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3.9. Educational personnel

COMMON ANALYSIS
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This profile refers to people working in educational facilities, including schools and universities. Students could also be affected by association. In some cases, reports on targeting concern educational facilities and educational personnel as well as students. Therefore, it cannot always be discerned whether the targeting was intentionally directed towards educational personnel.

See also the sub-section *Access to education* under the profile 3.15 Women and girls.

COI summary

Following the Taliban takeover, primary and elementary schools were reopened after being closed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Girls have however been denied education beyond primary level, as girls' secondary schools were ordered to remain closed. Some sources noted that initially secondary schools for girls were able to remain open in some provinces as well as private institutions, but as of September 2023 all secondary schools have closed again, including private secondary schools. Reportedly, underground secret schools have been running in parts of the country despite the ban and 'adaptive and creative methods' have emerged to support girls' education, including online. Nevertheless, these efforts have not been sustainable or equally accessible, *inter alia* due to the poor internet connection across Afghanistan [Country Focus 2023, 4.4.4., pp. 75-76].

Some changes were introduced in the Afghan educational system, including the revision of school curriculum, with the aim to make it 'compatible' with *sharia*. A source explained that the supreme leader is determined to implement the Taliban's version of *sharia* to 'purify' Afghan society, and that the issue around education is not only about the assault against female education but also against Western education altogether. This 'purification' campaign and efforts to eradicate secular education are reported to have intensified during the reference period. For instance, teachers have been required to take religious tests, with the alleged intention by the Taliban to dismiss those who are not *madrassa*-educated [Country Focus 2023, 4.9., p. 94].

According to reports, the Taliban MPVPV have subjected teachers to harassment and intimidation. On some instances, teachers have been arrested for working in underground schools, and for criticising the Taliban's ban on education for women and girls [Country Focus 2023, 4.9., p. 95]. Several education rights activists were also arrested by the Taliban in 2023,

see 3.7. Human rights defenders, activists and others perceived as critical of the Taliban [COI Update 2024, 3., pp 3-4; Country Focus 2023, 4.7., p. 92].

During the first half of 2022, bomb blasts targeting crowded places, including education facilities, and leading to casualties were also reported [Security situation 2022, 3.2., p. 67].

On 30 September 2022, a suicide IED attack was carried out against the Kaaj educational centre in Dasht-e-Barchi, a Hazara dominated area in Kabul City, killing 54 people and injuring another 114. The attack was not claimed by any actor. On November 2022, an explosion in a madrassa in Samangan led to 23 civilian deaths [Country Focus 2023, 4.9., p. 95; 2.3., p. 39].

In June 2023, between 60 and 90 schoolgirls and their teachers were poisoned and hospitalised in two separate targeted poison attacks against two primary schools in Sangcharak District in Sar-e Pul Province. A Taliban education official claimed that a 'personal grudge' was behind the attack [Country Focus 2023, 4.4.4., p. 77].

In Kabul Province, cases of detonation of IEDs and other explosions directed at both Taliban and civilian targets, including schools, were reported. Some attacks were claimed by or attributed to ISKP, while in other cases the actor behind the attack remained unknown [Country Focus 2023, 2.2.3., p. 34].

Conclusions and guidance

Do the acts qualify as persecution under Article 9 QD?

Acts reported to be committed against individuals under this profile are of such severe nature that they amount to persecution (e.g. killing).

When the acts in question are restrictions on the exercise of certain rights of less severe nature or (solely) discriminatory measures, the individual assessment of whether they could amount to persecution should take into account the severity and/or repetitiveness of the acts or whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures.

What is the level of risk of persecution (well-founded fear)?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as: gender (i.e. female teachers), origin from areas where ISKP has operational capacity, the individual or the institution not following Taliban directives and/or curriculum, speaking out against the Taliban, etc.

Are the reasons for persecution falling within Article 10 QD (nexus)?

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile is highly likely to be for reasons of (imputed) political opinion. In some cases, religion could also be seen as a relevant ground, such as in the case of individuals persecuted for using a curriculum perceived as contravening the actor’s interpretation of Islam.

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