2.3. Other armed groups opposing the Taliban

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: May 2024

According to the UN, there were claims of at least 22 armed groups opposing the Taliban in 26 provinces by September 2022. In 2023, UNAMA recorded claimed attacks by three main groups (the NRF, the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) and the Afghanistan Liberation Movement (ALM)) in eight provinces [Country Focus 2023, 2.2.1., p. 31]. Limited information is available on the size and capacity of the resistance, but it has been assessed as lacking enough coordination and resources to seriously contest Taliban rule [Country Focus 2023, 1.1.1., p. 17]. The report of the UN Secretary General noted an intensification of armed opposition activities against the Taliban in 2022. Sources, however, reported on a drop in activities by armed groups opposing the Taliban in 2023 and the NRF has been described as 'weak' after Taliban operations against the group [Country Focus 2023, 2.2.2., p. 31]. On the other hand, the AFF claimed an increased number of attacks against Taliban targets. The UN Secretary-General described the AFF as 'the most active group' in his latest reporting period (18 September–1 December 2023), while describing the NRF as 'much less active than in 2022' [COI Update 2024, 4., p. 5].

The NRF is led from headquarters located in Tajikistan, and most of the group's members are ethnic Tajiks. Based on its own account, NRF emerged in Panjshir Province and Andarab District of neighbouring Baghlan Province. NRF was formed after the Taliban conquered Kabul in mid-August 2021. The group was reported to consist of former civilians, former ANDSF personnel, including many low-ranking ex-officers, and former opposition members who have in common that they all supported the previous Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and are strong opponents of the Taliban [Security 2022, 2.2.1., pp. 45-47]. ACLED data indicated that the activity of NRF and/or other resistance groups was concentrated in the northeast of Afghanistan, with most events taking place in either the provinces of Panjshir, Takhar, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kapisa, or Parwan, although such groups were involved in or claimed to be involved in attacks in 14 additional provinces (Kabul, Kandahar, Ghazni, Kunduz, Laghman, Balkh, Nangarhar, Samangan, Badghis, Helmand, Jawzjan, Nuristan, Paktya, and Zabul) [Country Focus 2023, 2.2.1., p. 31].

While sources mentioned that NRF was the primary or 'most well-developed' anti-Taliban resistance movement, there was a lack of clarity as to which groups were affiliated with it. It has no clear chain of command and its capabilities appeared to be limited [Security 2022, 2.2.1., pp. 45-46]. Limited information is available on the size and capacity of the resistance, but it has been assessed as lacking enough coordination and resources to seriously contest Taliban rule [Country Focus 2023, 1.1.1., p. 17]. Neither ACLED nor UCDP recorded any events involving the NRF in Panjshir Province in the period 1 October 2023–12 January 2024, but recorded events involving the group in other parts of Afghanistan [COI Update 2024, 4., p. 5].

Other groups that have been mentioned in reporting on anti-Taliban resistance are the Turkestan Freedom Tigers, the National Resistance Council, the National Liberation Front of Afghanistan (NLFA), the Unknown Soldiers of Hazaristan, the allegedly Hazara-centred Freedom and Democracy Front and the Freedom Corps [Security 2022, 2.2.2., pp. 48-49].

See other topics concerning actors of persecution or serious harm:

- 2.1. Taliban *de facto* authorities and affiliated groups
- 2.2. Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)
- *2.3. Other armed groups opposing the Taliban*
- 2.4. Other non-State actors

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