4.3.2. Suspected ISKP affiliates

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Intense killings and abuses of suspected ISKP affiliates and supporters were reported in October and November 2021 in the provinces of Nangarhar[1207] and Kunar[1208] – previous strongholds of the ISKP.[1209] In their efforts to restrain the ISKP, the de facto authorities targeted Salafist communities in these areas,[1210] with reports of extrajudicial killings, beheadings, mutilation and severe torture,[1211] including of prominent members of the Salafi community and other civilians without actual links to the ISKP.[1212] According to Saleem and Semple, about 1 300 Salafis were killed in Nangarhar Province in this period.[1213] Killings and disappearances were also reported in other eastern areas, as well as in northern provinces and in Kabul.[1214] The situation had reportedly calmed by the second half of 2022,[1215] and sources reported on the de facto authorities adopting a more sophisticated approach, with 'less frequent but more targeted detentions'[1216] and efforts to suppress Salafi-leaning teachings at universities.[1217]

In 2024, an Afghan researcher stated that there were still reports of young Salafists with suspected ISKP-links being kidnapped from their homes, beheaded and killed in extrajudicial killings in Nangarhar Province, although casualties were much lower than in 2021–2022. According to the source, this was partly due to most targets having been killed or having relocated to other provinces. This included mosque imams of Jalalabad who lived elsewhere and concealed their identity.[1218] Other sources also reported on suspect ISKP affiliates being targeted in 2025, including Rawadari that reported on one case of a Salafi religious scholar being shot dead in Badakshan Province, allegedly for having ties with the ISKP.[1219] The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan reported on Salafis being targeted by the Taliban on the presumption that they are in allegiance with armed groups.[1220] Afghanistan experts Orzala Nemat and Antonio Giustozzi reported on a general suspicion against Salafis, due to suspected links with the ISKP. In their research, Salafi elders recounted discrimination from the Taliban, also in areas where there was no longer ISKP activity.[1221]

In 2024, the Afghan researcher divided Salafists into two different groups: those being part of the Jamaat al-Dawah party, which pledged allegiance to the Taliban in 2020 (which involves most Salafists in Kunar, and some in Nangarhar), and those not being part of it. The latter group had been targeted, while Salafists under Jamaat al-Dawah had not.[1222] Similarly, International Crisis Group reported that the de facto authorities 'differentiated between Salafi groups espousing political goals and others focusing on social change', with those pledging allegiance to the de facto government and 'involved themselves in non-political work, such as preaching, appear[ing] to have been tolerated, albeit grudgingly'.[1223]

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