3.14.2. Child recruitment

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: June 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: Country Focus 2026, 2.4.; Country Focus 2024, 2.6.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Children have reportedly been recruited by both the Taliban and other armed groups as soldiers for combat and support roles.

The Taliban have often recruited children through coercion, fraud, and false promises. After the takeover, the *de facto* authorities have taken measures to remove and avoid recruiting young boys into their ranks, including by forming a commission for this purpose. Reportedly, many children have been removed from armed forces in this process. However, many people in Afghanistan do not know their age and do not perceive the age of 18 years as the end of childhood. The *de facto* authorities have assessed the age of boys and their possible adulthood based on the boys' beard growth and signs of puberty, therefore leaving adolescent children still vulnerable to recruitment.

The NRF and the ISKP have recruited puberty children and used them in direct hostilities; however, the ISKP reportedly sought to recruit university students and focused on recruiting more educated persons.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Child recruitment amounts to persecution, including when recruitment is not induced by coercion.

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

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the child to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Gender**: the risk of being recruited is higher for boys than for girls.
- **Socio-economic situation**: children from families in poor economic conditions are at higher risk of being recruited.
- **Displacement**: being displaced increases the risk for children to be recruited.

- **Area of origin or residence**: children from rural areas and from areas with presence or in the reach of armed groups are at higher risk of being recruited.
- **Available support network**: the lack of a support network considerably increases the risk for children to be recruited.

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?

The individual circumstances of the child need to be taken into account to determine whether a nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated. For example, in the case of children who refuse to join the Taliban, persecution may be for reasons of **political opinion** and/or **religion** as the refusal may be perceived as opposition to the Taliban rule and/or their interpretation of the *sharia*.

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