

4.8.4. Hazaras and other Shia groups

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a) Background

The majority of Hazaras in Afghanistan are Shia Muslims (Twelver branch).¹⁷³⁷ A significant number follow the Ismaili Shia school of thought, while others are Sunni Muslims.¹⁷³⁸ Most Hazaras are Dari speakers.¹⁷³⁹

The Hazara community has historically faced discrimination and repression under various rules in Afghanistan,¹⁷⁴⁰ most notably under the rule of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan in the 19th century,¹⁷⁴¹ when Hazaras were enslaved, subjected to mass killings, and pushed to mass exodus.¹⁷⁴² The Taliban also engaged in massacres of Hazara civilians during their previous rule in 1996–2001.¹⁷⁴³ Before the Taliban takeover in 2021, Hazaras were targeted by attacks by both the Taliban and the ISKP.¹⁷⁴⁴ Political influence of Hazaras improved under the Islamic Republic,¹⁷⁴⁵ although they faced discrimination.¹⁷⁴⁶

b) Policies and discrimination by the de facto authorities

Following their takeover, the Taliban held a series of meetings with Shia Hazara leaders from various parts of the country,¹⁷⁴⁷ and pledged to provide security for all citizens, including Hazaras,¹⁷⁴⁸ and expressing their willingness to avoid sectarian divisions.¹⁷⁴⁹ Hazaras' limited participation in de facto government positions ¹⁷⁵⁰ has negatively impacted their access to government services,¹⁷⁵¹ including in obtaining official documents, such as passports.¹⁷⁵² More information on representation of Hazaras is available in section [4.8.1. General situation under Taliban rule](#). Sources noted a discrepancy between the Taliban leadership's public stance towards Shia Hazaras and the actual treatment of these communities by their rank-and-file.¹⁷⁵³ Kerr Chioyenda noted that there are sentiments among parts of the population that Hazaras are not 'proper' Muslims.¹⁷⁵⁴

The Taliban have stated that Shia Muslims are free to practice their beliefs,¹⁷⁵⁵ but they have been restricting 'religious practices that they considered discordant with their views'.¹⁷⁵⁶ Some Shia ceremonies and celebrations were allowed to take place,¹⁷⁵⁷ mainly in private spaces or in Shia mosques.¹⁷⁵⁸ However, the de facto authorities restricted the observance of *Muharram* and *Ashura* commemorations by monitoring celebrations,¹⁷⁵⁹ prohibiting holding ceremonies in open spaces¹⁷⁶⁰ or hindering participation in the ceremonies and removing religious symbols, including in Kabul, Herat, Ghazni, Parwan, Nimruz, Ghor, and Bamyan provinces.¹⁷⁶¹ In November 2024, the de facto authorities arrested two Shia clerics in Jebrael Herat Province.¹⁷⁶² Although the reason for their arrest was not clarified,¹⁷⁶³ local sources told exile Afghan media that the clerics had previously protested against the restrictions on the *Ashura* commemoration.¹⁷⁶⁴ In March 2025, the de facto authorities in Ghazni Province instructed members of the Shiite council of scholars to begin Ramadan and hold the Eid prayer according to Hanafi jurisprudence, forcing Shiites to perform Eid prayers one day earlier than their religious practice foresaw, and arresting three Shiite religious scholars for not complying.¹⁷⁶⁵ In June 2025, similar arrests were reported in Daykundi province.¹⁷⁶⁶ Furthermore, a local ban on intermarriages between Shias, including Ismailis,¹⁷⁶⁷ and Sunnis was reported in Paktia, Nimruz,¹⁷⁶⁸ and Badakhshan provinces.¹⁷⁶⁹

Shia Ja'fari jurisprudence has been excluded from the de facto judiciary,¹⁷⁷⁰ as well as from school and university curricula, being replaced with Hanafi jurisprudence.¹⁷⁷¹ The de facto authorities have instructed educational institutions to remove materials and books conflicting with Hanafi jurisprudence and considered contrary to the regime's principles and policies,¹⁷⁷² particularly those associated with the Shia sect,¹⁷⁷³ including in Bamyan, Daykundi, Ghazni, and Ghor provinces.¹⁷⁷⁴ In October 2024, the Taliban have distributed a list of 400 banned books to libraries and bookstores prohibiting their sale and mandating their removal,¹⁷⁷⁵ including those related to the Shia branch of Islam.¹⁷⁷⁶

Shia Hazaras have moreover faced discrimination.¹⁷⁷⁷ Rafiey noted that particularly Hazaras are vulnerable to discrimination in Afghanistan, as they are one of the largest minority, and also due to their historical experiences of facing oppression (including under the current de facto administration) owing to their ethnicity, and their classification as 'infidels' by the Taliban.¹⁷⁷⁸ Kerr Chiovenda noted that, although no current large-scale massacres have occurred, past violence against the group by the Taliban suggests a possibility that this may recur in the future.¹⁷⁷⁹

Sources described a perception that Hazaras benefitted too much under the former government, which needed to be revised,¹⁷⁸⁰ resulting in Hazaras being 'systematically treated differently' by the local Taliban.¹⁷⁸¹ As noted by Kerr Chiovenda, the de facto authorities' treatment of Hazaras has enabled people in ethnically mixed areas 'to express their anti-Hazara prejudice'.¹⁷⁸² Hazaras have for example been facing derogatory terms relating to their facial features,¹⁷⁸³ and their Shia identity.¹⁷⁸⁴ Meanwhile, Saleem and Semple also reported on Hazaras being discriminated by the de facto authorities, but suggested that this was only 'tangentially related to sectarian differences' and 'far more plausibly explained by the history of ethnic competition'.¹⁷⁸⁵

Some sources suggested that the de facto authorities have intentionally excluded religious and ethnic minorities from humanitarian aid.¹⁷⁸⁶ For example, Rawadari reported that the de facto Rural Rehabilitation and Development Directorate in Ghazni distributing cash and food aid to nearly 10 000 families in several districts, excluded Hazara and other ethnic and religious minority communities from the initiative.¹⁷⁸⁷ Likewise, the same source reported on aid mainly being directed to non-Hazara districts in Bamyan and Ghor provinces,¹⁷⁸⁸ as well as development projects, such as road construction and water systems, being allocated to Pashtun-majority districts in Ghazni Province, while only a few small-scale projects were implemented in Shia- and Tajik-majority areas.¹⁷⁸⁹ In Badakhshan and Parwan provinces, Ismaili-majority districts were similarly excluded, with development and public projects directed to Taliban-favoured districts.¹⁷⁹⁰ More information on aid delivery and aid diversion is available in section 3.6. in the [2024 EUAA COI Report: Afghanistan – Country Focus](#).

Moreover, since 2021, the de facto authorities carried out forced evictions affecting Hazaras.¹⁷⁹¹ A joint investigation of redevelopment projects in Kabul City between 2021–2024, carried out by the Guardian, AW, Lighthouse Reports and Afghan media outlets, suggested that large areas of the capital were razed and many residential properties and 'informal settlements' often inhabited by poorer or displaced families demolished, with reports alleging deaths and injuries during eviction operations, leaving thousands homeless. The investigation also suggested that there were signs that 'the destruction is in part linked to ethnicity', as three of the six most affected districts were populated predominantly by Hazaras, and two by Tajiks.¹⁷⁹²

c) Reported attacks and other incidents

Hazara women have been facing intersecting discrimination due to both their gender and minority status.¹⁷⁹³ There have been claims that de facto MPVPV particularly targeted Hazara young women during enforcement operations of the *hijab* decree.¹⁷⁹⁴ Such an operation was reported in January 2024 in predominantly Hazara and Tajik areas of Kabul City and other areas.¹⁷⁹⁵ Some women reported being beaten, abused, and subjected to derogatory anti-Hazara remarks during detention.¹⁷⁹⁶ Kerr Chiovenda noted that over-policing of dress codes was reported in Hazara-populated neighbourhoods, and Hazara women have been disproportionately affected by arrests and imprisonment, and faced derogatory comments

and treatment while imprisoned.¹⁷⁹⁷

As mentioned, ethnic and religious minorities have been targeted in attacks often claimed by or attributed to the ISKP,¹⁷⁹⁸ and Human Rights Watch has criticised the de facto authorities for not providing the Shia Hazara community with sufficient protection from such attacks¹⁷⁹⁹ which had killed or injured at least 700 Hazaras as of 2022.¹⁸⁰⁰ These attacks have however declined since its peak in 2022,¹⁸⁰¹ although sporadic attacks have resurfaced in periods.¹⁸⁰² The UN did not report on any violent attacks targeting the Shia Hazara community within the reference period of this report,¹⁸⁰³ although the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan noted that unidentified individuals shot and reportedly beheaded a Shia imam in Nusay District, Badakhshan Province, in June 2025, leaving an ISKP flag at the scene.¹⁸⁰⁴

d) Ismailis

Roughly 90 % of Ismaili Shias in Afghanistan are ethnically Hazara, living mostly in the Hazarajat region; some Ismaili communities also reside in Badakhshan Province and are classified as ethnic Tajiks.¹⁸⁰⁵ Followers of the Ismaili Shia school of thought faced ideological pressure by the de facto authorities, including conversion attempts to Sunni Islam, in Badakhshan¹⁸⁰⁶ (which is predominantly inhabited by Tajiks¹⁸⁰⁷) and Baghlan provinces.¹⁸⁰⁸ As reported by UNAMA, 50 Ismaili men were forced to convert to Sunni Islam by the local de facto authorities in Badakhshan Province in the period 17 January–3 February 2025. The men were ‘questioned on religious topics. Those who refused to convert were subject to physical assaults, coercion and death threats’.¹⁸⁰⁹ Rawadari also indicated that, since 2024 and as of the first six months of 2025, at least 203 Ismailis in Shughnan, Ishkashim, Khahan, Nasi, and Maimay districts of Badakhshan Province had been forced to convert.¹⁸¹⁰ According to Kabul Now, local sources claimed that the de facto authorities link ‘the provision of humanitarian aid to this community with their conversion to Sunni Islam’.¹⁸¹¹ Foschini however reported that ‘[t]he battle for local influence and political survival’ in Badakhshan ‘also plays out in the field of education’, and the de facto authorities have emphasised control of religious schools nationally especially in this province, ‘arguably because of concerns about rival or untrusted groups promoting “wrong” tenets or loyalties’.¹⁸¹² The de facto authorities have established several *madrassas* across Badakhshan Province,¹⁸¹³ in predominantly Ismaili-populated areas, requiring Ismaili children to enrol and follow religious education based on the Sunni faith.¹⁸¹⁴ They have banned the construction of Ismaili mosques and other Ismaili religious sites in Badakhshan Province.¹⁸¹⁵ According to media sources, in June 2025 an Ismaili man, working as a security guard in the World Health Organization (WHO), was killed by unidentified perpetrators in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, after allegedly being tortured.¹⁸¹⁶ UNAMA reported that as of 28 October 2025, no one had been arrested in connection with the killing.¹⁸¹⁷ A prominent member of the Ismaili community was shot and killed in July 2025 by unidentified armed individuals in Badakhshan Province.¹⁸¹⁸

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