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'I Feel Suffocated': Taliban Intensifies Clampdown On Music In Afghanistan

August 17, 2023

- By [Shapoor Saber](#)



Members of the Taliban morality police stand beside a bonfire of musical instruments and equipment they confiscated and burned in the Western Afghan city of Herat on July 29.

Soon after seizing power in Afghanistan, the Taliban outlawed music and publicly beat and humiliated musicians.

Now the militant group is intensifying its clampdown on Afghans playing and listening to music, which it considers un-Islamic.

In the western city of Herat, members of the Taliban's notorious morality police last month created a **huge bonfire** of confiscated musical instruments.

Residents who spoke to RFE/RL's Radio Azadi said the morality police have also started searching vehicles and homes as they seek to enforce the ban, which has been widely condemned.

"When the Taliban stops us at security checkpoints, they first look at the car's audio system to see what we are listening to," said Khalil Ahmad, a resident of Herat, adding that the militants confiscate MP3 players and thumb drives containing music.



A pile of musical instruments and equipment to be burned on the outskirts of Herat.

Locals say members of the Taliban's morality police patrol the streets and alleyways of the city at night in search of violators. Afghans caught contravening the ban can be beaten or jailed.

The morality police are responsible for enforcing the Taliban's morality laws, including its strict dress code and gender segregation in society.

"I have a bitter memory of witnessing people being beaten for simply playing music in their cars," said Ahmad Jawed, another Herat resident.



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Draconian Decrees: The Taliban's Restrictions In Afghanistan

The 26-year-old said his friends played music inside their house during a birthday party earlier this month.

"We were very afraid and stressed that someone would report us to the authorities," he told Radio Azadi. "The restrictions have become too much."

Under Taliban rule, Afghanistan is the only country in the world where music is banned. The group banned music during its first stint in power from 1996 to 2001.

TV and radio stations have been banned from broadcasting music. Meanwhile, sermons or readings of the Koran, Islam's holy book, have replaced the songs once heard at weddings.

Hundreds of musicians have fled Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Many musicians who remain in the country have abandoned their musical careers.

Among them is Abdul Khaliq Noori, a folk singer in Herat. The 61-year-old, the sole breadwinner in his family of six, used to earn a living by singing at events and selling CDs of his music. Now, he ekes out a living as a rickshaw driver.

"I can't breathe. I feel suffocated," he told Radio Azadi. "I'm heartbroken."



Herat's Badmurghan Street, once home to recording studios, is now full of car repair garages, auto spare part shops, and blacksmith stores.

Noori was among the scores of musicians who once recorded music in the studios along Herat's Badmurghan Street. Now, the street is home to car repair garages, auto spare part shops, and blacksmith stores.

Despite the Taliban's intensifying crackdown on music, Afghan musicians are determined to protect the country's musical traditions.

Singer Khalil Aria fled Afghanistan in October 2021, nearly two months after the Taliban marched into the capital, Kabul. He now lives in exile in Germany with his wife and two daughters.

"I buried my instruments in our garden [in Afghanistan before leaving], which felt like burying my own children," the 35-year-old told Radio Azadi.

Like scores of leading Afghan singers and musicians, Aria now **produces music abroad** and hopes to preserve the country's musical heritage.



[SEE ALSO:](#)

'Nothing Left' For Herat Shopkeepers After Taliban Bans Music, Foreign Films, Video Games

During the 1990s, many Afghan musicians fled to neighboring Pakistan and Iran, where they could practice freely and pass their knowledge on to the next generation. Most musicians who remained in Afghanistan either played secretly in their homes or hid their instruments.

After the U.S.-led invasion toppled the Taliban regime in 2001, great strides were made in reviving Afghanistan's musical traditions. Now, many of those gains are being reversed.

Azizul Rahman Mohajer, the head of the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in Herat, says music is forbidden under Islam. "We cannot allow musicians because God will be displeased," he told Radio Azadi.

But Islamic scholars reject the Taliban's reasoning. Mohammad Mohiq, a researcher specializing in Islam, says there is no definitive ruling about music in the Koran.



DVDs of Afghan singers on display in a shop in Kabul in September 2021

"The issue of music is disputed," he said. "If someone favors the idea that music is forbidden, they can avoid it. But it is wrong to force people to follow this view."

Ahmad Sarmast, the self-exiled founder of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, says that the Taliban's ban on music is an attack on Afghan culture.

"The Taliban policies are pushing the rich heritage of Afghanistan's music toward destruction," he told Radio Azadi. "The absence of music is turning Afghanistan into a sick and violent society."

Written by Abubakar Siddique based on reporting by Shapoor Saber

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More News

December 08, 2023

- By [Abubakar Siddique](#)

The Azadi Briefing: Concerns Mount For Women In Taliban Detention



Afghan women hold a protest to demand their right to education and employment in Mazar-e-Sharif earlier this year.

Welcome to The Azadi Briefing, an RFE/RL newsletter that unpacks the key issues in Afghanistan. To subscribe, click [here](#).

I'm Abubakar Siddique, senior correspondent at RFE/RL's Radio Azadi. Here's what I've been tracking and what I'm keeping an eye on in the days ahead.

The Key Issue

Afghan rights campaigners and the United Nations have expressed concern over the [treatment](#) of Afghan women activists incarcerated by Afghanistan's Taliban rulers.

The Taliban currently holds at least five women's rights activists in detention. Neda Parwani, Zholya Parsi, Munizha Siddiqi, Bahare Karimi, and Parisa Azadeh languish in various Taliban prisons and detention centers around the capital, Kabul.

In an audio message, Siddiqi's mother said that her daughter has fallen ill while incarcerated in the infamous Pul-e-Charkhi prison.

"Pul-e-Charkhi is a place for murderers, criminals, and other rights abusers. It is not a place for women who protested for their rights," Golchehra Yeftali, a women's rights activist, told RFE/RL's Radio Azadi.

Meanwhile, activists say that Parsi has been [returned](#) to a Taliban intelligence detention center after undergoing hospital treatment.

"We were told that her mental and physical condition was not good because of the torture she endured in Taliban detention," said Mina Rafiq, another women's rights activist.

On December 7, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan expressed its [concern](#) over the impact of "long-term, arbitrary" detentions of women activists by the Taliban.

It called on the Taliban "to ensure rights to health care, family visits, and legal representation are protected and fulfilled."

Why It's Important: The ongoing persecution of Afghan women rights activists underscores the Taliban's determination to impose an authoritarian political system in which the rights of Afghans can be violated with impunity.

Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, its government has often violently put down protests by Afghan women. Taliban's security forces and intelligence service have imprisoned hundreds of women after their protests were declared illegal.

The Taliban has also taken the draconian step of banning women and teenage girls from education. It has severely curtailed their employment prospects, mobility, and any public role in society.

What's Next: There is no indication yet that the widespread international and domestic condemnation of the Taliban's abuses are forcing the group to change its behavior and outlook.

There are no signs that the Taliban government is willing to rescind harsh policies that deprive Afghan women of education, work, mobility, and other fundamental rights.

Instead, the group appears to be ready to continue paying a heavy price for its hard-line policies and rights abuses, at the risk of failing to achieve the domestic legitimacy and international recognition it seeks.

What To Keep An Eye On

Iran appears to be gearing up efforts to [expel](#) millions of undocumented Afghans. The expulsion coincides with the mass deportation of "undocumented Afghans" from Pakistan.

On December 4, Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi reiterated that Tehran would deport all "illegal" migrants in the country, most of whom are Afghan nationals who fled war, persecution, and poverty in their country.

On December 3, an Iranian official [confirmed](#) that Tehran had banned undocumented Afghans from residing in, working in, and traveling to 16 of the country's 31 provinces.

Iranian officials seek to expel more than 2.5 million Afghans they say lack documents among the estimated 5 million Afghans currently living in the country.

Why It's Important: A mass expulsion of Afghans from Iran would dramatically worsen the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, where the majority of its estimated 40 million population needs humanitarian assistance.

International aid efforts to alleviate a dire situation caused by natural disasters and a crippled economy are already at the brink following the return of more than 450,000 Afghans who have been forced out of Pakistan since October. The returnees [lack](#) housing, sanitation, health care, adequate food, and employment, and are only a fraction of the more than 1.7 million undocumented Afghans Islamabad wants to expel.

Now, thousands of Afghans are being forced to leave Iran daily. The promised mass expulsion would inevitably create a crisis on top of a crisis, which Afghanistan's cash-strapped Taliban government and the humanitarian community is currently unprepared to deal with.

That's all from me for now. Don't forget to send me any questions, comments, or tips that you have. You can always reach us at azadi.english@rferl.org.

Until next time,

Abubakar Siddique

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December 05, 2023

Nobel Laureate Malala Calls Out Taliban For Making 'Girlhood Illegal' In Afghanistan



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai sits onstage after delivering the 21st Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture in Johannesburg on December 5.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai decried Afghanistan's Taliban rulers in a speech on December 5 and called on the international community to make gender apartheid a crime against humanity.

In a [speech](#) marking the 10th anniversary of the death of Nelson Mandela, Yousafzai told the audience in Johannesburg, South Africa, that since returning to power in August 2021, Taliban militants have made "girlhood illegal," causing many to despair over a lack of freedoms.

"Just two years ago, women in Afghanistan were working, serving in leadership positions, running ministries, traveling freely. Girls of all ages were playing soccer and cricket and learning in schools. Though all was not perfect, there was progress," she said of the almost two decades between Taliban rule, when international forces provided security to allow governments to rule.

But, she added, that since the U.S.-led troops pulled out in August 2021, the Taliban rulers who seized power "quickly began the systematic oppression of girls and women" by enacting more than 80 decrees and edicts restricting women's rights -- including barring girls from pursuing a high-school education -- in the name of their "false visions."

"In effect, the Taliban have made girlhood illegal, and it is taking a toll," Yousafzai said.



[SEE ALSO:](#)

[Afghan Activist And Daughters Who Fled To Pakistan Fear Return To Life Under The Taliban](#)

Eleven years ago, Yousafzai, then 15, was shot in the head on her school bus by the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) extremist group, which has pledged allegiance to the Afghan Taliban, though the two groups have separate operation and command structures.

The attack on Yousafzai, who had become a target for her campaign for girls' education, sent shock waves across the predominately Muslim country and provoked international outrage.

At 17, she became the youngest-ever recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize when she won the award in 2014 along with Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi.

In her speech honoring Mandela's legacy, Yousafzai said that while the Taliban's restrictions of the

lives of girls and women made global headlines at first, "the world has turned its back" since and it is "imperative to call the regime in Afghanistan what it really is: a gender apartheid."

She said world leaders have an opportunity to make a stand on the issue by including gender apartheid in a new UN crimes against humanity treaty that is currently being debated at the United Nations.

"I call on every government in every country to make gender apartheid a crime against humanity," she said.

[Read more](#)



An Afghan woman engages in Nuristani wood carving at a workshop in Herat on November 29.

A group of four women has dedicated themselves to preserving an ancient tradition of wood carving found in a mountainous and remote region of eastern Afghanistan.

December 01, 2023

- By [RFE/RL](#)

More Than 400 People Punished Under Shari'a Law In Afghanistan, Rights Group Says



The most common punishment was flogging under a category of Shari'a law that includes discretionary punishments not specified in religious texts. (illustrative file photo)

Afghanistan's Taliban-led government announced punishments handed out to 417 people under Shari'a law during a recent 12-month period, according to a report issued this week by Afghan Witness, an organization that monitors human rights abuses in Afghanistan.

Afghan Witness collected the data by reviewing the announcements of Shari'a punishments posted on the website of the Taliban-led Supreme Court. The announcements, which were also published on X, formerly Twitter, have been made public since the Taliban's Supreme Leader Mullah Hebatullah Akhundzada announced the return of Shari'a punishments in mid-November 2022.

Akhundzada had previously ordered a return to Islamic retribution and corporal punishments

shortly after the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in August 2021.

Afghan Witness [said in a statement](#) on November 29 that it looked at punishments meted out between October 26, 2022 and October 26, 2023, and found 71 announcements handed down to 417 individuals.

It said this included nine “Qisas punishments” during the period, including two that resulted in the execution of alleged murderers, while the remaining seven were pardoned.

Qisas punishments are for offenses seen as violations of the boundaries set by God such as murder, theft, and adultery. Convicts can be executed, flogged, stoned to death, or have limbs amputated.

Afghan Witness said it has yet to record any stonings or amputations, but it said its sources in Afghanistan say there are stoning punishments awaiting approval by Akhundzada.

The most common punishment was flogging under a category of Shari’a law that includes discretionary punishments not specified in religious texts.

The report said the punishments occurred in 22 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces from October 2022 through September 2023. A gender breakdown of the punished indicates that 220 men were punished compared with 57 women.

The organization also noted that while the sentences are often referred to as “public punishments,” their public nature is often limited.

“Although these punishments are carried out with an audience, including Taliban officials and citizens, they are often fulfilled behind closed doors, or under significant publication restrictions,” Afghan Witness said, adding that this leaves little visual evidence of the punishments being carried out.

The Taliban has framed its implementation of Shari’a punishments as “fair, righteous and desired by Afghanistan’s citizens” and claimed that the punishments act as a deterrent, Afghan Witness said.

After seizing power in August 2021 as U.S-led international forces withdrew from the country, the Taliban dismantled Afghanistan’s judicial system, suspended or scrapped all laws, and replaced judges, prosecutors, and lawyers.

Afghan Witness is a project to independently collect, preserve, and verify information on the human rights, security, and political situation in Afghanistan, according to its website.

The organization aims to provide a reliable source of information for international organizations, policymakers, and the media, and to “raise awareness of the reality of everyday life for Afghans living in the country.”

[Read more](#)

December 01, 2023

- By [Abubakar Siddique](#)

The Azadi Briefing: Many Afghans Forced From Pakistan Are Homeless



Afghan refugees settle in a camp in Afghanistan near the Pakistani border after being ordered home by Islamabad.

Welcome to The Azadi Briefing, an RFE/RL newsletter that unpacks the key issues in Afghanistan. To subscribe, click [here](#).

I'm Abubakar Siddique, senior correspondent at RFE/RL's Radio Azadi. Here's what I've been tracking and what I'm keeping an eye on in the days ahead.

The Key Issue

A new [survey](#) has found that around 90 percent of the more than 400,000 Afghans who have been forced from neighboring Pakistan in recent months are homeless.

The British charity Islamic Relief, which operates in Afghanistan, said in a report released on November 29 that one-third of the returnees face severe food shortages, while more than 60 percent are sick.

Islamabad has been deporting thousands of Afghans each day since the expiry of its November 1 deadline for some 1.7 million undocumented Afghan refugees and migrants to voluntarily leave the South Asian country.

Islamic Relief's report, based on interviews with 315 returnees, also found that 92 percent lacked access to safe drinking water, while 71 percent had no access to sanitation.

Some 98 percent of returnees were worried about the safety of their family members, while 90 percent were concerned about their children's access to education.

"Many of these people are returning to Afghanistan with nothing, just as a freezing winter approaches," said Manzoor Ahmed, Islamic Relief's acting country director in Afghanistan. "They don't have a place to stay, they don't have food or health care, they are sick and impoverished."

Why It's Important: Afghans are returning to a country grappling with the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

The hundreds of thousands of new returnees are adding to the more than 29 million Afghans -- out of a total population of around 40 million -- who need humanitarian assistance, according to the United Nations.

The cash-strapped Taliban government, which remains unrecognized and sanctioned by the international community, appears unable to absorb the returning refugees or address the humanitarian needs of Afghans.

Aid agencies operating in Afghanistan have called for more international funding to address the needs of the returnees, who lack shelter, warm clothes, and food.

"They are forced to return to Afghanistan at the worst possible time," said [Hsiao-Wei Lee](#), the country director for the World Food Program, on November 26. "We need to help them not only get through this winter but also help them rebuild their lives here."

What's Next: Many of the new Afghan returnees face a grim future.

The Taliban has established temporary camps for the returnees near the border with Pakistan, and promised to assist them. But many returnees complain of a lack of tents, food, water, and sanitation.

"Everyone I know doesn't have housing and is facing many other problems," Abdullah, who recently returned to the southern Afghan province of Zabul from Pakistan, told RFE/RL's [Radio Azadi](#). "It is impossible to live in tents because of the winter."

What To Keep An Eye On

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai is [under fire](#) for suggesting that the international community should not seek to forcibly remove the Taliban from power.

"We don't want a collapse of the regime or split of the regime. We have had enough of that in Afghanistan," the 65-year-old told [Kyodo News](#), a Japanese news agency, in an interview published on November 28.

Karzai, who lives in Kabul, suggested that dialogue with the extremist group could bring about changes to its controversial policies, including its severe restrictions on women's rights.

But some rights activists criticized Karzai's call for engagement with a group that has shown few signs of reversing its draconian policies.

"Since the Taliban returned to power, being a woman has become a crime," Azita Nazimi, a women's rights activist, told Radio Azadi. "All of what we have is the result of Karzai's past support for the Taliban."

When in power from 2001 to 2014, Karzai called for a negotiated end to the war between the Western-backed Afghan government and the Taliban.

Why It's Important: Reconciliation among Afghans has long been touted as the best solution to end the more than four decades of war in Afghanistan.

But the Taliban has refused to share power with other Afghans and used force to impose its fundamentalist version of Islam on the population.

During intra-Afghan negotiations prior to the Taliban's forcible takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, the extremist group rejected a power-sharing agreement with rival Afghans.

That's all from me for now. Don't forget to send me any questions, comments, or tips that you have. You can always reach us at azadi.english@rferl.org.

Until next time,

Abubakar Siddique

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December 01, 2023

- By [RFE/RL](#)

Iran Still Top Terror Sponsor; IS Still A Threat In Taliban-Ruled Afghanistan, U.S. Says



Iran continued to back Hizballah (above), designated a terrorist group by Washington in 1997, and also provided weapons systems to Hamas and other U.S.-designated Palestinian terrorist groups.

Iran remained the leading state sponsor of global terrorism last year, involved in backing terrorist recruitment, financing, and plotting across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, the U.S. State Department said in its 2022 Country Reports On Terrorism released on December 1.

In the Middle East, Iran continued to back Hizballah, designated a terrorist group by Washington in 1997, the report [said](#), adding that it also provided weapons systems to Hamas and other U.S.-designated Palestinian terrorist groups, including Palestine Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

"These groups were behind numerous deadly attacks originating in Gaza and the West Bank," the report said.

Tehran also provided support to extremist groups in Bahrain, Iraq, and Syria, through its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force (IRGC-QF) to provide support to terrorist organizations with the aim to create instability in the region, the report said.

Iran increasingly encouraged and plotted attacks against the United States, including against former U.S. officials, in retaliation for the death of Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani in January 2020.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced in 2022 that it had disrupted an IRGC-QF-led plot to assassinate former national-security adviser John Bolton and arrested an Iranian accused of planning the killing.



[SEE ALSO:](#)

[U.S. Sanctions Iranians Over Alleged Plots To Kill John Bolton And Others](#)

In Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, the report [says](#) that members of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State group, and regional terrorist groups remained active in 2022, despite the Taliban committing to prevent extremists from using the country to conduct attacks against the United States and its allies after the withdrawal of U.S.-led forces in August 2021.

The Taliban's capacity to stop elements from Al-Qaeda, Islamic State-Khorasan -- an IS splinter -- or Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from mounting external operations from the Afghan territory "remained unclear," the report said.

Islamic State-Khorasan in 2022 continued to conduct terrorist attacks against the Taliban and Afghan civilians, in particular against members of the Shi'ite community as well as cross-border attacks in Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The report mentions that "the United States has not yet decided whether to recognize the Taliban or any other entity as the government of Afghanistan," and says the Taliban hosted and sheltered Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri in Kabul before his death in a U.S. air strike in July last year.

[Read more](#)

November 28, 2023

- By [RFE/RL's Radio Azadi](#)

Afghan Women Activists Seek Taliban ICC Trial Over Rights Abuses



The letter argues that the treatment of Afghan women under the Taliban constitutes a gender apartheid because "they are systematically deprived of basic freedoms and human and citizenship rights."

Afghan women's rights activists are demanding the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecute Afghanistan's Taliban rulers for systemic violations of human rights.

In an [open letter](#) sent to the ICC on November 27, they accused the Taliban, who seized power in August 2021 as international troops withdrew from the country, of consistently violating the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

"They must be prosecuted," said one activist who requested anonymity because of security fears.

"The Taliban has imposed a gender apartheid in Afghanistan by excluding women from the society through employment and education bans while also persecuting rights activists," she added.

She is one of dozens of signatories to the letter.

The letter argues that the treatment of Afghan women under the Taliban constitutes a gender apartheid because "they are systematically deprived of basic freedoms and human and citizenship rights."



[SEE ALSO:](#)

[Afghan Women, Girls Face Grim Future After Expulsion From Pakistan](#)

The letter also highlights the persecution of Afghan women's rights activists.

Since the Taliban returned to power, the Taliban has put down, often violently, protests by Afghan women over their lack of rights. Hundreds of women have been imprisoned after their protests were declared illegal.

"Such letters can help the international community to fulfill its obligation toward the Afghan women," Maryam Maarouf Arvin, an Afghan women's rights activist, told RFE/RL's Radio Azadi.

Five women's rights activists -- Neda Parwani, Zholya Parsi, Manijeh Sediqi, Bahare Karimi, and Parisa Azadeh -- are currently in Taliban custody.

Since returning to power, the hard-line Islamist Taliban has banned women and teenage girls from education in Afghanistan. It has also banned them from employment in most sectors and discouraged them from leaving their homes.

On November 26, global rights watchdog Amnesty International launched an [online petition](#) saying the Taliban has started "a new era of human rights abuse and violations" that has put the country "at the brink of irreversible ruin."

"Not only [have] the Taliban de-facto authorities...broken their promise of protecting Afghan people's rights, especially women's rights, they have resumed the cycle of violence and committed a litany of human rights abuses and violations with full impunity," the petition says.

"Human rights are under attack on all fronts. It must be stopped," it [added](#).
[Read more](#)

November 27, 2023

- By [RFE/RL's Radio Mashaal](#)

Pakistani Army Claims Suicide Attack A Day Earlier Carried Out By Afghan National



People who were injured in a blast receive medical treatment at a hospital in Bannu, Pakistan, on November 26.

Pakistan's military said on November 27 that an Afghan national carried out a suicide attack a day earlier on a security forces convoy that killed two civilians and injured several others.

The military said in a [statement](#) that "a motorcycle-borne suicide bomber, affiliated with Hafiz Gul Bahadur and later identified as an Afghan national," carried out the attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in northwestern Pakistan. It added that seven civilians and three soldiers were injured in the attack.

It gave no further details.

Pakistani officials have not provided any other information, and there has been no claim of responsibility for the attack.

Hafiz Gul Bahadur is the leader of a Pakistani Taliban faction based in North Waziristan.

The security situation in the province in recent months has worsened despite the promises of the government and security authorities. There were multiple deadly incidents last week, including the killing of an employee of the Forestry Department in North Waziristan on November 23.

Two days ago, two soldiers were killed in a landmine explosion and a policeman was killed in an attack on a checkpoint in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while in South Waziristan on November 22, three civilians, including a local leader, were killed and four were injured in a bomb blast in Azam Worsk. No one has claimed responsibility for those attacks.

The bombing in Azam Worsk occurred after two soldiers were killed in an armed attack on a post in Sar Rogha in South Waziristan. The Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for that attack.

The Pakistani government and army say they have continued their operations against the militants.

The army said on November 21 that it had killed three suspected militants in an encounter in North Waziristan. The army added that one of its soldiers was also killed in the clash.

Earlier, the army had claimed the killing of 11 suspected militants in clashes during operations in Peshawar and Tank in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on November 16.

Pakistan's caretaker prime minister, Anwar ul-Haq Kakar, on November 20 said terrorist attacks inside his country have increased 60 percent since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in August 2021. Some 2,300 people have been killed in these attacks.

[Read more](#)



The reported firefight took place in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. (file photo)

November 24, 2023

- By [AFP](#)

German Aid Agency Says Local Staff Detained In Afghanistan

Germany on November 24 said four local employees of its government-linked operator GIZ had been detained by Taliban authorities in Afghanistan. "I can confirm that the local employees of GIZ are in custody, although we have not received any official information on why they are detained," a spokeswoman for Germany's Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development said. "We are taking this situation very seriously and are working through all channels available to us to ensure that our colleagues are released," she added. Germany closed its embassy in Afghanistan after the group swept back to power in 2021.

[Read more](#)



The embassy requested that the Afghan flag remain on the building in New Delhi.

November 23, 2023

- By [RFE/RL's Radio Azadi](#)

Family Confirms Death Of Former Afghan Prosecutor, Says Body Showed Signs Of Torture



Mohammad Naqi Taqi (file photo)

The family of former prosecutor Mohammad Naqi Taqi, who was forced out when Taliban militants took power in August 2021, has confirmed his death in eastern Afghanistan, saying it appears he was brutally slain by unknown assailants.

Taqi's son told RFE/RL's Radio Azadi on November 22 that his father and aunt were killed in the eastern Nangarhar Province this week after being invited to a celebration in the region.

He said the family doesn't know the identity of the killers and he didn't elaborate on whether the family knew the individuals who had invited his father and aunt to the event.

He added that the family identified their dead bodies after they were first discovered on the side of a road in Nangarhar's rural Behsud district on November 20.

"They were poisoned first and then tortured because traces of severe torture could be seen on their dead bodies," he told Radio Azadi.

Taqi, a lawyer, had served in the Afghan Attorney General's Office during the fallen pro-Western government and had investigated high-profile cases.

Like hundreds of former prosecutors, he was forced to relinquish his job after hard-line Taliban militants seized power as U.S.-led international forces withdrew from the country.

Instead of fleeing Afghanistan like most other former prosecutors -- who became targets of the criminals they investigated or helped convict -- Taqi stayed in Kabul.

Some of the prosecutors, now living in exile in Pakistan, are **resisting being deported back** to the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

Abid Andrabi, a member of the Afghanistan Prosecutors Association, said that before Taqi's killing, some 37 former prosecutors and others working for the Attorney General's Office and the judiciary had been killed in Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power.

"The general amnesty the Taliban has touted since returning to power is being completely disregarded," he told Radio Azadi. "Taliban members have been settling personal scores with the military and civilian employees of the previous government."

Afghan human rights activists allege that the killings of former government officials in the country are on the rise.

"These murders are increasing daily, which is deeply worrying," Nargis Sadat, a human rights campaigner, told Radio Azadi.

In a report in August, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said the Taliban militants ruling Afghanistan had carried out **more than 200 extrajudicial killings** of former government officials and security forces since August 2021.

[Read more](#)



Pakistan began requiring the crew of commercial vehicles to have passports and visas to enter, and Afghanistan responded by refusing to allow any trucks to pass. (file photo)

November 21, 2023

- By [RFE/RL's Radio Azadi](#)

Afghan Female Prosecutors Fear Being Sent Back To Afghanistan Under Pakistan's Deportation Program



Maria Safi, a senior member of the Committee of Afghan Women Prosecutors in Pakistan, said the ongoing forced deportation of thousands of Afghans from Pakistan daily are extremely worrying.

Female Afghan prosecutors who served the fallen pro-Western Afghan government are concerned about being deported from Pakistan to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan more than two years after they

fled the country because of fears of persecution.

The Committee of Afghan Women Prosecutors in Pakistan, meeting in Islamabad on November 21, said it is worried about the fate of hundreds of former prosecutors if they are forced to leave Pakistan as part of an ongoing drive to deport more than 1.7 million “undocumented foreigners” who are predominantly Afghan.

The former prosecutors, who fled Afghanistan after the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, have **become targets** of the criminals they investigated or helped convict.

Maria Safi, a senior member of the committee, said the ongoing forced deportation of thousands of Afghans from Pakistan daily are extremely worrying.

“This situation has forced us to face grave mental and emotional problems,” she said.

Safi said the prosecutors want Western embassies in Islamabad to process their immigration visas swiftly.

Former prosecutors estimate that more than 300 former Afghan prosecutors currently live in Pakistan. At least 30 among them are women.

They are among tens of thousands of Afghans in Islamabad waiting for Western embassies in the city to process their applications.

“We want them to not only process the cases of prosecutors, judges, and lawyers but all refugees,” she added.

Pakistani authorities have said these Afghans are exempt from deportation. But in Islamabad many Afghans pursuing their visa cases have complained of police harassment, bribes, and even forced expulsions.

“Pakistani authorities are not renewing our visas, which is a major headache,” said Muska Amiri, a former Afghan prosecutor.

“I have stopped leaving my house to avoid facing the police,” she added.

Farahnaz Hashimi, another former prosecutor, says returning to the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan she fled in late 2021 is not an option.

“I’m afraid that if I’m sent back to Afghanistan, I might be arrested by the Taliban,” she said.

Pakistani and Taliban officials confirmed on November 20 that more than 400,000 people returned to their countries after Islamabad first announced its ongoing crackdown on illegal foreigners on October 3.

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