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2.2. Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: May 2024

ISKP's activity has traditionally been concentrated in Kabul and in the country's eastern provinces, notably Kunar and Nangarhar where the group used to have a strong foothold, especially in rural areas. Although attacks have been recorded beyond these core areas (such as suicide attacks against Shia mosques in Kunduz, Kandahar and Mazar-e Sharif), most security events involving ISKP continued to be recorded in Kabul, Kunar, and Nangarhar [Country Focus 2023, 2.2.2., p. 33].

Primary targets of ISKP have been Taliban fighters, Taliban officials and religious leaders, in its strive to undermine the Taliban rule. However, the deadliest attacks attributed to or claimed by ISKP have been against certain ethno-religious groups, in particular the Shia Hazara community. In December 2022, the UN Secretary General called on the *de facto* authorities to implement adequate protection measures due to the improvised explosive device (IED) attacks against civilian targets and in civilian areas, and specifically mentioned places of worship and education facilities, and Hazaras as a community 'facing heightened risk'. In August 2023, it was reported that ISKP appeared to have shifted away from carrying out attacks against civilian and Shia Hazara neighbourhoods, as they have predominantly attacked Taliban targets [Country Focus 2023, 2.2.2., p. 34].

In the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2023, conflict data provided by both ACLED and the UN Secretary General indicated a significant decrease in ISKP activity, a trend which was affirmed by other sources that describe ISKP's capacities as 'limited' and 'degraded' [Country Focus 2023, 2.2.2., p. 32-34]. ACLED data also indicate a decrease of events involving the ISKP in 2023 (49 events in total) compared to 2022 (199 events). The UN Secretary-General noted an overall decrease in attacks claimed by or attributed to ISKP. In the period 1 August – 7 November 2023, the UN recorded 8 ISKP attacks carried out in 3 provinces. In 2023, no sectarian attacks against the Shia Hazara community had been recorded, until a suicide bomber attacked a Shia Mosque in Pul-e Kumri (Baghlan Province) on 13 October 2023. Estimates of the number of deaths and injured vary. UNAMA reported 21 deaths, and 30 injuries. ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack. Moreover, a series of IED attacks claimed by the ISKP took place in Dash-e Barchi, a Hazara dominated area in Kabul City [COI Update 2024, 4., p. 6-7].

For further information on human rights violations committed by the ISKP and their relevance as potential exclusion grounds, see 7. Exclusion.

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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