

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1699
Land:	Afghanistan
Kilde:	Rawadari
Titel:	Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025
Udgivet:	august 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	21. januar 2026

AFGHANISTAN MID-YEAR HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION REPORT: JANUARY-JUNE 30, 2025

August 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.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DFA	De-facto Authority
GDI	General Directorate of Intelligence
ICC	International Criminal Court
MPVPV	Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice
NRF	National Resistance Front
PDL	Places of Deprivation of Liberty
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a critical analysis of the human rights situation in Afghanistan during the first six months of 2025. It specifically documents violations of civil and political rights, with a focus on the plight of women and vulnerable ethnic and religious groups. Based on firsthand data, including interviews with victims, survivors, and eyewitnesses, this report examines the patterns of human rights abuses in Afghanistan in the first half of 2025 and their profound impact on the lives of ordinary citizens.

The report's findings indicate that while some forms of violence—such as casualties from suicide attacks and explosions—have decreased, the number of targeted and extrajudicial killings has increased by approximately 30% in the first half of 2025, compared to the same period in 2024.

Former government employees, journalists, human rights defenders, and anyone accused of cooperating with anti-Taliban groups remain the primary targets of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and torture.

The human rights situation for women deteriorated significantly during this period as the Taliban escalated organized discrimination and restrictions to suppress their fundamental rights and freedoms. These actions include new oral decrees from "Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" (PVPV) officials, requiring a mahram and specific hijab for girls in primary schools, shutting down informal learning centres for women, and restricting women's access to public and religious spaces.

Under international law, these systematic and discriminatory policies may constitute the crime against humanity of gender persecution.

Evidence also shows a notable increase in violations of citizens' right to liberty and personal security across the country, fuelled by the so-called "Vice and Virtue" law. The Taliban are widely and arbitrarily detaining people based on their clothing, beard and hair length and for listening to music and speaking to members of the opposite sex and other charges. There is a twofold increase in number of arbitrary arrests in the first 6 months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024.

Furthermore, the report's findings indicate that the Taliban have violently suppressed protest gatherings, arresting, imprisoning, and even killing demonstrators. This reflects a growing climate of fear and a deliberate policy to silence dissent and restrict civil action.

Taliban courts have also extensively ordered a range of cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishments, including executions, stoning, physical beatings, and humiliating public shaming by blackening the faces of the accused. There has been a twofold increase in number of physical punishments compared to the first 6 months of 2024.

Vulnerable ethnic and religious groups continue to face discrimination in access to jobs, government services, humanitarian aid, and national resources. The de facto authorities (DFA) have also imposed severe restrictions on religious freedom, suppressing diverse beliefs and even forcing members of religious minorities to convert to Hanafi Islam.

We hope that the international community, the United Nations, human rights organizations, and the de facto authorities will seriously consider the findings and recommendations in this report. It is imperative that they take practical and effective steps to protect human rights and ensure dignity for all Afghan citizens.

The report has been written in Dari/Farsi with testimonies in Dari and Pashto and is translated to English.

DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

In the first half of 2025, Rawadari continuously documented human rights violations by collecting information from a wide range of local sources in 32 provinces¹. Our sources include victims, their relatives, eyewitnesses, civil activists, journalists, teachers, government employees, lawyers, and national and international organizations. Rawadari observers used questionnaires and conducted direct interviews—either by phone or in person—to gather detailed monthly reports on human rights violations, while strictly adhering to research and security protocols.

Rawadari's research and documentation team directly supervised the information-gathering process, providing continuous guidance to local observers and meticulously verifying all data collected. Once verified, we stored this information in a secure electronic system. We also gathered supporting evidence, such as written documents, images, and other records, and cross-referenced them with interviewee testimonies. Therefore, this report is based on credible, confirmed information from multiple sources. We excluded any cases where we could not obtain sufficient evidence due to challenges on access to information.

We also used findings from previous reports by Rawadari and other human rights organizations as supplementary evidence to enrich our analysis. We analysed the data using a qualitative and comparative approach to identify shared patterns of human rights violations across the three main sections: civil and political rights, women's rights, and the rights of vulnerable ethnic and religious groups. We compared data from the first half of 2025 to the same periods in 2024 and 2023.

¹ Herat, Nimruz, Badghis, Daikundi, Ghor, Farah, Khost, Paktia, Paktika, Kabul, Parwan, Maidan Wardak, Samangan, Ghazni, Badakhshan, Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan, Nangarhar, Kunar, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul, Helmand, Bamiyan, Logar, Faryab, Balkh, Jawzjan, Nuristan, Laghman and Panjshir

It is important to note that a decrease in some of the statistics presented in this report does not necessarily mean the situation has improved. It may be due to the growing challenges we face in collecting information due to the increasing restrictions on human rights documentation. Our goal is not simply to provide statistics, but to offer a fact-based and accurate picture of the current human rights situation information.

OBSTACLES TO ACCESS TO INFORMATION

During this reporting period, the Taliban imposed stricter and more systematic restrictions on access to information compared to the first half of 2024. The General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) actively monitors the activities of media, civil activists, human rights defenders, and even social media users. Anyone who publishes information about human rights violations faces potential identification, interrogation, and torture. This is part of a deliberate, nationwide policy to conceal human rights abuses, which not only prevents victims and their families from accessing justice but also severely limits Rawadari's ability to fully and impartially document these events.

The de facto authorities have repeatedly ordered all their departments to share no information with media or anyone else without explicit permission from a higher authority. They have strictly banned employees from using smartphones with cameras, particularly in the southwest region (Farah, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimruz and Zabul). They have also systematically dismissed remaining employees from the previous government to control the flow of information.

Additionally, according to an official letter obtained by Rawadari, the Taliban explicitly told government employees to avoid any cooperation or interviews with exiled media. The Taliban's Information and Culture Directorates in Parwan and Nangarhar provinces have warned local journalists that if they cooperate with exiled media, they will be arrested and imprisoned by the GDI. Civil society activists and human rights defenders are also strictly forbidden from expressing any opinions that might offend the Taliban. Over the past six months, Rawadari has documented cases where the Taliban arrested and tortured human rights defenders and journalists who defied this order, accusing them of "spying for foreigners".

Local media outlets must publish only the information approved by the Taliban's Information and Culture Directorate and avoid any "unapproved" news or reports. This has led to widespread self-censorship and the concealment of many human rights violations that occur daily.

Furthermore, the Taliban force prisoners, especially torture survivors, to sign a written commitment not to speak to anyone about their experiences in prison, threatening re-arrest and torture if they do. Human rights organizations and observers are denied access to prisons and detention centres, and

officials in places of detention are strictly prohibited from providing any information to human rights organizations or media about the conditions of detention.

The Taliban are also extremely sensitive about release of any information about targeted and extrajudicial killings. They directly threaten the families and relatives of victims to prevent them from sharing any information. They also frequently check citizens' phones at checkpoints to find and deliberately delete/hide information related to human rights violations.

The implementation of the "Vice and Virtue" law has also contributed to a pervasive climate of fear, leading to more silence around human rights abuses. Therefore, the information in this report may be limited compared to the actual cases of human rights violations.

PART 1

VIOLATIONS OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS



Photo (C) Adobe Stock

Civil and political rights are among the most fundamental human rights, recognized in international documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. States are obligated to protect these rights and provide a framework for their full enjoyment. However, our assessment of the situation in Afghanistan in the first half of 2025 shows that the Taliban are violating these rights through restrictions and abuse of power, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and violations of the right to life.

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO LIFE

The right to life is non-derogable, meaning states cannot suspend it under any circumstances, even during war or other public emergencies. However, this report’s findings reveal that in the first half of 2025, at least 354 people were killed or injured as a result of targeted attacks, unexploded ordnance, or targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial killings⁵¹. Of these, 202 were killed and 152 were injured. The dead included 160 men, 15 women, and 27 children; the injured included 123 men, 7 women, and 22 children. Victims included former government employees and their families, journalists, civil activists, protesters, women, children, tribal elders, and people accused of having ties to anti-Taliban groups.

Rawadari documented 367 right-to-life violations in the first half of 2024. A comparison shows a decrease of about 3.5% in this reporting period. This is also a 31.3% decrease compared to the same period in 2023, which saw 516 cases.

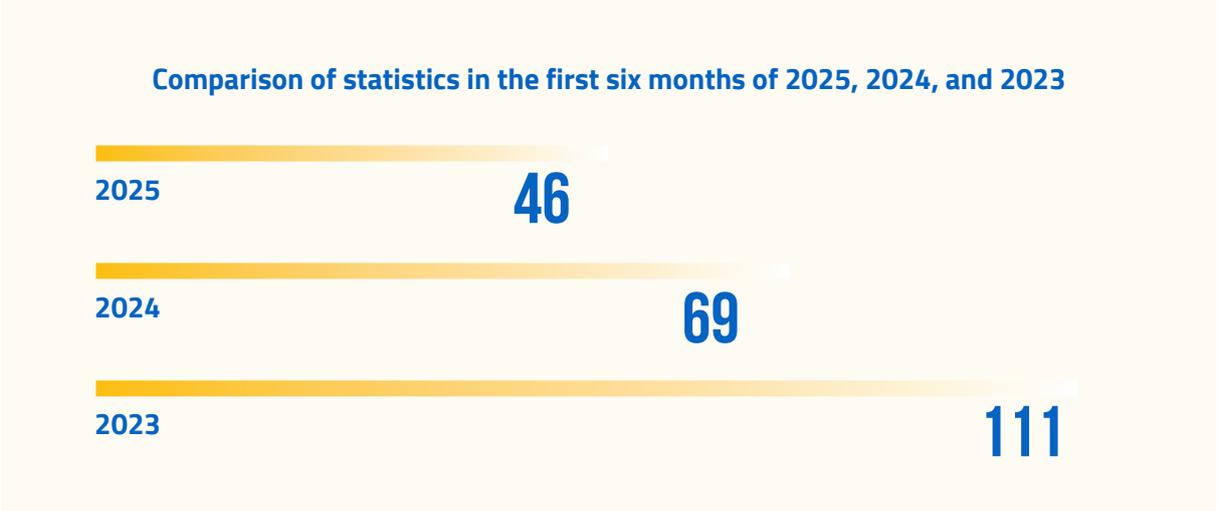


Given the increasing restrictions on access to information, a decrease in documented statistics does not necessarily mean the situation has vastly improved.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES FROM TARGETED EXPLOSIVE AND SUICIDE ATTACKS

According to this report, at least 46 people were killed or injured in the first half of 2025 from targeted suicide and explosive attacks in Kunduz, Balkh, Paktika, Kunar, Nangarhar, and Nuristan provinces. Of these, 11 people died and 35 were injured. The dead included 10 men and 1 woman; all 35 of the injured were men.

Rawadari recorded 69 civilian casualties from these attacks in the first six months of 2024, showing a decrease of about 33.3% in the current reporting period. This is also a 50% decrease compared to the 111 cases recorded in the first half of 2023.



On January 15, 2025, a planted mine on a vendor cart exploded in Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh province, killing at least two civilians and injuring six others. No group has claimed responsibility. Another explosion on April 14, 2025, near a Shiite Mosque in Mazar-e-Sharif, killed at least three people, including one woman, and injured six men. No group has claimed responsibility for this incident either.

On February 1, 2025, a Pakistani military bombing in Paktika province’s Nemat-Abad district killed three civilians, including two vaccinators. In another incident on March 5, 2025, three local journalists were injured by a mortar shell during a border clash between the Taliban and Pakistani forces in Nangarhar province.

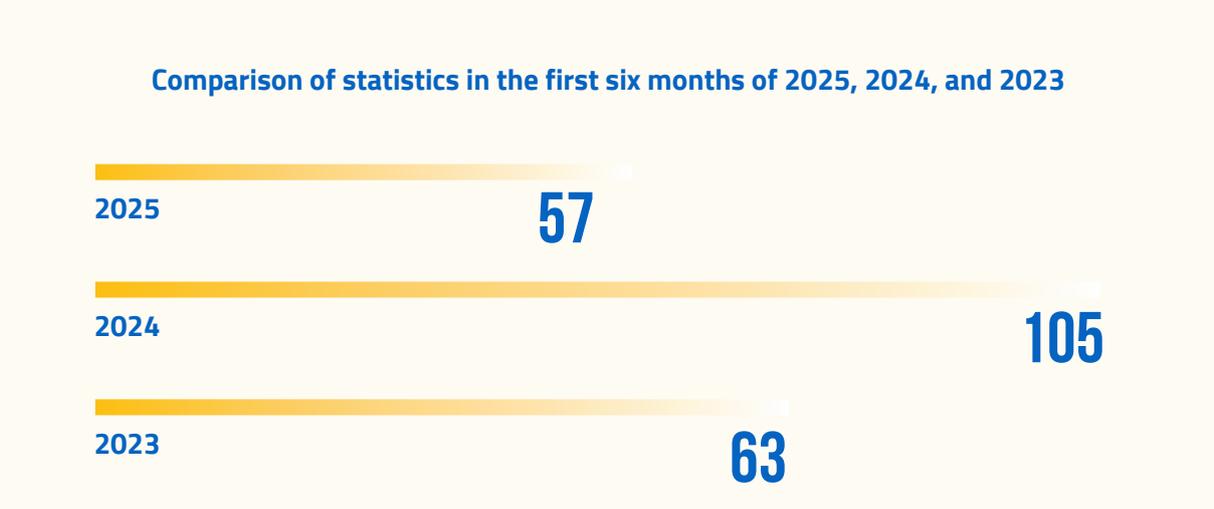


Photo (C) Alamy - Imago

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES FROM MINES AND UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE

In the first six months of 2025, at least 57 people were killed or injured by planted mines, unexploded rounds, and other explosive remnants of past conflicts. Of these, 26 were killed (9 men, 17 children) and 31 were injured (20 children, 10 men, 1 woman). This number shows a 45.7% decrease compared to the 105 cases in the first half of 2024 and a 9.5% decrease compared to the 63 cases in the first half of 2023. The recorded incidents mainly occurred in villages and areas that were former sites of armed conflict.

On April 13 of this year, a boy and a girl, who were siblings, were killed in Ghazni province’s Andar district by an explosion of war remnants. In another incident on April 8, 2025, a mine explosion in Chak district, Maidan Wardak province, killed one child and injured four others.



Additionally, on May 5, 2025, two men from Herat province’s Zende Jan district were injured by a mine from previous conflicts while walking home.

On April 18, 2025, a mine explosion in Badakhshan province’s Zebak district killed three children and injured three others. A relative of the victims said the children found the mine while collecting firewood and were playing with it when it exploded. In another incident on June 30, 2025, two children were killed and one was injured by a mortar shell explosion near Firozkoh city, Ghor province.

While civilian casualties from mine explosions have decreased in some areas due to the end to the armed conflict, large parts of the country remain contaminated, posing a serious threat to civilians, especially children. The HALO Trust reports that 6.4 million people in Afghanistan are at risk from unexploded ordnance, and children constitute 80% of those who are killed and injured.

TARGETED, MYSTERIOUS, AND EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

In the first six months of 2025, at least 251 people—219 men, 20 women, and 12 children—were killed or injured in targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial killings by the Taliban and unknown individuals. This is a 30% increase compared to the 193 cases in the same period in 2024, but a 26.6% decrease compared to the 342 cases in the first half of 2023.



The victims were mainly former government employees, people accused of being members of or collaborating with anti-Taliban groups, protesters, and local elders and influencers. Some had personal feuds with the Taliban.

The methods used to kill these individuals included gunshots, bladed weapons, beheadings, and burning⁷ Some were kidnapped, arrested, or threatened before being killed; others were killed under suspicious circumstances after being released from detention.

Challenges in Documenting Targeted Killings

Targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial killings are a complex form of violence in Afghanistan because the Taliban often attribute them to unknown groups while deliberately trying to conceal information. Taliban officials threaten and pressure victims’ families to prevent them from sharing information with media or human rights organizations. As a result, fully and accurately documenting these killings is extremely difficult, especially in large cities. The climate of fear makes families hesitant to cooperate, fearing potential consequences.

The Taliban strictly prohibit media from covering these incidents and in some cases have threatened them with arrest. Hospitals are also not allowed to release information about victims’ identities². In the southwest, many of these killings are not registered by hospitals, and if there is evidence of Taliban involvement, bodies are immediately transferred to military hospitals to prevent information about the victims from leaking.

² Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-year Human Rights Situation Report: January- June 30 2024.

In some cases, in the southwest region, the Taliban have even pressured families to give false testimonies, forcing them to describe the killings as personal feuds or criminal acts. These restrictions have prevented Rawadari from fully documenting the identities of many victims over the past six months.

Another notable detail is the fatality of the targeted attacks on individuals. In previous years, in some cases, victims might have only been injured. In the first half of 2025, however, the killings were more organized and violent. For example, in the southwest, perpetrators kidnapped victims and then killed them, dumping their bodies in remote areas. Some victims were even beheaded or burned possibly in an attempt to prevent recognition.

The Taliban continue to deny their own involvement in targeted killings yet also fail to investigate and prosecute cases of targeting killings, particularly those of former government employees and former (republic era) security force members. However, available evidence suggests that these targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial killings, particularly of former government employees, are systematic and the similarities in methods and victim selection point to a coordinated effort.

In several cases involving former government employees and those accused of collaborating with anti-Taliban groups, credible evidence points to Taliban involvement. The Taliban often kill these individuals and then falsely accuse them of being thieves or rebels to conceal the true motives for the killing.

A source within the Taliban's security sector told Rawadari that their forces "kill military opponents, critics, and those they consider 'rebels' after arresting them and won't allow them to live under the Islamic Emirate'.

Taliban's Response to Targeted Killings

According to international human rights treaties, states must not only prevent arbitrary killings but also effectively, impartially, and independently investigate them and hold perpetrators accountable. Failure to do so institutionalizes impunity and allows violations to continue.

However, for four years, the Taliban have taken no transparent action to prosecute the perpetrators of these targeted killings, leaving cases unresolved. This has perpetuated a cycle of violence and denied victims' families their right to justice.

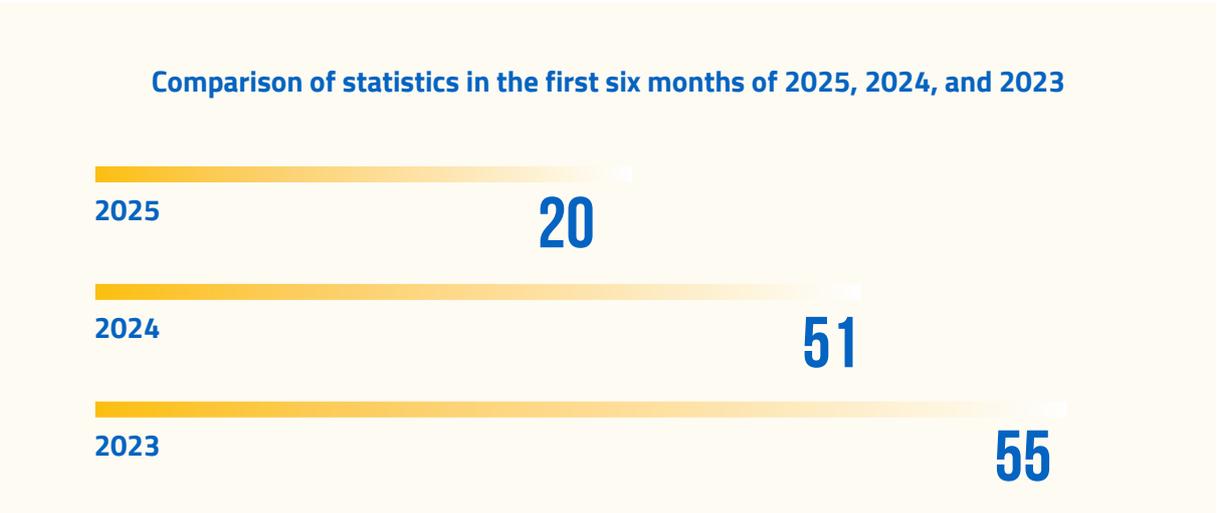
Of the 251 targeted killings that occurred in the first six months of this year, the Taliban only arrested two individuals in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, and there is no information on their trials or persecution. In all other cases, they have taken no legal action. This lack of prosecution demonstrates the Taliban's failure to fulfil their legal responsibilities to ensure citizens' safety and security, perpetuating impunity and a climate of fear.

As mentioned, the Taliban are extremely sensitive about sharing information related to these events. Courts and other relevant authorities neither report on their proceedings nor allow any investigation or research about them. Information from Kandahar indicates that the Taliban arrest individuals who collect information on these killings.

SYSTEMATIC KILLING OF FORMER GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

In the first six months of 2025, at least 20 former government employees were killed or injured in targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial attacks.

In the first half of 2024, 51 former government employees were killed or injured in targeted attacks. This represents a 60% decrease in recorded cases. It also shows a 63.6% decrease compared to the 55 cases recorded in the first half of 2023.



While a comparison of these statistics shows a decrease, this may not necessarily mean the situation has improved. It may largely be due to the severe restrictions on documenting these events.

Our report finds that the Taliban, particularly the GDI, are using various tactics to carry out attacks against former government employees. For example, in February 2025, a former soldier in Kandahar province’s Arghandab district was killed by the Taliban after a verbal argument. His relatives told Rawadari he was a shopkeeper, but the Taliban released a statement claiming he was a thief killed in a clash.

Additionally, on March 26, 2025, a former military commander in Ghor province was killed after being arrested by Taliban intelligence. The next day, the Taliban returned his body to his family but offered no explanation. On May 24, 2025, a former local police officer was found hanged in his home in Ghor province’s Taywara district. Local sources say the Taliban executed him.

In another incident on June 6, a former National Directorate of Security employee from Ghazni province was killed under suspicious circumstances in Kabul. His relatives said he disappeared on the first day of Eid al-Adha, and his body was found three days later at a Kabul hospital morgue. The Taliban claimed suicide, a claim his family rejects. Similarly, on March 24, 2025, Taliban forces arrested a former soldier from his home in Kabul. One day later, his family found his corpse in Kabul's Shakar Dara district. According to relatives, he had always been concerned for his safety, having previously received threats from the Taliban. The Taliban have provided no explanation for this incident.



Furthermore, a former Badghis province police officer, arrested by intelligence, was shot and killed after just a few hours. The Taliban later announced they had found grenades in his pocket.

There are also cases of former government employees being killed by unknown gunmen. In January 2025, a former National Directorate of Security employee who was working as a shopkeeper in Helmand province’s Sufian area was killed by unknown individuals. His relatives said he had no enemies. On June 4, 2025, unknown armed individuals shot and killed a former soldier in Badakhshan province’s Faizabad city. In Faryab province’s Khwaja Sabz Posh district, unknown gunmen shot and killed three former soldiers on January 27 and May 8, 2025.

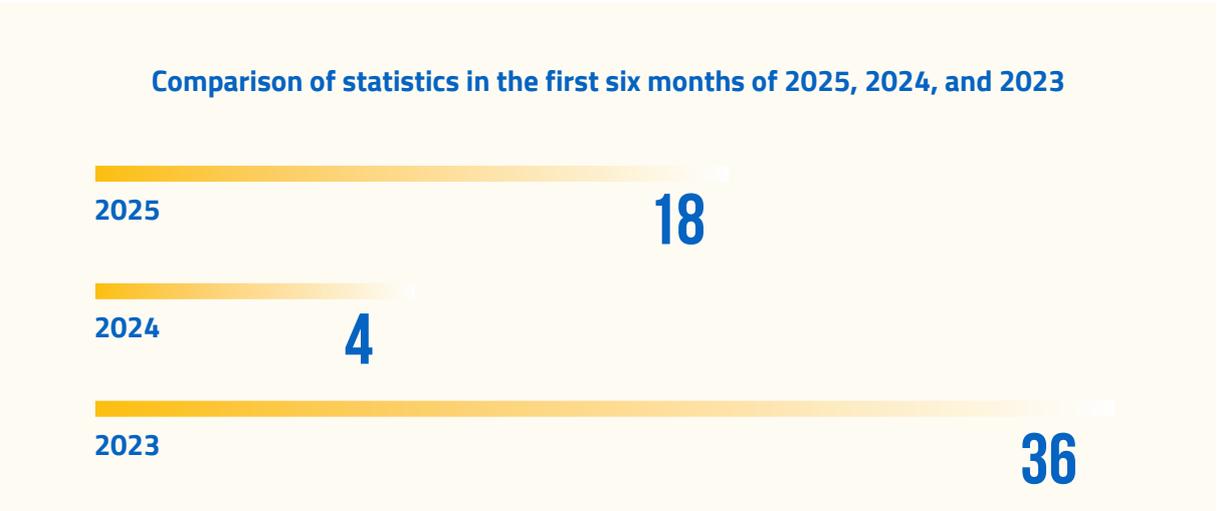
As mentioned in previous sections, the Taliban have taken no effective action to prosecute the perpetrators of these extrajudicial killings. Instead, since August 15, 2021, former government employees across the country have been targets of deadly, vengeful attacks.

UNAMA has also reported that they documented at least 13 killings of former security and defence forces between January 1 and June 30, 2025³.

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLING OF ACCUSED OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Based on our findings, in the first six months of 2025, the Taliban killed at least 18 civilians accused of cooperating with their military and political opponents. This is a significant increase compared to 4 cases recorded in the first half of 2024. It is twice the number of cases from the same period in 2023.

Evidence indicates that the Taliban’s intelligence directorate targeted individuals accused of being members of or collaborating with anti-Taliban groups using similar tactics as they did with former government employees.



³ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Update on the Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: January-March 2025 Update and Update on the Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: April-June 2025 Update

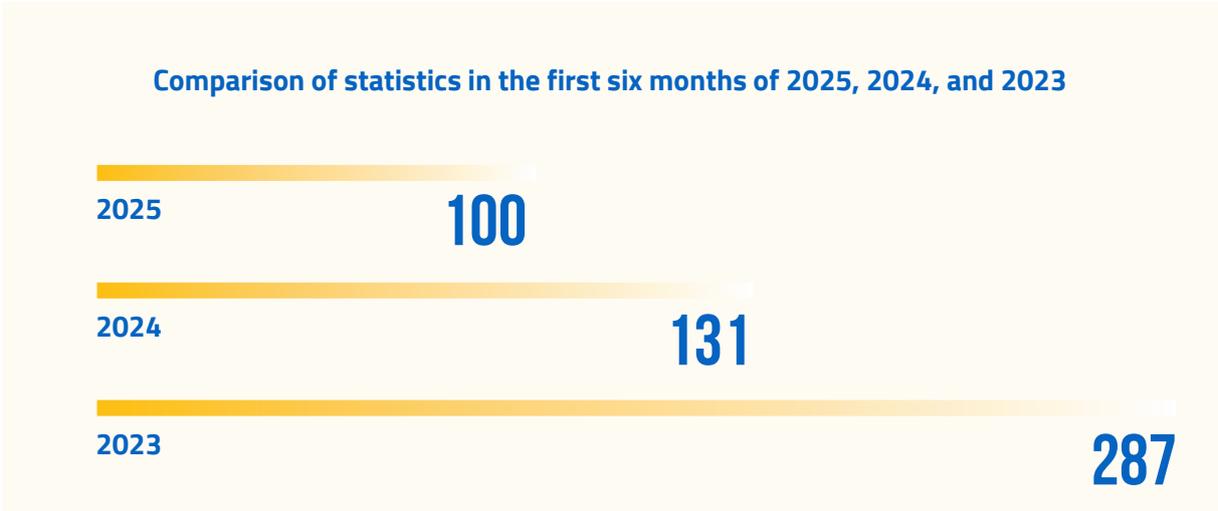
In March 2025, they arrested a resident of Herat province’s Injil district on charges of collaborating with opponents. After three days, they handed his body over to his family. This individual had returned from Iran 10 days before his arrest. In a similar incident, on April 30, 2025, the Taliban arrested a local elder in Herat province’s Kushk-e-Robat-e-Sangi district on charges of collaborating with opponents, killing him three hours later.

In another incident on January 25, 2025, the Taliban shot and killed two men in Herat province’s Injil district, claiming they were thieves. Information suggests their main charge was membership in anti-Taliban groups, and local Taliban officials used the theft accusation to hide the true motive.

On February 24, 2025, Taliban forces arrested a young man in Parwan province’s Bagram district on charges of collaborating with the Freedom Front and shot him one week later. Sources say a relative in prison had called him, pretending to be free and asking him to visit. When he arrived, the Taliban arrested him. The Taliban claimed his charge was carrying a weapon, but local sources say he was killed for his ties to the National Resistance Front and the Freedom Front.

MYSTERIOUS AND EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS OF OTHER CIVILIANS

In the first six months of 2025, at least 100 civilians were killed or injured in mysterious and extrajudicial attacks by the Taliban and unknown armed individuals. Of these, 39 were killed (32 men, 6 women, 1 child) and 61 were injured (58 men, 2 women, 1 child). Victims included protesters, supporters of the previous government, tribal elders, religious scholars, and local influencers. Of these, 39 were killed or injured during peaceful gatherings, as detailed in the relevant section.



In the first half of 2024, 131 civilians were killed or injured in similar incidents. This represents a 23% decrease. The number is also less than half of the 278 cases recorded in the same period in 2023.

A key point about these mysterious killings is that a significant number of victims were influential local, tribal, or religious figures. The lack of credible information about the perpetrators raises serious concerns, as the Taliban neither identify and punish them nor provide reports to the victims' families.

Evidence also shows that in cases where their own forces were publicly involved, the Taliban have shown leniency. The lack of legal prosecution and the denial of justice for victims' families is a serious concern that perpetuates these mysterious killings.

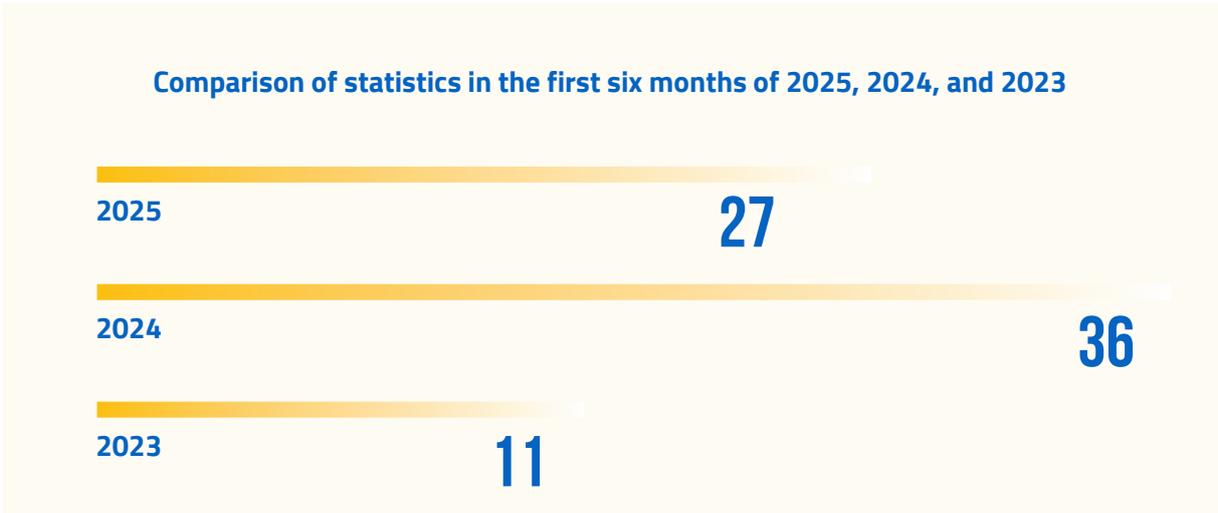
In February 2025, a tribal elder in Zabul province was killed under suspicious circumstances. The Taliban have not said anything about the perpetrators and have not acted to arrest them. In April, the imam of a mosque in Kandahar province's Khakrez district was assassinated by unknown individuals.

In January 2025, the Taliban commander in Badghis province's Qadis district killed two women due to a personal feud, according to their relatives. In June 2025, the Taliban killed a Salafi religious scholar in Badakhshan province's Shahuda district¹¹⁸.

On June 12, 2025, a resident of Ghor province's Dawlat Yar district was killed mysteriously. Local people found his mutilated body in the village and handed it over to his family.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Enforced disappearance refers to the detention, abduction, or any other deprivation of liberty by state agents or groups acting with state consent, support, or acquiescence. The key feature is the deliberate refusal to provide information about the reasons for arrest, fate, and whereabouts of the victim. Enforced disappearance begins at the moment of abduction and continues as long as the person's fate and whereabouts are unknown and they remain outside of legal protection. The International Criminal Court (ICC) Statute recognizes enforced disappearance as one of the most severe human rights violations and a crime against humanity.



This report's findings indicate that in the first half of 2025, at least 27 people in six Afghan provinces⁴ disappeared after being arrested by the Taliban and unknown individuals. This is a 25% decrease from the 36 cases in 2024⁵, but a more than twofold increase compared to the 11 cases in the same period in 2023.

Victims of enforced disappearance were mainly former government employees, people accused of collaborating with anti-Taliban groups, and tribal or religious elders. They were illegally arrested, disappeared, and deprived of fundamental rights, including access to a lawyer and family contact. The Taliban deliberately withheld information about their fate, and in some cases, they tortured and killed victims whose bodies were later found.

Our findings also show that the intelligence directorate primarily carried out enforced disappearances as a tool for revenge, suppression, and the physical elimination of former government employees and opponents. For example, on May 3, 2025, Taliban intelligence forces arrested and disappeared a Salafi religious scholar in Badakhshan province's Shuhada district. Six days later, his body was found shot in the river of Jurm district. Local sources said he was arrested for ties to Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP). In another incident, a former soldier in Kandahar province who had been missing was found on April 1, 2025, beheaded.

On April 28, 2025, the Taliban arrested and disappeared a resident of Badakhshan province's Faizabad city. Over two months later as we were preparing this report, his whereabouts and fate remained unknown. His relatives say he had no ties to any group. In a similar incident in Ghor province, the Taliban arrested and disappeared a man in May on charges of membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir. Two months later, his whereabouts are also unknown. According to information received, intelligence forces had previously arrested him.

In addition to the above incidents attributed to the GDI, there are examples of illegal arrests, torture and disappearances by other Taliban security institutions as well. For example, a soldier in a Kandahar security precinct abducted and disappeared a man with whom his friend had a legal dispute. The victim was held in an unknown location, given illicit drugs, chained, and threatened with death. After his release, he filed a complaint with a Taliban court against his torturer.

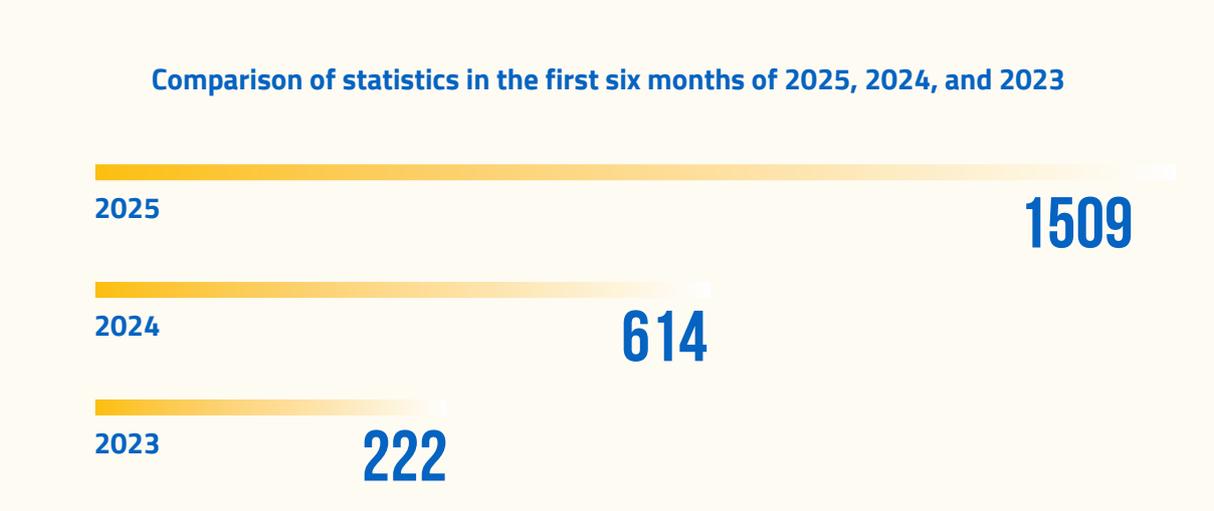
Documenting enforced disappearances is challenging due to strict restrictions on access to information and a lack of access to victims' families. Like with extrajudicial killings, the Taliban impose widespread restrictions on information related to these cases, so the number of enforced disappearances may be higher than the cases included in this report.

4 Ghazni, Herat, Badakhshan, Ghor, Kandahar and Balkh

5 Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January- 30th June 2024.

ARBITRARY AND UNLAWFUL DETENTION

According to Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, everyone has the right to liberty and personal security. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention, or be deprived of their liberty, except as prescribed by law and with fair trial principles. An arrest without a valid warrant or legal authorization, or lack of access to fair trial, is a violation of the right to liberty and personal security.



Our report finds that in the first half of 2025, at least 1,509 people, including 16 women, were arbitrarily and illegally arrested and imprisoned. Rawadari recorded 614 cases in the same period in 2024⁶, which shows that arbitrary detentions more than doubled. This number is also six times higher than the 222 cases in the same period in 2023.

The widespread suppression of civil action, revenge against critics and opponents, and the “Vice and Virtue” directorate’s unlimited authority to arrest people are key reasons for this increase.

Victims of arbitrary detention include former government employees, those accused of belonging to anti-Taliban groups, civil society activists, journalists, social media users, religious scholars, protesters, and women (for hijab enforcement reasons). Charges range from carrying weapons and cooperating with opponents to criticizing the Taliban, and violating the “Vice and Virtue” law regarding dress, beards, listening to music, talking to opposite sex (who is not a family member) and organizing protests and gatherings.

⁶ Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January- 30th June 2024.

PERPETRATORS OF ARBITRARY DETENTION

Our findings show that most arbitrary arrests were carried out by the intelligence and PVPV directorate. GDI primarily arrests former government employees, opponents, protesters, religious scholars, journalists, and civil activists without arrest warrants or fair trial principles, with the aim of suppression and revenge.

The MPVPV also widely detains citizens for not complying with its strict regulations. Officials have arrested and imprisoned women from restaurants, public transport, and other public places on various charges. These women, depending on the charges, were held for hours to months and were deprived of all their legal rights.

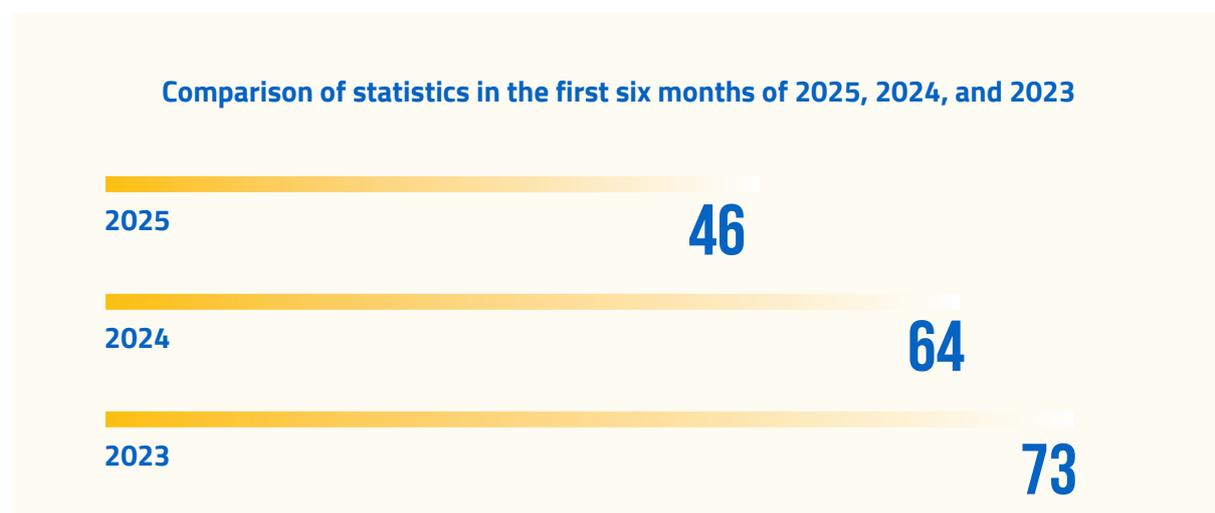
The charges ranged from lack of Taliban approved outfit and/or face covering to leaving the house without Mahram or speaking to unrelated men.

In the first half of 2025, in the southwest region alone, the MPVP officials arrested at least 250 men for violating the rules on outfit, beard and hair length, and missing prayers in the mosque.

Other local officials, including the police force, governors, and district governors, have also arbitrarily violated citizens' rights and held them in personal detention centres. For example, a local Taliban agriculture official in the southwest imprisoned a man in his office for 10 days for not paying his rent. This shows that Taliban forces, feeling immune from accountability, can arbitrarily arrest and imprison people despite lacking legal authority to do so.

A. Arbitrary Detention of Former Government Employees

Our report finds that in the first half of 2025, at least 46 former government employees were illegally arrested, mainly by Taliban intelligence. This is a 28.1% decrease from the 64 cases in 2024 and a 36.9% decrease from the 73 cases in 2023. This decrease may be due to restrictions on access to information, as well as the forced migration of many former government employees to countries in the region.





In March 2025, intelligence forces in Ghazni arrested a former soldier who had recently returned from Iran. He was tortured in prison for two nights and was forced to reveal the names and addresses of two former colleagues. The Taliban then arrested his colleagues and forced them to pay 120,000 Afghanis (equivalent of 1753 USD) for each weapon the Taliban claimed they had. In Daikundi province, Taliban intelligence arrested and tortured two former soldiers in Kiti district on January 2 and 23, 2025, on charges of possessing weapons. They were released a week later.

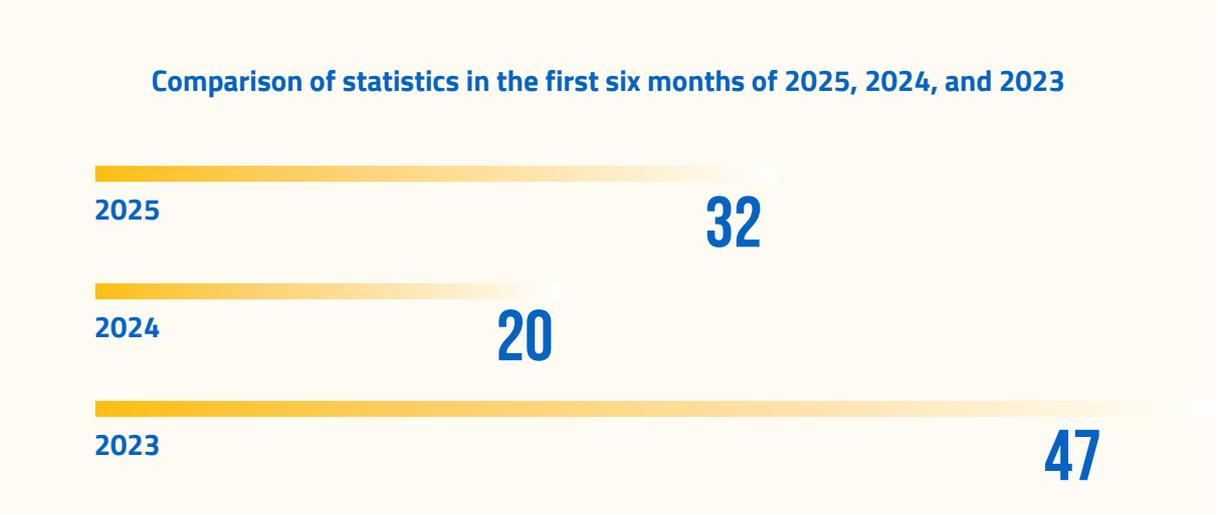
On March 11, 2025, Taliban intelligence arrested a former soldier in Ghor province’s Firozkoh city on charges of possessing a weapon. He was held for two months and released in exchange for a weapon his family provided.

In another incident, on March 13, 2025, the Taliban arrested a former soldier in Faryab province’s Khwaja Sabz Posh district on an unannounced charge. On January 10, 2025, they arrested and imprisoned two former soldiers in Badghis province. In Parwan province, the Taliban also arrested a former government employee on March 22, 2025, without declaring a reason. Additionally, on April 7, 2025, the Taliban arrested and imprisoned a former soldier in Baghlan province after he returned from Iran. He remains in prison without a clear charge.

B. Arbitrary Detention of Civil Activists and Human Rights Defenders

Our report finds that in the first half of 2025, the Taliban arbitrarily arrested at least 32 civil society activists and human rights defenders, including five women. Their charges included holding training courses for women, campaigning against the Taliban, and criticizing Taliban policies.

Rawadari recorded 20 cases of arbitrary detention of civil activists and journalists in the same period in 2024. This shows a 60% increase in arbitrary arrests in 2025, but a 31% decrease compared to the 47 cases in 2023.



Most of these arrests were carried out by Taliban intelligence. They primarily arrest these individuals for protesting and criticizing Taliban policies, especially restrictions on women’s rights.

The Taliban use these arbitrary arrests to suppress dissent. Their intelligence directorate continuously monitors journalists, activists, and social media users. In the first half of this year, Rawadari documented numerous cases where individuals were arrested simply for publishing critical posts on social media.

On May 5, 2025, intelligence arrested a local journalist in Ghazni for critical Facebook posts about women’s education. A Taliban court sentenced him to three months in prison for “campaigning against the regime’. On June 12, 2025, a civil activist in Daikundi was arrested by intelligence for a critical comment about the arrest of Shia religious scholars. A primary court sentenced him to six months in prison.

In another incident, on January 2, 2025, Taliban intelligence imprisoned a journalist and activist in Badakhshan province for three days for a Facebook post. On April 21, 2025, a civil activist in Ghazni’s Andar district was arrested for criticizing the Taliban on social media. Intelligence forces transferred him directly to public prison without a fair trial.

On April 24, 2025, intelligence arrested a student and activist from Baghlan province at his home for criticizing the Taliban. In May 2025, the Taliban arrested a religious scholar and media activist in Helmand province for criticizing the ban on women’s education. He was released after a month on the condition that he not speak to the media or criticize the Taliban.

On April 14, 2025, intelligence arrested a journalist in Kabul for collaborating with exiled media. He had been arrested and tortured by the Taliban before. On May 14, 2025, Taliban intelligence arrested an Uzbek social activist in Badakhshan province’s Argu district for his advocacy for rights of the Uzbek ethnic group.

In June 2025, the Taliban arrested a teacher and human rights activist in Paktika province’s Jani Khil district for encouraging people to learn science and technology. On July 16, 2025, a primary court sentenced him to death for insulting Islam. Local sources say a personal feud with a local Taliban commander also played a role in his conviction.

These cases are just a part of the arrests of civil activists in the first half of the year, showing that the Taliban are systematically suppressing critics nationwide. Rawadari has also documented numerous arrests of human rights activists for educating women and girls, as detailed later in the report.

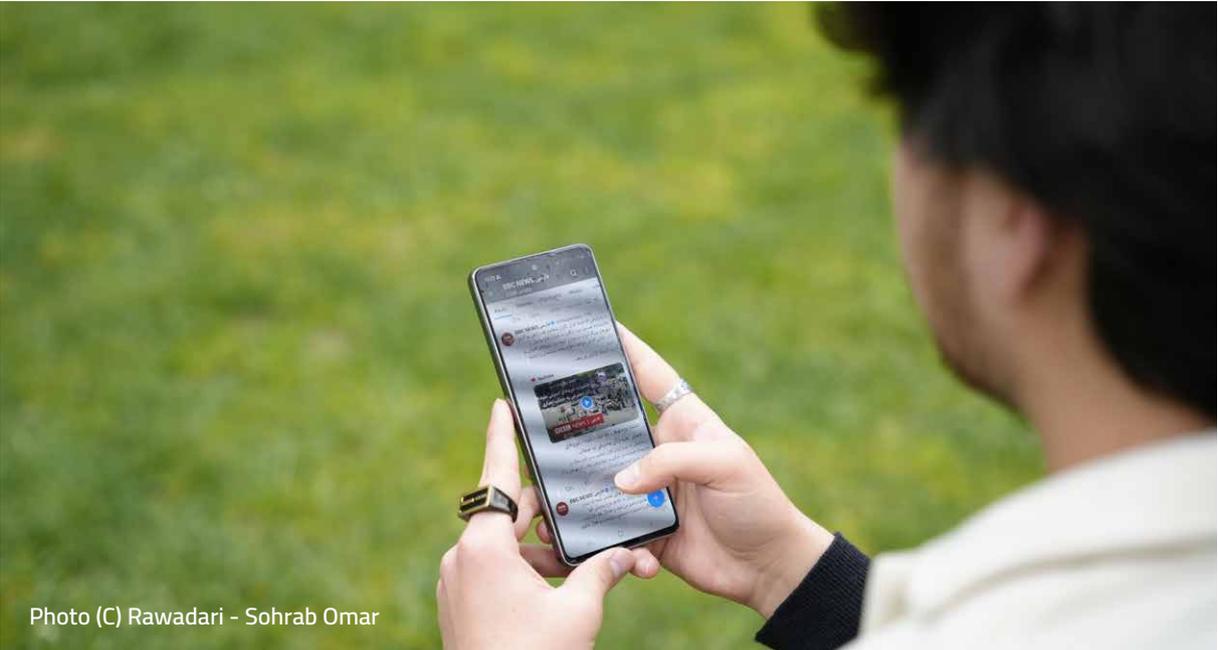
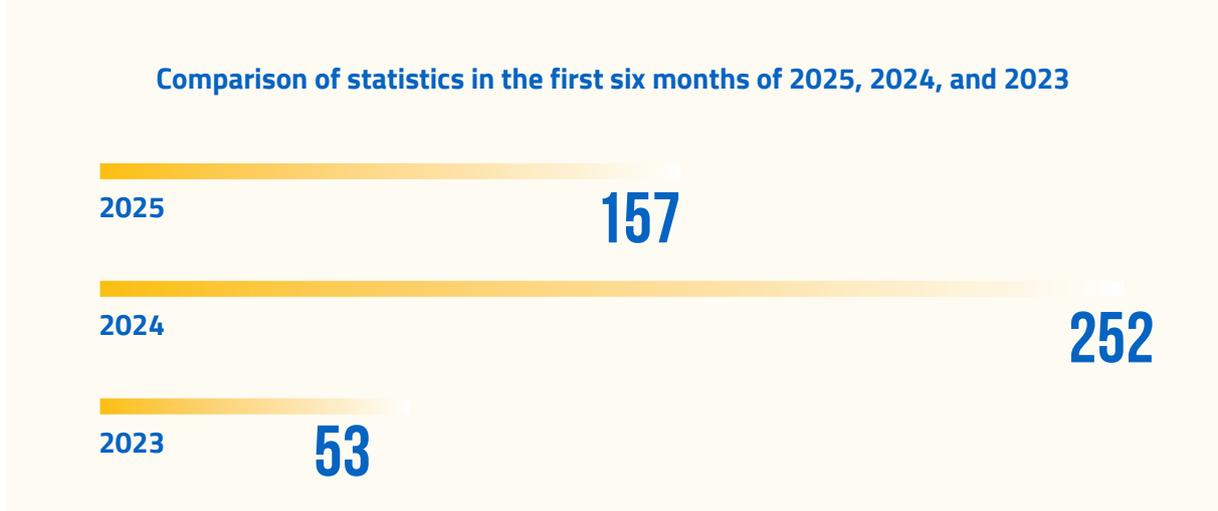


Photo (C) Rawadari - Sohrab Omar

C. Arbitrary Detention of Accused Opposition Members

During this reporting period, the Taliban arrested and imprisoned at least 157 people accused of collaborating with their military and political opponents. This is a 37.6% decrease from the same period in 2024, but a more than twofold increase from the 53 cases in 2023.



All of these detainees were men, arrested on charges of membership or collaboration with the National Resistance Front, the Freedom Front, and Hizb ut-Tahrir. Most arrests were made by intelligence officials.

Evidence shows that the Taliban disregard legal standards, including the right to a fair trial. For example, some members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, ideological opponents of the Taliban, have been in prison for two years without their cases going to court. Two members told Rawadari the Taliban said they would be held until they renounce their beliefs and express remorse.

In other cases, prisoners who have served their sentences remain in jail. In Kandahar province, local sources told Rawadari that courts have repeatedly ordered the release of some prisoners, but officials have deliberately not acted. Some have been held illegally in detention six months after their approved release date.

On May 24, 2025, the Taliban arrested a Panjshir resident in Kabul on charges of ties to the National Resistance Front. His family says he had no political ties and had just returned from Iran. On March 3, 2025, the Taliban arrested two residents of Faryab province’s Maimanah city for ties to the National Resistance Front, and they remain in prison. On June 1, 2025, the Taliban arrested a resident of Ghor province’s Tulak district for ties to the National Resistance Front. On March 19, 2025, the Taliban arrested four residents of Badghis province for ties to the National Resistance Front.

In June 2025, intelligence arrested two residents from Parwan province in Herat, accusing them of being National Resistance Front members. After 15 days, they were transferred from temporary detention to a public prison.

D. Other Arbitrary and Unlawful Detention

In the first half of 2025, the Taliban illegally and arbitrarily arrested 1,274 people, including 11 women. Their charges mainly involved violating the “Vice and Virtue” law regarding dress, beards, prayer attendance, hijab, and talking to members of the opposite sex.

The number of arbitrary arrests in this category has increased by more than four times in the first half of 2025, with Rawadari recording 258 cases in the same period in 2024. The main reason for this increase is the expansion of extra-judicial actions by “Vice and Virtue” officials to control the public and private lives of citizens.

In June 2025, the Taliban arrested and ill-treated three women in Herat. The women were at the passport office to get passports and protested the lack of queue and order among applicants. The Taliban arrested them and took them to the “Vice and Virtue” directorate. An interviewee said the officials humiliated the women, calling them “civil society women from the Republic era” and “dishonourable,” and accused them of opposing Islamic values. They were released after three hours after their families came and bailed them out.

On June 27, 2025, the Taliban arrested a young woman in Faryab province’s Maimanah city for “talking to an unrelated man and promoting immorality”¹⁹⁴. On June 12, 2025, “Vice and Virtue” officials in Ghazni arrested a groom and two of his companions from a wedding hall for playing music.

These cases are clear violations of citizens’ right to liberty and security, showing that the “Vice and Virtue” directorate is systematically suppressing fundamental freedoms through violent and extra-legal methods.

VIOLATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY

Human dignity is an inherent right and the basis for equal human rights. This right emphasizes the honour and dignity of every person, which must be respected under all circumstances. Therefore, it requires immunity from torture, humiliation, insults, and all other forms of cruel treatment. However, Rawadari’s findings show that over the past six months, the Taliban have tortured and ill-treated people to intimidate, punish, humiliate, or extract information and confessions. Taliban courts have also widely ordered and carried out a range of cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishments.

“Vice and Virtue’ officials harass and arrest citizens through raiding shops, markets and in public places. For example, in June 2025, they raided a pharmacy market in Kandahar, arresting a large number of pharmacists and customers for having short beards. In Ghazni on April 9, 2025, “Vice and Virtue’ officials arrested 22 municipal workers for having short beards and not wearing hats.



A. Torture and Ill-Treatment of Prisoners

Immunity from torture is an absolute, non-derogable, and non-suspendable right, which cannot be violated under any circumstances, even during war or other emergencies. The International Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibit the use of torture.

Currently, there is no law to criminalize torture in Afghanistan, as the Taliban have suspended the constitution and anti-torture laws. Torture and ill-treatment are common practice in Taliban-controlled detention facilities and there are no effective legal mechanisms to prosecute perpetrators. Additionally, victims do not have credible avenues to file complaints.

The Taliban, disregarding the unconditional prohibition of torture, have used various methods to torture and ill-treat people to obtain confessions, intimidate, punish, or humiliate them. The victims are primarily former government employees, people accused of collaborating with anti-Taliban groups, journalists, and activists.

Types and Methods of Torture

According to this report, while conditions in some public provincial prisons have improved and torture has decreased, most torture and ill-treatment occur in the monitoring facilities of the intelligence directorate, police precincts, and the "Vice and Virtue" directorate.

Common methods include beating with sticks, fists, rifle butts, and cables; electric shocks; putting plastic bags over heads; waterboarding; pulling hair; hanging by hands or feet; pulling out fingernails; throwing into wells; keeping hungry and thirsty; prolonged solitary confinement; ethnic, religious, and sexual humiliation; choking; and threatening to kill prisoners and their families.

The Taliban use torture as a tool for punishment, intimidation, humiliation, or to extract information and confessions. They have even tortured people they mistakenly arrested based on false information. For example, a released prisoner from Helmand province said he was arrested by the Taliban and tortured nightly for a week, only to be released with the explanation that he was mistaken for someone else.

In another incident on April 27, 2025, Taliban intelligence arrested three Panjshir residents in Kabul, accusing them of collaborating with Taliban's opponents. One of them told Rawadari that after three months in a cold, water-filled room where he was beaten with a cable and sexually abused, he was released after the Taliban failed to prove the charges.

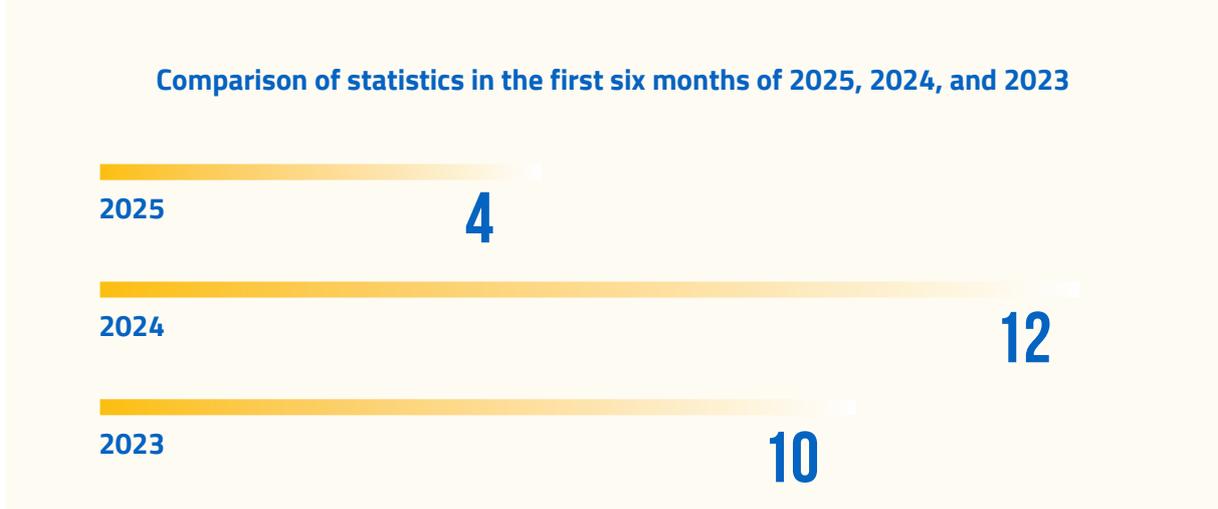
A former soldier from Ghor province said he was stopped by four armed men when he was on his way to the provincial capital, Firooz Kuh with his younger brother. Taliban soldiers blindfolded and beat him, demanding his weapon and threatening to kill his brother. He lost consciousness after being hit on the head and woke up 40 hours later in a district detention centre. He was tortured for four days, choked, waterboarded, and threatened with death, and was only released after his family provided a Kalashnikov to the Taliban.

An interviewee from Parwan province said that when he went to a police precinct to report a robbery, he saw the three thieves severely beaten in a container. Their faces were black and swollen. He said, "Even though they had robbed my house, I felt very sorry for them".

These cases are just a few examples of torture documented in the first half of 2025. Rawadari has previously published a detailed investigative report on the conditions in detention facilities and the Taliban's treatment of detainees from arrest to release⁷.

Killing of Prisoners

According to this report, in the first half of 2025, at least four people were killed in Taliban-controlled prisons after severe torture. This is a 66.6% decrease from the 12 cases in the first half of 2024 and a 60% decrease from the 10 cases in 2023.



Most of the deaths from torture occurred in the monitoring facilities of the Taliban's intelligence directorate.

In January 2025, Taliban intelligence arrested, tortured, and killed three residents of Parwan province. They first arrested one victim, tortured him severely, and released him near his home. He barely made it home, and a day later, the Taliban arrested him and two others again. Two days later, the Taliban handed the bodies over to their families. A witness said the bodies were hard to identify due to severe torture and gunshot wounds to their faces.

On January 14, 2025, after two years of imprisonment and torture, the Taliban handed over the body of a National Resistance Front member from Panjshir to his family. A relative said his arm was broken and his body was severely injured from torture. He was held in intelligence and later in Pul-e-Charkhi and Bagram prisons.

⁷ Rawadari, Torture and Ill-treatment: The state of prisons in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. 2025.

Lack of an Effective Monitoring Mechanism for Places of Detention

No independent body has permission to monitor Taliban detention facilities, particularly women's prisons and GDI centres. This makes it impossible to effectively address the existing violations and problems in places of detention. While the Taliban have created some monitoring mechanisms, they have not been effective in preventing torture or prosecuting perpetrators.

The "Vice and Virtue" and "Implementation of Decrees" directorates in some provinces register torture complaints, but most security agencies view this as an interference in their affairs or fail to cooperate with these entities to address complaints. According to an official letter from Kandahar in April 2025, the "Vice and Virtue" directorate registered 160 torture complaints by security agencies in the first six months of the year, but has not published any reports on how they addressed them or prosecuted perpetrators.

The Taliban's Office of Prison Administration (OPA) has a dedicated oversight section that occasionally inspects public provincial prisons. In some areas, including Bamiyan province, "Vice and Virtue" commissions are formed to monitor prisons. These commissions primarily focus on the prisoners' general living conditions and access to food and other basic necessities. In certain cases, the appeals court or the provincial governor tasks a special delegation with evaluating the prisons' conditions. However, none of these bodies ever release public reports. Prisoners cannot file complaints, as the delegations are only authorized to review general conditions and basic facilities.

UNAMA's human rights section monitors Taliban detention facilities, but only with prior coordination and permission from officials. The monitoring facilities of the intelligence and "Vice and Virtue" directorates, where most torture occurs, remain inaccessible to UNAMA.

B. Execution of Cruel and Inhuman Punishments

Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment. The Human Rights Committee emphasizes the absolute prohibition of such punishments, including public executions and corporal punishment, due to their horrifying and humiliating nature.

However, Taliban courts have implemented or ordered a range of cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishments in this reporting period, including executions, stoning, corporal punishment, and physical public humiliation. These punishments are prescribed to suspects in absence fair trial principles and Taliban often base their rulings on confessions obtained through torture.

According to our findings, Taliban courts have flogged at least 326 people (64 women) for crimes such as running away from home, extramarital affairs, theft, same-sex relations, smuggling drugs and alcohol and drug use. They have also executed four men for murder and sentenced a woman to stoning for having an illegitimate child.

1. Stoning and Qisas

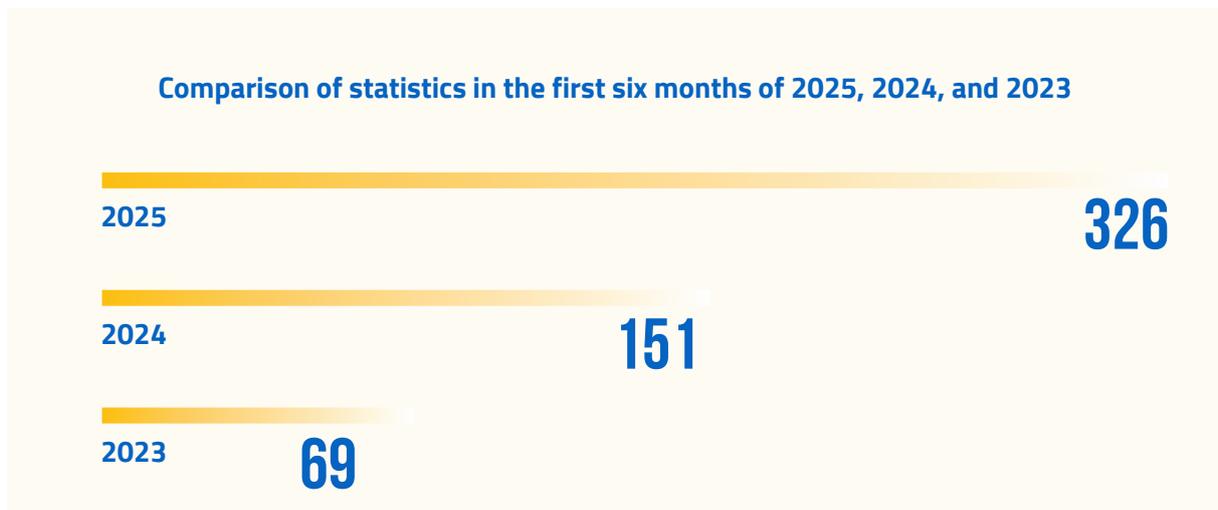
In the first half of 2025, Taliban courts carried out four qisas (retaliatory justice) sentences in Nimruz, Farah, and Badghis provinces. They also issued a stoning sentence for a woman in Daikundi province.

On April 11, 2025, the Taliban's Supreme Court publicly executed two men accused of murder in Badghis province's Qala-e-Naw stadium. Another man was executed by gunshot in a stadium in Nimroz province's Zaranj city, and a man was executed in a sports stadium in Farah province, all in front of hundreds of spectators. The Taliban's Supreme Court announced these executions were carried out following the approval of the Taliban leader.

On March 19, 2025, a primary court in Daikundi province's Ashtarlay district sentenced a woman to stoning for having an "illegitimate" child. The sentence has not yet been carried out and the suspect remains in detention. The sentence will be carried out if approved by higher courts.

2. Corporal Punishment

Taliban courts flogged at least 326 people, including 64 women in the first half of 2025. This is double the 151 cases in 2024 and more than four times the 69 cases in 2023. The floggings were carried out as punishment for running away from home (for women), same-sex sexual relations between men, extramarital relations, theft, production, purchase, sell and use of drugs or alcohol.



Taliban courts often use flogging as a supplementary punishment, with most floggings taking place non-publicly. In public cases, especially for “moral crimes” (i.e. running away from home, extramarital affairs), MPVPV officials and imams advertise the event to draw crowds, including religious students, judges, and other local officials.



In Kandahar, courts execute floggings non-publicly twice a week. These floggings are often combined with prison sentences. For example, a court in Herat sentenced three people (one woman) to 39 lashes and two years in prison for illicit sexual relations. The floggings were carried out in the appeals court courtyard after the Supreme Court approved the sentence:

On February 9, 2025, a court in Ghazni province's Jaghori district publicly flogged two men for illicit sexual relations. On April 9, 2025, a court publicly flogged four people for theft and illicit sexual relations. These four individuals also received prison sentences in addition to flogging.

In Kabul, a court publicly flogged 25 people on June 21, 2025, for buying and selling alcohol and drugs. On February 12, 2025, the Taliban flogged a woman in Ghazni province's Muqur district for "moral corruption".

On February 16, 2025, the Taliban invited residents of Nimroz to watch the flogging of 12 people. Although the Supreme Court had approved public flogging for six of the accused, the Taliban publicly flogged 11 of them.

Taliban usually publish the names and other identifying details of the suspects before carrying out the floggings, damaging their human dignity and reputation⁸.

3. Other Forms of Inhuman Punishment

In the first half of 2025, the Taliban also used other inhuman and degrading punishments. In January 2025, in Helmand province's Nowzad district, they blackened a man's face and displayed him in the market for theft. In Nad Ali district of Helmand, they tied a drug addict accused of theft to a long pole and displayed him publicly.

In July 2025, in Helmand province's Dishtu district, the Taliban paraded a man who was caught stealing through the city to be shamed publicly. These acts are severe forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment that violate human dignity, and they are prohibited under human rights principles.

SUPPRESSION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTS & GATHERINGS

The right to peaceful assembly is a human right guaranteed by international conventions and treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. States must not only refrain from preventing protests but must also provide the conditions for them to be held safely. Restrictions can only be imposed if they are prescribed by law and are necessary for national security, public safety, order and health or for protecting the rights of others in a democratic society.

⁸ Rwadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024.

However, the Taliban currently do not allow any protests and use force and violence to suppress them. In the first half of 2025, they violently suppressed at least 16 protest gatherings, arresting at least 82 protesters, killing 7, and injuring 32 others. The protests were against ethnic discrimination, the destruction of farms, land grabbing, and unfair exploitation of natural resources. The Taliban suppressed these gatherings by firing directly at protesters, arresting and imprisoning them.

On June 8, 2025, the Taliban arrested at least 50 Uzbek protesters in Faryab province's Dawlat Abad district. A clash between occurred between the local youth and the Taliban after two Taliban members harassed local young women. Taliban arrested the local youth. The arrests led to a protest against the Taliban's ethnically biased and discriminatory behaviour. The Taliban used aerial firing and beat protesters to suppress it. The arrested protesters were later released through the efforts of local elders.

During five demonstrations in Badakhshan province's Khash, Jurm, Arghanj Khwah, Baharak, and Warduj districts, at least seven protesters were killed, 51 injured, and 32 arrested. The protests were held in response to the destruction of poppy farms, land grabbing, and unfair exploitation of natural resources. The Taliban suppressed these gatherings by directly shooting at protesters.

While the Taliban violently suppressed these protests, they have also forced people to hold gatherings for their own political agendas. For example, on January 25, 2025, the Taliban governor in Bamiyan province, through threats, forced government employees and teachers to participate in a protest against the ICC's arrest warrants for Taliban leaders. In other provinces, the Taliban encouraged people to hold demonstrations in support of Palestine.

PART 2

THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION FOR WOMEN

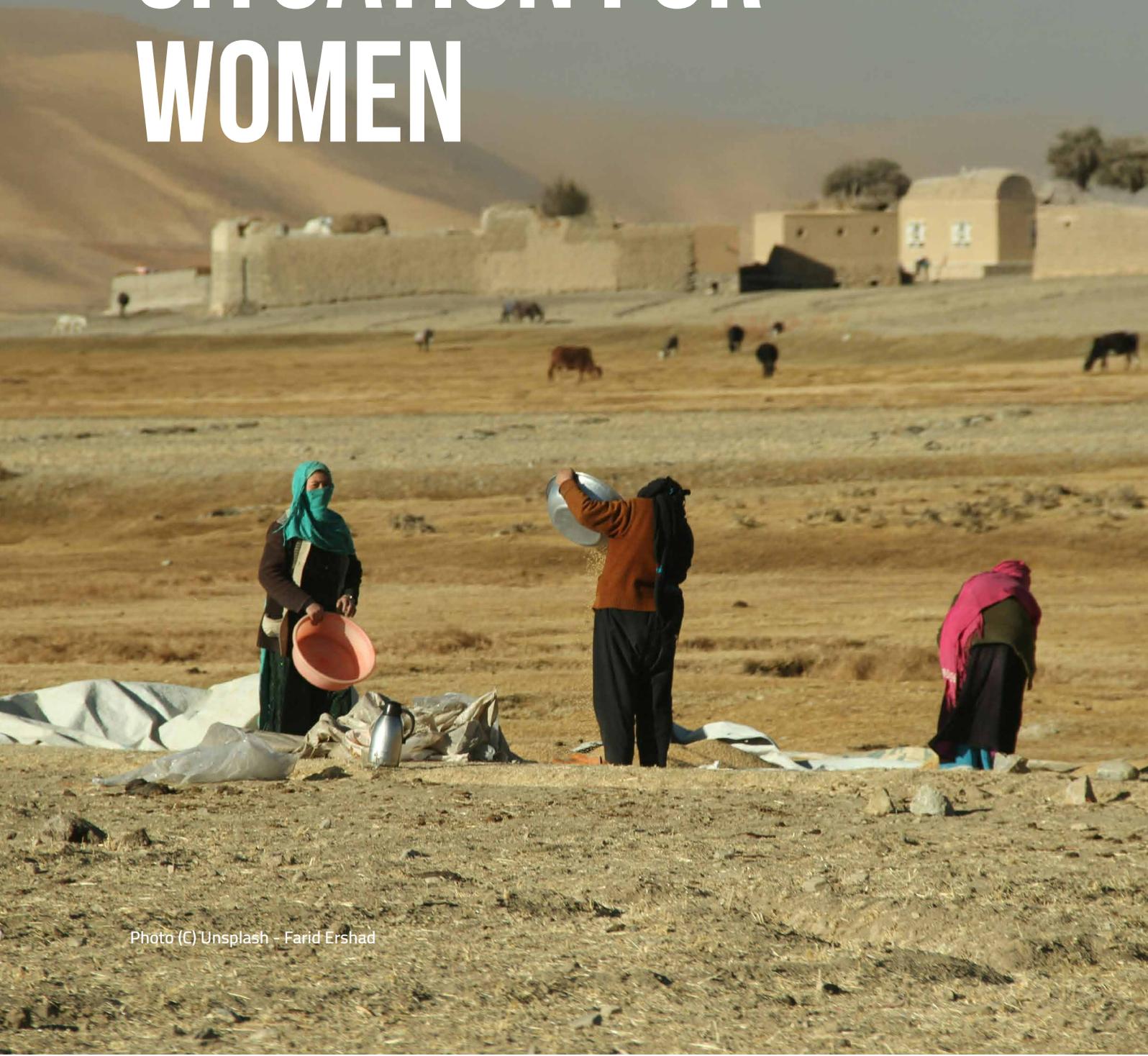


Photo (C) Unsplash - Farid Ershad

In the first half of 2025, the Taliban continued their discriminatory policies to deliberately deprive women of their right to education, work, freedom of movement, and access to justice. They also intensified these restrictions with a more organized approach, especially with the implementation of the “Vice and Virtue” law. Taliban’s policies may constitute gender persecution and a crime against humanity.

The following sections detail the new restrictions the Taliban imposed on women’s rights to education, work, freedom of movement, and justice during this reporting period.

ESCALATION OF RESTRICTIONS ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The right to education is a fundamental human right, recognized by international documents that emphasize equal access to educational opportunities for all. Any discrimination in this right based on gender or other reasons is a violation of human rights. Since August 2021, the Taliban have gradually, systematically, and deliberately stripped women and girls of their right to education through a series of decrees and announcements.

Our report finds that in the first half of 2025, the Taliban not only continued their discriminatory policies but also increased these restrictions. In some parts of the country, like the southwest, women are prohibited from attending vocational training programs. Currently, only men are allowed to participate in these programs. In Badghis province, vocational programs for women like sewing and embroidery have been shut down. The “Vice and Virtue” and “Labor and Social Affairs” directorates revoked the licenses of the centres that provide vocational education to women, citing an excessive number of women gathering and the presence of women without a mahram.

MANDATORY HIJAB AND MAHRAM FOR YOUNG GIRLS

The Taliban have imposed strict restrictions on the clothing of primary school girls (below sixth grade), requiring them to wear long black clothes and big scarves. In some districts, girls are told to cover their faces with masks. In Badghis province, they have banned cosmetics, jewellery, nail polish, long nails, and colourful clothing outside the home. In some cases, principals have violently torn the clothes of girls who wore colourful dresses or scarves.

In Kandahar province, the “Vice and Virtue” directorate is distributing “mahram cards” to girls over the age of nine, meaning they must be accompanied by a mahram to and from school. Mahram cards are also distributed to all women who leave their homes daily for any reason.

In a separate incident, the Taliban’s “Vice and Virtue” directorate told a private school in Helmand province that since girls in the sixth grade do not wear masks, all their teachers must be women. They also instructed another private school to use separate transportation

for boys and girls. In some schools, girls over nine years old are not allowed to attend school, as the Taliban state that Hanafi jurisprudence defines puberty as beginning at age nine.

On the first day of the new school year in March 2025, in Ghazni province, girls who were tall and had a larger build were prevented from entering classes and were told to go to religious schools or madrassas instead. In some schools, officials check girls' ID cards to ensure they are not over nine years old. This restriction puts more girls at risk of being deprived of education, as children in Afghanistan start school at age seven, meaning they could only complete up to the third grade.

ARREST OF TEACHERS FOR EDUCATING WOMEN

Based on our report, in the first half of 2025, the Taliban shut down at least nine private training centres, 41 English classes, and five computer classes that were discretely teaching girls. They also arrested at least 11 teachers, including five women.

In April 2025, the "Vice and Virtue" directorate in Paktika province shut down 267 educational classes for young girls supported by a non-governmental organization. Approximately 11,800 female students were studying in these classes.

On January 27, 2025, the Taliban shut down 46 English and computer classes in Bamiyan province, confiscating equipment and arresting six people, including four female teachers, for providing education to girls. In Ghoriyan district, Herat province, the "Vice and Virtue" directorate identified and shut down a charity that was secretly teaching English to women and girls. The Taliban warned the head of the centre against continuing his activities.

In Herat province's Jibrael town, a teacher who was privately teaching 30 women and girls was identified and arrested by the "Vice and Virtue" and intelligence directorates. She was released after five hours on the condition that she close the training centre. In Ghazni province, an English centre and a calligraphy and painting centre were shut down for providing educational services to women. The Taliban arrested the heads of these two centres for one to six hours.

On January 16, 2025, the Taliban arrested the provincial head of an English language course in Daikundi province for allegedly propagating Christianity, sentencing him to one year in prison. On February 24, 2025, Taliban intelligence arrested another teacher in Kabul for teaching school-deprived children and girls.

The "Vice and Virtue" directorate has also identified women who work as private home tutors for girls and has warned them against continuing. In the Kandahar region, two women who worked as private home tutors were identified and prohibited from working. "Vice and Virtue" officials took a guarantee from their fathers that they would not allow their daughters to do such work in the future.

In the first half of 2025, there were also cases of harassment of female students. An interviewee from Helmand province told Rawadari that in March, two nine-year-old female students were humiliated by two Taliban members while walking to school. The Taliban told them they should not go to school anymore, and the girls were so scared they returned home.

Another interviewee from Nimruz province recounted that “Vice and Virtue” officials harassed students on their way to a training course, asking them why they travel the same route every day and why they leave their homes alone. An interviewee from Parwan province said that in May, two veiled women stopped female students on the street and asked them about their religious knowledge. Girls who could not answer correctly were humiliated.

DISCRIMINATORY WORKING CONDITIONS

Equal access to the right to work and fair employment conditions are human rights guaranteed in multiple international human rights documents. Therefore, any discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or religion is legally prohibited and considered a human rights violation.

However, our report shows that in the first six months of 2025, the Taliban continued to enforce restrictions and discriminatory conditions on women’s work.

In many provinces, the Taliban have made it a condition for women to have a mahram to continue working in the education and health sectors, creating serious challenges for working women. An official from a non-governmental organization in the Kandahar region told Rawadari that women working in the health sector must have a mahram. While the Taliban distribute “mahram cards” to these women, they humiliate men who come to get them, saying, “What kind of men are you that your women work? How dishonourable are you to allow your women to work outside the home?”²⁸⁴. Mahrams must also have long beards, turbans, and Taliban-approved clothing, and the “Vice and Virtue” directorate will not issue mahram cards to men who don’t meet these requirements:

The requirement of a mahram has created serious problems for working women. A teacher from Helmand province told Rawadari that the “Vice and Virtue” directorate announced that all female employees and teachers in primary schools are not allowed to be at school without a mahram. Health service providers also do not hire women without a mahram. For example, an organization in Parwan province held a competitive exam in five districts on April 27, 2025, and only selected female applicants who had a mahram. In Herat province, women were fired from vaccination positions for not having a mahram.

Women who worked in the health and education sectors but did not have a mahram were fired by the Taliban. In Ghor province, on February 12, 2025, the Taliban fired a female employee from a local organization because she did not have a mahram. She was the sole provider for her family. In Badghis province, the Taliban fired several midwives and nurses for not having a mahram.

In Nimruz, Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan provinces, the “Labor and Social Affairs” directorates announced that they would not grant work permits to women for small businesses and vocational programs. Women are forced to obtain work permits in the name of a male family member.

The reduction of international aid, including the suspension of U.S. development projects, has also caused many women to lose their jobs. These women worked in healthcare, counselling for pregnant women, nutrition programs for children, polio vaccination, and other programs supporting women and children.

CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING HEALTHCARE SERVICES

International documents and treaties recognize and guarantee effective access to healthcare as a human right for all individuals. Deliberately depriving people of this right, especially based on gender or other discriminatory reasons, is legally prohibited and considered a human rights violation. Therefore, states parties must take the necessary measures to facilitate citizens’ access to these services.

However, our review shows that in the first half of 2025, women’s access to healthcare worsened due to restrictive and discriminatory Taliban policies. These restrictions, including the requirement for a mahram and a specific hijab, must be followed by women working in and visiting health centres. “Vice and Virtue” officials continuously monitor hospitals and other health centres to enforce these restrictions.

As a result, some female doctors and nurses have been forced to quit. Others are trying to open private clinics in their homes to avoid the undue pressure from “Vice and Virtue” officials. The Taliban have also completely separated the men’s and women’s sections of health centres and do not allow male and female colleagues to work together.

In Kandahar province, the Taliban have abolished all mental health counsellor positions, which were mainly held by women, and announced that women must have a mahram when visiting hospitals. As a result, women without a mahram are not being treated in clinics in Sangin and Marjah districts and the Karte Lagan clinic in Helmand province’s Lashkar Gah city. In Ghazni province, two provincial hospitals also refuse to provide health services to women without a mahram. “Vice and Virtue” officials regularly monitor the province’s health centres to enforce restrictions on women’s dress. Health centres in Ghor province also refuse to treat women without a mahram.

UNAMA also reported that “Vice and Virtue” officials have instructed health clinics, shops, government offices, and taxi drivers not to provide services to women without a mahram⁹.

⁹ UNAMA, Update on the Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: April-June 2025 Update

Testimonies

An interviewee from Ghazni province said, "My husband went to Iran. One day I took my ten-year-old son, who had a high fever, to the hospital. 'Vice and Virtue' officials were there and didn't let me in because I didn't have a mahram. They said, 'Go and come back with your husband or brother.' I explained my husband went to Iran for work. They responded, 'Your husband is dishonourable to leave you alone.' I returned home disappointed and went to a private hospital'.

Another interviewee from Parwan province said that on May 23, 2025, she was not allowed into a clinic for treatment because she did not have a mahram. She is over 50 years old, and her only son has migrated to Iran. She recounted, "I begged the doctor to examine me, but he became upset and said loudly, 'Where is your mahram?' The 'Vice and Virtue' directorate had closed his clinic for examining women without a mahram before'.

Another interviewee from this province said that "Vice and Virtue" officials sometimes go undercover in health centres, humiliating and insulting people whose appearance does not match their standards. She also said that the directorate in Parwan has emphasized that male doctors are not allowed to treat women without a mahram. Female doctors are required to wear a burqa when traveling to and from work and use masks to cover their faces inside the health centre.

Due to Taliban restrictions and the halt of some non-governmental organizations' activities, the number of female health workers has decreased, especially in remote areas. Most births now occur at home because the maternity wards in health centres are closed due to a lack of female doctors and nurses.

This is happening while access to family planning and birth control methods has been restricted in many parts of the country, as the Taliban encourage childbearing and interpret family planning as being against Islamic standards.

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The right to freedom of movement is a key human right that guarantees every individual can travel within or outside their country without undue or discriminatory restrictions and can freely choose their place of residence. States must protect women's right to freedom of movement equally with men.

However, since their return to power, the Taliban have extensively restricted women's right to freedom of movement. These restrictions have become more organized since the "Vice and Virtue" law was introduced in August 2025. In many areas, women cannot access recreational places, sports centres, shrines, parks, wedding halls, and stores, even with a hijab and a mahram. In the southwest region, women are prohibited from going to cemeteries, mosques, and ice cream shops.

Women without a mahram cannot eat in restaurants, use public transportation, or travel within or outside the country. Drivers who transport women without a mahram or sellers who sell items to women are interrogated and arrested. The “Vice and Virtue” law prohibits women from speaking in the presence of unrelated men, even when speaking to a doctor or in a courtroom, because it considers a woman’s voice to be “awrah” (private) and hearing it is forbidden. Imams in some Badghis mosques continuously preach that women’s presence in public is religiously prohibited.

“Vice and Virtue” officials in the southwest humiliated and insulted women who were shopping and arrested some of them. In February 2025, an elderly woman from this region who went to the city to buy groceries was arrested and taken directly to public prison. UNAMA also reported documenting cases of harassment or beating of women at checkpoints for not observing the Islamic hijab or being ordered to return home for shopping without a mahram¹⁰.

In Kandahar, Zabul, Helmand, and Uruzgan provinces, the Taliban banned women from going to wedding halls, citing an “inappropriate environment and the presence of men during food distribution”. Owners of wedding halls objected to this but the “Vice and Virtue” officials have made the reversal of this policy conditional upon the wedding halls meeting full separation conditions.

The Taliban governor in Kandahar also created a commission that decided to prohibit women who face a shortage of drinking water from going to the stream to wash clothes and household items.

Testimonies

An interviewee from Helmand province’s Musa Qala district said the Taliban announced several times that women could not go to the local market. The people objected, but the Taliban eventually closed the market, completely depriving women of access. In Sangin district, women are also not allowed to go to the city or shop. “Vice and Virtue” officials monitor the women’s market in Lashkar Gah city, and if women do not wear the required hijab or speak to male vendors, they are immediately arrested.

An interviewee from Nimruz province said, “When I went with my husband to the Taliban’s education directorate to get my educational documents, they didn’t let us in and told us to wait outside. When my husband went inside, an armed Taliban member came and said in a humiliating tone, ‘You woman, why did you come in? Get out quickly.’”

Another interviewee from Parwan province said that when women leave their homes, they must wear a mask, but due to the intense heat, the mask sometimes falls off, leading to humiliating encounters with “Vice and Virtue” officials. She recounted that an older woman who was not wearing a mask due to the heat was violently confronted by officials and warned that she must wear a mask in public.

¹⁰ UNAMA, No Safe Haven: Human Rights Risks faced by Persons Involuntary Returned to Afghanistan. July 2025

An interviewee from Badakhshan province said that when he was going with his wife to a recreational area, “Vice and Virtue’ officials stopped them and said women are not allowed to go to recreational places. He and other families were forced to return home.

In Bamiyan province on April 13, 2025, the Taliban arrested a female student for not wearing proper hijab. She recounted, “I was in the market and wasn’t wearing a burka, but I had a scarf and long clothes. Three men from a ‘Vice and Virtue’ car got out and one of them shouted, ‘Why is your face uncovered? Are you not ashamed?’ They forcibly put me in their car. They called my father and threatened that if I were to be seen in public like that again, they would arrest and flog me. I was released after my father gave a written commitment’.

Another interviewee from Ghazni province said that a relative was arrested with his wife for not wearing a proper hijab. Officials humiliated them and arrested the wife. When he and two others went to provide bail, one of his companions was insulted for having a short beard, and his bail was not accepted. The woman was released the next day after three people provided bail.



Photo (C) Alamy - Imago

LACK OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE

International human rights documents protect the right of all individuals to access independent courts, a lawyer, and other fair trial standards. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women obligates states to take legal and executive measures to ensure women's equal access to justice.

However, for four years, the Taliban have destroyed the legal frameworks protecting women and severely restricted their access to justice through numerous decrees. No effective legal mechanisms exist to address women's complaints of violence. Given the strict conditions and the discriminatory approach of Taliban courts, women are doubly victimized, and most of the violence against them goes unaddressed. This perpetuates a cycle of violence and violations of women's fundamental rights.

Our report also finds that the "Vice and Virtue" law has intensified discrimination and made women's access to justice more limited and, in many cases, impossible. The lack of professional expertise among Taliban court employees and long delays in processing cases have made the situation worse.

FAILURE TO ADDRESS CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Taliban judges believe that women should not complain about spousal violence and domestic abuse, viewing it as a legacy of the previous government that causes family breakdown. As a result, Taliban courts often do not act on complaints of violence or requests for divorce. Most of these complaints are resolved through non-judicial mechanisms, usually in favour of the perpetrators.

Furthermore, according to the "Vice and Virtue" law, women cannot file complaints or seek justice without a mahram. If they violate this rule, their complaint is ignored, and they face humiliation and ill-treatment. Fearing this, many victims do not go to the MPVPV or courts to complain and are forced to endure the violence.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan also reported that Taliban judges often approach cases of violence against women and requests for divorce with a patriarchal attitude, encouraging victims to obey their husbands¹¹.

Not only is access to justice for female victims of violence impossible in Afghanistan, but Taliban courts sometimes even legitimize the most severe forms of violence. A lawyer from the southwest told Rawadari that in June 2025, a man gave his seven-year-old daughter in marriage to a man over 50 to settle a debt. After social media outcry, the Taliban arrested both parties. The court later ruled that the girl should be married to the man after she turns

¹¹ UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. June 2025.

nine. This ruling, which violates all human rights standards, clearly shows that justice for female victims is hardly attainable in the Taliban's judicial system.

According to our information, the Taliban's "Vice and Virtue" directorate in some provinces does address a few complaints of violence against women. In Maidan Wardak, for example, they only act if the victim's father files the complaint against the husband's family. In Ghazni, they address mothers' complaints about violence from their children. In Parwan, they only address severe cases like murder. However, the directorate has not published any credible reports on how it addresses these cases or ensures justice for victims.

The claim that the "Vice and Virtue" directorate, which plays the largest role in suppressing women's rights, addresses domestic violence complaints is a clear contradiction and a propaganda tool. Evidence shows that the directorate's true function is to enforce strict rules, arrest women on various pretexts, and then subject them to ill-treatment and violence.

As this report explains, the "Vice and Virtue" directorate, police precincts, and in some areas, the council of religious scholars, local information and culture departments, justice directorates, and security agencies play the largest role in imposing restrictions on the lives of women and girls. Local Hajj and Endowments departments also play a key role through imams in enforcing these restrictions and promoting the "Vice and Virtue" law.

PART 3

THE SITUATION OF VULNERABLE ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

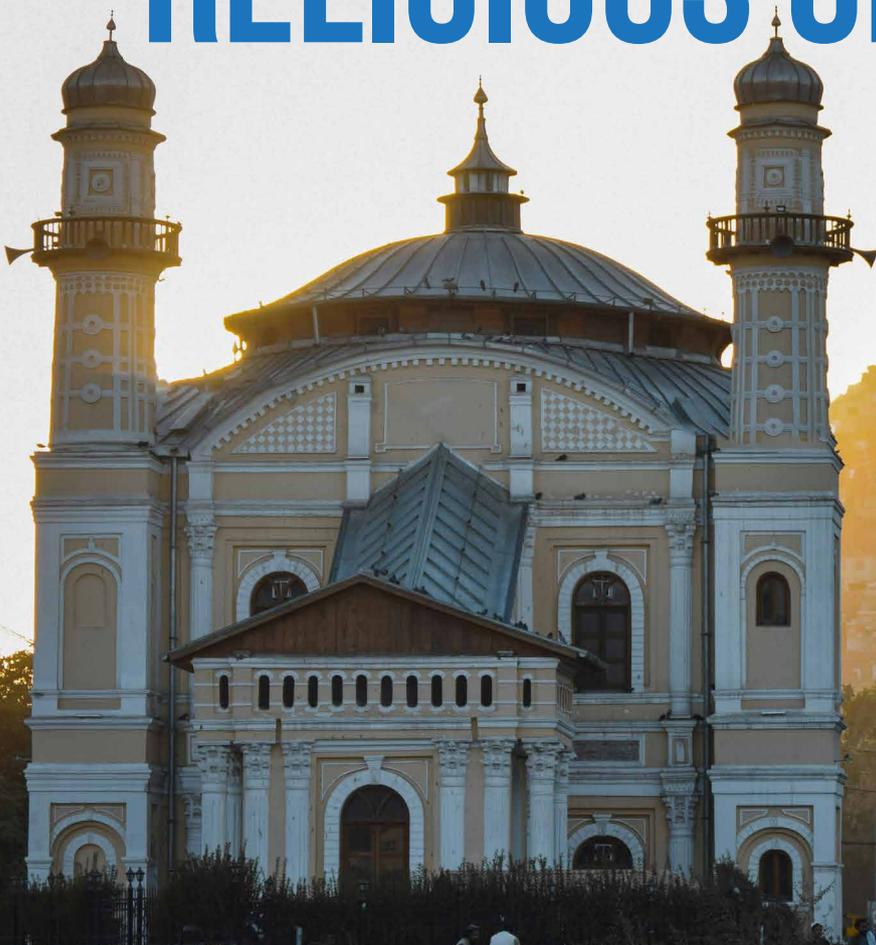


Photo (C) Unsplash - Qasim Mirzaie

Our report finds that vulnerable ethnic and religious groups continue to face discrimination in fair access to job opportunities, government services, humanitarian aid, and national resources. The Taliban have not only failed to address the existing barriers but have engaged in more widespread discrimination in the distribution of resources and development projects. The ruling group has also imposed strict restrictions on religious freedom, suppressing diverse beliefs and, in some provinces, even forcing religious minorities to convert.

This section details the Taliban's treatment of vulnerable ethnic and religious groups in the allocation of resources and development projects, discriminatory employment practices, and restrictions on religious freedom.

DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

International human rights documents emphasize immunity from any discrimination based on race, gender, language, and religion, and they guarantee equal access to resources and opportunities. However, our report finds that the Taliban are deliberately and discriminatorily depriving vulnerable ethnic and religious groups of equal access to government services, development projects, and humanitarian aid.

In Badakhshan province, residents of Ismaili-majority districts are systematically excluded from development and public projects. At the same time, a significant portion of these projects are being implemented in Warduj district, the hometown of two senior Taliban officials. A similar trend exists in Parwan province, where resources and services are disproportionately allocated to areas that were under Taliban control during the previous government.

In Ghor province, the Taliban have instructed organizations to implement development projects only in districts and areas that were previously under their control.

In Ghazni province, development projects like road construction and water systems are being implemented discriminatorily. In May 2025, the Taliban announced 98 development projects worth over \$6 million to be implemented over four years in three predominantly Pashtun districts: Zana Khan, Khugyani, and Rashidon. However, in the first half of 2025, only three projects worth \$64,000 were implemented in the province's Shia and Tajik-majority areas.

According to a statement from the Taliban's Rural Rehabilitation and Development Directorate in Ghazni, from February 14 to 17, 2025, cash and food aid were distributed to 9,820 families in Andar, Gilan, Qaraba, Ab Band, and Muqur districts. Not a single family from the Hazara, Tajik, Bayat, or other ethnic and religious minorities was included in these aid packages.

DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

International human rights documents guarantee the right to work, fair working conditions, job security, and protection from hiring or firing based on ethnicity, language, or religion. States must provide fair working conditions for all citizens regardless of their background. However, the ruling group has not fulfilled these responsibilities, acting discriminatorily in government hiring and dismissals.

Although the Taliban prioritize ideological loyalty and a history of membership over ethnic and religious affiliation in their hiring process, our findings in the first half of 2025 show that they are continuing to remove employees from vulnerable ethnic and religious groups from government institutions.

In the first six months of the year, several government departments were restructured, and many official positions were eliminated. These changes, particularly in the Ministry of Higher Education and in universities, disproportionately affected vulnerable ethnic and religious groups in provinces like Kabul, Panjshir, and Bamiyan leading to dismissal of non-Pashtun staff members.

In Ghazni province, the positions of employees from the Bayat, Tajik, and Hazara ethnic groups were eliminated from government departments. For example, in the local Information and Culture Directorate, the positions of six Tajik and one Hazara employee were removed. In the police command, six Hazara and three Tajik employees were dismissed. The governor of this province also directly fired seven Tajik, Bayat, and Hazara employees, and only one of them, a former manager, was rehired as a driver in a grade-seven position after much insistence.

Interviewees from Nimruz province said the Taliban are marginalizing ethnic and religious minorities and are giving jobs, especially in cross-border trade and in customs, to their own relatives. One source from this province said he knows government employees who have changed their religion and language out of fear of being dismissed. In Badakhshan province, the Taliban have dismissed minority employees and manage the hiring process based on ethnic and religious affiliations.

RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS

Freedom of religion includes freedom of belief and freedom to practice religious teachings and rituals, both privately and publicly. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the right of minorities to enjoy their own culture, religion, and language without discrimination.

However, Rawadari's findings show that in the first half of 2025, the Taliban continued to suppress religious freedoms and imposed extensive restrictions on the religious rituals of minorities. For example, they restricted the holding of Shiite ceremonies during Muharram in Kabul, Herat, Ghazni, Parwan, Nimruz, Ghor, and Bamiyan provinces. They removed flags and other mourning symbols and destroyed food distribution areas.

The Taliban briefly arrested some Shiite mosque officials in Herat province. In Ghazni, they formed a committee that told Shiite mosques they were prohibited from using loudspeakers at night and could not hold mourning ceremonies in open spaces.

An interviewee from Parwan province said that this year, the Taliban did not allow the traditional Muharram mourning processions to take place, took down religious flags, and prevented women from going to cemeteries to pray for their deceased.

In Badghis province, the Taliban have required male students to attend the Hanafi congregational prayers, regardless of their religious sect, and threatened to expel those who do not comply. In January 2025, a police commander in a Ghazni district ordered two Shiite workers to pray with their hands together and according to Hanafi jurisprudence.

On March 29, 2025, the Taliban forced some Shiite citizens in Ghazni province to not fast and perform Eid prayers with Hanafi sect followers, contrary to their religious beliefs. The Taliban's "Vice and Virtue" directorate had pressured the head of the Shiite council of scholars to hold the Eid prayer at the time announced by the Taliban. In his speech, he told worshipers he was forced to do so due to threats. The Taliban arrested three Shiite religious scholars for holding Eid prayers a day later than Taliban and forced other Shiite citizens to break their fast and drink water. Before that, the "Vice and Virtue" directorate had summoned the members of the Shiite council of scholars and told them to begin Ramadan according to the Taliban's announcement and Hanafi jurisprudence.

FORCING ISMAILI SHIITES TO CHANGE RELIGION

Evidence shows that in the first half of 2025, the Taliban continued to impose ideological pressure on Ismaili Shiites in Badakhshan province, forcing them to convert.

In all Ismaili-majority districts, the Taliban have opened religious schools and are forcibly teaching Hanafi jurisprudence to Ismaili children. Since last year, at least 203 Ismaili followers in Badakhshan province's Shughnan, Ishkashim, Khahan, Nasi, and Maimay districts have been forced to change their religion.

On January 1, 2025, a local Taliban commander in the Darwaz district told Ismailis to convert to Hanafi sect. An interviewee said Juma Khan Fateh, a hardline Taliban commander, pressured Ismailis in Darwaz to change their religion. He told them, "Your religion is polytheism and infidelity, and you should convert to Hanafi jurisprudence". After this issue was reported in the media, he forced some Shiite followers to announce on camera that they had converted voluntarily. The Taliban have also repeatedly announced in the districts of Shughnan, Zebak, Ishkashim, and Darwaz that marriages between Ismaili families and Sunni families are not permitted.

PART 4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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CONCLUSION

As this report shows, in the first half of 2025, human rights violations in Afghanistan have continued to increase. We saw a rise in targeted and extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, cruel and inhuman punishments, and further restrictions on the human rights of women.

The de facto authorities' systematic policies against women and girls intensified discrimination in education, work, freedom of movement, and access to justice. These actions may constitute gender persecution and a crime against humanity.

Vulnerable ethnic and religious groups were deliberately and discriminatorily deprived of fair access to jobs, national resources, and development projects. The Taliban also imposed strict restrictions on religious freedom.

Former government employees, opponents, protesters, human rights defenders, and journalists have become targets of violent attacks, facing arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, and even death. The Taliban also used force to suppress protest gatherings, arresting, injuring, and killing protesters.

The rate of cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishments, including public executions and floggings, has also increased, showing the Taliban's disregard for fair trial principles and human rights standards.

The deep-rooted culture of impunity is a key factor behind the increase in human rights violations. The violations will continue until the perpetrators are held accountable through international judicial mechanisms. While recent progress in ICC's arrest warrants for two Taliban leaders for crimes against humanity is a positive step, addressing these widespread violations requires all available international legal tools and mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the alarming human rights situation in Afghanistan, Rawadari offers the following recommendations to the de facto and the international community.

To the de facto authorities:

We strongly urge the DFA to stop committing human rights violations and to uphold their responsibilities to Afghanistan's international human rights commitments.

Deliberately depriving women of their rights and freedoms causes permanent damage to the country's development and carries serious legal consequences. We urge the authorities to end their discriminatory policies, reverse all bans and restrictions and respect the freedom and dignity of Afghan women and girls.

We ask the DFA to clear areas contaminated with mines and war remnants to protect children's lives and to cooperate with national and international NGOs in this effort.

We urge the DFA to fulfil their legal responsibilities to ensure citizens' safety and to immediately end the extrajudicial killings of former government employees, opponents, critics, and human rights defenders. They must also publicly report on their steps to prosecute and punish perpetrators.

Additionally, we ask the DFA to provide human rights organizations with access to detention facilities and to end torture and ill-treatment in all places of detention.

To the International Community:

The persistent fight against impunity and holding the Taliban accountable are essential to ending systematic human rights violations in Afghanistan. We urgently ask the international community to use all political, diplomatic, and judicial tools to restore the human rights of Afghans, particularly Afghan women and girls.

We ask the international community to support the justice-seeking struggles of human rights defenders, especially women and girls, and to effectively address the cases of arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, and killing of protesters in Afghanistan.

As our report shows, former government employees and their families remain targets of vengeful attacks. Therefore, we ask the international community to take practical measures to pressure the DFA and ensure the safety and security of former government employees.

We ask the United Nations to conduct a comprehensive investigation into targeted, extrajudicial, and suspicious killings, especially vengeful attacks against former government employees, and to share the results with the public and the international community.

