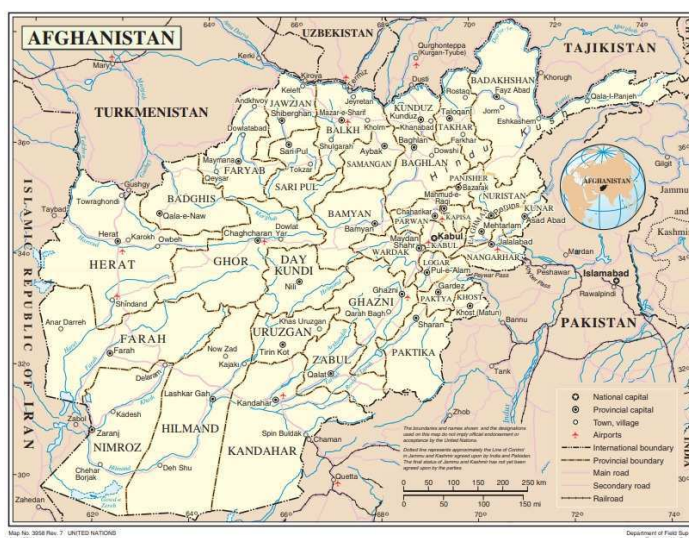


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Afghanistan

*Recent developments in the
security situation, impact on
civilians and targeted
individuals*



Ministry of Immigration
and Integration

The Danish
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newtodenmark.dk

This brief report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The brief report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this brief report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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Executive summary

On 1 May 2021, the Taliban launched an offensive throughout especially Afghanistan's northern provinces. The Taliban forces made rapid territorial gains and expanded the offensive to the western and southern provinces of the country during the months of June and July.

During the initial phase of the offensive, the Taliban had largely seized control of rural and sparsely populated districts, but throughout July, the Taliban began threatening larger cities and provincial capitals across Afghanistan.

On 6 August, the Taliban captured the first out of Afghanistan's 34 provincial capitals, and during the following nine days, Taliban fighters seized control of all but one provincial capital, including the capital, Kabul.

While the Taliban captured districts and provinces, such as Helmand, Herat and Kandahar because of fighting, many districts and provincial capitals changed hands as a result of negotiations between local government officials and Taliban representatives, or due to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) surrendering or fleeing.

As the Taliban expanded their territorial control in May, June, July and August, there are documented examples of the civilian population perceived as opposing the ideology of Taliban being targeted by the Taliban around the country. The targeted individuals include government officials, journalists, human rights defenders, Afghans employed by foreign forces as well as former members of the Afghan security forces.

However, the treatment of individuals perceived as adversaries by Taliban fighters has not been uniform throughout the country.

The treatment of women has also been affected by the Taliban's conquest of the country. In some parts of the country, girls have been denied access to attending school and women have been barred from their work outside of the home as well as from leaving the house without a male companion (*mahram*). In other parts of Afghanistan, women have continued to work outside of the home and leave the house on their own, albeit with more constraints than before the Taliban takeover.

The targeting of individuals perceived as opposing the Taliban, contradicts statements from Taliban's political leadership. Since seizing control of Kabul on 15 August, the leadership have repeated a message of amnesty and vowed no reprisals against former enemies.

The Taliban military campaign and subsequent conquest has affected the civilian population. May and June saw the highest number of civilian casualties in two consecutive months since UNAMA began tracking civilian casualties in 2009. Since May, almost 440,000 Afghans have been displaced from 118 of Afghanistan's 421 districts in a pattern, which largely mirrors the dynamics of the offensive.

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Introduction

This brief report first describes the development in the control and security situation in Afghanistan, and the impact on the civilian population, since the Taliban's launch of a countrywide offensive and subsequent seizure of the country. Then, the report seeks to portray how the Taliban have treated exposed members of the civilian population since May 2021 including government officials, journalists, human rights defenders, Afghans employed by foreign forces as well as former members of the Afghan security forces. Finally, the report describes how women and girls have been treated by the Taliban.

The report covers the period from 1 May 2021 to 8 September 2021.

The report is based on information from publicly available written sources comprised of carefully selected news reports by credible news outlets and reports published by the UN, NGOs and humanitarian organisations. These sources are supplemented with information obtained through a Skype-interview with Sune Engel Rasmussen (SER), a well-informed journalist with extensive and updated knowledge about the situation in Afghanistan in general and about the topics relevant to this brief report in particular. This source was briefed about the purpose of the interview and informed that his statements would be included in a publicly available report in accordance with his preferred referencing. The summary of the meeting was forwarded to the source for approval with the possibility to amend, comment or correct his statements.

For the sake of reader-friendliness, transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the minutes of the interview in Annex 1 have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are included in Annex 2.

During the interview, the source may have highlighted issues that are not addressed in the ToR. As these issues could be relevant to refugee status determination, they are included in the meeting summary in Annex 1, but they are not addressed in the report.

Attention should be called to the volatile and unstable situation in Afghanistan and the fact that the information provided may quickly become outdated. Therefore, the issues addressed in this report should be monitored regularly and the information be brought up to date accordingly. The rapid change in the control and security situation across the country in recent months can also have led to underreporting regarding security incidents and targeted attacks against the civilian population, especially in the remote parts of Afghanistan. However, the well-informed journalist stated that despite the decrease in access to information since the Taliban conquest, Afghanistan has not become a *black hole* regarding credible information.

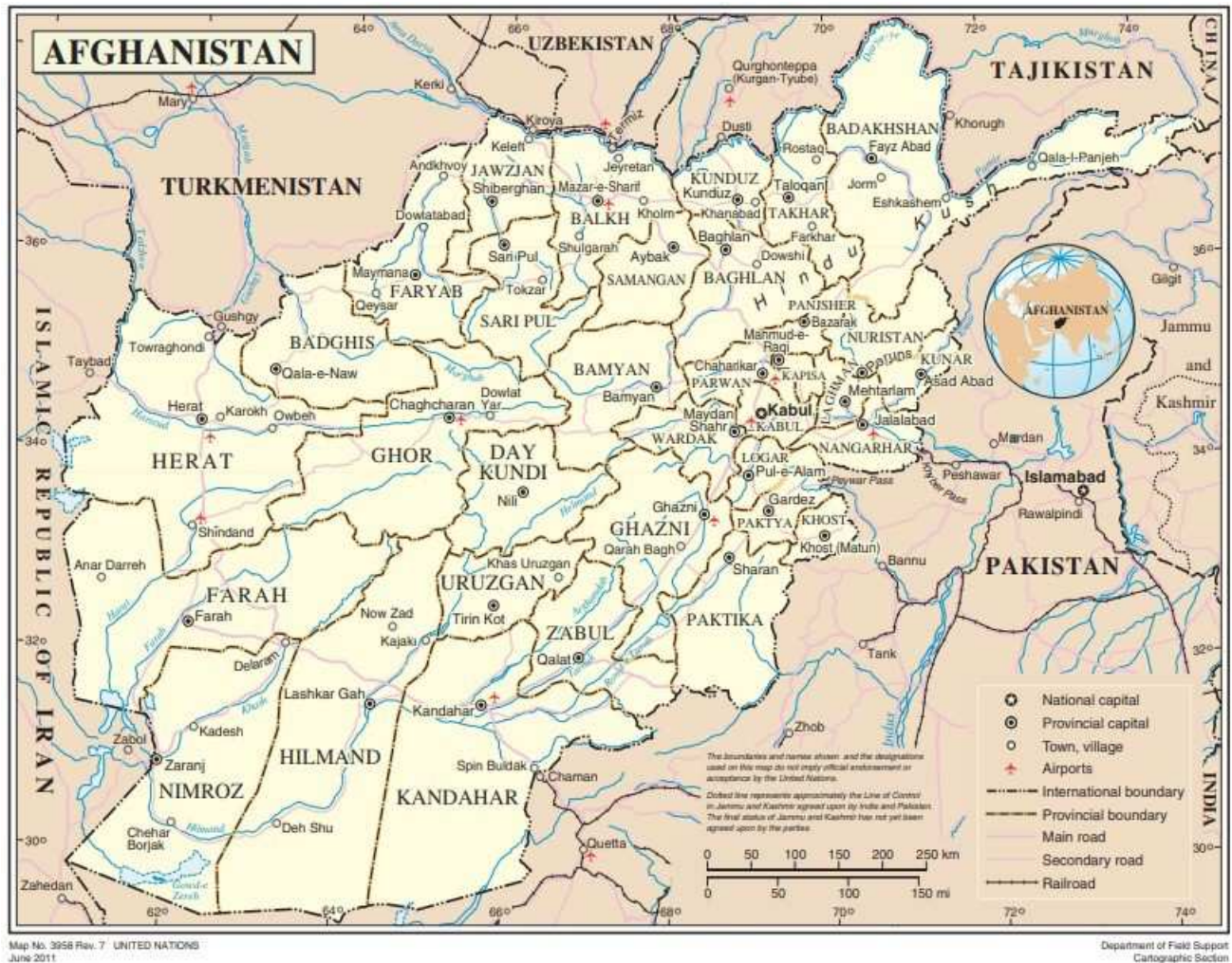
The report has been peer reviewed by the Norwegian Landinfo, in accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology.¹ The research and editing of this report was finalised on 8 September 2021.

¹ EASO, *EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, June 2019, [url](#)

Abbreviations

AAN	Afghanistan Analysts Network
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANDSF	Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces
ACLED	The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
COI	Country of Origin Information
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
FDD	Foundation for Defense of Democracies
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ISKP	Islamic State of Khorasan Province
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

Map of Afghanistan



Map 1: Afghanistan, Map No. 3958 Rev. 7, June 2011, UNITED NATIONS²

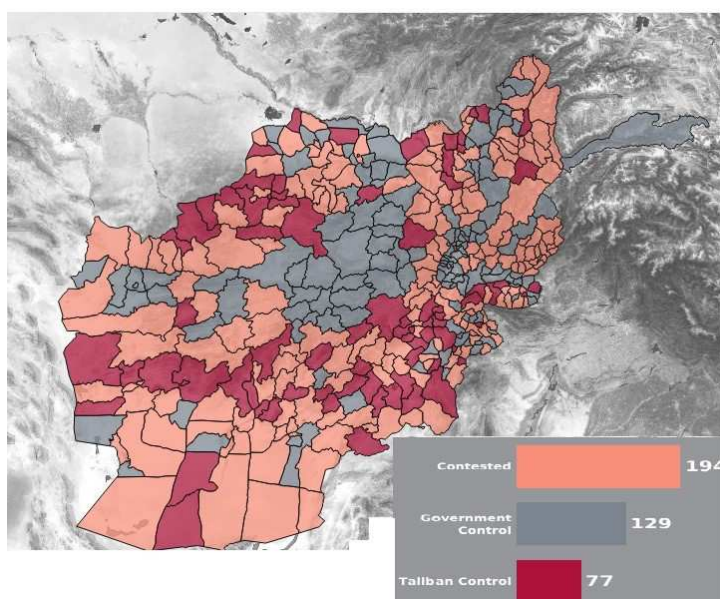
² UN, *Afghanistan*, Map No. 3958 Rev. 7, June 2011, [url](#)

Development in territorial control

As the international forces withdrew their troops from Afghanistan in late spring and early summer of 2021, the conflict in the country entered a new phase in which both sides comprised of mainly Afghans.³ This development affected the dynamics on the battlefield, as the Taliban launched a countrywide offensive; initially throughout especially Afghanistan's northern provinces as the U.S. troops began their withdrawal on 1 May 2021.⁴

In the Doha Peace Agreement of February 2020, the U.S. had initially committed to withdraw its military forces by May 2021.⁵ Although the U.S. withdrawal did not happen in May of 2021, Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) notes that the Taliban's change of strategy coincided with the beginning of May.⁶ As such, the following overview of the development of the security situation and territorial control has 1 May 2021 as its starting point.

The following section does not outline the territorial control in Afghanistan district-by-district but lays out the shifts in territorial control chronologically in Afghanistan from May 2021 up to and including August. Further, the following account of the development demonstrates the pace with which the Taliban conquest happened.



Map of territorial control district by district as of 3 May 2021.

Source: Long War Journal.⁷

³ AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

⁴ The Guardian, *Biden announces all US and Nato troops to leave Afghanistan by September 11*, 14 April 2021, [url](#); AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

⁵ USDOS, *Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America*, 29 February 2020, [url](#), p. 1

⁶ AAN, *Menace, Negotiation, Attack: The Taleban take more District Centres across Afghanistan*, 16 July 2021, [url](#)

⁷ FDD's Long War Journal, *Mapping Taliban Contested and Controlled Districts in Afghanistan*, n.d., [url](#)

May

From the outset of their offensive in May, the Taliban primarily, but not exclusively, focused their attention on capturing districts in rural areas of Afghanistan's northern provinces.⁸ The Taliban managed to capture districts in five of the nine⁹ northern provinces, where it faced their main opposition during their rule in the 1990's and early 2000's.¹⁰ More specifically, the Taliban seized control of districts in the provinces of Faryab, Sar-e Pul, Balkh, Baghlan and Badakhshan.¹¹

However, the Taliban did not limit their territorial gains to the northern provinces. Throughout May, districts in south-eastern province of Ghazni as well as Uruzgan, Kandahar and Zabul in the south fell into the hands of the Taliban. The Taliban also captured districts in the central provinces of Wardak and Logar as well as districts in western provinces of Herat and Farah.¹² The Taliban further seized control of districts in eastern Laghman province as well as in Nuristan in the Northeast.¹³ Many of the districts captured by the movement in May were captured as a result of negotiations between Taliban fighters and local power brokers.¹⁴

According to assessments from the Long War Journal, the Taliban controlled 73 of Afghanistan's 407 districts prior to the offensive, but throughout May that number rose to 89.¹⁵

⁸ FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban takes control of 30 districts in past six weeks*, 14 June 2021, [url](#); AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taliban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

⁹ Faryab, Jawzjan, Sar-e Pul, Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan

¹⁰ AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taliban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#); FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban takes control of 30 districts in past six weeks*, 14 June 2021, [url](#)

¹¹ FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban takes control of 30 districts in past six weeks*, 14 June 2021, [url](#)

¹² FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban takes control of 30 districts in past six weeks*, 14 June 2021, [url](#)

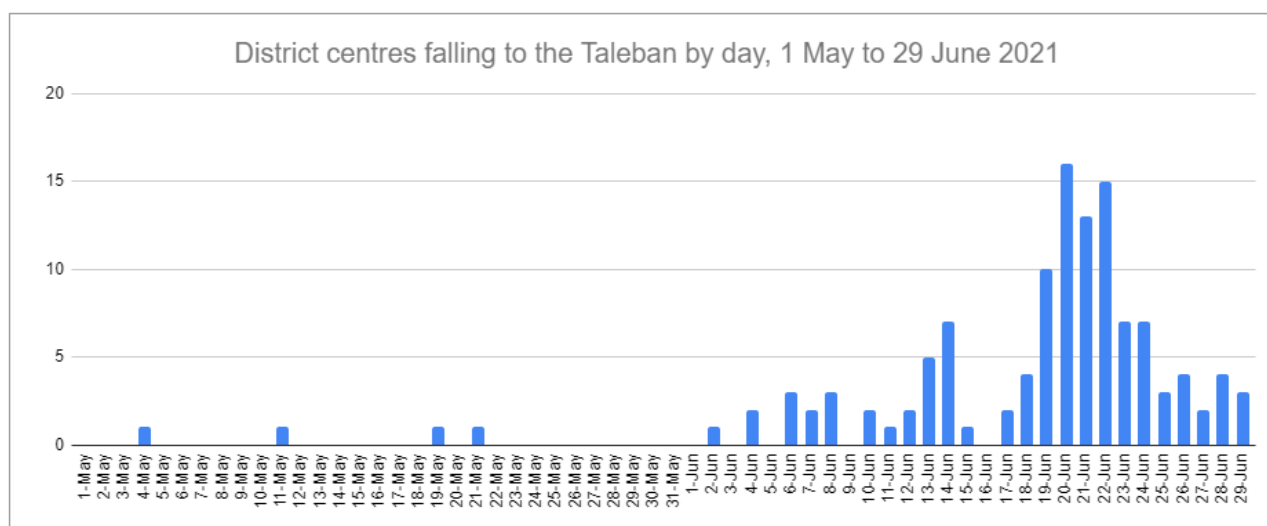
¹³ FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban seizes eight districts in the past week*, 6 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴ The New York Times, *A Wave of Afghan Surrenders to the Taliban Picks Up Speed*, 7 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵ FDD's Long War Journal, *UN report on Taliban controlled and contested districts tracks with LWJ data*, 3 June 2021, [url](#); FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghanistan at risk of collapse as Taliban storms the North*, 5 July, 2021, [url](#)

June

As May turned to June, the pattern in the conflict remained the same: Taliban continued to seize control of districts across rural parts of the country, and especially in the Northern provinces.¹⁶ However, the pace at which the insurgents seized control of districts increased significantly in June.¹⁷



Source: AAN¹⁸

In June, the Taliban expanded their operations in the North, seizing control of districts in all nine of the provinces. They also began capturing cities in the northern districts as well as threatening northern provincial capitals such as Kunduz, Taloqan, Pul-e Khumri and Mazar-e Sharif.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Taliban captured a number a strategic important districts throughout the North such as oil and gas rich districts in Sar-e Pul and Jawzjan.²⁰

From the launch of the offensive until the end of June, the Taliban captured more than 60 districts across the Northern provinces, which comprised almost half of the districts captured by the Taliban during that period.²¹

The districts captured by the Taliban in the northern provinces in June varied in population density and presence of ANDSF troops. Analysts at both the Long War Journal and AAN agree that the number of districts captured and the speed at which they were captured was surprising. This is mainly because the

¹⁶ NYT, *Afghan War Casualty Report: June 2021*, 4 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷ FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghanistan at risk of collapse as Taliban storms the North*, 5 July, 2021, [url](#); AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taliban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸ AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taliban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹ FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghanistan at risk of collapse as Taliban storms the North*, 5 July, 2021, [url](#); AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taliban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#); FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban doubles number of controlled Afghan districts since May 1*, 29 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁰ AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taliban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

²¹ AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taliban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

Taliban have historically largely been excluded from gaining a foothold in this region due to the presence of the Northern Alliance.²²

An example of just how fast Taliban captured districts in the North can be found in Jawzjan province.²³ Prior to 18 June the Taliban controlled no districts in Jawzjan, but between 18 June and 23 June, the Taliban captured nine of 11 districts in the province.²⁴

A similar pattern occurred in Faryab province, where the Taliban swept through the province between 6 June and 25 June, capturing 12 of 14 districts, leaving only the provincial capital of Maimana in government control.²⁵ This further advancement in the northern provinces meant that by the end of June, the Taliban controlled the majority of the districts in all nine northern provinces but Badakhshan.²⁶ Elsewhere in the country, the Taliban captured districts in Ghazni and Zabul provinces in the southeast, in Uruzgan, Ghor and Wardak provinces in Central Afghanistan as well as other places.²⁷

By the end of June, the Taliban controlled 157 districts throughout Afghanistan.²⁸

²² FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghanistan at risk of collapse as Taliban storms the North*, 5 July, 2021, [url](#); AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

²³ FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghanistan at risk of collapse as Taliban storms the North*, 5 July, 2021, [url](#); AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

²⁴ FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghanistan at risk of collapse as Taliban storms the North*, 5 July, 2021, [url](#); AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

²⁵ AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

²⁶ AAN, *Menace, Negotiation, Attack: The Taleban take more District Centres across Afghanistan*, 16 July 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL, *Once A Bastion Of Taliban Resistance, Afghanistan's Badakhshan On Brink Of Falling To Militants*, 9 July 2021, [url](#); AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

²⁷ AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

²⁸ FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban doubles number of controlled Afghan districts since May 1*, 29 June 2021, [url](#)

July

In the beginning of July, the Taliban gained control of several districts in Badakhshan province. Contrary to the rest of the Northern provinces, Badakhshan remained largely untouched by the Taliban during May and June.²⁹ This changed in July, as the Taliban rapidly swept through the province, capturing 25 of the 28 districts.³⁰ Among the territorial gains was the border crossing into Tajikistan in Ishkashim district.³¹

The Taliban seized another border crossing, Islam Qala, in Herat province in western Afghanistan on 8 July.³² Throughout the rest of July, the Taliban seized control of 13 of the 17 districts in Herat.³³

In the southern province of Kandahar, Taliban captured the Spin Boldak border crossing into Pakistan on 14 July.³⁴ Throughout the rest of July, Taliban seized control over a number of districts in Kandahar as well as in neighbouring province Helmand and in the western province of Farah.³⁵

July also marked the first attack on a provincial capital by the Taliban. On 7 July, the Taliban launched an attack on Badghis's provincial capital, Qala-i-Naw, freeing some 200 incarcerated persons from the city's prison.³⁶ On 15 July, an 'indefinite' province wide ceasefire was negotiated between local Taliban leaders and the provincial governor.³⁷

In the last days of July, the Taliban began threatening the provincial capitals of Herat in the West and Lashkar Gah and Kandahar in the South.³⁸

By the end of July, the Taliban controlled 223 districts throughout Afghanistan.³⁹

²⁹ AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

³⁰ AAN, *Menace, Negotiation, Attack: The Taleban take more District Centres across Afghanistan*, 16 July 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL, *Once A Bastion Of Taliban Resistance, Afghanistan's Badakhshan On Brink Of Falling To Militants*, 9 July 2021, [url](#); AAN, *District centre control 1 May - 24 July 2021*, 24 July 2021, [url](#)

³¹ Al Jazeera, *Taliban seizes key districts in Afghanistan as gov't forces flee*, 4 July 2021, [url](#); The Sydney Morning Herald, *The Taliban conquest of a thin strip of land could change Afghanistan*, 24 July 2021, [url](#)

³² The Guardian, *Taliban sweep through Herat province as Afghan advance continues*, 9 July 2021, [url](#)

³³ AAN, *District centre control 1 May - 24 July 2021*, 24 July 2021, [url](#); FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban advances on Herat City*, 30 July 2021, [url](#)

³⁴ BBC, *Afghanistan: Taliban flag raised above border crossing with Pakistan*, 14 July 2021, [url](#)

³⁵ FDD's Long War Journal, *Mapping Taliban Contested and Controlled Districts in Afghanistan*, n.d., [url](#); AAN, *Menace, Negotiation, Attack: The Taleban take more District Centres across Afghanistan*, 16 July 2021, [url](#)

³⁶ The Wall Street Journal, *Taliban Attack on Afghan City Allows 200 Prison Inmates to Escape*, 7 July 2021, [url](#)

³⁷ Reuters, *Provincial Afghan govt, Taliban agree on ceasefire in Western Badghis*, 15 July 2021, [url](#)

³⁸ The New York Times, *Key Afghan City in Danger of Falling to the Taliban*, 4 August 2021, [url](#); The Guardian, *Taliban sweep through Herat province as Afghan advance continues*, 9 July 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, *Afghanistan's Herat under pressure amid ongoing Taliban assault*, 31 July 2021, [url](#)

³⁹ FDD's Long War Journal, *Mapping Taliban Contested and Controlled Districts in Afghanistan*, n.d., [url](#)

August and September

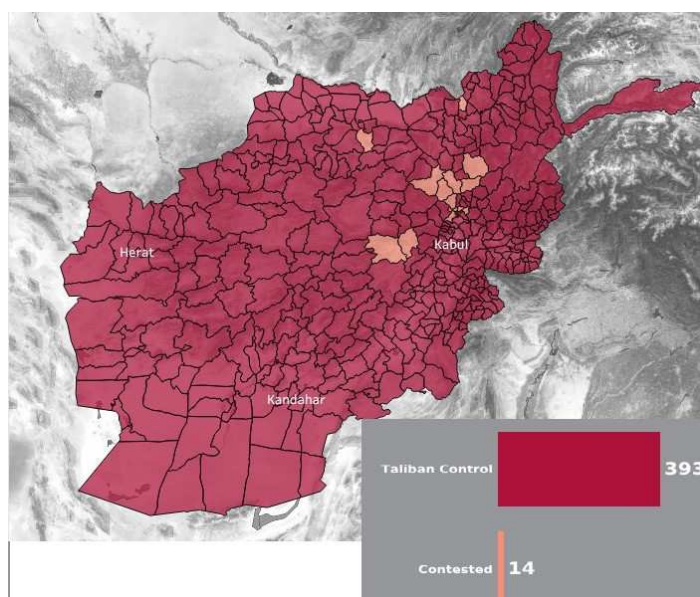
On 6 August, the Taliban captured the first of Afghanistan's 34 provincial capitals as they took control of Zaranj, Nimroz after negotiating a deal with local leaders.⁴⁰

The following three days saw the five Northern provincial capitals of Kunduz, Taloqan, Sherberghan, Sar-e Pul and Aybak seized by Taliban.⁴¹ Pul-e Khomri and Faizabad in the North and Farah in the West were captured the day after.⁴² On 12 August, the Taliban managed to seize control of Herat, Lashkar Gah, Qala-i-Naw and Kandahar after weeks of fighting,⁴³ and on 13 August Taliban further captured the provincial capitals of Tirin Kot in Uruzgan, Qalat in Zabul, Pul-i-Alam in Logar, and Fayroz Koh in Ghor.⁴⁴

The following day the insurgents moved closer to Kabul as the Taliban seized control of the provincial capitals of the provinces of Paktika, Paktia, Laghman, Faryab and Kunar as well as Mazar-e Sharif in Balkh, the last provincial capital of the North.⁴⁵

In the early hours of 15 August, the capital of Nangahar province, Jalalabad, was surrendered to the Taliban after negotiations, and at end of the day the Taliban had further seized control of the provinces of Wardak, Khost, Kapisa, Bamyan and Nuristan.⁴⁶ In the afternoon of 15 August, the Taliban fighters entered Kabul, as President Ashraf Ghani was leaving the country.⁴⁷ By the evening of 15 August, Panjshir was the only province in Afghanistan not in the hands of Taliban.⁴⁸

Pansjshir province withstood a series of attacks from the Taliban throughout the remainder of August, but on the 6 September, the Taliban entered the Panjshir Valley and captured the districts of the province, including the provincial capital, Bazarak.⁴⁹



Map of territorial control district by district as of 8 September 2021
Source: FDD's Long War Journal.⁵⁰

⁴⁰ The New York Times, *Taliban Seize Afghan Provincial Capital Just Weeks Before Final U.S. Withdrawal*, 15 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹ The New York Times, *Taliban Take Second Afghan City in Two Days*, 7 August 2021, [url](#); The New York Times, *The Taliban Seize Key City in Northern Afghanistan*, 8 August 2021, [url](#); Tolo News, *Key Areas in 2 Northern Afghan Cities Fall Amid Clashes*, 9 August 2021, [url](#); Tolo News, *Samangan's Center Aybak Falls to Taliban*, 9 August 2021, [url](#); Reuters, *Taliban overrun northern Afghan cities of Kunduz, Sar-e Pul, Taloqan*, 9 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴² The New York Times, *Taliban Overrun 3 More Provincial Capitals, Increasing Pressure on Kabul*, 10 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴³ The New York Times, *Afghanistan Collapse Accelerates as the Taliban Capture 3 Vital Cities*, 15 August 2021, [url](#); FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghan government on verge of collapse as Taliban capture 4 more cities*, 13 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴ FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghan government on verge of collapse as Taliban capture 4 more cities*, 13 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵ FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban encircling Afghan capital Kabul, prepping final assault through east*, 14 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶ FDD's Long War Journal, *Mapping Taliban Contested and Controlled Districts in Afghanistan*, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁷ Tolo News, *President Ashraf Ghani Leaves Afghanistan*, 15 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸ France24, *Defiant Afghan ex-VP vows new fight with Taliban*, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁹ FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban completes conquest of Afghanistan after seizing Panjshir*, 6 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰ FDD's Long War Journal, *Mapping Taliban Contested and Controlled Districts in Afghanistan*, n.d., [url](#)

Remaining and new actors in Afghanistan

Although these rapid developments in the conflict have put the Taliban in control of all of Afghanistan but the Panjshir Valley and other small pockets of resistance, it should be noted that the Taliban does not constitute the only actor in the country.

In the Panjshir Valley, the remnants of the former Afghan government and local militias had formed the **National Resistance Front (NRF)** led by former Vice President of the Republic, Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud. The NRF was said to consist of several thousand men with equipment from the Afghan army prior to the Taliban capture of Panjshir.⁵¹ In the days following the Taliban capture of Panjshir, Massoud vowed that the NRF would continue to resist the Taliban.⁵²

Al-Qaeda consists of approximately 500 members and operates in at least 15 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, primarily in the east, southern and south-eastern regions, according to assessments from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). UNSC further states that the group remains closely aligned with the Taliban.⁵³

Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) is assessed to retain a core group of approximately 1,500 to 2,200 fighters primarily in small areas of the eastern provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar, but is also present in smaller numbers in northern provinces such as Balkh, Badakhshan, Kunduz and Sar-e Pul. The group suffered significant losses of territory and personnel in 2020, but continues to facilitate attacks throughout Afghanistan, including bigger cities such as Jalalabad and Kabul.⁵⁴

Among other actors still present in Afghanistan is the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)**, which consists of approximately 700 fighters located in Faryab, Sar-e Pul and Jawzjan Provinces, where they rely on local branches of the Taliban for financial backing.⁵⁵

⁵¹ The Wall Street Journal, *Taliban Close In on Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley, Putting Pressure on Resistance Haven*, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵² FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban completes conquest of Afghanistan after seizing Panjshir*, 6 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵³ United Nations Security Council, *Letter dated 20 May 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 1 June 2021, [url](#), pp. 12-13

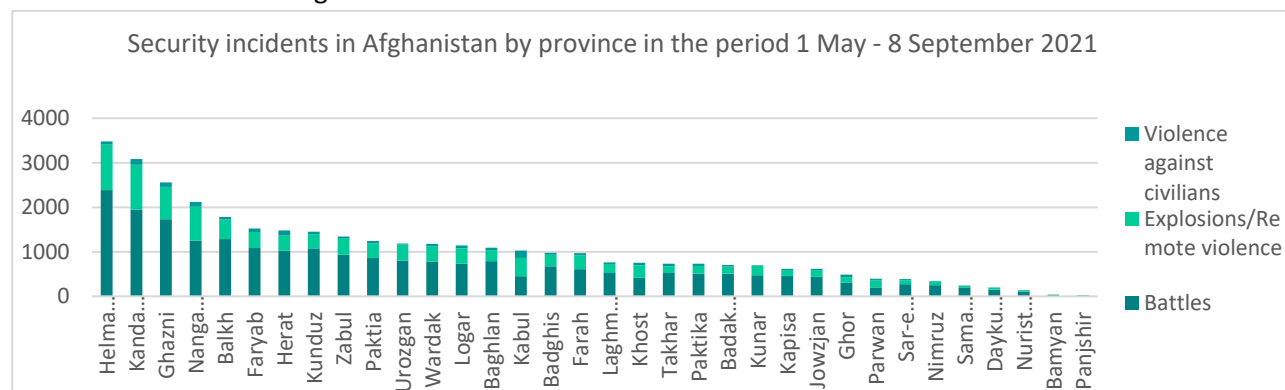
⁵⁴ United Nations Security Council, *Letter dated 20 May 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 1 June 2021, [url](#), pp. 16-17

⁵⁵ United Nations Security Council, *Letter dated 20 May 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 1 June 2021, [url](#), p. 20

The geography of security incidents

Security incidents in Afghanistan in May through August have largely mirrored the developments of the conflict and the number of security incidents was highest in the provinces with the most intense fighting.

In the period from 1 May to 8 September 2021, The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)⁵⁶ recorded 5,633 security incidents,⁵⁷ across Afghanistan's 34 provinces compared to 2,864 security incidents in the same period the year before.⁵⁸ Notably, ACLED recorded 79 new security incidents between 15 August and 8 September 2021.⁵⁹ By 'security incident' ACLED refer to "battles", "explosions/remote violence" and "violence against civilians".



Security incidents coded as 'battles', 'explosions/remote violence' and 'violence against civilians' in Afghanistan by province in the period 1 May – 8 September 2021, based on ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan (26 August 2020), [url](#)

In Helmand, Herat and Kandahar, the Taliban captured the respective provincial capitals of Lashkar Gah, Herat and Kandahar as a result of week-long fighting in the cities.⁶⁰ Similarly, the heavy fighting between Taliban fighters and ANDSF troops inside Ghazni City is reflected in the number of recorded security incidents in Ghazni province.⁶¹

In Jawzjan province, the Taliban seized a high number of district after to the surrender of ANDSF forces, which affected the amount of security incidents across the province.⁶² Similarly, there have been reports of ANDSF soldiers surrendering in Badakhshan province.⁶³ The Taliban took control of Zaranj, the provincial capital of Nimroz through negotiations, and this is reflected in the number of security incidents in the province.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ ACLED describes itself as "a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project. ACLED collects the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events across Africa, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Southeastern and Eastern Europe and the Balkans." ACLED, *About ACLED*, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁷ ACLED uses the term 'event' when registering these incidents. 'Security incident' is used here in accordance with the way ACLED data is referred to in the EASO report: EASO, *Afghanistan – Security Situation*, June 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸ ACLED, Curated Data Files, *Afghanistan*, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁹ ACLED, Curated Data Files, *Afghanistan*, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁰ The New York Times, *Afghanistan Collapse Accelerates as the Taliban Capture 3 Vital Cities*, 15 August 2021, [url](#); FDD's Long War Journal, *Afghan government on verge of collapse as Taliban capture 4 more cities*, 13 August 2021, [url](#); FDD's Long War Journal, *Taliban advances on Herat City*, 30 July 2021, [url](#)

⁶¹ Tolo News, *Heavy Fighting Around Ghazni City Reported: Sources*, 8 July 2021, [url](#)

⁶² AAN, *A Quarter of Afghanistan's Districts Fall to the Taleban amid Calls for a 'Second Resistance'*, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

⁶³ AAN, *Menace, Negotiation, Attack: The Taleban take more District Centres across Afghanistan*, 16 July 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴ The New York Times, *Taliban Seize Afghan Provincial Capital Just Weeks Before Final U.S. Withdrawal*, 15 August 2021, [url](#)

Impact on civilians

Civilian casualties

According to reports from United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) from July and August respectively, the first six months of 2021 have seen the number of civilian casualties rise significantly compared to the previous year.⁶⁵ UNAMA recorded 5,183 casualties – a 47 % increase, whereas AIHRC recorded 5,321 casualties which amounted to a 80 % increase compared to their data from 2020.⁶⁶

Notably, UNAMA registered 2,392 (783 killed and 1,609 injured) civilian casualties across Afghanistan in May and June alone, which marked the highest number of civilian casualties recorded in those two months since UNAMA started gathering data in 2009.⁶⁷ Since then, the conflict largely shifted from rural, sparsely populated areas into more populous urban areas, thus affecting more civilians.⁶⁸ At the time of publishing of this report, UNAMA had not released data regarding civilian casualties for the months of July and August.

The New York Times reported that at least 189 civilians were killed across Afghanistan in July, but noted that the numbers were likely to be higher in reality.⁶⁹ During the first five days of August, the New York Times registered 58 civilians killed as a result of the conflict.⁷⁰

On 26 August ISKP carried out two bomb attacks at the entrance to Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, killing as many as 170 civilians and 13 U.S. service members.⁷¹

⁶⁵ UNAMA, *AFGHANISTAN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT MIDYEAR UPDATE: 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2021*, July 2021, [url](#), pp. 10, 12; UNAMA Press Release, *CIVILIAN CASUALTIES SET TO HIT UNPRECEDENTED HIGHS IN 2021 UNLESS URGENT ACTION TO STEM VIOLENCE – UN REPORT*, 26 July 2021; [url](#); AIHRC, *Summary Report on Civilian Casualties in the First Six Months of 2021 (January to end of June 2021)*, 1 August 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶ UNAMA, *AFGHANISTAN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT MIDYEAR UPDATE: 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2021*, July 2021, [url](#), pp. 10, 12; UNAMA Press Release, *CIVILIAN CASUALTIES SET TO HIT UNPRECEDENTED HIGHS IN 2021 UNLESS URGENT ACTION TO STEM VIOLENCE – UN REPORT*, 26 July 2021; [url](#); AIHRC, *Summary Report on Civilian Casualties in the First Six Months of 2021 (January to end of June 2021)*, 1 August 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷ UNAMA, *AFGHANISTAN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT MIDYEAR UPDATE: 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2021*, July 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁸ DW, *Afghanistan: Civilians fear for their lives amid Taliban advances*, 9 August 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹ The New York Times, *Afghan War Casualty Report: July 2021*, 5. August 2021, [url](#)

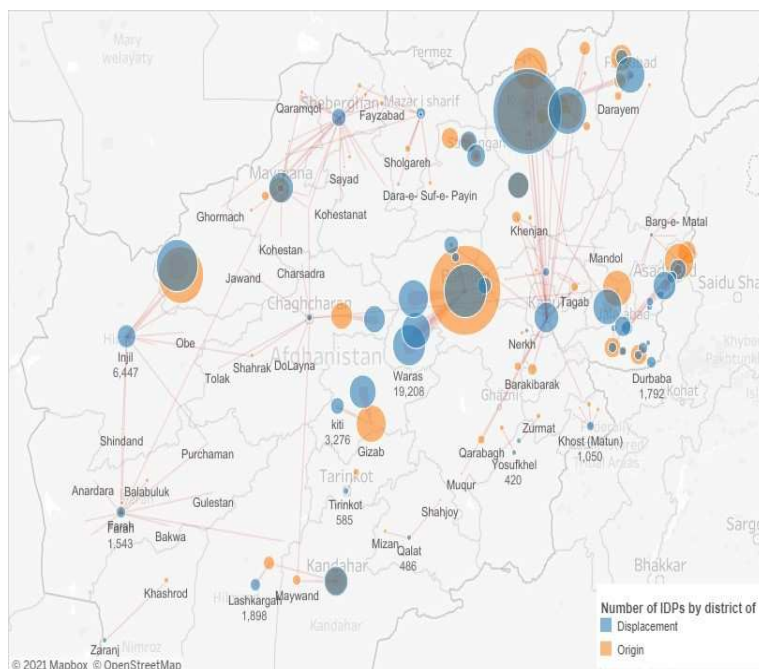
⁷⁰ The New York Times, *Afghan War Casualty Report: August 2021*, 5 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹ The New York Times, *U.S. Launches Strike on ISIS-K as Bombing's Death Toll Soars*, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

Internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees and returnees

Between 1 May, when the Taliban launched their countrywide offensive and 14 August, 439,160 people have been displaced in Afghanistan, according to UNOCHA.⁷² 59 % of the displaced persons were children.⁷³ UNOCHA states that constrained humanitarian access hinders assessments, which hinders verification of the full extent of displacement.⁷⁴

Bamyan, Kunduz and Badghis are the provinces with the most displaced persons, and most of them have relocated within their province of origin.⁷⁵ Kabul has received IDPs from especially the Northern provinces of Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan.⁷⁶



IDPs in Afghanistan, 1 May – 14 August 2021. Source: UN OCHA.⁷⁷

From the outset of the Taliban offensive, mostly rural parts of the country was targeted, forcing civilians toward larger provincial cities. When these cities were attacked, many moved to Kabul. According to UNHCR, Kabul have received approximately 120.000 IDPs in 2021.⁷⁸ In the days between 15 August, when the Taliban captured Kabul and 19 August, UNOCHA did not register additional IDPs in Kabul.⁷⁹

In the two weeks following the capture of Kabul, UNOCHA registered a total of 500 new IDPs across Afghanistan.⁸⁰

⁷² UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements, Actual displacements between 3 May 2021 and 9 August 2021*, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷³ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements, Actual displacements between 3 May 2021 and 9 August 2021*, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements, Actual displacements between 3 May 2021 and 9 August 2021*, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁵ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2021*, last update: 15 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁶ UNOCHA, *AFGHANISTAN Weekly Humanitarian Update (9 – 15 August 2021)*, 16 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁷ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements, Actual displacements between 3 May 2021 and 9 August 2021*, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸ UNHCR, *External Update: Afghanistan Situation #2*. Genève: UNHCR, 16 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁹ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan. Internal Displacement in Kabul Flash Update No.4 (15 August 2021)*. Kabul: OCHA, 15 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁰ UNOCHA, *AFGHANISTAN Weekly Humanitarian Update (16 – 22 August 2021)*, 25 August 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, *AFGHANISTAN Weekly Humanitarian Update (23 – 29 August 2021)*, 3 September 2021, [url](#)

Across Afghanistan, people have been displaced from 118 out of 421 districts and 58 districts hosted the IDPs.⁸¹ The geography of the displacement largely reflects the development of the Taliban offensive, but it should be noted that other factors such as severe drought in parts of northern and western Afghanistan have contributed to the displacement as well.⁸²

The Taliban offensive and the following months of conflict further prompted many Afghans to leave the country. Between the turn of the year and the Taliban capture of Kabul, nearly 360,000 Afghans have left the country as a result of conflict.⁸³ According to the New York Times, at least 30,000 Afghans were leaving the country each week in July.⁸⁴ The Iranian government estimated in July that approximately 5,000 Afghans a day entered Iran in an irregular manner.⁸⁵

Since the Taliban conquest, an estimated 123,000 people have been evacuated from Hamid Karzai International Airport.⁸⁶ At the time of publishing, there is no exact overview of how many Afghans have left the country since the Taliban takeover.⁸⁷ According to sources cited by Landinfo, all border crossings have reopened.⁸⁸

Iran, on the other hand, has returned 752,000 Afghans in 2021 as of 3 September.⁸⁹ As of May 2021 that represented a 345 % increase compared to 2020.⁹⁰ Approximately 7,400 Afghans have returned from Pakistan since 1 May.⁹¹

⁸¹ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements, Actual displacements between 3 May 2021 and 9 August 2021*, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸² UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements, Actual displacements between 3 May 2021 and 9 August 2021*, 29 August 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, *AFGHANISTAN Weekly Humanitarian Update (9 – 15 August 2021)*, 16 August 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, *AFGHANISTAN Weekly Humanitarian Update (16 – 22 August 2021)*, 25 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸³ IOM Afghanistan (@IOMAfghanistan), [Twitter], 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁴ The New York Times, *As Fears Grip Afghanistan, Hundreds of Thousands Flee*, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁵ UNHCR, *Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran*, 20 July 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁶ BBC, *Afghanistan: How many refugees are there and where will they go?*, 31 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷ BBC, *Afghanistan: How many refugees are there and where will they go?*, 31 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan: Talibans maktovertakelse*, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁹ UNOCHA, *AFGHANISTAN Weekly Humanitarian Update (23 – 29 August 2021)*, 3 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁰ UNHCR, *Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran*, 20 July 2021, [url](#)

⁹¹ UNOCHA, *AFGHANISTAN Weekly Humanitarian Update (23 – 29 August 2021)*, 3 September 2021, [url](#)

Targeted individuals

The conflict in Afghanistan has been well-covered and access to credible information have generally been plentiful throughout the past 20 years. Afghans are generally well connected and have been willingly to answer the questions of journalists.⁹²

The access to credible information has gradually worsened, as the Taliban captured more and more territory, according to the well-informed journalist at The Wall Street Journal, Sune Engel Rasmussen (SER), and sources and key informants living in Taliban-controlled areas have become increasingly reluctant to be cited.⁹³ SER further assessed that credible information was harder to access in rural areas compared to Kabul and other cities, but stressed that Afghanistan have not become a *black hole* regarding information about the current affairs in the country since the Taliban captured Kabul on 15 August.⁹⁴

On their first press conference on 17 August 2021 after seizing control of Kabul, long time spokesman of the Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid, stated that the Taliban regarded the war in Afghanistan as over and, contrary to their actions in the 1990s, vowed no reprisals against former enemies and adversaries going forward.⁹⁵ According to SER, there are, however, no reason to believe that this will be the case since there have been no indications during the last 20 years that Taliban have moderated their conservative interpretations of Islam. This has been documented in areas, which the movement have governed throughout the of course of the conflict.⁹⁶

These variations between official statements from the leadership and actions on the ground, occur because the Taliban is made up of many different fractions with varying degrees of loyalty to the leadership, according to Dr. Mike Martin, Visiting Research Fellow at King's College and Professor Christopher Ankersen, Centre for Global Affairs at New York University.⁹⁷ Martin further argued that the speed at which the Taliban conquered Afghanistan has come as a surprise to the leaders themselves, and as such, there was no national political framework in place when they captured Kabul.⁹⁸

During the course of the Taliban offensive, as well as after the conquest of Kabul, there have been reports of the Taliban targeting members of the civilian population and the Afghan military as well their families. According to SER, members of Taliban have been going door to door and arresting or threatening family members of targeted individuals. He explained how members of the Taliban came to the house in Kabul of a colleague of his knocking on the door. Being a journalist, he was hiding inside his house with his family and the Taliban left. He had been warned over the telephone by his neighbour and he immediately thereafter moved to a hotel, knowing that the Taliban knew his address.⁹⁹

⁹² Sune Engel Rasmussen: 1

⁹³ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 1

⁹⁴ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 1

⁹⁵ The New York Times, *Taliban Promise Peace, but Doubt and Fear Persist*, 18 August 2021, [url](#); The Conversation, *The Taliban wants the world's trust. To achieve this, it will need to make some difficult choices*, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 16

⁹⁷ The Voices of War, *Dr Mike Martin & Dr Christopher Ankersen - Afghanistan Update and Future*, 28 August 2021, [url](#), 5:30-7:10, 7:15-9:30

⁹⁸ The Voices of War, *Dr Mike Martin & Dr Christopher Ankersen - Afghanistan Update and Future*, 28 August 2021, [url](#), 7:15-9:30

⁹⁹ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 3

There have also been reports of Taliban targeting ethnic and religious minorities during their conquest of Afghanistan, notably Afghanistan's Hazara population.¹⁰⁰ SER assessed that Hazaras in country would face discrimination going forward as the Taliban views them as infidels.¹⁰¹ According to a report from Landinfo, on the other hand, the Taliban leadership has on the other hand tried to reach out to the Hazara community in Afghanistan since their takeover.¹⁰²

Overall SER deemed the current mood in Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover as tense and hesitant regarding how the Taliban rule will pan out.¹⁰³

It should also be noted that the Taliban does not constitute the only actor in Afghanistan, and that other actors may target vulnerable individuals.

¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International, *Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men – new investigation*, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 6

¹⁰² Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan: Talibans maktovertakelse*, 2 September 2021, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁰³ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 2

Women

In their 2021 midyear report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan, UNAMA registered an 82 % increase in the number of women casualties in Afghanistan compared to the first six months of 2020.¹⁰⁴ Targeted killings of women amounted to 9 % of the recorded casualties, including targeting of men where women were incidentally impacted. Women appeared to have been the main target in 18 of the incidents, resulting in four women killed and 25 women injured. According to UNAMA, the women were targeted either due to their professional affiliation, because they were accused of supporting the former government or ANDSF, spying for ANDSF, or because they were accused by the Taliban of “immoral conduct” such as adultery.¹⁰⁵

Incidents of targeted attacks against women from April to September 2021 include:

- April: A woman accused of committing adultery is flogged in public by Taliban in Herat province.¹⁰⁶
- 8 May: 85 killed in attack on school in Kabul, most of which were either women or girls. No actors has claimed responsibility.¹⁰⁷
- 3 August: The Taliban allegedly kills a woman in Balkh province because of inappropriate clothing and because she was not accompanied by a man. Taliban has denied this incident.¹⁰⁸
- 19 August: A woman was killed in Takhar province for not wearing a burka.¹⁰⁹

There have been reports of the Taliban imposing strict rules regarding women in newly captured districts across the country.¹¹⁰ In Balkh province, the Taliban have distributed leaflets among the local population, declaring that women cannot leave their home without a male companion (*mahram*) nor without wearing a hijab.¹¹¹ Similar reports have come out of Faryab and Jawzjan provinces.¹¹² There have also been reports of women being forced to marry Taliban fighters prior to the conquest of Kabul.¹¹³ The well-informed journalist interviewed for this report stated that in some cases these women have been under-age but he has not been able to verify these pieces of information.

In Kandahar City, there have been reports of Taliban forcing women away from their jobs in a local bank, and in Herat women have been denied access to attend schools and to work apart from domestic work in

¹⁰⁴ UNAMA, *AFGHANISTAN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT MIDYEAR UPDATE: 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2021*, July 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰⁵ UNAMA, *AFGHANISTAN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT MIDYEAR UPDATE: 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2021*, July 2021, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁰⁶ The Guardian, *After the retreat: what now for Afghanistan?*, 4 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ UNAMA, *AFGHANISTAN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT MIDYEAR UPDATE: 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2021*, July 2021, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰⁸ RFE/RL, *Afghan Police Say Taliban Killed Young Woman For Wearing Tight Clothing*, 4 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ Radio Neshat, *قتل طالبان توسط برقع از استفاده عدم دلیل به زن یک قتل* [informal translation: Murder of a woman for not using the burqa by the Taliban], 19 August 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ The New York Times, *Taliban Try to Polish Their Image as They Push for Victory*, 4 August 2021, [url](#)

¹¹¹ VOA News, *Taliban Impose New Restrictions on Women, Media In Afghanistan's North*, 9 July 2021, [url](#);

¹¹² RFL/RE, *Return To The 'Dark Days': Taliban Reimposes Repressive Laws On Women In Newly Captured Areas In Afghanistan*, 14 July 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³ Foreign Policy, *As Taliban Expand Control, Concerns About Forced Marriage and Sex Slavery Rise*, 23 July 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL, *Return To The 'Dark Days': Taliban Reimposes Repressive Laws On Women In Newly Captured Areas In Afghanistan*, 14 July 2021, [url](#)

their home.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, women in Logar province have been able to visit the local bazar without a male companion, albeit in a burka.¹¹⁵

Despite these incidents, the Taliban leadership have stated that women constitute an important part of Afghan society going forward, and that they will be allowed to attend schools and work in accordance with Islamic rules.¹¹⁶ However, The Taliban leadership have been vague as to how they interpret *in accordance with Islamic rules*.¹¹⁷ As such, the situation for women in Afghanistan remains uncertain, according to SER.¹¹⁸

In general, the ruleset regarding women's access to schools and universities and work outside of the home as well as freedom of movement remains uncertain and vary depending on where in Afghanistan they live and what family they belong to.¹¹⁹

Afghans working for foreign states and international organisations

In July 2021, the Taliban leadership announced that the organisation would not harm any Afghan currently or previously employed by foreign forces as long as they stopped their work and showed remorse.¹²⁰ This message was repeated by Taliban spokesman, Suhail Shaheen, after the Taliban captured Kabul on 15 August.¹²¹ This announcement contradicts previous statements from the Taliban. In 2018, the organisation stated on their official website that killing those who supported foreign troops, including interpreters, remained a top priority.¹²² Furthermore, according to article 11 of the Taliban's code of conduct, any Afghan working for foreign powers in Afghanistan ought to be executed.¹²³

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), there have been reports of the Taliban actively searching for civilians with ties to the Afghan government or foreign powers in newly captured districts in both Kandahar and Ghazni provinces.¹²⁴ Similarly, the Telegraph reported in early August that the Taliban going from door to door in newly captured parts of Helmand's provincial capital, Lashkar Gah, searching for civilians currently or previously employed by foreign forces in the country.¹²⁵ In their 2021 midyear report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan, UNAMA noted that reports of the Taliban targeting individuals perceived as adversaries directly contradicted the aforementioned statement by the Taliban leadership.¹²⁶

SER assessed that Afghans who were previously employed by foreign powers or international organisations currently face varying differentiated levels of vulnerability and risk depending on which organisations they

¹¹⁴ Reuters, *Afghan women forced from banking jobs as Taliban take control*, 15 August 2021, [url](#); Hakim, Yalda, (@BBCYaldaHakim), [Twitter], n.d., [url](#)

¹¹⁵ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 9

¹¹⁶ The Wall Street Journal, *Shariah Law, Women's Rights in Afghanistan and the Taliban: What to Know*, 23 August 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 8

¹¹⁸ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 8

¹¹⁹ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 8, 9

¹²⁰ Al Jazeera, *Taliban says Afghans who worked for foreign forces will be safe*, 7 June 2021, [url](#); DW, *Taliban says Afghans who show 'remorse' will be safe*, 7 June 2021, [url](#)

¹²¹ BBC, *Afghanistan: Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen calls the BBC - interview in full*, 16 August 2021, [url](#)

¹²² EASO, *Afghanistan Anti-Government Elements (AGEs)*, August 2020, [url](#), p. 26

¹²³ AAN, *The Layha: Calling the Taleban to Account*, 4 July 2011, [url](#), pp. 9-10

¹²⁴ HRW, *Afghanistan: Advancing Taliban Execute Detainees*, 3 August 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵ The Telegraph, *Taliban going door to door to hunt down Afghan interpreters*, 3 August 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁶ UNAMA, *AFGHANISTAN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT MIDYEAR UPDATE: 1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2021*, July 2021, [url](#), p. 12

were employed by. As an example, SER advised that the best of his knowledge, people previously employed by the U.S. embassy would face greater risk compared to those employed by a UN organisation.

Recent incidents of targeted attacks against civilians employed by the international community include:

- 12 May: An Afghan interpreter, previously employed by American troops, captured and decapitated on his way from Kabul to Khost province.¹²⁷
- 9 June: 10 deminers killed and 12 injured while working for the international NGO, Halo Trust, in Baghlan province. All the victims were ethnic Hazara. ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack.¹²⁸
- 29 July: The Taliban attacks UNAMAs headquarters in Herat City. Two guards were injured.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ CNN, *Afghan interpreter for US Army was beheaded by Taliban. Others fear they will be hunted down too*, 23 July 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁸ BBC, *Halo Trust: Afghanistan mine clearance workers shot dead 'in cold blood'*, 9 June 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁹ UN News, *Afghanistan: Attack on UN mission draws global condemnation*, 30 July 2021, [url](#)

Government employees and perceived supporters of the former government

The Taliban officials claim their forces are under orders to protect civilians, but they have previously excluded from that category civilian employees of the former Afghan government.¹³⁰

After the capture of Kabul, Taliban have stated that former government employees could return to their work in the capital and across the country without fear of recrimination.¹³¹ SER assessed that some Afghans previously employed by the former government could continue their work within public administration because the Taliban need skilled people to maintain the function of the public sector. Examples of this include the Mayor of Kabul and the Minister of Health.¹³²

As the Taliban advanced through the districts and provinces of Afghanistan, there has been reports of organisation targeting former and current employees of the former Afghan government as well as perceived supporters of the former government in various districts in Helmand, Ghazni and Kandahar provinces.¹³³ The Taliban have reportedly seized biometric identification devices and records of Afghans employed by the former government.¹³⁴

Recent incidents of targeted attacks against government employees and perceived supporters of the former government include:

- 21-25 June: The Taliban burns down houses of alleged supporters of the government in Kunduz province.¹³⁵
- 19 July: The Taliban kills two sons of a Kandahar provincial council member.¹³⁶
- 3 August: The Taliban kills the district governor of Sayed Abad in Maidan Wardak, Amir Mohammad Malikzai, in Kabul.¹³⁷

¹³⁰ UN, *As Taliban Offensive Escalates, Afghanistan at Dangerous Turning Point, Special Representative Warns Security Council amid Calls for Ceasefire, Aid Access*, 6 August 2021, [url](#); HRW, *Taliban Linked to Murder of Afghan Rights Defender*, 6 September 2019, [url](#)

¹³¹ Al Jazeera, *Taliban tries to reassure population*, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

¹³² Sune Engel Rasmussen: 12

¹³³ HRW, *Afghanistan: Threats of Taliban Atrocities in Kandahar*, 23 July 2021, [url](#); HRW, *Afghanistan: Advancing Taliban Execute Detainees*, 3 August 2021, [url](#); The Telegraph, *Taliban going door to door to hunt down Afghan interpreters*, 3 August 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 13; The Intercept, *The Taliban Have Seized U.S. Military Biometrics Devices*, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁵ HRW, *Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Displace Civilians*, 7 July 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁶ HRW, *Afghanistan: Threats of Taliban Atrocities in Kandahar*, 23 July 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁷ CNN, *Resurgent Taliban takes provincial capital, kills Afghan government spokesman*, 6 August 2021, [url](#)

Members of ANDSF and pro-government militias

Taliban's code of conduct, the *Layha*, grants permission to members of the Taliban to execute members of ANDSF should they not wish to surrender.¹³⁸ In the wake of their recent offensive, HRW have reported that Taliban have committed summary executions of active and retired ANDSF members as well as current and former members of the Afghan police forces.¹³⁹

SER advised that members of ANDSF and former police forces constitute the most vulnerable amongst the targeted individuals in Afghanistan because they have been directly involved in combat against the Taliban.¹⁴⁰

According to Martine van Bijlert of the AAN, surrendering members of ANDSF across the country have not received the same treatment by the Taliban. In some places like Herat, Kunar and Kunduz, surrendering ANDSF troops were allowed to leave the city in vehicles, whereas surrendering ANDSF troops were taken into Taliban custody in Uruzgan and Logar.¹⁴¹ SER stated that dissenting ANDSF troops in some areas have been paid a month's salary by the Taliban in order to persuade other troops to surrender.¹⁴²

Since their conquest, there have been reports of the Taliban searching for Afghan special operations forces personnel and commandos of the intelligence service, as well as police and security chiefs across the country. According to The New York Times, however, there have been discussions amongst the Taliban leadership whether to grant amnesty to some highly trained Afghan operatives.¹⁴³

Recent incidents of targeted attacks against members of ANDSF include:

- 16 June: The Taliban summarily executes 22 members of Afghan Special Forces unit in connection with a military operation in Faryab province.¹⁴⁴
- 9 July: The Taliban kills a former police worker in Kandahar province.¹⁴⁵
- 27 August: The former security police chief in Farah, Ghulam Sakhi Akbari, was fatally shot on the main Kabul-Kandahar highway.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁸ AAN, *The Layha: Calling the Taleban to Account*, 4 July 2011, [url](#), p. 10

¹³⁹ HRW, *Afghanistan: Threats of Taliban Atrocities in Kandahar*, 23 July 2021, [url](#); HRW, *Afghanistan: Advancing Taliban Execute Detainees*, 3 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 4

¹⁴¹ AAN, *Is This How It Ends? With the Taleban closing in on Kabul, President Ghani faces tough decisions*, 15 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴² Sune Engel Rasmussen: 5

¹⁴³ The New York Times, *As the Taliban Tighten Their Grip, Fears of Retribution Grow*, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ CNN, *Taliban fighters execute 22 Afghan commandos as they try to surrender*, 14 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ HRW, *Afghanistan: Threats of Taliban Atrocities in Kandahar*, 23 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ The New York Times, *As the Taliban Tighten Their Grip, Fears of Retribution Grow*, 29 August 2021, [url](#); BBC, *Amid violent reprisals, Afghans fear the Taliban's 'amnesty' was empty*, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

Journalists and human rights defenders

In an interview with Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, vowed that the Taliban will respect freedom of the press in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁷ However, there have been reports of news outlets shutting down and journalists going into hiding in districts and provinces captured by the insurgents.¹⁴⁸ There have also been reports of Taliban fighters going house-to-house searching for journalists.¹⁴⁹ According to German news outlet, Deutsche Welle (DW), the Taliban have raided the homes of at least three DW journalists since the launch of the offensive.¹⁵⁰

The private news outlet Tolo News, have been allowed to continue their reporting with female anchors, while the Taliban has barred female anchors at Radio Television Afghanistan from returning to work.¹⁵¹

In the wake of the Taliban takeover, the UN Human Rights Special Rapporteurs have also expressed concerns regarding the safety of journalists, human rights defenders and civil rights activist as the insurgents prepare to govern the country.¹⁵² SER advised that Taliban perceive human rights defenders as an extension of the American presence in the country because they find that the idea of human rights undermine the principles of Islam.¹⁵³

Recent incidents of targeted attacks against journalists and human rights defenders include:

- 17 July: Reuters Journalist Danish Siddiqui killed and mutilated by Taliban at Spin Boldak border crossing.¹⁵⁴
- 1 August: Reporter from Pajhwok Afghan News shot and killed by Taliban fighters in Herat province.¹⁵⁵
- 2 August: Interpreter working with German newspaper Die Zeit killed in Jalalabad.¹⁵⁶
- 6 August: The Taliban kills the director of Afghanistan's government media in Kabul.¹⁵⁷
- 8 August: Radio Station manager shot dead by Taliban in Paktia province.¹⁵⁸
- 9 August: Journalists kidnapped by Taliban in Helmand province.¹⁵⁹
- 14 August: Civil rights activist, Haji Azizullah, detained and killed by Taliban in Kandahar.¹⁶⁰
- 18 August: Family member of Afghan journalist shot dead by the Taliban, another injured during a house-to-house search.¹⁶¹

¹⁴⁷ RSF, *Taliban tell RSF they will respect press freedom, but how can we believe them?*, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ VOA News, *Afghanistan's Media Freedom in Retreat as Taliban Advances*, 25 July 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 14; DW, *Relative of DW journalist killed by the Taliban*, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ DW, *Relative of DW journalist killed by the Taliban*, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ BBC, *Afghanistan: Female presenters back on Tolo News after Taliban takeover*, 17 August 2021, [url](#); Tolo News, *Afghan Female Journalists Ask Taliban for Right to Work*, 19 August 2021, [url](#); Sune Engel Rasmussen: 14

¹⁵² UNOHCHR, *Afghanistan: UN experts urge swift global action to protect human rights and prevent 'civilian slaughter'*, 16 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵³ Sune Engel Rasmussen: 15

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Annex 1: Notes

Sune Engel Rasmussen

Sune Engel Rasmussen (SER) er en dansk journalist, der har beskæftiget sig med forholdene i Afghanistan og Iran siden 2014. Fra 2014-17 boede han i Kabul, hvor han dækkede situationen i landet for The Guardian og for Weekendavisen; efter han forlod Afghanistan har han senest besøgt landet i november 2020 og i maj 2021 for the Wall Street Journal. I 2019 udkom hans bog 'Nyt blod – portræt af Afghanistans generation 9/11'.

Skype-interview, 23. august 2021

Adgang til viden om den aktuelle situation i Afghanistan

1. SER vurderede, at adgangen til kilder med førstehåndsviden om den aktuelle situation i Afghanistan er blevet forværret i takt med, at Taliban har vundet frem; han har oplevet af nøgleinformanter, fx lederen af en menneskerettighedsorganisation, er blevet mere påpasselige med at udtale sig til citat. Dette gælder både i Kabul og i provinserne. Den forværrede adgang til oplysninger skal ses i lyset af, at der altid har været god adgang til informationer i Afghanistan, fordi så mange afghanere bruger de sociale medier, og fordi så mange afghanere har været villige til at tale med de journalister, som de stoler på. Det medie som SER arbejder for, Wall Street Journal, har valgt at evakuere samtlige afghanske journalister, som avisen har samarbejdet med i de forløbne 20 år samt deres familier, hvilket betyder, at en lang række nationale journalister forlader Afghanistan. Det er fortsat muligt for SER at ringe til allerede kendte kilder og interviewe dem over telefonen, men det er blevet sværere at interviewe til nye kilder, da der mangler en lokal kontakt til at etablere den nødvendige indledende kontakt.
2. Ifølge SER var situationen i Afghanistan på tidspunktet for interviewet (23. august) ekstremt anspændt; den var kaotisk omkring lufthavnen, og afventende i resten af Kabul. I Kabul er der færre folk på gaden og især færre kvinder. Det tolkede SER som et udtryk for folks frygt og afventende holdning til, hvordan situationen vil udvikle sig. Ifølge SER følger det Talibans 'håndbog', at hovedstaden skal fremstå rolig efter bevægelsens magtovertagelse; eksempelvis er Taliban begyndt at flytte de betonblokke (*blast walls*), som har præget bybilledet i mange år; fjernelsen af disse blokke sker som udtryk for, at krigen er afsluttet. I modsætning hertil er området omkring lufthavnen præget af stort kaos og af, at tusindvis af mennesker strømmer til lufthavnen. Senest er portene indtil lufthavnen blevet lukket, og at evakueringsmulighederne er blevet yderlige forringet.
3. Der var iflg. SER endnu ikke oplysninger om, at Taliban havde udført vold mod civile i stor skala. Derimod var SER blevet oplyst af en tidligere kollega om, at Taliban havde udført dør-til-dør runderinger i Kabul, hvor de opsøgte journalister. Denne afghanske kollega var selv blevet advaret per telefon af sin nabo, og hele familien med seks børn havde gemt sig i huset med slukket lys og bag nedrullede gardiner. Taliban var gået videre med uforettet sag. SER forklarede, at Taliban nu ved, hvor denne journalists bopæl er, og siden er denne kollega flyttet på hotel.

Situationen for udsatte og sårbare grupper

Soldater og politifolk

4. Blandt sårbare grupper er de mest udsatte ifølge SER tidligere soldater og politifolk, fordi de har arbejdet for regeringen og direkte mod Taliban. Der er bekræftede oplysninger om, at Taliban har henrettet soldater og politi i landdistrikterne i takt med at bevægelsen har erobret nyt land. Dette er sket til trods for Talibans løfter om amnesti og tilgivelse af personer, der har arbejdet for myndighederne. SER forklarede, at dette skal ses i sammenhæng med at Talibans politiske lederskab i Doha, hvoraf dele nu er i Kabul, nok har udstedt løfter, men at lederskabet ikke nødvendigvis kontrollerer, hvad Talibans fodsoldater foretager sig lokalt i de tilfælde, hvis Talibankrigere ønsker hævn over lokalansatte politifolk og soldater.
5. De soldater som har overgivet sig frivilligt når Taliban er rykket en i et bestemt område er ifølge SER, så vidt han er oplyst, blevet behandlet uden vold. Nogle er blevet belønnet en månedsløn (ca. 150 US dollars), når de har overgivet sig, og er blevet bedt om at melde det tilbage til deres soldaterkammerater i et forsøg på at få flere til at overgive sig uden modstand.

Hazarere

6. Etniske minoriteter som hazarere, der er shiamuslimer, har ifølge SER endnu ikke været udsat for massakre, og sidstnævnte fik lov til at fejre en religiøs højtid, Ashura, i uge 33. SER vurderede, at lignende fejring vil være tvivlsomme fremover; de vil uden tvivl blive diskrimineret fremadrettet og muligvis også udsat for vold, og det er uvist i hvilket omfang, de fremover vil få lov til at udøve deres religion uhindret, da Taliban betragter hazarene som vantro. Deres udsathed forøges af, at flere også har arbejdet for vestlige magter.

Ansatte på vestlige ambassader og internationale organisationer

7. Ansatte på vestlige ambassader og internationale organisationer er sårbare i forskellige grader alt afhængig af hvilken organisation, de har arbejdet for. Ansatte for den amerikanske ambassade vil være i en kategori for sig, hvorimod FN-ansatte vil blive vurderet på, hvilken type FN-organisation, det drejer sig om. WHO er særskilt ildeset blandt Taliban, eftersom Osama bin-Laden blev fundet af CIA under dække af en polio vaccineindsats. Medarbejdere ved humanitære organisationer (Røde Kors, hospitaler) er muligvis mindre udsatte.

Kvindes situation

8. Situationen for kvinder er usikker: Der er pålidelige oplysninger om, at Taliban har tvangsgiftet unge, ugifte kvinder væk til Talibansoldater. Der er ubekræftede rygter om, at det også drejede sig om mindreårige piger. For øjeblikket udtaler Taliban, at piger skal gå i skole og kvinder skal have lov at arbejde, men disse løfter ledsages aldrig af detaljer om, hvordan det skal foregå, ej heller tidligere når SER har interviewet højtstående Taliban-ledere. De tætteste disse ledere har været på konkrete anvisninger har været, at pige børn må gå i skole, men kun indtil de når puberteten; kvinder må arbejde i den formelle sektor, men kun på kontorer, hvor der ikke er mænd til stede; kvinder må forlade hjemmet, men kun iført burka. SER understregede, at når Taliban siger hijab, så mener de ikke tørklæde, men fuldt tildækket/burka. Kvinder skal arbejde inden for Talibans fortolkning af Sharia-lovgivningens rammer.

9. Rammerne for kvinders bevægelsesfrihed ser ud til at variere en smule iflg. SER. I syd er befolkningen generelt mere konservativ og her vil ingen kvinde kunne forlade hjemmet uden at være iført burka og uden mandlig ledsager. I Logar-provinsen sydøst for Kabul havde SER interviewet civile og talibanere og der fundet de mest 'tolerante' talibanere. Her måtte kvinder på egen hånd gå på bazaren (i burka), og man måtte se tv i hjemmene. SER understregede, at Taliban er en bevægelse, der er opstået organisk af afghansk traditionel stammekultur. Det betyder, at der er mange afghanere, som deler Talibans konservative værdisæt uden at tilhøre Taliban. Det betyder, at Taliban vil kunne indføre restriktioner på kvinders rettigheder uden nødvendigvis at møde stor modstand fra den del af befolkningen, som ellers ikke er tilhængere af Taliban.
10. Kvinders muligheder for at arbejde på sundhedscentre tegner også til at blive omfattet af Talibanernes modvilje mod at lade kvinder arbejde uden for hjemmet på kontorer, hvor der var mænd til stede. Selvom de Talibanere, SER havde interviewet, foretrak at deres hustruer eller døtre blev tilset af en jordemor eller af en kvindelig læge var de modstandere af at lade kvinder uddanne sig på universitetet og henviste til, at traditionelle sundhedsmedarbejdere/jordemødre måtte kunne udfylde rollen som sundhedsarbejdere for kvinder fremover.
11. Den del af befolkningen som har støttet en mere progressiv tankegang ift. kvinders rettigheder, har befundet sig i byerne og har kunnet gøre det med støtte fra de vestlige ambassader ifølge SER. Hvis de skal fortsætte med at støtte kvinders rettigheder, vil det fremover ske uden nogen form for sikkerhed. SER fandt det sigende, at de afghanske kvindelige politikere og menneskerettighedsforkæmpere som han talte frit med gennem årene, nu er stoppet med at svare på beskeder eller svarer, at de ikke kan udtale sig.

Offentlige ansatte i embedsværket

12. SER forventer, at nogle civile embedsmænd vil kunne fortsætte deres arbejde alene af den grund, at Taliban har brug for dem for at kunne regere landet. Fx er Kabuls borgmester og sundhedsministeren blevet bedt om at fortsætte, selvom Taliban overtager de statslige institutioner. Talibans beskedne erfaring med skyggekabinetter fra provinserne vil ikke være tilstrækkelig til, at de kan regere landet uden de tidligere embedsmænd. Kvindelige embedsmænds fremtid er usikker, men der har ej heller været mange kvinder ansatte i administrationen. Kvindelige parlamentarikere har der derimod været en del af, og de vil sikkert blive rensat ud/Parlamentet vil blive opløst.
13. Det tyder på, at Taliban nåede at storme flere regeringskontorer, inden registrene over offentligt ansatte blev tilintetgjort. Ifølge SER har Taliban gode muligheder for at finde ud af hvem, der har arbejdet hvor, da Afghanistan har været præget af et vist teknokratiske og meget bureaukratisk styre. Den tidligere præsident er blevet omtalt som en leder, der 'førte krig via excel-ark'.

Journalister

14. Behandlingen af journalister har været blandet. SER nævnet, at Taliban har udtalt, at de ikke vil forfølge journalister, og Taliban har nedsat en kommission, der skal undersøge overfald på journalister. Uanset disse løfter så blev en fotograf fra nyhedsmediet Reuters dræbt i Kandahar to uger før Taliban indtog Kabul, og Taliban fik fat i personens lig og skamferede det, og påtog sig ansvaret for handlingen. Derudover fortalte SER, at Taliban har slået afghanske regerings øverste

presse-embedsmand ihjel i Kabul. Taliban har udtalt, at journalister 'kan få lov til at arbejde under emiratet, hvis de neutrale og unbiased', men hvornår de betingelser er opfyldt skal vurderes af Taliban. Der er fortsat aktive journalister på gaderne i Kabul, og Tolo News opererer fortsat.

Menneskerettighedsaktivister

15. Ifølge SER findes der primært menneskerettighedsaktivister i Kabul og andre større byer, fremfor i provinserne. Taliban betragter menneskerettighedsaktivister som USA's forlængede arm; bevægelsens modvilje stammer ifølge SER fra, at menneskerettighedsorganisationer blev indført i Afghanistan 'med maskingeværer', og at talen om kvinderettighederne udgør en underminering af Islam. Taliban betragter i lige så høj grad de personer, som har arbejdet for menneskerettighedsorganisationer (fx menneskerettighedskommissionen), som de soldater, der ses som USA's forlængede arm af Taliban.

Fremtidige perspektiver for civilbefolkningen

16. Sideløbende med at SER var opmærksom på, at situationen kan ændre sig hurtigt i Afghanistan, fremhævede han, at man kan udele meget af, hvordan Taliban handlede i 90'erne, og hvordan de har ageret i de områder af Afghanistan, de har haft kontrollen med de seneste 20 år, når man skal forudse, hvordan Taliban fremover vil behandle udsatte og sårbare grupper. Ifølge SER er der intet, der tyder på, at Taliban har ændret ideologi ift. en konservativ fortolkning af Islam. De faktorer, som måske kunne tænkes at moderere den måde, Taliban vil behandle civile på (i den betydning at civile skal kunne leve et liv i fred, såfremt de følger lovgivningen; hvis ikke vil de blive straffet hårdt og korporeligt) er, at Taliban vil blive tvunget til at forholde sig til at befolkningen vænnet sig til et vist niveau af sociale services. Dette niveau kan kun opretholdes, såfremt Afghanistan bliver tilført eksterne økonomiske midler. Taliban ønsker givetvis ikke at ende som en paria stat underlagt internationale sanktioner og uden adgang til de økonomiske reserver og derfor kan det nye styre muligvis moderere sin behandling af civile. Afhængigheden af vestlige bistandsmidler kan dog erstattes af økonomiske støtte fra Pakistan, Kina, Indien eller Rusland og disse stiller næppe krav til god regeringsførelse og overholdelse af menneskerettigheder.
17. Afslutningsvis fremhævede SER, at Haqqani-netværket, som er blevet den førende fraktion inden for bevægelsen med de blodigste angreb på vestlige tropper og afghanske civile og de fleste kidnapninger af vesterlændinge på samvittigheden, udgør den mest anti-vestlige del af Taliban. De kommer muligvis til at tegne Talibans politik fremover. De har et meget tæt forhold til al-Qaeda og har også en vis form for forbindelse til Islamisk Stat i Afghanistan (ISKP). Der er konsensus mellem de (forhenværende) afghanske sikkerhedstjenester og vestlige efterretninger om, at Haqqani-netværket har faciliteret og bidraget til de meget blodige terrorangreb gennemført af ISKP i Kabul, hvor ofre primært har været hazaraer. SER vurderer, at al-Qaeda fremover vil få endnu fastere fodfæste i Afghanistan enten direkte faciliteret af Taliban eller grundet den fremvoksende lovløshed i fjerne egne af landet. Det er allerede kendt viden, at al-Qaeda er i Afghanistan under Talibans beskyttelse, og det kan få en betydning for hazararenes situation fremover.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference (ToR)

- 1. The development in Taliban's territorial gains since 1 May 2021**
 - i. Overview of the geography of security incidents
- 2. Impact on civilians**
 - i. Civilian casualties
 - ii. IDPs and refugees in and out of Afghanistan
- 3. Targeted individuals**
 - i. Women
 - ii. Former members of ANDSF and pro-government militias
 - iii. Former government employees and perceived supporters the government
 - iv. Employees or former employees of international companies, foreign troops or foreign embassies in Afghanistan
 - v. Journalists
 - vi. Human rights defenders