4.1.3. Motives and victim profiles

4.1.3. Motives and victim profiles

The exact motives behind recorded killings of former government personnel have been difficult to discern, including due to the pervasive ‘revenge culture’ in Afghanistan1115 which brings in personal feuds,1116 tribal allegiances, and past conflicts into the issue.1117

The Human Rights Research League (HRRL) identified revenge motives in almost all their recorded killings of former military and security personnel in the first two years after the Taliban takeover.1118 The de facto authorities have dismissed violations of the amnesty as the result of personal animosities.1119 In response to a report by UNAMA from 2025, the de facto authorities have also dismissed revenge motives as being behind any breaches of the amnesty, and claimed any such incidents have occurred ‘in the course of professional police duties’.1120 Rawadari noted that in killings recorded by the organisation in the first six months of 2025, the accounts of de facto officials differed significantly from those of the victims’ families and local sources. According to Rawadari, accusing victims of criminality has been a common tool of the de facto authorities to hide the true motive behind a killing.1121

Victims of recorded killings and other abuse have been both military and civilian personnel of the former government.1122 Several sources have indicated to the EUAA that was not possible to identify any pattern as regards who is being targeted and not among these groups.1123 For example, the hierarchal rank of victims have seemingly not impacted their exposure,1124 as victims have included profiles that held various different positions.1125 The individuals circumstances may also impact a person’s exposure, for example their having a poor human rights record or access to tribal protection. However, as noted by Sharan, amid the lack of accountability efforts, also de facto officials target people with great impunity, committing crime and extorting ransoms from families of former government officials who are perceived to have the means to pay.1126

Victims of killings held various former ranks in data collected by Rawadari in the first six months of 2025, comprising former soldiers, a former local police officer, a former provincial police officer, a former NDS employee, and a former military commander.1127 In 2025, UNAMA recorded killings of only former ANDSF members, while instances of arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment involved both former civil and security personnel of the former government. 1128 HRRL documented killings in October 2022–June 2023, which included various victim profiles, both civil and military staff holding various ranks, including service personnel in households of former officials.1129 UNAMA has earlier provided a breakdown of their data covering 800 human rights violations against former government officials collected In the period

15 August 2021–30 June 2023, which outlined victim profiles including military (31 %), police (26 %), provincial and district departments (22 %), NDS (15 %), central government and national authorities (4 %), and judges and prosecutors (2 %).1130

Individuals accused of being active in or collaborating with anti-Taliban groups have been targeted in killings and arrests by the de facto authorities.1131 This profile reportedly often overlaps with former security personnel from areas with a history of armed resistance, being disproportionally targeted and perceived as 'potential resistance fighters', regardless of their actual involvement.1132 More information is available in section 4.3. Persons with perceived affiliation to anti-Taliban groups.

In the PeaceRep study, authors Mawlvi Atta ur Rahman Saleem and Michael Semple suggested that former commanders of auxiliaries of the former government, such as the Afghan Local Police (ALP), have been 'singled out' in arrests and killings.1133 Some former security forces employees have also had their homes raided1134 or have been arrested1135 over accusations of possessing government weapons.1136

Many women who had served in the police and the security forces under the former government went into hiding after the Taliban takeover.1137 According to research carried out by Human Rights Watch in 2024, former women police and security personnel have faced threats, harassment and violent home searches by the de facto authorities. Some have been able to return to work or return to the police headquarters to collect their belongings – although they have been treated with suspicion and pressured to disclose contact information of former colleagues. Human Rights Watch further reported that many women have been living in fear of being reported by their neighbours, and that many had cut off contacts with former colleagues as a safeguard. Additionally, some had been experiencing threats from people who they had investigated. Family members who opposed their female relatives' work in the police were also using the powershift as an opportunity to punish them with threats and violence.1138

Some sources stated that the local contexts and local arrangements impact whether the general amnesty has been upheld or not.1139 Sharan stated that the local tribes had negotiated settlements with the Taliban in some areas. For example, in Khost Province, former members of the Khost Protection Force had been spared from retaliation, and in Kandahar Province, following significant violence targeting members of the Achakzai tribe affiliated with General Raziq, a negotiated deal eventually brought an end to these killings. (More information on the targeting of individuals associated with Raziq is available in the 2023 EUAA COI Report Afghanistan Country Focus (p. 70)). Sharan further noted that local settlements had been effective in reducing retribution in southern provinces and in Panjsher, but emphasised that most regions lack such agreements, and that the longevity of these settlements is uncertain.1140

- 1115

  International analyst (A), interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview 3 October 2023

- 1116

Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, url, p. 15

- 1117

  Akram, S., Breaking the Cycle of Centuries-old Violence: A decline in blood feuds in Khost province?, AAN, 3 August 2025, url

- 1118

  HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, url, p. 41

- 1119

  HRW, Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Afghanistan, 11 October 2023, url; Lighthouse Reports, Hunted by the Taliban, 15 October 2025, url

- 1120

  UNAMA, No safe haven: Human rights risks faced by persons involuntarily returned to Afghanistan, July 2025, url, p. 21

- 1121

  Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, url, pp. 17–18, 20

- 1122

  UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, url, pp. 6–9; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April–June 2024, 24 July 2024, url, p. 6; Rawadari, Afghanistan, Human Rights Situation Report 2023, March 2024, url, p. 12

- 1123

  Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025; International analyst (A), interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; International journalist, online interview, 3 October 2023

- 1124

  Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1125

  Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025; HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, url, pp. 46–47, 49–51, 53, 55–56, 58, 61–62, 64, 68

- 1126

Sharan, T., email, 27 November 2025

- 1127

  Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, url, p. 19

- 1128

  UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: January-March 2025, 1 May 2025, url, p. 6; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: April-June 2025, 24 July 2025, url, p. 5; UNAMA, Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: July-September 2025, 28 October 2025, url, p. 6

- 1129

  HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, url, pp. 46–47, 49–51, 53, 55–56, 58, 61–62, 64, 68

- 1130

  UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, url, p. 5

- 1131

  Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, url, p. 15; UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, url, pp. 8–9

- 1132

  Saleem, M. A. and Semple, M., Peace Matrix for Afghanistan, PeaceRep, 11 November 2024, url, pp. 27, 31

- 1133

  Saleem, M. A. and Semple, M., Peace Matrix for Afghanistan, PeaceRep, 11 November 2024, url, pp. 27, 31

- 1134

  Saleem, M. A. and Semple, M., Peace Matrix for Afghanistan, PeaceRep, 11 November 2024, url, pp. 27, 31

- 1135

  Afghanistan International, Taliban Members 'Detain' Three Ex-Servicemen in Laghman, 2 November 2024, url

- 1136

  Rawadari, The Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report, August 2024, url, p. 15; UNAMA, A barrier to securing peace: Human rights violations against former government officials and former armed force members in Afghanistan, 22 August 2023, url , pp. 8–9; Saleem, M. A. and Semple, M., Peace Matrix for Afghanistan, PeaceRep, 11 November 2024, url, pp. 27, 31

- 1137

  Guardian (The), Hungry, hunted, terrified: unending plight of the Afghan women who served in military and police, 14 August 2023, url

- 1138

  HRW, Double Betrayal, Abuses against Afghan Policewomen, Past and Present, October 2024, url, pp. 17, 19–22

- 1139

  International journalist, online interview 3 October 2023; HRRL, Those We Left Behind, November 2023, url, p. 69; Sharan, T., email, 27 November 2025

- 1140

  Sharan, T., email, 27 November 2025

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu