinces. For instance, the restrictions to perform religious rituals have been reported less frequently in the city of Kabul compared to other provinces, particularly Badakhshan and Baghlan.

One interviewee recounted the following regarding the restriction of freedom to perform the religious rituals and ceremonies of Ismaili Shias in Badakhshan:



*“Under the previous government, along the Amu River and in the Darwaz districts—where the residents are predominantly Ismaili—the anniversary of the Ismaili Imam’s Accession to the Imamate (Imamat Day) was celebrated with great splendour and a large presence of followers from both sides of the border. This occasion was also commemorated in Jamatkhanas, hotels, and other Ismaili-populated areas, including the provincial centre of Badakhshan, with the participation of government officials and followers of various faiths. But after the Taliban takeover, no one dares to hold such ceremonies anymore, and people cannot even hold them freely at the level of Jamatkhana or in small or large circles.”<sup>75</sup>*

Another interviewee spoke about the consequences of the imposed restrictions and the fear Ismaili followers have regarding public religious observances:



*“In the place where we lived, we held our religious ceremonies in secret due to fear of the Taliban, and no one but ourselves knew about them. We went to the Jamatkhana, but secretly, in a way that no one would notice we were going there for worship. In the final days before I left my place of residence, we could not even go to the Jamatkhana. Of course, in areas where the Ismaili population is larger, these restrictions are less intense.”<sup>76</sup>*

---

75 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

76 Rawadari. Interviewee No 3. 16 October 2025

One of the interviewees commented on the ban on the cultural and religious festivals of Ismaili Shias as follows:



*“In the Zibak district of Badakhshan province, the shrine of ‘Diwana Shah’ was one of the religious sites revered by Ismailis. Every year on the 14th of Hoot (March 4th), people held a magnificent celebration known as ‘Nowruz-e Diwana Shah,’ involving the slaughter of cattle, preparation of local food, music, singing, dancing, target shooting, Buzkashi, footraces, and horse racing. At the end of the festival, all the local farmers would go to the shrine’s custodian, and he would pray for everyone; then, from the next day, the people would begin their farming and agricultural work. When the Taliban came, they banned this ceremony... Just a few days ago, unidentified individuals set fire to this shrine, which was also considered a historical monument, and large parts of it were destroyed in the fire. This shrine had also been excavated [looted] several times during the civil wars.”<sup>77</sup>*

A number of interviewees also pointed to instances where the Taliban did not permit the holding of Ismaili religious programs and ceremonies. In this regard, one interviewee stated:



*“In early 2022, when Ismailis wanted to hold their religious ceremonies and festivals, they approached the security precincts near the Jamatkhana to seek permission. They even pledged that women would observe the hijab, would not be present alongside men, and that separate entrance gates would be provided for men and women. Despite this, the Taliban refused, claiming: ‘In these programs, you speak about equality between men and women, democracy, freedom, and other misleading things.’”<sup>78</sup>*

Another interviewee spoke about the harassment faced during Ismaili worship and religious ceremonies:



*“After the Taliban came to power, they went to an Ismaili place of worship in the Dahana-i-Ghori district of Baghlan province. They filmed the people, created disturbances, and said: ‘How is it that these people worship?’”<sup>79</sup>*

However, some interviewees stated that restrictions on holding religious ceremonies are fewer in the city of Kabul. One interviewee recounted:



*“In the city of Kabul, there are no specific restrictions on holding religious ceremonies, and on the days we have programs, even Taliban forces provide security for our religious sites. In the villages as well, people also go to Jamatkhana and worship, but outside of these specific areas, we face discrimination for holding religious ceremonies.”<sup>80</sup>*

---

77 Rawadari. Interviewee No 15. 28 October 2025  
78 Rawadari. Interviewee No 8. 1 November 2025  
79 Rawadari. Interviewee No 18. 2 November 2025  
80 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 29 October 2025



*Another interviewee stated:*

*“Fortunately, in Kabul province, Ismaili women and men can worship in Jamatkhana, even in a mixed setting. Our men and women go to the Jamatkhana morning and evening, and the Taliban have allowed this so far... However, they have imposed severe restrictions on religious education, which has caused us concern.”<sup>81</sup>*

According to the findings of this research, the imposition of restrictions on the freedom to perform Ismaili religious rituals and practices—especially in the provinces of Badakhshan and Baghlan—is seen not as a random occurrence, but as part of a targeted Taliban policy to suppress diverse religious beliefs and thoughts. These restrictions are considered a violation of international obligations and human rights under the regulations set forth in the ICCPR, which guarantees the freedom to perform religious rituals and the right to enjoy one’s own culture and religious teachings.

### **Coercion to Participate in Performing Others’ Worship Ceremonies**

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights explicitly emphasizes that no one shall be subject to coercion or pressure to perform acts of worship and religion contrary to their own beliefs and convictions. Therefore, any kind of compulsion—including threats, coercion, social pressure, or the abuse of political and military power to attend the religious ceremonies of others—is considered a clear instance of religious discrimination and a violation of the human dignity of individuals.

However, data from this research shows that the Taliban, and especially the MPVPV, by resorting to force and threats, have forced followers of the Ismaili religion in some provinces to perform the religious and worship ceremonies of others. Seven out of the 25 interviewees stated that during the past four years they personally had the experience of being coerced to participate in the worship and religious ceremonies of other sects, and two others also spoke about individuals who were forced to do such a thing.



*One of the interviewees narrated:*

*“One day in the centre of Baghlan province, one of the agents of Propagation of Virtue told me that it is time for prayer and you must go to the congregation, but I replied that I am Shia and Ismaili and we pray later. He insisted that you must go to the congregational prayer right now; I argued that our religious rules are different, but he would not accept it. Finally, he resorted to violence and aggression; I resisted, and after much noise, people gathered and I left the area at that moment.”<sup>82</sup>*

81 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025

82 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

Another interviewee stated that the Taliban in some areas pressure followers of the Ismaili religion to perform religious rituals according to Hanafi jurisprudence. He explained:

“...In Badakhshan province, due to restrictions they have imposed, Ismailis cannot freely execute their religious ceremonies and rituals. They must go to the mosque and pray five times a day like followers of the Hanafi sect... fast using the Sunni method and pay Ushr and Zakat (religious tax). All these duties exist in the Ismaili faith as well but with different methods. Of course, the Taliban do not tell Ismailis not to go to the Jamaatkhana; but they say that they (Ismailis) must come to the mosque and pray five times then they have the choice whether to go to the Jamaatkhana more than these five times or not.”<sup>83</sup>

Another interviewee said:  
“In Zebak district of Badakhshan province, agents of Propagation of Virtue go to Ismaili houses early in the morning, knock on their doors, and dip men who have not gone to the mosque at prayer time in cold water. One night I was a guest at one of my relatives’ houses; early in the morning, Taliban Propagation of Virtue agents knocked on the door; my aunt opened the door and told them her son had gone to prayer. A few minutes later, we heard the sound of screaming and pleading of the neighbour, telling the Taliban that he was at work at night and due to extreme fatigue could not go to congregational prayer early in the morning. But the Taliban took him, threw him into cold water, and asked who else among the men had not gone to congregational prayer.”<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, a number of interviewees said that the Taliban in some areas have appointed clerics from the Sunni sect in Ismaili Shia places of worship to hold prayers and other worship rituals for them according to Hanafi jurisprudence. In this regard, one of the interviewees narrated as follows:

“Previously we held Eid prayers and Friday prayers separately and based on our own religious rules, but currently, the Taliban have introduced a Sunni Imam and he prays for us. All local residents and worshipers are Ismaili, but the Mullah Imam (prayer leader) is Sunni. Also, in mosques related to the villages of ‘Khilar’, ‘Wadu Tobi Bala and Pain’, and ‘Qala-e-Bandi’ which were built by Ismailis, currently prayers are held based on the Hanafi sect method.”<sup>85</sup>

Coercing Ismaili Shias to perform religious rituals and acts contrary to their beliefs and convictions—which is part of the religious discrimination and repressive policies of the Taliban—is considered one of the most severe instances of human rights violations according to binding international documents. The Taliban, contrary to their legal duties, by abusing power and through threats, coercion, and social pressure, have forced followers of the Ismaili religion to perform worship acts contrary to their religious beliefs.

83 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

84 Rawadari. Interviewee No 21. 26 October 2025

85 Rawadari. Interviewee No 14. 20 October 2025

## Imposition of Restrictions on Educational Institutions and Places of Worship

In its interpretation of Article 18 of the ICCPR, the Human Rights Committee emphasizes that the freedom to establish educational centres or religious schools is an integral part of the right to religious freedom. Consequently, states are obligated to implement the necessary measures and actions for the effective protection of these centres.

Despite this, 24 interviewees stated that since the Taliban's return to power, extensive restrictions have been imposed on Ismaili educational centres and places of worship. According to the interviewees' statements, these restrictions include the closure of certain worship centres, the conversion of Ismaili places of worship into Sunni religious sites, the creation of an atmosphere of fear, and the monitoring of people's movements to educational and religious centres.

One interviewee spoke about the closure of Ismaili Shia places of worship as follows:

“Although the Jamatkhana in Baghlan province is still active, I am aware of at least two Ismaili prayer centres in this province that the Taliban have converted into mosques and currently do not allow followers of the Ismaili faith to access. These centres were actually rooms or buildings affiliated with former mosques that were established for performing religious duties in areas where the Ismaili population is smaller. The Taliban's Department of Virtue and Vice has installed loudspeakers on these centres and appointed Mulla Imams (Sunni clerics) for them. In justifying this action, the Taliban claimed that these centres were previously mosques and had not been used properly or in accordance with Sharia over the past twenty years. The Taliban's action regarding these centres—which had been used as Ismaili places of worship for more than 20 years—has brought serious psychological consequences for the members of this religious minority.”<sup>86</sup>

Another interviewee stated:  
“It is very clear that the Taliban have deprived us of religious freedom. The Ismaili people have a place of worship called a Jamatkhana where men and women worship alongside each other; however, at present, they cannot use these places of worship freely. This is because the Taliban monitor these centres and say they do not want men and women to worship together in the same place.”<sup>87</sup>

While the Taliban have constructed more than 21,000 madrassas across Afghanistan between August 2021 and September 2024, they do not allow followers of the Ismaili faith to establish such educational centres. In this regard, one interviewee said:

“When a number of Ismaili elders approached the officials in an area of Kabul and requested to build a Jamatkhana, the precinct officials told them to go collect signatures for the petition and bring them to the precinct for verification. Approximately 1,900 signatures were collected from that area and submitted to the precinct, but the officials refused, saying: ‘Our information about you was

86 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

87 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 1 November 2025

*insufficient; your place of worship has no pulpit (Minbar), and furthermore, men and women worship together. We will not allow you to do such a thing.”<sup>88</sup>*



*Another interviewee stated:*

*“In our village, there is a Jamatkhana that people are not allowed to enter for worship because, for the past two years, the Taliban have been using it as a guesthouse and a venue for their official programs. For instance, if they have guests from elsewhere, they take them there, or they use this Jamatkhana for their talks and speeches. For this reason, Ismailis are not allowed to use it.”<sup>89</sup>*

## Labelling Ismaili Places of Worship as “non-Islamic”

During their interviews, three participants stated that the Taliban do not consider Ismaili religious centres and places of worship to be among the holy Islamic sites. As one interviewee said:



*“Recently, a Taliban court in Baghlan province stated in a judicial order that Ismaili religious sites are not considered holy Islamic places. Additionally, a number of local extremists have repeatedly issued public threats, stating that Ismaili worship centres are un-Islamic because men and women worship in them jointly.”<sup>90</sup>*



*Another interviewee recounted on the same subject:*

*“In Baghlan province, a dispute arose between followers of the Ismaili faith and Sunnis over the ownership of a mosque building. This mosque had been built by Ismailis about 20 or 25 years ago and was in their possession during the Republic era. However, after the Taliban’s return to power, a number of Sunnis complained to the Taliban, claiming that Ismailis are not ‘people of the mosque’ and that the site should be handed over to them. In December of last year, the Taliban court ruled in favour of the Sunnis. I have seen this ruling myself; it states that Ismaili places of worship are not considered the worship houses of Muslims and the mosque must be handed over to the Sunnis. In this ruling, Ismaili Jamatkhans were described as equivalent to idol temples, churches, and non-Islamic sites.”<sup>91</sup>*

The restrictions imposed on Ismaili religious centres over the past four years have been carried out through a series of measures, including preventing the establishment of new places of worship, banning the presence of women in these centres, and in some cases, closing down existing centres. This is considered a violation of religious freedom according to international human rights documents, particularly the provisions of Article 18 of the ICCPR. Effective protection of minority schools and educational centres is part of the legal obligations of states, and the Taliban have failed to fulfil this duty over the past four years.

---

88 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025  
89 Rawadari. Interviewee No 23. 5 November 2025  
90 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025  
91 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

## Coercion to Change Religion

States must respect the right of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of children in conformity with their own convictions. Public education that includes instruction in a particular religion or belief against the wishes of parents and legal guardians of children is prohibited. In addition, states are obliged to respect the liberty of parents and legal guardians to ensure that the religious and moral education of their children is in conformity with their own convictions.

On the other hand, the ICCPR specifies that no one shall be subject to coercion which would impair their freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of their choice. The Human Rights Committee explicitly emphasizes that coercion to change religion—whether direct or indirect—is a serious violation of religious freedom, and no state can resort to a policy aimed at the forced conversion of individuals or groups.

However, findings of this research show that the Taliban have proceeded in an organized and targeted manner to force the teaching of Hanafi jurisprudence and promote their ideology among Ismaili children, as well as coercing members of this religious minority to abandon their beliefs and accept the Sunni sect. The United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMA) has also stated in a report that local officials in some districts of Badakhshan province have forced at least 50 male members the Ismaili community to convert to the Sunni faith<sup>92</sup>. According to this report, those who have refused to convert have faced beatings and threats. Furthermore, Amnesty International, in its 2025 annual report, has stated that there are reports of forced conversion of Ismailia Shias to Sunni faith<sup>93</sup>.

### A - Compulsory Teaching of Hanafi Jurisprudence to Ismaili Children

All 25 interviewees of this research pointed to the Taliban's targeted and organized actions to force or encourage male children of Ismaili families to learn Hanafi jurisprudence, primarily in Badakhshan province. Among them, 10 people said they know families who were forced to do such a thing. Four others stated that children from among their relatives and kin were taken by force to Taliban religious schools, and two others stated that they spoke directly with a number of these children.

The major part of these actions has been conducted by local officials and the Taliban's Department of Propagation of Virtue in Badakhshan province, mainly in the Darwaz districts. Based on the statements of interviewees, Juma Khan Fateh has created religious schools in the five districts of Shekay, Maymay, Nusay, Kuf, and Khwahan and personally funds each school from the income obtained from gold mines. The Department of Propagation of Virtue

---

92 UNAMA. "Update on Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: January- March 2025 Update". [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama\\_update\\_on\\_human\\_rights\\_in\\_afghanistan\\_january-march\\_2025.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_update_on_human_rights_in_afghanistan_january-march_2025.pdf)

93 Amnesty International. The State of the World's Human Rights: Amnesty International Annual Report 2025. [https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2025-04/Amnesty%20Annual%20Report%202025.pdf?VersionId=8E3tHyv18OZSCGRXnuHu4Znldxx42Nqf&\\_gl=1\\*19b4c8i\\*\\_up\\*\\_MQ..\\*\\_gs\\*\\_MQ..&gclid=Cj0KCCQIA6Y7KBhCkARIsAOxhqtM2PqyduMzokTsvVQTDGEAEJG9fxQ5mR3x6eXmas9AJm6rKZgxewakaAiArEALw\\_wc-B&gbruid=0AAAAADvZPbLN6wKlfqtsllkeBOR5LxF8w](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2025-04/Amnesty%20Annual%20Report%202025.pdf?VersionId=8E3tHyv18OZSCGRXnuHu4Znldxx42Nqf&_gl=1*19b4c8i*_up*_MQ..*_gs*_MQ..&gclid=Cj0KCCQIA6Y7KBhCkARIsAOxhqtM2PqyduMzokTsvVQTDGEAEJG9fxQ5mR3x6eXmas9AJm6rKZgxewakaAiArEALw_wc-B&gbruid=0AAAAADvZPbLN6wKlfqtsllkeBOR5LxF8w)

has established madrassas in Shughnan and Ishkashim districts. Additionally, two Taliban commanders have established religious schools in Warduj district.

UNAMA has also confirmed in its reporting in early 2025 that the Taliban have opened religious madrassas in Ismaili populated districts in Badakhshan and are requiring the Ismaili children to enrol in these madrassas to receive training in Suni jurisprudence<sup>94</sup>.

Interviewees also said that the Taliban recruit and teach Ismaili children according to the capacity of these schools; in some districts, they take one child from every Ismaili family, and in other districts, they recruit as many as they can.



*One of the interviewees narrated in this regard:*

*“The Taliban have created religious schools in the centres of Ismaili-populated districts in Badakhshan province and have set quotas for villages for the forced attendance of children. They take Ismaili children to these schools and teach them Hanafi jurisprudence. Also, they have appointed an Imam for every mosque and launched Hanafi jurisprudence teaching classes inside these mosques. Imams who conduct these classes receive a monthly salary from the Taliban. In this regard, a Talib in Shughnan district said in an audio message sent to the Department of Propagation of Virtue that Ismailis are infidels and must become Muslims. [He said] we face problems in creating schools; our total capacity has been creating one school. If you cooperate and provide facilities, we can create more schools and convert more individuals from followers of this faith to Muslims.”<sup>95</sup>*

Another interviewee stated that every Ismaili family in Nusay district of Badakhshan province is forced to send one son to the Taliban religious school:



*“In the school that Juma Khan Fateh has created in Nusay district, he has asked every Ismaili family to send at least one child of theirs there for learning Hanafi jurisprudence.”<sup>96</sup>*



*Another interviewee said:*

*“...In the beginning, they tried to take male children above 14 years old to these schools, but later realized that this action has no result. Now they have decided to take young children to schools and educate them and change their religion through this means.”<sup>97</sup>*

In Kabul city as well, based on what interviewees have said, there are efforts to teach Hanafi jurisprudence to Ismaili children. In this regard, one of the interviewees narrated:



*“In Kabul, Mawlawis went to Ismaili houses and asked them to send their children to mosques to be educated. Members of these families told the Taliban that we*

94 UNAMA. “Update on Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: January- March 2025 Update”. [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama\\_update\\_on\\_human\\_rights\\_in\\_afghanistan\\_january-march\\_2025.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_update_on_human_rights_in_afghanistan_january-march_2025.pdf)

95 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

96 Rawadari. Interviewee No 3. 16 October 2025

97 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 29 October

*are Ismaili and our religion is different; but they replied you must do what we tell you. Currently, children are forced to go to mosques. I know two or three children who are about eight to nine years old and are being educated in these schools.”<sup>98</sup>*

### **Threat, Torture, and Fines**

As mentioned earlier, the Taliban in Badakhshan province take male children from Ismaili families to religious schools under their control through coercion, threats, and intimidation and teach them Hanafi jurisprudence. In cases where families did not agree to send their children to Sunni schools or demanded to take them out of these schools, the Taliban have imposed cash fines of up to 200,000 Afghanis (equivalent of 2,820 USD).

Furthermore, the Taliban have warned Ismaili families in Badakhshan that if children escape from schools or leave studies unfinished, they will set fire to their houses and property and kill members of their families. In cases where Ismaili elders resisted the transfer of their children to Taliban religious schools/madrassas, they were subjected to detention and torture. One of the interviewees said in this regard:

“I know two students whom the Taliban had taken to school by force, but they escaped and took refuge in my house. One was an Ismaili Shia and the second was a follower of Twelver Shia. After their escape, the Taliban contacted their parents and threatened that if their children do not come back to school, they will set fire to their houses and kill their brothers. They were forced to go back to school. The Taliban take a pledge from all families to send their children to their religious school, and if a child leaves the study unfinished, escapes, or goes somewhere else, they will set fire to their house and property and surrender their livestock to the Emirate.”<sup>99</sup>

Another interviewee, pointing to the torture of an Ismaili elder in Badakhshan province due to resistance against transferring children to Taliban schools, said:

“...The Taliban take children and sons of Ismailis by force from villages to ‘Al-Fatah’ school in the centre of Darwaz district. The head of the Ismaili local council asked the Taliban that you appoint a Mullah or Mawlawi to come to our region, and we will even pay all their expenses, but we will not send our children and sons to that school. Because of these very words, Juma Khan Fateh summoned him to himself and beat and tortured him to the brink of death. They even wanted to execute him, but local residents mediated and prevented it.”<sup>100</sup>

98 Rawadari. Interviewee No 8. 1 November 2025

99 Rawadari. Interviewee No 3. 16 October 2025

100 Rawadari. Interviewee No 17. 13 November 2025



Another interviewee explained regarding the Taliban's use of force:

*"They take our children to the mosque and teach them the Sunni religion. They use every tool and method to force us to send our children to their schools; even armed Taliban individuals come to our doors and take children with them by force. Of course, this is done with the direction of their elders."*<sup>101</sup>

In Badakhshan province, the Taliban have determined a cash payment of up to 200,000 Afghanis for families who refuse to send their children to religious schools<sup>31</sup>. In this regard, one interviewee said:



*"They took several members of our family to school by force and teach them Hanafi jurisprudence. Their method was initially such that they included 15, 16, and 17-year-old children in their schools two or three years ago, but they could not change the beliefs and religious convictions [of these teenagers]. Finally, they used another tactic; this time they started with 7-year-old children because the mind of children at this age is like white paper and they can write whatever they want on it. Then they created fear among people and said that if they do not send their children at this age to their schools, they will be fined one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand Afghanis. This event has happened many times in our village. Even a number of families were forced to abandon their work and life and flee to other provinces because the Taliban were taking their children to the religious schools by force."*<sup>102</sup>



Another interviewee narrated:

*"Last night I had called [relatives in] Badakhshan; the Taliban have taken the son of one of our relatives by force to their religious school to teach him Hanafi jurisprudence; meaning, let me say clearly, they have taken him to change his religion. Another relative of ours wanted to take his son out of the Taliban religious school, but the talk reached a point where officials of that same school said if you want to take your son out of school, you must pay the sum of one hundred thousand Afghanis... The Taliban take Ismaili children who reach the age of 12 by force to their religious schools and educate them. I know about 5-6 families in Shekay district of Badakhshan province whom the Taliban have taken their children by force to teach them Hanafi jurisprudence in their religious schools. The situation is very dangerous and families have no remedy but to comply"*<sup>103</sup>

### **Encouragement to Learn Hanafi Jurisprudence**

The findings of this research show that the Taliban have also resorted to encouraging and persuading families to teach Hanafi jurisprudence to Ismaili children and youth. In this regard, one interviewee from Baghlan province said:



*"I personally have not witnessed the coercion of Ismaili children to learn Hanafi jurisprudence, but I have witnessed propaganda and encouragement of Ismaili families to send their children to Sunni schools. For example, in Pul-e-Khumri city, Baghlan province, a number of Sunni clerics were preaching in the area*

101 Rawadari. Interviewee No 24. 14 November 2025

102 Rawadari. Interviewee No 17. 13 November 2025

103 Rawadari. Interviewee No 9. 3 November 2025

*belonging to Ismailis and Shias, telling Shia youth, including Ismailis and Twelvers, that if you study Hanafi jurisprudence lessons in the Jihadi schools created in provincial centres, you can be hired in government offices, become judges, or work in various administrative sectors in the future. They brought examples and said that such and such person who has a bachelor's or master's degree is unemployed, but Qaris (Quran reciters, those with religious education) have good jobs.”<sup>104</sup>*



*Another interviewee from Badakhshan province stated:*

*“They encourage our children to go and learn the Hanafi sect. Taliban forces come to our Jamaatkhana, mock our religious values, and try to take our children to Sunni mosques to be educated there.”<sup>105</sup>*

## **B - Coercing Ismailis to Change Religion**

The Taliban, during the past four years and especially in Badakhshan and Baghlan provinces, have in an organized and targeted manner made efforts to change the religion of Ismailis. They have used methods based on coercion, threats, torture, intimidation, and other forms of violence for forced conversions. All 25 interviewees stated that the Taliban have tried to force Ismailis to change their religion by employing various methods of pressure.

Seven interviewees stated they have spoken with individuals who were forced to change their religion under Taliban pressure. Five others said they know some of these individuals closely or have lived with them in the same locality. One person stated that after threats, beatings, and harassment to convert, he left his home and fled elsewhere.

The major part of these efforts has been concentrated in Badakhshan province and in the Darwaz districts. Based on the interviewees' narratives, this process has been carried out under the direction of Juma Khan Fateh, a local Taliban commander. An interviewee stated:



*“One of the local Taliban commanders with his armed men, who are affiliated with Juma Khan Fateh, came to my house at 12:00 midnight, dragged me out of the house, and said you must change your religion. I replied that all my life and for several generations I have been a follower of the Ismaili faith; now, even if I am killed, I will not turn back from my religion and beliefs. Then they beat me with rifle butts and sticks as much as they could, to the extent that my whole body had turned black. They said you are an infidel (Kafir), your religion is not the truth, and you must recite the Kalima and become Muslim. These people who cannot even read the Holy Quran from the text claim to be Muslims, but I, who know the Holy Quran with translation and meaning, am an infidel in their view... The situation reached a point where my family said the Taliban would kill me next time, so it is better that we leave here. For this reason, we left the area and now live in hiding in another province.”<sup>106</sup>*

---

104 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025  
105 Rawadari. Interviewee No 5. 14 November 2025  
106 Rawadari. Interviewee No 3. 16 October 2025

Another interviewee, stating that he has access to information about individuals who have forcibly converted, said:



*“Since the Taliban regained control over Afghanistan, more than 300 Ismailis in Badakhshan province, from the Darwaz districts to Shughnan and Ishkashim, and from Wakhan to Warduj, have converted to Sunni Islam due to pressure, threats, coercion, or under the influence of the Taliban narrative. I have the names and details of all these individuals, which districts they are from, and how many from each district... Of course, the Taliban do not publicly admit to coercion in changing religion, as Juma Khan Fateh claimed in an interview that we have not invited any Ismailis to the Hanafi sect by force; they found the truth themselves and have become Muslims. But after these statements, they went armed to the homes of Ismailis who had been forced to abandon their religion and threatened them that if they did not confirm Fateh’s words, they would be killed. For this reason, these individuals were forced to say that no one pressured them and they made this decision themselves. Now the fundamental question is why those same Ismailis who, according to Juma Khan Fateh, ‘found the truth’, had not found it during their sixty or seventy years of life, but suddenly found the truth after the Taliban domination and Juma Khan Fateh’s rule? ...The Taliban do not say that Ismailis should incline towards the Hanafi sect, but they say because Ismailis are infidels, they must recite the Kalima and become Muslims.”<sup>107</sup>*



*Another interviewee explained:*

*“From districts and areas adjacent to us, they forced a number of people to change their religion; they even asked me many times with threats and monetary offers to change my religion. If the situation continues like this and external institutions are indifferent to us, it is possible that within the next few years, they will force all of us to change our religion.”<sup>108</sup>*



*Another interviewee stated:*

*“It is a lie what Juma Khan Fateh said on Badakhshan local television that Ismailis changed religion not by force but by their own decision and will. All of this is fabrication; they have forced Ismailis to change religion with force and torture. Some of these individuals are now afraid to say anything... They change the beliefs of those whom they take to the Madrasa, like those who were trained in Deoband and other places.”<sup>109</sup>*



*According to interviewees, the Taliban have used various methods to change the religion of Ismailis:*

*“An Ismaili person in Baghlan province had killed another individual in a traffic accident. When his case reached the court, the Taliban judges told him that if you abandon your religion, there is no problem and we will acquit you; but if you do not do this, you will be severely punished, because you have killed a Muslim, and the blood money (Diyya) of a Muslim killed by an infidel is very heavy. Then this individual was released from prison; ... I have concrete information that, a Mullah came to the prison, made him recite the Kalima, and also gifted him*

107 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

108 Rawadari. Interviewee No 24. 14 November 2025

109 Rawadari. Interviewee No 17. 13 November 2025

*a copy of the Holy Quran. During the time he was in prison, he was forced to perform ablution and pray five times a day in accordance to the Hanafi faith.*<sup>110</sup>



*Another interviewee stated:*

*“Local Taliban in Tala wa Barfak district of Baghlan province coerced a follower of the Ismaili religion who worked as a shepherd to change religion. The ‘Ahsan-ul-Madaris’ school sent an invitation letter to the community. The invitation was titled ‘Towards Light’. They took him to a mosque and in a gathering put a flower garland around his neck and made him recite the Kalima again. Then they took this individual village to village and showed him to the people, saying that he has newly become a Muslim. Beyond this individual, this was a very difficult experience for other followers of the Ismaili faith.”*<sup>111</sup>

## **Consequences of Forced Conversion and Education of Ismaili Children in Taliban Madrassas**

The Taliban, especially in Badakhshan province, are striving in a targeted and systematic manner to teach Hanafi jurisprudence to Ismaili children and force members of this religious minority to change their beliefs. If this policy continues undeterred, it will lead to the weakening of the Ismaili religious identity and the elimination of cultural diversity. Coercing individuals to change religion counts as one of the most serious instances of human rights violations. This is part of the Taliban’s organized and targeted attack against this religious minority, which can be considered a clear instance of systematic religious persecution and a crime against humanity.

Interviewees expressed serious concern that these actions will lead to the suppression or destruction of this religious identity. One interviewee said:



*“More than three hundred Ismaili children are under compulsory religious training in Taliban religious schools. These three hundred children, ten years later when they graduate from Taliban religious schools, will each turn into a completely extremist force, even worse and more dangerous than Mullah Omar’s son or any other Talib. Since the Taliban, on one hand, restrict the freedom to perform Ismaili religious rituals and, on the other hand, target the children of this religious minority for compulsory Hanafi jurisprudence education, they are strategically and systematically seeking to change the cultural and social fabric of the Ismaili community.”*<sup>112</sup>



*Another interviewee stated:*

*“When Ismaili children are given religious instructions in schools and Madrassas that are different from their own religion, they become distanced from their own culture and religious identity and may be raised to be extremists in the future.”*<sup>113</sup>

110 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

111 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025

112 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

113 Rawadari. Interviewee No 10. 14 October 2025



Another interviewee said:

*“One of our relatives in Badakhshan province joined the Taliban in exchange for a job offer and changed his religion; now his behaviour and family relationships have changed so much that you wouldn’t think he is the same person as before. He doesn’t even allow his wife to go to her brother’s house, saying since we abandoned the Ismaili religion, her brother is now not Mahram to his wife. Even when his father passed away, his will was to hold his funeral based on Ismaili religious rites, but this individual did not accept and, by force and against the wishes of his family members, performed his father’s funeral using the Hanafi jurisprudence method and didn’t even allow Ismailis to stand in the first row of prayer. Meaning, when these individuals change religion, they must declare enmity with other members of the Ismaili community, and it is a main condition of changing religion.”<sup>114</sup>*

## Threats, Fear, and Security Concerns

Out of the total 25 interviewees, 19 stated that Ismailis are constantly exposed to threats, fear, and security concerns due to their religious identity. Among them, five stated they personally had experienced threats, and four others pointed to cases of threats against other individuals.



One interviewee narrated:

*“I cover news related to the situation of Ismailis. For this reason, I was attacked by armed men several times and was wounded once. The last time I went to my province, several people made an armed attack on my house; they intended to kill me, but I managed to escape.”<sup>115</sup>*



Another interviewee, who was threatened and beaten by a local Taliban commander, said:

*“Two years ago, Juma Khan Fateh sent some men to my house and told me that you are an infidel and must change your religion, and if you don’t do this, we will kill you. For this reason, I left my job, house, and place of residence and fled to another place. His men severely beat another Ismaili; they wanted to kill him, but he escaped. I spoke with another person on the phone a few days ago; he also left the area because of these threats.”<sup>116</sup>*



Another interviewee, pointing to the security concerns that Ismailis face, stated: *“There is a nationwide and collective security concern among the Ismaili community; for this reason, a significant number of these people have left Afghanistan during the past four years and fled to various other countries.”<sup>117</sup>*

---

114 Rawadari. Interviewee No 21. 26 October 2025  
115 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 29 October 2025  
116 Rawadari. Interviewee No 3. 16 October 2025  
117 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025

# Suspicious and Extrajudicial Killings

---



Twenty-two of the interviewees of this research stated that they know or have information about individuals from the Ismaili community who have been killed suspiciously and extrajudicially during the past four years. Analysis of the interviews illustrate that at least four cases of extrajudicial killings of Ismaili individuals is confirmed in statements of various interviewees for this report.



*In this regard, one of these interviewees narrated as follows:*

*“A local Taliban commander, currently the governor of a province, had asked the Aga Khan Consul in Badakhshan province, who operated based on religious duties and instructions, to reduce his religious activities. He had directly threatened this individual at the funeral ceremony of an Ismaili elder. When he did not act on this Taliban order, the mentioned commander sent four people to his house one night and killed him. In another case, an active Ismaili student who had connections and cooperation with civil society institutions and networks outside the country was killed in his dormitory in the centre of Badakhshan province.”<sup>118</sup>*



*Another interviewee said regarding the killing of this Consul:*

*“I personally spoke with sources close to this individual. He was threatened by local Taliban for defending his religion, people, and family. According to individuals close to him, the Taliban killed him, but no one could say anything due to fear and security concerns. His relatives know very well whom he met in the days before this incident, whom he spoke with, and by which individuals he was threatened. Even a number of individuals had warned him that his life was in danger.”<sup>119</sup>*

Another interviewee who met closely with family members and relatives of this Consul stated:



*“...His relatives told us that the Taliban had told him many times that he should not go to the Jamaatkhana, and their Jamaatkhana must be converted into a mosque and have a Mullah Imam, and prayers must be held five times. The three times of Ismaili prayer must be stopped, but this individual stood against the Taliban’s demand and said he would not do this. The Taliban threatened that ‘we will implement our plan, and maybe you won’t be around’. When the relevant Aga Khan entities became aware of this situation, they asked him to go to Kabul and they would facilitate his departure from the country. Relatives of this individual told us that everyone in the community had asked him to leave or he would be killed, but he did not accept and was finally killed. .”<sup>120</sup>*

Rawadari has obtained credible information that this individual was detained for three days by the Taliban’s Department of Propagation of Virtue in Badakhshan province due to his religious activities, including his insistence on women performing prayers in Jamaatkhana.

118 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

119 Rawadari. Interviewee No 8. 1 November 2025

120 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025

Similarly, another interviewee spoke regarding the killing of an Ismaili elder in Baghlan province:



*“In Tala wa Barfak district of Baghlan province, an Ismaili elder was killed by unknown armed men. Local people believe that this murder has a religious motive, but due to security concerns, they cannot express their opinion publicly about it.”<sup>121</sup>*



*Another interviewee stated:*

*“An Ismaili individual who had gone from Kabul to Tala wa Barfak district of Baghlan province was taken down from a car in Ashraf village by a local Taliban commander and killed. In the first period of Taliban rule, they had also killed a nephew of this same individual and another Ismaili under torture. At that time, the Taliban had arrested and tortured 80 Ismailis, of whom these two were killed....Also, another Ismaili who had a verbal dispute with a Taliban-affiliated individual in the local market during a religious discussion was killed near his house that same night.”<sup>122</sup>*

Another interviewee said regarding the murder of a Jamaatkhana guard in Badakhshan province:



*“A guard of a Jamaatkhana in Zebak district was killed suspiciously. In the morning when people went to the central Jamaatkhana of Zebak district to perform prayer, they realized that the guard of this Jamaatkhana had been hanged. He had no enmity or hostility with anyone, but it never became known who did this. The Taliban took a number of local people for further investigation, saying supposedly you had differences with this individual before and are the perpetrators of this murder, but the main perpetrator was not found, and the family of this individual has also said nothing so far.”<sup>123</sup>*

---

121 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

122 Rawadari. Interviewee No 14. 20 October 2025

123 Rawadari. Interviewee No 15. 28 October 2025

# Gender and Religious Discrimination against Ismaili Women

---



Although Afghan women from all ethnic and religious groups have been targeted by the Taliban's discriminatory policies solely due to their gender—deprived of rights such as education, work, and free movement—findings of this research show that women belonging to the Ismaili religious minority have been exposed to double and more complex discrimination. In addition to experiencing discrimination due to their gender identity, these women have endured more severe forms of deprivation due to their religious and ethnic identity.

Fifteen interviewees stated that Ismaili women during the past four years have been exposed to a set of double discrimination and restrictions compared to other Afghan women. These include limitations on access to religious education, the prevention of freely performing religious rituals, harassment regarding their type of clothing, and the imposition of restrictions conflicting with the cultural values and traditions of the Ismaili community.

Based on the contemporary teachings of the Ismaili faith, women and men are equal in several areas such as decision-making, social participation, and rights regarding inheritance and marriage. One interviewee said in this regard:

“Previously, Ismaili men and women worked alongside each other in agriculture and farming sectors. For example, if in a household the man was busy with farming work, his wife would take livestock to pastures, but currently, the Taliban have severely limited this space and do not allow women to go out of the house. Also, Ismaili women had freedom in choosing their type of clothing, but now they must wear the Chadari (burqa) and the covering imposed by the Taliban. A number of local young women told me that one day Propagation of Virtue agents in Fayzabad city, Badakhshan province, even lifted our skirts to see that we weren't wearing jeans.”<sup>124</sup>

“Another interviewee stated:  
‘I am aware of several cases in Badakhshan province where the Taliban entered villages and beat women while they were working in the fields and assisting their husbands with farming. The Taliban would ask these women why they were not wearing a chadari (burqa), even though the chadari is not customary in that region and many women are not even familiar with it.’”<sup>125</sup>

Another interviewee narrated regarding the suicide of an Ismaili girl after harassment by the Taliban:

“We don't have much strictness, and Ismaili women have freedom regarding their type of clothing... In the year 1403 (2024), an Ismaili girl committed suicide in Kabul city. The Taliban flogged this girl in public in the Taymani area because of her type of clothing and then took her with them to the Department of Propagation of Virtue. When she was released and returned home, she attempted suicide a week later, and this act was done so quietly that even her non-Ismaili neighbours did not find out about this event.”<sup>126</sup>

---

124 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October  
125 Rawadari. Interviewee No 22. 20 November 2025  
126 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025



Another interviewee, pointing to the ethnic identity of Ismaili women, stated: *“Ismaili women, especially with Hazara ethnic identity, are exposed to more and severe discrimination. Both because of their religious identity and because of their ethnic identity... Based on Ismaili religious rules, women can be present in places of worship alongside men without any restriction and pray under one roof. But currently, the Taliban do not allow Ismaili women to be present in places of worship.”*<sup>127</sup>

Regarding the lack of access to religious educational centres, another interviewee said:



*“Ismaili religious education usually takes place in Jamaatkhana and ‘Bait-ul-Ilm’, but due to changes that came after 2021, girls, both children and teenagers, have been deprived of the right to access these centres. For example, my little sister, as an Ismaili child has been simultaneously deprived of going to school and religious education, whereas in Taliban Madrasas, this is not the case, and women can study at different ages and up to higher levels (for religious education in Hanafi jurisprudence).”*<sup>128</sup>



In this regard, another interviewee stated: *“The local Taliban in our village are extremely strict. Consequently, women have been deprived of all their rights; they do not even allow our girls to attend school from the first grade. Our primary school has been closed since the day they came to power.”*<sup>129</sup>



Another interviewee said: *“In general, the situation of Ismaili women is no different from that of other women in Afghanistan. However, the problem our young girls face is that when they reach the age of 12 or 13 and can no longer attend school, they are also unable to access their own religious schools and teachings. Meanwhile, this restriction does not exist for girls belonging to other religious groups; that is, when they are deprived of attending [secular] school, they can go to [Sunni] religious madrasas and continue their religious education. Although the Bait-ul-Ilm (Ismaili educational centres) are active, our girls are not allowed to go there, and this issue could lead to the weakening of the religious beliefs of Ismaili women in the future.”*<sup>130</sup>

---

127 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025  
128 Rawadari. Interviewee No 10. 4 October 2025  
129 Rawadari. Interviewee No 23. 5 November 2025  
130 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025

# Forced Displacement and Seizure of Ismaili Property

---



The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes and guarantees the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to housing for all individuals. Additionally, according to the general comment of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, any forced eviction without appropriate compensation and outside of legal processes is considered an explicit violation of human rights. Based on this interpretation, forced displacement also includes cases where individuals are forced to leave their homes under pressure, threats, and unbearable conditions.

Furthermore, according to the ICCPR, any discrimination based on religion in the enjoyment of the rights set forth in the Covenant is prohibited, and all individuals must enjoy equal protection under the law. Therefore, forced displacement and the seizure of the property of religious minorities are instances of discrimination and violations of the fundamental principles of human rights.

An analysis of the data from this research shows that a number of Ismaili Shias have been displaced over the past four years, particularly from the provinces of Badakhshan and Baghlan, following pressure, threats, and fear of insecurity. Additionally, during this period, their properties in the aforementioned provinces have been seized arbitrarily and outside of legal procedures, which will be examined in detail below.

### Forced Displacement

Fifteen of the interviewees stated that during the past four years, a number of Ismaili families have left their homes and places of residence due to discrimination, threats, violence, a sense of insecurity, and fear of persecution. Among them, three interviewees stated that they personally left their places of residence due to experiencing discrimination, harassment, being forced to change their religion, and the imposition of the study of Hanafi jurisprudence.



*As one interviewee recounted:*  
*“A large number of people have been forced to leave their homeland and place of residence due to discrimination, property seizure, and physical threats. In the Tala wa Barfak district of Baghlan province, there were previously about 4,000 Ismaili families, but now not even 1,000 families remain. Everyone who could has left the region because they see no future for themselves, and this process is still ongoing.”<sup>131</sup>*



*Another interviewee stated:*  
*“When I see children who have come from Badakhshan province to Kabul to live with their relatives, I ask why they have come here; they say they fled for fear of the Taliban—fear that tomorrow they might be forced to join the Taliban or abandon their religion. Even some families residing in Kabul have sent some of their members to Pakistan so they can live there in safety.”<sup>132</sup>*

131 Rawadari. Interviewee No 12. 13 October 2025  
132 Rawadari. Interviewee No 20. 3 October 2025

Another interviewee explained that unidentified armed men have threatened a number of Ismailis to leave their homes and land:

“In Tala wa Barfak district, although most people left the region out of fear, there are also cases where armed men went to Ismaili homes at night and threatened them that they must leave their houses and lands. For example, one follower of the Ismaili faith, who had been repeatedly threatened to leave his neighbourhood, home, and land, had declared that he was not willing to leave under any circumstances. Ultimately, this individual was murdered at night by unidentified persons. Local people went to Taliban offices to complain, but no action was taken.”<sup>133</sup>

Another interviewee said regarding this matter:  
“Local Taliban in the Tala wa Barfak district of Baghlan province had warned two members of the Ismaili community that they must leave their land and homes, but when they did not accept this demand and showed resistance, they were murdered under suspicious circumstances. Additionally, another Ismaili from the same province, who had gone to take his land back from a previous tenant, was also killed. The Taliban have performed no investigation to date, nor have they arrested anyone in connection with these murders. Furthermore, several others were wounded by gunfire from unidentified armed men and fled the area.”<sup>134</sup>

## Seizure of Property Belonging to Ismailis

Twelve of the 25 interviewees in this research reported that properties belonging to Ismailis have been seized over the past four years, primarily in the provinces of Badakhshan and Baghlan, without any official authorization and outside of legal procedures.

One interviewee recounted:

“The Chief of Police of Arghanj Khwa goes to Ismaili homes at night and says, for example, ‘I will buy your land for 20 million Afghans, and tomorrow we will film you; you must say in your own words that you are selling your land to such-and-such person at this price by your own consent. If you don’t, we will kill you the following night.’ The individual is forced to accept. These people never wanted to sell their lands. When they spoke to me over the phone, they were crying and saying, ‘We cannot protect our homes and lands; we have no other choice—we either do this to stay alive or resist and be killed.’”<sup>135</sup>

Another interviewee, pointing to religious motives behind the seizure of Ismaili property, said:

“A large number of Ismaili-owned shops in the centre of Ishkashim district have been seized under various pretexts, even though they had purchased these properties previously and held legal deeds. The motive for this is religious, as followers of other faiths also have shops in that same location, but theirs have not been seized. Similarly, in Wakhan district, properties belonging to Ismailis have

133 Rawadari. Interviewee No 4. 4 October 2025

134 Rawadari. Interviewee No 12. 13 October 2025

135 Rawadari. Interviewee No 2. 21 October 2025

*been taken from them without a court order under the guise of ‘expropriation’ or by claiming they were government land.”<sup>136</sup>*

Another interviewee recounted the following regarding the widespread seizure and destruction of lands belonging to Ismaili Shias in Badakhshan province for gold mining:



*“For the sake of gold, they destroyed roads, pastures, and both cultivated and barren lands. If you protest, they torture you to the point of death. They provide no compensation; an ordinary soldier comes and destroys your home, and no one can say a word. Just a year ago, in the Zamin Darreh area, they took agricultural lands belonging to Ismailis and are now conducting excavations. They destroyed people’s pastures, which amount to hectares of land. Another threat resulting from this is natural disasters, as they have excavated everywhere; if a flood occurs, it will sweep away the entire village and all its assets. Juma Khan Fateh and his brother, Musa Shahryar, have seized these lands; everything is under this individual’s control... Wherever he finds gold, he doesn’t ask if it is agricultural land, a house, a road, or fruit-bearing or non-fruit-bearing trees; he simply labels it ‘spoils of war’ (Ghanimat) and begins excavating.”<sup>137</sup>*

---

136 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 29 October 2025

137 Rawadari. Interviewee No 17. 13 November 2025

# Restrictions on Access to Justice

---



Article 14 of the ICCPR stipulates that all persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals. Everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal. Similarly, Article 26 of this Covenant emphasizes the principle of equality for all before the law and prohibits any form of discrimination, including religious discrimination.

Despite this, 20 of the interviewees in this research stated that, at present, the complaints of Ismaili individuals are not handled fairly within judicial and legal institutions. Among them, 10 emphasized that members of this community—particularly in cases involving personal status—do not approach Taliban courts.

Interviewees stated that the aforementioned institutions settle all criminal and civil cases involving members of this religious minority based on Hanafi jurisprudence, despite the significant differences that exist between Ismaili and Hanafi jurisprudence, especially in matters of personal status.

Additionally, a number of these interviewees stated that Taliban courts do not grant credibility to the testimony of Shia followers. As one interviewee noted:



*“Taliban courts in Baghlan province generally do not grant credibility to the testimony of Shia individuals. For example, some time ago, the house of a Twelver Shia follower was robbed. When the case was referred to the Taliban court, the homeowner brought an individual to testify, but the Taliban judges refused his testimony. They declared that the condition for a witness is to be ‘just’ (Adil), and the condition for ‘justice’ is to be a Muslim; therefore, you must bring a Sunni witness. In another case, an Ismaili individual paid his brother \$600 in exchange for him waiving his inheritance rights. Three years later, they had a dispute again and the case reached a Taliban court. One party brought a witness to court, but the Taliban judges refused his testimony. This practice is very common in Baghlan courts. I have seen numerous cases in both the Criminal Division of the Appeals Court and the Urban Court Division where judges refuse to accept the testimony of followers of the Shia faith.”<sup>138</sup>*



*Another interviewee said:*

*“I have not personally approached the court, but I have seen instances of discrimination against followers of the Ismaili faith. For example, I once witnessed the proceedings of a case in a Kabul court where the indictment stated that the accused was also a follower of the Ismaili faith. This means the subject’s faith was actually written down as one of the contributing factors of the allegation against him.”<sup>139</sup>*

138 Rawadari. Interviewee No 1. 19 October 2025

139 Rawadari. Interviewee No 7. 29 October 2025

Some interviewees stated that according to the contemporary rulings of the Ismaili faith, women enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres, including the right to inheritance; however, Taliban courts rule on these matters based on Hanafi jurisprudence. One interviewee said:



*“In our faith, women enjoy equal inheritance rights to men, and similarly, in other matters, no superiority is given to men over women. Whenever a dispute arises among Ismailis regarding personal status issues—including the right to inheritance—the ‘Aga Khan Conciliation and Arbitration Board’ handles the dispute based on Ismaili religious rulings. However, the Taliban overturn these decisions, claiming that Ismaili religious rulings are wrong and that they are infidels because, in [their] Islamic Sharia, women are entitled to half the inheritance of men. Therefore, they settle these cases according to Hanafi jurisprudence.”<sup>140</sup>*

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this report, following the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, the Ismaili religious minority in Afghanistan has faced systematic religious suppression and persecution. Forcing Ismaili children to learn Hanafi jurisprudence and compelling members of this community to adopt the Sunni faith through intimidation, detention, torture, and death threats are among the targeted and continuous actions the Taliban have carried out over the past four years.

Furthermore, the exclusion of Ismailis from decision-making levels in government offices, the prevention of employment or their dismissal from state institutions due to their religious identity, the increase in negative propaganda, public Takfir (labeling as infidels), hate speech, and other forms of verbal discrimination constitute another part of the Taliban's discriminatory and repressive policies against this religious minority.

The imposition of restrictions on the freedom to perform religious rituals and the operation of places of worship, as well as threats, extrajudicial killings, forced displacement, and the seizure of property and assets belonging to the Ismaili community, are additional factors that have left profound impacts on their security, human dignity, and human rights status.

The aforementioned points indicate that the Taliban's actions to undermine and suppress the religious identity of the Ismaili community in Afghanistan are organized in nature, as they have been carried out extensively over the past four years and have affected all spheres and dimensions of the lives of this community. Consequently, what is currently being inflicted upon the Ismailis of Afghanistan may constitute crimes against humanity, which, in light of international human rights instruments, places heavy responsibilities upon the Taliban as the de facto authorities in Afghanistan.

Moreover, there is currently no clear legal framework to guarantee religious freedoms in Afghanistan, and the Taliban not only fail to fulfil their legal obligations based on international human rights instruments but also suppress any differing religious thoughts and beliefs through their strict and ideological interpretation of Islam. Therefore, halting the systematic religious persecution against the Ismaili community in Afghanistan necessitates the effective employment of international mechanisms.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this report, and in order to further report on the human rights situation of the Ismailis of Afghanistan, ensure accountability, and protect the members of this community, Rawadari proposes the following:

### *To the de facto authorities:*

- Afghanistan is a party to numerous binding international human rights instruments that guarantee religious freedom; therefore, we call upon the Taliban, as the de facto authority, to fulfil their legal duty to observe and implement the provisions and obligations set forth in these international commitments.
- We call upon the DFA to end the policies and actions restricting religious freedom in Afghanistan without delay and to prevent the violation of the human rights of the members of the Ismaili community.
- We call upon the DFA to immediately end the forced religious education of Ismaili children and to respect the right of parents to choose the type and content of their children's education in accordance with international human rights standards.
- The forced conversion of Ismaili community members and the imposition of the Sunni faith upon them constitute the most severe forms of human rights violations and can carry serious legal consequences for the perpetrators. Therefore, we call on the DFA to take action regarding the prosecution and punishment of their local officials involved in such acts.

### *To the United Nations and the International Community*

- The Ismaili community is an important and inseparable part of the cultural and civilizational identity of Afghanistan, and supporting them is essential and inevitable for strengthening peace, mutual acceptance, progress, and the sustainable development of this country. Therefore, we call upon the United Nations to adopt and implement effective and practical measures to prevent the suppression of this religious minority.
- As the findings of this report demonstrate, followers of the Ismaili faith in Afghanistan are subject to organized forms of discrimination and human rights violations. For this reason, it is expected that the United Nations and other competent international bodies recognize the religious persecution against Ismailis within the framework of international law.
- It is also essential that the United Nations prevent the continuation and escalation of the suppression of Ismaili community in Afghanistan by activating monitoring mechanisms and utilizing other legal solutions and measures.
- We propose that the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan prepare a report on the human rights status of the Ismaili minority in Afghanistan and share his findings with the UN human rights council, as well as media and other relevant stakeholders.
- We call upon the United Nations and other relevant institutions to make respect for the rights of religious minorities—and specifically the guarantee of preventing the suppression of the Ismaili community in Afghanistan—a prerequisite for any political and diplomatic engagement with the Taliban.
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is requested to prioritize the asylum cases of Ismaili community members who have been forced to flee due to fear

of prosecution and persecution.

- We also request that host countries support the asylum claims of Afghanistan's Ismailis, taking into account the serious risks they face.
- Furthermore, we call upon the international community to use diplomatic and political tools to compel the Taliban to respect religious freedoms and Afghanistan's obligations regarding the regulations set forth in international human rights documents.

### ***To Human Rights Organizations and the Media***

- Human rights organizations and the media are expected to play an effective and active role in documenting discrimination, violence, and human rights violations against the Ismaili community in Afghanistan by collecting credible evidence, testimony, and reports.
- We also call upon human rights organizations and the media to combat any negative propaganda, religious hate speech, and the Takfir of Ismailis in Afghanistan through advocacy tools and awareness campaigns, playing an active role in promoting peaceful coexistence.
- Holding the perpetrators of systematic religious discrimination and persecution against Ismailis accountable requires coordination and alignment among relevant institutions. Therefore, we call upon human rights organizations and the media to act in a coordinated manner to ensure justice and pursue accountability of those responsible for human rights violations.

