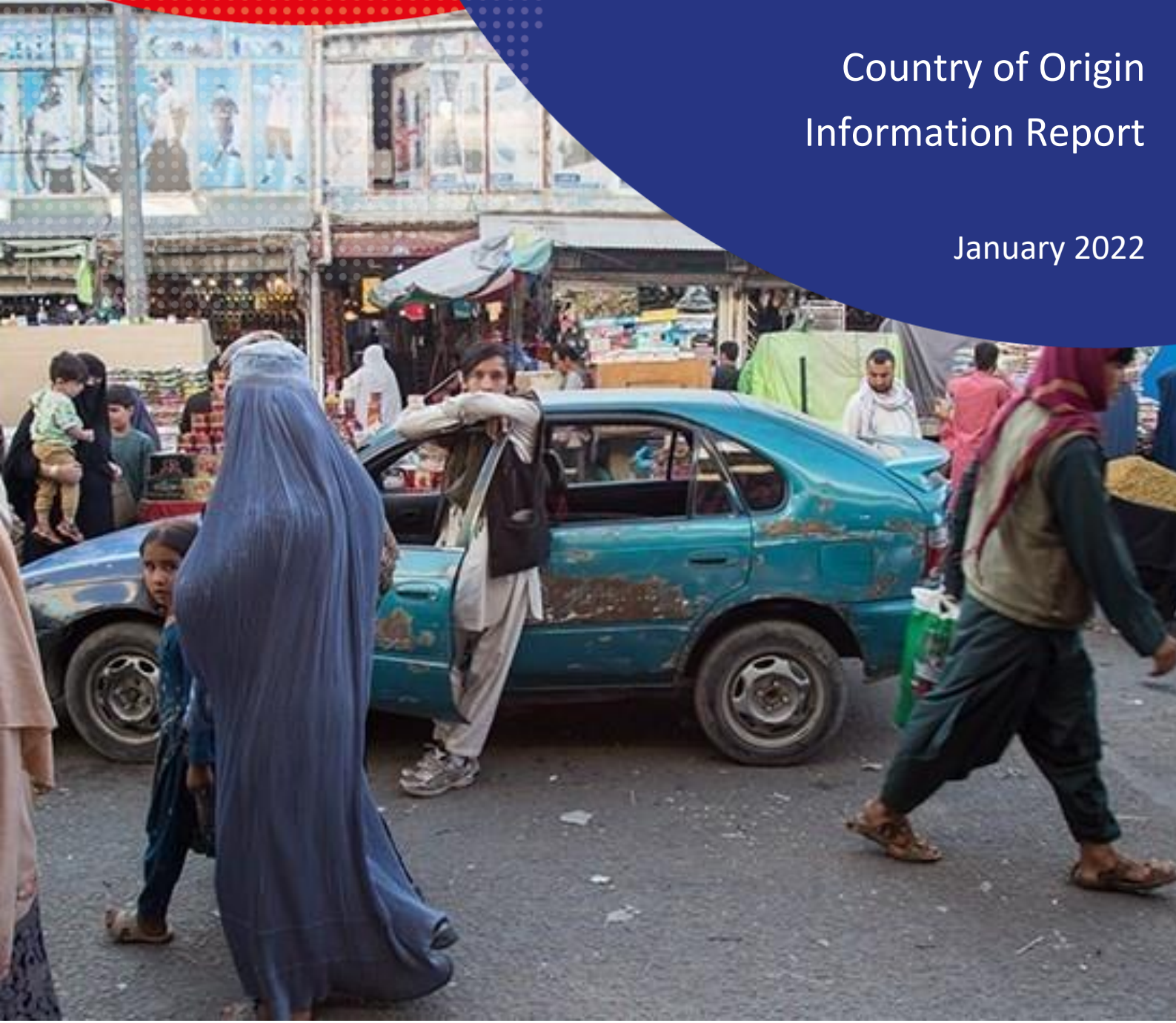




Afghanistan Country focus

Country of Origin
Information Report

January 2022



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It must be noted that the review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EASO.



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Disclaimer

This report was written by EASO according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2019)¹. The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EASO nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 8 December 2021. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the [Introduction](#).

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

Glossary and Abbreviations

AAN	Afghanistan Analyst Network
ACB	Afghanistan Cricket Board
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANDSF	Afghan National Defence and Security Forces
ANJU	Afghanistan National Journalists Union
AUAF	American University of Afghanistan
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
IED	Improvised explosive device
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
MoD	Minister of Defence
Mol	Minister of Interior
NRF	National Resistance Front
NSIA	Afghanistan's National Statistics and Information Authority
SFSA	Seasonal Food Security Assessment
SJSU	San Jose State University
UXO	Unexploded ordnance



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide information relevant for international protection status determination. The report contains information on developments in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021 until 8 December 2021.

The content of this report differs from the previous EASO report on Afghanistan covering the security situation in the country², which had as a main focus on the conflict dynamics. As the conflict between the previous Afghan government and the Taliban movement cannot be described as ongoing, and as the conflict-related violence levels have naturally changed, the current topics of interest for international protection status determination are now rather linked to the Taliban's government formation, policy making and policy implementation, as well as to the situation under Taliban rule for the general population and for some specific groups or profiles. Security incidents and violence related to resistance, insurgent groups, terrorism and similar elements have, however, been included in the chapters covering the general security situation.

This report does not cover events after 8 December 2021. However, as regards the situation of women it should be noted that on 26 December 2021 the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice reportedly issued a guidance saying that women should not be offered transport of more than 45 miles (72 kilometres) if unaccompanied by a close male relative and calling on drivers to not offer rides to women that are not wearing hijab.³

Methodology

This report was drafted by EASO and quality reviewed by relevant departments in Member States mentioned in the [Acknowledgement](#) section, in line with the EASO COI Report Methodology (2019)⁴ and the EASO COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2019).⁵

Sources

In accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology the content of this report relies on a range of different open-source material, as well as interviews with sources between 8 and 11 November 2021. Several of the oral sources interviewed for this report have been anonymised upon their own request. For additional information, see the [Bibliography](#).

Limitations in monitoring developments in Afghanistan

Analysing preliminary findings

The political situation and conflict dynamics radically changed in Afghanistan when the US withdrew their forces and the former government collapsed in mid-August, leading to the Taliban taking power and reinstating the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). The [Terms of Reference](#) that formed the basis of the report structure, contain questions related to the type of state and rule that may be established under the Taliban, and how it will impact the everyday life of the Afghan people and certain groups of the population. Such forward looking questions are impossible to answer with

² EASO, EASO COI Report: Afghanistan – Security situation update, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

³ AFP, No trips for Afghan women unless escorted by male relative: Taliban, 26 December 2021, available at: [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women Banned From Making Trips Unless Escorted By A Chaperone, 26 December 2021, [url](#)

⁴ EASO, EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, June 2019, [url](#)

⁵ EASO, Writing and Referencing Guide for EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, June 2019, [url](#)

certainty at this stage, mainly due to a great information gap on the situation in the country and on the Taliban's intentions, but also due to the transitional and highly volatile period that Afghanistan undergoes at the time of writing. During an EASO organised seminar on Afghanistan on 23 November 2021, three expert speakers, independent of each other and with different fields of interest, stressed that it is too early to draw any final conclusions about the situation in Afghanistan or how it might unfold in the future.⁶

Against the background of prevailing research limitations, this report demonstrates preliminary findings on how Taliban rule has manifested itself since the takeover of Kabul but does not analyse whether these findings are representative of the Taliban leadership's intentions nor of their bearing for the future. For the same reason the demonstrated security incidents and trends are events known to EASO but should not be viewed as an exhaustive description of the current situation.

Media presence

During the drafting period, journalism was facing major challenges in Afghanistan. Consequently, the possibilities to cover the situation from abroad reduced significantly. One of the main monitoring challenges was the fact that a great number of international and local journalists evacuated or fled the country.⁷ A number of international media outlets withdrew their correspondents during the evacuation efforts in the last weeks of August 2021 and relied on monitoring the situation from abroad. However, there were international correspondents that stayed in the country, returned or took up duties in Afghanistan after the evacuations⁸, but in some cases it remained unclear whether international media had reporters on the ground or relied on freelancers.⁹

The local media landscape was severely affected by the Taliban takeover, both by restrictions on media freedom and financial problems.¹⁰ A significant number of media outlets stopped operating after the takeover.¹¹ In mid-September the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) estimated that at least 153 media organisations had ceased operations¹² and that about 1 300 local journalists remained in Afghanistan, primarily in Kabul.¹³ The availability of sources on the ground and relevant open source material was impacted by local journalists fleeing or going into hiding¹⁴, as well as

⁶ Dam, B., investigative journalist, statement made at EASO's hybrid seminars on Afghanistan, 23 November 2021, Athens, Greece; Berg Harpviken, K., research professor at PRIO, statement made at EASO's hybrid seminars on Afghanistan, 23 November 2021, Athens, Greece; Shapour, R., analyst at AAN, statement made at EASO's hybrid seminars on Afghanistan, 23 November 2021, Athens, Greece

⁷ RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸ See for instance: CNN, CNN correspondent Clarissa Ward boards flight out of Afghanistan, 20 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, Clarissa Ward returns to Kabul just a month after Taliban takeover, 28 September 2021, [url](#); Sune Engel Rasmussen, [Twitter], posted on: 15 September 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Kabul airport chaos: How the Washington Post team escaped Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, 20 August 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Q&A: Ask The Post's Susannah George about reporting on the Taliban, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹ CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰ Ariana News, Crippling economy closing Afghan media outlets, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹ France24, Afghanistan's media enters the unknown under Taliban rule, 24 August 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Media Activity Faces Sharp Decline: Report, 3 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Journalists Call for Access to Official Information, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

¹² IFJ, Afghanistan: Attacks to the media escalate as Taliban control takes hold, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³ Guardian (The), Taliban's return 'catastrophe' for journalism in Afghanistan, 14 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴ IFJ, Afghanistan: "Every minute I fear they will try to find and kill me", 30 September 2021, [url](#)

financial drawbacks that left many without an income, forcing journalists to search for other employments.¹⁵ Especially reporting on events taking place in other areas than Kabul was sparse.¹⁶

Source assessment

As the possibilities to cover the situation reduced¹⁷, reporting on Taliban interactions with the Afghan population was limited, and in many cases tended to be ‘anecdotal’.¹⁸ Fake news circulated¹⁹ and social media were frequently used as a source by many reporters. Twitter was, for instance, frequently used as a source to report on Taliban policy²⁰ which made it difficult to assess whether the statements were official, verify the source, and identify nuances in stated policy changes. In some cases, dubious information was even republished by major newspapers.²¹ Similarly, some fake social media accounts akin to established media spread false information²² as well as fake social media accounts were attributed to former and incumbent government officials.²³ A related issue was journalists reporting from abroad who shared information on claimed atrocities and violations by the Taliban on social media.²⁴ The possibilities to verify circulating information and track the original or primary sources were limited.

It should also be taken into account that much of the reporting on Afghanistan during the drafting period came from Western media outlets, US media in particular, and from reporters mainly working from outside Afghanistan. Furthermore, there was a concentration of reports on events in Kabul. In an article by International Journalists’ Network (IJNET), some journalists working in Afghanistan or in the region pointed out that the reporting situation left room for errors and misrepresentation. It also noted problematic narratives and language resonating in many reports resulting in sensationalising content stemming from biases and a lack of cultural and contextual understanding.²⁵ In this report, cross checking has been conducted in line with EASO’s COI Methodology, checking information in Western media with local sources as far as possible. However, assessing the reliability of local media reports also became increasingly complex. Still operating media outlets and journalists reportedly adjusted to the new conditions under Taliban rule.²⁶ For instance, this could be noticed in a general decrease of potentially provocative content, as well as

¹⁵ Khaama Press, Degeneration of journalism, Afghan journalist making bricks to feed family, 01 October 2021, [url](#);

RFE/FL/Gandhara, As Afghan Media Struggles Under Taliban, Jobless Journalists Grow Desperate, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶ International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule Begins in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#); Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021. This source is not based in Afghanistan but remains in contact with personal contacts on the ground. The source has extensive experience of academic research on, *inter alia*, the Afghan justice system. The source wishes to be anonymous.

¹⁷ RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸ International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule Begins in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹ Deadline, Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem – Special Report, 20 September 2021, [url](#); France24, Fake photo of new Afghan central bank chief goes viral, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁰ See for example: BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban deputy denies reports of leaderships row in new video, 15 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), At Afghan Universities, Increasing Fear That Women Will Never Be Allowed Back, 27 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

²¹ New York Times (The), At Afghan Universities, Increasing Fear That Women Will Never Be Allowed Back, 27 September 2021, [url](#); NPR, Kabul University chancellor says female students will be allowed, but segregated, 2 October 2021, [url](#)

²² Deadline, Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem – Special Report, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

²³ Pajhwok Afghan News, Tens of fake social media pages attributed to high profile figures, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁴ See for example: Bilal Sarwary, [Twitter], posted on: 25 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁵ IJNET, Report responsibly on Afghanistan with this advice, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁶ RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

increased content praising the Taliban.²⁷ A tendency to self-censorship could also be noted.²⁸ In addition, the Taliban issued 11 guidelines for journalists which included rules against topics in conflict with Islam or ‘insulting national personalities’. Journalists were also instructed to produce reports in coordination with the interim-government’s media office.²⁹ Human Rights Watch described these rules as ‘suffocating media freedom’ and criticised them for being so broad and vague that they in practice prohibited any critical reporting about the Taliban.³⁰

Decrease in relevant reporting

There were a number of sources that stopped publishing or updating material that previously has been important to COI production on Afghanistan. For example, the following sources or products stopped publishing public material during the reference period:

- Afghanistan’s National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA)³¹
- Reports on protection of civilians in armed conflict by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)³²
- Report of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR)³³
- Long War Journal mapping Taliban control in Afghanistan³⁴
- The New York Times’ Afghan War Casualty Report³⁵
- Voice of Jihad (Taliban official website)³⁶
- RiV (Reduction in Violence) Monitoring³⁷
- Reporterly (resumed in early November 2021)³⁸
- United States Department of Defense’s (USDOD) Reports on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan³⁹

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is also a source frequently used in previous EASO COI products. ACLED continues their coding of events, but experiences increased difficulties in sourcing events.⁴⁰

Furthermore, there were no active monitoring bodies reporting from Afghanistan, which limited the possibilities to monitor human rights violations or other misconduct. On 18 September 2021 the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) issued a statement in which it said that it could not carry out its function as all offices had been ‘occupied’ by Taliban forces. Furthermore, AIHRC stated that they were hindered in carrying out their duties as they had little confidence in the Taliban government respecting the mandate of AIHRC or female staff members.⁴¹

²⁷ BBC, How Afghanistan's media is changing under Taliban rule, 21 August 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fewer women, No Entertainment: Kabul’s Media Scene Transforms After Taliban Takeover, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

²⁸ New York Times (The), ‘Everything Changed Overnight’: Afghan Reporters Face an Intolerant Regime, 11 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁹ New York Times (The), New Taliban Guidelines Stir Fear About the Future of Press Freedom, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁰ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

³¹ Afghanistan. National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), [official website inaccessible]

³² UNAMA, Reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2021, [url](#)

³³ OHCHR, Human Rights Reports OHCHR/UNAMA, n.d., [url](#)

³⁴ FDD’s LWJ, Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁵ New York Times (The), The Afghan War Casualty Report, 5 August 2021, [url](#)

³⁶ Voice of Jihad, [official website inaccessible]

³⁷ RiV Monitoring, [homepage], last updated: 12 August 2021, [url](#)

³⁸ Reporterly, [homepage], n.d., [url](#)

³⁹ USDOD, Publications, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁰ ACLED, ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions around the Conflict in Afghanistan, September 2021, [url](#), pp. 12–13

⁴¹ AIHRC, Statement on the status of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 18 September 2021, [url](#)



Map

AFGHANISTAN: Administrative Divisions



Creation date: 06 November 2014 Data Sources: AGCHO; GAUL Feedback: ocha.imu.afg@un.org Website: <https://afg.humanitarianresponse.info> <http://www.unocha.org/afghanistan>
 The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Map 1: Afghanistan - administrative divisions, source: UNOCHA⁴²

⁴² UNOCHA, Afghanistan - administrative divisions, January 2014, [url](#)

1. Taliban governance

1.1 Reinstating the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

1.1.1 Announcement and international recognition

Following the sudden collapse of the former government of Afghanistan⁴³ and the Taliban takeover of the capital Kabul on 15 August 2021⁴⁴, the Taliban announced the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)⁴⁵, which was previously in power in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001.⁴⁶ In October 2021, the Taliban called on Afghan media to refer to them as the IEA and not to use terms like the ‘Taliban group’ or ‘Taliban faction’, they further stated that they controlled the entire territory of Afghanistan and provided service to the people.⁴⁷

The Taliban searched for international recognition, as well as assistance to avoid a humanitarian and economic disaster in Afghanistan.⁴⁸ However, no country officially recognised the IEA⁴⁹, and the UN referred to the Taliban as the ‘de facto’ authorities.⁵⁰ Yet, some countries kept their embassies open in Kabul, for instance China, Pakistan, Russia, Iran and Qatar, and some engaged with the announced interim government.⁵¹ Some of the more notable initial interactions with other states were the meeting between a US delegation and the Taliban representative in Doha, Qatar, on 10 October 2021⁵², Pakistan’s foreign minister’s visit to Kabul two weeks later, and, following talks with the Taliban in Moscow, President Vladimir Putin’s announcement that the Taliban might be removed from Russia’s list of extremist groups.⁵³ UNAMA also had some initial interaction with the interim government.⁵⁴

The United States Department of States (USDOS) indicated that ‘candid and professional’ discussions were held in Doha on 9 and 10 October 2021, on concerns related to security, terrorism, safe passage, human rights, and humanitarian assistance, and reiterated that ‘the Taliban will be judged on its actions, not only its words’.⁵⁵ Pakistan’s foreign minister vowed on 21 October 2021 that Pakistan would provide humanitarian assistance, resume flights with Kabul and facilitate border crossing trade.⁵⁶ On 2 November 2021, less than two weeks after this statement, Pakistan reportedly reopened Chaman border to allow crossings from Afghanistan after a month-long closure.⁵⁷ As of 5 November 2021, the Afghan embassy in Islamabad was reopened, operating with former government staff.⁵⁸

In late October 2021, the Taliban declared that they met the conditions for international recognition, as several stakeholders met with them, including the US, some EU Member States, Russia, China,

⁴³ CSIS, The reason for the collapse of Afghan forces, 17 August 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁴ van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban’s new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵ WSJ, Taliban unveil new Afghan government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶ BBC, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷ VOA, Taliban order Afghan media to use group’s official name, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸ France24, Taliban warns US not to ‘destabilise’ new Afghan regime in face-to-face talks, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, UN Indefinitely Delays Decision On Taliban, Burma Junta Recognition, 7 December 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰ UN News, Anxiety in Afghanistan as Taliban struggles for legitimacy, 17 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹ WSJ, Who Are the Taliban and What’s Next for Afghanistan?, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵² USDOS, US delegation meeting with senior Taliban representatives in Doha, 10 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵³ Ariana News, Russia Mulling excluding IEA from list of extremists group: Putin, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴ UN News, Anxiety in Afghanistan as Taliban struggles for legitimacy, 17 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵ USDOS, US delegation meeting with senior Taliban representatives in Doha, 10 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Pakistani foreign minister pledges to expand trade after visit to Kabul, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷ Reuters, Pakistan reopens Chaman border crossing to Afghanistan, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸ TOLONews, Afghan embassy in Islamabad resumes operations, 5 November 2021, [url](#)

Iran and Pakistan.⁵⁹ The Express Tribune, however, reported that Pakistan, Russia, China and the US had agreed on a continuation of ‘practical engagement’ with the Taliban but had asked them to follow ‘moderate policies’, and to ‘do more’ before a formal recognition could be considered.⁶⁰

1.1.2 Government formation

The Taliban announced an interim government on 7 September 2021⁶¹ and two additional rounds of appointments followed.⁶² As of 5 October 2021, the interim government was composed of over 30 ministries.⁶³ Lists of the appointments made can be found in [Annex 1](#).

All appointments to the interim government consisted of persons from within the Taliban movement, and many served in the government of the 1990s.⁶⁴ For instance, the appointed prime minister, Muhammad Hasan Akhund, and his deputy, Abdul Ghani Barader, held various senior positions during the previous Taliban rule. The appointed director of intelligence, Abdul Haq Wasiq, was previously deputy director of intelligence, and the appointed foreign minister Mullah Amir Khan Mutaqi previously served as Minister of Information and Culture.⁶⁵

Furthermore, the cabinet comprised several persons on the UN Security Council’s sanction list⁶⁶, and also included three out of five senior Taliban members that were held by the US in Guantanamo Bay for over a decade and later exchanged for a US soldier in 2014.⁶⁷ They are the Minister of Information and Culture, Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah, the Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs, Mullah Noorullah Noori, and the Director of Intelligence, Abdul Haq Wasiq.⁶⁸ Fazl Mohammad Mazloom served as Deputy Defence Minister in the interim government for a short period, and Mohammab Nabi Omari was appointed governor of Khost province.⁶⁹ They all participated in the peace talks in Doha before the Taliban takeover.⁷⁰

Regarding the Taliban’s affiliation with armed groups, the Haqqani network was included in the interim government by the appointment of Serajuddin Haqqani as Minister of Interior.⁷¹ Serajuddin Haqqani has been deputy leader of the Taliban since 2015. In the meantime, members of the Haqqani network are allegedly closely linked to al-Qaeda.⁷² According to some sources, al-Qaeda remained a threat in Afghanistan.⁷³ International Crisis Group, on the other hand, stressed that al-

⁵⁹ Nunn Asia, *اسلامي امارت: به رسميت د پېژندو شرطونه مو پوره کړي* [informal translation ‘Islamic Emirate: we have filled the conditions for international recognition’], 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰ Express Tribune (The), *Taliban recognition unlike in near future*, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶¹ BBC, *Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government*, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶² van Bijlert, M., *Taliban’s caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments*, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); Zabihullah Mujahid, [Twitter], posted on: 21 September 2021, [url](#); JustPaste.it, *د نويو ټاکنو په اړه د اسلامي امارت اعلاميه* [informal translation ‘Islamic Emirate’s declaration on new appointments’], 4 October 2021, updated on 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶³ van Bijlert, M., *Taliban’s caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments*, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴ van Bijlert, M., *The focus of the Taliban’s new government: internal cohesion, external dominance*, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵ TOLONews, *Hibatullah Akhundzada to lead Taliban Govt*, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶ UN Security Council, *Haqqani network*, n.d., [url](#); UN Security Council, *Mohammad Hassan Akhund*, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁷ New York Times (The), *Once Jailed in Guantánamo, 5 Taliban Now Face U.S. at Peace Talks*, 26 March 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁸ TOLONews, *Hibatullah Akhundzada to lead Taliban Govt*, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹ BBC, *Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government*, 7 September 2021, [url](#); van Bijlert, M., *Taliban’s caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments*, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); JustPaste.it, *د نويو ټاکنو په اړه د اسلامي امارت اعلاميه* [informal translation ‘Islamic Emirate’s declaration on new appointments’], 4 October 2021, updated on 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰ New York Times (The), *Once Jailed in Guantánamo, 5 Taliban Now Face U.S. at Peace Talks*, 26 March 2019, [url](#)

⁷¹ TOLONews, *Hibatullah Akhundzada to lead Taliban Govt*, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷² New York Times (The), *ISIS branch poses biggest immediate terrorist threat to evacuation in Kabul*, 25 August 2021, updated on 4 November 2021, [url](#); WSJ, *In Taliban-Ruled Afghanistan, Al Qaeda-Linked Haqqani Network Rises to Power*, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

⁷³ CNN, *Pentagon: “We know that al Qaeda is a presence” in Afghanistan*, 20 August 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), *Kabul Airport Attack Highlights Enduring Threat of ISIS and Al Qaeda*, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

Qaeda did not have ‘the organisational capability to capitalise on the Taliban’s win’ and that they at times ‘seemed detached from events unfolding in Afghanistan’.⁷⁴

The appointments to the interim government were all-male⁷⁵, and most were Pashtuns and clericals.⁷⁶ Some appointments included persons from other ethnicities than Pashtuns⁷⁷, such as members from the Tajik⁷⁸, Uzbek⁷⁹, and Hazara⁸⁰ communities. For example, Haji Noor Uddin of Tajik ethnicity was appointed acting minister of commerce, and his two deputies were also Tajik.⁸¹ Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi of Uzbek ethnicity was appointed second deputy prime minister⁸², and Muhammad Hasan Ghyasi of Hazara ethnicity was appointed second deputy minister of public health.⁸³

On 8 November 2021, the Taliban appointed new provincial governors for Badakhshan, Baghlan, Bamyan, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kunduz, Logar, Maidan Wardak, Nimroz, Paktia, Paktika, Sar-e Pul, Uruzgan, and Zabul and deputy governors for the majority of these provinces. Additionally, provincial police chiefs were appointed for Baghlan, Balkh, Farah, Faryab, Ghor, Kabul, Kunar, Kunduz, Logar, and Takhar, and a ‘security chief’ for the districts of Herat’s Shindand area.⁸⁴

There were some reports on ethnic representation on local level, for instance in Panjshir (which is predominantly populated by members of the Tajik community⁸⁵). The governor and his deputy, the security commander and his deputy (who is also head of intelligence), as well as all security personnel (including operational Taliban commanders) reportedly came from the local population.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Taliban appointed Mawlawi Mahdi from the Hazara community as intelligence chief for Bamyan province.⁸⁷ Mahdi previously served as a district governor within the Taliban’s shadow governance.⁸⁸ According to the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), Mahdi was tasked to fill local government positions in Bamyan province, which is predominantly populated by members of the Hazara community, with persons from the local population.⁸⁹

⁷⁴ International Crisis Group, How Islamist militants elsewhere view the Taliban’s victory in Afghanistan, 27 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁵ UN Women, Expert’s take: Gender equality is critical for the Afghanistan’s future, long-term development, and sustained peace, 14 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁶ van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban’s new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁷ WSJ, Taliban add minorities, technocrats, to Afghan government, but no women, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸ International News (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to ‘make’ it inclusive, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Who is who in Taliban’s caretaker cabinet?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁰ International News (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to ‘make’ it inclusive, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸¹ International News (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to ‘make’ it inclusive, 22 September 2021, [url](#); Zabihullah Mujahid, [Twitter], posted on: 21 September 2021, [url](#); JustPaste.it, د عالیقدر د عالیقدر امیرالمؤمنین د فرمان له مخی د اسلامی امارت په تشکیلاتو کی لاندی ټاکنی وشوی [informal translation ‘Based on supreme leader’s decree the following appointments were made within the Islamic Emirate’], 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸² van Bijlert, M., Taleban’s caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Who is who in Taliban’s caretaker cabinet?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸³ International News (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to ‘make’ it inclusive, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁴ TOLONews, New governors appointed in 17 provinces, 8 November 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁵ DW, Why Afghanistan’s Panjshir remains out of Taliban’s reach, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Kabul lovers, ملا حمید خراسانی قوماندان امنیه طالبان در پنجشیر آماده جنگ با امرالله صالح و مقاومت ۲ [informal translation ‘Mullah Hamid Khorasani Taliban security in Panjshir ready for war against Amrullah Saleh and 2 resistance’], 22 September 2021, [url](#); Hamayon Afghan Official, ملا عبدالحمید خراسانی برضدامرالله صالح و مقاومت ۲ [informal translation ‘Mullah Abdul Hamid Khorasani against Amrullah Saleh and 2 resistance’], 5 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Washington Post (The), The Taliban hopes Maulavi Mahdi, a 33-year-old Hazara, will help win over the ethnic group, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Ruttig, T., The case of Mawlawi Mehdi and Balkhab District: Are the Taleban attracting Hazaras?, AAN, 23 May 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁹ WSJ, Taliban reach out to Shiite Hazara minority, seeking unity and Iran ties, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

1.1.3 Political system

The Taliban did not announce in detail how they intend to govern Afghanistan, nor which type of political system they envisaged to adopt. Instead, there was a tendency to refer to Sharia as the legal system they were going to impose.⁹⁰ During the first press conference after the takeover, Taliban spokesmen said that the Taliban had changed during the past 20 years in terms of experience, maturity and vision, but that Afghanistan was still a Muslim nation and that there would be ‘a strong Islamic government’. The Taliban also announced that they intended to act on the basis of their principles, religion and culture, and emphasised the importance of Islam and that ‘nothing should be against Islamic values’.⁹¹ The same day, 17 August 2021, senior Taliban member Waheedullah Hashimi told Reuters that ‘we will not discuss what type of political system should we apply in Afghanistan because it is clear. It is sharia law and that is it’.⁹² Political analysts commenting the issue claimed that the ideal state of the Taliban was highly centralized with laws and policy being implemented nationwide.⁹³

After the announcement of the interim-government, the Taliban did not give any time indications on how long it would hold office or on what constitutional basis it would function.⁹⁴ On 28 September 2021, the Afghan Ministry of Justice published a statement in which the acting Minister of Justice was said to have indicated to the Chinese ambassador that provisions from the constitution of the King Mohammad Zahir era would be enacted temporarily, except for content contradicting Sharia law or ‘principles of the Islamic Emirate’.⁹⁵

After the takeover the Taliban did not indicate that they would hold elections.⁹⁶ However, the official spokesperson for the Taliban’s Qatar office, Suhail Shaheen, did not fully exclude this possibility as he told Voice of America’s (VOA) Urdu Service that the issue of elections would be determined when drafting a new constitution.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the Taliban have previously repeatedly rejected the idea of forming a government based on elections.⁹⁸ In the above-mentioned interview with Reuters, senior Taliban member Hashimi said that ‘there will be no democratic system at all’.⁹⁹

According to an article by United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the interim government was ‘modelled on the same system’ as in the 1990s with both a spiritual leader and a prime minister heading the government.¹⁰⁰ Looking at its decision-making structure, the announced emirate could be described as a religious theocracy¹⁰¹ ruled by the commander of believers and supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada¹⁰² who has had the authority over the Taliban’s political, religious and military affairs since 2016. On 31 October 2021, after years of absence from public view and rumours of being deceased, Akhundzada appeared in public and held a speech in Kandahar city.¹⁰³

⁹⁰ Rahimi, H. Opinion. What the Taliban may be getting wrong about Islamic governance, Al Jazeera, 24 August 2021, [url](#); WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate, but vulnerable Afghans say brutal justice is still being meted out, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹¹ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban’s first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁹² Reuters, Exclusive: Council may rule Afghanistan, Taliban to reach out to soldiers, pilots, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

⁹³ Hussain, M., Taliban’s Evolving Strategy, 2 September 2021, [url](#); Mobasher, M. B., What Does the Future Holds for the New Taliban Government?, MIR, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁴ International Crisis Group, Who Will Run the Taliban Government, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁵ Ministry of Justice, His Excellency Acting Minister Of Justice Met With The Chinese Ambassador, 28 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁶ AP, Taliban form all-male Afghan government of old guard members, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁷ VOA, Taliban Not Ruling Out Holding Elections, 16 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁸ Mobasher, M. B., What Does the Future Holds for the New Taliban Government?, 13 September 2021, MIR, [url](#)

⁹⁹ Reuters, Exclusive: Council may rule Afghanistan, Taliban to reach out to soldiers, pilots, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ USIP, For the Taliban, governing will be the hard part, 5 October 2021, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰¹ DW, Afghanistan: What is Taliban’s religious ideology?, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰² van Bijlert, M., Taleban’s caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Hibatullah Akhundzada to lead Taliban Govt, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰³ Reuters, Taliban reclusive supreme leader appears, belying rumours of his death, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

1.1.4. Capacity to run the state

Most persons appointed to the interim government were of a clerical background, and few seemed to have any higher non-religious educational background or other competencies specifically related to the post they were appointed.¹⁰⁴ In a statement to media in September, the appointed Minister of Higher Education, Abdul Baqi Haqqani, said that university degrees were of no importance as ‘the Mullahs and the Taliban in power have no Doctor’s degree, Master’s degree or even a high school degree, but are the greatest’.¹⁰⁵ According to WSJ, the appointed clerics had little experience of managing ministries and government departments¹⁰⁶ although many had experience of serving in the previous Taliban government.¹⁰⁷ Other sources suggested that the Taliban do not have experience of funding or personnel to deliver sophisticated government services.¹⁰⁸

In an interview by Vox, Haroun Rahimi, an assistant professor of law at the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF), called the appointments a way of ‘distributing power’ and ‘rewarding loyalists’, rather than making appointments on the basis of qualification. The same source stated that all appointments made in Herat city and within the Ministry of Higher Education had been ‘unqualified’ Taliban members, primarily mullahs with few known qualifications related to their new positions. The head of the Central Bank previously ran the Taliban’s finances, and according to Rahimi he most certainly lacked experience in monetary policy and interacting with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the international system of finances.¹⁰⁹ Omar Sadr, also assistant professor at AUAF, pointed out to Al Jazeera that after 100 days of the new rule the economic policy of the Taliban was still unclear, as well as how they intended to address issues such as poverty and unemployment.¹¹⁰ Four employees at financial institutions told Associated Press (AP) that Taliban officials lacked experience in banking or financial issues.¹¹¹ One of the interviewees told AP that the Taliban did not understand the magnitude of the financial crisis, although one could not expect them to understand international monetary policy being ‘guerrilla fighters at heart’.¹¹² An Afghan human rights expert, interviewed by EASO on 11 November 2021, also stated that the Taliban did not realise the urgency of the situation and the need to conform with some demands to reach international assistance.¹¹³ According to WSJ, Afghanistan’s electric utility company was headed by a mullah.¹¹⁴

There were sources that indicated that the Taliban seemed genuine and serious about maintaining functioning ministries and delivering state service.¹¹⁵ However, Afghan public services heavily depended on foreign aid and support even before the takeover, and the lack of foreign aid and

¹⁰⁴ van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban’s new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#); Vox, What the Taliban’s new government reveals about how they will rule, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ Said Sulaiman Ashna, [Twitter], 7 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban’s new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ Al Jazeera, 100 days of the Taliban, 23 November 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Why the Taliban’s Repression of Women May Be More Tactical Than Ideological, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ Vox, What the Taliban’s new government reveals about how they will rule, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Al Jazeera, 100 days of the Taliban, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹¹ AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 19 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹² AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 19 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021. This source left Afghanistan as the Taliban took power but remains in communication with sources on the ground. The source monitor developments within the human rights field through local sources in the country. The source wishes to be anonymous.

¹¹⁴ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ East Asia Forum, Afghanistan’s Taliban-led future, 16 October 2021, [url](#); AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 19 October 2021, [url](#)

support posed a great challenge to fund public services.¹¹⁶ The appointment of persons on UN sanctions lists to the interim government further complicated the possibilities for the Taliban government to receive international support.¹¹⁷ Sanctions, lack of aid, frozen Central Bank reserves, and isolation were some of the factors that impacted Afghan economy and the Taliban's ability to govern, as social services were severely underfunded and as the situation caused a difficult humanitarian situation.¹¹⁸

The Taliban called on former government financial workers to return to work¹¹⁹ and reportedly made certain appointments to restore the financial system.¹²⁰ In the above-mentioned interview by AP, four employees from financial institutions stated that the Taliban had commanded bureaucrats from the Finance Ministry, Central Bank and other state-owned banks to resume work to cope with the financial challenges, acknowledging that they did not have the expertise to manage the situation themselves.¹²¹

Another issue related to the capacity to run the state administration was that many qualified staff members left the country in August, causing a significant 'brain drain' in many sectors.¹²² According to AP, among those who stayed all did not resume work, and a department within the Finance Ministry had shrunk from 250 employees to 50 employees during better days.¹²³ WSJ on the other hand reported that most male workers at government ministries had returned to work.¹²⁴ There were also challenges in paying salaries to state employees.¹²⁵

Despite the challenges outlined above, Andrew H. Watkins, senior expert at USIP, emphasised the speed of the Taliban transition of leaders and fighters from an insurgency to 'officials of a still-forming government'. Watkins pointed out that the Taliban within two months had 'extracted oaths of fealty or at least gestures of tacit acceptance' from most remaining political leaders, appointed an interim government, established new security institutions in the cities and had established control over the borders, set customs, engaged in regional diplomacy, struck down the resistance in Panjsher, and devoted resources to handle security challenges such as ISKP.¹²⁶ In a guest essay for The New York Times, Ashley Jackson, co-director of Centre for the Study of Armed Groups, stated that the Taliban had prepared for Western forces to withdraw for years, although their administration was 'rudimentary' and 'stretched thin'. Jackson emphasised 'stark' differences between areas that had been under Taliban influence for long and that tend to be deeply conservative, and more progressive areas that recently saw a shift of power, concluding that there were few indications of the Taliban being equipped to govern the cities or the country as a whole on their own.¹²⁷

¹¹⁶ Terpstra, N., The 'new' Taliban regime in Afghanistan: different methods but the same political goal, Conversation (The), 6 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Reuters, U.N. warns of 'colossal' collapse of Afghan banking system, 22 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ USIP, Afghanistan's Economic and Humanitarian Crisis Turn Dire, 14 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Reuters, Taliban expand economic team as Afghan crisis deepens, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²¹ AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²² Economic Times (The), Afghanistan brain drain complicates Taliban rule: Experts, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²³ AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#); AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁶ Watkins, A. H., An Assessment of Taliban Rule at Three Months, November 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Jackson, A., Opinion. This Is What Taliban Control Looks Like In 2021, 17 August 2021, in New York Times (The), [url](#)

1.2 State institutions

1.2.1 Government institutions and state service

During the years as an insurgency the Taliban established a shadow governance and a shadow court system.¹²⁸ For more information on the shadow justice structures before the takeover, see EASO's report: [Afghanistan. Criminal law, customary justice and informal dispute resolution](#).

As they had the whole state apparatus to manage after the takeover as well as the need to provide basic public services, an initial approach seemed to be to incorporate elements of the existing civil service into the new administration.¹²⁹

Appointments were made to central ministries¹³⁰ and within the provincial administration.¹³¹ The most notable change from the previous government was that the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice was reinstated. Under the previous Taliban rule one of the main functions of the body was to enforce the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia.¹³² No appointments were made to the previous Ministry of Women's affairs, whose office building was assigned to the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.¹³³ Persons working for the previous administration were asked to return to work.¹³⁴ However, many employees within the state administration evacuated in August, some did not resume their jobs despite the general amnesty that was issued after the takeover, and there were also reported issues in paying salaries.¹³⁵

Afghan banks started to reopen in Kabul on 25 August 2021, after being closed for more than a week due to the takeover.¹³⁶ Initially there was a weekly withdrawal limit corresponding USD 200, but on 3 November the limit was raised to USD 400.¹³⁷ According to a report by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) from November 2021, cited by Reuters, banks had stopped extending new credits, and non-performing loans had almost doubled to 57 % in comparison to the previous year. UNDP warned of a possible collapse of the banking system within the coming months due to the inability to repay loans, cash liquidity crunch and lower deposits as about 40 % of Afghanistan's deposits was expected to be lost by the end of 2021.¹³⁸

Since the Taliban takeover, maintaining the electricity supply has been a major issue as power bills have not been paid. WSJ reported on Kabul facing blackouts in October 2021, and the former chief operating officer of Afghanistan's state power monopoly stated that it 'needs an urgent infusion of \$90 million to stave off a collapse'.¹³⁹

¹²⁸ Terpstra, N., The 'new' Taliban regime in Afghanistan: different methods but the same political goal, Conversation (The), 6 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁹ Terpstra, N., The 'new' Taliban regime in Afghanistan: different methods but the same political goal, Conversation (The), 6 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁰ Nunn.asia, [Twitter], posted on: 7 September 2021, [url](#); van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban's new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³¹ Justpaste.it, به ولايتونو کې د يو لړ ټاکنو په اړه د عاليقدر امير المؤمنین حفظه الله فرمان [informal translation 'Supreme Leader's decree on a number of provincial level appointments'], 7 November 2021, [url](#)

¹³² Guardian (The), Taliban name all-male Afghan cabinet including minister wanted by FBI, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³³ Al Jazeera, Taliban replaces ministry for women with 'guidance' ministry, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Al Jazeera, Taliban announces 'amnesty', reaches out women, 17 August 2021, [url](#); AA, Taliban notify Gov't servants to return to jobs, 21 August 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁵ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Al Jazeera, Banks in Kabul reopen, drawing crowds of cash-starved Afghans, 25 August 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁷ AP, Afghan Central Bank doubles cap on weekly withdrawals, 3 November 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Afghanistan central bank raises limit on bank withdrawals to \$400 a week, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁸ Reuters, U.N. warns of 'colossal' collapse of Afghan banking system, 22 November 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁹ WSJ, Kabul Faces Blackout as Taliban Don't Pay Electricity Suppliers, 3 October 2021, [url](#)

On 22 September 2021, the Director-General of World Health Organisation (WHO) described the Afghan health system as ‘on the brink of collapse’ and pointed out the cuts in donor support leading to reduced operations and health facilities shutting down. According to the statement, only 17 % of Sehatmandi health facilities (Afghanistan’s largest health project) were fully functional.¹⁴⁰ Since then, there have been additional reports on a deteriorating situation with, *inter alia*, unpaid salaries to medical personnel, shortages in medicines and equipment as well as a decreased access to healthcare among women, and a drop in rates of skilled birth attendance.¹⁴¹

Schools reopened after the takeover¹⁴², except for secondary education for girls which remained closed in most parts of the country.¹⁴³ Economic hardship also affected the educational sector, with difficulties to pay salaries to teachers and other staff.¹⁴⁴ According to TOLONews, 50 % of private education centres closed since the Taliban takeover, due to a significant decrease in students as the economic situation of Afghan families deteriorated.¹⁴⁵ Some private universities resumed their activities and held graduation ceremonies, while public universities reportedly remained closed.¹⁴⁶

On 6 October 2021, the passport distribution service reportedly began in Kabul.¹⁴⁷ In mid-November there were reports indicating that 100 000 passports had been issued in seven provinces¹⁴⁸ although the passport distribution in Kabul halted due to technical issues.¹⁴⁹ On 24 November 2021 the Taliban announced that the passports would be issued in 10 more provinces¹⁵⁰, and on 5 December they announced that the service would be provided in 14 additional provinces and that the passport service would soon resume in Kabul.¹⁵¹ Only passports of the previous government style were issued, and according to the acting General Director of the Passport service, Alam Gul Haqqani, people who had already registered online and paid for their passports would be prioritised. According to another Taliban official 170 000 online requests were registered before 15 August 2021, and once these passports were issued Afghans would be able to register for new passports (although in the former government style). Alam Gul Haqqani further stated in October that between 900 000 and one million printed passports were available which would be enough for the coming eight to nine months.¹⁵²

For information on the justice system [see chapter 1.5](#).

1.2.2 Security institutions

When the Taliban entered Kabul on 15 August 2021, the group was estimated to have 75 000 militants in Afghanistan who caused the collapse of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces

¹⁴⁰ WHO, Acute health needs in Afghanistan must be urgently addressed and health gains protected, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ Krishna, G. & Howard, S., Afghanistan’s doctors urge world to put politics and prejudice aside to save its healthcare, 3 November 2021, available at: [url](#)

¹⁴² DW, Schools reopen in Afghanistan — but not for girls, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴³ BBC, Afghanistan: Girls' despair as Taliban confirm secondary school ban, 8 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ TOLONews, Herat Teachers Demand Their, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ TOLONews, 50% of Private Education Centers Closed Nationwide Since Takeover, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ Daily Mail, Female students in Afghanistan graduate from private university - watched on by Taliban leaders, 29 November 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Economic Situation Hurting Private Universities, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ Bakhtar News, Process of distributing passports began in Kabul, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Republicworld.com, Taliban to extend passport services to seven Afghanistan provinces: Report, 14 November 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Govt to Reopen Passport Offices in 7 Provinces, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ ANU, Afghanistan: Passport distribution in Kabul still on hold for past 12 days, 29 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ Ariana News, Gov't to resume issuing passports in 10 more provinces, 24 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ TOLONews, '32 Provinces' to Offer Passport Services: Officials, 5 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵² Ariana News, Interview with Mawlawi Alam Gul Haqqani, Head of Passport Department, 13 October 2021, [url](#); DW, افغانستان | صدور پاسپورت در افغانستان از سر گرفته شد [Informal translation: Passport issuance resumed in Afghanistan], 5 October 2021, [url](#)

(ANDSF).¹⁵³ One month later, the Taliban's army chief of staff Qari Fasihuddin reportedly announced that they were working to 'form a "regular" and "strong" army'.¹⁵⁴

As of 7 September 2021, the Taliban had, *inter alia*, appointed a Minister of Defence (MoD), a Director of Intelligence Affairs of the MoD, a Minister of Interior (Mol), a Deputy Mol for Counternarcotics, a Deputy Mol for Interior security, and a Head of Intelligence.¹⁵⁵

In Kabul City, Taliban fighters increasingly put on military uniforms.¹⁵⁶ As of 4 October 2021, the number of Taliban forces in Kabul was estimated at about 4 000 men that were deployed to provide security as policemen. However, most of them were reportedly dressed in local traditional clothing.¹⁵⁷

According to Nunn Asia, a Pashto independent local news agency, 'Special Security and Defence forces of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' are called *Fateh Zwaq* ("victorious force").¹⁵⁸

In September 2021, Taliban officials made public statements indicating 'plans to improve organization and marshal fighters' and called on members related to defence, interior and intelligence agencies to move to military bases.¹⁵⁹ On 11 November 2021, the Taliban established a military court to deal with complaints against the Taliban military forces based on a decree of the Supreme Leader.¹⁶⁰ The Taliban's interior ministry spokesperson, Qari Sayed Khosti, stated that a training programme is underway, that professionals will be deployed on all levels, and also called on former police personnel to return to work.¹⁶¹

In October 2021, Balkh's governor, Mawlawi Qudratullah Abuhamza, reportedly stated that 'soldiers from different ethnic groups have been recruited into the Balkh military corps, who will provide security and safety of the people'.¹⁶²

According to BBC Pashto, on 8 November 2021, the Taliban issued a degree that changed the names of the previous army corps (*Qol-e Ordou*) as follows:

- Kabul Corps changed to **Kabul Central Corps**
- 209th Shaheen Corps in Mazar changed to to **Al-Fatha Corps**
- 17th Pamir Corps in Kunduz changed to **Omary Corps**
- 205th Attal Corps in Kandahar changed to **Badar Corps**
- 201st Silab Corps in Laghman changed to **Khalid Ibn-e Walid Corps**
- 203rd Tander Corps in Paktia changed to **Mansouri Corps**
- 207th Zafar Corps in Herat changed to **Al-Farooq Corps**
- 215th Maiwand Corps in Helmand changed to **Azm Corps**.¹⁶³

¹⁵³ CSIS, The reason for the collapse of Afghan forces, 17 August 2021, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁵⁴ TOLONews, Taliban Says it Will Build Regular Army, Include Former Members, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ Stars and Stripes, After 20 years of waging guerrilla warfare, Taliban fighters say they miss the battle, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ France24, From insurgency to city beat: Taliban police learn the rope, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ Nunn Asia, الهجره ستوديو د افغان ځانگړو ځواکونو تازه انځورونه نشر کړي [informal translation 'Al-Hejra Studio has published new images of Afghan special forces'], 2 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ AP, Taliban order fighters out of Afghan homes they took over, 30 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ AVA, دولت اسلامي طالبان اعلام کرده که به منظور رسیدگی به شکایات و عرایض علیه نیروهای نظامی طالبان، دادگاه نظامی ایجاد شده است. این حکم از سوی ملا هبت الله آخوندزاده؛ رهبر طالبان صادر شده است [informal translation 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has announced the creation of a military court in order to address complaints against Taliban military personnel'], 11 November 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Islamic Emirate to Form Military Court, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶¹ France24, From insurgency to city beat: Taliban police learn the rope, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶² TOLONews, In Balkh Mod official urges troops to guard the nation, 17 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶³ BBC Pashto, طالبانو د افغانستان د قول اردوگانو نومونه بدل کړي [informal translation 'Taliban changed the names of military corps of Afghanistan'], 8 November 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban retitles all military corps in Afghanistan, 8 November 2021, [url](#)

On 11 November 2021, Bakhtar news agency cited Mawlawi Ataulloh Omari, the commander of the Al-Fatah Corps, stating that the Taliban made the air force operational in Balkh province where the majority of the former government air force pilots and technicians had returned to work. Zia-ul-Haq Aghasi was appointed as the commander of Balkh air force.¹⁶⁴

1.3 Central control

The exact structure of Taliban forces, and the movement's decision-making practices or chain of command were not fully clear.¹⁶⁵ Several sources described the Taliban as decentralised and flexible, which was an effective approach as an insurgency, but not necessarily an asset in their governance causing inefficiency in decision-making.¹⁶⁶ As an effect, policy implementation differed depending on geographical contexts, such as local stakeholders.¹⁶⁷ An Afghan human rights expert confirmed this and observed that statements in Kabul generally were not translated into action in all provinces, and that there was not a uniform policy implementation across Afghanistan. According to the source Taliban behaviour was contextual, depending on the province and its local dynamics.¹⁶⁸

A USIP study from 2019 concluded that the Taliban's shadow governance held a level of organisation, hierarchical decision-making, and policy coherence unusual for insurgencies, but did also note uneven policy implementation on local level.¹⁶⁹ Although the *Layha* charts¹⁷⁰ of 2010 described the organisational structure as highly centralised with top-down decision-making¹⁷¹, the USIP study concluded that policymaking and its application were influenced by local Taliban leaders' 'personalities, preferences and relationships'. In practice they were not as hierarchal and top-down as often indicated by the Taliban, but 'at least as much bottom-up' as consensus within the movement had been prioritised before coherence.¹⁷² An Afghan law professor, interviewed by EASO on 9 November 2021, stated that the Taliban had been very hesitant to compromise and give in to international demands and explained this as a result of not wanting to risk creating discontent rising from 'the bottom' among the fighters. Showing flexibility in sensitive issues would pose a serious challenge for the cohesion of the movement as fighters might perceive flexibility on women's rights, cutting relations with other Islamist/Jihadi groups or including members of the previous government looked at as 'foreign puppets', as contradictory to the narrative they were told when they were mobilised to fight.¹⁷³

The Afghan law professor separated the Taliban's consistency in the societal sphere from the military sphere. As an insurgency, the Taliban showed 'outmost unity' in issues related to military strategy, ceasefire and mobilisation, and having a flat organisational structure did not hinder them from acting coherently. However, when engaging in social issues such as education or healthcare, the composition of the movement, containing several decentralised networks, were more notable with local variations. With the Taliban in power, one could see the same pattern with cases of

¹⁶⁴ Bakhtar News, Air force of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan started operating in Balkh, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ DW, Afghanistan: What will the Taliban do without an enemy to fight?, 11 October 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Taliban have their work cut out to win hearts and minds in Kabul, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ van Bijlert, M., The Taleban's Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); Vox, What the Taliban's new government reveals about how they will rule, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ USIP, Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban Makes Policy, November 2019, [url](#), p. 37

¹⁶⁸ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

¹⁶⁹ USIP, Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban Makes Policy, November 2019, [url](#), p. 37

¹⁷⁰ The Taliban's *Layha* can be described as the movements 'code of conduct' which was periodically issued for their members, the latest version in 2010. See: Clark, K., The *Layha*. Calling the Taleban to Account. Appendix 1. The Taleban Codes of Conduct in English, AAN, 2011, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ Johnson, T. H., Taliban narratives: the use and power of stories in the Afghanistan conflict, Hurst & Company, London, 2017, chapter 8; Clark, K., The *Layha*. Calling the Taleban to Account, AAN, 2011, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁷² USIP, Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban Makes Policy, November 2019, [url](#), p. 37

¹⁷³ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

Taliban members taking matters in their own hands, imposing their own versions of what the Taliban should be doing as a government, despite what the official spokesperson or central leadership said. The source further described high level fissures between a southern and an eastern leaning of the movement, but also mentioned that there was a lot of variation from province to province, from city to city reflecting the local Taliban leadership. According to the source there could be differences even on lower level as the fighter's own preferences could play a role.¹⁷⁴ Other sources also pointed at ideological differences between factions within the Taliban¹⁷⁵, and tensions between an 'older' and a 'younger' generation, describing the latter as having a more 'hardline' approach.¹⁷⁶

Regarding the leadership's control in the military chain of command and control over foot soldiers, there were speculations on internal competition and in-fighting.¹⁷⁷ An anonymised 'Afghanistan-based security analyst', told Deutsche Welle (DW) that there were 'numerous accounts' of unclear military structures across the country. According to the source, such disputes were most visible in Kabul as, for example, several commanders came from different locations of Afghanistan, had competing interests and claimed responsibility of the same area or issue, which caused disputes, sometimes escalating into violence.¹⁷⁸ Another source, conflict expert Weeda Mehran, told Foreign Policy (FP) that violence between rival factions became more public and called the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) 'a convenient scapegoat' for attacks 'possibly committed' in internal power struggles.¹⁷⁹ An Afghan human rights expert also stated that alleged ISKP attacks could be a way of disclosing political competition and competition of resources within the Taliban.¹⁸⁰ Dr. Melissa Kerr Chiovenda, assistant professor of anthropology at Zayed University, told EASO on 9 November 2021 that there had been some Taliban infighting in Bamyan. According to her it was unclear to people what had actually happened but there seemed to be issues of the Taliban in controlling foot-soldiers as well as rifts inside the movement.¹⁸¹ There were also several reports on Taliban fighters subjecting civilians and journalists to violence, as well as conducting house-to-house searches and retaliation acts despite the general amnesty that was issued for all who served within the previous government.¹⁸² Yet, it remained unclear whether such acts were sanctioned by the leadership or caused by a lack of discipline or control in the chain of command.¹⁸³

Although it was difficult to determine whether reported atrocities were systematic or not, there was reportedly room for Taliban fighters to act on their own initiative as they did not seem to face punishment or any consequences.¹⁸⁴ Taliban representatives made statements in which they acknowledged that Taliban fighters sometimes did not act in line with the official policy because of personal enmities and desire for revenge.¹⁸⁵ In some cases, the Taliban claimed that they would

¹⁷⁴ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

¹⁷⁵ DW, Afghanistan: What is the Taliban's religious ideology?, 2 November 2021, [url](#); FP, With Haqqanis at Afghanistan's Helm, the Taliban Will Grow Even More Extreme, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Financial Times, Afghanistan's young Talibs: 'No compromise with the enemy of our martyrs', 18 September 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), What the Taliban's youngest fighters tell us about the future of the movement, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ USIP, Five Questions on the Taliban's Caretaker Government, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ DW, Afghanistan: What will the Taliban do without an enemy to fight?, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ FP, Taliban Splintered by Internal Divisions, External Spoilers, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

¹⁸¹ Kerr Chiovenda, M. (Dr.), professor at Zayed University, online interview, 9 November 2021

¹⁸² UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 2 September 2021, [url](#), p. 5; France24, Afghan journalists tell of Taliban beatings after covering protests, 9 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban accused of murdering pregnant Afghan policewoman in front of her family, 6 September 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Protest turns violent in Kabul; journalists, women were beaten, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸³ New York Times (The), A Taliban spokesman urges women to stay home because fighters haven't been trained to respect them, 24 August 2021, [url](#); Diplomat (The), The Taliban's False Amnesty, 24 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021; Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021; Times of India, Out-of-control foot soldiers run amok, embarrass Taliban, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

punish members acting against the official policy¹⁸⁶, that they would establish commissions to prevent unwanted behaviour¹⁸⁷, and remove problematic members from military ranks.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, they declared a ‘ban on arbitrary military operations and courts’ by Taliban members and stated that they were willing to create five sub-commissions to apply these measures in all provinces.¹⁸⁹ However, as noted by sources interviewed by EASO there were no reports of Taliban fighters being punished or facing other consequences for misconduct¹⁹⁰, except for an instance in October 2021 when Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated that two people involved in a shooting at a wedding had been arrested, without clarifying whether these persons were Taliban fighters or not.¹⁹¹ Patricia Gossman, associate director for the Asia division of Human Rights Watch, told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) that there were many reports of people being arrested ‘purely for having any association with the former security forces and family members being interrogated or beaten by Taliban looking for former officials’, and that those carrying out such abuses appeared to have been given a ‘free hand’ while top-officials denied such events taking place.¹⁹²

1.4 Initial reports of the implementation of Sharia law in daily life

Sharia law allows for different interpretations and varies between different schools of thought. The Taliban’s view of Sharia law is based on the Sunni Hanafi school of jurisprudence and rooted in the late-19th-century Deobandi movement. It is also influenced by local traditions and tribal codes making it different from the interpretation and implementation of Sharia law in other countries with justice systems under Islamic law.¹⁹³ During the first press conference after the takeover of Kabul, Taliban spokesmen stated that the Taliban had changed since their last time in power, but emphasised that nothing should be against Islamic values. In their promises of allowing women’s rights and media freedom they stated that such rights should be allowed within ‘the limits of Sharia’, ‘our cultural frameworks’ and ‘Islamic values’.¹⁹⁴ However, the Taliban did not elaborate on what such limits would look like in practice¹⁹⁵, and during the reporting period the situation remained unclear.¹⁹⁶

As previously mentioned, the implementation of Sharia law differed in areas controlled by the Taliban during their time as an insurgency.¹⁹⁷ During their time as an insurgency, there were also reports indicating a tendency to implement gradually stricter policies as they gained influence in an area.¹⁹⁸

¹⁸⁶ Bilal Karimi, [Twitter], posted on: 23 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban creates commission to expel unfavourable members, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ TOLONews, Taliban Commission to Probe Violence Against Media, 22 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ Bilal Karimi, [Twitter], posted on: 23 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban creates commission to expel unfavourable members, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ AVA, Taliban bans arbitrary operations and courts, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021; Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

¹⁹¹ Ariana News, IEA arrests two gunmen after wedding party shooting, 31 October 2021, [url](#); CNN, Three wedding guests reportedly shot dead in Afghanistan for playing music at reception, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Takes Revenge On former Afghan Security forces, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban ‘Tribal Version’: Shari’a Is Not The Same Everywhere, 2 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban’s first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁵ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban’s first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ Berkley Forum, Islam, Politics, and the Future of Afghanistan, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Public Executions, Floggings ‘Inevitable’ Under Taliban Court Rulings, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ HRW, “You Have No Right to Complain”. Education, Social Restrictions, and Justice in Taliban-Held Afghanistan, 2020, [url](#), pp. 38, 42–43, 47–48

There were reports indicating local divergence in implementing Islamic rule and official policy during the reference period. One example concerned secondary education which was interrupted as the Taliban took power, and resumed only for boys in mid-September.¹⁹⁹ Secondary education for girls stayed closed awaiting arrangements in line with Islamic law ensuring ‘a safe learning environment’ according to Taliban spokespersons.²⁰⁰ However, in early October the official spokesman for the Taliban’s political office in Qatar posted on Twitter that girls were going back to school in Kunduz²⁰¹, which was also confirmed by local teachers.²⁰² Meanwhile the education ministry official Mohammad Abid told Agence France-Presse (AFP) that there had been no policy changes concerning girls’ high school education.²⁰³ In most parts of the country girls could not access secondary education²⁰⁴, but it resumed for girls in some northern provinces (reportedly Balkh, Kunduz, and Sar-e Pul)²⁰⁵, as well as in Herat Province.²⁰⁶

In some areas of southern Afghanistan, more conservative social policies reflecting more conservative norms were reported, although conservative traditions impacted the public life even before the Taliban takeover.²⁰⁷ One woman in Lashkar Gah told WSJ that she had to wear a burqa.²⁰⁸ However, this was a common practice in many areas before the takeover²⁰⁹ and burqa was not officially decreed as mandatory.²¹⁰ In Kandahar most women had reportedly been barred from resuming work or education.²¹¹ Taliban officials in Helmand reportedly banned barbers from shaving or cutting beards, and issued a warning that those violating the rule would be punished by the religious police.²¹² There were also reports on similar restrictions in Ghor²¹³, Kabul²¹⁴, Uruzgan²¹⁵, Kapisa and Takhar²¹⁶, although this information could not be verified through other sources. According to TOLONews, these restrictions also prohibited women to own smartphones in Helmand, Takhar and Kapisa. TOLONews also reported that Ministry of Culture and Information officials stated that limitations on shaving beards and smartphones were not in line with the Taliban’s official position.²¹⁷ According to WSJ, the Taliban authorities in Kabul ‘overruled’ decisions in Helmand on cutting hair or shaving beards.²¹⁸

A report of Human Rights Watch and the San Jose State University (SJSU) Human Rights Institute suggested a dire situation for women and girls in Herat city, claiming that the Taliban committed ‘widespread and serious human rights violations against women and girls’ and had instilled fear among them. Seven women activists, educators and university students in Herat were interviewed about their life under the Taliban, and, in sum, they said that their lives had completely changed,

¹⁹⁹ Guardian (The), Taliban ban girls from secondary education in Afghanistan, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ Al Jazeera, Girls to return to secondary schools ‘soon as possible’: Taliban, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁰¹ Suhail Shaheen, [Twitter], posted on: 4 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁰² TOLONews, Girls Attend Schools in Kunduz, Balkh, Sar-e-Pul, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁰³ AFP, Some girls return to school as Taliban seeks to manage image, 5 October 2021, available at: [url](#)

²⁰⁴ TOLONews, Schools Reopen for Girls in Grades 7-12 in Balkh Province, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ TOLONews, Girls Attend Schools in Kunduz, Balkh, Sar-e-Pul, 9 October 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Taliban Allow Girls to Return to Some High Schools but With Big Caveats, 27 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ TOLONews, Girl’s Schools for Grades 7-12 Reopen in Herat, 8 November 2021, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021; WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ New Yorker (The), The Other Afghan Women, 6 September 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁰ DW, Afghanistan: What Taliban’s new media rules mean for female actors, 28 November 2021, [url](#)

²¹¹ AFP, Anxiety and fear for women in Taliban stronghold, 9 October 2021, available at: [url](#)

²¹² BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban ban Helmand barbers from trimming beards, 26 September 2021, [url](#); Bilal Sarwary, [Twitter], posted on: 26 September 2021, [url](#)

²¹³ Hast-e Subh Daily, Taliban Banned Beard Shaving in Ghor, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁴ BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban ban Helmand barbers from trimming beards, 26 September 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban’s ‘New’ Governing Style Includes Beatings For Beard Shaving, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁶ TOLONews, Taliban: Some Restrictions in Provinces Not Official, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁷ TOLONews, Taliban: Some Restrictions in Provinces Not Official, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁸ WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

being trapped indoors and afraid to leave their houses without a male family member.²¹⁹ However, other sources did not suggest a ‘hardline’ rule in Herat referring to the more ‘modern’ values and diverse culture that defines the area.²²⁰ Women reportedly were not expected to fully cover²²¹, and all-women demonstrations took place in the city.²²² An Afghan law professor described that some wore more or less the same clothing as before the Taliban took power, although some wore more conservative clothing out of fear of the Taliban. This source had not heard of any mistreatment of women due to their clothing or for going out in public.²²³ However, some female residents told The Washington Post that Taliban fighters had asked them to stop wearing make-up or dismissed them from their jobs, and one woman stated that she had been harassed at a police stop for driving alone.²²⁴ Such tendencies of Taliban fighters seemingly acting on their own initiative in implementing Sharia law were also reported elsewhere.²²⁵

Women reportedly struggled to resume qualified work²²⁶, and some women reportedly did not dare to go outside, although the Taliban did not physically confine them to their homes.²²⁷ A Taliban official in Kandahar told AFP in October 2021 that women had not been banned from anything and that it was the women’s own fault if they did not feel secure enough to go back to work.²²⁸ A political rights activist based in Kandahar told National Public Radio (NPR) that women in general still went out in the area, and that ‘normal housewives’ could continue their lives and, for instance, go shopping. On the other hand, women working within the government, NGOs, or at the universities could not resume their ‘normal routine work’ or move outside, mobilise and socialise as they used to.²²⁹ According to the Afghan law professor, there was a push against the social progress that had been taking place in areas like Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh and Kabul to some extent, although these areas seemed to be quite robust and enduring in maintaining the relative social progress, while in other more conservative areas, such as Kandahar, there were completely different social policies reflecting more conservative norms. On the other hand, the situation had not changed much in such conservative areas either as they were already conservative before the takeover, although in some parts of the country that has been ‘incredibly’ conservative, like the south, there were indications that some social progress under the past 20 years was being reversed as the Taliban got back in power.²³⁰ For more information on the situation of women, see [chapter 2.3](#).

The Taliban did not issue an official ban of music after the takeover, although they disapproved of playing music at weddings and other public events.²³¹ Musicians were reportedly afraid to perform and found a lack of directives on whether they were allowed to carry out their work.²³² There were reports on a popular musician from Badakhshan being welcomed back from Tajikistan by the local

²¹⁹ HRW & SJSU, Afghanistan: Taliban Abuses Cause Widespread Fear, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

²²⁰ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021; Washington Post (The), Life under Taliban in Herat, Afghanistan: Harsh public justice and private despair, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

²²¹ Washington Post (The), Taliban faces a new hurdle in Afghanistan: Protecting public from Islamic State, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²²² TOLONews, Herat Teachers Demand Their Salaries, 20 October 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Herat women protest against Taliban over right to work, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

²²³ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

²²⁴ Washington Post (The), Taliban faces a new hurdle in Afghanistan: Protecting public from Islamic State, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²²⁵ HRW, From Taliban to Taliban: Cycle of Hope, Despair on Women’s Rights, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

²²⁶ Washington Post (The), Taliban faces a new hurdle in Afghanistan: Protecting public from Islamic State, 18 October 2021, [url](#); NPR, How life has changed for Afghan women and girls since the Taliban takeover, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²²⁷ Washington Post (The), Taliban faces a new hurdle in Afghanistan: Protecting public from Islamic State, 18 October 2021, [url](#); AFP, Anxiety and fear for women in Taliban stronghold, 9 October 2021, available at: [url](#)

²²⁸ AFP, Anxiety and fear for women in Taliban stronghold, 9 October 2021, available at: [url](#)

²²⁹ NPR, How life has changed for Afghan women and girls since the Taliban takeover, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²³⁰ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

²³¹ CNN, Three wedding guests reportedly shot dead in Afghanistan for playing music at reception, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

²³² AP, Under Taliban thriving Afghan music scene heads to silence, 22 September 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Musicians Face Uncertain Future, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

Taliban²³³ as well as on occasional incidents of violence against musicians and artists.²³⁴ For more information on musicians and artists, see [chapter 2.9](#).

1.5 Justice system

Under the previous government, Afghan jurisdiction was based on three parallel and overlapping systems or sources of law: formal statutory law, tribal customary law, and Sharia law.²³⁵ The Taliban administered shadow Sharia courts for years²³⁶, and they were welcomed by many due to dissatisfaction with the justice system provided by the Afghan state.²³⁷

For more information on the shadow justice structures before the takeover, see EASO's report: [Afghanistan. Criminal law, customary justice and informal dispute resolution](#).

In an article by RFE/RL of 8 September 2021, several experts were consulted on the coming judicial structure under the Taliban. The coming justice system was believed to be a continuation of the established shadow courts which were identical to the judicial system of the former government, with both criminal and civil courts on district and provincial level, as well as a supreme court.²³⁸

The shadow court system was overseen by the head of the Taliban's judicial commission, Abdul Hakim Ishaqzai, who also headed the shadow supreme court.²³⁹ Ishaqzai was appointed to an equivalent function within the structure of the announced interim government²⁴⁰ and was appointed Minister of Justice on 7 September 2021.²⁴¹ The Telegraph reported that shadow judges took positions within the justice system of the former government.²⁴² In mid-October 2021 a new Supreme Court was reportedly established.²⁴³

In the Taliban's transition from an insurgency to a government, Afghanistan's justice system lacked an official constitution and official laws.²⁴⁴ In interviews to international media, judges and police officers said that the basis of their judgements and actions was Sharia law.²⁴⁵ However, implementing Sharia law opens up for variations according to some experts interviewed by FP and RFE/RL.²⁴⁶ Rana Osman, doctoral researcher at SOAS University of London, explained that to achieve some values and norms within Sharia law the methods of jurisprudence have been dependent on interpretation and 'implementation style', which could open up for the system to 'become an extension of the arm of power of an authoritative state'. Mahmood Mahroon, professor at Kabul University called the situation under the Taliban's shadow government 'completely arbitrary' and mentioned the lack of laws. Journalist Stefanie Glinski stated that the Taliban were not great jurists, and that they viewed 'everything through their own clouded lens' as Sharia law leaves much open to interpretation and scholarship.²⁴⁷ Ashley Jackson told RFE/RL that there were 'some degree' of

²³³ Miraqa Popal, [Twitter], posted on: 19 October 2021, [url](#); Bilal Sarwary, [Twitter], posted on: 19 October 2021, [url](#)

²³⁴ Foschini, F., Music Censorship in 2021: The silencing of a nation and its cultural identity, AAN, 17 November 2021, [url](#)

²³⁵ Hakimi, A. & Sa'adat, M., Legal reform or erasure of history? The politics of moral crimes in Afghanistan, 2020, [url](#)

²³⁶ Jackson A. & Weigand, F., Rebel rule of law. Taliban courts in the west and north-west of Afghanistan, ODI, [url](#), p. 2

²³⁷ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#)

²³⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Public Executions, Floggings 'Inevitable' Under Taliban Court Rulings, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

²³⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Public Executions, Floggings 'Inevitable' Under Taliban Court Rulings, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁰ Express Tribune (The), Abdul Hakim Haqqani appointed Afghanistan's chief justice, 15 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁴¹ van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban's new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁴² Telegraph (The), Taliban will chop off hands of thieves as harsh punishments return, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁴³ Frontier Post (The), Taliban announces creation of Supreme Court of Afghanistan, 15 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan's justice system altered under the Taliban, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Public Executions, Floggings 'Inevitable' Under Taliban Court Ruling, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁷ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#)

geographic variability in the functioning of shadow courts, especially for women and in processing more sensitive issues. Jackson referred to the influence of local customs and tribal structures, that seemed to be more present in the South-eastern parts of the country than in the Western parts.²⁴⁸

AFP reported on the delay in judicial proceedings for some prisoners as the Taliban struggled to implement their justice system across Afghanistan. Awaiting the local judge in Panjwai district in Kandahar, Taliban fighters reportedly represented the whole justice system and were 'left to their own whims and understanding of the group's interpretation of Islamic law'.²⁴⁹ WSJ referred to court staff who stated that Kabul's new primary court did not hold trials, but hosted mediation for disputes. If compromises could not be reached, case files were prepared for future hearing before a judge.²⁵⁰ There were also reports of judges, local leaders and other Taliban officials actively working with public order, security and solving disputes.²⁵¹ For instance a judge, previously serving in a district shadow court in Ghazni, told FP that he was currently serving in the main court of Ghazni city together with four muftis²⁵². Furthermore, a local police officer in Chak district in Wardak told FP in October 2021 that a judge in the sharia court currently helped people solve their problems, and that bigger disputes were taken to the provincial court in Maidan Shar.²⁵³ An anonymous lawyer in Kabul, referring to secondary information from another lawyer, told the legal news and research service JURIST that the Taliban were looking to hire judges and prosecutors and that they had already appointed prosecutors in some areas.²⁵⁴

DW reported that the justice system had been 'radically changed' after the Taliban takeover and referred to public shaming for petty crime and public execution of a kidnapper as examples of punishments under Sharia law.²⁵⁵ However, as noted by journalist Sulaiman Hakemy in an opinion for The National, it was not always clear whether punishments were issued by a court or on the spot by Taliban fighters.²⁵⁶ Regarding DW's reports on public executions for instance, other sources did not report on 'public executions', but on an event of public display of four corpses in Herat.²⁵⁷ According to an article by AP, the Taliban announced that the four men had been caught in a kidnapping and were killed by the police during an exchange of gunfire.²⁵⁸ A second display of corpses took place in the Obe district of Herat Province on 5 October 2021, and Taliban officials said that the three men were killed after an attempted home theft.²⁵⁹ Neither reports on the instances of public shaming mentioned any court proceedings.²⁶⁰ According to Hindustan Times, the crimes of some of those subjected to public shaming were not known²⁶¹, and according to AP public shaming was revived by Taliban fighters.²⁶² The Washington Post reported that Taliban fighters were

²⁴⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Public Executions, Floggings 'Inevitable' Under Taliban Court Rulings, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁹ AFP, Justice delayed as Taliban build their legal system in Afghanistan, 13 November 2021, available at: [url](#)

²⁵⁰ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁵¹ CNN, The Taliban have Afghanistan's justice system in their hands. CNN shows what it's like, 11 October 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), This Is Life in Rural Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁵² The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World defines a mufti as 'a Muslim jurist capable of giving, when requested, a nonbinding opinion known as a *fatwa*, on a point of Islamic law'. See, Oxford University Press, The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, 2009, [url](#)

²⁵³ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁴ JURIST, Afghanistan dispatches: 'the Taliban are looking to hire judges and prosecutors', 14 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ DW, Afghanistan's justice system altered under the Taliban, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ Hakemy, S., Opinion. The shaky ethics of public flogging in Afghanistan, National (The), 20 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ AP, Taliban hang bodies in public; signal return to past tactics, 25 September 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), Taliban publicly display bodies of alleged kidnappers in Herat, 25 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban put alleged kidnappers' bodies on display, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ AP, Taliban hang bodies in public; signal return to past tactics, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁹ Washington Post (The), Harsh public justice and private despair reign in Taliban-ruled Herat, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁰ Hakemy, S., Opinion. The shaky ethics of public flogging in Afghanistan, National (The), 20 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁶¹ Hindustan Times, Kidnappers' body hung in public view: Punishments that Taliban are bringing back in Afghanistan, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁶² AP, Taliban official: Strict punishment, executions will return, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

undisciplined and sent people to prison on the slightest suspicion of illegal activity without legal counsel, ‘languishing in cells until a formal judicial system is in place’.²⁶³

1.5.1 Capital and corporal punishment

In September 2021, Zabiullah Mujahid told The Telegraph that amputation of hands would be among the punishments in court. In the same article unnamed Taliban officials said that some physical punishments were necessary parts of Islamic law and would be revived but did not comment whether public executions and stoning would be reintroduced.²⁶⁴ According to a local judge in Ghazni city, interviewed by FP in the end of October 2021, that such punishments could be return into practice, although this would require a lengthy decision-making process.²⁶⁵ Mullah Nooruddin Turabi told AP in September 2021 that the foundation of Afghanistan’s laws will be the Quran and that some punishments used during the last Taliban rule would be revived. Further, Turabi said that ‘cutting off hands is very necessary for security’ and that executions will be issued by court, but the punishments might not be carried out in public.²⁶⁶

According to The Washington Post, Taliban ‘police chiefs and fighters openly said they want their leadership to impose the kinds of strict Islamic punishments that were in place from 1996 to 2001’.²⁶⁷ In an interview by Vox, Haroun Rahimi, assistant professor at AUAF, stated that public executions and floggings would be inevitable under a court system in line with the Taliban’s interpretation of Sharia law. Rahimi further stated, according to Sharia law, that punishment of certain crimes ‘against God’, such as stoning for adultery, public flogging for drinking alcohol, hand amputation for some types of theft, must be carried out in public. In the case of retributive justice served for other types of crimes, such as execution for murder on the request of a victim’s family, public display might not be as necessary according to Rahimi – although a Quranic verse says that witnesses should be taken to floggings, which might imply carrying out such punishments in public as well.²⁶⁸

In mid-October the Taliban announced that punishments shall not be carried out in public unless the supreme court issues and orders for such actions.²⁶⁹

No reports on corporal or capital punishments issued by a court were found during the reference period.

As reported by AFP in November 2021, Taliban judges avoided to issue too harsh punishments to avoid losing support among the population.²⁷⁰ However, there were reports on Taliban fighters subjecting civilians to violent treatment, *inter alia* whipping alleged thieves.²⁷¹

1.5.2 Prisons and prison conditions

Soon after the takeover, the Taliban announced the release of ‘all political detainees’ throughout Afghanistan²⁷² and released thousands of prisoners, *inter alia* from Kabul’s main prison Pul-e

²⁶³ Washington Post (The), Taliban faces a new hurdle in Afghanistan: Protecting public from Islamic State, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁴ Telegraph (The), Taliban will chop off hands of thieves as harsh punishments return, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁵ FP, 12 Million Angry Men, 28 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁶ AP, Taliban official, Strict punishment, executions will return, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁷ Washington Post (The), Taliban faces a new hurdle in Afghanistan: Protecting public from Islamic State, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Public Executions, Floggings ‘Inevitable’ Under Taliban Court Rulings, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁶⁹ Zabihullah Mujahid, [Twitter], posted on: 14 October 2021, [url](#); Dawn, Taliban ask officials not to carry out public executions unless directed by apex court, 15 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ AFP, Justice delayed as Taliban build their legal system in Afghanistan, 13 November 2021, available at: [url](#)

²⁷¹ Metro, Taliban return to brutal ways as they whip and torment ‘thief’, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁷² CNN, Taliban leader calls for all remaining “political detainees” to be released, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

Charkhi.²⁷³ On 20 August 2021, an Afghan journalist running the YouTube channel ‘Kabul lovers’, provided a documentary from Pul-e Charkhi prison and interviewed the Taliban security personnel. According to a Taliban member responsible for the prison, the majority of the inmates had already left when the Taliban came and the remaining prisoners, around 200 persons, were released.²⁷⁴ Some of the former inmates became guards.²⁷⁵ Earlier in August 2021, the Taliban released 708 prisoners in four provinces²⁷⁶, and in November 2021 they released 21 prisoners from Helmand central prison.²⁷⁷

In an interview on 31 October 2021, Qari Habibullah Zadran (also known as Qari Mohammad Haroon Bader), the military acting director of prisons in Afghanistan, stated that there were around 4 000 prisoners in Afghanistan including 600 in Pul-e Charkhi.²⁷⁸ One month before, most of the prison’s cells appeared to be empty, with one part housing about 60 prisoners, mainly accused of crime and drug users.²⁷⁹ According to Al Jazeera the prison could house 5 000 prisoners, although the cells could be ‘packed’ with more than 10 000 prisoners.²⁸⁰ The Taliban’s managing director of the prison claimed that it had the capacity to keep 6 000–7 000 prisoners.²⁸¹

On 10 November 2021, TOLONews cited Khalil Hamza, spokesman for the Taliban’s intelligence department, claiming that 600 ISKP members were imprisoned in several parts of Afghanistan including its top members.²⁸² This information could not be verified by other sources.

According to the Taliban’s military acting director of prisons, former government employees of the prison returned to work. He further stated that the inmates were provided with food, medical care, access to legal procedures, and allowed to receive visits from male and female family members. He further claimed that there were plans to establish madrassas and professional schools (previously known as *Sanhati*) in Pul-e Charkhi prison where inmates would be able to work and receive professional trainings.²⁸³ However, there were reports indicating that inmates did not have access to legal counsel and suffered in cells, awaiting a formal judicial system being put in place.²⁸⁴ Female inmates reportedly lacked medical care in Kabul prison. According to Mullah Abdullah Akhund, Taliban administrator for the women’s prison in Kabul, most women in prison were detained for elopement charges. In addition, women victims of domestic violence reportedly moved to a women’s prison instead of returning to their families following the closure of shelters.²⁸⁵

In October 2021, the Taliban reportedly trained 130 uniformed guards for prisons and planned to train further 160 guards who will serve as prison guards both in Kabul City and in the provinces. During the training, the guards were reportedly taught that the prisoners would be punished only by the law and that the guards’ duty is to protect them not to harm them.²⁸⁶ The head of Pul-e Charkhi prison indicated that the Taliban do not seek revenge referring to the announced amnesty for Afghans who served in the former government, army and police.²⁸⁷ However, there were reports of

²⁷³ WSJ, Afghan government collapses as Taliban take Kabul, 15 August 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁴ Kabul Lovers, گزارش کامل از زندان پل چرخي تحت اداره طالبان (زنداني های طالبان کی ها خواهد بود ؟) [informal translation ‘full documentary about Pul-e Charkhi prison under the Taliban (who will be Taliban prisoners?)’], 20 August 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁵ BBC, Inside the prison staffed by former inmates released by the Taliban, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ Pajhwok, Taliban free 708 prisoners in 4 four provinces, 22 August 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ Bakhtar News, [Twitter], posted on: 28 November 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁸ Ariana News, Saar: situation of Afghanistan prisons discussed, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁹ Al Jazeera, Once inmates, Taliban now in charge of a Kabul prison, 14 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ Al Jazeera, Once inmates, Taliban now in charge of a Kabul prison, 14 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁸¹ France24, Afghanistan: les Taliban prépare la réouverture de la plus grande prison de Kaboul, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁸² TOLONews, 600 Daesh members detained in past 3 months: officials, 10 November 2021, [url](#)

²⁸³ Ariana News, Saar: situation of Afghanistan prisons discussed, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ Starts and Stripes, The Taliban’s new challenge: enforcing law, 19 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁸⁵ South Asia Morning Post, Life inside a Taliban-run prison for Afghan women, 29 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁸⁶ France24, Afghanistan : les Taliban prépare la réouverture de la plus grande prison de Kaboul, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁸⁷ Euronews, Inside the Afghan jail where the ex-inmates are now the prison guards, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

Taliban fighters arresting people and using violence and torture in custody.²⁸⁸ According to an Afghan human rights expert there was a lack in training of Taliban fighters taking up duties as police officers and prosecutors in Nangarhar making them turn to torture as a means for investigation.²⁸⁹

According to the Taliban's military acting director of prisons, current prisoners were detained based on criminal charges including murder and killings. Some of the prisoners who fled from prison on 15 August 2021, had been arrested and reincarcerated. He further stated that the Taliban held the prisons' database, which it intended to use to identify and arrest further fugitive prisoners.²⁹⁰ It was also reported that the Taliban incarcerate people with minor 'suspicion of illegal activity'.²⁹¹

In November 2021, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Afghanistan indicated that they had met with the Director of the Office of Prison Administration in Afghanistan. They further stated that as part of ICRC's humanitarian mandate, they carried out visits to detentions centres and provided support to improve the conditions of detainees.²⁹² ICRC also distributed hygiene items in Sarpoza prison in Kandahar province.²⁹³

²⁸⁸ BBC, Afghanistan: Journalists tell of beatings by the Taliban, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁸⁹ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

²⁹⁰ Ariana News, Saar: situation of Afghanistan prisons discussed, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁹¹ Starts and Stripes, The Taliban's new challenge: enforcing law, 19 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁹² ICRC Afghanistan, [Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2021, [url](#)

²⁹³ ICRC Afghanistan, [Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2021, [url](#)

2. Situation under Taliban rule for the general population and certain profiles

2.1 Compliance with Taliban moral and religious norms

Throughout the reference period it remained unclear which laws were enforced by the established authorities.²⁹⁴ As previously mentioned, there was a tendency of Taliban officials to state that they were implementing Sharia without further clarifications.²⁹⁵ An Afghan human rights expert described the lack of clarity regarding the prevailing legal order as one of the most prominent factors of life in Afghanistan after the takeover; people did not know what was legal or not, whether the laws of the previous administration were still in place or had been replaced. The source called the situation ‘a suspension of the legal order’.²⁹⁶

As the laws were difficult to identify, some people altered their characteristics and behaviour to conform with what was perceived as Taliban norms.²⁹⁷ For example, in the first days after the Taliban entered Kabul many people stayed indoors, and especially professional women and persons fearing retaliation reportedly did not go outside.²⁹⁸ There were also reports on an increased demand for traditional clothing for men and women²⁹⁹, and some men letting their beards grow out.³⁰⁰

Reactions to behaviour perceived as non-compliant with Taliban moral and religious norms seemed to differ. According to journalist Ali Latifi, the top leadership’s assurances that people could resume their daily lives did not ‘reach the bottom’, and there were instances of fighters subjecting people to violence or verbal confrontations.³⁰¹ For instance, men were reportedly stopped and harassed by Taliban fighters for wearing Western style clothes³⁰² or cutting beards³⁰³, and women for leaving their homes without a male relative³⁰⁴ or not wearing a burqa.³⁰⁵

The Head of the Ministry of Virtue and Vice in Ghazni province told CNN that the authority wanted to help Afghans to embrace Islamic rule, and persons who did not follow their interpretation of Sharia law were to be ‘informed’ on their deed. Using force to convince someone was ‘against the Emirate’s policy’ and ‘a gentler approach’ was outlined in a handbook.³⁰⁶ The head of the same ministry in Kandahar told The Guardian that the staff members would focus on persuasion and not

²⁹⁴ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate, but vulnerable Afghans say brutal justice is still being meted out, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁹⁵ Rahimi, H. Opinion. What the Taliban may be getting wrong about Islamic governance, Al Jazeera, 24 August 2021, [url](#); WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate, but vulnerable Afghans say brutal justice is still being meted out, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁹⁶ Afghan Human Rights Expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

²⁹⁷ Afghan Human Rights Expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

²⁹⁸ FT, Deaths reported as Taliban faces growing dissent in Afghan cities, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

²⁹⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Hijab, turban prices soar in Kabul with Taliban's return, 22 August 2021, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ CNN, The Taliban have Afghanistan's justice system in their hands. CNN shows what it's like, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁰¹ Al Jazeera, 100 days of the Taliban, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁰² CNN, The Taliban have Afghanistan's justice system in their hands. CNN shows what it's like, 11 October 2021, [url](#);

Telegraph (The), Taliban 'flog young Afghans for wearing jeans', 22 August 2021, [url](#)

³⁰³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban's 'New' Governing Style Includes Beatings For Beard Shaving, 6 October 2021, [url](#); Hasht-e Subh Daily, Taliban Banned Beard Shaving in Ghor, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ HRW & SJSU, Afghanistan: Taliban Abuses Cause Widespread Fear, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ openDemocracy, I travelled around Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. This is what I saw, 24 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁰⁶ CNN, Taliban's religious police instructed to be more moderate, but vulnerable Afghans say brutal justice is still being meted out, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

violence, and also shared a booklet with guidelines.³⁰⁷ However, this handbook reportedly set different stages for responses to prohibited acts, stretching from education and guidance to the use of force.³⁰⁸ According to Human Rights Watch, the later stages outlined in the manual included prohibition of vice in ‘an aggressive, angry and scary manner’ or ‘physically’. Human Rights Watch further stated that, except for instructions on how to enforce rules against ‘vice’, the manual also contained guidelines for all Afghans and Taliban members. For instance, the handbook outlined rules on dress codes for women but added that such mandates should be enforced in ‘an easy and kind way’.³⁰⁹

According to CNN, the religious police was keen on showing ‘a lighter touch’ and referred to a sequence where, in the presence of CNN, they informed the public to make sure that women covered and did not travel without a close male relative. During this episode, they did not pay attention to a man openly smoking a cigarette, an action which was forbidden under their previous rule.³¹⁰ Omar Sadr, assistant professor at AUAF, stated that the Taliban were cautious of how to present themselves in some areas, and he thought that they had softened their attitude in certain areas, although there were no indications of any departure from their core fundamental principles.³¹¹ An Afghan journalist suggested that the Taliban had not changed since the 1990s, and that the virtue and vice squads were trying to operate away from the eyes of (especially Western) media.³¹²

2.2 Reactions to demonstrations and protests

Demonstrations and other protest actions occurred on several occasions after the Taliban takeover, with participants demonstrating against Taliban rule³¹³, against the closure of banks³¹⁴, demanding proper rights for women³¹⁵, urging the international community to unfreeze Afghanistan’s assets³¹⁶, demonstrating against forced evictions³¹⁷, and teachers and medical personnel demanding their salaries.³¹⁸ Demonstrations in support of the Taliban also took place.³¹⁹ On 8 September 2021, the Taliban issued an instruction prohibiting unauthorised assemblies.³²⁰ Two days later OHCHR expressed concern over what was described as an ‘increasingly violent response’ towards peaceful protesters.³²¹

³⁰⁷ Guardian (The), ‘We don’t want people to be in a panic,’ says chief of Taliban morality police, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁰⁸ Guardian (The), ‘We don’t want people to be in a panic,’ says chief of Taliban morality police, 19 September 2021, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban ‘Vice’ Handbook Abusive, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban ‘Vice’ Handbook Abusive, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

³¹⁰ CNN, Taliban’s religious police instructed to be more moderate, but vulnerable Afghans say brutal justice is still being meted out, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

³¹¹ Al Jazeera, 100 days of the Taliban, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

³¹² NPR, A more moderate Taliban? An Afghan journalist says nothing has changed, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

³¹³ Reuters, Three dead after anti-Taliban protests in Jalalabad-witnesses, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

³¹⁴ Khaama Press, Hundreds of people protest against closure of banks in Kabul, 28 August 2021, [url](#)

³¹⁵ India Today, Taliban fighters watching, Afghan women protest for their rights on Kabul streets, 18 August 2021, [url](#);

TOLONews, Women Call for Political, Social Inclusion, 5 December 2021, [url](#)

³¹⁶ Khaama Press, People protested in Kabul against US over frozen assets, 24 September 2021, [url](#)

³¹⁷ CNN, Taliban gives thousands of Kandahar residents three days to leave their homes, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

³¹⁸ Khaama Press, Hundreds of doctors ask for their 14-month unpaid salaries in Kabul, 10 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Herat Teachers Demand Their Salaries, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

³¹⁹ New York Times (The), At Pro-Taliban Protest, a Symbol of America’s Lost Influence: Faces Obscured by Veils, 11 September 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah women rally for rights under Islamic law, 21 September 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Khost protest calls for unfreezing of Afghanistan money, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

³²⁰ OHCHR, Press briefing notes on Afghanistan, 10 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), As Taliban Crush Dissent, New Leaders Face Cascading Challenges, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

³²¹ OHCHR, Press briefing notes on Afghanistan, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

Anti-Taliban protests reportedly took place in Jalalabad, Kabul, Khost and Kunar.³²² In some cases, the protests were met with violence by Taliban fighters. In Jalalabad, Taliban fighters reportedly shot and attacked ‘dozens of people’ carrying the Afghan republic’s national flag on 18 August 2021.³²³ Al Jazeera reported on two deaths³²⁴, while Reuters reported on three deaths and more than a dozen people injured during this event, although Reuters stated that it remained unclear whether the deaths were caused by shooting or a stampede.³²⁵ Marking the Afghan National Independence Day, 19 August 2021, demonstrations were held in Kabul and other cities during which protesters carried the Afghan republic’s national flag.³²⁶ According to Al Jazeera, at least two persons were killed in Asadabad (the capital of Kunar province). Witnesses said that Taliban opened fire at a crowd after a member of the crowd had stabbed a Taliban fighter.³²⁷ In the second week of September 2021, anti-Pakistan protests reportedly took place in Kabul with participants in ‘hundreds’.³²⁸ Taliban fighters reportedly beat four Afghan media workers, and detained and kept journalists and protestors in a basement.³²⁹ During the same week, anti-Taliban protests took place in Herat³³⁰, Parwan, Nimruz, Kunduz, and Kapisa provinces.³³¹ In some cases, Taliban fighters subjected protesters to violence and arrests occurred.³³² In Herat, two men were reported shot dead and seven others wounded as Taliban fighters fired at protesters.³³³

Several demonstrations for women’s rights took place throughout the reference period³³⁴, and in the week of 2 – 8 September 2021 there were daily reports of demonstrations taking place.³³⁵ Most reported demonstrations occurred in Kabul but there were also reports on ‘women’s demonstrations’ in Herat³³⁶, Mazar-e Sharif³³⁷, Badakhshan³³⁸ and smaller cities.³³⁹ Since then women-staged protests have reportedly waned after violent crackdowns took place and a ban on unauthorised protests was issued.³⁴⁰ In many cases there were no reports of Taliban fighters

³²² New York Times (The), The Taliban respond with force to an outpouring of public anger, 18 August 2021, [url](#);

RFE/RL/Gandhara, Report Of Taliban Violence In Afghanistan As Ghani Denies Theft, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

³²³ RFE/RL, Report Of Taliban Violence In Afghanistan As Ghani Denies Theft, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

³²⁴ Al Jazeera, Afghans display national flag as they mark independence day, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

³²⁵ Reuters, Three dead after anti-Taliban protests in Jalalabad-witnesses, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

³²⁶ New York Times (The), Demonstrations Against the Taliban Spread Throughout Kabul, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

³²⁷ Al Jazeera, Afghans display national flag as they mark independence day, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

³²⁸ Al Jazeera, Hundreds of Afghans take to Kabul’s streets calling for ‘freedom’, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

³²⁹ Khaama Press, Journalists beaten, detained while covering protest in Kabul, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

³³⁰ Garda World, Afghanistan: One person killed after Taliban forces open fire on protesters in Herat, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

³³¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Defy Taliban Protest Ban Amid Growing Fear Over Government’s Direction, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

³³² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghans Defy Taliban Protest Ban Amid Growing Fear Over Government’s Direction, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

³³³ UN News, Taliban response to protests increasingly violent, warns OHCHR, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

³³⁴ India Today, Taliban fighters watching, Afghan women protest for their rights on Kabul streets, 18 August 2021, [url](#);

TOLOnews, Women Call for Political, Social Inclusion, 5 December 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Women protest in Kabul against Taliban’s policies for them, 19 September 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), Afghan women stage protest in Kabul after Taliban crack down on women’s rights – video report, 19 September 2021, [url](#); AFP, Taliban disperse women protesters with gunfire in Kabul. 30 September 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Women protest over closed schools for girls in Afghanistan, 26 October 2021, [url](#); Heather Barr [Twitter], posted on: 10 October 2021, [url](#)

³³⁵ BBC, Afghanistan: Women protest against all-male Taliban government, 8 September 2021, [url](#); BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban fire warning shots at protest in Kabul, 7 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban accused of murdering pregnant Afghan policewoman in front of her family, 6 September 2021, [url](#); BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban break up women’s rights protest in Kabul, 5 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Taliban Fighters Crush a Women’s Protest Amid Flickers of Resistance, 8 September 2021, [url](#); AP, Afghan women demand rights as Taliban seek recognition, 3 September 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Herat women protest against Taliban over right to work, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

³³⁶ Al Jazeera, Herat women protest against Taliban over right to work, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

³³⁷ CNN, Taliban accused of murdering pregnant Afghan policewoman in front of her family, 6 September 2021, [url](#);

TOLOnews, Women Protest For Rights In Northern Afghanistan Despite Militant Threats, 6 September 2021, [url](#)

³³⁸ BBC, Afghanistan: Women protest against all-male Taliban government, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

³³⁹ Al Jazeera, Afghans protest, fearing curbs on women’s rights, free speech, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁴⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, ‘Safe Spaces’: After Taliban Crackdown, Afghan Women Take Their Protests Home, 8 December 2021, [url](#)

interfering, although Taliban members were physically present.³⁴¹ However, there were also reports on Taliban fighters using violence against protesters and journalists to disperse larger demonstrations.³⁴² Taliban fighters have reportedly used tear gas and pepper spray³⁴³, beaten or threatened to beat protesters³⁴⁴ using whips and batons that emit electric shocks.³⁴⁵ Journalists and other media workers were reportedly beaten and detained while covering some of the protests.³⁴⁶ On 4 and 7 September 2021, two largescale protests took place in Kabul with an estimate of respectively ‘hundred’ and ‘hundreds’ of women protesting against Taliban rule and demanding women’s rights. On 4 September 2021, the Taliban used tear gas, rifle butts and metal clubs or tools to rout the gathering.³⁴⁷ On 7 September 2021, Taliban fighters reportedly fired into the air to disband the protest, and BBC related that dozens of women took shelter from gunfire for about 20 minutes in a basement car park.³⁴⁸ On 10 September 2021, Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for OHCHR, told a briefing in Geneva that OHCHR had received reports of severe beatings of protesters, as well as house-to-house searches to identify those who attended certain protests.³⁴⁹

In November 2021, The Guardian reported that the Taliban infiltrated and intimidated women groups. According to the article, Taliban fighters appeared on private addresses and called women activists on their phones. One activist claimed that the Taliban used women to pose as journalists to extract personal information from protesters, and that they spread rumours among activists about their phone numbers being shared with Taliban members.³⁵⁰

Three reports were found of demonstrations in support of Taliban rule.³⁵¹ On 11 September 2021, a group of women demonstrated in Kabul and Taliban fighters reportedly accompanied the protesters and hindered media from interacting with them.³⁵² On 21 September 2021, Pajhwok Afghan News reported on a demonstration in Farah, which consisted of mainly female participants demonstrating in support of the Taliban interim government and stressing women’s rights under Islamic law.³⁵³ On 23 September 2021, an ‘all-male’ demonstration in support of the Taliban was held in Khost city.³⁵⁴ Another all male demonstration demanding the US and UN to unfreeze Afghan assets, taking place on 24 September 2021 in Kabul, was reportedly ‘well protected’ by Taliban fighters.³⁵⁵

³⁴¹ India Today, Taliban fighters watching, Afghan women protest for their rights on Kabul streets, 18 August 2021, [url](#);

TOLONews, Women Call for Political, Social Inclusion, 5 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁴² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Militants Use Tear Gas, Fire Warning Shots As Women In Kabul Demand Equal Rights, 4 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Militants ‘Used Force’ To Disperse Rally For Women’s Rights In Northern Afghanistan, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁴³ BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban break up women’s rights protest in Kabul, 5 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ New York Times (The), Taliban Fighters Crush a Women’s Protest Amid Flickers of Resistance, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ BBC, Afghanistan: Women beaten for demanding their rights, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ TOLONews, [Twitter], posted on: 7 September 2021, [url](#); Bais Hayat, [Twitter], posted on: 7 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban fighters use whips against Afghan women protesting the all-male interim government, 9 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), As Taliban crush dissent, New Leaders Face Cascading Challenges, 9 November 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Protest turns violent in Kabul; journalists, women were beaten, 21 October 2021, [url](#); France24, Taliban strike journalists at Kabul women’s rights protest, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁴⁷ New York Times (The), Taliban Fighters Crush a Women’s Protest Amid Flickers of Resistance, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban fire warning shots at protest in Kabul, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁴⁹ Guardian (The), At least four killed in Taliban crackdown on protests, says UN, 10 September 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Taliban response to Afghan protests increasingly violent, UN says, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁰ Guardian (The), They stayed to fight the Taliban. Now the protesters are being hunted down, 4 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁵¹ New York Times (The), At Pro-Taliban Protest, a Symbol of America’s Lost Influence: Faces Obscured by Veils, 11 September 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah women rally for rights under Islamic law, 21 September 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Khost protest calls for unfreezing of Afghanistan money, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁵² New York Times (The), At Pro-Taliban Protest, a Symbol of America’s Lost Influence: Faces Obscured by Veils, 11 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁵³ Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah women rally for rights under Islamic law, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, Khost protest calls for unfreezing of Afghanistan money, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ Khaama Press, People protested in Kabul against US over frozen assets, 24 September 2021, [url](#)

2.3 Women and girls

During their first press conference after the takeover, the Taliban addressed women's rights, highlighting that women will be respected and active in society within the limits of Sharia. As previously mentioned, they did not clarify or elaborate on what those limits were.³⁵⁶ Women were not represented in the announced interim government³⁵⁷, and no appointments were made to the Ministry of Women's Affairs whose offices were used by the reinstated Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.³⁵⁸ Furthermore, women reportedly faced difficulties in accessing work³⁵⁹ and girls faced difficulties in accessing secondary education.³⁶⁰

The Taliban ensured that their restrictions on women's access to work and secondary education were temporary awaiting 'safe' workplaces and learning environments.³⁶¹ However, Mahbouba Seraj, executive director of Afghan Women's Network, stressed that the Taliban used the same narrative as during their previous rule, when 'temporary' restrictions on education for girls were never lifted.³⁶² An Afghan human rights expert stated that on a general note the situation for women across the country had worsened as regards accessing their rights, regardless of living in a 'hardline' area or not, although women in conflict-affected rural areas, for instance, experienced difficulties in accessing their rights even before the takeover.³⁶³ Some sources suggested that restricting women's rights seemed to be a political tactic of the Taliban, not only an ideological matter, to demonstrate power³⁶⁴ or to make room for compromise in efforts to receive international aid.³⁶⁵ For information on provisional differences in the implementation of Sharia law affecting women see [chapter 1.4](#).

The Afghan human rights expert, as well as other sources³⁶⁶, pointed out victims of domestic violence as vulnerable. As most shelters were no longer operating many were forced to return to live with their abusers.³⁶⁷ A small number of shelters reportedly remained open, but did not accept new cases.³⁶⁸ A shelter director in Kabul told RFE/RL's Radio Azadi in September 2021 that Taliban fighters had searched the office several times, and confiscated vehicles and private property.³⁶⁹ Another manager of a shelter in Kabul told The Guardian in October 2021 that the Taliban were 'still figuring out what to do about women's refuges', and suggested that they fear that women in the shelters will leave and enter prostitution.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, sources noted that the humanitarian

³⁵⁶ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban's first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), What is Shariah Law, And What Does it Mean for Afghan Women, 19 August 2021, [url](#); WSJ, Sharia Law, Women's Rights in Afghanistan and the Taliban: What to Know, 23 August 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁷ AP, Taliban name deputy ministers, double down on all-male team, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁸ New York Times (The), Taliban Seize Women's Ministry Building for Use by Religious Police, 17 September 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Officials Deny Removal of Women's Ministry, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ TOLONews, Afghan Women Seek Right to Return to Govt Jobs, 10 September 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), Kabul government's female workers told to stay at home by Taliban, 19 September 2021, [url](#); AFP, [Twitter], posted on: 20 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁶⁰ Guardian (The), Taliban ban girls from secondary education in Afghanistan, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁶¹ BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban unveil new rules banning women in TV dramas, 21 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁶² Al Jazeera, 100 days of the Taliban, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁶³ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

³⁶⁴ New York Times (The), Why the Taliban's Repression of Women May Be More Tactical Than Ideological, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁶⁵ NPR, The Taliban give back some rights to women, but it may be all a political strategy, 21 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ HRW, Afghan Women Fleeing Violence Lose Vital Protection, 24 September 2021, [url](#); Geneva solutions, No safety under Taliban for Afghan women fleeing domestic violence, 18 October 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), 'I don't know where to go': uncertain fate of the women in Kabul's shelters, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁶⁷ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

³⁶⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women's Shelters Vanishing Under Taliban Rule, 26 September 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), 'I don't know where to go': uncertain fate of the women in Kabul's shelters, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Women's Shelters Vanishing Under Taliban Rule, 26 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁷⁰ Guardian (The), 'I don't know where to go': uncertain fate of the women in Kabul's shelters, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

situation in Afghanistan forces families to negative coping strategies, such as marrying off young girls.³⁷¹

On 3 December 2021, the Taliban released a 'decree on women's rights', setting out rules governing marriage and women's ownership. The decree stated that women should not be considered as 'property' or be forced into marriage, and that widows have a share in their husband's property.³⁷² However, the decree did not address women's access to education or work. Afghan women interviewed by CNN on 3 December 2021 stated that 'the decree would do little to change their lives', as the stipulated rights were already enshrined under Islamic law.³⁷³ Mahbouba Seraj, executive director of the Afghan Women's Skills Development Centre, welcomed the decree and told Reuters that more rules should be released to clarify 'women's rights to access public spaces'.³⁷⁴

After the finalisation of the drafting of this report, a guidance related to women's freedom of movement was issued by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, see the [Introduction](#).

2.3.1 Access to work

No uniform policy was announced related to women's access to work.³⁷⁵ During the first days after the takeover, female government employees were advised to stay home, and only women in positions that could not be replaced by men were allowed to resume work.³⁷⁶ Some of these positions were in departments for design and engineering and attendants of public toilets for women.³⁷⁷ Some female government employees were reportedly barred from entering their offices by Taliban fighters.³⁷⁸ Taliban spokesperson Suhail Shaheen asked female staff members within public healthcare to resume their work on 28 August 2021³⁷⁹, and employees at Kabul International Airport, including women, reportedly resumed work as of 13 September 2021.³⁸⁰ According to Financial Times (FT) women were not officially barred from private sector jobs.³⁸¹

According to Human Rights Watch, referring to a report of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Taliban officials had issued a written agreement providing 'unconditional' permission to women aid workers to work in three provinces as of 28 October 2021, while women aid workers in over half the country were allowed to work under 'severe' restrictions, such as being escorted by a male family member.³⁸²

Female judges, whose number amounts in Afghanistan to around 250, were reported to face fears about their safety in the country, particularly after a release of prisoners by the Taliban.³⁸³ International Association of Judges (IAJ) and International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ)

³⁷¹ UNICEF, Girls increasingly at risk of child marriage in Afghanistan, 12 November 2021, [url](#); UNDARK, In Afghanistan, Climate Change Drives an Uptick in Child Marriage, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁷² Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban supreme leader issues decree on women's rights, 3 December 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Taliban release decree saying women must consent to marriage, 3 December 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Taliban bans forced marriage of women in Afghanistan, 3 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁷³ CNN, Taliban decree on women's rights, which made no mention of school or work, dismissed by Afghan women and experts, 4 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁷⁴ Reuters, Advocates welcome Taliban decree barring forced marriages but call for more, 3 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁷⁵ VOA, Taliban-run Kabul Municipality to Female Workers: Stay Home, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁷⁶ Guardian (The), Kabul government's female workers told to stay at home by Taliban, 19 September 2021, [url](#); AFP, [Twitter], posted on: 20 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁷⁷ AP, Taliban-run Kabul municipality to female workers: Stay home, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁷⁸ TOLONews, Afghan Women Seek Right to Return to Govt Jobs, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁷⁹ AA, Taliban asks women healthcare workers to resume duties, 28 August 2021, [url](#)

³⁸⁰ TOLONews, Kabul Airport Employees, Including Women, Return to Work, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁸¹ FT, Afghan women resist the return of Taliban's segregation, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁸² HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Blocking Female Aid Workers, 4 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁸³ Reuters, Hunted by the men they jailed, Afghanistan's women judges seek escape, 3 September 2021, [url](#)

published a joint statement on 20 September 2021, in which judges were stated to be in ‘very grave danger’, fearing for their and their families’ lives. Female judges were claimed to be at ‘added risk’ due to their gender as the Taliban did not ‘accept that women have the right to judge men’. IAJ and IAWJ further noted that judges had been subjected to house-searches, threatening messages and physical harassment, and they also had their bank accounts suspended.³⁸⁴ Only a few female judges had reportedly managed to evacuate due to the fact that most Afghan women, including the judges, lacked national identity cards and passports.³⁸⁵

In November 2021, the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice issued media guidelines banning films or shows ‘against Islamic or Afghan values’ and in which Afghan media were called to stop broadcasting ‘soap operas or dramas featuring women actors’.³⁸⁶ The guideline also ordered women presenters to wear hijab.³⁸⁷ Taliban fighters reportedly hindered female journalists from resuming work.³⁸⁸ For more information on the situation female journalists see [chapter 2.6.1](#).

2.3.2 Access to education

Girls of primary age were told to return to schools after the takeover.³⁸⁹ According to the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan all of the organisation’s schools for girls and boys in primary age had reopened as of 5 November 2021, encompassing 14 of Afghanistan’s provinces.³⁹⁰

However, girls were excluded from secondary education, which initially only reopened for boys.³⁹¹ During October 2021, secondary schools reportedly resumed for girls in several provinces, including Kunduz³⁹², Balkh³⁹³, Sar-e Pul³⁹⁴ and Herat.³⁹⁵ On the other hand, secondary education remained closed for girls in most parts of the country³⁹⁶, including Kabul.³⁹⁷ In October 2021, Thomson Reuters Foundation reported on girls taking secret online lessons in Herat, and reported that hundreds of girls and women continued to learn online or in hidden makeshift classrooms.³⁹⁸ The New York Times reported that the rules on gender segregated classes created a shortage of teachers which limited girls’ opportunities to receive high school education.³⁹⁹ On 2 November 2021, the Taliban’s Director of External Programmes and Aid at the Ministry of Education told Reuters that the Taliban would soon announce ‘good news’ on high school education for girls. Furthermore, he noted that the Taliban were not striving to ‘deleting’ women and girls from schools or universities.⁴⁰⁰

On 5 September 2021, the Taliban-run Ministry of Education issued a document concerning the education of female university students, stipulating that female students, teachers, and educational

³⁸⁴ IAJ & IAWJ, Joint IAJ and IAWJ Statement on the Current Situation in Afghanistan, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁸⁵ New York Times (The), Female Judges in Afghanistan, Now Jobless and in Hiding, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁸⁶ DW, Afghanistan: Taliban issue guidelines against women actors, 21 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁸⁷ Reuters, Taliban release media guidelines, ban shows with female actors, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁸⁸ DW, Afghan journalists ‘have to get out of the country’, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁸⁹ Al Jazeera, Taliban says Afghan girls will return to secondary schools soon, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ GP, Fler afghanska flickor tillbaka i skolbanken [informal translation: ‘More Afghan girls back in school’], 5 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁹¹ Guardian (The), Taliban ban girls from secondary education in Afghanistan, 17 September 2021, [url](#); BBC, Afghanistan: Girls excluded as Afghan secondary schools reopen, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁹² France24, Girls return to schools in Afghan province, remain barred elsewhere, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁹³ TOLONews, Schools Reopen for Girls in Grades 7-12 in Balkh Province, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁹⁴ TOLONews, Girls Attend Schools in Kunduz, Balkh, Sar-e-Pul, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁹⁵ TOLONews, Girls’ Schools for Grades 7-12 Reopen in Herat, 8 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁹⁶ BBC, Afghanistan: Girls’ despair as Taliban confirm secondary school ban, 8 December 2021, [url](#)

³⁹⁷ France24, Girls return to schools in Afghan province, remain barred elsewhere, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁹⁸ Thomson Reuters Foundation, Afghanistan’s girls learns, code ‘underground’ amid Taliban curbs, 29 October 2021, available at: [url](#)

³⁹⁹ New York Times (The), Taliban Allow Girls to Return to Some High Schools but With Big Caveats, 27 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁰ Reuters, “We are not deleting them”: Afghanistan’s Taliban promise progress on girls’ schooling soon, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

staff must wear a black 'Islamic abaya robe and niqab that covers the hair, body, and most of the face' as well as gloves. The document ordered the classes to be gender segregated, at least by a curtain, and that teaching for girls and women had to be done by women or, in the absence of female teachers, by elderly men who are well-known for being trustworthy. These measures were also to be implemented in private universities.⁴⁰¹ As previously mentioned the education sector faced economic hardship, and according to TOLONews, 50 % of private education centres had closed since the takeover as of 30 November.⁴⁰² Some private universities resumed their activities and held graduation ceremonies, including female students, while public universities reportedly remained closed.⁴⁰³

2.3.4 Access to sports

Hundreds of female athletes reportedly went into hiding⁴⁰⁴ or were evacuated from Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, *inter alia*, female soccer and basketball players.⁴⁰⁵

With regard to access to sports, a Taliban cultural commission official, Ahmadullah Wasiq, told SBS News on 8 September 2021 that women would be banned from sports where they expose too much of their bodies and that they did not think that women would be allowed to play cricket as 'it is not necessary'.⁴⁰⁶ On 10 September 2021, Azizullah Fazli, then acting Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) Chairman, indicated in an interview that the board would outline how women will be able to play cricket 'very soon'.⁴⁰⁷ In October 2021, Fazli stated during an interview that the stance of top Taliban government officials is that there is no official ban on women's sports and that they had 'no problem with women taking part in sport'. According to Fazli ACB had not been asked to stop women from playing cricket.⁴⁰⁸ In early November 2021, Australia postponed a cricket test match against Afghanistan, due to the unclarity on whether Afghan women would be allowed to play cricket.⁴⁰⁹ On 24 November 2021, Mirwaus Ashraf, the new chairman of the ACB stated that female cricketers can continue playing, and that ACB will provide for their basic needs and facilities.⁴¹⁰

2.4 Hazara and Shia Muslims

There is no up-to-date data on the number of ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan.⁴¹¹ While the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) includes no data on ethnic and religious groups⁴¹², some estimate that Shia Muslims in Afghanistan compromise 10–20 % of the

⁴⁰¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Imposes New Dress Code, Segregation of Women At Afghan Universities, 6 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Curtains separate male and female Afghan students as new term begins under Taliban rule, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰² TOLONews, 50% of Private Education Centers Closed Nationwide Since Takeover, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰³ Daily Mail, Female students in Afghanistan graduate from private university - watched on by Taliban leaders, 29 November 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Economic Situation Hurting Private Universities, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁴ Al Jazeera, Ban? No ban? Afghan cricket chief offers hope to women athletes, 13 October 2021, [url](#); BBC Sport, Afghanistan women's cricket team: Players hiding in Kabul fear Taliban rule, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Dozens More Afghans Linked To Women's Soccer, Basketball Are Evacuated From Afghanistan, 21 October 2021, [url](#); BBC, Rescuing the Afghanistan girls' football team, 24 November 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), Dozens more female footballers and family members escape Afghanistan, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁶ SBS News, Taliban say women won't be allowed to play sport, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁷ SBS News, Afghanistan's cricket board signals Taliban backtrack on women's cricket ban, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁸ Al Jazeera, Ban? No ban? Afghan cricket chief offers hope to women athletes, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁹ Al Jazeera, Australia postpones its first-ever Afghanistan cricket Test match, 5 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹⁰ TOLONews, Afghan Official Says Women Can Continue Playing Cricket, 24 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹¹ Reuters, For Afghan Hazaras, where to pray can be life and death choice, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹² Afghanistan, NSIA (National Statistics and Information Authority), Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020, April 2021, [url](#)

population⁴¹³ and that Hazaras comprise 15 % of the population.⁴¹⁴ The Hazaras constitute the largest part of Afghanistan's Shia Muslims.⁴¹⁵

The Hazara group is native to the region of Hazarajat in central Afghanistan⁴¹⁶, which comprises the provinces of Ghor, Bamyan, and Daykundi⁴¹⁷ as well as parts of Ghazni, Uruzgan, and Wardak.⁴¹⁸ In Hazarajat, the Hazara were reported to have been involved in conflicts with the nomadic population, the majority of whom is comprised by Pashtuns.⁴¹⁹ For more information, see [EASO Report Afghanistan – Criminal law, customary justice and informal dispute resolution](#), pp. 24-25.

Many Hazaras migrated or were displaced to other parts of Afghanistan because of poverty and the continuing conflict since the start of the Afghan war in 1978.⁴²⁰ During the Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001⁴²¹, several massacres were perpetrated on the Hazara: in Mazar-e Sharif in 1998⁴²², and in Yakawlang (Yakaolang), Bamyan in 2001.⁴²³ After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the situation of the Hazara community was reported to have improved⁴²⁴: as noted by a researcher, Michael Semple, the Hazara 'maximized their participation in the new political, economic and social fields, in particular education.'⁴²⁵ However, new security threats emerged for the Shia Muslim (Hazara) community from 2016 and onwards as the ISKP was established as a new conflict actor in Afghanistan carrying out attacks targeting, *inter alia*, Hazaras.⁴²⁶ For information on the situation and treatment of the Hazara and Shia Muslims by the former government, the Taliban, and ISKP in 2018 – 2020, see [EASO Query on Hazaras and Shias](#).

In June 2021, a Hazara leader in Central Afghanistan, Zulfiqar Omid, claimed having mobilised 800 fighters into 'self-protection groups'.⁴²⁷ As reported by DW on 1 September 2021, Omid stated that the Hazara resistance comprised 800 regular fighters and 5 000 volunteers and that he was conducting talks with Ahmad Massoud, the leader of the NRF in the Panjsher valley⁴²⁸, on uniting Hazara and Tajik forces.⁴²⁹ In an interview with EASO on 9 November 2021, Dr. Melissa Kerr Chiovenda said that 'the Hazara militias seemed to have silenced,' while people whom she might expect to be involved in any resistance were 'people, who worked for the former security forces, and they all were in hiding, including the governor of Bamyan, who hid himself in the mountains.' According to the sources Dr. Kerr Chiovenda was in contact with, the Hazara militias that had been active before 'were not active anymore and stayed low'.⁴³⁰

As noted by an Afghan human rights expert, there seemed to be no Taliban policies in place against the Hazara minority or on evictions against them after the Taliban took over Afghanistan.⁴³¹ Shia Muslims were allowed to perform their religious ceremonies, such as annual celebrations of the *Ashura*. Furthermore, the Taliban vowed to protect the Hazara community and Taliban fighters

⁴¹³ Reuters, For Afghan Hazaras, where to pray can be life and death choice, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹⁴ FT, Afghanistan's Shia are fearful in face of Taliban takeover, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹⁵ USHMM, Early Warning Project, Countries at Risk for Mass Killing 2021-22, November 2021, [url](#), p. 10

⁴¹⁶ Britannica, Hazara, n.d., [url](#)

⁴¹⁷ Johnson Th., H. and Adamec, L. W., Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan, Fifth Edition, Rowman & Littlefield, London, 2021, p. 216

⁴¹⁸ Australia, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report, Afghanistan, 27 June 2019, [url](#), p. 10

⁴¹⁹ Giustozzi, A., Typologies of nomad-settler conflict in Afghanistan, AREU Issues Paper, AREU, January 2018, [url](#), pp. 2, 9.

⁴²⁰ Britannica, Hazara, n.d., [url](#)

⁴²¹ CFR, The Taliban in Afghanistan, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴²² MRG, Hazaras, n.d., [url](#)

⁴²³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Hazara in Afghanistan's Bamiyan Region Fear Repeat of Taliban Atrocities, 31 July 2021, [url](#)

⁴²⁴ MRG, Hazaras, n.d., [url](#)

⁴²⁵ Semple, M., The rise of the Hazaras and the challenge of pluralism in Afghanistan 1978-2011, n.d., [url](#)

⁴²⁶ HRW, Afghanistan: Surge in Islamic State Attacks on Shia, 25 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴²⁷ New York Times (The), Attacked and Vulnerable, Some Afghans Are Forming Their Own Armies, 24 June 2021, [url](#)

⁴²⁸ France 24, Afghan resistance has sanctuary in Tajikistan, but fighting Taliban a 'non-viable prospect,' 4 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴²⁹ DW, Afghanistan's repressed minority faces a hostile Taliban, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴³⁰ Kerr Chiovenda, M. (Dr.), online interview, 9 November 2021.

⁴³¹ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

reportedly guarded Shia Mosques⁴³² However, the Taliban were reported to have confirmed that its governance would be based solely on Sunni Hanafi jurisprudence.⁴³³ The Taliban Cabinet, announced on 7 September 2021, had no Hazara representatives. On 21 September 2021, a member of the Shia Hazara community, Mohammad Hasan Ghiasi, was appointed deputy health minister,⁴³⁴ which is the highest post to which a Hazara was appointed in the current cabinet. As reported by AP on 16 November 2021, the Taliban leadership rejected ‘repeated requests’ of Hazara community leaders to be included into the government administration; several Hazaras, who were appointed to posts in the provincial administration had been part of the Taliban insurgency since long and few Hazaras recognised them as representatives.⁴³⁵ According to Dr. Andrea Chioventa, interviewed by EASO on 9 November 2021, there had been a few ‘symbolic’ appointments of Hazaras to mid or lower levels within the new government, but he stated that he would not call it an ‘inclusion’ of Hazaras.⁴³⁶ According to Dr. Kerr Chioventa, sources in Bamyan and Daykundi noted that the Taliban had not appointed locals to govern in the provisional centres, but people from ‘outside’, whom, she figured, most Hazaras in the area did not know.⁴³⁷

At the end of August 2021, many Hazaras were reportedly crossing to Pakistan.⁴³⁸ Referring to activists, the Guardian reported that around 10 000 Hazaras arrived in Quetta city in Baluchistan province in Pakistan.⁴³⁹ As reported by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 19 October 2021, Hazaras constituted 40 % ‘among the new arrivals in Iran.’⁴⁴⁰

With the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, instances of violence against the Hazara were reported to have increased.⁴⁴¹ As found by Amnesty International (AI), at least nine Hazara men were killed by the Taliban fighters (six shot and three tortured to death) in the village of Mundarakht, Malistan district, Gazni province, between 4 and 6 July, after the Taliban captured the province.⁴⁴² On 30 August 2021, the Taliban reportedly killed 13 ethnic Hazara, including nine former ANDSF members who were executed after they had surrendered and two civilians, including a 17-year-old-girl, who attempted to flee after ‘the Taliban opened fire on a crowd of people’ in Kahor village, Khidir district, Daykundi province.⁴⁴³

Forced evictions of Hazaras also reportedly took place. According to Patricia Gossman, associate director at Human Rights Watch Asia division, ‘Hazaras and others’ were evicted due to their ethnicity or political opinion.⁴⁴⁴ According to the Afghan human rights expert, in areas where evictions took place, it seemed to occur due to a perception of the Hazara minority as ‘inferior’, making it relatively easy for local Taliban authorities to grab their property and force them out of their homes without risking much.⁴⁴⁵ ABC reported, however, that Taliban officials in Kabul had retracted some eviction orders in Daikundi, but as of 15 October 2021 no residents had returned.⁴⁴⁶

⁴³² AP, Despite mistrust, Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection, 16 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴³³ Mohammadi, S. and Askary, S., Why the Hazara people fear genocide in Afghanistan, Al Jazeera, 27 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴³⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Expands Afghan Cabinet Lit but Again Fails To Include Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#); WSJ, Taliban Add Minorities, Technocrats to Afghan Government, but no Women, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴³⁵ AP, Despite mistrust, Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection, 16 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴³⁶ Chioventa, A. (Dr.), online interview, 9 November 2021.

⁴³⁷ Kerr Chioventa, M. (Dr), online interview, 9 November 2021

⁴³⁸ Guardian (The), Hazara Shias flee Afghanistan fearing Taliban persecution, 29 August 2021, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan’s repressed minority faces a hostile Taliban, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴³⁹ Guardian (The), Hazara Shias flee Afghanistan fearing Taliban persecution, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁰ UNHCR, Afghanistan situation Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 19 October 2021, [url](#), p. 2. This figure is based on the data from UNHCR interviews conducted with 870 families (3 609 individuals).

⁴⁴¹ Mohammadi, S. and Askary, S., Why the Hazara people fear genocide in Afghanistan, Al Jazeera, 27 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴² AI, Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men – new investigation, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴³ AI, Afghanistan: 13 Hazara killed by Taliban fighters in Daykundi province – new investigation, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁴ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Evict Minority Shia, 22 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁵ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 17 December 2021

⁴⁴⁶ ABC, Despite promises, Taliban begin evicting Afghanistan’s ethnic Hazaras from their land, 15 October 2021, [url](#)

The Afghan human rights expert further stated that some Taliban fighters had the mindset that they could harass or discriminate people from the Hazara community without being held accountable, but it depended on the view and mindset among the fighters. The source gave an example of a colleague who is a member of the Hazara community who struggled to get the same service at the passport office as non-Hazara colleagues. The source thought that the anti-Hazara mindset was widespread among Taliban fighters, not only for having an 'identifiable' ethnicity but also due the Hazara community's engagement in the former government and in social progress in general. For instance, Hazara women serving within the armed forces and in artistic and cultural activities, which have caused a perception within conservative parts of the Afghan society that the Hazara minority has embraced a culture not in line with the Taliban's definition of Islam. The source stated that Hazaras are seen as 'Westernised' which adds to their 'victimisation'.⁴⁴⁷ Dr. Andrea Chiovenda and Dr. Melissa Kerr Chiovenda also stated that the Hazaras were perceived as more supportive of the West than other groups in Afghanistan. They further stated that Hazaras in general gained more from the democratic system as well as the educational system, and had more interest in having foreign troops present in the country. Dr Chiovenda and Dr. Kerr Chiovenda believed that there was a common negative perception of the Hazaras as not being 'right Muslims', and stated that there was an 'anti-Hazara' language among the general population even before the takeover. They further stated that people in support of the Taliban, and that are part of the movement's current state-building, usually do not have a positive perception of the minority. Thus, the Taliban's strive to gain support could be at the expense of the Hazaras, for example taking sides in favour of non-Hazaras in land disputes. In the past, the Taliban usually took the side of Pashtun nomads in land disputes.⁴⁴⁸

Among the cases of forced evictions were, as noted by AP in November 2021, Taliban officials expelling Hazaras from several villages in Daykundi province, claiming they were living on land which they did not own.⁴⁴⁹ In September 2021, the local news agency Hasht-e Subh Daily reported on videos circulating on social media, in which Hazara elders accused the Taliban of confiscating houses and land of Hazaras in Nawabad and Balasar-e Tagabdar villages in Gizab district, which was adjunct by the Taliban to Pato district, Daykundi province⁴⁵⁰. As reported by the source, the Taliban-appointed deputy governor of Daykundi, Jomhur Khan, who claimed ownership of the lands, and a person called Zaher Khan Timor, urged around 300 families to leave their houses and lands within nine days. The Taliban authorities in Daykundi were reported to have started an investigation.⁴⁵¹ According to WSJ, eviction orders in Gizab were addressed to Hazara residents of Kindir and Tagabdar villages and resulted in 700 families fleeing their homes.⁴⁵² As reported by UNOCHA, around 400 families (approximately 2 800 persons) were evicted from their villages of Kindir and Dahan-e Nala in Gizab during 20 – 26 September 2021.⁴⁵³ Similarly, the governor of Pato district, Mullah Musafir, was reported to have ordered the residents of Shagholja and Khargak villages, whose ownership of the land is 'legally disputed' according to the Taliban, to leave their homes in five days. The new settlers were reportedly ethnic Pashtuns from Uruzgan province.⁴⁵⁴ As reported by Hasht-e Subh, there was also an anonymous source reporting on evictions of Hazara families from their houses and lands in Pato by Kuchi nomads: one of such instances was reported in the Khalaj

⁴⁴⁷ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 17 December 2021

⁴⁴⁸ Chiovenda, A. (Dr.), professor at Zayed University, online interview, 9 November 2021; Kerr Chiovenda, M. (Dr.), professor at Zayed University, online interview, 9 November 2021

⁴⁴⁹ AP, Despite mistrust, Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection, 16 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ As noted in EASO's 2020 report on the security situation in Afghanistan, the administrative allocation of Gizab district had been a source of contestation, with sources allocating it to both Uruzgan and Daykundi provinces; see EASO, Afghanistan: Security Situation, September 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁵¹ Hasht-e Subh Daily, Taliban Affiliates Force Hazaras to Migrate From Daykundi, Central Afghanistan, 14 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵² WSJ, Taliban Evict Hazara Shiite Muslims From Villages, Rewarding Loyalists, 30 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵³ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Weekly Humanitarian Update (20 – 26 September 2021), n.d., [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁵⁴ WSJ, Taliban Evict Hazara Shiite Muslims From Villages, Rewarding Loyalists, 30 September 2021, [url](#)

village of the district.⁴⁵⁵ As noted by the Human Rights Watch, evictions took place in 15 villages of Daykundi province.⁴⁵⁶

In September 2021, Hasht-e Subh Daily reported that members of the Kuchi community entered parts of the Nawar district, Ghazni province, to graze their flocks on Hazara farmlands; these accusations were denied by the Taliban spokesperson Bilal Karimi, while the district governor 'promised to address the issue.' Furthermore, the Kuchi were reported to have evicted four families from their homes in the Qorban-Mordah village and prohibited the use of the water dam to the villagers of Surma area.⁴⁵⁷

In the beginning of October 2021, as reported by Human Rights Watch, 'hundreds of Hazara families' were evicted by 'the Taliban and associated militias' in Helmand and Balkh provinces. In the Qubat al-Islam district of Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh province, Hazara residents were reportedly evicted by 'armed men from the local Kushani community' who 'were working with local Taliban security forces.' While Taliban officials stated that the evictions were conducted in accordance with a court order, the evicted residents claimed having ownership over the land since 1970s.⁴⁵⁸

As noted by the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative (SRSG) for Afghanistan and the head of UNAMA, Deborah Lyons, in November 2021, the Shia community continued to be targeted by ISKP.⁴⁵⁹ In October 2021, ISKP claimed responsibility for two attacks on Shia Muslim (Hazara) mosques: on the Said Abad (Gozar-e Sayed Abad) Mosque in Kunduz on 8 October 2021⁴⁶⁰, in which at least 72 people were killed and more than 140 wounded⁴⁶¹ and on Fatimiya (Bibi Fatima) mosque in Kandahar on 15 October⁴⁶², in which 47 people were killed and more than 80 wounded.⁴⁶³ The Fatimiya mosque is also known as the Imam Bargah mosque and is the largest Shia mosque in the city⁴⁶⁴; as reported by the Guardian, the mosque was particularly crowded on the day of the attack due to memorial prayers held for the victims of the Said Abad mosque in Kunduz.⁴⁶⁵ On 25 October 2021, Human Rights Watch quoted a statement of ISKP, issued after the Kandahar attack, in which the group said it 'would target Shia in their home and centres.'⁴⁶⁶

Following the blast in Kandahar, it was reported that the Taliban took the responsibility over providing security in the Fatimiya mosque, guarded previously by the Shia community.⁴⁶⁷ In November 2021, four Taliban fighters were reported to have been guarding a Shia mosque in Kabul together with a guard from the Hazara community. As reported by the Hazara leaders, after the attacks on Shia mosques in Kunduz and Kandahar, the Hazara 'in most cases' got their weapons back, which had been confiscated by the Taliban when it took control over the country.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Hasht-e Subh Daily, Taliban Affiliates Force Hazaras to Migrate From Daykundi, Central Afghanistan, 14 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁶ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Evict Minority Shia, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁷ Hasht-e Subh Daily, Kuchis are Taking Advantage of Hazara Farmlands in Ghazni's Nawur District, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁸ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Evict Minority Shia, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁹ UNAMA, SRSG Lyons Briefing to the UNSC on the Situation in Afghanistan, 17 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Scores Killed, Wounded In IS-K Suicide Blast Inside Afghan Shi'ite Mosque, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶¹ Al Jazeera, 'Blood and pieces': Kunduz residents describe blast aftermath, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Funerals Held for Victims of Kandahar Mosque Bombing Claimed by IS-K, 16 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶³ Guardian (The), Shia mosque bombing in Afghanistan that killed at least 47 claimed by ISKP, 15 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁴ New Arab (The), Taliban pledge to step up Shia mosques' security after suicide bombing, 16 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁵ Guardian (The), Shia mosque bombing in Afghanistan that killed at least 47 claimed by ISKP, 15 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ HRW, Afghanistan: Surge in Islamic State Attacks on Shia, 25 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Funerals Held for Victims of Kandahar Mosque Bombing Claimed by IS-K, 16 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁸ AP, Despite mistrust, Afghan Shiites seek Taliban protection, 16 November 2021, [url](#)

In the reporting period, the Dasht-e Barchi area of western Kabul, which is dominated by Shia Hazara population, witnessed several explosions that caused civilian casualties.⁴⁶⁹ For a description of incidents in the Dasht-e Barchi area, see [chapter 3.2](#).

2.5 Persons affiliated with the former government, security forces or foreign forces

On 17 August 2021, the Taliban announced a general amnesty for all government workers.⁴⁷⁰ However, on 19 August 2021, a RHIPTO Center intelligence report referred to by Reuters presented information claiming that the Taliban had compiled a blacklist and were hunting down people with suspected links to the previous administration or to US-led forces, noting that those ‘particularly at risk are individuals in central positions in military, police and investigative units.’⁴⁷¹ In an interview with BBC, RHIPTO Center director Christian Nellemann stated that there were a ‘high number of individuals’ targeted by the Taliban, and called the threat ‘crystal clear’.⁴⁷² However, Afghanistan experts Thomas Ruttig and Kristian Berg Harpviken have expressed scepticism on the conclusions of the RHIPTO report saying that they seemed exaggerated. Ruttig further stated that credible information on the situation following the takeover was lacking and that the picture was more complex than the RHIPTO report expressed.⁴⁷³ A former Afghan government official quoted by The New York Times also reported ‘a pattern of pursuit of Afghan special operations forces personnel and commandos of the intelligence service [...], as well as police and security chiefs across the country’, and also mentioned that it was too early to judge whether this was part of Taliban policy, or whether individual Taliban members were taking revenge for past incidents. According to the same article, the Taliban had detained at least a dozen former provincial officials across the country, while the former head of the Interior Ministry’s police criminal investigation unit, Bismillah Taban, stated that the Taliban were searching for him. According to Taban, one of his colleagues had been killed by the Taliban, and another colleague had been tortured in the search for Taban’s hide-out. During the same month, August 2021, an armed group reportedly accessed the headquarters of the National Security Directorate and the Ministry of Communications, and retrieved thousands of payroll lists and top-secret files, including files on intelligence officers and informers. Two former officials stated that it was not clear whether the group belonged to the Taliban, and suggested that they might have been Pakistani agents ‘working in tandem’ with the Taliban.⁴⁷⁴

In September 2021, another article by The New York Times argued that many Afghans were questioning the Taliban leaders’ control over their fighters, and their ability to oversee the August 2021 amnesty. According to the article, ‘former government officials, aid workers and diplomats say Taliban leaders have barely managed to keep their well-armed rank-and-file in check.’⁴⁷⁵ At the same time, violent incidents targeting security officials were reported: five former police officers were killed in two separate incidents in Kandahar⁴⁷⁶, while in Ghor Province, a pregnant police officer was reportedly killed in front of her family, although the Taliban denied any involvement in the

⁴⁶⁹ Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Deadly explosion hits mainly Shia suburb of Kabul, 13 November 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Blast hits Shi’ite area of Afghan capital Kabul, 13 November 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Islamic State claims twin blasts in Afghan capital Kabul, 17 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ VOA, Taliban’s Afghanistan Takeover — a Timeline, 17 August 2021, [url](#); France24, Taliban declares general ‘amnesty’ for Afghan government officials, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ Reuters, Taliban are rounding up Afghans on blacklist – private intel report, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷² BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban carrying out door-to-door manhunt, report says, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷³ Landinfo, Temanotat. Afghanistan. Talibans maktovertakelse [informal translation: ‘Afghanistan. The Taliban’s takeover’], 2 September 2021, [url](#), p. 21

⁴⁷⁴ New York Times (The), As the Taliban Tighten Their Grip, Fears of Retribution Grow, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁵ New York Times (The), Afghans With Ties to U.S. Who Could Not Get Out Now Live in Fear, 3 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Takes Revenge On Former Afghan Security Forces, 12 October 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Ex-policemen among five killed in Kandahar, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

incident.⁴⁷⁷ In the same month, Afghanistan International news quoted reports of Taliban fighters conducting house-to-house searches in Kabul, looking for interpreters of foreign troops, embassy personnel and former government authorities.⁴⁷⁸ This information could not be corroborated.

The Taliban's acting Army Chief of Staff, Qari Fashuddin, stated that soldiers and officers from the former government would be allowed to join the planned new Afghan army.⁴⁷⁹ The Taliban Intelligence Direction of Ghazni province reportedly instructed its members to identify in their ranks, among others, *ageers* (mercenaries) belonging to the former government, and report them to the intelligence direction.⁴⁸⁰ Meanwhile, in an audio recording, the Taliban's defence minister Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, allegedly admitted that some militants had committed revenge killings despite the declared amnesty, and stated that no Taliban fighters had the right to break the amnesty. The statement was posted on a social media website by a Taliban spokesperson and was reportedly shared by several Taliban PR officials, including Zabihullah Mujahid.⁴⁸¹ According to Reuters, Yaqoob stated that some 'miscreants and notorious former soldiers' within Taliban units had committed abuses, and issued a rebuke over the misconduct.⁴⁸²

In October 2021, Patricia Gossman, associate director for the Asia division of Human Rights Watch, told RFE/RL of accounts 'of people being arrested purely for having any association with the former security forces, and family members being interrogated or beaten by Taliban looking for former officials'. According to the same source, 'the Taliban forces carrying out these abuses appear to have been given a free hand while officials at the top deny it is happening.'⁴⁸³ Violent incidents continued to be reported during that month and in November 2021: according to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Taliban fighters executed an Afghan army officer previously working as an interpreter for the Australian Defence Force⁴⁸⁴, while unknown gunmen 'shot a former Afghan army soldier in front of his house, killing him and two friends standing nearby'.⁴⁸⁵ In Khost, a former police officer was shot dead.⁴⁸⁶

More recently, on 30 November 2021, Human Rights Watch published a report stating that they had documented 'summary execution or enforced disappearance' of 47 former ANSF members 'who had surrendered to or were apprehended by Taliban forces' between 15 August – 31 October 2021, and that their research indicated that over 100 former security force personnel and family members of such individuals had been targeted. There were also reports on killings or forced disappearances in the provinces of Ghazni, Helmand, Kundz, and Kandahar.⁴⁸⁷ On 4 December 2021, the European Union, the United States, and 20 other countries, quoting Human Rights Watch's report as well as other sources, jointly condemned the Taliban over the alleged killings of former members of the Afghan security forces.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁷⁷ CNN, Taliban accused of murdering pregnant Afghan policewoman in front of her family, 6 September 2021, [url](#); BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban accused of killing pregnant police officer, 5 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁸ Afghanistan International, [Facebook], طالبان جستجوی خانه به خانه را آغاز کرده اند [informal translation 'Taliban started house to house search'], 15 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁹ TOLONews, Taliban Says it Will Build Regular Army, Include Former Members, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁰ Dr. Ahmad Waqas [Twitter], امارات داستخباراتو کمیسیون د غزنی ولایت داستخباراتو ریاست [Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Intelligence Commission, Direction of Intelligence of Ghazni province], 15 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸¹ RFE/RL/Gadhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#); Bilal Karimi, [Twitter], posted on: 23 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸² Reuters, Afghan Taliban defence minister orders crackdown on abuses, 24 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Takes Revenge On former Afghan Security forces, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ ABC, Interpreter who assisted ADF executed by Taliban, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁵ Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, Ex-policeman found dead in Khost, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁷ HRW, "No Forgiveness for People Like You". Executions and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan under the Taliban, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁸ USDOS, Joint Statement on Reports of Summary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Afghanistan, 4 December 2021, [url](#)

On 1 October 2021, Dutch public television NOS reported that the Taliban had summoned Afghan interpreters previously working for the Netherlands to appear in court. The interpreters were in hiding and, according to NOS, the interpreters' families were informed that they might be held responsible if the interpreters failed to appear in court.⁴⁸⁹ Later that month, RFE/RL's Tajik Service quoted Afghan pilots who had fled to Tajikistan after the Taliban takeover, stating that their relatives in Afghanistan were threatened by the Taliban to force them to return to the country.⁴⁹⁰

An Afghan human rights expert explained that while it did not seem like there was a policy of targeting and killing former Afghan security forces, it seemed to happen a lot in some areas. For instance, in parts of the country like southern, south-eastern and eastern Afghanistan, targeted killings were a bigger issue than in 'perhaps' some parts of the northern areas. However, there are also areas there who see similar patterns of targeted killings. The compliance on the ground with the announced amnesty looked different from province to province, and the source stated that the Taliban were either unable or unwilling to control their soldiers doing 'crazy' and 'outrageous' things. Furthermore, the Taliban did not hold their fighters accountable when they went after former combatants or civilians and conducted atrocities such as killings, hangings, and subjecting people to violence.⁴⁹¹ An Afghan law professor reasoned that if the Taliban were to go after and punish anyone who worked against them, the number of targeted attacks would be significantly higher than the records today as it would include hundreds of thousands of people. According to the same source the Taliban had the capacity to carry out such operations in many parts of the country, but the number of reprisal killings was not so high. The revenge killings seemed to be on a lower level according to the source, who also added that the extent was hard to know and that 'the pattern was scattered'.⁴⁹²

As of 11 November 2021, the Afghan human rights expert had seen reports of 30 targeted attacks in the past two months, and the victims were killed because of their links to the former government and the security forces or because being alleged ISKP affiliates. According to the source the allegations of victims being ISKP affiliates could be a cover to target some individuals, and Nangarhar was a 'hotspot' for such recent events. Alleged ISKP affiliates were killed without due process, drawn out of their homes and shot on the spot, or illegally detained and subjected to torture. Although the source could not say whether such events were part of a larger Taliban policy, the Taliban leadership did not seem to have issues with their fighters going after people considered to be of 'high risk' such as ISKP affiliates.⁴⁹³ The Afghan law professor also stated that, although it was hard to say whether the revenge killings were centrally sanctioned or not, the source 'absolutely believed' that the Taliban systematically targeted anyone perceived as a potential threat, i.e. anyone who could align themselves with the National Resistance Front (NRF); anyone with possible connections to the ISKP; intelligence officials or elite forces of the previous administration who could potentially join anti-Taliban movements, and influential figures who could challenge the Taliban. People that were a potential threat to the Taliban were monitored, harassed, threatened or even killed according to the source, especially persons with suspected links to ISKP who were often executed on the spot.⁴⁹⁴ Dr. Andrea Chiovenda, adjunct assistant professor of anthropology at Zayed University, told EASO during an interview on 9 November 2021 that the Taliban could not enforce its amnesty, and also mentioned a 'worrisome' situation in Nangarhar with almost daily reports of bodies hanging from trees along the roads, and similar events taking place in Laghman and Kunar.⁴⁹⁵ There were also media reports on killings in Nangarhar where bodies were found with handwritten notes in their

⁴⁸⁹ France24, Taliban summon Afghan interpreters who worked for Dutch, threaten families, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Pilots who Fled to Tajikistan Say Taliban Is Threatening Relatives Back Home, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁹¹ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

⁴⁹² Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

⁴⁹³ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

⁴⁹⁴ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

⁴⁹⁵ Chiovenda, A. (Dr.), professor at Zayed University, online interview, 9 November 2021

pockets accusing them of being ISKP fighters.⁴⁹⁶ Some feared that accusations of ISKP affiliation made room for the Taliban to target any suspects.⁴⁹⁷

Personal enmities were also a part of the targeting according to the Afghan human rights expert, who had seen several reports of revenge killings. According to the source, it seemed like the Taliban fighters felt like they ‘earned’ to commit such killings by becoming victorious.⁴⁹⁸ The Afghan law professor also emphasized personal enmities, as well as local conflicts and ethnic tension behind targeted killings. The source explained that targeted killings were often driven by revenge by Taliban fighters, and usually local Taliban taking revenge on local actors because of longstanding conflicts in that area. There were also patterns of local rivalry, and rivalry between tribes who have aligned themselves with either the Taliban or the former government. After the takeover the dynamics have changed and therefore some ethnic tensions have been aggravated according to the source.⁴⁹⁹

As previously mentioned, female judges and prosecutors reportedly lived in hiding fearing for their lives as some had ruled against Taliban members as well as released prisoners.⁵⁰⁰ IAJ and IAWJ published a joint statement in which judges were stated to be in ‘very grave danger’, and stressed that revenge killings might occur, and that judges had been subjected to house-searches, threatening messages and physical harassment, and had their bank accounts suspended. Also, family, friends and neighbours were said to have been pressed to reveal judges’ whereabouts.⁵⁰¹ A similar account was published by Business Insider quoting a former judge, who claimed that ‘Taliban fighters went into his house looking for him and searched the homes of his families, friends, and colleagues.’ Another former judge in hiding told Business Insider that some Taliban fighters were pursuing ‘personal vendettas’ against judges, and could not be controlled by the Taliban leadership.⁵⁰²

2.6 Journalists and media workers

During their first press conference after the takeover, the Taliban assured that they were committed to media ‘within our cultural framework’ and that private media could continue to ‘be free and independent’ and continue their activities with the requests that Islamic values should be taken into account, that media should be impartial and not work against national values or unity.⁵⁰³ In September 2021, the Taliban issued guidelines for journalists, including rules against addressing topics in conflict with Islam or ‘insulting national personalities’, and instructing media to produce reports in coordination with the Taliban government’s media office.⁵⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch called these regulations ‘so broad and vague as to prohibit virtually any critical reporting about the Taliban’ and ‘suffocating media freedom in the country’.⁵⁰⁵ In late November 2021, Khaama Press reported that local authorities in Badakshan province had asked media outlets’ report to be published after ‘a review and censorship’.⁵⁰⁶

⁴⁹⁶ BBC, The Taliban’s secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁷ Washington Post (The), Taliban sends 1,300 fighters to eastern Afghanistan to battle Islamic State, 22 November 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁸ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

⁴⁹⁹ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

⁵⁰⁰ New York Times (The), Female Judges in Afghanistan, Now Jobless and in Hiding, 20 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gadhara, Afghanistan’s Former Prosecutors Hunted By Criminals They Helped Convict, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰¹ IAJ & IAWJ, Joint IAJ and IAWJ Statement on the Current Situation in Afghanistan, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰² Business Insider, Hunted by the Taliban, Afghanistan’s former judges are disguising themselves and going underground. ‘I have a lot of enemies right now,’ said one., 2 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰³ Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban’s first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁴ New York Times (The), New Taliban Guidelines Stir Fear About the Future of Press Freedom, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁵ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁶ Khaama Press, Media freedom at risk as Taliban censors news reports in northern Afghanistan: Report, 29 November 2021, [url](#)

Numerous journalists fled from Afghanistan after the takeover or went into hiding.⁵⁰⁷ Subsequent reports stated that some people in unnamed ‘non-journalistic bodies’⁵⁰⁸ and institutions had used the identities of journalists to evacuate friends and families, while actual reporters were left in the country.⁵⁰⁹ According to a representative of the Afghanistan Civil Society And Journalist Group, press cards and media documents had been forged.⁵¹⁰

On 3 October 2021, the National Association of Journalists stated that 70 % of media outlets in Afghanistan had stopped operating following the Taliban takeover.⁵¹¹ Taliban restrictions impacted the media landscape, *inter alia* limiting popular content⁵¹², but the main reason behind media outlets shutting down was reportedly financial issues.⁵¹³ About 70 % of Afghan journalists had reportedly lost their jobs as of mid-October⁵¹⁴, leading to a growing feeling of desperation among media workers finding themselves without an income.⁵¹⁵ One local journalist with ten years’ experience reportedly felt forced to take up work in the construction industry making bricks to provide for his family.⁵¹⁶

Still operating media workers faced restrictions in carrying out their work. The Taliban’s regulations were vague, and thus difficult to follow in practice.⁵¹⁷ DW reported in October that the Taliban rule for media was not uniform, and that the situation for Afghan journalists differed ‘from place to place and case to case’. Journalists in Nangarhar did not experience any direct interference in their work by the Taliban, while other faced severe problems such as direct threats from Taliban fighters.⁵¹⁸ Reporters Without Borders (RSF) stated that private TV channels were subjected to threats and quoted a producer who stated that the Taliban had beaten five of the channel’s staff members and labelled them as ‘takfiri’ (unbelievers). The producer also accused Taliban members of ‘systematically’ trying to influence reporters in the field.⁵¹⁹

Reporters also faced difficulties in covering unauthorised events such as women’s protests.⁵²⁰ Between 6 and 8 September 2021, at least 14 journalists covering protests were detained and later released according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and at least nine were subjected to violence in custody.⁵²¹ Two men working for the local newspaper Etilaat-e Roz were arrested while covering a woman’s protest in Kabul, and after their release they showed bruises and witnessed of severe beatings with batons, electric cables and whips while in custody.⁵²² Some of their colleagues were also ‘pushed and slapped’ by Taliban fighters when seeking after the two men at the police station.⁵²³ On 21 October 2021, CPJ reported that three journalists were assaulted by Taliban

⁵⁰⁷ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁸ Khaama Press, Common Afghan impersonating journalists flown out of Afghanistan: Afghan Journalists Union, 10 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁹ TOLONews, Afghan Journalists’ Identities Falsely Assumed by Evacuees, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹⁰ Ariana News, Journalists, activists slam evacuees for faking their professions, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹¹ Khaama Press, 70 % of Afghan media outlets stopped working since Taliban takeover, 3 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹² Guardian (The), Switched off: Afghan media struggle to survive under Taliban rule, 27 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹³ Ariana News, Crippling economy closing Afghan media outlets, 11 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Media Face Budget Issues, Lack of Access to Information, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹⁴ TOLONews, Journalists Call for Access to Official Information, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, As Afghan Media Struggles Under Taliban, Jobless Journalists Grow Desperate, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ Khaama Press, Degeneration of journalism, Afghan journalist making bricks to feed family, 01 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹⁷ LA Times, Many of Afghanistan’s journalists have fled. Those who remain face a harsh new world, 22 October 2021, [url](#);

DW, Afghanistan: Journalists encounter tough times under Taliban rule, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹⁸ DW, Afghanistan: Journalists encounter tough times under Taliban rules, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹⁹ RSF, New (unofficial) oppressive rules imposed on journalists in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁰ LA Times, Many of Afghanistan’s journalists have fled. Those who remain face a harsh new world, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵²¹ CPJ, Taliban fighters detain, flog, and beat journalists covering protests in Afghanistan, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵²² France24, Afghan journalists tell of Taliban beatings after covering protests, 9 September 2021, [url](#); LA Times, Taliban beats protesters and arrests journalists at women’s rally in Kabul, 8 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), As Taliban

Crush Dissent, New Leaders Face Cascading Challenges, 8 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵²³ Al Jazeera, Taliban accused of torturing journalists for covering protests, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

fighters while covering a women's protest in Kabul.⁵²⁴ There were also reports of Taliban fighters subjecting journalists to violence during other types of protests⁵²⁵, and subjecting media workers to violence and confiscating equipment of unclear reasons.⁵²⁶

Soon after the takeover, some journalists were also reportedly searched for by Taliban fighters. France24 reported that the Taliban were tracking down people perceived as a threat to their rule, including journalists, in at least four provinces, using 'any means at their disposal'.⁵²⁷ DW reported that the Taliban had raided the homes of at least three of their journalists, and that a family member of one of the journalists was killed and another injured by Taliban fighters during a house-to-house search.⁵²⁸ According to France24, the Taliban opened fire after it was revealed that the journalist had fled abroad.⁵²⁹ In another instance close to the takeover, armed men reportedly broke into the home of a TV station director, stole vehicles and other equipment and threatened him.⁵³⁰

On 27 October 2021 the Afghanistan National Journalists Union (ANJU) claimed that it had recorded more than 30 separate incidents of 'violence and threats of violence' against journalists the past two months, and in almost 90 % of the cases the Taliban were identified as perpetrators.⁵³¹

Among incidents leading to the death of journalists, there was Fahim Dashti, who was also a NRF spokesperson. Dashti was killed in Panjsher on 6 September 2021, and while NRF representatives claimed that he was targeted and killed by Pakistani Air Force drones, the Taliban stated that he died in an internal conflict between resistance commanders.⁵³² On 2 October 2021, journalist and lecturer Sayed Maroof Sadat was killed by unknown gunmen in Jalalabad City, along with three other people.⁵³³ In another attack, one media worker was lightly wounded by gunmen on a motorcycle in Kabul⁵³⁴, while a journalist working for media outlet Salam Watandar was shot and 'severely injured' by another passengers when travelling in a taxi.⁵³⁵ Journalists were moreover subjected to physical violence by border guards.⁵³⁶ Some journalists were also reportedly abducted by Taliban fighters and subsequently released.⁵³⁷

In August 2021, the Taliban claimed to have formed a committee that would prevent and probe acts of violence against journalists⁵³⁸ and Taliban representatives met with and apologised to the two Etilaat-e Roz journalists subjected to torture on 8 September 2021.⁵³⁹ Steven Butler, the Asia programme coordinator at the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), told Al Jazeera that the Taliban promised to investigate matters, but had not presented any actual findings. Furthermore,

⁵²⁴ CPJ, Taliban fighters assault at least 3 journalists covering women's protest in Afghanistan, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁵ New York Times (The), Reporters in Afghanistan Face an Intolerant Regime: 'Everything Changed Overnight', 11 September 2021, [url](#); CPJ, Afghan photographer Morteza Samadi detained by Taliban since September 7, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁶ TOLONews, TOLONews Reporter, Cameraman Beaten by Taliban, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁷ France24 Observers, 'I knew they'd come for us' Afghan journalists, activists report Taliban reprisals, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁸ DW, Relative of DW journalist killed by the Taliban, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵²⁹ France24 Observers, 'I knew they'd come for us' Afghan journalists, activists report Taliban reprisals, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁰ TOLONews, Taliban Commission to Probe Violence Against Media, 22 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵³¹ Al Jazeera, Watchdog: 30 recent cases of violence against Afghan journalists, 28 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵³² TOLONews, Well-Known Journalist Fahim Dashti Killed in Panjshir, 6 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵³³ Khaama Press, Former Afghan journalist, journalism lecturer killed in eastern Nangarhar province, 3 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁴ AP, Official: Afghan journalist survives attack by gunmen, 30 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁵ Salam Watandar, AJC condemns attempt on the life of Salam Watandar journalist, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁶ TOLONews, TOLONews Reporter Beaten by Soldiers in Torkham, 24 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁷ Xinhuanet, Afghan media safety group resumes all activities in Kabul, 2 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Herat Family Asks Emirate to Release Photojournalist, 30 September 2021, [url](#); Bilal Sarwary, [Twitter], posted on: 15 September 2021, [url](#); Bashir Ahmad Ghwakh, [Twitter], posted on: 15 September 2021, [url](#); Larawbar, طالبانو په گردیز کې خبریال داود تپاند نادرکه کړی دی [informal translation 'Taliban disappeared the journalist Dawoud Tapan in Gardez'], 14 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁸ TOLONews, Taliban Commission to Probe Violence Against Media, 22 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵³⁹ Washington Post (The), After Etilaatroz journalists were brutally beaten, Taliban apologizes and vows to investigate, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

CPJ had experienced difficulties in establishing contacts with the Taliban to advocate for the rights of Afghan media workers.⁵⁴⁰

2.6.1 Female journalists and media workers

The situation for women working in the media was reportedly difficult.⁵⁴¹ While many female journalists fled from Afghanistan soon after the takeover⁵⁴², many of those who stayed were reportedly sent home from their workplaces.⁵⁴³ On 19 August 2021, two female journalists at Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) claimed that the Taliban were barring them from entering their offices⁵⁴⁴, while two days later, Pajhwok Afghan News reported that the Taliban in Ghazni had banned female presenters and music from broadcasting media.⁵⁴⁵ By the end of August 2021, fewer than 100 of the estimated 700 women journalists in Kabul were still working, according to a survey by RSF.⁵⁴⁶

During the first days after the takeover, women quickly disappeared from broadcasting media, but some female news anchors and reporters soon resumed work and appeared on screen.⁵⁴⁷ A female news anchor interviewed a Taliban spokesperson on air⁵⁴⁸, and a female journalist reported from the streets of Kabul.⁵⁴⁹ However, both left Afghanistan⁵⁵⁰ and women's general appearance on broadcasting media reportedly dropped again soon thereafter.⁵⁵¹

In October 2021, a journalist told DW that the Taliban had announced that women journalists were not allowed to appear on camera in Badakshan province, and that women working with radio were only permitted to continue working if all staff members in a program were women.⁵⁵² More recently, on 21 November 2021, the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice issued new guidelines for the media industry, where it stated that female reporters should wear a hijab when appearing on screen.⁵⁵³

2.7 Human rights defenders and activists

Taliban fighters reportedly conducted 'door-to-door' searches after the takeover, looking for *inter alia*, activists.⁵⁵⁴ On 11 September 2021, Taliban fighters allegedly broke into the house of Fahima Rahmati, a local female activist in Kandahar Province, and dragged her family members out, beat

⁵⁴⁰ Al Jazeera, Afghan journalists lament 'bleak' future for media under Taliban, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴¹ LA Times, Many of Afghanistan's journalists have fled. Those who remain face a harsh new world, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴² AJ, Afghan women speak up against new Taliban media guidelines, 25 November 2021, [url](#); Politico, How Athens became the unexpected hub for Afghan women, 22 November 2021, [url](#); Dawn, 'My computer is my weapon': Afghan woman journalist, who pretended to be a boy, stands up to Taliban, last updated 18 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴³ ABC, Afghan journalists face threats and beatings despite Taliban promises of a free press, 25 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁴ AFP, [Twitter], 20 August 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Female Journalist Ask Taliban for Right to Work, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁵ Pajhwok Afghan News, Music, female employees in radios banned in Ghazni, 21 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁶ RSF, Fewer than 100 of Kabul's 700 women journalists still working, last updated 1 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁷ BBC, Afghanistan crisis: 'Hey world, do you care what happens here?', 22 August 2021, [url](#); Reid, R., UN Human Rights Council to talk about Afghanistan: Why so little appetite for action, AAN, 23 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁸ TOLONews, [YouTube], نیمه ورځ: د کابل پر وضعیت مرکه, [informal translation 'half-day: discussion on the situation in Kabul'] August 17 August 2021,, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁹ TOLONews [Twitter], Video – Tolonews' Hasiba Atakpal reports on the situation in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁰ CNN, Female journalist flees Afghanistan following groundbreaking TV interview with Taliban spokesman, 30 August 2021, [url](#); Hasiba Atakpal, [Twitter], posted on 1 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵¹ Reid, R., UN Human Rights Council to talk about Afghanistan: Why so little appetite for action, AAN, 23 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵² DW, Afghanistan: Journalists encounter tough times under Taliban rule, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵³ Guardian (The), Afghan journalists decry Taliban rules restricting role of women on TV, 23 November 2021, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: Taliban issue guidelines against women actors, 21 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁴ France24 Observers, 'I knew they'd come for us' Afghan journalists, activists report Taliban reprisals, 20 August 2021, [url](#); France24 Observers, 'Lay low and stay home': The only option for Afghans targeted by Taliban, 23 August 2021, [url](#)

them, and took them to an unknown location, following information they had about former NDS operatives residing in a house in that area.⁵⁵⁵ On 13 September 2021, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated that they had received information regarding Taliban raids on offices of some non-governmental organisations and civil society groups.⁵⁵⁶ Activists interviewed by CIVICUS, a global civil society alliance, also noted that ‘between 16th August and 13th September 2021, the Taliban conducted several raids on women-led NGOs across Afghanistan and in some cases, they confiscated their vehicles and sealed their offices’.⁵⁵⁷

During telephone interviews with Human Rights Watch and the SJSU Human Rights Institute, seven women in Herat, including activists, educators, and university students explained that they ‘had heard reports that the Taliban had searched for at least some women’s rights activists and high-profile women in Herat’, while one of them claimed to have been informed about a list of 25 high-profile women from Herat, wanted by the Taliban.⁵⁵⁸ No further information on the date when the interviews were conducted was provided by the source.

On 21 September 2021, France24 Observers released a special program in which four anonymous persons remaining in Afghanistan recounted life under the Taliban. One of them stated that the Taliban had conducted ‘targeted searches’ to look for activists, but have done it so quietly to avoid drawing attention. Another person said that the Taliban had lists of persons that have worked with foreigners or as social activists. A third person claimed that the Taliban assassinated a colleague, a women’s rights activist and a nurse, by shooting her in the forehead in her own house.⁵⁵⁹

Regarding the treatment of activists during the demonstrations in the first weeks of September 2021, OHCHR referred to ‘credible reports’ about beatings and detention of protesters, including activists and human rights defenders, by Taliban fighters during demonstrations that took place on 8 of September in Faizabad City in Badakhshan province and Kapisa.⁵⁶⁰

On 4 November 2021, Frozan Safi, a women’s rights activist and lecturer, was found shot dead in the city of Mazar-e Sharif, after she went missing on 20 October.⁵⁶¹ On 6 November 2021, an official of the Taliban Interior Ministry confirmed the arrests of two individuals related to the killing of four women in Mazar-e Sharif, including Frozan Safi. No information about whether the arrested persons confessed to the killings and a motive to commit them was given.⁵⁶²

2.8 Healthcare professionals

Soon after the takeover, the Taliban asked women working within healthcare to return to their jobs.⁵⁶³ In November 2021, Human Rights Watch reported that UNOCHA had mapped agreements between aid agencies and the Taliban in Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, ‘showing where female staff members will be permitted to function’. According to the report, Taliban officials had provided a written agreement providing ‘unconditional’ permission to women aid workers in only three provinces, while in the rest of the country women aid workers were restricted to effectively engage to their job by the requirement of male guardianship.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁵ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban attack Fahima house, arrest family members, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁶ OHCHR, Oral update on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁷ CIVICUS, Activists And Journalists At Risk, Crackdown On Protests In Afghanistan Following Taliban Takeover, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁸ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Abuses Cause Widespread Fear, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵⁹ France24 Observers, Out Observers recount life under Taliban rule in 2021 [Online video], 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁰ OHCHR, Press briefing notes on Afghanistan, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶¹ Guardian (The), Women’s rights activist shot dead in northern Afghanistan, 5 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Arrests Two In Connection With Killing Of Four Women, Including Activist, in Afghanistan, 6 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶³ Reuters, Taliban say Afghan woman health service staff should go back to work, 27 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁴ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Blocking Female Aid Workers, 4 November 2021, [url](#)

In September, representatives of the Afghanistan Nurses Association (ANA) stated that the situation was ‘unclear’ and referred to cases where some patients did not accept a female nurse and ‘armed soldiers’ entering the wards of a hospital making some nurses flee from their workplace.⁵⁶⁵ Many health workers were too afraid to resume their duties despite the Taliban’s request of their return to work.⁵⁶⁶ According to an opinion by representatives of Women in Global Health, Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and Kabul University, the reality of health care workers differed across Afghanistan, and the lack of clear guidance on the rules in force and how the situation may evolve was stated to cause distress and self-restriction among healthcare workers, leaving many female health workers at home.⁵⁶⁷

On 15 September 2021, The New York Times visited a local hospital in Cake-e Wardak (Wardak Province), in which 14 of 65 employees were women. A midwife working at the hospital said that members of the Taliban had visited them and spoken to her, and that she did not experience any threat from the new rule.⁵⁶⁸ AFP did a reportage from a village in Daymirdad district (Wardak Province), which had been under Taliban control the past 25 years. Local Taliban leaders reportedly allowed some flexibility on gender segregation at the local clinic where men and women often worked side-by-side. According to the Taliban official in charge of health care in the district, Islamic law permits men and women working together when necessary, although under normal circumstances there should be separating curtains in place.⁵⁶⁹

On 21 September, France24 Observers released a special program in which four anonymous persons recounted life in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. One source said that the Taliban assassinated a colleague, a women’s rights activist and a nurse, by shooting her in the forehead in her home.⁵⁷⁰ The same month a well-known Afghan psychiatrist was abducted by unknown armed men in Balkh.⁵⁷¹ His body was found weeks later, showing signs of torture according to his family.⁵⁷²

In October 2021, a midwife in Paktika told a reporter of The Christian Science Monitor that the clinic where she works was intruded by a Taliban commander and two fighters who said that women ‘have no right to go out or work’, that women ‘attending meetings with men’ and going out without male guardians had ‘ruined Afghanistan’, and that midwives are not necessary as death is in the hands of God. According to the article, midwife services have been able to continue under Taliban rule to some extent. However, the Taliban’s view on women’s education and work remained unclear, and according to the article rules and norms were applied seemingly ‘haphazardly from region to region’. A midwife who fled Afghanistan but remained in daily contact with colleagues described midwives as ‘frontline health care providers’ with a constant worry of what will happen to them and their families.⁵⁷³

On 2 November 2021, Kabul military hospital was attacked as two explosions detonated near its entrance and was followed by heavy gunfire. Sources from the interior ministry told Al Jazeera that 19 people were killed and 43 wounded. ISKP later claimed responsibility for the bombing.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶⁵ ICN, Afghan nurses report on extreme challenges and need for international support, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁶ France24, Under years of Taliban rule, women nurses work alongside men, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁷ Jung, L., Khorsand, L., Afzali, A., Dahir, M., Yassir Essar, M., Dhat, R., Staring into the darkness: women health workers in Afghanistan, 6 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁸ New York Times (The), This Is Life in Rural Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶⁹ France24, Under years of Taliban rule, women nurses work alongside men, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁰ France24 Observers, Out Observers recount life under Taliban rule in 2021, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷¹ Hasht-e Subh Daily, World Mental Health Day: A Psychiatrist Is Missing in Balkh, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷² Guardian (The), Abducted Afghan psychiatrist found dead weeks after disappearance, 19 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷³ Christian Science Monitor (The), How Afghan midwives are challenging Taliban strictures on women, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁴ Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Deadly blasts, gunfire hit Kabul military hospital, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

2.9 Musicians and artists

Documenting the situation of musicians and artists in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, The New York Times reported that, while the Taliban ‘have not banned art outright’, they have closed music schools, and radio and television networks were reported to have stopped airing songs, musicals and comedy shows.⁵⁷⁵ According to AP, some Taliban fighters are enforcing their own rules, and have harassed musicians and music venues. Further, wedding halls limit music at gatherings, and musicians are afraid to perform.⁵⁷⁶ In turn, several Afghan musicians interviewed by TOLONews expressed concern over their future, and called for the government to facilitate alternative job opportunities if music will not be allowed⁵⁷⁷, while RFE/RL reported that some Afghan musicians had gone into hiding.⁵⁷⁸ According to the CNN, Afghan artists were destroying their own work due to fear of retribution of the Taliban.⁵⁷⁹ Additionally, the Taliban were reported to have painted over murals, replacing them with their own slogans.⁵⁸⁰ In October 2021, The New York Times reported that at least ‘100 young artists, teachers and their relatives’, previously targeted by the Taliban, had fled Afghanistan.⁵⁸¹ According to a subsequent report, they were granted asylum in Portugal.⁵⁸² Other singers fled to Pakistan, and were hiding in Islamabad and Peshawar.⁵⁸³ Some were reported to ‘struggle to make a living’ in Pakistan.⁵⁸⁴ In November 2021, the Taliban ordered that television channels refrain from airing shows featuring women artists.⁵⁸⁵ Films and programs against ‘Islamic or Afghan values’ were also banned, as were ‘films that promote foreign cultures or traditions in Afghan society, or which provoke immorality’.⁵⁸⁶

Among the violent incidents recorded against artists, on 27 August 2021, an Afghan folk singer was reportedly murdered by Taliban members in Andarab district, Baghlan province.⁵⁸⁷ In October 2021, journalist Bilal Sarwary reported that the Pashto poet Heelamand Zhwanday was taken out of his home and murdered.⁵⁸⁸ On 29 October 2021, three men claiming to be Taliban members opened fire at a wedding reception in Nangarhar province. A Taliban spokesperson stated that the wedding was attacked as music was being played, but emphasised that no one in the ranks on the Islamic Emirate has the right to turn anyone away from music.⁵⁸⁹ Soon after, the Taliban spokesperson and deputy minister of information and culture Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed that two people allegedly involved in the shooting were arrested but did not clarify whether they were Taliban fighters or not.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁷⁵ New York Times (The), Afghan Art Flourished for 20 Years. Can It Survive the New Taliban Regime?, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁶ AP, Under Taliban thriving Afghan music scene heads to silence, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁷ TOLONews, Afghan Musicians Face Uncertain Future, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Afghan Musicians Fear Being Silenced By The Taliban, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷⁹ CNN, Afghan artists destroy their work fearing Taliban retribution, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁰ CNN, Afghan artists destroy their work fearing Taliban retribution, 13 October 2021, [url](#); Business Insider, This artist painted murals to challenge the Taliban after their last rule. Then the militants destroyed them, leaving him fearing for his life, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸¹ New York Times, Musicians Flee Afghanistan, Fearing Taliban Rule, 3 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸² Sky News, Afghanistan: Musicians are desperate to flee following the Taliban takeover - this is why, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸³ BBC, Afghanistan's singers flee Taliban violence, 16 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁴ Al Jazeera, Fleeing Afghan musicians stuck in limbo in Pakistan, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁵ VOA, Taliban Edict Targets ‘Immoral’ Afghan TV Shows Featuring Female Artists, 21 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁶ DW, Afghanistan: What Taliban's new media rules mean for female actors, 28 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Accused Of Slaying Afghan Folk Singer, 29 August 2021, [url](#); Sami Mahdi, [Twitter], posted on: 28 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁸ Bilal Sarwary, [Twitter], posted on: 20 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸⁹ CNN, Three wedding guests reportedly shot dead in Afghanistan for playing music at reception, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁰ Ariana News, IEA arrests two gunmen after wedding party shooting, 31 October 2021, [url](#); CNN, Three wedding guests reportedly shot dead in Afghanistan for playing music at reception, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

2.10 LGBTIQ persons

The digital news platform Openly reported that before the Taliban takeover it was too dangerous for gay men to live openly in Afghanistan, 'whatever changes had been won over the past 20 years'.⁵⁹¹ After the takeover in mid-August, members of the LGBTIQ⁵⁹² community reportedly lived in fear for their lives, and many went into hiding.⁵⁹³ There were allegations of street attacks and threats over the phone to LGBTIQ persons.⁵⁹⁴ Although killings involving LGBTIQ Afghans could not be 'independently verified'⁵⁹⁵, ABC reported on allegations of the beheading of a gay man⁵⁹⁶, while Thomson Reuters Foundation noted that a gay man had allegedly been killed by the Taliban after gay material was found on his mobile phone during a checkpoint search.⁵⁹⁷ In a telephone interview with France24, Kimahli Powell, the Executive Director of Rainbow Railroad, the only international LGBT+ organisation on the ground in Afghanistan, claimed that the Taliban have a 'kill list' for members of the LGBTIQ community. According to Powell there were a lot of information sharing after the takeover, and the Taliban seemed to complement these lists through data leaks and entrapment. For instance, the organisation received information from individuals who had received emails from someone asking for personal data and claiming to be connected with Rainbow Road.⁵⁹⁸ The Guardian reported on rumours of the Taliban attempting to trick gay men by contacting them on social media and offering ways to escape from Afghanistan. The same source reported that some transwomen felt forced to grow beards to hide their gender identity, and that lesbian women reportedly were under pressure to act 'more feminine'.⁵⁹⁹

On 29 October 2021, a group of 29 LGBTIQ Afghans arrived in Britain, after an evacuation operation, coordinated by the human rights organisations of Rainbow Railroad, Stonewall and Micro Rainbow, and the British foreign ministry.⁶⁰⁰ Two LGBTIQ activists outside of Afghanistan told CNN they had separate lists each with hundreds of names of people who want to flee.⁶⁰¹ Nemat Sadat, a gay Afghan-American novelist who taught at an Afghan university from 2012 to 2013, has reportedly a list of more

⁵⁹¹ Openly, LGBT+ Afghans in hiding, fearing death under Taliban, 19 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹² The term has been found in various forms in the sources. In line with the EU strategy, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/lgbtiq_strategy_2020-2025_en.pdf, referring to sexual and gender minorities as: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons, the drafter of this COI has uniformly implemented the abbreviation LGBTIQ.

⁵⁹³ Thomson Reuters Foundation, LGBT+ Afghans in hiding, fearing death under Taliban, 19 August 2021, [url](#); BBC, LGBT in Afghanistan: 'I could be killed on the spot', 20 August 2021, [url](#); ABC, LGBT Afghans are on the run, afraid they could be stoned to death under Taliban law, 2 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Angry and afraid, Afghanistan's LGBTQ community say they're being hunted down after Taliban takeover, 18 September 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The), 'The Taliban will have no mercy': LGBTQ+ Afghans go into hiding, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁴ ABC, LGBT Afghans are on the run, afraid they could be stoned to death under Taliban law, 2 September 2021, [url](#); DW, Afghanistan: LGBTQ people fear for their lives under Taliban rule, 10 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Angry and afraid, Afghanistan's LGBTQ community say they're being hunted down after Taliban takeover, 18 September 2021, [url](#); DW, Trans in Afghanistan: A mortal danger under the Taliban, 2 October 2021, [url](#); Thompson Reuters Foundation, LGBT+ Afghans fear being forgotten 100 days since Taliban takeover, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁵ Thompson Reuters Foundation, LGBT+ Afghans fear being forgotten 100 days since Taliban takeover, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁶ ABC, LGBT Afghans are on the run, afraid they could be stoned to death under Taliban law, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁷ Thompson Reuters Foundation, LGBT+ Afghans fear being forgotten 100 days since Taliban takeover, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁸ France24, 'The Taliban has a kill list' for the Afghan LGBT community, NGO says, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹⁹ Guardian (The), 'The Taliban will have no mercy': LGBTQ+ Afghans go into hiding, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁰ Guardian (The), First group of LGBT+ Afghans fleeing Taliban arrive in the UK, 30 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰¹ CNN, Angry and afraid, Afghanistan's LGBTQ community say they're being hunted down after Taliban takeover, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

than 500 Afghans he has identified who want to leave Afghanistan out of fear for their lives because they are part of the LGBTIQ community.⁶⁰²

While the Taliban did not address the rights of LGBTIQ people during the first days after the takeover⁶⁰³, on 29 October 2021, ministry spokesman Ahmad Wali Haqmal told Reuters that human rights will be respected within the framework of Islamic law, but this does not include LGBTIQ rights as that is against Sharia law.⁶⁰⁴

2.11 Persons seeking asylum or remaining abroad, and returnees

On 30 August 2021, the Austrian newspaper Kronen Zeitung published an interview with Taliban spokesperson Zabihulla Mujahid. According to Mujahid he thought that many left Afghanistan out of fear due to propaganda, and that the Taliban are not happy that people are leaving Afghanistan although anyone with documents should be entitled to leave. When asked whether Afghan asylum seekers in Germany or Austria with rejected asylum claims and who had possibly also committed crimes would be accepted back into the country, Mujahid replied that they would be accepted if deported, and presented to a court to decide on how to proceed.⁶⁰⁵ It was not clear whether Mujahid referred to returnees in general or only returnees who had committed crimes in this statement.

Two days after the Taliban takeover, the Indian newspaper The Print published an article on Afghan women in India fearing that their families could be targeted by the Taliban for sending them abroad to study. One woman had reportedly asked her family to destroy all pictures of her without a hijab or posing together with male friends as well as embassy documents and degrees.⁶⁰⁶ An Afghan law professor expressed a personal concern as often being critical of the Taliban in, for example, social media. The source stated to have taken down any connections with family members, as well as photos, from social media platforms, and claimed that 'a lot of people' take similar precautions to safeguard contacts that are still under Taliban control.⁶⁰⁷

According to an Afghan human rights expert, there was a negative narrative on Afghans that had left Afghanistan among Taliban sympathizers and some Taliban segments. According to the source, people who had left were seen as not having any Islamic values or being on the run from things they have done. On the other hand, the Taliban have prioritised passports for Afghan labours working abroad as that would mean an income for the country. So, on one level the Taliban might understand the economic aspect, but on another level, know that many abroad disagree with them.⁶⁰⁸

An Afghan law professor described two narratives of the Taliban on persons leaving Afghanistan to live in Western countries. In one narrative the Taliban said that people flee due to poverty and that it has nothing to do with any fear of the Taliban, but life is better economically in the West. The other narrative was about the elites that left: they were not seen as 'Afghans', but as corrupt 'puppets' of the 'occupation', opposed to the population. They were said to have no 'roots' in

⁶⁰² People, LGBTQ Afghans Facing 'Violent Death' Under Taliban Are Hiding and Fleeing But Need Help, Advocates Say, 7 October 2021, [url](#); Independent (The), 'Race against time' to help hundreds of LGBTQ+ Afghans escape the Taliban, 19 October 2021, [url](#); Thompson Reuters Foundation, LGBT+ Afghans fear being forgotten 100 days since Taliban takeover, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰³ CNN, Angry and afraid, Afghanistan's LGBTQ community say they're being hunted down after Taliban takeover, 18 September 2021, [url](#); Al, Afghanistan: The fate of thousands hanging in the balance, 21 September 2021, [url](#), p. 11

⁶⁰⁴ Reuters, 'Just give us our money': Taliban push to unlock Afghan billions abroad, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁵ Kronen Zeitung, Wir nehmen eure straffälligen Asylwerber zurück!, 30 August 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁶ Print (The), 'Burn my degrees, photos of me without hijab': Afghan women in India tell families back home, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰⁷ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

⁶⁰⁸ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

Afghanistan, so as soon as ‘the foreigners’ left, they took this group with them. This narrative could also include, for example, activists, media workers and intellectuals, and not only former government officials. According to the source the Taliban often said that a ‘good Muslim’ would not leave and that many who left for the West were not ‘good enough Muslims’.⁶⁰⁹

Dr. Andrea Chiovenda and Dr. Melissa Kerr Chiovenda, anthropologists at Zayed University, described a similar narrative that people who wants to leave are not ‘the right kind of person’ and not perceived as ‘good Muslims’. However, they separated the tradition of Pashtun men going abroad for periods to work, which is a long tradition, from other Afghans who go away and stay in non-Muslim countries – which is not ‘the right way to do it’. They further stated that in rural Pashtun areas a person wanting to leave for Europe or the US would in general be perceived with suspicion, and even persons having Western contacts.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁹ Afghan law professor, online interview, 9 November 2021

⁶¹⁰ Chiovenda, A. (Dr.), online interview, 9 November 2021; Kerr Chiovenda, M. (Dr.), online interview, 9 November 2021

3. General security situation

3.1 Recent security trends

As noted by the UN Security General on 2 September 2021, the number of conflict-related violence such as ‘airstrikes, armed clashes and incidents caused by improvised explosive devices’ (IEDs) showed a decrease as the Taliban were establishing control over the country since the beginning of August 2021.⁶¹¹ The Taliban announced the seizure of Panjsher on 6 September 2021⁶¹², although the leader of the resistance forces in Panjsher, Ahmed Massoud, claimed the fighting was still ongoing.⁶¹³ According to UNOCHA, fighting was taking place in Baghlan province in the end of August, resulting in displacement⁶¹⁴, and security incidents were reported in Panjsher, Kabul, and Parwan during 6 and 12 September 2021.⁶¹⁵

ACLED data for the period of 16 August 2021 – 15 November 2021 revealed some regional differences. The majority of cases of violence against civilians was recorded in the provinces of Nangarhar and Kabul, followed by Baghlan and Panjsher.⁶¹⁶ It should be noted that ACLED faced some reporting issues, as explained in the [Introduction](#).

As reported by international media sources in mid-September, a considerable decrease in conflict-related violence was seen in most parts of Afghanistan’s countryside.⁶¹⁷ Farmers in Mizan district of Zabul province told WSJ that they could water their fields at night with a flashlight without a risk of being shot, and in Qalat, the capital of Zabul, young men had started with overnight picnics in the desert.⁶¹⁸ Pajhwok Afghan News reported that the second week of September could be ‘marked as the second week in the past decade in which no civilian was killed or injured or no conflict related incidents happened’, although other security related incidents, such as beheadings, explosions, and killings, took place.⁶¹⁹ On 23 October 2021, Pajhwok Afghan News reported again on record low levels of casualties, counting six deaths and three wounded during the week, in contrast to 56 killed and 90 injured the week before (most casualties were caused by an attack on a Shia mosque in Kandahar).⁶²⁰

Travelling by road was reported to have become safer in certain areas.⁶²¹ According to WSJ, commuting from Kandahar city to Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand, previously considered too dangerous, was reportedly ‘clogged with traffic’ in September 2021.⁶²²

⁶¹¹ UN General Assembly, The situation in Afghanistan UN and its implications for international peace and security, 2 September 2021, [url](#), para 22

⁶¹² AP News, Taliban say they took Panjshir, last holdout Taliban province, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶¹³ Al Jazeera, Panjshir, the last pocket of resistance, falls to Taliban, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶¹⁴ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (23 – 29 August 2021), 30 September 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁶¹⁵ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (6 – 12 September 2021), 15 September 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁶¹⁶ EASO analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, 15 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶¹⁷ New York Times (The), This is Life in Rural Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover, 15 September 2021, [url](#); Los Angeles Times, In Afghanistan’s war-torn countryside, America’s exist means one thing: Peace, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶¹⁸ WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶¹⁹ Pajhwok News, Afghan conflict ends but economic problems surging, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶²⁰ Pajhwok News, last week, casualties in Afghanistan fall to record low, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶²¹ Guardian (The), ‘The challenge for us now is drought, not war’: livelihoods of millions of Afghans at risk, 21 September 2021, [url](#); WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶²² WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

3.1.1 ISKP

Despite the general decrease in violence following the Taliban takeover⁶²³, Afghanistan witnessed a number of attacks claimed by or attributed to ISKP⁶²⁴ and the violence levels in Nangarhar saw an increase with almost daily incidents.⁶²⁵ According to a November 2021 statement of Deborah Lyons, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the UNAMA, ISKP became 'increasingly active, stepping up attacks from 60 in 2020 to 334 in 2021, and gained ground across all provinces.'⁶²⁶ In email correspondence with EASO, Abdul Sayed, security specialist and researcher of radical militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan, commented that he did not 'understand the barometers behind this assessment'. According to Sayed, ISKP members could possibly have spread across Afghanistan individually, particularly escaped prisoners, but this did not mean that they 'posed a threat in those areas'. Based on ISKP attacks and Taliban raids against hideouts, Sayed stated that ISKP had a strong presence in Eastern Afghanistan (Nangarhar and Kunar provinces), as well as Kabul and northern Afghanistan.⁶²⁷

According to media reports, ISKP used 'the same hit-and-run tactics' until recently practiced by the Taliban against the previous Afghan government, including roadside explosions and targeted killings.⁶²⁸ The security incidents were particularly reported in northern and southern provinces as well as in Kabul City.⁶²⁹ Attacks were particularly reported to take place in Nangarhar province⁶³⁰, defined as a 'stronghold' of ISKP,⁶³¹ and its capital, Jalalabad.⁶³² On several instances, ISKP targeted the Shia (Hazara) community.⁶³³ Researcher Antonio Giustozzi told Reuters in early November 2021 that ISKP 'had been carrying out a campaign of targeted killings since around the summer of 2020 and had continued since the Taliban victory in August 2021 on a "roughly comparable scale."⁶³⁴

ISKP was reported to have no territorial control in Afghanistan⁶³⁵, and no such probability was forecasted for the imminent future.⁶³⁶ ISKP's ability to conduct assaults against the Taliban, however, reportedly raised some doubts over the Taliban's ability to contain the group⁶³⁷ and maintain security and stability.⁶³⁸ In October 2021, the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) noted that the presence of ISKP was 'potentially increasing the risk of civil war.'⁶³⁹ Other

⁶²³ BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶²⁴ AP, Bomb at Kabul mosque kills 5 civilians, Taliban say, 3 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶²⁵ Washington Post (The), Taliban sends 1,300 fighters to eastern Afghanistan to battle Islamic State, 22 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶²⁶ UN, Abandoning Afghanistan Now, amid Humanitarian Crisis, Would Be 'Historic Mistake', Special Representative Tells Security Council, 17 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶²⁷ Sayed, A., email, 6 December 2021. Abdul Sayed is a security specialist and researcher on radical militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Sayed is based in Lund, Sweden.

⁶²⁸ BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶²⁹ AP News, Roadside bombing targets Taliban, kills Afghan civilians, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶³¹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶³² AP, Bomb at Kabul mosque kills 5 civilians, Taliban say, 3 October 2021, [url](#); AP, Taliban arrest 4 Islamic State militants north of Kabul, 6 October 2021, [url](#); BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶³³ AP, Suicide attack on Shiite mosque in Afghanistan kills 47, 15 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Funerals Held for Victims of Kandahar Mosque Bombing Claimed by IS-K, 16 October 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council Report, November 2021 Monthly Forecast, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁴ Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁵ BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁶ AP, EXPLAINER: Can the Taliban suppress the potent IS threat?, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁷ EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 3

⁶³⁸ AP, Roadside bombing targets Taliban, kills Afghan civilians, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶³⁹ EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 3

sources noted that the Taliban were capable of handling ISKP⁶⁴⁰ or stressed that the threat was exaggerated.⁶⁴¹ Sources reported that the aim of ISKP was to ‘sow sectarian divisions’⁶⁴² and to discredit the Taliban’s guarantee for security in the country.⁶⁴³ As stated by Jacob Zenn, senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, this would give ISKP ‘chances to rule in areas where the Taliban is diminished.’⁶⁴⁴ In November 2021, conflict expert Weeda Mehran suggested to FP that ISKP was a ‘convenient scapegoat’ for attacks ‘possibly committed’ in the Taliban’s internal power struggles.⁶⁴⁵

As of November 2021, Antonio Giustozzi estimated the number of ISKP militants in Afghanistan at around 4 000.⁶⁴⁶ As noted by security analyst Abdul Sayed, it was difficult to say whether they were all active.⁶⁴⁷ As noted by BBC, there were fears that ISKP could recruit Afghanistan-based foreign fighters from Central Asia and Pakistan, as well as ‘disillusioned Taliban members’ in case ‘rival factions’ would ‘develop within the group in the future.’⁶⁴⁸ According to reporting of AP, ISKP was ‘reaching out to tribes and other groups to recruit from their ranks while stamping out dissent among moderate Salafis.’⁶⁴⁹ Referring to Taliban leaders, former security officers and Afghans knowing defectors, WSJ reported that a ‘relatively small, but growing’ number of former members of Afghanistan’s intelligence service and elite military units were joining ISKP to resist the Taliban.⁶⁵⁰

Following attacks in Nangarhar province on 18 and 19 September 2021, the Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that ISKP had no ‘genuine presence’ in Afghanistan, stating, as quoted by Reuters, that ‘some people who may be our own Afghans have adopted the ISIS mentality, which is a phenomenon that the people do not support.’⁶⁵¹ By mid-October 2021, the new acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, was cited stating that ISKP benefitted from the non-recognition of the new government in Afghanistan, while dismissing concerns that the group posed a threat.⁶⁵² At the end of October 2021, the head of the Taliban intelligence services in Jalalabad, as reported by BBC, similarly denied the influence of ISKP in Afghanistan and called ISKP militants ‘a group of traitors who have rebelled against our Islamic government.’⁶⁵³ Furthermore, in the beginning of November 2021, as reported by Bakhtar News Agency, the Taliban’s deputy spokesman stated that ISKP had no ‘fixed position in Afghanistan’ and no ‘capacity to recruit.’⁶⁵⁴

In the period between 18 September and 10 November 2021, Taliban officials and affiliated media reported on Taliban raids against ISKP, arrests of ISKP members, and prevention of attacks. On 23 September 2021, Taliban security officials reportedly killed three ISKP members in Akhundzada area of Jalalabad city.⁶⁵⁵ On 4 October 2021, hours after the ISKP attack on a mosque in Kabul city, the Taliban reported that its forces raided an ISKP ‘operations center’ in Khair Khana neighbourhood, killing ‘several insurgents.’⁶⁵⁶ On 6 October 2021, Taliban forces reportedly arrested four ISKP

⁶⁴⁰ AP, Islamic State attacks test Taliban’s control in Afghanistan, October 13, 2021, available at: [url](#); Guardian (The), US to give humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, Taliban say, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴¹ ORF, ISKP: The exaggerated threat, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴³ AP, EXPLAINER: Can the Taliban suppress the potent IS threat?, 12 October 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#); EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁴⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁵ FP, Taliban Splintered by Internal Divisions, External Spoilers, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁶ Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁷ National News (The), Taliban play down ISIS-K threat despite spate of attacks, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁸ BBC, The Taliban’s secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁴⁹ AP, EXPLAINER: Can the Taliban suppress the potent IS threat?, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁰ WSJ, Left Behind After U.S. Withdrawal, Some Former Afghan Spies and Soldiers Turn to Islamic State, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵¹ Reuters, Taliban say no al Qaeda or ISIS in Afghanistan, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵² Ariana News, Muttaqi says non-recognition of IEA govt is benefitting Daesh, 17 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵³ BBC, The Taliban’s secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁴ Bakhtar News, Islamic Emirate Denied Reports that ISIS has Recruited Former Troops, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁵ Bakhtar News, Three Members of ISKP Killed in East Afghanistan, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁶ AP, Taliban raid suspected IS hideout after bombing in capital, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

members in the Pashae area of Paghman district of Kabul city⁶⁵⁷, seizing also documents and weapons.⁶⁵⁸ On 10 October 2021, security forces reportedly arrested 14 ISKP members, who confessed their engagement in planning suicide attacks and explosions in Khost province.⁶⁵⁹ The next day, five suspected ISKP members were arrested in Ahmadabad District in Paktia province.⁶⁶⁰ On 17 October 2021, magnetic explosives placed on a passenger car were defused in Ghezel Kotal village of Kalafgan district of Takhar province.⁶⁶¹ On 6 November 2021, 25 ISKP members reportedly surrendered to the Taliban in Nangarhar ‘through the mediation of tribal elders,’ receiving amnesty by the order of Mullah Akhundzada; in total, 250 ISKP members were reported to have surrendered ‘in over the past two months’ and were reportedly pardoned.⁶⁶² In a press briefing in Kabul on 10 November 2021, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated that Taliban security forces destroyed 21 bases of ISKP in different locations including the provinces of Kabul, Nangarhar, and Herat, capturing about 600 ISKP fighters in the past three months.⁶⁶³ On 3 November 2021, three alleged ISKP members, including a woman, were reported to have been killed in an attack over a hideout of ISKP in Jalalabad.⁶⁶⁴ On 23 November 2021, according to the director of General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) of Nangarhar, around 100 ISKP militants, who were active in Muhmand Dara, Chaparhar, Kot and Khogiani districts, surrendered⁶⁶⁵; on 24 November, Pajhwok Afghan News reported on at least 80 ISKP members, who surrendered to the Taliban in Nangarhar resulting from a mediation by elders.⁶⁶⁶

On 29 October 2021, BBC reported that bodies of people who were shot, hanged, or beheaded were found ‘every few days’ in Jalalabad, with many having notes in their pockets claiming their ISKP affiliation. While no group claimed responsibility for these killings, the Taliban were reported to have been ‘widely assumed to be responsible.’⁶⁶⁷ For more information on reported killings in Nangarhar, [see chapter 2.5](#).

3.1.2 Al-Qaeda

Regarding al-Qaeda’s presence in Afghanistan, US Defence Secretary Lloyed Austin stated that the group ‘may attempt to regenerate’ in the country.⁶⁶⁸ In June 2021, the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team estimated the human capacity of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan as ranging ‘from several dozen to 500 people.’⁶⁶⁹ While during the negotiations of the peace agreement with the US the Taliban stated it would not allow al-Qaeda or any other extremist group into areas under its control and renewed this statement after the takeover of 15 August 2021, it was reported that the Taliban received ‘congratulatory messages from al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates.’⁶⁷⁰ Following the Taliban takeover, sources referred to reported relations between al-Qaeda and the Haqqani network⁶⁷¹, whose leader, Sirajuddin Haqqani, was appointed interior minister in the interim

⁶⁵⁷ Bakhtar News, Four ISIS Members Arrested in Paghman, Kabul, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁸ AP, Taliban arrest 4 Islamic State militants north of Kabul, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵⁹ Bakhtar News, ISIS Plan to Carry Out Terrorist Attacks in Khost Failed, 10 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁰ Bakhtar News, Five ISIS Members Arrested in Paktia, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶¹ Bakhtar News, Tragic event prevented in Takhar, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶² TOLONews, 25 Daesh Members Surrender To Islamic Emirate, 6 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶³ Xinhua, Afghan administration downplays IS threat, arrests 600 militants, 10 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁴ Xinhua, Security forces kill 3 IS members in Afghanistan’s eastern Nangarhar, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁵ Xinhua, About 100 IS militants surrender in E. Afghanistan, 23 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁶ Pajhwok News, 80 Daesh militants surrendered in Nangarhar, 24 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁷ BBC, The Taliban’s secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁸ AP, Pentagon chief: al-Qaida may seek comeback in Afghanistan, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶⁹ UN Security Council, Twelfth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2557 (2020) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan, S/2021/486, 1 June 2021, [url](#), para 45

⁶⁷⁰ BBC, Afghanistan: the pledge binding al-Qaeda to the Taliban, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷¹ EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 2; BBC, Afghanistan: the pledge binding al-Qaeda to the Taliban, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

government.⁶⁷² In September 2021, Zabihullah Mujahid rejected accusations that al-Qaeda maintained presence in Afghanistan.⁶⁷³

3.1.3 The Taliban's ability to secure law and order

Before the Taliban's takeover, the city of Kabul was rife with crime⁶⁷⁴, with robberies and kidnappings occurring on nearly daily basis.⁶⁷⁵ The Taliban reportedly quickly established security forces in the capital with Taliban fighters patrolling the streets to maintain security.⁶⁷⁶ Some sources referred to residents that stated that the crime rates had reduced significantly in Kabul since the Taliban took power.⁶⁷⁷ However, residents of Kabul have reportedly seen an emergence of robberies conducted by persons in the name of the Taliban⁶⁷⁸; there were also reports on the Taliban arresting individuals on charges of 'misusing the name of the Islamic emirate and perpetrating crime against the people'.⁶⁷⁹ An Afghan human rights expert stated that there were cases of extortion either directly or indirectly through Taliban fighters. The source further stated that, due to the humanitarian situation, there were Taliban fighters also struggling with food insecurity, making some use 'the Taliban brand' to go into people's homes, steal vehicles and threaten people.⁶⁸⁰

In September 2021, UNOCHA reported on an increase in criminal activities in western provinces and southern provinces, mainly in Uruzgan, Helmand and Kandahar, as well as in the northern province Kunduz.⁶⁸¹

On 3 December 2021, a local media reported that Taliban security forces rescued a 9-year-old girl in Mazar-e Sharif, who was kidnapped on her way to school; one of the kidnapers was reportedly killed and nine others arrested.⁶⁸²

3.2 Incidents of violence against civilians

During the weeks of fighting in Panjsher and after that, social media sources were reporting on human rights violations committed by the Taliban against captured resistance fighters and civilians; however, as noted by Patricia Gossman, associate director for the Asia division of Human Rights Watch, 'a credible investigation' was needed to verify them.⁶⁸³ As reported by BBC on 13 September 2021, at least 20 civilians were killed in Panjsher valley, among whom a shopkeeper, who was reportedly tortured and killed after being accused by the Taliban of 'selling sim cards to resistance fighters'.⁶⁸⁴

On 26 August 2021, ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack on Hamid Karzai International Airport amid the ongoing evacuation efforts, in which two suicide bombers attacked the airport's Abbey

⁶⁷² EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁶⁷³ Reuters, Taliban say no al Qaeda or ISIS in Afghanistan, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁴ Guardian (The), Taliban patrols return to the streets of Kabul – in pictures, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁵ Al Jazeera, Taliban: From Afghanistan's rugged mountains to policing streets, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁶ Guardian (The), Taliban patrols return to the streets of Kabul – in pictures, 6 October 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Taliban: From Afghanistan's rugged mountains to policing streets, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁷ WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#); Ariana News, Four suspected kidnapers captured in Kabul, hostages freed, 2 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁸ Hasht-e Subh Daily, Kabul Residents Tired of Increasing Armed Robberies, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷⁹ TOLONews, Armed Robbers Posing as Islamic Emirate Members Arrested, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁰ Afghan human rights expert, online interview, 11 November 2021

⁶⁸¹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (6 – 12 September 2021), 15 September 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (13 – 19 September 2021), 23 September 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (20 – 26 September 2021), 30 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸² Atn News, Security forces rescue girl, arrest 9 kidnapers in Balkh operation, 3 December 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸³ New York Times (The), In Panjshir, Few Signs of an Active Resistance, or Any Fight at All, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁴ BBC, Afghanistan crisis: Taliban kill civilians in resistance stronghold, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

Gate and gunmen opened fire on civilians and military personnel⁶⁸⁵, killing at least 169 Afghans and 13 US troops. On 29 August 2021, a US drone strike killed ten civilians of the same family, including seven children⁶⁸⁶, after mistaking a civilian NGO worker carrying canisters of water in his trunk for a terrorist with explosives.⁶⁸⁷

The following are illustrative, but not exhaustive, incidents of violence resulted in civilian casualties, sorted by type of incident and time of its occurrence.

On 18 September 2021, at least three people were reported to have been killed and about 20 others wounded in a series of five blasts in Nangarhar province. It was reported that Taliban members were among the casualties and that the target of the roadside bombs were Taliban vehicles.⁶⁸⁸ The next day, a roadside bomb reportedly targeted a Taliban border police vehicle in Jalalabad, killing at least five people, including a child.⁶⁸⁹ ISKP claimed responsibility for the roadside bomb attacks targeting the Taliban on both days through the ISKP-affiliated Amaq News Agency, which announced that at least 35 Taliban militants were killed or injured.⁶⁹⁰ On 18 September 2021, two people were reported to have been wounded after a magnetic bomb targeted a vehicle in Dasht-e Barchi area of Kabul city,⁶⁹¹ which is an area dominated by Shia Hazara population.⁶⁹² On 22 September 2021, a Taliban fighter and a civilian were wounded in a roadside bomb explosion in Jalalabad.⁶⁹³ On 25 September 2021, local officials reported that at least one person was killed and seven others wounded, including four civilians, after a roadside bomb was detonated to target a Taliban convoy in Jalalabad.⁶⁹⁴

On 3 October 2021, at least five civilians were killed in an ‘apparent roadside bomb’ explosion outside Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul during a memorial service for the mother of Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. No immediate claim of responsibility was made but three suspects were reported to have been arrested as suspicion fell on ISKP.⁶⁹⁵ On 14 October 2021, an explosion of a roadside bomb targeting the Taliban police chief for the Shigal district of Asadabad, the capital of Kunar province, killed the police chief, wounding four Taliban fighters⁶⁹⁶ and seven civilians, including a schoolboy.⁶⁹⁷ On 23 October 2021, at least two civilians, one of whom a child, were killed and four other civilians wounded⁶⁹⁸ after twin roadside bombs targeted a Taliban vehicle in Jalalabad.⁶⁹⁹ On 3 November 2021, two Taliban security force members were killed and three others, as well as a civilian identified as a school teacher, wounded when a roadside bomb targeted a Taliban pickup truck in Police District 8 in Jalalabad.⁷⁰⁰ On 30 November 2021, at least two people were reported to have been injured in an explosion in Kabul’s Police District 6. According to a spokesman of Kabul security department, the explosion was caused by a mine placed in the area.⁷⁰¹ On 12 November 2021, at least three people were reported to have been killed and 24 injured in an

⁶⁸⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, At Least 72 Afghans, 13 U.S. Troops Killed in Kabul Airport Attacks, 26 August 2021, updated 27 August 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁶ AP, Afghan killed by drone praised by co-workers in US aid group, 15 September 2021, [url](#); BBC, Afghanistan: US admits Kabul drone strike killed civilians, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁷ New York Times (The), In US Drone Strike, Evidence Suggests No ISIS Bomb, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁸ Reuters, Three killed in blasts in Afghan city of Jalalabad, sources say, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸⁹ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Blast Hits Taliban Vehicle In Eastern Afghanistan, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁰ Reuters, Islamic state claims responsibility for attacks in eastern Afghanistan, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹¹ Garda World, Afghanistan: Explosion reported in western Dasht-e Barchi area of Kabul Sept. 18, 18 September, [url](#)

⁶⁹² Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Deadly explosion hits mainly Shia suburb of Kabul, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹³ RFE/RL/Gandhara, At Least Five Killed In Attacks Targeting Taliban In Eastern Afghanistan, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁴ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Bomb Blasts Hit Taliban Convoy In Eastern Afghanistan Killing At Least One, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁵ AP, Bomb at Kabul mosque kills 5 civilians, Taliban say, 3 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁶ Ariana News, District police chief killed in Kunar roadside bombing, 14 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Police Chief Killed In Bomb Attack In Eastern Afghanistan, 14 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁸ AP, Roadside bombing targets Taliban, kills Afghan civilians, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹⁹ Afghanistan Times, Twin Bombs in Jalalabad Kill Two Civilians, 24 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁰ Xinhua, 6 killed in separate explosions in Afghanistan, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰¹ Tolonews, Two Injured in Kabul Blast, 30 November 2021, [url](#)

explosion in a mosque during Friday prayers in Tereli area of the Spin Gar district of Nangarhar province; no group was reported to have claimed responsibility for the attack.⁷⁰² On 13 November 2021, at least six people were killed and seven wounded in an explosion reportedly caused by a magnetic bomb that was attached to a passenger minivan in the Dasht-e Barchi area of Kabul.⁷⁰³ It was further reported that the blast occurred near a Taliban checkpoint and killed journalist Hamid Saighani, who worked for Ariana television network, although it was not known whether he was the target of the attack.⁷⁰⁴ On 17 November 2021, one civilian was killed and six wounded in a car bomb explosion in Dasht-e Barchi area of Kabul, and another explosion was reported in Karte 3 area nearby; ISKP reportedly claimed responsibility for the both attacks.⁷⁰⁵

On 22 September 2021, as reported by Radio Azadi of RFE/RL, gunmen in a rickshaw opened fire on a Taliban vehicle in Jalalabad, killing two Taliban members and at least one civilian; according to the Taliban, all killed people were civilians.⁷⁰⁶ On 5 October 2021, at least two Taliban members were reportedly killed and three civilians wounded, after unidentified gunmen 'opened a fire on a Taliban patrol at a vegetable market in Jalalabad.'⁷⁰⁷ On 6 October 2021, two Taliban members were killed and at least three civilians wounded when unidentified gunmen attacked two Taliban members, who, as reported by eyewitnesses, were collecting taxes from vendors in Hada area of Laghman province.⁷⁰⁸ On 8 November 2021, one person was reported to have been killed and three others wounded after 'a group of bandits' attacked 'a convoy of passengers' on the Ghor-Kabul highway in Kotal Bekk village in Yakawlang district of Bamyan province. The driver was reportedly fatally shot while attempting to escape; three passengers were wounded 'after resisting the bandits.'⁷⁰⁹

On 8 October 2021, at least 72 people were reported to have been killed⁷¹⁰ and 143 wounded after an ISKP suicide bomber carried out an attack on the Said Abad (Gozar-e Sayed Abad) Mosque in Kunduz, used by Shia Muslim (Hazara) minority, during Friday noon prayers.⁷¹¹ ISKP was reported to have stated through its Telegram channels that its suicide bomber 'detonated an explosive vest amid a crowd' and identified the attacker as 'Muhammad al-Uyguri'.⁷¹² As reported by AP, ISKP-affiliated Amaq News Agency stated that 'the attack targeted both Shias and the Taliban for their purported willingness to expel Uyghurs to meet demands of China.'⁷¹³ On 15 October 2021, during Friday prayers, suicide bombers attacked the Fatimiya mosque in Kandahar, also used by the Hazara, killing 47 people and wounding at least 70.⁷¹⁴ ISKP reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack via its Telegram channels, stating it was carried out by two suicide bombers at different parts of the mosque, the hallway and the centre. On 16 October 2021, the Taliban police chief in Kandahar stated that the Taliban would be responsible for security in the mosque, which was previously guarded by the Shia community.⁷¹⁵

On 2 November 2021, ISKP militants were reported to have conducted an attack on the Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan hospital, described as a 400-bed military health facility, situated in the 10th district of Kabul. Five ISKP attackers and three Taliban guards were reportedly killed at the

⁷⁰² Atn News, Explosion hits mosque in Nangarhar, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰³ Reuters, Blast hits Shi'ite area of Afghan capital Kabul, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁴ VOA, Bus Bombing Kills Afghan Journalist, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁵ Reuters, Islamic State claims twin blasts in Afghan capital Kabul, 17 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁶ RFE/RL/Gandhara, At Least Five Killed In Attacks Targeting Taliban In Eastern Afghanistan, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁷ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Claims Arrest of Four Islamic State Militants Near Kabul, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁸ Hasht-e Subh Daily, Attacks on Taliban Members Continue in Nangarhar and Laghman, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰⁹ Bakhtar News Agency, Deadly Attack of Bandits on Convoy of Passengers on Ghor-Kabul Highway, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹⁰ Al Jazeera, 'Blood and pieces': Kunduz residents describe blast aftermath, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹¹ AP, IS bomber kills 46 inside Afghan mosque, challenges Taliban, 8 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Scores Killed, Wounded In IS-K Suicide Blast Inside Afghan Shi'ite Mosque, 8 October 2021, [url](#); BBC, Afghanistan: Deadly attack hits Kunduz mosque during Friday prayers, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹² RFE/RL/Gandhara, Scores Killed, Wounded In IS-K Suicide Blast Inside Afghan Shi'ite Mosque, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹³ AP, IS bomber kills 46 inside Afghan mosque, challenges Taliban, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹⁴ AP, Suicide attack on Shiite mosque in Afghanistan kills 47, 15 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹⁵ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Funerals Held for Victims of Kandahar Mosque Bombing Claimed by IS-K, 16 October 2021, [url](#)

hospital entrance; at least seven other people, including three women and a child, were also killed in the assault.⁷¹⁶ As reported by Reuters, ‘a Taliban security official speaking on condition of anonymity’ stated that at least 25 people were killed and 50 wounded, although the casualty toll was still to be confirmed. The Taliban officials identified one of the persons killed in the attack as the head of the Kabul military corps and ‘one of the first senior Taliban commanders to enter the abandoned presidential palace’ after the takeover of Kabul.⁷¹⁷ ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack on its Amaq News Agency’s Telegram channel.⁷¹⁸

UNOCHA reported on several incidents, in which civilians were killed or harmed by abandoned IEDs and unexploded ordnances (UXOs), especially in rural areas of Kandahar where at least 56 civilians were injured in the six weeks between 27 September 2021 – 7 November 2021.⁷¹⁹ On 25 November 2021, four children were reported to have been killed and one child injured in an explosion of ‘some explosive remnants’ on the outskirts of Taluqan, the capital of Takhar. The children were reportedly carrying scrap metals, with ‘an explosive device’ among them, for sale.⁷²⁰

3.3 Displacement and return

3.3.1 IDPs

As of 15 November 2021, UNHCR estimated the figure of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan at 3.4 million, reporting that around 667 000 Afghans had been internally displaced due to the conflict since January 2021.⁷²¹ Until the beginning of November 2021, IDPs were registered in 33 Afghan provinces, and 80 % were women and children.⁷²² Most of the IDPs were displaced to regional capitals and urban centres as well as to Kabul city.⁷²³ As noted by International Crisis Group in September 2021, the number of IDPs in Afghanistan ‘over the last seven months was twice the monthly average in the last five years,’ and the figures were expected to increase ‘as aid agencies’ accounting catches up with the scale of the crisis.’⁷²⁴

According to UNOCHA data on internal displacement in Afghanistan, 21 991 Afghans were internally displaced in the period between 4 August and 18 October 2021. The provinces of origin, included into the UNOCHA data as of 5 December 2021, were Panjsher (3 990 IDPs), Daykundi (2 877 IDPs), Kunduz (2 695 IDPs), Herat (1 818 IDPs), Kapisa (1 680 IDPs), Ghor (1 510 IDPs), Takhar (1 165 IDPs), Paktya (896 IDPs), Baghlan (882 IDPs), Parwan (863 IDPs), Farah (794 IDPs), Badakhshan (630 IDPs), Badghis (399 IDPs), Kandahar (392 IDPs), Balkh (385 IDPs) Helmand (91 IDPs), Kunar (98 IDPs), Logar (280 IDPs), Samangan (280 IDPs), Maidan Wardak (217 IDPs), and Faryab (49 IDPs). The provinces with the largest arrival of IDPs in the same period, included in UNOCHA data, were Kabul (11 863 IDPs), Herat (4 018 IDPs), Daykundi (2 856 IDPs), Kapisa (1 057 IDPs), Paktya (896 IDPs), Farah (717 IDPs), and Kandahar (306 IDPs).⁷²⁵

⁷¹⁶ AP, IS attack on Kabul hospital leaves 7 dead, 16 wounded, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹⁷ Reuters, Dozens killed and wounded as blasts and gunfire hit Kabul hospital, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹⁸ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Islamic State Claims Attack On Kabul Hospital That Killed At Least 19, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷¹⁹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (27 September – 3 October), 7 October, 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (4 – 10 October 2021), 14 October 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (18 - 24 October 2021), 29 October 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (25 - 31 October 2021), 5 November 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (1 – 7 November 2021), 12 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷²⁰ Xinhua, 4 killed in explosions in Afghanistan: officials, 25 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷²¹ UNHCR, Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #10, As of 15 November 2021, 22 November 2021, [url](#), p. 1

⁷²² UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation External Update – 1 November 2021, 6 November 2021, [url](#), p. 1

⁷²³ IPC, Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#), p. 2

⁷²⁴ International Crisis Group, Afghanistan’s Growing Humanitarian Crisis, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷²⁵ UNOCHA, Conflict Induced Displacement in 2021, updated 5 December 2021, [url](#)

In November 2021, UNHCR estimated that around 169 000 IDPs had returned to their places of origin in the period between September and November 2021, with 36 % having returned to southern and 35 % to north-eastern regions of the country.⁷²⁶

3.3.2 Refugees and returnees

At the end of August 2021, UNHCR estimated 1 435 000 registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan and 780 000 in Iran.⁷²⁷ In November 2021, UNHCR reported on continuous ‘movements of largely undocumented Afghans resorting to irregular land border crossing points’ with Iran.⁷²⁸ The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) noted on 10 November 2021 that 4 000 – 5 000 Afghans were leaving Afghanistan for Iran daily via informal border crossings. Referring to Iranian Students’ News Agency, NRC noted that ‘at least 300 000 Afghans have entered Iran’ since the Taliban takeover.⁷²⁹

According to an IOM Afghanistan Situation Report comprising the data until 3 November 2021, around 1 077 600 undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan since 1 January 2021, including around 1 063 400 returnees from Iran and about 14 220 from Pakistan. In the period between 28 October and 3 November 2021, IOM reported on 32 366 undocumented Afghan returnees: 31 609 returnees from Iran and 757 from Pakistan.⁷³⁰ According to media reports in the beginning of October 2021, around 600 families, who were displaced during clashes between the Taliban and the previous government, were reported to have returned to Badakhshan from Tajikistan, as stated by the governor of Badakhshan.⁷³¹

3.4 Humanitarian situation

As noted by the World Bank, interruption of international aid and disruption of trade and the banking system followed immediately after the Taliban took over the country.⁷³² Foreign grants, amounting to around 8.5 billion dollars a year and covering 43 % of Afghanistan’s GDP, including 75 % of public expenditures, 50 % of the budget, and around 90 % of expenditures in the security sphere, were frozen due to sanctions on insurgent movements and their leaders. Besides the largest part of the international aid, Afghanistan’s currency reserves were also frozen.⁷³³ As underlined by the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and Head of the UNAMA, Deborah Lyons, in November 2021, financial sanctions, which paralysed Afghanistan’s economy, were the primary cause for ‘the dire humanitarian situation’ in the country’.⁷³⁴

The prices of food commodities in Afghanistan were reported to have increased significantly: from June to September 2021, the cost of wheat flour was reported to have increased by 28 % and the price of cooking oil reportedly increased by 55 % compared to the same period in 2020. Based on Seasonal Food Security Assessment (SFSA) data for 2021, 95 % of Afghanistan’s population reported a decrease in household incomes compared to 2020, with 83 % of urban and 72 % of rural

⁷²⁶ UNHCR, Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #10, As of 15 November 2021, 22 November 2021, [url](#), p. 1

⁷²⁷ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Refugee Situations, Afghanistan, accessed 11 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷²⁸ UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation External Update – 1 November 2021, 6 November 2021, [url](#), p. 3

⁷²⁹ NRC, Humanitarian needs in Iran rise as 300 000 Afghans arrive since Taliban takeover, 10 November [url](#)

⁷³⁰ IOM, IOM Afghanistan Situation Report, 28 October – 3 November 2021, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷³¹ Bakhtar News, Hundreds Families Returned Homes in Badakhshan, 4 October 2021, [url](#); Xinhua, About 600 displaced Afghans return home in northern Badakhshan province, 4 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷³² World Bank (The), The World Bank in Afghanistan, updated 8 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷³³ Kate Clark, Killing the Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs: Afghanistan’s economic distress post 15-August, AAN, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

⁷³⁴ UN, Abandoning Afghanistan Now, amid Humanitarian Crisis, Would Be ‘Historic Mistake’, Special Representative Tells Security Council, 17 November 2021, [url](#)

households reporting a significant reduction.⁷³⁵ According to Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis for September 2021, nearly half of Afghanistan's population was reported to experience 'high levels of food insecurity,' while the figures of 'food insecure people' were the highest since the first IPC analysis in 2013, which made the situation in Afghanistan 'the world's second-largest food crisis, in absolute terms.'⁷³⁶ Based on World Food Programme (WFP) surveys, for the first time, urban residents were reported to have faced the same level of food insecurity as rural residents, with 'virtually no family' in urban and rural environments that would be able to 'afford sufficient food'.⁷³⁷

In September and October 2021, which is the post-harvest season, 18.8 million Afghans, or 47 % of the total population, was reported to have faced 'high levels of acute food insecurity, classified in Crisis or Emergency (IPC Phases 3 or 4),' which was nearly a 30 % increase from the period in 2020. Of this figure, around 6.8 million Afghans were reported to experience 'critical levels of acute food insecurity, classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).'⁷³⁸ According to IPC figures, the provinces with the situation of Emergency (IPC Phase 4) comprised in September-October 2021 all three provinces in the North-West (Herat, Badghis, and Ghor), almost all provinces in the North (Faryab, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pul, Balkh, and Samangan), some of the central provinces (Uruzgan, Daykundi, Bamyan, and Kabul), Ghazni province in the South, Badakhshan in the North-East, and Nuristan and Laghman in the East; other provinces were classified as Crisis (IPC Phase 3).⁷³⁹

According to a projection for the period between November 2021 and March 2022, the number of Afghans in IPC Phase 3 or above was predicted to increase to 22.8 million, which is nearly a 35 % increase compared to the same period in 2020. The reasons behind the deterioration in food access were reported to comprise climate conditions (droughts), high food prices, international sanctions, increasing unemployment, and 'possibly increased displacement'.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁵ IPC, Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#), p. 2

⁷³⁶ IPC, Afghanistan: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, September 2021 – March 2022, 25 October 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁷³⁷ WFP, Afghanistan set to be world's worst humanitarian crisis, report warns, 25 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷³⁸ IPC, Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#), p. 1; IPC, Afghanistan: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, September 2021 – March 2022, 25 October 2021, [url](#), p. 1

⁷³⁹ IPC, Afghanistan: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, September 2021 – March 2022, 25 October 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁷⁴⁰ IPC, Afghanistan: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, September 2021 – March 2022, 25 October 2021, [url](#), p. 1

Annex 1: Appointments to the Taliban's interim government and other positions

On 9 September 2021, TOLONews provided a short biography of the interim government key members:

- Prime Minister: Muhammad Hasan Akhund, from Shah Walikot district in Kandahar. Held various posts during the first Taliban regime (foreign minister, governor of Kandahar and military official in the north of Afghanistan).
- Deputy Prime Minister: Abdul Ghani Barader, from Dehrawood district in Uruzgan. Co-founder of the Taliban led by Mullah Omar.
- Defence Minister: Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob, from Dehrawood district in Uruzgan. Son of Taliban founder Mullah Omar.
- Director of Intelligence: Abdul Haq Wasiq, from Khogyani district in Ghazni. Worked as deputy Director of Intelligence in the previous Taliban regime. Detained in the US's Guantanamo detention centre for 13 years.
- Minister of Interior: Serajuddin Haqqani. Son of the late Jalaluddin Haqqani, who led the Haqqani Network.
- Foreign Minister: Mullah Amir Khan Mutaqi, from Zurmat district of Paktia province. Served as Minister of Information and Culture in the previous Taliban regime.
- Minister of Information and Culture: Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah, from Kandahar province. Detained in Guantanamo detention centre for 12 years.
- Minister of Justice: Mawlawi Abdul Hakim Haqqani, from Maiwand district in Kandahar. Graduated from a Pakistani madrasa and worked in judicial organisations.
- Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs: Mullah Noorullah Noori, from Zabul province. Served as governor of Balkh and Laghman provinces in the previous Taliban regime. Detained in Guantanamo detention centre for 13 years.⁷⁴¹

Between 7 September and 4 October, the following appointments to posts within the government, state agencies and institutions were announced:

- Minister of Justice: Mawlawi Abdul Hakim Shari – Kandahar
- Minister of Foreign Affairs: Amir Khan Muttaqi – Helmand
- Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanekzai Logar
- Minister of Finance: Mullah Hedayatullah Badri (aka Gul Agha Ishakzai) – Kandahar
- Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock: Mawlawi Shamsuddin Pahlawan - Badakhshan
- Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs: Mullah Nurullah Nuri - Zabul
- Deputy Minister of Border Affairs: Haji Gul Mohammad - Helmand
- Second Deputy Minister of Border Affairs: Gul Zarin Kochi
- Minister of Civil Aviation and Transportation: Mullah Hamidullah Akhundzada
- Minister of Economy: Qari Din Muhammad Hanif
- Minister of Education: Sheikh Mawlawi Nurullah
- Deputy Minister of Education: Mawlawi Sakhauallah

⁷⁴¹ TOLONews, Hibatullah Akhundzada to lead Taliban Govt, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

- Minister of Public Health: Qalandar Ibad
- Deputy Minister of Public Health: Abdul Bari Omar
- Deputy Minister of Public Health: Mohammad Hasan Ghyasi
- Minister for Hajj and Religious Affairs: Mawlawi Nur Muhammad Saqib
- Minister of Higher Education: Mawlawi Abdul Baqi Haqqani
- Deputy Minister of Higher Education: Dr Lutfullah Khairkhwa
- Minister for Information and Culture: Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa
- Deputy Minister of Information and Culture: Zabihullah Mujahed
- Minister of Invitation and Guidance, Prevention of Vice & Promotion of Virtue: Sheikh Muhammad Khaled
- Minister of Martyrs and Disabled Affairs: Mullah Abdul Majeed Akhund
- Deputy Minister of Martyrs and Disabled: Mullah Abdul Razaq Akhund
- Minister of Mines and Petroleum: Mullah Muhammad Essa Akhund
- Minister of Public Works: Mullah Abdul Manan Omari
- Minister of Refugee Affairs: Khalil ul-Rahman Haqqani
- Deputy Minister of Refugee Affairs: Arsala Khoroti
- Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development: Mullah Muhammad Yunus Akhundzada
- Minister of Telecommunication: Mawlawi Najibullah Haqqani
- Minister of Water and Power: Mullah Abdul Latif Mansur
- Deputy Minister of Water and Power: Engineer Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Omar
- Deputy of Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority: Haji Ghulam Ghaws
- Chief of Staff: Mawlawi Ahmad Jan Ahmadi
- Head of Da Afghanistan Bank: Haji Muhammad Idris
- Head of Afghanistan's Nuclear Energy Agency: Engineer Najibullah
- Head of the Central Statistics Office: Dr Mohammad Faqir
- Deputy Mayor of Kabul: Mawlawi Abdul Rashid
- Head of the National Olympic Committee: Engineer Nazar Mohammad Motmaen
- Head of the Red Crescent Society: Mawlawi Matiul Haq
- Deputy head of the Red Crescent Society: Mullah Nooruddin Turabi
- Head of the southwestern zone: Mawlawi Sardar Mohammad
- Head of the south-eastern zone 'Tamiz' [possibly referring to the tertiary court]: Sheikh Mohammad Hanif.⁷⁴²

As of 4 October 2021, the following army appointments were announced:

- Chief of the Army: Qari Fasihuddin
- Commander of the Helmand Corps: Mullah Sharafuddin Taqi
- Deputy of the Helmand Corps: Mullah Mohibullah Nusrat
- Chief of Staff of Helmand Corps: Mullah Mohammad Khan Dawat
- Commander of the Herat Corps: Mawlawi Mohammad Zarif Muzaffar
- Deputy of the Herat Corps: Mullah Abdul Shakur Baryalai
- Chief of Staff of the Herat Corps: Mawlawi Abdul Rahman Haqqani
- Commander of the Kabul Corps: Mawlawi Hamdullah (killed in Kabul, 2 November 2021).⁷⁴³

⁷⁴² Nunn.asia, [Twitter], posted on: 7 September 2021, [url](#); van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban's new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴³ Reuters, Dozens killed and wounded as blasts and gunfire hit Kabul hospital, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

- Deputy of the Kabul Corps: Mawlawi Nusrat
- Chief of Staff of the Kabul Corps: Qari Baryal
- Commander of the Kandahar Corps: Mullah Mehrullah Hammad
- Deputy of the Kandahar Corps: Mullah Wali Jan Hamza
- Chief of Staff of the Kandahar Corps: Mawlawi Hizbullah Afghan
- Commander of the Kunduz Corps: Mullah Rahmatullah Mohammad
- Deputy of the Kunduz Corps: Qari Mohammad Ismail Turkman
- Chief of Staff of the Kunduz Corps: Qari Mohammad Shafiq
- Commander of the Mazar Corps: Mawlawi Attaullah Omari
- Deputy of the Mazar corps: Mawlawi Amanuddin
- Chief of Staff of the Mazar Corps: Mullah Abdul Razaq Faizullah
- Commander of the Paktia Corps: Qari Mohammad Ayub
- Deputy of the Paktia Corps: Mullah Rohul Amin
- Chief of Staff of the Paktia Corps: Mullah Ahmadullah Mubarak.⁷⁴⁴

On 7 November 2021, following appointments were made on provincial level according to a decree issued by the Taliban's supreme leader:

- Governor of Badakhshan province: Abdul Ghani
- Governor of Baghlan province: Qari Bakhtiar
- Deputy governor of Baghlan province: Mohammad Edris
- Chief of security for Baghlan province: Safaullah Akhund
- Deputy governor of Balkh province: Noor-al Hadi
- Chief of security for Balkh province: Matihullah
- Governor of Bamyān province: Abdullah Sarhadi
- Governor of Farah province: Rohani Sayeb
- Deputy governor of Farah province: Jahadyar
- Chief of security for Farah province: Haji Massom
- Governor of Faryab province: Qari Pahlawan
- Chief of security for Faryab province: Hazifa
- Governor of Jawzjan province: Shoyab
- Deputy governor of Jawzjan province: Abdul Manan Mahmood
- Governor of Kabul province: Qari Barialai
- Deputy governor of Kabul province: Mufti Mohammad Edris
- Chief of security of Kabul province: Wali Jan Hamza
- Deputy governor of Kunar province: Abdullah
- Chief of security for Kunar province: Abdul Haq Haqqani
- Governor of Kunduz province: Nessar Ahmad
- Deputy governor of Kunduz province: Habib-u Rahman Sohaib
- Chief of security of Kunduz province: Azizullah
- Deputy governor of Laghman province: Sayed Ahmad
- Governor of Logar province: Haji Mali Khan
- Deputy governor of Logar province: Enaamullah
- Chief of security for Logar province: Mohammad-u Din Shah Mokhbet
- Governor of Maidan Wardak province: Amin Jan Kochai
- Deputy Governor of Maidan Wardak province: Sher Ahmad

⁷⁴⁴ van Bijlert, M., Taliban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

- Governor of Paktika province: Abdullah Mukhtar
- Governor of Paktya province: Mohammad Ali Jan
- Deputy governor of Samangan province: Abdul Manan
- Governor of Sar-e Pul province: Abdul Rahman Akaa
- Deputy governor of Sar-e Pul province: Mohammad Nader
- Chief of security for Takhar province: Habibullah Shaker
- Governor of Uruzgan province: Haji Dawat
- Chief of security for Ghor province: Leeb
- Deputy governor of Zabul province: Abdul Khaleq Abed
- Governor of Nimruz province: Najibullah Rafeh
- Governor of Ghazni province: Eshaq Akhundzada
- Deputy governor of Ghazni province: Sayed Hanif (Ebada Agha)
- Deputy governor of Daykundi province: Haji Rashed
- Governor of Zabul province: Besmellah (Abdullah)
- In charge of security of five districts of Shindand district (Herat province): Solaiman Agha.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴⁵ Afghanistan, په ولايتونو کې د يو لړ ټاکنو په اړه د عاليقدر امير المؤمنين حفظه الله فرمان [‘informal translation ‘Supreme Leader’s decree on a number of provincial level appointments’], 7 November 2021, [url](#); Zabihullah Mujahid, [Twitter], posted on 7 November 2021, [url](#)

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Annex 3: Terms of Reference

Reference period

All reporting should focus on the situation following the Taliban takeover (15 August 2021 – latest possible date before drafting is completed). As background information, in some cases reference can be made to the situation before the takeover, e.g. concerning areas which were already under Taliban control and the Taliban behaviour there. This should be clearly indicated.

Reporting from the country

- Which research limitations prevail under the current circumstances in Afghanistan?

Government and administration under the Taliban

- What is the composition of the government announced by the Taliban (gender, ethnicity, background and affiliation with the previous Taliban regime, and with other armed groups)?
- What is the level of international recognition of the government announced by the Taliban?
- What (de facto) state institutions and administration have been established by the Taliban? How are these institutions staffed?
- What security institutions have been put in place by the Taliban? How are those institutions staffed?
- Are there any initial signs on the central Taliban leadership's execution of authority and control of local Taliban leaders and members across the country?
- Are there any initial signs on the Taliban's interpretation and implementation of Sharia law?
- Are there reports on the prevailing justice system?
- Are capital and corporal punishments issued and executed? For what crimes?
- Are there any initial reports on the Taliban's operation of prisons and the situation in prisons?

Profiles

If available, information on the potential targeting of family members should also be included.

Compliance with Taliban moral and religious norms

- Do the Taliban perceive certain characteristics or behaviour that were usual during the previous rule as non-compliant with religious and moral norms?
- Are there reports on legislation against such characteristics and behaviour and reactions by Taliban members towards such characteristics and behaviour?
- Have individuals been reported to display such characteristics and behaviour since the takeover? Have individuals been reported to alter such characteristics and behaviour to conform with Taliban norms or what is perceived as Taliban norms?

Women and girls

- What are the announced Taliban policies towards women, following their takeover, e.g. work, sport, freedom of movement, assembly and association, healthcare (inc. reproductive healthcare), etc.?
- How are those policies implemented in practice?
- Are there reports of discrimination, violence, or threats against women and/or girls by the Taliban?

Education

- What is the general policy of the Taliban concerning education, in particular of girls and young women?
- What is the practice? Are there differences in bigger cities compared to rural areas?
- What is the level of girls' enrolment in schools?

Ethnic and religious minorities

- What is the official policy of the Taliban towards ethnic and religious minorities?
- Are there reports of discrimination, threats or violence against certain minorities by the Taliban?

Persons affiliated with the former government/security forces

- Since the Taliban takeover, have amnesties been granted and to which profiles? Are these amnesties conditionals and what conditions apply? Are they time-limited?
- What is the implementation of the amnesties in practice?
- Are there reports of reprisals, discriminations, violence or threats against former ANSF members?
- Are there reports of reprisals, discriminations, violence or threats against employees of state authorities and courts under the previous rule?
- Are there reports of reprisals, discriminations, violence or threats against other persons affiliated with the former government?

Journalists and media workers

- Are there reported incidents of targeting of journalists and media workers by the Taliban?
- What is the treatment of female journalists and media workers by the Taliban?

Healthcare professionals and humanitarian workers, including individuals working for national and international NGOs

- Are there reported incidents of targeting of healthcare professionals and humanitarian aid workers, including individuals working for national and international NGOs by the Taliban?

Demonstrations and protests

- Are there reports of demonstrations/protests? In which areas? With what demands?

- What is the response to demonstrations by the Taliban?

Security situation

- What has been reported regarding the general violence levels in Afghanistan?
- What security incidents and cases of civilian casualties have been reported? Have the incidents been claimed or attributed to any specific actors?
- Is new conflict-induced displacement reported following the Taliban takeover? Are return movements reported?

Humanitarian situation

- What is the food security situation following the takeover, in general and in Kabul?
- What is the poverty situation following the takeover, in general and in Kabul?
- What is the healthcare situation following the takeover, in general and in Kabul?



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