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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Afghanistan – January to June 2024

30 June 2024

08 January 2024

Afghan refugees expelled from Pakistan and Iran; humanitarian situation

According to UNHCR/IOM, around 490,000 Afghan nationals had been expelled from Pakistan by 31.12.23, many of whom have no accommodation in Afghanistan and are living in tents or in the open. At the same time, approximately 520,000 Afghan nationals have been expelled from Iran in the last nine months. In the districts of Herat province which were hit by the severe earthquakes in October 2023, many families are also living in tents and are reliant on humanitarian aid. Diseases are spreading among children in particular as the cold snap weather intensifies.¹

Security situation

On 06.01.2024, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed responsibility for the explosion of a minibus in Kabul's Dashti Barchi district, which has a large Hazara community. According to the Taliban, two people were killed and 14 others were injured in the incident. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has reported that 25 people were killed or wounded.

According to their own sources, the Afghanistan Freedom Front and the National Resistance Front (NRF) killed a total of three Taliban in Baghlan and Parwan provinces on 25.12.23 and 31.12.23. The office of the Taliban governor of Badakhshan province was hit by a missile fired by unidentified persons on 02.01.24.²

Governance and persecution

Between 01.01.24 and 05.01.24, several dozen women and girls were reportedly arrested in Kabul, particularly in the Dashti Barchi district and in Ghazni province for allegedly failing to observe the dress code. At the time the report was issued, the whereabouts of the girls and women were unknown. According to the report issued on 07.01.24, families are increasingly restricting women's freedom of movement for fear of being arrested.

On 05.01.24, the women's rights activist Bibi Gul Mohammadi is said to have died by suicide in Kunduz province after being detained by the Taliban in September 2021 and facing intense social pressure. On 25.12.23, women's rights activist Parisa Azada, who had been arrested on 14.11.23, was released from prison.

In 2023, the Afghanistan Journalists Centre reported that 61 journalists had been arrested and that 168 incidents sometimes involving the violent obstruction of journalists' rights had occurred. On 05.01.24, the Taliban reportedly arrested the director of a radio station in Ghor province after the station had broadcast messages from UNAMA advocating an education system where boys and girls can learn.

On 31.12.23, a man from the province of Panjshir was reportedly arrested in Kabul. His whereabouts have been unknown since then. Two weeks earlier, a student from the same province had been arrested in Nimruz province on charges of supporting the NRF. On 31.12.23, a well-known lawyer was reportedly arrested in the province of Panjshir.

On 04.01.24, a former military officer was reportedly gunned down by a member of the Taliban in Urozgan province.³

15 January 2024

Security situation

On 14.01.24, a suicide attack was carried out on the Taliban governor's office of Nimruz province, injuring three people. On the same day, the Afghanistan Freedom Front reported that it had fired rockets at the Taliban governor's office of Panjshir province, killing two Taliban. Most recently, on 02.01.24, a missile attack was carried out on the office of the Taliban governor in Badakhshan province (cf. BN of 08.01.24). Another attack was waged outside a shopping centre in the Hazara district of Dashti Barchi in Kabul on 11.01.24, killing six people and injuring 15 others. Most recently, on 07.01.24, the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) carried out an attack on a minibus carrying Hazara passengers (cf. BN of 08.01.24). Another explosive attack was carried out on a vehicle belonging to employees of a prison in Kabul on 09.01.24 for which the ISKP has claimed responsibility. Three people were killed and four were wounded in the attack. Also on 11.01.24, a blast occurred in the city of Mazar-e Sharif in Balkh province. Nothing is known about the perpetrators or the number of casualties.⁴

Governance

On 11.01.24, it was reported that long queues comprising thousands of people from all over the country had formed outside the central passport issuing office in Kabul as the Taliban have suspended online passport applications, forcing people to apply in person.

Taliban leader emir Haibatullah Akhundzada has met with the leader of the allied Pakistani party Jamiat Ulema-e Islam Fazlur (JUI-F), Fazlur Rehman, to discuss tensions that have arisen between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the spike in terrorist attacks being carried out by the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, TTP) and the repatriation of undocumented Afghan refugees from Pakistan (cf. BN of 08.01.24). On his return to Pakistan, Rehman said emir Akhundzada had called for the resumption of talks between Islamabad and the TTP via the Taliban's political office in Doha.⁵

Humanitarian situation

Northern Afghanistan (Badakhshan province) has been hit by yet another earthquake. There were no immediate reports of deaths or damage to buildings. According to reports issued on 11.01.24, the WFP has issued a warning that around one in three people across the country face uncertainty over their next meal as the country faces a daunting winter season.⁶

22 January 2024

Security situation

According to media reports, the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) beheaded two individuals in Diwa-Gul Dara (Chawkey District), Kunar province, on 20.01.24, accusing them of spying on behalf of the Taliban. In a similar incident that occurred on 05.01.24, members of the ISKP beheaded an individual in the same district facing the same accusations. On 08.01.24, a Taliban fighter was killed by members of the ISKP in Nangarhar province (Dara-e Noor district). It would seem that the Taliban too are aware of the surge in ISKP activity in Kunar province; the Taliban's Ministry of Information and Culture distributed booklets entitled "Army of Satan" to students in both public and private schools in the province on 25.12.23 as part of an anti-ISKP campaign.⁷

Governance and persecution

According to media reports issued on 18.01.24, the Taliban seized at least 100 books, encompassing religious and political themes, from bookstores and libraries in Kabul which are considered to oppose the Taliban regime, including seven religious books, 21 history books and countless political books. Students in Kabul have also reported that the Taliban's Ministry of Higher Education has removed books from university libraries that oppose Taliban views. In the past week, over 2,000 books were reportedly removed from bookstores in the cities of Kunduz and Pol-e Khomri. According to sources, the Taliban are focusing on books about well-known "non-Pashtun"

individuals from the former anti-Taliban movement (e.g. Ahmad Shah Massoud, Abdul Ali Mazari), books about the history of the various ethnic groups in Afghanistan and books about Shi'ism.

The Taliban Ministry of Education has revised the primary school curriculum in order to align it to their own interpretation of "Sharia". The spokesperson for the Taliban Ministry of Education told the Taliban-run RTA channel that subjects which were not in line with "Sharia and the culture of Afghanistan" had been removed from the curriculum. However, he did not specify which subjects had been eliminated.

The Taliban passport office in Kabul announced on 21.01.23 that it had suspended in-person passport applications for the time being, as the office did not have the capacity to handle the large influx of applicants (cf. BN of 15.01.24). The directorate stated that it would only process passport applications online and only for persons with medical conditions and persons who have other urgent reasons.

According to media reports issued on 16.01.24, the Taliban arrested six young girls in Balkh province for allegedly violating the dress code. The Taliban had already arrested two girls in Balkh on 16.01.24 for the same reasons. They had been wearing white socks and shoes, the colour of the Taliban flag. Several girls were arrested in Kabul and the province of Ghazni between 01.01.24 and 05.01.24 for allegedly failing to observe the dress code (cf. BN of 08.01.24). The Taliban stormed a local radio station in Khost province on 16.01.24. The raid involved the forcible entry of Taliban security forces into the station's premises, leading to the detention of four staff members, specifically a reporter, two producers, and an administrative staff member. On the same day, the Taliban shut down another radio station in Khost. Four of the station's employees were detained briefly but were released two hours later. However, the radio station owner's brother, who was arrested a week ago, remains in custody.

According to reports, the Taliban shot dead a former military officer of the previous government in Kabul upon his return from Iran.⁸

29 January 2024

Persecution

A report released by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on 22.01.24 on the human rights situation highlighted in particular the violent and arbitrary enforcement of decrees against women, among other things. The report also addressed incidents of violence against the Hazara community, the expulsion of Afghan nationals from Pakistan and the associated risk of persecution people who have fled the Taliban face.

According to media reports, a former interpreter for US troops was arrested and killed by the Taliban in Asadabad, Kunar province, on 20.01.2014. The Taliban arrested two former soldiers, who had recently returned from Iran, in Takhar province on 22.01.24. According to media reports issued on 23.01.24, a former soldier from Panjshir province had been arrested by the Taliban two weeks earlier.

According to reports issued on 23.01.24, the Taliban arrested two journalists in Kabul and in Ghazni province. The organization Nai, which has campaigned for freedom of the press in Afghanistan, announced on 26.01.24 that it would be suspending its activities due to the political situation.

On 25.01.24 and 26.01.24, the Taliban flogged a total of 22 people, including seven women, in Takhar province, punishing them for offences such as having extramarital relationships or "fleeing from home", sentencing them to prison terms.

According to media reports released on 23.01.24, the Taliban are urging Ismaili families in Badakhshan province to send their children to specially established Sunni religious schools where they will undergo religious re-education.⁹

Situation along the border with Pakistan

The Torkham border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan was reopened for trucks from Afghanistan on 23.01.24 following an 11-day closure. Pakistan had closed the border because a large number of truck drivers were not in possession of a visa allowing them to enter Pakistan as per the requirement introduced in November 2023. Following negotiations with the Taliban, the Pakistani authorities extended the deadline for obtaining visas until 31.03.24. The Taliban closed the second border crossing at Spin Boldak on 24.01.24. The number of Afghan nationals entering Afghanistan from Pakistan has dropped. On 22.01.24, UNHCR reported that around 600 Afghan nationals were crossing the border daily. The main reasons they give for leaving Pakistan include fear of arrest, restricted freedom of movement and reports of people's belongings being confiscated.¹⁰

Security situation

According to their own sources, the National Resistance Front and the Afghanistan Freedom Front killed a total of six Taliban in the provinces of Parwan, Kapisa and Kabul on 23.01.24.¹¹

Humanitarian situation

So far, the winter has been unusually dry and warm, exacerbating the ongoing drought and humanitarian situation. The WHO reports a substantial rise in Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), claiming that 292 people have died from respiratory infections since the beginning of the year, with 63% of infections affecting children under the age of five.¹²

05 February 2024

Security situation

According to a UN Security Council report released on 29.01.24, the terrorist network al-Qaeda has set up a total of eight new training camps in Afghanistan, four of which are located in the provinces of Ghazni, Laghman, Parwan and Uruzgan, as well as a new weapons depot in the Panjshir Valley. According to the report, the Taliban have been concealing their close ties with al-Qaeda. In addition, al-Qaeda and the Taliban are supporting the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)) in the attacks they are carrying out in Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban have denied the allegation.¹³

Governance and persecution

According to media reports, Chinese President Xi Jinping accepted the credentials of Taliban-appointed Afghan Ambassador Asadullah Bilal Karimi at a ceremony on 30.01.24 along with the credentials of envoys of around 40 other countries. According to some analysts and former diplomats, this step marks the first official recognition of the Taliban interim government by a major nation. Although the spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry did not confirm recognition of the Taliban government, he emphasised that, from the Chinese perspective, Afghanistan should not be excluded from the international community.

The US is exploring the possibility of consular access to Afghanistan, according to a recently published strategy paper published by the US State Department. This does not mean recognition of the Taliban government, but rather serves to build functional relationships in order to better pursue the US government's own goals.

In a controversial statement, Noorullah Noori, Taliban Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs, denied the existence of an "official" or "international" border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs released a video in which Noori described the Durand Line separating the two countries as a "hypothetical line".

According to reports, there has been an increase in unsolved murders committed by unidentified gunmen across the country since 25.01.24. Within a week, a total of 12 people, including old people, women and children, were killed in the provinces of Helmand, Badghis, Balkh, Takhar and Herat. There is reason to fear that the number of unreported cases is high. On 01.02.24, the Taliban had two people flogged in Kabul for having an "extramarital relationship".¹⁴

Humanitarian situation

The provincial hospital of Badakhshan has reportedly recorded around 10,000 cases of measles since the beginning of 2024, and 21 children have succumbed to the illness so far. The increase is partly due to the lack of medication.¹⁵

12 February 2024

Security situation

According to its own sources, the Afghanistan Freedom Front and the National Resistance Front killed a total of five Taliban in the provinces of Parwan and Baghlan on 11.02.24 and 12.02.24.¹⁶

Persecution

The Taliban detained 10 civilians who were playing the drums and dancing in Takhar province on 05.02.24.

According to reports, the Taliban shot and killed a woman in Balkh province on 06.02.24. The background to the shooting is unclear.

On 08.02.24, it was reported that the Taliban shot dead a former soldier in Paktya province after arresting him three days earlier. According to reports, the Taliban arrested a former policeman in Maidan Wardak province on the same day. In Faryab province, a former soldier was shot dead by unidentified gunmen on 10.02.2014.

According to reports, the Taliban arrested four people in Panjshir province on 09.02.24 on charges of collaborating with the armed opposition.

On 08.02.24, the Taliban reportedly conducted house searches in the Khair Khana neighbourhood of Kabul.

On 10.02.24, the Taliban arrested a journalist from the Pajhwok news agency in Samangan province.¹⁷

Humanitarian situation

Deportations of Afghan nationals from Iran and Pakistan continue. According to a report issued on 08.02.24, almost 2,000 people arrived in Afghanistan in a single day, the majority of them from Iran. According to information provided by Iranian sources on 10.02.24, twenty thousand Afghan nationals had been expelled within the space of 15 days.

International organisations are warning of the increasingly severe effects of the ongoing drought. After the province of Ghazni was hit by a cold snap, a man froze to death on 06.02.24.¹⁸

19 February 2024

Persecution: homes seized in Panjshir, corporal punishment, arrests

According to several media reports, the NGO Panjshir Worldwide Council has published a report according to which around 21,000 Taliban are stationed in the province of Panjshir. They have usurped 285 houses, 13 mosques and 12 schools there and converted them into military bases or residences for the families of Taliban leaders. The districts most affected are Bazarak, Anaba and Rokha.

On 14.02.24, the Taliban in Bamiyan province had 13 people whipped for engaging in extramarital relationships and theft. The subsequent sentences ranged from two to seven years in prison (the latter for murder and theft). Eyewitnesses report that on Valentine's Day, the Taliban arbitrarily arrested couples strolling on the street and punished them for having extramarital affairs.

In Kunduz province, the Taliban arrested four women on 13.02.24 for violating the dress code. The Taliban arrested two soldiers of the former government in Maidan Wardak province on 15.02.24. Both are ethnic Hazara and are said to have co-operated with the National Resistance Front. On 09.02.24, a former employee of the Ministry of the Interior was arrested by the Taliban in Maidan Wardak province. On 12.02.24, the Taliban opened fire on a taxi at a checkpoint, killing all five passengers. The driver is said to have ignored the warnings given.¹⁹

26 February 2024

Governance and persecution

On 18.02.24 and 19.02.24, a UN conference on the situation in Afghanistan was held in Doha (Qatar) under the chairmanship of UN Secretary-General António Guterres. Despite receiving an invitation to attend the conference, the Taliban refused to attend after their demands to be recognised as the "sole official representatives of Afghanistan" and to hold talks with the UN Secretary-General were rejected. The Taliban's Foreign Ministry took issue in particular with the fact that representatives of Afghan civil society and women had also been invited to attend the conference.

UN experts have called for the recognition of "gender apartheid" as a crime against humanity, which is currently being examined by the UN General Assembly's Sixth Committee, highlighting in particular the plight of women and girls in Afghanistan.

According to media reports issued on 22.02.24, the Taliban Supreme Court carried out the death sentence of two men accused of murder in Ghazni province under the Qisas law. Following the approval from Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada, the sentence was carried out by firing squad in Ghazni province the same day. On 26.02.24, the Taliban announced another public execution of a man convicted of murder in Jowzjan province. On

25.02.24, a young couple in Jowzjan province and two other people in Laghman province were flogged by the Taliban for having "extramarital relations".

The acting governor of Kandahar province issued a directive on 18.02.24 banning photography and filming of meetings with local Taliban officials in the province. According to reports issued on 22.02.24, the Taliban have instructed school headmasters in Kandahar province to ban girls over the age of 10 from attending classes beyond the sixth grade. In Khost province, the Taliban have prohibited women and girls from making contact with local radio and television channels. On 24.02.24, the Taliban's Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice once again called on anyone running beauty salons for women to close within one month.²⁰

04 March 2024

Public executions and corporal punishment

On 26.02.24, the public execution that had been announced took place at a stadium in Sheberghan in the northern province of Jawzjan (cf. BN of 26.02.24). This is the fifth public execution to take place since the Taliban seized power in August 2021. According to an anonymous witness, the man sentenced to death for murder was shot by the victim's brother. The two men convicted of murder in the southeastern city of Ghazni on 22.02.24 were also shot dead by relatives of the victims in front of thousands of spectators.

In a statement issued by the Taliban Supreme Court on 29.02.24, it was announced that eight people had been flogged in accordance with a ruling handed down by the Taliban military court. They had been sentenced to five months' imprisonment and 20 lashes for "adultery and dishonour". On 03.03.24, the Taliban Supreme Court announced the administration of a public whipping of a man in Sar-e Pol province on charges of "immorality".²¹

Persecution in Kabul and Panjshir province

According to a media report issued on 29.02.24, two civilians were arrested and physically mistreated by the Taliban in the Anaba district of Panjshir province last week. The rationale behind the detention remains unclear, although sources assert that both individuals are civilians unaffiliated with any particular group or organisation.

Recently, the Taliban have increasingly arrested former government soldiers and civilians in both Panjshir and Kabul. In line with this development, it was reported that another four people from villages in Rokha district were arrested last week and taken to Kabul.

According to a media report issued on 29.02.24, the Taliban military court has sentenced a university professor to one year in prison. Sources suggest that the professor's activism on social media where he advocated for girls' education rights and criticized the Taliban's actions, particularly regarding women's rights, was the reason behind his imprisonment. He hails from Piyawesht in the Rokha district of Panjshir province.²²

11 March 2024

UN reports increase in conflict-related security incidents

A UN Security Council report on Afghanistan released on 28.02.24 shows that between 01.11.23 and 10.01.24 the UN recorded 1,508 security incidents, a 38 percent increase from the 1,090 incidents recorded during the same period in 2022 and 2023. Many of the cases involve arrests made in the context of drug trafficking. The armed opposition remains active but does not pose a threat to the Taliban. The report also highlights the increase in the arrests of women accused of violating the dress code. This mainly affects urban non-ethnic Pashtun women. Although the Taliban continue to deny any persecution of former security forces, at least five former security forces were killed and seven others arrested in the reporting period between November 2023 and February 2024. People accused of belonging to the armed opposition also continue to be arrested or executed without a trial. The Taliban regularly use corporal punishment; journalists and human rights activists continue to be arrested. The economic situation is relatively stable, but at a low level. Sixty-nine percent of the population lack access to basic items. The effects of the earthquakes in Herat province in October 2023 continue to be felt, as agriculture in particular has been severely affected. The shrinking labour market faces further challenges due to the high number of Afghan nationals deported from neighbouring countries. The need for humanitarian aid remains high, especially in the healthcare sector.²³

Security situation

The National Resistance Front (NRF) and the Afghanistan Freedom Front reported attacks carried out against the Taliban in the provinces of Herat, Parwan, Takhar and Kabul on 07.03.24 and 09.03.24. A total of 10 Taliban and two members of the NRF are said to have been killed.²⁴

Persecution

In the provinces of Maidan Wardak and Parwan, a total of 10 men and two women were whipped on 06.03.24 and 10.03.24. Several former security forces, people from Panjshir province and people accused by the Taliban of collaborating with the armed opposition have reportedly been arrested or killed.²⁵

Humanitarian situation

Recent snowfall and extreme cold weather have resulted in the deaths of around 40 people in several provinces. At the same time, deportations from Pakistan continue. Between 25.02.24 and 02.03.24, more than 5,000 people are said to have been deported. The people affected are particularly vulnerable to the current extreme weather conditions.²⁶

18 March 2024

Security situation

According to its own sources, the National Resistance Front (NRF) carried out three attacks on the Taliban in Kabul on 13.03.24 and 18.03.24, killing a total of three Taliban and injuring three others. The NRF also claims to have killed a Taliban in Parwan province on 15.03.24.

According to the Taliban, Pakistani airstrikes carried out in the provinces of Khost and Paktika on 18.03.24 resulted in the deaths of eight civilians. The attacks were reportedly aimed at members of the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan).²⁷

Humanitarian situation

According to a statement issued by the Taliban on 13.03.24, at least 60 people have died in the past three weeks due to heavy rainfall. In Herat province alone, at least 250 houses were destroyed and numerous fields were flooded.

Deportations from Pakistan continue. According to reports issued in the Afghan media, the Pakistani government has announced that it will not only take action against unregistered Afghan nationals but that the operation to deport Afghan citizen card holders, who are hence registered, will also begin on 15.04.24.

The NGO Swedish Committee for Afghanistan has suspended its activities in Afghanistan for the time being due to difficulties it has encountered operating under the Taliban. The organisation ran two hospitals and supported more than 20,000 people with disabilities.²⁸

25 March 2024

Security situation

On 21.03.24, an explosion took place outside a branch of Kabul Bank in the city of Kandahar. According to various reports, up to 27 people were killed and 43 others were injured. The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to its own sources, the National Resistance Front (NRF) killed a total of four Taliban in attacks carried out in Kabul and Takhar on 20.03.24, 23.03.24 and 24.03.24.²⁹

Persecution

On 20.03.24, the new academic year began with a ceremony held in Kabul. Female journalists were not allowed to attend. No changes have been made to the ban on secondary school attendance for girls. In an audio message broadcast over the radio, the Taliban's supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, declared that women should be stoned to death if they commit a serious offence against Sharia law.

On 20.03.24 and 21.03.24, several people were arrested or beaten by the Taliban for celebrating the Persian New Year Nowruz. The Taliban labelled the festival un-Islamic and carried out strict controls.

In Takhar province, the Taliban are said to have carried out house searches following an attack by the NRF on 24.03.24 and arrested five people on charges of collaborating with the organisation. On 21.03.24, they also arrested four hospital employees in Herat under obscure circumstances as well as a journalist in Kunduz province. On 22.03.24, the Taliban arrested the chairperson of the Justice and Development Party, Sayed Jawad Hussaini, and the head of the office of this party, Jafar Joya, in Kabul. They are said to have spoken out against a Shia religious leader appointed by the Taliban.

On 22.03.24 and 23.03.24, the Taliban killed two former special force members in the provinces of Logar and Parwan.³⁰

Humanitarian situation

At least three people, including one child, were killed in floods that swept the provinces of Badghis and Faryab on 21.03.24 and 22.03.24. Around 150 houses were destroyed.

To mark World Water Day on 22.03.24, the UN pointed out that 79 percent of the population do not have sufficient access to clean water.³¹

08 April 2024

Indications of increasing international acceptance of the Taliban

Media report growing indications of increasing international acceptance of the Taliban in non-Western countries. After China became the first country to accredit a Taliban diplomat in January 2024, the Russian Federation is currently reviewing the removal of the Taliban from its national terror list. According to media reports, the background to this is the attack in Moscow on 22.03.24 by the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), whose influence the Russian government wants to curb in Afghanistan.³²

Persecution situation

Media report that last week, several people in Kandahar, Khost and Faryab provinces were publicly flogged for homosexuality, extramarital affairs, and moral corruption, among other offences, and subsequently taken into custody.

On 06.04.24, the Taliban arrested two former soldiers of the Republic in Faryab province; in Mazar-e Sharif; one former soldier died on 07.04.24 under Taliban torture in custody on.

The Taliban government has closed various educational institutions in the seventh and tenth districts of Kabul because female students were being taught there beyond the 6th grade.

The Taliban have agreed to the demolition of the Khair Khana cinema in Kabul, one of the last remaining cinemas in the capital. A market, residential buildings and a mosque are to be built in its place.³³

Repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

The Taliban ministry of refugees and repatriation informed on 04.04.24 that since November 2023, Pakistan has repatriated already more than 535,000 illegally residing Afghan nationals to Afghanistan. The Pakistani government is adamant about continuing the repatriation plan to enter in its next phase following Eid al-Fitr on 10.04.24. Approximately 600,000 Pakistan-issued Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, who have so far been considered to be legal residents, will then also have to leave the country (cf. BN of 18.03.24). According to media reports, the Pakistani government has already begun to register the people concerned throughout the country.³⁴

15 April 2024

Security situation

The Afghanistan Freedom Front and the National Resistance Front claim to have killed a total of four Taliban fighters in attacks on Taliban vehicles in Kabul on 13.04 and 14.04.24.³⁵

Persecution situation

According to reports dated 08.04.24, the Taliban in Sar-e Pol province have arrested a man who had posted on Facebook a picture of Ahmad Shah Massoud (armed opposition to the Taliban during their first rule between 1996 and 2001). On 09.04.24, it was reported that the Taliban arrested a former army officer in Samangan province. On the same day, the Taliban reportedly beat ten people for having their beards and hair cut in Fayzabad, the capital of Badakhshan province.

Reports of 10.04.24 say that a man from Panjshir province died of torture by the Taliban in Kabul. On 12.04.24 another man from Parwan province was tortured to death by the Taliban; it is unclear on what charges he had been arrested.³⁶

Humanitarian situation and expulsions from Pakistan

In 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, at least 33 people lost their lives in heavy rainfall between 12.04. and 14.04.24, most of them when their houses collapsed. The Taliban report that at least 600 houses and 800 hectares of fields were destroyed.

According to figures provided by Pakistan, 8,581 Afghan nationals were expelled from Pakistan between 03.04. and 13.04.24.³⁷

22 April 2024

Governance and persecution situation: media closures and corporal punishment

On 16.04.24, the Taliban government closed the private TV stations NoorTV and BaryaTV until further notice for violating Islamic principles in their reporting. NoorTV is owned by Salahuddin Rabbani, the son of former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani; he had been foreign minister and is the leader of the Islamist party Jamiat-e Islami; BaryaTV is owned by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who is the leader of the Islamist party Hizb-e Islami. After the change of power, Hekmatyar had initially moved closer to the Taliban but recently publicly expressed his displeasure with their policies. As a result, the Taliban forced Hekmatyar to leave his house in Kabul in March 2024, which the old government had made available to him as part of a contract. On 16.04.24, the Taliban finally banned Hekmatyar from organising public events or receiving people at his home.

On 17.04.24, a journalist was apparently arrested by the Taliban in Ghazni province for reporting for Radio Azadi/Radio Free Europe (RFE). RFE reports on Afghanistan from Prague and was banned by the Taliban in 2021 immediately after the takeover.

On 17.04.24, a person was flogged for theft by the Taliban in Maidan Wardak province. The day before, a person was flogged for adultery in Zabul province (Shahjoy district).³⁸

Security situation

On 21.04.24, a bomb attack by the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) in West Kabul (PD 3) on a minivan carrying ethnic Hazara killed the driver and injured three people.³⁹

Humanitarian situation

According to reports dated 17.04.24, heavy rainfall and flash floods killed around 70 people and injured 56 in 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Thousands of families were apparently displaced from their homes, around 2,000 livestock died, and 2,600 houses and 1,950 hectares of agricultural land were destroyed. The Taliban have issued new storm warnings for the coming days.⁴⁰

29 April 2024

Security situation

Between 24.04. and 28.04.24, the National Resistance Front (NRF) reported several attacks on the Taliban in Kabul as well as individual attacks in Herat and Parwan provinces. The Afghanistan Freedom Front also reported on 28.04.24 that it had killed four Taliban fighters in Kabul.

An armed opposition group under former Vice President Amrullah Saleh, calling itself Afghanistan's Green Trend, claims to have killed the head of the criminal investigation department of a district in Laghman province on 24.04.24. It was the first time that this group declared the killing of a Talib.⁴¹

Persecution situation

On 22.04.24, the U.S. Department of State published its annual report on the human rights situation. It lists numerous human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, life-threatening prison conditions, political prisoners, collective punishment, numerous restrictions on basic freedoms, ethnic discrimination, and the recruitment of minors. Women's rights activists point out that the Taliban's human rights abuses go far beyond the documented incidents.

The Taliban stated that they publicly flogged two people accused of theft in Kapisa province on 22.04.24.

On 22.04.24, it was reported that the Taliban have arrested a former general from Panjshir province, who had retired before the Taliban took power, along with his son. On 27.04.24, a former police officer was reported to have died as a result of torture in Parwan province. He had been expelled from Iran shortly before his arrest. In Helmand Province, a political activist and his two sons were reportedly arrested on 23.04.24. His organisation appears to have been inactive since the Taliban took power. One of the sons was released.

From 24.04. to 28.04.24, three radio station managers were detained by the Taliban in Khost province. They were accused of broadcasting music and phone calls to women.

According to media reports, a shop owner was arrested on 26.04.24 in Baghlan province on charges of supporting the NRF. According to media reports, a 14-year-old boy died on 27.04.24 after being shot by the Taliban in prison in Paktika province.

On 28.04.24 it was reported from Khost province that the Taliban have closed at least 200 locally organised schools for girls. Closures were also reported in other provinces.⁴²

Humanitarian situation

A plague of locusts was reported in Herat province on 23.04.24.

Deaths and damage caused by heavy rain and a landslide have been reported in several provinces.

The deportation of Afghan nationals from Iran and Pakistan has resumed in increasing numbers, with the Taliban claiming that more than 3,000 people were deported on 22.04. and 23.04.⁴³

06 May 2024

Governance and persecution situation: Insurgency against the Taliban in Badakhshan

According to a press release dated 03.05.24, local people (mainly Uzbeks) in the Darayim and Argo districts of Badakhshan province protested against the Taliban for destroying poppy fields. One protester was reportedly shot dead by the Taliban and others were injured when the Taliban fired into the crowd. The protests continued for several days and were generally against "Taliban oppression" and demanded the withdrawal of the Pashtun Taliban from the region.

The Jamiat-e Islami party, which has its headquarters in the province and whose unofficial TV station NoorTV was recently closed down by the Taliban (cf. BN of 22.04.24), supports the protests against the Taliban. The Taliban have sent a delegation to investigate the incidents. In addition, troops have been deployed to the region to put an end to the uprisings by force if necessary. According to the "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2023", opium production has fallen by 95 percent since the Emir's ban in April 2022. Despite this decline, Badakhshan is still second only to the province of Kandahar in terms of poppy cultivation.⁴⁴

Security situation

The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for the attack of 29.04.24 on the Shia Imam Zaman mosque in Andisha community (Guzara district, Herat province), which is mainly inhabited by ethnic Hazaras. Six civilians were killed (including a woman and a child) and around ten others were injured.⁴⁵

Humanitarian situation

Reports of 05.05.24 say that heavy rains, flash floods and lightning strikes have killed around 15 people, displaced 500 families, and destroyed many homes and shops in the Ghor, Uruzgan, Herat and Farah provinces.⁴⁶

13 May 2024

Governance and persecution: protests against the Taliban in Badakhshan

On 07.05.24, the Taliban met with protesters in Badakhshan province (cf. BN of 06.05.24). Some of them were reportedly taken by force to the provincial capital Faizabad for the occasion. No agreement was reached, but the Taliban subsequently declared the protests over. The protesters continued to demand that those from the ranks of the Taliban who were suspected of being responsible for the killing of two protesters be handed over to the local population. On 09.05.24, additional Taliban forces were deployed to the province in order to destroy opium poppy fields in a concerted action the following day.⁴⁷

Security situation

The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for the bomb attack on a Taliban convoy in the city of Faizabad in Badakhshan province on 08.05.24 leaving three Taliban dead and six others injured. The attack targeted a Taliban patrol involved in the campaign against poppy cultivation (see above).⁴⁸

Humanitarian situation

Heavy rains and flash floods in Baghlan province (Burka and Markazi districts) have killed 315 people and injured 1,630, according to Taliban reports on 12.05.24. Thousands of livestock died, and 2,655 houses were destroyed or damaged. Floods also caused casualties in Herat province and Ghor provinces. In Takhar province, floods killed 20 people and injured 80 others.

On 08.05.24, an earthquake measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale struck Badakhshan province. There were no reports of damages caused.⁴⁹

27 May 2024

Security situation

On 17.05.24, the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) attacked international travellers in Bamyan Province. Three Spanish and three Afghan nationals were killed in the incident, and seven others, among them Afghan and foreign nationals, were injured.

Between 13.05. and 15.05.24, Taliban fighters clashed violently with Pakistani border guards.

The National Resistance Front has claimed to have killed two Taliban in the city of Herat on 23.05.24.⁵⁰

Persecution situation

According to a report on 14.05.24, the Taliban shot dead four men from Panjshir province at a checkpoint in Kabul, claiming that they were thieves who had fled the scene of the crime. According to observers, the people had not stopped properly at the checkpoint.

According to a report on 22.05.24, a former mine sweeper who worked with US troops has died. After his face appeared in a documentary film and a video about that film circulating on social media, he was first detained by the Taliban at a checkpoint, then released and arrested again short time later. After his release, he died as a result of torture.

On 25.05.24 the Taliban reportedly shot dead a former soldier in Baghlan province.

Protests against the destruction of opium fields continued in Badakhshan province (cf. BN of 13.05.24). On 13.05.24, the Taliban reportedly shot at the protesters and killed three people. Reports of 16.05.24 say that a village in Argu district of Badakhshan province was placed under house arrest following protests. The telephone network was also switched off and the Taliban carried out house searches. Eyewitnesses reported that the Taliban were using lists to search for people involved in the protests and arrested several people.

Between 13. and 26.05.24, a total of 25 people were flogged in several provinces. They were accused of offences such as "running away from home", sodomy, extramarital affairs, possession and consumption of alcohol and

robbery, and some were also sentenced to prison terms. According to data from the Taliban's supreme court, a total of 72 people were flogged in 17 provinces in April and May 2024. Most of the floggings took place in Khost province.⁵¹

Humanitarian situation

Between 19. and 25.05.24, floods killed around 150 people in Ghor, Faryab, Sar-e Pol and Badakhshan provinces. Many houses, roads and agricultural land were destroyed. Some districts are difficult or impossible to access for humanitarian aid, and injured people have no access to healthcare. On 22.05.24, the WFP reported that 80,000 people have been affected by the floods and warned that food insecurity in the affected areas would worsen in the coming months. Drinking water supplies have also been severely affected. Deportations of Afghan nationals from Pakistan and Iran continue. with several hundred people crossing the borders every day.⁵²

Governance

According to a report of 18.05.24, the Taliban have issued a law prohibiting begging if the individual concerned has a meal available, receives help from the Taliban or "abuses" children and people with physical disabilities for begging.

The Taliban's supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, who lives in Kandahar and never appears in public, was reported to have arrived in Kabul on 16.05.24.⁵³

03 June 2024

Security situation

Both the Afghanistan Freedom Front and the National Resistance Front (NRF) reported several attacks on the Taliban in Kabul and one in Herat between 28.05. and 02.06.24.

The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) claims to have killed a Taliban commander in Kabul on 02.06.24. A drone strike attributed to the Pakistani government has killed eight people in Paktika province. The victims were apparently members of the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP).⁵⁴

Situation of persecution

According to a report on 28.05.24, a former doctor at a military hospital in Badakhshan province died as a result of torture by the Taliban. The Taliban first publicly abused and then released him. He was later re-arrested on charges of supporting the NRF.

On 26.05.24, another doctor died in Badakhshan province after being tortured by the Taliban.

According to a report on 27.05.24, the Taliban arrested two education activists in Maidan Wardak province. One of them had been an English teacher before the Taliban took power. The Taliban accused them of supporting the armed opposition around General Alipur.

Between 28.05. and 02.06.24, the Taliban flogged more than 30 people in several provinces. The accusations included drug use, transporting alcohol and adultery.

Between 28.05. and 01.06.24, the Taliban reportedly arrested several former security forces in Khost, Kabul, Kunar provinces and at a border crossing after expulsion from Iran. One of them apparently died after being injected with poison. Two of them were from Panjshir province.⁵⁵

10 June 2024

Governance and persecution situation

According to a report on 31.05.24, the Taliban have replaced the incumbent health minister - the trained doctor, non-Taliban and ethnic Hazara Qalandar Ebad - with the conservative Pashtun Taliban cleric Noor Jalal. Ebad had been appointed to the cabinet on 22.09.21 to make it more ethnically inclusive.

The deputy police chief of the 15th Kabul police district, where the airport and the interior ministry are located, has announced the installation of more than 7,000 security cameras. In addition to these cameras, around 100 more

surveillance cameras with facial recognition functions are to be installed. Around 80,000 surveillance cameras were last installed in the city of Kabul in April 2024.

According to media reports on 03.06.24, the Kazakh government has officially removed the Taliban from its terror list in order to improve economic relations. The Russian government had previously initiated an internal review of such a removal (cf. BN of 08.04.24).

The Taliban's justice ministry has shut down Tamadon TV, which is seen as an extension of the Islamist political party Harakat-e-Islami (cf. BN of 22.04.24 on further closures of TV stations). The station is run by ethnic Hazara and broadcasts, among other things, programmes for Shiites. The Taliban stated that the operators had illegally acquired the premises from which the station operated. The same apparently also applied to the properties of the Khatam al Nabieen University, which is also linked to Harakat-e-Islami, and the Khatam al Nabieen religious school. In the city of Pol-e Khomri (Baghlan province), the Taliban have confiscated a residential area of Shiite Ismailis as state property and submitted plans to build a "bus station" on the site. The approximately 70 families living there have been requested to leave the area. The Taliban have denied this, saying that the families had offered the land voluntarily.

Media reports on 07.06.24 say that the previous week, the Taliban ordered all residents of Nowabad, a Hazara area in the 6th security district of Ghazni city, to present their property documents. According to the Taliban, the area had been usurped by the Hazara population, and the documents were declared invalid. The residents were then ordered to leave their homes and hand over the land to the Taliban.

According to a report dated 07.06.24, the Taliban in Bamiyan province have ordered all schools to collect religious books on Jafari jurisprudence and remove them from the curriculum.

The Norwegian Refugee Council has stated that the Taliban have begun demolishing informal settlements for internally displaced people in Kabul, leaving more than 800 families, or some 6,000 people, at risk of homelessness. On 04.06.24, the Taliban publicly flogged 52 people in the stadium of Sar-e-Pul city (province of the same name). According to a report on 05.06.24, a former employee of the U.S. embassy in Kabul was abducted by the Taliban and died as a result of torture. His relatives said that at the time of his arrest he was carrying documents relating to an application for a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) to the U.S.⁵⁶

Humanitarian situation: suspension of pension payments

According to media reports on 03.06.24, pensioners in Afghanistan are still not receiving any pension payments. Since taking power in 2021, the Taliban have stopped paying pensions. This has forced thousands of people to return to work, often as street vendors, to feed their families. In April 2024, Taliban leader Emir Akhundzada ordered his government to stop deducting pension contributions from the salaries of state employees. This effectively destroyed the pension system. Akhundzada claimed that the system was "un-Islamic". A demonstration against these measures had been held on 20.04.24 but was dispersed by the Taliban.⁵⁷

17 June 2024

Security situation

According to media reports on 16.06.24, eight Taliban were arrested in the city of Herat on suspicion of belonging to the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP). There was no comment from the Taliban on the incident.

According to media reports on 12.06.24, the National Resistance Front (NRF) is regrouping in Panjshir province. The Taliban have sent around 100 fighters to Shotul and Anaba districts to prevent the conflict from flaring up again. There has been no large-scale fighting in the province for a year. On 12.06.24 it was reported that two fighters of the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, TTP) were killed by unidentified assailants in Khost province. A report in the Long War Journal on 08.06.24 says that the Emir of al-Qaeda, Sayf al-Adl, has called on all members to travel to Afghanistan to learn from the "heroic" Taliban how to establish an Islamic state and fight the "Zionists" in Israel and the West in general.⁵⁸

Governance & persecution

A new study by the Middle East Institute (Taliban Leadership Tracker) of 11.06.24 found that of around 1,200 people in the Taliban leadership, around 90 percent are ethnic Pashtuns - Tajiks make up 5.4 percent, Uzbeks 2.8, Hazaras 0.7, Turkmen 0.3, and Baluchis 0.3 percent.

On 13.06.24, the Taliban flogged eleven people for various offences in Kandahar province. In the last ten days, around 100 people are reported to have been flogged across the country.

According to a report on 11.06.24, the Taliban dismissed 20 Tajik employees of the local virtue ministry (muhtasibs) in Panjshir province, according to unconfirmed statements on ethnic grounds.

Media reports of 09.06.24 say that Tajik lieutenant colonel Abdul Ghiyath from Panjshir province died as a result of torture after being released from a two-year detention in a Taliban secret service prison.

According to a report on 10.06.24, the Taliban's justice ministry has launched a nationwide campaign to reclaim illegally confiscated land. For this purpose, a special commission has been set up and has apparently reclaimed already 60,000 hectares of land in the city of Kabul alone. Nationwide, the figure is said to be 2.5 million hectares. However, the confiscation also involves illegal actions by the Taliban and the displacement of ethnic minorities (cf. BN of 10.06.24). A report of 09.06.24 says that, for example, a Taliban district governor of Darwagha in Badakhshan province seized some 4,000 hectares of pasture and farmland and sold the land as building land for residential areas. Following protests, the residents were reportedly beaten and arrested. Already in mid-April 2024, the Taliban had confiscated 10,000 hectares of agricultural land in the province.

On 13.06.24, UNICEF pointed out that 1,000 days have passed since girls were banned from attending secondary schools from the 6th grade onwards. In this context, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, has published a new report for the 56th session of the UN Human Rights Council on the Taliban's systematic discrimination of women and girls, calling for the criminalisation of "gender apartheid" (as an extension of the crime of apartheid under Article 7 (1) j) of the Rome Statute) as *ius cogens* (i.e. compelling criminal international law binding on all nations).⁵⁹

24 June 2024

Security situation

A report by the UN Secretary-General on the security situation in Afghanistan dated 21.06.24 documents a 55 percent increase in security incidents in the period from February to May 2024 compared to the same period last year. Violence related to drugs and land disputes was particularly frequent, but armed clashes also increased.

The Afghanistan Freedom Front and the National Resistance Front claim to have attacked the Taliban in of Baghlan, Kabul, Panjshir and Parwan provinces.⁶⁰

Persecution situation

From 13.06. to 15.06.24, a journalist from Parwan province was detained by the Taliban. After his release, the U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) documented traces of beatings and a head injury.

On 16.06.24, the Taliban reportedly arrested at least five barbers in Herat province for shaving men's hair and shortening beards.

According to a report on 18.06.24, the Taliban beat and arrested a former border policeman in Khost province.

Reports on 18.06.24 say that the Taliban cut off telephone and internet connections during the Feast of Sacrifice and strictly regulated access to parks and recreational areas. In addition, on 16.06.24, the Taliban reportedly questioned and threatened four village elders in Panjshir province because they had already started celebrating the Feast of Sacrifice on this day. Contrary to the practice in other Muslim countries, the Taliban had set the first day of the celebrations for 17.06.24. On 22.06.24, an imam and his son were reportedly arrested by the Taliban in Panjshir province for the same reason.⁶¹

Government activities

In an audio message on the occasion of the Feast of Sacrifice, the Taliban's supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, called on the Taliban to show greater unity. He also stressed that there should be no public criticism of the Taliban.⁶²

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