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3.4. Individuals perceived as members or supporters of the National Resistance Front (NRF)

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: May 2024

With reference to NRF as a potential actor of persecution or serious harm, see section 2.3. Other armed groups opposing the Taliban of this common analysis.

COI Summary

The Taliban have responded to armed opposition with force, including reports of summary executions, detentions and ill-treatment of detainees, as well as collective punishment and abuses of civilians suspected of supporting anti-Taliban groups. Civilians perceived as associated with NRF, mainly in Tajik dominated areas in the northeast provinces, have been subjected to house searches, arbitrary arrests, detentions, extrajudicial killings, torture and displacement. In September 2022, the Taliban extrajudicially executed several men who appeared to be NRF fighters who had surrendered. In 2022, the Taliban mainly carried out reprisal attacks, which included arbitrary arrests and killings of civilians in areas associated with resistance groups. This took place mostly in the province of Panjshir, while cases were also reported in Baghlan, Takhar, and Daykundi [Country Focus 2023, 4.3., p. 65; 4.3.1., p. 66].

Some sources identified an ethnic dimension to the targeting and ethnic Tajiks as prone to violations, also in Kabul City, while other sources have discarded such accounts. As the armed opposition has declined in areas of resistance, the situation for the civilian population has reportedly improved in 2023, although the *de facto* authorities still showed suspicion when interacting with residents of Panjshir – e.g. in border control situations. Suspected NRF affiliates have moreover continued to be subjected to severe human rights violations, and one source pointed out the risk of 'guilt by association' for individuals seen with suspected NRF affiliates [Country Focus 2023, 4.3.1., p. 67].

It was reported that Taliban forces had engaged in the beating and arbitrary arrests of civilians in Panjshir who were accused of supporting the NRF [Targeting 2022, 6.5.2., pp. 146-148]. Individuals originating from Panjshir province have also been arrested in Kabul City for suspected links to NRF [Country Focus 2023, 4.3.1., p. 67].

According to a representative of an international NGO in Kabul, the purpose of the Taliban's actions was to intimidate the local population so that they would not support the NRF. In June 2022, there were news reports about the forced evictions of residents in certain districts of Baghlan province as well as in Panjshir province. Freedom House also noted that the Taliban have engaged in discrimination against members of ethnic minority groups, including Tajiks [Country Focus 2023, 4.3.1., p. 66; Targeting 2022, 6.5.2., pp. 146-147]. Between March 2022 and August 2023, UNAMA documented 408 arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals perceived as NRF affiliates. Several other sources have also reported on extrajudicial executions of individuals suspected to be NRF members, including prisoners of war, as well as arrests and mistreatment of detainees [Country Focus 2023, 4.3.1., pp. 65-67; COI Update 2022, p. 7].

On 6 September 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, stated that the conflict between the Taliban and NRF had caused significant suffering and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. He especially pointed out Panjshir province and Andarab district (Baghlan province), from where he had received reports of civilians being subjected to arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings and torture, which sometimes appeared to be collective punishments. Following a visit to Afghanistan in October 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur stated that communities in, *inter alia*, Panjshir province were being 'heavily suppressed' [Country Focus 2023, 4.3.1., p. 66].

In November 2022, a source reported that around 150 families were forced to flee seven villages in Panjshir in the previous months due to crossfire between the Taliban and NRF as well as due to Taliban's demands for information about NRF fighters (assuming kinship ties) [Country Focus 2023, 4.3.1., pp. 66-67].

See also the profile 3.1. Members of the security institutions of the former government, under the Refugee Status chapter.

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. collective punishments, torture, execution, arbitrary arrest).

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

For individuals perceived by the Taliban as being involved with or as supporting NRF well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated. The individual assessment whether the applicant would be perceived to have such affiliation could take into account their place of origin and ethnic background, with Tajiks from Panjshir and Andarab district (Baghlan province) being particularly at risk.

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.

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Exclusion considerations could be relevant to this profile (see the chapter 7. Exclusion).

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