3.9. Humanitarian workers

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: June 2026

This profile relates to individuals working for national and international NGOs, including healthcare personnel, whose activities are perceived as non-neutral or in violation of cultural or religious norms (e.g. not complying with gender segregation rules, as well as employing women, promoting public awareness on issues such as health and hygiene, peacebuilding, and advocating for human rights).

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: Country Focus 2026, 4.4.5., 4.7.; Country Focus 2024, 3.6., 4.9.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Following the Taliban takeover, some humanitarian workers have been evacuated from Afghanistan. The *de facto* authorities have been interfering with humanitarian operations and confronting them with restrictions, forcing aid workers to constantly navigate 'a difficult environment'. NGOs have been limited to humanitarian and development-related activities. Women have been banned from working in international and national NGOs since December 2022, and for the UN since April 2023. Following the publication of the 'Morality law', there has been a general increase in the enforcement of restrictions for NGOs and UN agencies. The Taliban warned NGOs that not complying with restrictions would make them lose their license to operate in Afghanistan. In reaction to this, some NGOs stopped recruiting Afghan women.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which humanitarian workers could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. An increase in the number of arrests of humanitarian workers was reported after the Taliban takeover. Often the arrests took place at healthcare facilities motivated by the lack of gender segregation or other accusations of lack of morality. Also armed *de facto* officials beating healthcare personnel was noted. In May 2025, dozens of Afghan women received death threats in relation to their work for UN agencies. Attacks by unknown actors have been recorded in which humanitarian staff was wounded and one employee was killed.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that individuals under this profile could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered. For example, aid workers face pressure and

administrative barriers or are not allowed to work.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

A well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated for humanitarian workers who have been involved in activities perceived as non-neutral or in violation of cultural or religious norms and, therefore, face serious violations of human rights.

In the case of a female applicant under this profile, it is reminded that in light of the current situation, a well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated for Afghan women and girls.

For additional information, see 3.13. Women and girls

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Persecution of individuals under this profile is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** and/or **political opinion** as not complying with the *de facto* authorities' restrictions and regulations would be perceived as contravening the Taliban's interpretation of Islam and/or as political dissent.

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