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3.6. Persons fearing forced recruitment

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: May 2024

This profile refers to persons who claim to be targeted by the Taliban or ISKP in order to be recruited by force and against their will.

For the topic of child recruitment, see the separate section [3.16.2. Child recruitment](#).

COI summary

a) Forced recruitment by the Taliban

During the conflict, the Taliban typically recruited unemployed Pashtun males from rural communities who were educated and trained in Afghans and Pakistanis mosques and camps. It was reported that they had no shortage of volunteers and recruits. The Taliban only made use of forced recruitment in exceptional cases. Pressure and coercion to join the Taliban were not always violent and were often exercised through the family, clan, or religious network, depending on the local circumstances. It can be said that the consequences of not obeying were generally serious, including reports of threats against the family of the approached recruits, severe bodily harm, and killings [[Anti-government elements](#), 2.2., 2.4., p. 21; [Recruitment by armed groups](#), 1.5., p. 22; 5.2.1.3., pp. 43-44; 5.2.1.4., p. 44; [Society-based targeting](#), 8.2., p. 94].

Since the takeover, the Taliban have been creating a national *de facto* military by voluntarily recruiting their own members and, to a limited extent, specialist members of the former Afghan security forces. No sources reported on forced recruitment taking place and instead described a situation where joining the *de facto* security structure is desirable as there are few job opportunities. On the other hand, one source emphasised that some former security officials might have returned to work out of fear of the Taliban, perceiving it as a measure to mitigate the risk of reprisals by Taliban members and sympathisers [[Country Focus 2023](#), 2.5., pp. 42-43].

b) Forced recruitment by ISKP

Before August 2021, in rural areas with firm ISKP presence and/or where fighting was taking place, there was pressure on communities to fully support and help the group [[Anti-government elements](#), 3.4., p. 33; [Recruitment by armed groups](#), 2.1.4., p. 30; 5.2., p. 41].

The recruitment by ISKP increased in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of international forces. As of May 2022, the terrorist group had an estimated 1 500 to 4 000 fighters settled in rural areas of Kunar and Nangarhar provinces, with smaller covert cells in northern provinces [[Targeting 2022](#), 13., p. 188; 13.2., p. 190; [Security 2022](#), 2.3., pp. 53-54].

In terms of composition, half of the ISKP members were estimated to be foreigners. ISKP reportedly tried to recruit amongst the Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek ethnic groups in northern Afghanistan, capitalising on the growing dissatisfaction among these communities with the Taliban rule. Furthermore, ISKP reportedly recruited individuals from influential political and warlord families, as well as urban middle-class men and women who joined the group for ideological reasons. Taking advantage of its significant support in Kabul, the group recruited in the capital, especially among university students and Salafis [[Targeting 2022](#), 13.2., pp. 190-192; [Security 2022](#), 2.3., pp. 50, 52-54].

ISKP reportedly sought to recruit individuals with a militant Salafi profile and particularly religious students, especially those known to have experienced harassment from 'extremist Hanafi students' or from the Taliban in their repression of ISKP. Recruitment hotspots were mainly in Kabul and Gulbahar, and also in Nangarhar and Badakhshan Universities. Moreover, it was reported that the new ISKP leader was focusing on recruiting more educated individuals and had extended recruitment to non-Salafists. Recruitment methods included sending recruitment videos. If the student did not react positively to such approaches, the recruitment attempt was allegedly stopped [[Country Focus 2023](#), 2.5., p. 44].

A source reported that the Taliban fear that non-Pashtun communities in Takhar might be exposed to recruitment campaigns of both armed groups opposing the Taliban (NRF and ISKP) and of radical Islamist groups only loosely aligned with the movement (such as Jundullah) [[Country Focus 2023](#), 4.3.3., p. 69].

No information about forced recruitment by ISKP or other armed groups opposing the Taliban was found in the reference period July 2022 - September 2023 [[Country Focus 2023](#), 2.5., p. 44].

Conclusions and guidance

Do the acts qualify as persecution under Article 9 QD?

Forced recruitment is of such severe nature that it would amount to persecution. The consequences of refusal of (forced) recruitment could also amount to persecution (e.g. severe bodily harm, killing).



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

The likelihood of being approached for forced recruitment by the Taliban or ISKP is generally low. Risk-impacting circumstances could include: area of origin (in relation to potential ISKP recruitment), military background, etc.



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

While the risk of forced recruitment as such may not generally imply a nexus to a reason for persecution, the consequences of refusal could, depending on individual circumstances, substantiate such a nexus, among other reasons, to (imputed) political opinion.

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