

6. Internal protection alternative

COMMON ANALYSIS | Last update: June 2026

For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see ‘EUAA, Internal protection alternative in *Country Guidance: explained*, February 2026’.

This guidance document examines the availability of an internal protection alternative within the whole territory of Afghanistan.

In order to determine that internal protection is available, three cumulative criteria have to be met: ‘safety’, ‘travel and admittance’ and ‘reasonableness to settle’.

Safety

Travel and admittance

Reasonableness to settle

General conclusion on the applicability of IPA

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report and query: Country Focus 2026, 1.1., 2.1., 2.3., 2.5., 4..; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

General security situation in relation to indiscriminate violence

The general security situation should be assessed in accordance with the analysis under the section on 4.3.3. Indiscriminate violence.

Actor of persecution or serious harm and their reach

The **Taliban** are currently in control of all the country’s 34 provinces. Since the takeover, there have been reports of violation of human rights and excessive use of force by the de facto

authorities, including extrajudicial killings and different forms of torture and ill-treatment. The majority of the profiles addressed in this common analysis are subjected to persecution or serious harm by the Taliban who do not qualify as an actor of protection (Article 7 QR). Therefore, in cases where the person fears persecution or serious harm by the Taliban, there is a presumption that IPA would not be available, see 5. Actors of protection.

The safety criterion under Article 8 QR would in general not be met. In exceptional cases, such as when the well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of serious harm is linked to a non-State actor (such as clan, tribe, (locally) powerful individual, family member) who would not have the capacity to trace and target the applicant in the area of relocation, the safety criterion may be satisfied. See 2.4. Other actors.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report and query: COI Update 2026, 3.; Country Focus 2026, 4.4.3..; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

The decline in armed conflict in the country from August 2021 onwards improved physical accessibility across the country, with intercity travel generally occurring without significant impediment. Due to the ongoing conflicts with Pakistan and in the region, airport traffic has reportedly been affected by security-related disruptions.

There are currently no known formal restrictions on travel and admittance within Afghanistan for men. In contrast, under the Taliban rule, women's freedom of movement is constrained by social and formal restrictions requiring male consent or a male chaperone (See also 3.13.Women and girls).

The requirement of safety and legality of travel is not met for women and girls who are not accompanied by a male relative due to the restrictions posed on their freedom of movement. For other individuals, the travel and admittance requirement under Article 8 QR is likely to be satisfied subject to security-related disruptions.

If the criteria of safety and travel and admittance are met, the next step in assessing the existence of an IPA is to consider the reasonableness to settle in light of the general situation and the individual circumstances of the applicant. According to Article 8(1) QR, IPA can only apply if the applicant 'can reasonably be expected to settle' in the area of internal protection under consideration.

General situation

Conclusion on reasonableness to settle

General situation

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report and query: COI Update 2026, 3.; Country Focus 2026, 3.1., 3.2., 3.3., 3.4., 3.5., 3.6.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Means of basic subsistence and employment

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) noted 'significant deteriorations' of the population's ability to afford adequate housing, healthcare, cooking items, food, and winter clothing, and reported on 75 % of the population being 'subsistence-insecure'. Unemployment is widespread, and in urban areas poverty is driven by the lack of job opportunities. A UNDP household survey in 2024 reported a great discrepancy, with most men (84 %) having a job, in contrast to 7 % of female household members, indicating the gender disparity in access to economic opportunities. A drop in average household incomes was observed in 2024, from 10 712 AFN (apr. USD 136) to 9 004 AFN (apr. USD 115). The high number of returnees has intensified job competition, and as people return from abroad, many families lose the economic support received through remittances.

Food security

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classifications (IPC), 27 % of the Afghan population experienced high levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and 4) in March–April 2025 and were in 'urgent need of humanitarian food assistance'. The WFP reported that 78 % of Afghans was unable to afford nutritious food, highlighting that Afghanistan was experiencing an unprecedented hunger crisis in 2025, representing one of the most severe nutrition crises globally. Food insecurity has disproportionately affected female-headed households, persons with lower education, persons with disabilities as well as returnee households. Food insecurity is more prevalent in rural areas; however, the prices of food are generally cheaper in these areas, and many households can rely on their own food production and livestock. Nevertheless, the persistent droughts in 2021-2023 and in 2025 highly affected the agricultural sector. Urban households generally rely on wage labour, which is also volatile given the lack of job opportunities. While there is a greater availability of food products in urban areas, food is generally more expensive, and many households struggle to afford even basic food items. In the framework of the ongoing clashes with Pakistan, and according to WFP, humanitarian needs in Afghanistan remain critically high as of February 2026, estimating that 17.4 million people are in urgent need of food assistance, while resources may only reach around 2 million. Humanitarian organisations, including WFP, have been affected by movement restrictions along the Durand Line, leaving 160 000 people without food assistance in the provinces Helmand, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Paktika, Paktia and Zabul. The ongoing cross-border tensions with Pakistan, alongside wider regional conflicts involving Iran and the Middle East, have further strained supply chains, reduced availability of basic goods, and risen prices, based on information from the Afghanistan Center for Policy Studies (ACAPS). Although no data is yet available, the source projects that the closure of the Durand line for trade will impact food prices nationwide in Afghanistan and further worsen national food insecurity levels, particularly

given that Pakistan has been the primary source of 60 % of Afghan staple food imports. In this context, eastern and southern regions are particularly vulnerable due to limited alternative trade routes and low purchasing power.

Housing and shelter

A 2022 survey indicated that 61 % of Afghan households lived in mud houses, many of which were partially damaged from rainfalls and provided limited protection from natural disasters such as earthquakes. Many of the poorest segments of the population, including disaster-affected individuals and returnees, lived in tents. By 2024, overall housing adequacy had deteriorated. The large influx of returnees has added pressure on the urban 'housing crisis'. In some city areas, rents reportedly more than doubled in 2025.

Water and sanitation

The majority of households is facing challenges in relation to water and energy, lacking access to piped water and heating devices for cooking, as well as sanitation facilities and hygiene supplies. Kabul City is facing a water resource crisis due to plummeting groundwater levels. Moreover, most of the limited groundwater available to the city population is dangerous to consume, with 80 % of the groundwater being contaminated by dangerously high levels of chemicals, sewage and toxins.

Basic healthcare

Afghan healthcare has been impeded by decades of war, making it heavily reliant on international aid for the provision of basic health services. The country is experiencing a deepening healthcare crisis, exacerbated by declining international aid and minimal state budget allocation on health by the de facto authorities. Approximately one third of the population (over 14 million people) lack access to healthcare, with rural communities being particularly affected. The number of operative health facilities had declined to 1 500 by 2024. An additional 422 health facilities have been suspended by 31 August 2025, due to the cuts in US foreign aid. Remaining facilities face challenges, such as poor infrastructure and a lack of medical equipment and medicines. Moreover, a notable shortage of healthcare staff is reported, exacerbated by the departure and resignation of many healthcare professionals, following the Taliban takeover. Additionally, the ongoing conflict with Pakistan has led to the destruction or damage of healthcare facilities, resulting in the disruption or suspension of health services.

For further information see the 1.2. Humanitarian situation and 4.2.4. Healthcare and socio-economic conditions.

Conclusion on reasonableness to settle

The dire humanitarian situation in the country has a significant impact on all elements considered under the requirement of reasonableness to settle in a different part of the country, including food security, housing and shelter, basic healthcare, and means of basic subsistence. Therefore, **the reasonableness to settle criterion under Article 8 QR would generally not be met**.

Taking into account the assessment with regard to the three criteria under Article 8 QR, it is found that **IPA would in general not be applicable to any part of Afghanistan**.

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