



A Commentary on the UK Home Office's *Country Policy and Information Note: Afghanistan, Fear of the Taliban* (V4.0 and V5.0)

November, 2025

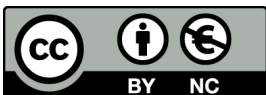


A Commentary on the UK Home Office's *Country Policy and Information Note: Afghanistan, Fear of the Taliban (V4.0 and V5.0)*

November, 2025



Asylos' publications are covered by the Creative Commons License BY-NC 4.0, allowing for limited use of Asylos' publications, provided the work is properly credited to Asylos, and it is for non-commercial use. Asylos does not hold the copyright to the content of third party material included in this publication.



This publication was produced with the kind support of the Justice Together Initiative.



We would like to extend our thanks to Zoe Bantleman, Legal Director of the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA), and Berivan Gunes, Senior Legal Officer at the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA), who generously shared their expertise and analysis to assist the development of this commentary.

asylos.org / info@asylos.org

Design: Iris Teichmann

Photo credit: © LukeOnTheRoad / Shutterstock

Contents

Introduction	4
Background	5
Key Issues	6
Recommendations	7
Fear of the Taliban: former government officials / civil servants and their families	8
1. Consistency of CPIN assessment with COI	8
Recent sources – targeting of former government officials and civil servants (and family members)	12
2. Emphasis on quantitative assessment of risk	17
3. Impact of limitations on access to information in Afghanistan	18
Recent sources – limitations on access to information in Afghanistan	19

Introduction

This commentary identifies what Asylos considers to be key inconsistencies and omissions between available country of origin information (COI) on the situation of those associated with the former government of Afghanistan, and the conclusions relating to this profile that were reached in the 2024 and 2025 versions (V4.0 & V5.0) of the Country Policy and Information Note: Fear of the Taliban, Afghanistan (alternatively referred to as the *Fear of the Taliban CPIN (V4.0 or V5.0)* or *CPIN (V4.0 or V5.0)*).

This publication is intended as a guide for legal practitioners and decision makers in respect of identified inconsistencies and omissions in these Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs), and as a tool to signpost recent COI on the issues considered within this commentary. The commentary focuses primarily on the targeting of former government officials by the Taliban, and is divided into three sections, addressing:

1. Consistency of CPIN assessment with COI
2. Disproportionate focus on quantitative assessment of risk
3. The impact of limitations on reporting on access to information.

The commentary highlights a selection of relevant COI published within the last year, which was not included in the updated version of the CPIN published in August 2025.

***Disclaimer:** A selection of recent COI is included for illustrative purposes and should not be considered exhaustive. For further information, lawyers and decision makers may wish to consult a range of sources, including but not limited to:

- Consider submitting a research request to Asylos' [free-of-charge COI research service](#) or consulting a country expert.¹
- Asylos' October 2025 [COI report](#) covering former government officials, those who worked for international forces and members of the former judiciary.
- ACCORD's periodical report Afghanistan: Overview of recent developments, the most recent of which can be accessed on the [ecoi.net website](#).
- Regular reporting by the UN Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan (at the time of writing, reports are published quarterly), as well as other UN reporting.

¹ Consider consulting the [Asylex Country Experts Database](#) to assist in identifying a country expert.

Background

In August 2021, the Taliban's seizure of power precipitated a human rights and security crisis in Afghanistan, giving rise to a sharp increase in protection needs. While most Afghans who were displaced across borders have been hosted in Pakistan and Iran, the UK and other countries in Europe also saw an increase in Afghans seeking refuge in the years following the Taliban takeover. In response to the arising protection needs, the UK government established a number of resettlement schemes for Afghan nationals:

- The [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\)](#) for individuals who served alongside British armed forces and worked with the British government. This scheme operated from April 2021.
- The [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme \(ACRS\)](#), which created a pathway to resettlement for groups deemed particularly at risk by the British government. The scheme was established in January 2022 and was set up to allow for the resettlement of up to 20,000 people. Groups deemed to be at risk included:
 - 'a. those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights and freedom of speech, rule of law (for example, judges, women's rights activists, academics, journalists); and*
 - b. vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT).'*²
- The [Afghanistan Response Route \(ARR\)](#), which was established in April 2024, after the British government became aware of a data breach, in which it stated that the information of some applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme and the Afghanistan Locally Employed Staff Ex-Gratia Scheme was made public.³ The scheme was not made public in accordance with a High Court super-injunction preventing widespread public knowledge of the incident, to allow for protective measures to be taken.⁴ The super-injunction was lifted following a High Court ruling in July 2025.⁵

In July 2025, these resettlement schemes were ended by the UK government, raising concerns that there will no longer be safe and legal routes to the UK for Afghans who continue to face the risk of serious harm or persecution.⁶

2 UK Home Office, [Afghanistan resettlement and immigration policy statement](#), updated July 2024 (withdrawn 3 July 2025)

3 UK Ministry of Defence, [Afghanistan Response Route](#), last updated 23 September 2025; UK Ministry of Defence, [Data incident affecting applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme and Afghanistan Locally Employed Staff Ex-Gratia Scheme](#), last updated 11 August 2025

4 UK Ministry of Defence, [Afghanistan Response Route](#), last updated 23 September 2025; UK Ministry of Defence, [Data incident affecting applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme and Afghanistan Locally Employed Staff Ex-Gratia Scheme](#), last updated 11 August 2025

5 BBC, [Thousands of Afghans were moved to UK in secret scheme after data breach](#), 15 July 2025

6 Right to Remain, [Closure of Safe Routes for Afghans: Changes to the Immigration Rules](#), 11 July 2025; International Rescue Committee, [Closure of Afghan resettlement schemes represents 'concerning abandonment of the UK's commitments to the people of Afghanistan'](#), says IRC UK, 3 July 2025

Key Issues

In the years following the Taliban takeover, the UK Home Office has published and updated several Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs) on Afghanistan, covering relevant topics including fear of the Taliban, the security and humanitarian situation and unaccompanied minors.

This commentary focuses primarily on the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN, and in particular, the most recent iterations of it: the UK Home Office [Country Policy and Information Note Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban \[Version 5.0\]](#), August 2025, also with some reference to the [Country Policy and Information Note Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban \[Version 4.0\]](#), August 2024.

The analysis in this commentary identifies the following key issues:

- **Narrowing assessment of those considered to be at risk from the Taliban:** While the 2024 and 2025 versions of the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN acknowledge the ongoing risks to people with a range of profiles, since August 2024 the UK Home Office has assessed that in general ‘government officials, civil servants, or those otherwise formerly in official or advisory roles’ do not face a real fear of persecution or serious harm. Such a conclusive assessment is not supported by country of origin information, which indicates that former government officials experience ongoing human rights violations.
- **Disproportionate focus on quantitative assessment of risk:** By approaching the assessment of risk to former government officials through a predominantly quantitative lens, the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN (V4.0 & V5.0) risks distorting the correct legal test for assessing whether there is a reasonable likelihood a person would be persecuted (for a Convention reason), and elevating the evidentiary threshold for proving that people claiming to be former government officials are at risk from the Taliban.
- **Minimal consideration of limited access to information:** The assessment lacks a clear explanation of how the limitations in reporting and access to information have been considered and weighed in the context of making a definitive assessment of risk to former government officials.
- **Lack of up-to-date COI included in the August 2025 version of the CPIN:** The August 2025 version of the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN (V.5.0) does not include updated COI on risk profiles, including former government officials and civil servants.

Recommendations

To UK and European governments:

- Policies relating to the international protection needs of Afghans must continuously reflect relevant and timely country of origin information on the situation in Afghanistan.

To legal practitioners and decision-makers:

- Ensure that asylum procedures are fair and evidence-based by consulting up-to-date country of origin information. This is especially important in country contexts like Afghanistan, where the situation is continuously evolving. Lawyers and asylum decisions makers may find it helpful to consult a range of recent COI reports on the situation in Afghanistan, including but not limited to:
 - » Asylos' October 2025 [COI report](#) covering former government officials, those who worked for international forces and members of the former judiciary.
 - » ACCORD's periodical report *Afghanistan: Overview of recent developments*, the most recent of which can be accessed on the [ecoi.net website](#).
 - » Regular reporting by the UN Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan (at the time of writing, reports are published quarterly), as well as other UN reporting.
 - » Consider submitting a research request to Asylos' free-of-charge [COI research service](#) or consulting a country expert.⁷
- Recognise that limited or absent information on a particular issue does not mean that the issue does not exist.⁸ This is especially important to consider in contexts like Afghanistan, where factors such as restrictions on press freedom are affecting access to information. Limitations in access to information must be clearly taken into account in assessments of risk.

⁷ Consider consulting the [Asylex Country Experts Database](#) to assist in identifying a country expert.

⁸ Note that this principle is recognised by many country of origin information producing institutions. For examples, see the following documents providing methodological guidance on country of origin information research: Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), [Researching Country of Origin Information: Training Manual](#), p.151, March 2024; European Union Agency for Asylum, [Country of Origin Information \(COI\) Report Methodology](#), p.18, February 2023; Asylos, [Country of Origin Information: Fundamentals](#), p.19, 2024

Fear of the Taliban: former government officials / civil servants and their families

1. Consistency of CPIN assessment with COI

The 2024 and 2025 versions of the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN acknowledge the ongoing risks to people with a range of profiles. However, since August 2024 the UK Home Office has assessed that 'government officials, civil servants, or those otherwise formerly in official or advisory roles', are not in general at risk of persecution. Such a conclusive assessment is not supported by the COI.

In particular, this assessment minimises continuing reports of serious harm against former government officials. Although some sources point out that former officials have resumed work under the new Taliban regime, assess that reprisals have been sporadic and not part of any targeted campaign, or refer to the return of some Afghans to the country in the context of public encouragement by the Taliban, other sources highlight that former government officials and civilian personnel have been subject to arbitrary arrests and detentions, human rights violations, various forms of torture and ill-treatment and extrajudicial killings. Furthermore, the CPIN cited an August 2023 report by Armed Conflict Location & Event Data and Afghan Peace Watch, which assessed that former government officials were amongst the most targeted groups by the Taliban. Meanwhile an excerpt cited from the December 2023 EUAA Country Focus report indicated that civilian personnel had been in hiding.

The August 2025 version of the CPIN did not include any updated COI covering the profile of former government officials and civil servants (and their families), and the COI remains the same as that included in the August 2024 version. The COI section on former government officials and civil servants and their family members is cited at some length below, in order to demonstrate the body of information that the UK Home Office considered in making its assessment. Sections of the text are in bold highlight information that runs counter to the UK Home Office assessment that those with this profile are not in general at real risk of persecution or serious harm.

Excerpt from August 2025, Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban CPIN

Country Information [...]

10.2 Application of the 'general amnesty'

10.2.1 Despite calls to uphold the amnesty, UNAMA claimed that during the period of its investigations, it had '... **recorded credible reports of hundreds of human rights violations – including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions and torture and ill-treatment – carried out by the de facto authorities against former government officials and ANDSF members. There is limited information regarding efforts by the de facto authorities to conduct investigations and hold perpetrators ... to account.**'⁶⁰ [...]

10.6 Profiles of people affected: former government officials, civil servants, or those otherwise formerly in official or advisory roles (and their family members)

10.6.1 DFAT's January 2022 Thematic Report noted that '... lower and mid-level ordinary officials within the Afghanistan government have been ordered back to work in order to help run the country'¹⁰⁴ and assessed that 'Due to the Taliban's desire to restart Afghan governance and curry favour with the international community, ordinary and/or technical government officials are presently assessed to be at low risk of adverse Taliban attention.'¹⁰⁵

10.6.2 UNAMA claimed that it had recorded '... **at least 800 human rights violations against former government officials and ANDSF members between the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021 and 30 June 2023**'¹⁰⁶ However, the source did not clarify what the 'human rights violations' were, nor how many of each were allegedly committed, nor how many were specifically against government officials as opposed to ANDSF members.

10.6.3 The joint ACLED and APW report of August 2023 stated that 'Since the fall of Kabul, **former government and security officials have been the most targeted civilian group by the Taliban in the country**, according to the salient identity categories that ACLED tracks.'¹⁰⁷

10.6.4 In the global affairs magazine, Foreign Policy, an article about civil servants that remained in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover, dated 9 February 2022, noted that:

The Taliban told Foreign Policy that of the 455,000 total civil servants, more than 98 percent remained in Afghanistan, including at least two deputies at the Ministry of Finance, two at the Ministry of Transport and Aviation, and one in Kabul's municipal government. Former President Hamid Karzai and former Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah remain in Afghanistan as well but have essentially been put under house arrest...

'While a handful of officials chose to stay in Afghanistan, the majority of civil servants didn't really have an option. Few had international connections, and while many feared Afghanistan's new rulers, most depended on a regular income.'¹⁰⁸

10.6.5 In a June 2023 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls stated: 'Prior to August 2021, women comprised... 30 per cent in the civil service, and held key roles in the Government, independent commissions and the judiciary. **While many of these officials have since left the country, many others live in fear of retribution for having worked with the former regime, despite the declaration of a "general amnesty". The experts are deeply concerned about the continuing reprisal attacks on former officials.**'¹⁰⁹

10.6.6 ICG noted that, based on their interviews with Panjshir residents and former government officials, May-June 2022, 'The sporadic nature of reprisals, and their low numbers relative to the size of the Republic's political and security apparatus, suggested that it was not the Taliban's nationwide policy to hunt down all former government officials. **Still, the Taliban detained and interrogated many former security officials in areas, such as Nangarhar and Panjshir, where armed opposition was fiercest.**'¹¹⁰

10.6.7 The EUAA Country Focus also referenced Crisis Group's point above and added 'This information was confirmed by the international journalist who stated that if the Taliban had carried out an orchestrated revenge campaign to kill former soldiers, the number of deaths would be much higher.'¹¹¹

10.6.8 Rahimi wrote in July 2022:

'In terms of staffing, at the national level, the Taliban seems to have kept most of the staff in technical ministries who remained in the country but have placed Taliban members in leadership roles. The security ministries were almost entirely purged from non-Talibs, on the other hand. In the ministries that dealt with issues considered sensitive by the Taliban, such as the ministry of education and higher education, it appears that the Taliban have replaced most of the staff with their members.

'On the local level, hoping to cement their control over the country and generate employment for the now oversized fighting force, the Taliban appear to have replaced most of the staff in the local administration with Taliban members but have kept most teachers and professors. Most of the staffing decisions at the national and local levels were taken primarily based on proximity to the Taliban and not qualifications.'¹¹²

10.6.9 Landinfo, Norway's country of origin information centre¹¹³, noted in its September 2022 COI Query response 'Departures and returns after Taliban's takeover of power' that

'From the takeover of power until today, the signals from the Taliban have been that Afghans are encouraged not to leave Afghanistan. Directly after the takeover of power, during the evacuation, the Taliban requested that Western countries stop evacuating skilled Afghans. "We need their talent", said spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid (Matre & Lode 2021).

'The Taliban recognises that they are dependent on the part of the population that has education and experience in administration in order to rule the country. Civilian and military leaders are therefore encouraged to return home. The message is that all Afghans are welcome back to Afghanistan to contribute to the country's development.'¹¹⁴

10.6.10 **In its annual report for 2023, published in March 2024, Rawadari reported on targeted and extra-judicial killings of former government employees by the Taliban and unknown individuals. According to families of victims, unknown armed individuals were actually Taliban taking revenge¹¹⁵. The report added that 'In some cases the Taliban, especially their intelligence agency, assassinate former government employees and then announce that these individuals were affiliated with the ISIS group or committed suicide.'**¹¹⁶

10.6.11 Rawadari recorded the targeted killing of 82 former government employees (and one injured) in 2023, which included 68 military personnel and 14 civilian officials of the former government¹¹⁷. The majority of incidents occurred during the first half of 2023 (1 January to 30 June), when Rawadari recorded 54 killings and 1 person injured, including 45 former military personnel and 10 civilian

employees¹¹⁸. Rawadari noted the limits in obtaining information on extra-judicial killings due to the Taliban's restrictions on reporting.¹¹⁹

10.6.12 The EUAA Country Focus noted in regard to the Taliban's general amnesty that 'most civilian former public officials have been able to resume their duties within the new de facto administration in Kabul, except for most female civil servants that were sent home.'¹²⁰

10.6.13 The same EUAA report added:

'At sub-national level the Taliban have tried to bring in their own members to be trained by and then replace former officials. Some former security personnel work in the Taliban's de facto forces, and an international journalist knew about a case where even the former local head of the former National Directorate of Security (NDS) in one area had been appointed head of the Taliban valley shura. Retired officials have also staged protests against the non-payment of their pensions. **At the same time, killings and various forms of ill-treatment have taken place against both former military and civilian personnel, and such individuals have reportedly been living in hiding.'**¹²¹

10.6.14 The Report by the UN Secretary-General on developments in Afghanistan since 18 September 2023, dated 1 December 2023, noted that, 'According to the de facto authorities, salaries of all civil servants, including women ordered to remain at home, continued to be paid. The de facto Ministry for Martyrs and Disabled Affairs announced in early September that it had processed payments for the families of martyrs and disabled persons of the Republic and de facto authority periods, though pensions of retired Republic-era government employees remained unpaid.'¹²²

10.6.15 The EUAA Country Focus noted that:

The Taliban have communicated that former officials returning from abroad will be ensured safety, and established a commission for the "Return and Communications with Former Afghan Officials and Political Figures" in March 2022. According to this commission, as reported by TOLONews, up to 1 000 businessmen and political or military figures had returned to Afghanistan as of early November 2022, including some former ministers, governors, and generals. The commission continued to report on returns of political figures and former government officials in 2023. An international analyst questioned their estimate of 1 000 people returning, stating instead that a handful former political and military figures had returned, and that many could have gone but left again.

'Other media outlets also reported on political figures and former government officials returning to Afghanistan. According to the international analyst, the return commission has not led to any political recognition or pledges for allegiance, and the commission has mainly been a way for wealthy individuals to return to manage their assets. The former director of Afghanistan's intelligence agency, Rahmatullah Nabil, also stated that some former officials had returned for personal business interests, to retain their properties and assets. **Local media Kabul Now** [Taliban's false amnesty...', July 2023] **reported on individual cases of low-ranking military officials being detained, disappeared or killed after returning. The same source reported that some high-ranking military officials had received a "warm reception" by Taliban officials upon their return, whilst others had received a "cold welcome" or were living in fear and uncertainty. The same source reported that returning officials were to be provided with "immunity cards" upon their return to ensure that they were not detained. However, it was reportedly difficult to receive an immunity card as the Taliban had not announced a registration centre and the return commission was hard to reach, and in some cases returned individuals had to bribe Taliban officials to receive an immunity card. Moreover, in some cases Taliban officials detained individuals despite having immunity cards. It has not been possible to corroborate the information provided by Kabul Now with other sources.'**¹²³

10.6.16 The Netherlands MFA report noted that:

The Taliban reportedly focused their persecution more on security forces personnel (low-ranking, middle-ranking and senior) than on civilian employees. However, **the Taliban apparently had a narrower definition of "civil" than in humanitarian law. For example, they regarded ministers, senior officials and persons who held non-combat positions in the army as non-civilians. According to experts, the treatment (and possible persecution) of the former officials depended on the position they had held.**

'Workers in health care and education were reportedly less targeted. However, this did not mean that persons working in the "less dangerous" sectors were not at any risk of persecution.'¹²⁴

10.6.17 **Rawadari recorded the arbitrary arrest and detention of at least 118 former government employees and their family members in 2023, which included 6 civilian personnel¹²⁵. Of the 118, 47 military personnel, 5 civilian personnel and 21 relatives were unlawfully arrested and detained during the first 6 months of 2023, though Rawadari noted that numbers were likely to be higher¹²⁶.**

10.6.18 The EUAA Country Focus also noted that:

‘According to ACLED data [from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023] over fatalities in Kandahar Province, 29 events (out of 100) concerned killings of former security forces personnel, as well as the killing of one former customs department employee. The Taliban was the main identified perpetrator, but in many cases the actor behind the killings was unknown. In an interview carried out by the Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN), a former senior civil servant of the former government described how he and his two brothers had been able to return to Afghanistan (after fleeing to Turkey amid the Taliban takeover) after the general amnesty was announced. This individual stated that he had not faced any issues with the de facto authorities, and that they even let him carry a gun for his protection while travelling in his area of origin. He thought that the reason for the Taliban not targeting him or his family was due to the fact that they had not fought the Taliban but served as civilians for the former republic. A former Afghan National Army (ANA) member from Nangarhar stated that he had been arrested and faced one week’s imprisonment and subsequently was investigated two more times, as the social network of his home village did not protect him from retaliation. Rather, he had been “subjected to a ‘show of force’ by fellow tribesmen” on the winning side after the Taliban takeover.’¹²⁷

- 60 UNAMA, [A barrier to securing peace...](#) (page 1), August 2023
- 104 DFAT, [Thematic Report on Political and Security Development...](#) (paragraph 3.29), January 2022
- 105 DFAT, [Thematic Report on Political and Security Development...](#) (paragraph 3.30), January 2022
- 106 UNAMA, [A barrier to securing peace...](#) (page 5), August 2023
- 107 ACLED and APW, [Two Years of Repression...](#), 11 August 2023
- 108 Foreign Policy, [I Wanted to Stay for My People](#), 9 February 2022
- 109 UNHRC, [Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan...](#) (page 6), 15 June 2023
- 110 ICG, [Afghanistan’s Security Challenges under the Taliban](#) (section IV(C)), August 2022
- 111 EUAA, [Afghanistan – Country Focus](#) (pages 56, 57), December 2023
- 112 Rahimi, H, [Remaking of Afghanistan ...](#) 26 July 2022
- 113 Landinfo, [About Landinfo](#), no date
- 114 Landinfo, [Departures and returns after Taliban’s takeover of power](#) (page 3), 29 September 2022
- 115 Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation Report 2023](#) (page 12), March 2024
- 116 Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation Report 2023](#) (page 12), March 2024
- 117 Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation Report 2023](#) (page 12), March 2024
- 118 Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan...](#) (page 11), August 2023
- 119 Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation Report 2023](#) (page 11), March 2024
- 120 EUAA, [Afghanistan – Country Focus](#) (pages 56, 57), December 2023
- 121 EUAA, [Afghanistan – Country Focus](#) (pages 56, 57), December 2023
- 122 UNGA, UNSC, [Report of the Secretary-General](#) (paragraph 14), 1 December 2023
- 123 EUAA, [Afghanistan – Country Focus](#) (pages 57, 58), December 2023
- 124 Netherlands MFA, [General Country of Origin Report Afghanistan](#) (pages 67, 68), June 2023
- 125 Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation Report 2023](#) (page 16), March 2024
- 126 Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan...](#) (pages 17 to 18), August 2023
- 127 EUAA, [Afghanistan – Country Focus](#) (page 61), December 2023

Overall, the COI at 10.6 of the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN (V5.0) presents a complex picture, and a conclusive assessment that there is no general risk of persecution or serious harm to former government officials, including civil servants and their families, is not supported by the COI. This assessment appears to privilege the assessment of the 2022 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade report, meanwhile placing less weight on other COI sources published over time that highlight grave human rights violations perpetrated against former government officials.

Furthermore, the UK Home Office’s assessment as of August 2025 is at odds with the assessments of the situation by other institutions with expertise in the field of asylum and country of origin information. For example, in its September 2025 *Guidance Note on Afghanistan – Update II*, UNHCR stated:

9 UNHCR, [Guidance Note on Afghanistan – Update II](#), September 2025

'...many persons of this profile [Afghans associated with the former government, security forces or allies] — including former government officials, previous members of the ANDSF, former prosecutors or judges and persons who were affiliated with foreign forces—are likely to be in need of international protection. Other persons of this profile may be in need of international protection depending on the individual circumstances of the case...'⁹

The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), in its May 2024 Country Guidance, also appeared to reach a different conclusion to that of the UK Home Office.¹⁰ In its consideration of the risk facing *'individuals affiliated with the previous government and members of the judiciary, including court personnel and civil servants'*, EUAA assessed that:

'Acts reported to be committed against individuals under this profile are of such severe nature that they amount to persecution (e.g. summary executions, killing, torture, enforced disappearances). [...]

'For judges, prosecutors, and former court personnel well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated.

'For others under this profile, the individual assessment should take into account the institution they were employed by and their role and functions. Being female and possible personal enmities may also constitute risk-impacting circumstances. Family members may also have a well-founded fear of persecution, for example in the context of the Taliban searching for the individual they are related to.'¹¹

Furthermore, unlike the UK Home Office CPIN, the EUAA's Country Guidance report sets out its assessment in several parts, reflecting the different elements of the legal test to assess whether an individual has a well-founded fear of persecution. First, it affirms that acts reported to have been perpetrated against individuals under this profile amount to persecution or serious harm within the meaning set out at Article 9 of the Qualification Directive.^{12, 13} Second, it considers the level of risk of persecution – in other words, whether there is a 'well-founded fear' – and leaves open the possibility that individuals affiliated with the former government (and their families), including civil servants, may face a well-founded fear of persecution, advising that 'individual assessments' should take into account a number of factors, including institution, role, function and gender.¹⁴ This assessment appears to reflect the nuances of the country of origin information it has considered, much of which also appears in the UK Home Office *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN V5.0. Finally, the EUAA assessment affirms that the reasons for persecution of this profile fall within those set out at Article 10 of the Qualification Directive.^{15, 16}

Recent sources – targeting of former government officials and civil servants (and family members)

The August 2025 *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN (V.5.0) contains a limited number of COI updates, and in the case of former government officials and civil servants (10.6), only includes COI dating from August 2024 or before. Since this COI is now more than a year old, lawyers and decision makers may find it instructive to consult more recent COI. This section sets out a selection of illustrative COI on the targeting of former government officials and civil servants published subsequent to the August 2024 *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN.

A June 2025 report of the UN Secretary-General, covering 'the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including political, humanitarian and human rights efforts, since the issuance of the previous report, dated 21 February 2025'¹⁷, reported on the killing, arbitrary arrest and detentions of former government officials (as well as former ANDSF members). This report forms part of regular reporting (every three months) of the UN Secretary General 'on the situation in Afghanistan and the implementation of UNAMA's mandate', as foreseen in the UN

¹⁰ EUAA, [Country Guidance: Afghanistan](#), pp.32-33, May 2024

¹¹ EUAA, [Country Guidance: Afghanistan](#), pp.32-33, May 2024

¹² EUAA, [Country Guidance: Afghanistan](#), pp.32-33, May 2024

¹³ European Union, [Regulation - EU - 2024/1347 - EN - EUR-Lex](#), Article 9, May 2024

¹⁴ EUAA, [Country Guidance: Afghanistan](#), pp.32-33, May 2024

¹⁵ EUAA, [Country Guidance: Afghanistan](#), pp.32-33, May 2024

¹⁶ European Union, [Regulation - EU - 2024/1347 - EN - EUR-Lex](#), Article 10, May 2024

¹⁷ UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, "[The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General \[A/79/947-S/2025/372\]](#)", para. 2, 11 June 2025

Security Council Resolution 2777 (2025).¹⁸ Gathering 'credible and accurate' information regarding the human rights situation in Afghanistan forms part of UNAMA's activities in Afghanistan.¹⁹

'[...] 33. During the reporting period [Feb - June 2025], UNAMA documented at least four killings and 10 arbitrary arrests and detentions of former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. [...]

74. Continued reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions and the torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces are deeply troubling.'

UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, "[The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General \[A/79/947-S/2025/372\]](#)", 11 June 2025

In its 2025 annual report on the state of the world's human rights (covering 2024), Amnesty International reported that former government employees were subject to arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention, forcible disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, and extrajudicial executions at the hands of the Taliban.

- 'The Taliban's arbitrary arrests, forcible disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions of former government employees [...] continued [...] The Taliban continued using arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and unlawful detention against people perceived as political opponents. These included former government employees [...] Detainees, including members of the former government and those critical of the Taliban, remained at risk of torture and other ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions.'

Amnesty International, "[The State of the World's Human Rights; Afghanistan 2024](#)", 29 April 2025

Rawadari is an Afghan organisation that works 'with individuals and collectives inside and outside Afghanistan' on human rights promotion, monitoring, documentation & reporting, and victim-centered justice and accountability

²⁰ In March 2025, Rawadari published an annual report on the human rights situation covering 2024. Rawadari indicated that its documentation team collected data on human rights violations on a monthly basis, using questionnaires, and in-person or telephone interviews with multiple local sources, including survivors, family members and eyewitnesses.²¹ The report commented comprehensively on limitations in accessing information, and observed that the information presented in the report represents 'a portion of the numerous human rights violations that Rawadari has been able to document during 2024'.²² The information presented by Rawadari's report should therefore be understood as a likely under-representation of the true scale of violations. Despite challenges in accessing information, Rawadari documented cases of former government employees and their families who had been subject to arbitrary detention, torture, killings and enforced disappearances amongst other forms of retaliation.

- '[...] Rawadari's findings indicate that former government employees and their family members have continued to be subjected to arbitrary detentions, torture, killings, enforced disappearances, and other acts of retaliation. The rate of targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial killings of former government employees in 2024 has increased by 9%, while their arbitrary and unlawful detentions rose by approximately 20%. [...] In 2024, a total of 142 former government employees, including both civilian and military personnel, were illegally detained and imprisoned, primarily by the Taliban's intelligence agency. [...] there have been cases of harassment against lower-ranking employees of the previous government who are currently working in Taliban-controlled state offices. For instance, in Kandahar, Nimruz,

¹⁸ UN Security Council, [Resolution 2777 \(2025\)](#), adopted 17th March 2025

¹⁹ UNAMA, [Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting](#), undated

²⁰ Rawadari, [About Us](#), undated

²¹ Rawadari, [Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024](#), p.6, 19 March 2025

²² Rawadari, [Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024](#), p.6-7, 19 March 2025

Herat, Ghazni, and Ghor provinces, the Taliban have harassed several former government employees under various pretexts, forcing them to leave their jobs.'

Rawadari, [Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024](#), p.5, p.18, p.19, 19 March 2025

In February 2025 the UN Secretary-General reported on the killing, arbitrary arrest and detentions, and ill-treatment and torture of former government officials (as well as former ANDSF members). This report forms part of regular reporting (every three months) of the UN Secretary General (see above for source description).

- '[...] 36. Human rights violations against former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continued to be reported, despite the 2021 general amnesty. UNAMA documented at least 1 killing, 37 arbitrary arrests and detentions, and 18 instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. [...]

75. Continued reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions and the torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, despite the de facto authorities' publicly stated commitment to their general amnesty, are deeply concerning.'

UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, "[The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General \[A/79/797-S/2025/109\]](#)", 21 February 2025.

In a February 2025 report to the UN Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan²³ noted that former government officials (as well as members of the military and police) are a particular risk of arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment and extrajudicial killing.

- 1 Introduction [...]

Former government officials and security personnel continue to suffer retaliation. [...]

76. The Special Rapporteur recognizes the long history and important role that Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan and Türkiye have played in hosting the vast majority of Afghan refugees. Nonetheless, Afghans who reside in those countries have frequently reached out to the Special Rapporteur to express their fear of persecution if forced to return to Afghanistan. That includes individuals who require heightened international protection, such as [...] former civil servants [...]

84. In addition to de facto court-sanctioned corporal and capital punishments, the Special Rapporteur remains concerned about torture and ill-treatment occurring in detention centres, including unofficial places of detention, especially during interrogations, despite clear prohibitions having been issued by the de facto authorities. Former government officials and former members of the military and police are at particular risk of arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment, as well as extrajudicial execution, despite a declared amnesty. [...] The Special Rapporteur has received reports of former officials living in hiding for years. [...]

HRC, "[Situation of human rights in Afghanistan; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett \[A/HRC/58/80\]](#)", 20 February 2025

²³ Information on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan can be found here: OHCHR, [Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan](#), undated

A report of the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Human Rights Council referred to UNAMA's documentation of human rights violations against former government officials, and 'numerous violations' of the Taliban's general amnesty, for which there was reported to be no written clarification regarding the scope.

- 'II. Human rights situation in Afghanistan [...]
D1 Former government officials and Afghan National Defence and Security Forces
16. The de facto authorities reiterated their commitment to a "general amnesty"⁷ for former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. On 31 December 2023, the de facto Minister of Defence held a press conference, in which he stated that the de facto security and defence forces were fully committed to the general amnesty.⁸ He denied that any violations of the general amnesty had occurred in the past 12 months, stating that such allegations were misleading and pertained to cases of personal enmity which were being investigated by the courts.
17. Nevertheless, UNAMA has documented extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and ill-treatment of, and verbal threats against, former government officials and former Afghan National Defence and Security Forces members by members of the de facto authorities. Killings of such individuals by unknown perpetrators have also been documented.⁹ It is unclear to what extent the de facto authorities have investigated these violations and taken action against those responsible. [...]
III. Stocktaking of accountability options and processes [...]
B. Past attempts at transitional justice or accountability processes at the national level [...]
41. [...] Following the Taliban takeover of the country in August 2021, the de facto authorities issued a "general amnesty" for former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. While there has been no written clarification regarding the scope of the amnesty issued by the de facto authorities, their public comments to date suggest that the "general amnesty" refers to a broad guarantee of protection for former government officials and Afghan National Defence and Security Forces members. However, as noted above, there have been numerous violations of this amnesty and a failure to ensure accountability for perpetrators by the de facto authorities.'

⁷ See UNAMA Human Rights Service, "[A barrier to securing peace: human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021– 30 June 2023](#)" (2023).

⁸ See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzX_sZTk0Gg (in Pashto).

⁹ UNAMA Human Rights Service, "[Human rights situation in Afghanistan: October–December 2023 update](#)", p. 5.

HRC, "[The human rights situation in Afghanistan; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \[A/HRC/57/22\]](#)", 4 February 2025

In December 2024, the UN Secretary-General reported on the killing, arbitrary arrest and detentions, and ill-treatment and torture of former government officials (as well as former ANDSF members). This report forms part of regular reporting (every three months) of the UN Secretary General (see above for source description).

- '[...] III. Human rights
[...] 29. Human rights violations against former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continued to be reported in violation of the general amnesty announced by the de facto authorities in August 2021. UNAMA documented at least 5 killings, 14 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 4 instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and former Afghan National Defence and Security Forces members. [...]
VIII. Observations [...]
68. The persistent targeting of former government officials and Afghan National Defence and Security Forces members, despite the de facto authorities' publicly stated commitment to their general amnesty, is deeply concerning. It is critical to ensure the protection of these individuals and, when violations of the amnesty occur, to carry out thorough and transparent investigations leading to accountability for perpetrators. [...]

UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, "[The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General \[A/79/675–S/2024/876\]](#)", 6 December 2024

A January 2025 report by Landinfo, a Country of Origin Information Centre, and ‘an independent body within the Norwegian Immigration Authorities’²⁴ discussed evidence relating to the targeting of former government officials. The report assessed that there was no basis for claiming systematic abuse of certain profiles, though acknowledged the seemingly unpredictable and arbitrary nature of targeting, the difficulty in fully understanding the context of the cases, and that ‘undercounts are likely’.

- ‘It is difficult to know how widespread such acts of revenge are now, more than three years after the seizure of power. According to the UN (2024), from May to August 2024, four extrajudicial killings, nine arbitrary arrests and detentions, and six cases of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials were reported. In the autumn of 2024, the UN documented five killings, four cases of torture, and 14 arrests (UN Secretary-General 2024, p. 7). Different sources operate with different figures, and unreported cases, i.e. undercounts, are likely. The Afghan human rights organization Rawadari (2024, p. 11) has documented that about 50 people affiliated with the republic were killed or injured during the first half of 2024. There is little concrete information about the reported cases. The background and context are often unclear. It is therefore difficult to determine with certainty what the underlying and triggering cause may be. An international analyst interviewed by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) (2024a, p. 88) believes that loyalty is now the most important thing for the Taliban, trumping previous alliances and positions. There is no basis for claiming that there is systematic abuse directed at certain profiles, but it seems to be arbitrary and unpredictable who is affected. As Landinfo understands the situation, it is often a matter of private revenge [...] The cases are extrajudicial abuses, and it is often unclear what role the de facto authorities play. However, it is a fact that the perpetrators operate with impunity.’

Landinfo, "[Afghanistan; Situasjonen for afghanske menn](#)", 20 January 2025 [Note that the original report is in Norwegian, and it has been translated into French using online translation software Online Doc Translator. Therefore 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed.]

***Disclaimer:** The inclusion of recent COI that was published subsequent to the August 2024 *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN is for illustrative purposes and should not be considered exhaustive. For comprehensive information pertaining to the situation in Afghanistan, readers may wish to:

- Consult [Asylos’ October 2025 COI report](#) covering former government officials, those who worked for international forces and members of the former judiciary.
- ACCORD’s periodical report Afghanistan: Overview of recent developments, the most recent of which can be accessed on the [ecoi.net website](#).
- Regular reporting by the UN Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan (at the time of writing, reports are published quarterly), as well as other UN reporting.
- Consider submitting a research request to Asylos’ free-of-charge [COI research service](#) or consulting a country expert.²⁵

²⁴ [ecoi.net](#), Source Description, [Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre \(Landinfo\)](#), last updated 11 March 2021
³³ Rawadari, [Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report](#), 2 March 2024
²⁵ Consider consulting the [Asylos Country Experts Database](#) to assist in identifying a country expert.

2. Emphasis on quantitative assessment of risk

The CPIN makes the following assessment with regards to former government officials (and their relatives) and the risk of persecution or serious harm:

Excerpt from August 2025, Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban CPIN

Assessment

3. Risk [...]

3.3 Risk to people claiming to be former government officials (and their family members)

3.3.1 In general, the available information does not indicate that government officials, civil servants, or those otherwise formerly in official or advisory roles are targeted with such regularity, scale or intensity that they present, in general, a real risk of persecution or serious harm.

Firstly, to frame the assessment in this way has the effect of amalgamating the assessment of whether the targeting of former government officials in the manner reported in the COI amounts to persecution with the likelihood of such persecution occurring.²⁶ Framing the assessment in this way conflates two distinct questions central to the refugee definition: (1) whether the treatment reported amounts to persecution, and (2) the likelihood of such persecution occurring to a particular person. A similar tendency was highlighted in a commentary published by ARC Foundation & the University of the West of England in 2021 on the use of quantitative assessments to determine risk in CPINs (commentary on quantitative assessments of risk),²⁷ which judged that: *'By amalgamating these two elements of the refugee definition, the CPINs' analysis of the COI lacks clarity and inaccurately applies the law.'*²⁸ The same commentary cautioned that, in the case of the CPINs analysed, *'undue weight'* placed on quantitative information *'has resulted in a probability assessment of whether the fear is well-founded'*.²⁹ The commentary argued this is not in alignment with the legal test for assessing whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood a person would be persecuted (for a Convention reason) on the bases of all evidence in the round.

In the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN (V5.0 & V4.0), the risk to former government officials, civil servants and their families appears to be understood through a predominantly quantitative frame, effectively introducing a statistical probability model. This framing is echoed in the CPIN's comments on data it cites from a report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which underscores the lack of quantification of human rights violations and how many were specifically perpetrated against government officials:

Excerpt from August 2025, Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban CPIN

Country Information [...]

10.6 Profiles of people affected: former government officials, civil servants, or those otherwise formerly in official or advisory roles (and their family members) [...]

10.6.2 UNAMA claimed that it had recorded '... at least 800 human rights violations against former government officials and ANDSF members between the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021 and 30 June 2023'¹⁰⁶ However, the source did not clarify what the 'human rights violations' were, nor how many of each were allegedly committed, nor **how many were specifically against government officials as opposed to ANDSF members**.

¹⁰⁶ UNAMA, [A barrier to securing peace...](#) (page 5), August 2023

26 A commentary by ARC Foundation & the University of the West of England made similar observations with regards to the use of quantitative assessments in UK Home Office CPINs. ARC Foundation, University of the West of England, ['A Commentary on the use of quantitative assessments to determine risk in Country Policy and Information Notes \(CPINs\) issued by the UK Home Office'](#)

27 ARC Foundation, University of the West of England, ['A Commentary on the use of quantitative assessments to determine risk in Country Policy and Information Notes \(CPINs\) issued by the UK Home Office'](#), 12 November 2021

28 ARC Foundation, University of the West of England, ['A Commentary on the use of quantitative assessments to determine risk in Country Policy and Information Notes \(CPINs\) issued by the UK Home Office'](#), p.4, 12 November 2021

29 ARC Foundation, University of the West of England, ['A Commentary on the use of quantitative assessments to determine risk in Country Policy and Information Notes \(CPINs\) issued by the UK Home Office'](#), p.6, 12 November 2021

Yet, as noted by the ARC Foundation & the University of the West of England commentary on quantitative risk assessments, '[...] *human rights violations do not have to be widespread to be serious enough to be considered persecutory. A single act may be sufficiently serious by its very nature to amount to a severe violation of a basic human right. Significantly, ill-treatment by the State is not required to be 'systematic' to be sufficiently serious or reasonably likely to occur.*'³⁰

By using a predominantly quantitative frame in assessing the risk of persecution or serious harm to former government officials, the CPIN assessment (3.3) appears to take the approach of a statistical probability test. This approach – as observed in the commentary on quantitative risk assessments – runs the risk of ultimately pushing the standard of proof beyond “reasonable degree of likelihood”.³¹ Therefore, basing its decision on a lack of available statistical evidence, the assessment in the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN (V4.0 & V5.0) risks distorting the correct legal test and elevating the evidentiary threshold for proving that people claiming to be former government officials are at risk from the Taliban.

3. Impact of limitations on access to information in Afghanistan

The ARC Foundation & the University of the West of England commentary on quantitative risk assessments observed that *'the very nature of state-persecution often results in limited reporting being available due to limits placed on press freedom, acts of repression or publicly hidden abuse and violations.'*³² This point is highly relevant when considering evidence of persecution by the Taliban in Afghanistan, yet the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN (V4.0 & V5.0) provides relatively scant contextual information on limits on reporting, and crucially, how those limits may impact on the ability to understand and make assessments of risk about violations that have occurred. Turning specifically to the issue of the treatment of former government officials and their families, the CPIN cites a report on the human rights situation in 2023 by Rawadari, an Afghan organisation with human rights monitoring capabilities.

Excerpt from August 2025, Afghanistan: Fear of the Taliban CPIN

10.6 Profiles of people affected: former government officials, civil servants, or those otherwise formerly in official or advisory roles (and their family members) [...]

10.6.11 Rawadari recorded the targeted killing of 82 former government employees (and one injured) in 2023, which included 68 military personnel and 14 civilian officials of the former government¹¹⁸.

The majority of incidents occurred during the first half of 2023 (1 January to 30 June), when Rawadari recorded 54 killings and 1 person injured, including 45 former military personnel and 10 civilian employees¹¹⁹.

Rawadari noted the limits in obtaining information on extra-judicial killings due to the Taliban's restrictions on reporting.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan...](#) (page 12), August 2023

¹¹⁹ Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan...](#) (page 11), August 2023

¹²⁰ Rawadari, [Human Rights Situation Report 2023](#) (page 11), March 2024

While paragraph 10.6.11 does briefly reference limits in obtaining information on extra-judicial killings due to restrictions on reporting, the CPIN would have benefitted from directly quoting the Rawadari report in this respect, and in particular, its assessment that *'the numbers and cases included... may not reflect the full extent of violations in 2023.'*³³ Furthermore, the assessment of risk to former government officials and their families set out in the CPIN at 3.3 lacks any clear indication of how the limitations in reporting have been considered and weighed.

³⁰ ARC Foundation, University of the West of England, ['A Commentary on the use of quantitative assessments to determine risk in Country Policy and Information Notes \(CPINs\) issued by the UK Home Office'](#), p.8-9, 12 November 2021

³¹ ARC Foundation, University of the West of England, ['A Commentary on the use of quantitative assessments to determine risk in Country Policy and Information Notes \(CPINs\) issued by the UK Home Office'](#), p.6, 12 November 2021; see also section 32(4) of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

³² ARC Foundation, University of the West of England, ['A Commentary on the use of quantitative assessments to determine risk in Country Policy and Information Notes \(CPINs\) issued by the UK Home Office'](#), p.9, 12 November 2021

Recent sources – limitations on access to information in Afghanistan

Given the lack of substantial information on limitations in accessing information in the *Fear of the Taliban* CPIN (V5.0 & V4.0), legal practitioners and decision makers may find it instructive to consult a variety of sources addressing this issue. The following selection of sources (which are not exhaustive) describe significant restrictions on access to information, freedom of expression and press freedom, alongside efforts by the Taliban to conceal information about human rights violations or information that may be critical of the Taliban regime. Such efforts have included the prevention of access to prisons for monitoring, and a ban from entering Afghanistan placed on the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan. The sources comment on the effect of this context on freedom of expression and access to information, observing the existence of censorship and self-censorship, suppression of information and, as noted by the European Union Agency for Asylum, increasing difficulties in obtaining up to date and reliable information.

- ‘Since the Taliban have imposed strict restrictions on access to information, gathering the necessary data for this report, particularly documenting human rights violations and specifically targeted and extrajudicial killings, torture, the killing of prisoners, and enforced disappearances, has been a challenging task. The Taliban employ various tactics to conceal such information, including obtaining written guarantees from victims, forcing them to swear oaths not to speak about their experiences, and resorting to intimidation, and threats against victims and their families.

Evidence indicates that prisoners and torture victims are often released from detention on the condition that they provide written commitments not to share information or speak about their experiences. In many cases, the Taliban have threatened them with rearrest and further punishment. As a result, those released from prison and survivors of torture refrain from sharing information with the media and human rights organizations, fearing retaliation and security repercussions for their families.

The Taliban prevent human rights organizations and monitors from accessing prisons or detention facilities and they have also warned all government employees that they will be dismissed and punished if they disseminate information without authorization.

The General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) monitors the activities of civil society activists, journalists, media outlets, human rights defenders, lawyers and educational institutions and health centres and aggressively suppresses any criticism or opposition to Taliban policies.

In 2024, the Taliban imposed even stricter restrictions compared to 2023 on the work of journalists and local media. Currently, local media cannot publish information without prior approval from the Directorates of Information and Culture and GDI. They are only permitted to publish reports and information that the Taliban approve and endorse. The dissemination of information related to specific issues, including human rights violations and women’s rights, is strictly prohibited, and media outlets are not allowed to report on these matters. For example, in August 2024, in a meeting of journalists called by the Directorate of Information and Culture in Ghazni, the GDI and the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) introduced a guideline stating that any reporting on human rights is considered contrary to the “values of the Islamic Emirate.

In Southern and Eastern regions of Afghanistan, both state and private TV stations have been forced to suspend their operation following the PVPV law that introduced a ban on publishing imagery and videos of living beings (humans and animals). As a result, the only source of information from the local DFA authorities and departments in these regions is now the Facebook pages of the local administration. Additionally, in some provinces, the Taliban routinely inspect mobile phones and computers at checkpoints to ensure that no information related to human rights violations is recorded or disseminated. Consequently, these restrictions, along with the recent enforcement of the “PVPV” law, have fostered an environment of fear and mistrust, leading to the concealment of information and evidence related to human rights violations.

Therefore, what is presented in this report represents a portion of the numerous human rights violations that Rawadari has been able to document during 2024 considering the limitations on access to information.'

Rawadari, [Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024](#), (see pp. 6-7), 19 March 2025

- In a report published in February 2025 in French, the Swiss Refugee Council summarised factors impacting the ability to obtain information on the human rights situation. The report refers to severe restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of the press; media censorship and self-censorship inhibiting access to information; the high proportion of journalists who quit the profession, or went into exile, following the Taliban takeover, and reduced presence of international observers, including the recent Taliban ban on the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan from entering the country.

Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe, [Afghanistan : persécution des membres de la famille par les talibans](#), (available in French, see p. 4-6), 20 February 2025

- 'Since the Taliban takeover, Afghan local media and civil society have faced numerous restrictions, and it has become increasingly difficult to retrieve reliable and up-to-date information from the country. Especially media coverage on the situation in remote rural areas is difficult to obtain as the remaining media offices have been concentrated in Kabul City. Afghan media in exile, such as Hasht-e Subh, Afghanistan International and Kabul Now, have been used in some instances, but the information provided by these sources has been used restrictively, as it at times is highly critical of the Taliban and oftentimes is not possible to corroborate. Due to difficulties assessing the reliability of these sources, case-by-case assessment has been carried out before including reports from them.

In order to fill research gaps, several oral sources have been interviewed to obtain first-hand information on the situation on the ground. Many of these sources have, however, requested to be anonymised for their own safety or their families' safety, or due to operational reasons to be able to continue to travel to Afghanistan and report from the country. For example, some sources did not want to risk not getting future visas approved for being cited by name and title in this report.'

European Union Agency for Asylum, [Afghanistan Country Focus](#), (p.12), November 2024

- 'The de facto authorities' measures interfering with editorial content and internal operation of media outlets have substantially diminished media freedom. Between 15 August 2021 to 30 September 2024, UNAMA HRS documented instances of human rights violations affecting 336 journalists and media workers – 256 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention (249 men, 7 women), 130 torture and ill-treatment (122 men, 8 women) and 75 threats or intimidation (66 men, 9 women). The lack of transparent procedures in determining violations and the use of intimidation, arbitrary arrests and detentions on those who criticize the de facto authorities create a culture of self-censorship and negatively impact freedom of expression.

'On 19 September 2021, the de facto authorities' "Government Media and Information Centre" issued an 11-Point Guidance to media, forbidding the publication of content deemed contrary to Islam and Afghan culture, or more broadly deemed to be against national interests. [...] the fact that violations, or perceived violations, can lead to severe punishment creates a pervasive culture of self-censorship among journalists. As these instructions aim at limiting the range of permissible topics for public discourse and in penalizing media outlets being critical of the de facto authorities, they are incompatible with the conditions needed to limit freedom of expression under the ICCPR.'

UNAMA, OHCHR, [Media freedom in Afghanistan](#), November 2024



Asylos

We stand for
asylum decisions
based on evidence.



info@asylos.org
asylos.org