

3.12.1. Individuals of Hazara ethnicity and other Shias

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: June 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: COI Update 2026, 1.; Country Focus 2026, 1.1.1., 1.2.1., 1.2.7. b, 2.2.2., 4.8.1., 4.8.2., 4.8.4.; Country Focus 2024, 2.2.2., 3.6., 4.6.1., 4.6.3.; Targeting 2022, 6.4.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Estimates identify Hazaras as the third largest ethnic group in the country. Mostly, persons of Hazara ethnicity are of Shia religion. There are two main Shia communities in Afghanistan: the main Shia branch Ithna Ashariya ('the Twelvers') and the smaller Ismaili branch ('the Seveners'). The majority of the Hazara population inhabits the Hazarajat. Historically the Hazarajat included Bamyan, Ghor, and Uruzgan provinces, as well as parts of several others. There are also major Hazara populations in the cities of Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif.

The Hazara community has historically faced discrimination, forced evictions and mass killings under various rules in Afghanistan. Even before the Taliban takeover in 2021, Hazaras were targeted by both the Taliban and the ISKP. Since 2016, the ISKP has been conducting attacks targeting Hazaras and other Shia Muslims, without them having access to protection from such attacks.

Additionally, in 2026, the *de facto* government issued a 'Criminal Procedure Code for Courts'. Although there is currently no available information about its implementation, it is reported that the law refers to those following Muslim branches other than the Hanafi school of thought or other religions as 'heretics'.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which individuals of Hazara ethnicity and other Shias could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, there have been arrests of Shia religious scholars for not complying with Taliban instructions. Land disputes frequently result in forced evictions and displacement, often including Hazaras, with reports of deaths, injuries and destruction of property.

Hazara women have been disproportionally affected by arrests and imprisonment in the context of controlling dress codes. Some women reportedly were beaten, abused and subjected to

derogatory anti-Hazara remarks during detention.

Cases were reported in which Ismailis were forced to convert to Sunnism. Those who refused to convert were subject to physical assaults, coercion and death threats. Also, killings of Ismailis are documented.

ISKP attacks targeting members of religious minorities, especially Shia, continued to be reported, albeit on a lower level than at its peak in 2022. Examples of recent acts claimed by the ISKP include the execution of 14 Hazara travellers, shooting and suicide bomber attacks on Shia mosques and IED attacks against buses transporting Hazaras.

Unclaimed attacks killed Shia religious leaders and killed and wounded civilians in an explosion in a commercial centre in a Hazara neighbourhood.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that individuals of Hazara ethnicity and other Shias could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. Hazaras have been 'systematically been treated differently' by the local Taliban. The following acts were reported: widespread discrimination, including with regard to aid distribution and development and public projects as well as in legal disputes, barriers in obtaining passports and in accessing government services, the requirement to use Pashtun in government interactions in some Hazara-populated areas, conversion attempts to Sunni Islam, restrictions on Shia commemorations and ceremonies, (collective) dismissals from government departments, removal of references to Shia teachings from school curriculums and land disputes disproportionally affecting Hazaras.

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

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for **individuals of Hazara ethnicity and other Shias** to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Role and function**: being a Shia scholar or Imam, or advocating Shia rights, may increase the risk.
- **Area of origin**: in areas where the ISKP is particularly active Hazaras are exposed to a higher risk. Many ISKP cells have relocated from former strongholds to northern Afghanistan and are reportedly scattered across the northern and northeastern provinces. See 2.3. Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). In the case of Ismailis, those originating from Badakhshan are at increased risk as most incidents of targeting Ismailis by the Taliban are reported to have occurred in Badakhshan.

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

Being a Hazara may also be a risk-impacting circumstance in relation to other profiles14, such as: 3.1. Members of the security institutions of the former government, 3.2. Public officials and servants of the former government and judicial system, 3.9. Humanitarian workers, 3.11. Individuals perceived to have transgressed religious, moral and/or societal norms, 3.14. Children , 3.16. Individuals involved in blood feuds and land disputes.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this may be for reasons of **religion** as Hazaras and other Shias are considered as 'not proper Muslims', **political opinion** as Hazaras are perceived as associated with the former government, and/or **race (ethnicity)** as Hazaras are a distinct ethnic group.

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  ECtHR, Case of D.M. v SWEDEN, application no. 32694/23, First Section, judgment of 26 March 2026, para 177.

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