

4.8. Ethnic and religious groups

4.8.1. General situation under Taliban rule

The de facto government is led by a thirty-three-member caretaker cabinet, composed of men who are predominantly ethnic Pashtuns,1600 and Taliban members or individuals loyal to the group.1601 Most senior de facto officials, moreover, originate from Kandahar,1602 and other southern and southeastern Pashtun-majority provinces, whereas northern and central provinces have 'little to no representation', as noted by Amu TV.1603 Non-Pashtun members of the cabinet include a small number of ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks,1604 and three Hazaras serve as deputy ministers.1605 Sikhs and Hindus have no representation in the cabinet.1606 According to the Middle East Institute (MEI), out of approximately 1 185 individuals mapped in the Taliban leadership as of September 2025, around 90 % were Pashtuns, 5.3 % Tajiks, 2.5 % Uzbeks, 0.6 % Hazaras, and 0.4 % Turkmen.1607

Due to their limited representation in public positions, ethnic and religious minorities face marginalisation in decision-making processes.1608 Local communities are reportedly slightly better represented in the provinces, although they do not necessarily feel represented solely based on shared ethnicity,1609 especially as local officials have often been appointed outside their home areas.1610 In Hazara-dominated areas some local Hazaras were appointed to de facto administration positions on district or provincial level1611 and some low-level de facto government positions.1612 However, Hazaras have largely been excluded from the de facto administration,1613 from senior positions, as well as within the police and intelligence service. 1614 Furthermore, in many Ismaili-populated districts of Badakhshan Province, Ismailis have reportedly no representation in local offices.1615

Rawadari reported that, although the de facto authorities 'prioritize ideological loyalty and a history of membership over ethnic and religious affiliation in their hiring process', they have been acting discriminatorily in appointments and dismissals procedures since 2021,1616 relying on religious and ethnic criteria.1617 Primarily Pashtuns have been appointed in hiring processes, 1618 and employees of ethnic and religious minorities have sometimes been collectively dismissed.1619 In the first half of 2025, several de facto government departments, including the de facto Ministry of Higher Education and universities, were restructured and many positions eliminated, disproportionately affecting non-Pashtun staff members in provinces such as Kabul, Panjshir, and Bamyan.1620 Collective dismissals of Hazaras from local de facto government offices have been also reported in Daykundi, Bamyan, and Ghazni provinces.1621 During 2025, the de facto authorities dismissed many university professors, including in Bamyan.1622 This reportedly included many Hazara professors who were either dismissed or offered transfer to universities in Pashtun-dominated areas.1623

Religious freedom has been curtailed since the Taliban takeover, with a de facto government 'who vigorously assert their interpretation of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam', as reported by Freedom House.1624 As a result, religious and ethnic minority groups have faced severe restrictions on their freedoms.1625 Saleem and Semple noted that, while a majority of Afghans adhere to the Hanafi sect, Shias and Salafis constitute two major religious minorities, and they have been 'affected by the Taliban efforts to favour the Hanafi sect', including pressure on Salafi *madrassas* to conform with Hanafi doctrines, and excluding Shia jurisprudence from the justice system and removing references to Shia teachings from school curriculums.1626

The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan noted that Afghan stakeholders have been voicing concern about ethnic and religious grievances linked to 'discrimination, exclusion, violence and the lack of protection, as well as lack of recognition of past violations'. Although the de facto authorities have 'emphasized unity, stability and equal rights', they appeared 'unwilling to acknowledge or address such grievances'.1627 Likewise, sources noted that the de facto authorities have not sufficiently documented or addressed cases of crimes and targeted attacks against minorities.1628

Sources have also emphasised that women from minority communities face intersecting and various forms of discrimination.1629 This discrimination was reported in the forms of 'structural exclusion', gender-based violence, denial of education on the basis of both gender and ethnicity 1630 and access to healthcare.1631

The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan noted 'instances of hate speech and discrimination among Afghans, including online'. De facto officials have also used derogatory terms for ethnic and religious minorities.1632 This included the de facto Minister of the MPVPV who was cited by media as comparing non-Muslims with 'four-legged animals'.1633

The de facto authorities have increasingly promoted Pashto as the primary language in official communication1634 – replacing other languages in signs and official correspondence.1635 Research for RWI suggested that this reflected a broader pattern linked to the predominance of Pashtun officials in the de facto administration, and that Tajiks, Hazaras and other minority groups have been most negatively affected.1636 In predominately Hazara-populated areas, such as Daykundi, there is a requirement for government interactions to be in Pashto instead of Dari.1637 According to the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights, speakers of minority languages have further noted that media programming and education in their languages 'have become rarer'.1638

In 2024, ISKP attacks targeting members of religious minorities continued to be reported,1639 especially against Shia Muslims, who are predominantly ethnic Hazaras, and also Sufis.1640 During 2025, the number of ISKP attacks has reportedly decreased, targeting mostly the de facto authorities.1641 Within the reference period of this report the UN Secretary-General recorded continuous ISKP attacks targeting the de facto authorities, and one attack targeting ethnic minorities: the Sufi community.1642

- 1600

  CFR, The Taliban in Afghanistan, last updated 14 August 2025, url

- 1601

  CFR, The Taliban in Afghanistan, last updated 14 August 2025, url; Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, url, pp. 43, 44

- 1602

  Amu TV, Exclusive: Taliban’s cabinet largely dominated by leaders from Kandahar, 16 November 2025, url; Sharan, T., email, 27 November 2025

- 1603

  Amu TV, Exclusive: Taliban’s cabinet largely dominated by leaders from Kandahar, 16 November 2025, url

- 1604

  EUAA, Afghanistan – Country Focus, November 2024, url, p. 117

- 1605

  Amu TV, Taliban Housing Ministry stops sharing photos of ‘living beings’, 3 August 2025, url; Ariana News, Afghanistan’s economy not dependent on foreign aid, says deputy minister Nazari, 2 August 2025, url; Tolo News, Afghanistan’s Health System in 1403 Reviewed, 21 March 2025, url

- 1606

  Amu TV, Exclusive: Taliban’s cabinet largely dominated by leaders from Kandahar, 16 November 2025, url

- 1607

  MEI, Taliban Leadership Tracker: Who is in power, last updated September 2025, url

- 1608

  UN, General Assembly, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 8 October 2025, url, paras. 62, 63; Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024, March 2025, url , p. 50; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 9 February 2023, url, para. 42

- 1609

  Adili A. Y., The politics of survival in the face of exclusion (2): The Emirate’s accommodation and suppression of local Hazara commanders, 8 April 2025, url; International analyst (A), interview 8–9 June 2023, and email communication, 10 October 2023; Foschini, F., Ruling Uncharted Territory: Islamic Emirate governance in northeastern Afghanistan, AAN, September 2024, url, p. 18

- 1610

Foschini, F., Ruling Uncharted Territory: Islamic Emirate governance in northeastern Afghanistan, AAN, September 2024, url, pp. 22, 25–26, 28

- 1611

Adili A. Y., The politics of survival in the face of exclusion (2): The Emirate's accommodation and suppression of local Hazara commanders, 8 April 2025, url; Saleem, M. A. and Semple, M., Peace Matrix for Afghanistan, PeaceRep, 11 November 2024, url, p. 25

- 1612

Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1613

Saleem, M. A. and Semple, M., Peace Matrix for Afghanistan, PeaceRep, 11 November 2024, url, p. 25

- 1614

Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1615

Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024, March 2025, url, p. 44

- 1616

Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, url, p. 50

- 1617

Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024, March 2025, url, p. 5

- 1618

Formuli, H. A., Leaving Many Behind: Examining the State of Inclusivity and Non-Discrimination in Afghanistan, RWI, May 2025, url, p. 44; Norway, Landinfo, Temanotat, Afghanistan, Situasjonen for afghanske menn, 20 January 2025, url, p. 13; Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report, Afghanistan, 19 March 2024, url, p. 33

- 1619

Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024, March 2025, url, pp. 5, 43

- 1620

Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, url, p. 50

- 1621

  Rawadari, Afghanistan Mid-Year Human Rights Situation Report: January-June 30, 2025, August 2025, url, p. 50; Rawadari, Afghanistan Human Rights Situation Report 2024, March 2025, url, p. 44

- 1622

  Amu TV, Taliban dismiss hundreds of university professors across Afghanistan, sources say, 11 May 2025, url; Kabul Now, Taliban Dismisses Dozens of Staff Members, Including Lecturers, from Bamyan University, 13 May 2025, url; Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1623

  Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1624

  Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024, Afghanistan, 2024, url

- 1625

  UN, General Assembly, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 8 October 2025, url, para. 62; Freedom House, Afghanistan: Freedom in the World 2025 Country Report, 2025, url; GPC, Afghanistan: Protection Analysis Update, Update on protracted-crisis and climate-related protection risks trends January - December 2024, January 2025, url, p. 3

- 1626

  Saleem, M. A. and Semple, M., Peace Matrix for Afghanistan, PeaceRep, 11 November 2024, url, pp. 22–23, 25

- 1628

  UN, General Assembly, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 8 October 2025, url, para. 63; Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1629

  UN CEDAW, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Afghanistan, 10 July 2025, url, para. 40; Alavi, L. J., Intersectionality and Human Rights: Ensuring Access to Maternal Health in Afghanistan, RWI, May 2025, url, p. 39, 43; Kett Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1630

  UN CEDAW, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Afghanistan, 10 July 2025, url, para. 40

- 1631

Alavi, L. J., Intersectionality and Human Rights: Ensuring Access to Maternal Health in Afghanistan, RWI, May 2025, url, p. 43

- 1632

  UN, General Assembly, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 8 October 2025, url, para. 65

- 1633

  Afghanistan International, Taliban Minister's Remarks On Non-Muslims Spark Concern Among Afghan Sikhs & Hindus, 12 April 2025, url; Amu TV, Taliban minister calls non-Muslims 'worse than four-legged animals', 9 April 2025, url

- 1634

  Formuli, H. A., Leaving Many Behind: Examining the State of Inclusivity and Non-Discrimination in Afghanistan, RWI, May 2025, url, pp. 58–59; Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1635

  Formuli, H. A., Leaving Many Behind: Examining the State of Inclusivity and Non-Discrimination in Afghanistan, RWI, May 2025, url, pp. 58, 59; UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 20 February 2025, url, para. 48; Hasht-e Subh, Public Response to Taliban Political Deputy's Remarks: Prejudice on the Rise, 13 October 2024, url

- 1636

  Formuli, H. A., Leaving Many Behind: Examining the State of Inclusivity and Non-Discrimination in Afghanistan, RWI, May 2025, url, p. 59

- 1637

  Kerr Chiovenda, M., email, 29 November 2025

- 1638

  UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 20 February 2025, url, para. 48

- 1639

  UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 20 February 2025, url, para. 49; HRW, World report 2025, Afghanistan, Events of 2024, 16 January 2025, url

- 1640

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, 20 February 2025, url, para. 49

- 1641

  The Diplomat, Is the Islamic State of Khorasan Province Losing Momentum?, 26 June 2025, url; International Crisis Group, The Islamic State in Afghanistan: A Jihadist Threat in Retreat?, 16 July 2025, url

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