1. Recent developments

COMMON ANALYSIS | Last update: June 2026

1.1. State building and political system under Taliban rule

1.2. Humanitarian situation including impact of hostilities with Pakistan

The information below is based on the following EUAA COI products: COI Update 2026, 1., 2.; Country Focus 2026, 1.1., 1.1.1., 1.1.2., 1.2.1., 1.2.2., 1.2.3., 1.2.4., 1.2.5., 1.2.7., 1.2.8.; Country Focus 2024, 1.1.2, 1.1.3., 1.2., 1.2.1., 1.2.2., 1.2.3., 1.2.4., 1.2.6.; COI Update 2024, 1., 2.; Country Focus 2023, 1.1.2., 1.1.3, 1.2., 1.2.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

The Taliban6 returned to power on 15 August 2021 and proclaimed the re-establishment of the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan'. Since then, the Taliban's all-male, Pashtun-dominated so-called interim government has become permanent. It has been consolidating its power, moving towards a theocratic police state. Authority is centralised under the Taliban Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhunzada who enjoys absolute power and controls Afghanistan's political, administrative and religious institutions.

Most of the former administration's structure was retained and most male civilian former public officials resumed their duties within the new *de facto* administration soon after the takeover.

The Taliban follow an ultra-conservative interpretation of Sunni Islam adhering to the Hanafi School of Jurisprudence and the Deobandi school of thought. Amid the takeover they abolished the 2004 Constitution, declared that *sharia* would serve as the legal system and initiated a review of existing laws for compliance, without announcing the outcome or specifying which laws remain in force.

The *de facto* authorities, including the Taliban Supreme Leader, impose their religious ideology on the general population through numerous restrictions and have issued verbal and written instructions based on their own interpretations of *sharia*. This has resulted in a fragmented and uncertain legal framework marked by vague instructions leading to different interpretations by individual enforcers. However, several sources noted a general trend of more uniform enforcement across the country, but some regional variations continued to be reported due to internal disagreements and local influences. The most comprehensive set of restrictions is included in the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law (colloquially referred to as the 'Morality law') published on 31 July 2024.

The Taliban reopened courts across Afghanistan, replaced former staff with male judges educated in madrassas and ordered to fully implement *sharia*, including through issuing *hudud* and *qisas* punishments. Since then, *de facto* courts have been handing down capital punishments and floggings, and in some cases executions and floggings have been carried out in public.

Since the takeover, the general human rights situation in Afghanistan has further deteriorated as the country has been increasingly ruled through fear and suppression of dissent. Numerous provisions regulate personal behaviour, severely curtail women's and girls' rights, limit religious and cultural practices, ban political parties, and suppress dissent through media controls, intimidation, and punishment, prompting many critics to flee, hide, or self-censor.

On 4 January 2026, the *de facto* government issued a 'Criminal Procedure Code for Courts'. The Code contains 119 articles, and several provisions appear to violate international human rights standards. Notably, it uses terms such as 'slaves' and 'masters', and some sources suggest it indirectly authorises slavery. The Code also divides society into four social categories: 'scholars', 'the elite', the 'middle class', and the 'lower class'. It stipulates that legal consequences should be determined by social status rather than by the crime itself, with punishments increasing for individuals of lower social standing.

In addition, the Code reportedly expands corporal punishment, restricts fair trial rights, and enables broad repression of dissent, minorities, and women.

There was no public announcement of the new code and there is currently no available information about its implementation.

The information below is based on the following EUAA COI products: COI Update 2026, 3., Country Focus 2026, 3.1., 3.2., 3.3., 3,5,; Country Focus 2024, 3.1., 3.2., 3.3., 3.5., 3.6.; COI Update 2024, 5.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Prior to the Taliban's return to power, Afghanistan was already experiencing a severe economic and humanitarian crisis driven by prolonged drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and decreased international military spending.

Amid the Taliban takeover, the economy suffered a severe shock stabilising by mid-2022. Limited recovery in 2023-2024 failed to improve living standards and, by 2025, 22.9 million people, almost half of the population, required humanitarian assistance to survive, according to UNOCHA. The economy continued to be impacted by sanctions and international isolation. The US funds cutting in April 2025, followed by other donors as well as restrictions by the *de facto* authorities have also negatively affected aid delivery and complicated the work of aid organisations on the ground. These factors led to the closure of hundreds of health centres and the suspension of key programmes supporting millions of Afghans with food provision, urgent healthcare services, and water, sanitation and hygiene. The humanitarian situation has been further strained by mass returns from Iran and Pakistan and by recurring climate-related disasters, including floods, droughts, and earthquakes. In 2025, as reported by the World Bank, nearly half of the population lived below the poverty threshold with 75 % of the population being subsistence-insecure according to the UNDP. Unemployment is widespread, especially in urban areas, with salaried jobs declining and casual or self-employment rising. Women and educated youth are disproportionately affected, and returning refugees have intensified job competition.

Many households resorted to negative coping strategies, including taking on debt, taking children out of school and engaging them in child labour, or marrying off girls. More extreme strategies, but still reported, included selling children and selling body organs.

According to World Food Programme (WFP), in 2025 Afghanistan faced an unprecedented hunger crisis, among the worst in the world, exacerbated by donor-funded aid cuts that further weakened the health and nutrition system. Vulnerable groups, including households headed by women, persons with lower education, persons with disabilities as well as returnee households, were most affected. In August 2025, 3.5 million children under five were affected by the nutrition crisis, with 10.3 % of them severely malnourished.

Additionally, significantly lower levels of international aid, the *de facto* authorities' negligible state budget allocation on health, and the departure of many healthcare workers have compounded the crisis of the healthcare system, leaving much of the population, in particular in rural areas, without access to it. Restrictive policies on women, including gender segregation, also contributed to the shortage of female health staff and restricted women's access to healthcare, leading to a decline in life expectancy and rising mortality among children under five.

Afghanistan is also vulnerable to climate-related disasters and faces annual flash floods, persistent droughts and earthquakes, causing severe damage and deaths and leading to displacement. A compilation by UNOCHA indicated that in the first ten months of 2025, over 90 000 people had been affected by natural disasters, such as the earthquake hitting the eastern province of Kunar on 31 August. In addition, a shortage of female rescue staff, exacerbated by official restrictions, was reported, as according to some witnesses, male rescuers neglected and refused to assist women.

In early 2026, the conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan re-escalated, as the previously agreed ceasefire was breached in February 2026. With the resumption of cross-border clashes and airstrikes, the geographical scope of the conflict expanded, impacting provinces located

along the border with Pakistan as well as Kabul.

The military confrontations between the two countries have caused the death and injury of hundreds of civilians in Afghanistan. Moreover, the conflict has fuelled displacement, and destructed or damaged residential houses and shelters, healthcare facilities and humanitarian sites, shops and vehicles. Furthermore, as a result of the hostilities, operations delivering humanitarian assistance have been suspended. Similarly, schooling and health and nutrition services have been disrupted or suspended.

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  In this document the Afghan authorities operating under the Taliban (since August 2021) are described as the *de facto* authorities, as the announced state government has not been internationally recognised. In July 2025, Russia became the first and only country to recognise the Taliban's *de facto* government.

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