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## 6. Internal protection alternative

### COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: May 2024

#### [Article 8 QD](#)

In order to determine that internal protection is available in a particular part of the applicant's country of origin, three cumulative criteria have to be met: 'safety', 'travel and admittance' and 'reasonableness to settle'.

**Figure 4. IPA: elements of the assessment.**



#### **a) Safety**

The Taliban were reported to be in control of all the country's 34 provinces [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.1.1., pp. 17-18; [Security 2022](#), 2.1., p. 36]. Since the takeover, there have been reports of excessive use of force by the *de facto* authorities, including different forms of torture and ill-treatment, and extrajudicial killings [[Country Focus 2023](#), 1.2.3., pp. 25-28; [Targeting 2022](#), 1.1.4.(f), p. 32; 1.1.4.(g), pp. 34-35]. Several profiles addressed in this common analysis are also subjected to persecution or serious harm by the Taliban. Moreover, for these and other profiles, the Taliban do not qualify as an actor who is able to provide protection in accordance with Article 7 QD, see [5. Actors of protection](#).

The safety criterion under Article 8 QD would in general not be met. In exceptional cases, such as when the well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of serious harm is linked to a local or private actor who would not have the capacity to trace and target the applicant in the area of relocation, the safety criterion may be satisfied.

## **b) Travel and admittance**

There are currently no known restrictions on travel and admittance within Afghanistan for men. The decline in armed conflict in the country following the Taliban takeover has generally led to better accessibility within the country with intercity travel largely unimpeded. Taliban checkpoints were reported 'in and around Afghan cities and towns'. An increase in Taliban checkpoints in Panjshir province as well as on Taliban checkpoints set up at the Afghanistan-Iran border in order to identify former soldiers and NRF affiliates were reported in July 2022, after clashes reportedly intensified in Afghanistan's north [[KSEI 2022](#), 10.1., pp. 68-70].

Women's ability to travel on their own in Afghanistan was already constrained by social and formal restrictions and often their freedom of movement was limited by the requirement of male consent or male chaperone. Following the takeover, the Taliban announced further restrictions on travel for women which may affect women's ability to safely and legally travel within Afghanistan. In particular, the MPVPV issued a guidance according to which women are not allowed to travel more than 72 kilometres if not accompanied by a mahram. This guidance also instructed taxi drivers to only transport female passengers who were respecting the Islamic dress code (wearing a hijab). The UN stated that these restrictions are increasingly enforced, especially at checkpoints, and harassment is commonly reported. Women are being increasingly questioned when travelling alone and moving in the public space, while men travelling with women are requested to show ID cards or marriage certificates to prove their relation to the woman [[Country Focus 2023](#), 4.4.3., pp. 74-75; [Targeting 2022](#), 5.2.3., p. 112].

The existence of Taliban checkpoints in and around cities would impact the safety of travel for profiles targeted by the Taliban. In addition, the restrictions posed on women's freedom of movement may result in the requirements of safety and legality of travel not being met, in particular for single women. For other individuals, the travel and admittance requirement under Article 8 QD is likely to be satisfied.

## **c) Reasonableness to settle**

Afghanistan faced an economic and humanitarian crisis already before the Taliban takeover, due to drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and decreased international military spending. However, the situation escalated after August 2021. The UN launched the largest aid appeal for one single country in history in January 2022. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased from 24.4 million people in 2022 to 28.3 million people in January 2023, which corresponds to two thirds of the Afghan population. Funding for aid relief has however decreased, which has forced inter alia food support from WHO to stop to 10 million people. By 2022, the Afghan economy had stabilised again after entering a stage of 'free fall' after the Taliban takeover, and in 2023 it marginally improved. It has however stabilised at a lower equilibrium than before, meaning that people in general were poorer, and there were also reports of Afghans having exhausted all their resources to cope with the situation. There are few alternatives for salaried employments, and the inflation rates in 2021-2022 reduced the real value of earnings. The World Bank estimated that 70 % of the population was impacted by

monetary poverty and that 48.3 % lived below the poverty threshold. Moreover, food insecurity was wide-spread, and the WFP estimated that far over 80 % of the population experienced insufficient food consumption in 2022 and 2023. Afghan households spent most of their income on food, and people avoided seeking healthcare and/or repair of damaged shelters. The UN Human Rights Council reported that women belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, such as Shia Hazara, women with disabilities, women living in poverty, in rural areas, and those without male family members faced additional challenges in accessing services. The situation continues to be vulnerable to spillover effects from global and regional challenges, as well as disasters related to climate change. In 2024, Afghanistan entered its third consecutive year of drought, and on 7 October 2023, the province of Herat was hit by a powerful earthquake and at least 35 additional aftershocks. Reportedly, entire villages were destroyed, with almost all inhabitants beings wiped out. Additionally, on 12 October 2023, a sandstorm destroyed hundreds of tents housing victims from the earthquake [[COI Update 2024](#), 5., p. 8; [Country Focus 2023](#), 3.1., p. 45-46; 3.2., p. 48; 4.4.6., p. 79; [KSEI 2022](#), 1.1., pp. 14-16].

For further information see the [1.3. Humanitarian situation](#) at the beginning of this document.

The dire humanitarian situation in the country has a significant impact on all elements considered under the requirement of reasonableness to settle in a different part of the country, including food security, housing and shelter, basic healthcare, and means of basic subsistence. Therefore, the reasonableness to settle criterion under Article 8 QD would generally not be met.

## **Conclusion**

Taking into account the assessment with regard to the three criteria under Article 8 QD, it is found that IPA would in general not be applicable to any part of Afghanistan.

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