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3.14.4. Salafis

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: May 2024

COI summary

The Afghan Salafists, of whom there are several hundred thousand in Afghanistan, reside mainly in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, and Nuristan [Security 2022, 4.25.1., p. 165].

Salafism in Afghanistan can be traced back to the nineteenth century although it first flourished during the anti-Soviet Jihadi era in the 1980s, when Saudi Arabia, among others, supported the 'salafisation' of the Afghan *mujahideen*. When the Taliban came to power in the 1990s, they inherited a traditional hostility towards Salafism. Consequently, Salafi teachings were banned, and the Taliban took other measures to prevent its spread [Targeting 2022, 6.6.6., pp. 154-155].

Since August 2021, the Taliban have reportedly been cracking down on Salafis, allegedly arresting and killing members of their community and raiding and closing dozens of their mosques and *madrassas* [Security 2022, 4.25.1, p. 165]. Salafi communities were also targeted, due to their perceived affiliation to ISKP. The Taliban's approach towards Salafists has reportedly varied from location to location, with attempts by the Taliban to distinguish between Salafi members with links to ISKP and those who had no links to the group [Country Focus 2023, 4.3.1., p. 68; 4.5.1., p. 83].

Violations against Salafists reportedly occurred in 2023 as well, and women and children have been arrested without charges. Social and communal profiling of Salafists took place especially in the east, in the provinces Nangarhar and Kunar, but then also increasingly in Kunduz and Badakhshan. In October 2023, sources stated that the *de facto* security forces in Nangarhar had adopted a much more conciliatory approach, with Salafi *madrassas* re-opening in an attempt to prevent Salafists having no other option to protect themselves than supporting ISKP. At the same time, limitations were imposed on Salafi communities on what they can teach. Teachers and university students with suspected links to ISKP were arrested from the university campus in Kabul City and subsequently released, and there were cases of high-level Salafi clerics being assassinated and imprisoned [Country Focus 2023, 4.3.2., pp. 68-69].

For further guidance on the targeting of the Salafi community linked to their perceived support and affiliation to ISKP, see 3.5. Individuals perceived as members or supporters of the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP)

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. abduction, torture, execution).

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: province of origin (especially Nangarhar and Kunar), additional individual elements implicating the applicant as being supportive of ISKP, 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 and/or religion.

For those with links to ISKP, exclusion considerations could be relevant (see the chapter 7. Exclusion).

See other topics concerning ethnic and/or religious minorities:

- 3.14.1. Overview
- 3.14.2. Individuals of Hazara ethnicity and other Shias
- 3.14.3. Hindus and Sikhs
- *3.14.4. Salafis*
- 3.14.5. Tajiks

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