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Report on the Human Rights Situation of the Hazaras During Five Years of Taliban Rule

(August 2021 – August 2026)



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Report:

The Human Rights Situation of Hazaras During Five Years of Taliban Rule

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Report: *The Human Rights Situation of Hazaras During the Five Years of Taliban Rule (August 2021–August 2026)*

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The "Kotal-e Kajak" road construction project in Miramor District, Daikundi Province, in 2026 / Video from the YouTube channel "Rozgar Journal"

Acknowledgments!

The writing of this research report under the difficult, security-compromised, and suffocating conditions of Afghanistan would not have been possible without the sincere cooperation and support of institutions, researchers, human rights activists, and concerned citizens. Above all, we extend our sincere gratitude to all the victims, eyewitnesses, local elders, civil activists, brave journalists, and citizens who, despite the life-threatening and security risks, shared their lived narratives, documents, and documented testimonies for this research. Protecting the security, identity, and confidentiality of these individuals has always been the primary red line of this investigation. We hope this document serves as a small step towards seeking justice, documenting grievances, and reclaiming the violated rights of the Hazara community and other vulnerable minorities in Afghanistan.

Report Summary

The present report is the result of a comprehensive and documented study of the situation of the Hazara community in Afghanistan during the five years of Taliban rule (from August 2021 to August 2026). The findings of this research across five dimensions, security, economic, cultural, legal, and land usurpation, indicate that what the Hazaras are experiencing is not merely a consequence of sporadic insecurity or individual violations; rather, it is a systematic, legislated, and multi-layered pattern of discrimination, marginalization, and targeted violence. These policies, rooted in the Takfiri ideology and religious exclusivism of the Taliban group, have severely endangered the physical survival, cultural identity, and economic livelihood of the Hazara community. The totality of these actions exhibits alarming indicators of crimes against humanity, physical genocide, and cultural genocide. The most significant findings of this report are summarized as follows:

Collapse of Human Security and Continuation of Targeted Killings

Over the past five years, Hazaras have faced absolute deprivation of individual, social, and political security. Contrary to the Taliban's claim of ensuring security, Hazara-populated areas have become epicenters of bloody violence and impunity. Documentation shows at least 36 deadly terrorist attacks and 47 documented cases of direct assassinations by Taliban agents and armed individuals, resulting in the deaths of at least 497 people (including 81 women and 44 children) and the injury of 363 others over the past five years. Meanwhile, Hazara women and girls, due to the intersection of "ethnic and gender discrimination," are subjected to the severest forms of suppression and arbitrary detention.

Legal Apartheid and Institutionalization of Discrimination in Legislative Documents

By abolishing the 2004 Constitution and creating a deliberate legal vacuum, the Taliban have established a system based on radical decrees. Foundational Taliban documents, including the book "Al-Imarah al-Islamiyya wa Nizamuha" (The Islamic Emirate and Its System), the "Criminal Procedure Principles of Courts," and the "Law on Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice," structurally marginalize Hazaras and Shias. Granting unlimited judicial authority under vague titles and introducing concepts of slavery such as "slave" (ghulam) and "master/owner" (badar) into the Taliban's penal system have stripped Hazaras of any possibility of seeking justice or fair trial, turning laws into tools for legislative suppression.

Systematic Land Usurpation and Forced Displacement

One of the most prominent dimensions of oppression against Hazaras is the dispossession and "state-ization" (Amarati-sazi) of their ancestral lands with the direct support of Taliban courts. Based on cross-referencing field data, sketches, and official letters from Taliban commissions, at least 19,840 jeribs of land with documented boundaries (including 10,089 jeribs in Jaghato, 7,990 jeribs in Gizab and Pato, and 1,761 jeribs in Omid-e Sabz Township, Kabul) have been usurped or declared off-limits (mamnu-ul-tasarruf). Additionally, in Ghor, Bamyan, Parwan, and Baghlan provinces, hundreds of jeribs of agricultural and pasture land have been confiscated, and dozens of families (including 20 families in the village of Boom and 25 families in the village of Rashk) have been forcibly displaced at gunpoint, forced to cede their lands to Kochis and Taliban affiliates.

Cultural Erasure and Forced Assimilation

The Taliban's policies towards Hazaras constitute a clear example of "cultural genocide." The removal of Ja'fari jurisprudence from the educational curriculum, forcing Shia students to pledge adherence to Hanafi jurisprudence, imposing violent restrictions and arresting dozens during Muharram mourning ceremonies, and systematically destroying historical memory are aimed at obliterating the cultural and religious identity of Hazaras. This process has paralyzed the capacity to transmit identity heritage to future generations.

Economic Collapse and Survival Crisis

Afghanistan's economic isolation, combined with discriminatory policies, has completely paralyzed the economy of Hazara communities, which were always at the bottom of the development chain. The targeted dismissal of Hazara employees, usurpation of agricultural lands, and imposition of heavy taxes have plunged this community into absolute poverty; to the extent that a significant portion of its people, to escape hunger, have resorted to desperate measures such as selling body parts, selling children, and undertaking dangerous, illegal migration.

Therefore, the continuation of the five-year Taliban rule demonstrates that this group's strategy towards the Hazara community is based on physical, identity-based, economic, and geographic elimination. The intersection of the deliberate legal vacuum with repressive policies has placed the life and survival of this community in a state of emergency. This situation requires immediate intervention, continuous monitoring, and decisive action by the international community and international criminal courts; because without guaranteeing existential security and restoring the violated rights of Hazaras, any prospect of stability in Afghanistan will be impossible.

Summary of Recommendations

Given the severity of the aforementioned systematic situation, this report presents the following recommendations as urgent actions:

To the International Criminal Court (ICC) and UN Investigation Mechanisms:

- Accelerate the investigation process regarding crimes committed against Hazaras, including forced displacement, land usurpation, and targeted killings, as clear instances of "crimes against humanity," and examine the elements of "genocide."

To the UN Human Rights Council:

- Establish an independent and robust fact-finding mechanism for the continuous documentation of legal apartheid, violations of religious freedoms, and dispossession of minorities in Afghanistan.

To the International Community and Donor Countries:

- Condition any diplomatic engagement and non-humanitarian aid to the Taliban government on the immediate cessation of systematic discrimination, the repeal of laws violating minority rights, and the restitution of usurped Hazara lands.

To refugee-hosting and Neighboring Countries:

- Immediately halt the expulsion and deportation of Hazara asylum-seekers, recognizing the life-threatening dangers and persecution they face due to their ethnic and religious identity in Afghanistan under Taliban rule.

Glossary

Administrative Purge / Downsizing Process: An administrative term reportedly used by the Taliban as a legalistic cover for targeted dismissals, ethnic purging, and the removal of Hazara employees, academics, and professional personnel from government institutions and universities, with the aim of concentrating positions in the hands of their own ethnic affiliates.

Apostate (Murtadd): Literally, a person regarded as having left Islam. According to the report, officials of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and local Taliban authorities use this term as an ideological and takfiri label against Hazara academics and students, thereby denying their religious legitimacy and providing purported religious justification for their repression.

Armed and Aggressive Kuchism: The transformation of Kuchis from traditionally mobile pastoral communities into armed groups enjoying extensive impunity and support from Taliban courts, which not only occupy pastures but also destroy Hazara farmland, fruit trees, winter fodder, and water resources, thereby undermining the economic basis of indigenous communities.

Barak, Khāmak Embroidery, and Beadwork: Traditional and historically rooted Hazara handicrafts. Barak is a type of winter woollen fabric. Once important pillars of household economies, these crafts are now described, amid the collapse of domestic markets, as one of the few remaining economic opportunities for women deprived of employment and education, particularly through connections with diaspora markets.

Coercive Settlement Construction / Demographic Engineering: The alleged seizure of plains and valuable Hazara lands, such as Dasht-e-Bagh-e-Attar in Qarabagh, Ghazni, by Taliban commanders for the construction of residential settlements for members of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Pashtuns from across the border, with the aim of gradually altering the demographic composition of Hazara-majority areas and facilitating the displacement of Hazaras from their ancestral lands.

Compulsory Settlement Payments / Land-Related Extortion: A process whereby original Hazara landowners are compelled, under pressure from Taliban courts or commanders, to make substantial payments such as the reported 30 million Afghanis in Uruzgan or 300,000 Afghanis in Qarabagh, as “blood money” or a “settlement price” to those occupying or claiming their land in order to retain at least part of their property.

Conversion of Land into “Emirate” Property: The misuse of the “Law on the Prevention of Land Grabbing,” whereby Taliban courts disregard Hazaras’ Sharia-based and customary land deeds and confiscate agricultural land and pastures by classifying them as “public pasture,” “unowned land,” or “Emirate property,” thereby facilitating forced displacement.

Crimes Against Humanity: A category of international crimes involving widespread or systematic attacks carried out knowingly against a civilian population. The report assesses targeted killings, arbitrary detention, and the torture of Hazara women and girls within the framework of this concept.

Cultural Genocide / Cultural Erasure: A set of coordinated and systematic measures by a governing authority aimed at destroying the identity, language, religion, art, and historical heritage of a minority group. The report describes the prohibition of Ja’fari jurisprudence education, censorship of books on Hazara history, and restrictions on religious practices as clear manifestations of this “hidden crime.”

Decree-Based System of Governance: Afghanistan’s current governing system, in which “law” is described not as the product of collective decision-making or parliamentary legislation, but as a collection of unilateral orders, prohibitions, and decrees issued and imposed by the Taliban leadership without public participation.

Dejudicialisation of Disputes: The removal of disputes from the jurisdiction of lawful and impartial courts and their reduction to unilateral, coercive decisions based on power rather than due process, reportedly used as mechanisms for extortion and the repression of minorities.

Equality Before the Law: A principle expressly guaranteed under Article 22 of the Constitution of the former Republic and in international human-rights covenants, ensuring equal rights for all citizens. Under the new regime, this principle has been explicitly abandoned through the classification of society into “upper,” “middle,” and “lower” ranks.

Erasure of Collective / Historical Memory: The intended consequence attributed to book censorship, the prohibition of traditional music, and the closure of cultural institutions, whereby future Hazara generations may become disconnected from their history, collective suffering, and cultural identity, rendering their presence in the public sphere increasingly “invisible.”

Ex Parte and Unilateral Judgments: Decisions allegedly issued by Taliban courts deliberately in the absence of the original Hazara landowners or without examination of their deeds and historical documentation, resulting in the transfer of land to claimants belonging to the Taliban’s own ethnic constituency, primarily Pashtuns, particularly Kuchis.

Extrajudicial Punishment: The imposition of punishment, torture, or deprivation by security or military institutions, such as the detention of women on the grounds of hijab violations or preventing medical treatment for injured persons, without due proceedings before a competent court.

Fair Trial: A body of internationally recognised procedural safeguards, including the right to legal counsel, the right to remain silent, the presumption of innocence, access to an independent judge, and the prohibition of torture. The report states that these safeguards are absent from Taliban courts, where proceedings rely heavily on “confessions,” often allegedly obtained under torture, and witness testimony.

Forced Assimilation: The application of structural pressure such as making humanitarian assistance conditional upon religious conversion in Badakhshan or requiring compulsory written pledges from students to compel followers of Shia traditions, both Twelvers and Ismailis, to abandon their beliefs and accept Hanafi jurisprudence as the sole officially recognised interpretation.

Forced Eviction / Forced Displacement: The systematic coercion of dozens or hundreds of families, such as the reported 3,500 families in Kandir and Tagabdar, or residents of the villages of Bum and Rashk, to abandon their homes and ancestral lands under military threat, sometimes during cold seasons and without permission to take their possessions with them. These acts are clear instances of crimes against humanity.

Free Person and Slave (Hurr wa Ghulām): Terms used in Article 15 of the Penal Regulations for determining punishment. Their use is presented as reflecting a regression of the Taliban legal system towards concepts associated with slavery and the formal recognition of subordinate classes deprived of fundamental human rights.

Haqqani Network: Described in the report as the most violent and radical military-intelligence faction within the Taliban structure. According to the analysis presented in the text, the network has played a central role during the past two decades in complicity with, and organisation of, high-casualty attacks against the Hazara community, sometimes allegedly conducted under the names of other groups such as ISIS.

Hostage-Taking of Local Notables: A pressure tactic whereby village elders and influential community figures, such as in the reported case of Lora-Shiw in Gizab, are detained and tortured for defending local property rights, with the aim of compelling communities to surrender land or accept imposed settlements.

Identity-Based Dress / Traditional Clothing: Traditional Hazara clothing carrying historical and social meanings. Oral and compulsory Taliban orders, such as those reported in Jaghori, requiring Hazara men and women to alter their styles of dress to conform to Taliban norms are described as attempts to remove visible manifestations of Hazara identity from public space.

Ideologically Restricted Tourism: A situation in which internationally recognised tourist attractions, such as Band-e-Amir and Bamyan, are described as having been transformed from sources of local income into securitised and economically stagnant environments because of restrictive rules imposed by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, restrictions on women's access, and the appropriation of tourism revenues by the Taliban.

Imam, Husband, and Master: Ambiguous terms appearing in Articles 4 and 5 of the Penal Regulations that grant these individuals authority to impose ta'zir punishments. The undefined use of the term "imam" allows virtually any Taliban commander to regard himself as having judicial authority, while the use of "master" (bādār) alongside "slave" (ghulām) is presented in the report as indicative of a move towards reviving a system of slavery.

Indigenous Festivals and Cultural Symbols: Cultural practices including Nowruz, Hazara Culture Day, the Potato Blossom Festival in Bamyan, the Almond Blossom Festival in Daykundi, and the raising of the Jahenda-ye Sakhi. The Taliban have prohibited these shared and indigenous traditions on the grounds that they constitute religious "innovation" (bid'a) and have prevented their observance through coercive force.

Instrumentalisation of Humanitarian Aid: The misuse of humanitarian assistance provided by international organisations by the Taliban regime, including the misappropriation of aid, the diversion of assistance away from eligible communities, particularly Hazara-populated area, towards areas affiliated with the Taliban, and the extraction of payments from aid recipients under the pretext of an "ushr on aid."

Intersectional Discrimination / Compounded Oppression: A "deadly" situation in which Hazara women and girls simultaneously experience three forms of structural repression: restrictions based on gender, described as the Taliban's systematic misogyny, and restrictions arising from their ethnic and religious identity as Hazaras and Shias.

Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP): The regional branch of the Islamic State terrorist organisation, which has claimed responsibility for numerous deadly attacks on Hazara mosques, schools, and public gatherings. Within the analytical framework of the report, ISKP's actions

against Hazaras are assessed as operating in parallel with the Taliban's ideological intent and as benefiting from the permissive environment created under the current regime.

Kuchis: Within the context of this report, Kuchis are described as no longer functioning merely as mobile pastoralists but as armed proxy actors supported by the Taliban who enter Hazara-populated regions, damage agricultural resources, advance allegedly baseless ownership claims over indigenous ancestral lands, and contribute to the displacement of local residents.

Legal apartheid: A situation in which the discrimination, inequality, and exclusion of a particular group are institutionalised and legitimised not only in practice, but also through the explicit provisions of the governing authority's written laws (such as the Taliban's penal code).

Local Guarding / Chowkidari: Community-level defence mechanisms and survival strategies. Because of social insecurity, declining trust in Taliban security institutions, and an increase in armed robbery, residents of Hazara-populated areas have reportedly been compelled to employ private guards or organise community night patrols to protect their lives, property, and even agricultural equipment.

Loss of Cultural Capital / Exodus of Intellectuals: The flight and forced displacement of Hazara writers, artists, journalists, and university academics as a result of repression and security threats, leading to a depletion of the community's capacity for intellectual and artistic production within Afghanistan.

Mawat Land and Public Pasture: Terms in Islamic jurisprudence and property law referring respectively to uncultivated or "dead" land and communal grazing areas. The Taliban designate land cultivated and developed by Hazaras over decades as barren or state-owned property and subsequently confiscate it.

Monopolisation of Natural Resources: The deprivation of local populations of their rights to own, use, and benefit from local natural resources, such as the coal mines of Dara-e-Suf, the lead mines of Yakawlang, and naturally occurring medicinal plants, and the transfer of extraction rights to companies affiliated with Taliban leaders, leaving local communities primarily with environmental degradation and pollution.

Mubtadi' ("Religious Innovator" / Heretic): Under paragraph eight of Article 2 of the Penal Regulations, anyone whose beliefs differ from those of Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jama'a is classified as a mubtadi'. The report describes this as a legal-takfiri mechanism for criminalising Shia religious beliefs and providing religious-legal justification for the repression of Hazaras.

Negative Coping Mechanisms: Desperate and destructive measures to which individuals resort in conditions of severe economic collapse in order to survive, including the sale of children, the sale of bodily organs such as kidneys, and engagement in irregular and dangerous migration routes.

Organised Extortion: A process whereby local Taliban authorities use threats, torture, and arbitrary pretexts - such as ordering villagers to purchase and surrender weapons to the authorities or forcing them to pay the costs of disputes involving Kuchis - to seize the property and assets of settled rural communities.

Otherisation: In identity and political terms, a sociopolitical concept that aptly describes the position of Hazaras under the Islamic Emirate regime. By concentrating political power in the hands of a single ethno-religious group, Pashtuns adhering predominantly to Sunni Hanafi Islam, the Taliban have effectively positioned Hazaras as “others”: a population perceived as outside the dominant political and social order and largely excluded from meaningful participation in power and public life.

Pasture Disputes: Conflicts that ostensibly concern access to grazing land but in reality, are mechanisms through which armed Kuchis provoke violent confrontations and obtain Taliban military support to displace indigenous Hazara populations from their lands.

Penal Regulations of the Courts (Criminal Code of Courts): The foundational penal document of the Taliban system, endorsed in January 2026. It lacks established legal standards and employs vague and ambiguous language that grants Taliban appointees extensive powers to repress, detain, and impose corporal punishment, including flogging.

Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (Amr bil Ma'ruf wa Nahy an al-Munkar): The Taliban's religious-policing and monitoring apparatus, which functions as one of the regime's principal ideological instruments. In Hazara-populated areas, the institution is described as extending beyond religious monitoring to become an instrument of compounded discrimination, religious humiliation and stigmatisation, and the arbitrary detention of Hazara women and girls under allegations of “improper hijab.”

Purging and Censorship of Libraries: The continuous inspection and surveillance of bookstores and universities by Taliban intelligence bodies and the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, aimed at removing and destroying works relating to Shia jurisprudence, Hazara history, women's rights, and philosophy that are considered incompatible with the Taliban's monotone ideology.

Qabala (Sharia Deeds and Customary Deeds): Historically recognised forms of property documentation demonstrating the purchase, development, and ownership of land by Hazaras over previous decades. The Taliban courts systematically disregard such documented evidence while accepting oral claims or allegedly fraudulent deeds submitted by competing claimants.

Radical Taliban Narrative: The ideological framework described as governing present-day Afghanistan, combining extremist interpretations of Hanafi jurisprudence with tribal codes, particularly Pashtunwali, and regarding forms of religious pluralism such as Ja'fari jurisprudence and cultural diversity as forms of “deviation” and “threat.”

Restricted-Transaction Areas: A legal mechanism used by the Taliban’s “Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing.” By designating an area such as thousands of jeribs of land in Jaghori, as subject to restrictions, original owners are prohibited from buying, selling, constructing on, or cultivating their land, thereby creating conditions for its eventual confiscation.

Rule of Law: A universal principle of good governance under which governing authorities must exercise power within a pre-established legal framework that protects citizens’ rights and prevents arbitrary rule. The report argues that this principle has collapsed in Afghanistan and has been replaced by the “rule of decrees and personal discretion.”

Shariatisation of Laws: An approach whereby the Taliban are described as having invalidated civil, criminal, and constitutional laws based on human-rights principles and imposed their own radical and exclusive interpretation of Hanafi jurisprudence as the country’s sole legal foundation.

Shia Personal Status Law: A body of legal rules governing personal status matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, based on Ja'fari jurisprudence. It was formally recognised under Article 130 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan but was abolished under Taliban rule and replaced by the compulsory application of Hanafi jurisprudence.

Summary Execution / Field Execution: Immediate execution or shooting outside any judicial framework. The report uses this political-military term to describe the alleged killing of prisoners and opponents by Taliban forces in provinces including Panjshir, Daykundi, and Ghor.

Ta'zir: A category of punishment for which Islamic law does not prescribe a fixed penalty. Under Taliban regulations, the absence of pre-specified minimum and maximum penalties for ta'zir creates scope for personal discretion, retaliation, and the imposition of arbitrary, unjust, and disproportionate sentences.

The Islamic Emirate and Its System (al-Imārat al-Islāmiyya wa Nizāmuhā): A book authored by the Taliban's Chief Justice that functions as the movement's "legal manifesto and unwritten constitution." The book explicitly prohibits members of religious minorities, including Shias, and women from holding leadership and judicial positions, and characterises Shia Islam as a source of "shame and disgrace."

Traditional Music and the Dambura: Within Hazara culture, music is not merely a form of entertainment but a medium for transmitting historical narratives, epics, and accounts of collective suffering. The religious prohibition of music, destruction and burning of musical instruments, and detention of musicians by the Taliban are described as severing one of the community's most important channels of cultural transmission.

Tribal Retaliation: The misuse of military and state power to settle ethnic and historical grievances. In the report, Taliban treatment of Hazaras, Achakzai communities, and former security personnel is described not as law enforcement but as violence driven by tribal and ethnic loyalties and animosities.

Unauthorised Excavations / Plunder of Cultural Heritage: The alleged exploitation by the Taliban of the absence or weakness of international monitoring institutions, such as UNESCO, to conduct unprofessional archaeological excavations and traffic antiquities from historic centres of Hazarajat, particularly Bamyan, resulting in irreparable damage to the region's historical heritage.

University Entrance Quotas (Kankor Quotas): A political-educational term associated with the period of the Islamic Republic, referring to systematic limitations on Hazara youths' access to public universities. Its inclusion in the report is intended to demonstrate that discrimination against Hazaras has historical and structural roots but has, under Taliban rule, shifted from "restriction" towards "complete exclusion."

Ushr and Zakat: Islamic forms of religious taxation that have been transformed under the Taliban system into an "instrument of plunder and oppressive multiple taxation." Such payments are reportedly extracted coercively and repeatedly, from farmers, traders, and at city checkpoints, without consideration of losses caused by natural disasters.

Written Pledge to Change Religious Adherence: Compulsory written declarations reportedly distributed at universities, and also among Ismaili communities in Badakhshan, requiring Shia students or citizens to pledge adherence to Sunni Hanafi jurisprudence as a condition for receiving services or continuing their education (a clear form of religious inquisition and forced assimilation).

Contents

Introduction	1
Research Methodology	5
Research Challenges and Limitations.....	5

Chapter One

Security Situation

Introduction	7
1. Personal Security	9
Conceptual Framework	9
Findings	10
Causal Analysis in Personal Security Dimension	18
2. Legal Security	19
Conceptual Framework	19
Findings	20
Causal Analysis in the Dimension of Legal Security	23
3. Social Security	24
Conceptual Framework	24
Findings	25
Causal Analysis in the Dimension of Social Security	27
4. Political Security	28
Conceptual Framework	28
Findings	29
Causal Analysis in the Dimension of Political Security	31
Chapter Summary	32

Chapter Two

Economic Situation

Introduction	36
1. Economic Production	38
A. Agriculture and Animal Husbandry.....	38
Kuchis (Nomads)	38
Taliban Regime Taxation	40
B. Productive Trades	42
Handicrafts.....	42
Tailoring	44
Confectionery/Bakery	46
Government Employees.....	47
International Community Assistance	48
Medicinal Plants.....	49
Mines	50
Tourism.....	50
2. Economic Circulation	52
Small Trade	52
Day Labor	53
Transportation.....	53
3. Summary: Reasons for Economic Weakness	55

Chapter Three

The Cultural Situation

Introduction	57
1. Historical Background of Cultural Discrimination Against the Hazaras	58

2. Removal of Ja'fari Jurisprudence from Schools and Universities and Pressure to Change Religious Affiliation within the Ismaili Community	60
3. Restrictions on Books, Publications, and Cultural Works of Hazaras and Shia Communities	72
4. Restrictions on Religious Ceremonies	78
5. The Ban on Music and Destruction of Art: Impacts on Hazara Culture	81
6. Pressure on Hazara Media Outlets, Cultural Centers, and Educational Institutions	89
7. Arrest of Hazara Scholars, Cultural Figures, and Activists.....	97
8. Restrictions on Clothing, Cultural Symbols, and Visible Identity	102
Conclusion: Cultural Genocide or Cultural Erasure	106

Chapter Four

Legal Status

Introduction	109
1. The Collapse of the Rule of Law and the Establishment of a Decree-Based System	110
Abolition of the 2004 Constitution and Its Consequences for Hazaras	111
The Taliban Definition of Law and the Process of Sharia-isation and Monopolisation of Legislation.....	112
2. Theoretical Foundations and Overarching Instruments of Discrimination	116
The Taliban's Legal Manifesto	117
Structural Exclusion of (Religious) Minorities and Religious Monopolisation	119
3. Penal Regulations of the Courts: Institutionalisation of Apartheid and Deprivation of Fair Trial.....	121
Absence of Fair-Trial Standards.....	121
Ambiguity and Unlimited Powers.....	122
Return to Slavery and the Stratification of Justice (Articles 9 and 15).....	123

4. Law as an Instrument of Repression.....	125
Creating a Legal Framework for Land Seizure	125
Creating a Legal Framework for Cultural Repression	126
Chapter Conclusion	128
 Chapter Five The Land Seizure 	
Introduction	130
1. Kandir, Uruzgan Province, and Tagabdar, Daikundi Province	131
2. Forced Displacement in Lal wa Sarjangal.....	133
3. Rashk Village, Bamyan Province	134
4. Jaghori	135
5. Dahan-e Nala Pa'in Village, Uruzgan Province	141
6. Detention of Local Community Leaders During Land Disputes in Gizab.....	142
7. Appropriation of the Dasht-e Miyangi Area in Sheikh Ali District, Parwan Province	143
8. Land Dispute in Baghlan Province	143
9. Omid-e Sabz Township, Kabul.....	144
10. Qarabagh District, Ghazni Province.....	145
Chapter Summary.....	148
Conclusion	149
Recommendations	153
References:.....	155

Figures

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of perpetrators responsible for the killing of Hazaras	13
Figure 2. Provinces in which Hazaras were subjected to targeted assassinations between 15 August 2021 and August 2026.	18
Figure 3: Taliban pledge form for students of public universities (Photo source: Etilaatroz newspaper)	61
Figure 4: Photo showing the Taliban forcing a follower of the Ismaili faith to follow Hanafi jurisprudence in Badakhshan (Photo source: Hasht-e Subh Daily).....	68
Figure 5: Photo of Taliban forces opening fire on a Shia mourning procession in Nowabad, Ghazni Province.....	69
Figure 6: Photo showing Taliban forces raiding the Radio Nasim office (Source: Etilaatroz Daily).	71
Figure 7: Taliban directive ordering the removal of books related to Ja'fari jurisprudence from university libraries (photo sourced from social media).	74
Figure 8: Photo of a Taliban directive ordering the removal of books related to Ja'fari jurisprudence from schools in Bamyan Province (Source: social media).	75
Figure 9: Khadija Ahmadzadeh, a sports coach detained by the Taliban (Photo: BBC Persian)87	
Figure 10: Photo of the sealing of the office of Ayatollah Waezzada Behsoodi, a prominent Shia religious scholar in Kabul Province (Source: Etilaatroz Daily).....	95
Figure 11: Religious scholar detained by the Taliban (Photo source: Etilaatroz Daily).....	99
Figure 12: Hazara religious scholars detained by the Taliban in Herat Province (Photo source: Afghanistan International news outlet).	100
Figure 13: Letter issued by the Taliban's Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing to the Taliban district administration in Jaghori. (Source: Etilaat Roz)	138
Figure 14: Cadastral sketch map (karoki) of the Lower Dasht-e Oshtor Korbala area. (Source: Etilaat Roz)	139
Figure 15: Cadastral sketch map (karoki) of the Ghajur Airport area and the Ghajur Municipal Shops. (Source: Etilaat Roz)	139
Figure 16: Petition submitted by residents of Jaghori District to the Taliban authorities.....	140

Tables

Table 1. Hazara casualties during the past five years	14
Table 2: Differences between the legislative process under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban government.....	114
Table 3: Number of laws, regulations, codes, decrees, procedures, and announcements published by the Taliban	114
Table 4: Number of Families Subjected to Forced Displacement and the Amount of Land Allegedly Appropriated in Fifteen Villages of Gizab and Patu Districts in Bamyan province.....	133
Table 5: Areas in Jaghori District, Ghazni Province, declared Mamnu‘ al-Tasarruf by the Taliban	137

Introduction

Over the past four decades, Afghanistan has experienced one of the most complex and protracted political, security, and humanitarian crises in the world. Successive wars, the collapse of state institutions, foreign interventions, the rise and fall of various regimes, the spread of religious extremism, and chronic weak governance have not only continuously transformed the country's political structure but have also left profound and lasting impacts on the social, economic, and cultural lives of its citizens. In this context, not all social groups have been affected equally. Afghanistan's historical experience demonstrates that certain ethnic and religious minorities, due to their social and identity status, have been more exposed to exclusion, discrimination, violence, and deprivation than others. The Hazara community is one of the most prominent examples of this historical reality. Over the past century, the Hazaras have experienced successive periods of political suppression, ethnic and religious discrimination, forced displacement, land confiscation, exclusion from political participation, restricted access to economic resources, educational discrimination, and organized attacks. This experience demonstrates that the issue of the Hazaras cannot be analyzed merely as isolated violent incidents or temporary crises. What has been repeated across different periods is the existence of relatively persistent patterns of structural discrimination and gradual exclusion from various spheres of public life, patterns that have been reproduced at different junctures of Afghanistan's history, with varying intensity and forms.

Following the fall of the first Taliban regime in 2001 and the establishment of the republican system, for the first time relatively extensive opportunities for political participation, education, cultural development, and social presence were made available to the Hazaras. This community was able to achieve significant progress in higher education, media, civil society, state institutions, economic activities, and political participation, and to rectify some of the historical gaps. Nevertheless, many areas of historical discrimination remained, and targeted attacks against Hazaras, particularly by extremist groups, continued throughout the republican period. Consequently, many of the achievements of the two decades of the republic rested on fragile foundations and lacked sustained institutional and legal support.

The return of the Taliban to power on August 15, 2021, represents a decisive turning point in Afghanistan's contemporary history. This development was not merely a change of government but signified a fundamental transformation in the power structure, legal system, governance approach, definition of citizenship, the status of law, and the government's interaction with ethnic and religious minorities. With the collapse of the republican system, the 2004 constitution was effectively set aside, elected institutions were dismantled, many previously enforceable laws

lost their validity, and a system based on Taliban leadership decrees and the group's particular interpretation of Sharia replaced the former legal order. These changes brought far-reaching consequences for all Afghan citizens; however, their impact on groups already subjected to structural discrimination was far deeper and more extensive.

For the Hazaras, the Taliban's return marked the beginning of a new phase of security uncertainty, legal vulnerability, cultural restrictions, economic pressure, and intensified disputes over vital resources, particularly land. Over the past five years, numerous reports have been published regarding targeted attacks against Hazara civilians, the restriction of political participation, gradual removal from administrative structures, the imposition of restrictions on ethnic education and culture, reduced security of property rights, and increased land disputes in Hazara-inhabited areas. Although each of these events may appear independent at first glance, their simultaneous examination reveals that these developments are understandable within the context of a broader process of undermining human security and diminishing the social capacities of the Hazara community. Accordingly, the present report seeks not to analyze the situation of the Hazaras solely through the lens of security events or physical violence, but rather to adopt a multidimensional approach to provide a comprehensive picture of this community's conditions following the Taliban's return. The theoretical foundation of this report is the concept of "human security", a concept that does not define security merely as the absence of war or military violence, but rather as a set of necessary conditions for a life of dignity, enjoyment of equal rights, economic security, legal protection, the possibility of political participation, preservation of cultural identity, and equitable access to public resources. Based on this approach, a society may be safe from terrorist attacks at a given time, yet simultaneously face such restrictions in legal, economic, cultural, or social spheres that the human security of its citizens is compromised.

The present report is the result of several years of documentation, data collection, analysis, and continuous monitoring of the situation of the Hazaras by the independent, non-profit human rights network "Bolaq" (Bolaq Analysts Network). Over the past years, this network has utilized diverse sources to provide a documented, evidence-based, and reliable picture of the situation of the Hazara community in Afghanistan. In addition to public dissemination, the reports of the Bolaq Analysts Network are also made available to international organizations, human rights institutions, research centers, and policymakers to contribute to a better understanding of developments in Afghanistan and the situation of ethnic and religious minorities. The present version is a consolidated and updated report encompassing the documented findings on the situation of the Hazaras from the time of the Taliban's return up to the preparation of this report. Focusing on five main areas, security, economy, culture, law, and land ownership, this report seeks to study the various dimensions of the individual and collective life of the Hazaras within a

coherent framework. These five areas were selected on the basis that they constitute the most important components of human security and the most fundamental spheres of impact on the Hazara community in the current period.

The first chapter of the report is dedicated to examining the security situation. This chapter demonstrates that the concept of security in today's Afghanistan is not limited to the risk of armed attacks. Individual security, legal security, social security, and political security are four complementary dimensions of human security, each affecting the lives of the Hazaras in different ways. Targeted attacks against civilians, feelings of insecurity in public spaces, restrictions on political participation, declining trust in official institutions, difficulties accessing justice, and the spread of a sense of social helplessness together paint a multidimensional picture of the security situation of the Hazara community. This chapter also attempts to clarify the relationship between direct violence and the structural factors that produce insecurity.

The second chapter addresses the economic situation. Afghanistan's economic crisis after 2021 has affected all sectors of society; however, the intensity and nature of its impacts have not been uniform across different regions. By examining the state of agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts, small businesses, day labor, transportation, mining, tourism, and other economic activities in Hazara-inhabited areas, this chapter demonstrates how the reduction of foreign aid, economic recession, multi-layered taxes, market restrictions, land disputes, and insecurity have undermined the livelihood foundations of this community. The findings of this chapter indicate that the existing economic problems are not merely the result of Afghanistan's general economic crisis, but are in many cases intertwined with other forms of discrimination and deprivation.

The third chapter examines the cultural situation of the Hazaras. Culture, language, religion, and historical memory are among the most important elements of any community's collective identity. This chapter studies the process of removing Ja'fari jurisprudence from the educational system, restrictions on books and cultural works, limitations on cultural and artistic activities, pressure on religious ceremonies, and other policies affecting the cultural identity of the Hazaras. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that cultural restrictions are not merely administrative or educational decisions, but can have profound consequences for the continuity of identity, historical memory, and the sense of social belonging of a community.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the legal situation, an area that constitutes the foundation of other citizenship rights and freedoms. Changes in Afghanistan's legal structure, the abrogation of the constitution, the centralization of legislation in the Taliban's decree-based structure, the reduction of judicial independence, and the replacement of many previous legal rules have created a new environment whose effects on ethnic and religious minorities have been

devastating. This chapter shows how legal developments can pave the way for reduced legal protection of citizens, the weakening of the principle of equality, restrictions on fair trial, and increased vulnerability of marginalized groups.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the issue of land and expropriation. Land ownership in Afghanistan is not merely an economic matter but is directly linked to identity, security, history, and the survival of local communities. For many Hazara families, land represents their last economic asset, their most important source of livelihood, and part of their historical memory. Examination of documented cases in Bamyan, Daikundi, Ghazni, Uruzgan, Baghlan, and other regions shows that land disputes, forced displacement, expropriation, and insecurity of property rights constitute one of the most significant concerns of the Hazara community in the current period. This chapter attempts to document the common patterns of these disputes and their social, economic, and legal consequences.

From a methodological perspective, this report is based on qualitative analysis and draws on a wide range of sources, including human rights documents, reports of international organizations, media reports, official documents, semi-structured interviews, victim testimonies, and information gathered from local sources. Given the extensive restrictions on access to various regions of Afghanistan, restrictions on independent media activity, security risks for interviewees, and the difficulty of field verification of some events, data collection faced serious challenges. Therefore, throughout all stages of the research, efforts have been made to cross-examine findings through comparison and triangulation of different sources, and only information with sufficient documentary support has been utilized.

Ultimately, this report is premised on the assumption that the current situation of the Hazaras cannot be understood as the result of a series of separate crises. Security, economy, culture, law, and land ownership are not independent domains, but rather constitute interconnected components of a single social reality, each affecting the others. Hence, understanding the situation of the Hazaras requires a comprehensive and interdisciplinary perspective capable of revealing the connections between these various dimensions. The ultimate goal of this report is not merely to record a set of events, but to provide a documented, coherent, and analytical picture of the living conditions of the Hazara community in post-Taliban-return Afghanistan, a picture that can assist researchers, human rights institutions, international organizations, and policymakers in more accurately understanding developments in Afghanistan, and provide a basis for evidence-based dialogues about minority rights, justice, equality, and accountability in contemporary Afghanistan. This report can also provide the groundwork for broader discussions

concerning the suppression of other ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan and the human rights record of the Taliban regime at both national and international levels.

Research Methodology

This research is conducted in continuation of the studies published over the past four years by the Bolaq Analysts Network on the human rights situation of the Hazaras in Afghanistan. Over the past four years, the Bolaq Analysts Network has published annual reports titled "The Situation of Hazaras under Taliban Rule," each separately examining various dimensions of the Hazaras' living conditions. Previous years' research utilized a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative). In past studies, in addition to semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires were also used for data collection. The present research has been conducted using qualitative methods. Semi-structured interviews and field observations by the Bolaq Analysts Network research team constitute the primary data collection tools. Reports and documentation from other reputable human rights institutions and international bodies such as Human Rights Watch, the United Nations Human Rights Council, local and international media, and library sources have also been used in preparing this report.

Interviewees for this research were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods. In interviews, individuals were asked only about their lived experiences to facilitate data collection within a more precise thematic framework. These interviews have been conveyed directly and indirectly in accordance with the topics covered in this report. It should be noted that the use of purposive sampling in conducting interviews for this research enabled us to directly approach knowledgeable and informed individuals regarding issues related to encounters with the Taliban in many cases and gather information from them. The personal information of interviewees in this research remains confidential with the Bolaq Analysts Network, and throughout this research, they have been referred to by pseudonyms. The Bolaq Analysts Network confirms that during the data collection process for this research, particularly regarding cases of land grabbing and legal claims, it obtained numerous documents and evidence which it has refrained from including in this report due to threats from the disputing parties. However, it can make these documents available to an impartial international body or court.

Research Challenges and Limitations

This research, like any field study in crisis conditions, faced numerous limitations that must be acknowledged for methodological transparency and validation of findings:

1. **Geographical access limitations:** Due to widespread insecurity, mortal danger to researchers from the Taliban, restrictions imposed by the Taliban, and difficult road conditions and the mountainous nature of the central regions, field access to some remote districts (such as Kajran and Khedir districts in Daikundi and some areas of Ghazni) was not possible, and data related to these areas was primarily collected through telephone calls, online interviews, and secondary reports.
2. **Fear and self-censorship of interviewees:** Many residents of Hazara-inhabited areas, especially women, refrained from providing complete information or mentioning their real names due to fear of security consequences and Taliban retaliation. Although this issue was partially mitigated through the use of snowball sampling and ensuring anonymity, it may still have affected the depth and accuracy of some responses.
3. **Lack of access to official documents and primary government data:** Since the Taliban does not publish official statistics on attacks, detentions, and the legal status of citizens, or the published data lacks transparency and ethnic disaggregation, researchers were compelled to use estimates from non-governmental organizations, media reports, and field evidence, which may be subject to statistical error.
4. **Financial and logistical limitations:** This research was conducted at the researchers' personal expense and without any institutional support, which undoubtedly affected the sample size due to the lack of necessary budget and logistical facilities. With adequate financial and logistical resources, far better results could have been achieved.
5. **Limited time and variability of field conditions:** The security and political conditions in Afghanistan, particularly the situation of the Hazaras, are rapidly changing, and some findings of this research may be subject to change with new developments at the time of publication. Therefore, this research reflects the situation up to the time of data collection (until the end of July 2026) and cannot cover subsequent developments.

Despite these limitations, efforts have been made to approximate reality as much as possible and to present a clear and documented picture of the security situation of the Hazara community through the use of triangulation (combining quantitative, qualitative, and documentary data), referencing reliable sources, and adhering to research ethics.

Chapter One

Security Situation

Introduction

Today marks exactly five years since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan and the fall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Under the Constitution¹ of the former government, the Hazaras were officially recognized as one of the country's ethnic groups and since a large proportion of the Hazara population follows the Shia branches of Islam (Ja'fari and Ismaili), the Shia faith was, for the first time in Afghanistan's history, officially recognized in the Constitution, and adjudication of personal status matters concerning Shia citizens was permitted in accordance with the provisions of that faith.

Despite clear evidence of prejudice and discrimination in the conduct of Afghan government officials toward the Hazaras including creation of quota systems in the national university entrance examination (Kankor), national security and military institutions, barriers to Hazara participation in government institutions, and discriminatory treatment and limitations imposed on working public employees² most observers agree that the two decades of the Islamic Republic provided relatively favorable opportunities for the Hazara community to develop and excel in education, culture, sports, the arts, and other fields. Nevertheless, the Taliban's return to power reversed these gains and severely restricted the lives of the Hazara community, particularly Shia Hazaras. During the past two decades (2002- 2021), from the standpoint of physical and military security, numerous terrorist attacks were carried out against the Hazara

community by various terrorist organizations, including the Taliban and ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K). These attacks clearly exhibit characteristics consistent with genocide. Based on evidence, claims

¹ Article 4 of the Constitution promulgated in 2004: Nation of Afghanistan comprising Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baloch, Pashai, Noristani, Aimak, Arab, Kerghiz, Qezilbash, Gujer, Brahui and others.

² There are a lot of examples in this regard, but one of the most notorious discriminatory encounters against Hazaras was of Sawabuddin Makhkash, one of the high-ranking officials of the office of presidential administration in 2017. Mr. Makhkash in creating an official directive had clearly raised the issue of discrimination against Hazaras. He was later sentenced to two years by the court. <https://bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-41912098>.

made by officials of the former Afghan government, and official Taliban statements, responsibility for a large proportion of these attacks rests with the Taliban. Although ISIS-Khorasan also organized and carried out a number of large-scale and deadly attacks against the Hazara and Shia communities after its emergence in Afghanistan, many security experts and analysts believe that ISIS-K conducted many of its attacks in cooperation with the Taliban, particularly the Haqqani faction of the group.

Following the Taliban's takeover on 15 August 2021, despite the group's repeated claims of having established nationwide security in Afghanistan, the Hazara community has continued to experience numerous terrorist attacks. Although the number of attacks has declined compared with the period of the previous government, and fewer incidents have been reported during each successive year of Taliban rule, our findings indicate that there has been no fundamental change in the Taliban's intent or ideology regarding the persecution and killing of Hazaras. Rather, the method by which this ethnic group is targeted has changed.

Although the Taliban's return to power has generally deprived all Afghan citizens of meaningful security, and numerous reports have documented the killing, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearance of former security and defense personnel, civil society activists, political figures, community elders, human rights defenders, and women's rights activists throughout the country, our research demonstrates that insecurity affecting the Hazara community is systematic, deliberate, continuous, and rooted in the Taliban's ideological worldview.

The Taliban's treatment of the Hazara and Shia communities is driven by its radical interpretation of religion and ethnicity. This conduct may clearly constitute crimes against humanity and may even amount to genocide. This report is not intended to ignore or deny the Taliban's abuses against other groups in Afghanistan. It acknowledges the documented detention and summary execution of numerous men in the provinces of Panjshir,³ Parwan, Kapisa, Baghlan, and Takhar under accusations of supporting anti-Taliban armed groups; the systematic and inhumane oppression of Afghan women; acts of tribal retaliation against members of the Achakzai ethnic group in Kandahar Province; and the widespread reprisals carried out against former Afghan security and defense personnel.⁴ Nevertheless, as part of our ongoing annual assessments of the

³ Amin Kawa, "War Crimes and Genocide: Taliban shot 70 prisoners in Panjshir last week" Hasht-e-Sub, September 17, 2022. <https://8am.media/fa/war-crime-and-genocide-taliban-shot-70-prisoners-in-panjshir-last-week/>

⁴ Fahim Abed et al, "Hunted by the Taliban," Lighthouse Reports, October '5,2025, <https://www.lighthousereports.com/investigation/hunted-by-the-taliban/>

condition of the Hazara community under Taliban rule, this report focuses specifically on the situation of the Hazara people.

Although the assessment of security generally centers on two essential concepts freedom from fear and freedom from want under current conditions, even these two elements encompass an extensive and complex subject that requires examining multiple dimensions of insecurity within society. While the concept of human security covers many areas, the United Nations' 1994 Human Development Report groups them into seven principal categories:

1. Economic security
2. Food security
3. Health security
4. Environmental security
5. Personal security
6. Community (or social) security
7. Political security⁵

This section examines the final three categories: personal security, community security, and political security; as well as the legal security of the Hazara community during the five years of Taliban rule.

1. Personal Security

Conceptual Framework

Personal security is one of the most fundamental pillars of human security in any society. In every human community, people's lives are increasingly exposed to factors that threaten their personal safety. As with many concepts in the social sciences, numerous definitions have been proposed. Nevertheless, they all share certain common elements, particularly the absence of threats and

⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development 1994: New Dimension of Human Security (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 25. <https://hdr.undp.oef/ayatam/files/documents/hdr1994encompletenostats.pdf>

the ability of individuals to survive and live safely. Accordingly, Andrzej Urbanek defines personal security as follows:

Personal security refers to a condition in which individuals and human communities are protected against physical, social, and institutional threats and possess the ability to survive, function, and develop within a relatively stable environment free from direct threats.⁶

This concept forms part of the broader framework of human security, which shifts the focus away from the traditional state-centered approach and instead regards individuals and human communities as the primary subjects of security analysis. From this perspective, personal security is not merely an objective condition characterized by the absence of threats, but also a subjective experience reflected in people's sense of safety that is closely linked to social and institutional structures.

In practical terms, personal security may be understood as the protection of individuals' lives and physical well-being against both intentional harms such as violence, assault, terrorism, torture, and war and unintentional harms, including natural disasters and accidents. At a broader level, the concept includes protection against armed attacks, bombings, kidnappings, and other forms of direct physical violence. This dimension represents the most fundamental level of human security because, in its absence, all other dimensions of security become meaningless.

Findings

Based on the definition of personal security presented above, the Hazara community has continued to live under alarming insecurity since the Taliban's return to power. This remains the case despite the Taliban's sweeping claims of having established nationwide security and despite efforts to portray security as one of the group's principal achievements. According to documentation compiled by the Bolaq Analysts Network, at least 36 terrorist attacks against the Hazara-Shia community have been recorded over the past four years. Unlike during the period of the previous government, these attacks have occurred even in provinces traditionally regarded as among the safest in Afghanistan namely Bamyān, Daikundi, and Ghor, raising serious concerns about the security of the Hazara population.

⁶ Andrzej Urbanek, "Current State and Development Prospects for the Reflection on the Security of Individuals and Human Collectivities," *Security Dimensions* no.23(2017):46, DOI 10.24356/SD/23/1

Although statistical data indicate a decline in the number of attacks against the Hazara community, a trend that has become a central element of the Taliban's propaganda tool regarding nationwide security, the more fundamental question, which is seldom addressed by the Taliban or its supporters, is this: Who were responsible for planning, facilitating, or carrying out the terrorist attacks and organized violence against Hazaras during the past two decades? According to repeated statements by officials of the former Afghan government, the overwhelming majority of attacks targeting Hazaras were either directly perpetrated by the Taliban or carried out by members of the group in coordination with other terrorist organizations, including ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K).

According to some analysts, the Taliban pursued two objectives by killing Hazaras or, in their words, eliminated two enemies simultaneously.⁷ First, they targeted individuals whom their radical ideological interpretation labeled as "Rafidis" (a derogatory sectarian term used against Shia Muslims) and therefore considered deserving of death. Second, they targeted those whom they regarded as supporters of the former Afghan government. As a result, following the Taliban's return to power, Hazaras have increasingly been viewed solely through the lens of their ethnic and religious identity. Because they are predominantly Shia, they are perceived as "Rafidis," and because they are Hazara, they are subjected to an especially radical Taliban interpretation that identifies them as enemies. Consequently, personal insecurity has become a constant and ever-present fear in the lives of ordinary Hazaras. Even newborn infants⁸ have been attacked in hospital beds less than an hour after birth, while mourning ceremonies and even collecting the dead bodies⁹ have not been spared from Violence.

During the [first year](#) of Taliban rule, the Bolaq Analysts Network documented 18 terrorist attacks against the Hazara and Shia communities as part of its Hazara Genocide Archive. These attacks included suicide bombings improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, and direct armed assaults. As a result, at least 222 Hazara civilians were killed. The highest concentration of attacks occurred in Kabul (44%), followed by Balkh Province (17%).

⁷ Jakub Mirowski, ["When you kill a Hazara, you kill two enemies": Is Genocide Threatening Minorities in Afghanistan?] OKO.Press, October 8, 2022 <https://oko.press/mniejszosci-w-afganistanie-grozi-ludobojstwo>

⁸ Doctors Without Borders, "Afghanistan: Massacre in a Maternity Ward: Honoring the Victims of the Attack on Dasht-e-Barchi Hospital in Kabul," August 21, 2020

⁹ Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Najim Rahim, "Bombing Outside Afghan School Kill at Least 90, with Girls as Targets," New York Times, May 8, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/08/world/asia/bombing-school-afghanistan.html>

According to the Bolaq Analysts Network's findings for the [second year](#) of Taliban rule (15 August 2022-15 August 2023), at least 22 targeted attacks against Hazara individuals were documented. These included targeted assassinations, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, mass poisoning of schoolchildren, and kidnappings. As a result, 32 Hazara men and women were killed or forcibly disappeared in several provinces. The documented incidents consisted of:

- 1 suicide attack;
- 2 bomb explosions;
- 5 cases of arrest followed by killing;
- 12 targeted assassinations;
- 1 case of mass poisoning; and
- 1 armed attack on a private residence.

In 2024, documentation by the Bolaq Analysts Network recorded at least six terrorist attacks against Hazaras, resulting in 32 deaths and 18 injuries. In May 2024, for the first time, an armed terrorist attack targeted foreign tourists in the city of Bamyan, killing and injuring several foreign nationals as well as local residents. In Septem 2024, ISIS-Khorasan claimed responsibility¹⁰ for an armed attack in the border area between Daikundi and Ghor provinces in central Afghanistan, during which at least 14 Hazara men traveling to welcome a religious pilgrimage caravan were killed. In response, Human Rights Watch¹¹ called upon the international community to take urgent measures to protect the Hazara population.

¹⁰ "ISKP Claims Responsibility for Attack on Hazaras in Central Afghanistan," Kabul Now, September 13, 2024, <https://www.kabulnow.com/2024/09/iskp-claims-responsibility-for-attack-on-hazaras-in-central-afghanistan/>

¹¹ Fereshta Abbasi, "Afghanistan's Hazara Community Needs Protection," Human Rights, Watch, September 13, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/13/afghanistan-hazara-community-needs-protection>

Our research further indicates that, in addition to ISIS-Khorasan, unidentified armed groups and members of the Taliban have also been involved in the killing of Hazaras. Of the 34 documented attacks, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for 14, while the remainder were attributed either to Taliban members or to unidentified armed individuals. Many experts argue, however, that because the Taliban repeatedly claim that no unauthorized armed groups operate in Afghanistan and maintain that they exercise complete control over the country, attacks officially attributed to "unknown gunmen" are also likely to have been carried out either by Taliban members themselves or by individuals acting with Taliban support or protection.

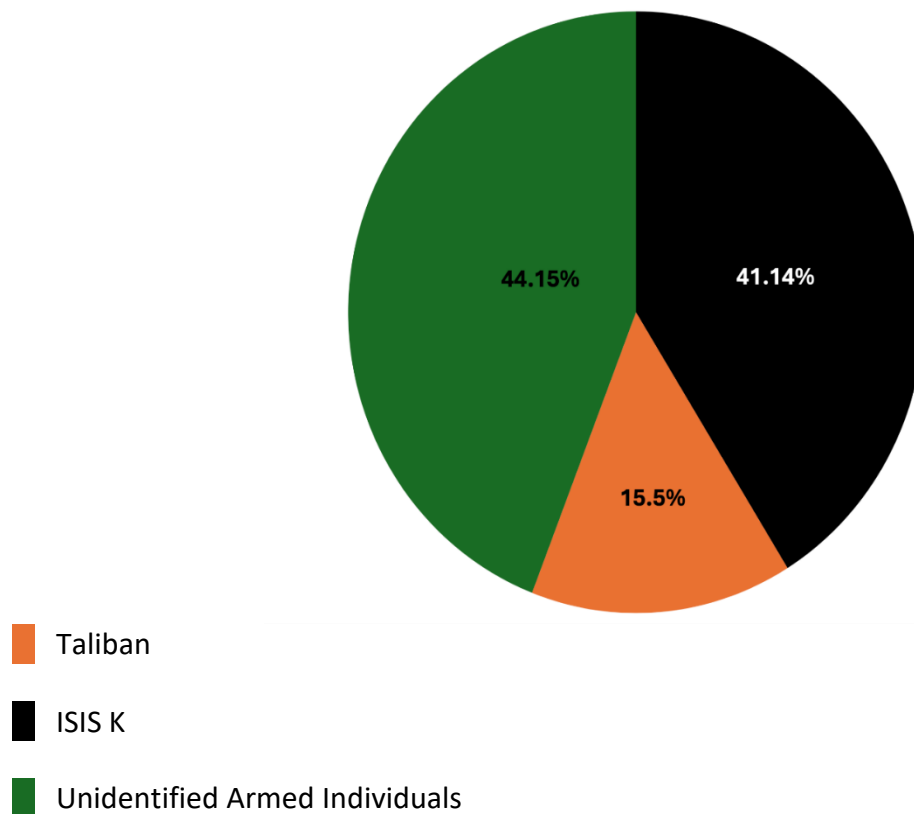


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of perpetrators responsible for the killing of Hazaras

Some analysts¹² regard these attacks in Hazara-populated provinces as unprecedented and interpret them as evidence of the Taliban's inability or unwillingness to protect the Hazara community. They believe that such attacks in Hazara-majority areas undermine the work of international humanitarian organizations and damage the tourism industry, which constitutes a major source of income for many residents of Bamyan. Following the Bamyan attack, the Taliban

¹² <https://www.afintl.com/202409139367>

arrested a local resident of the province, whose whereabouts remain unknown. Local sources reported that the detained individual was innocent and had been arrested merely to create the public impression that the perpetrator had been apprehended.

According to the findings of the Bolaq Analysts Network, during the past year alone (August 2024-August 2025), at least 19 Hazaras were killed by Kuchi nomads acting with Taliban support across Hazara-populated regions of Afghanistan. These findings suggest that the targeting of Hazaras has only changed in method rather than in purpose. During the previous two decades, Hazaras were frequently killed through roadside bombs, vehicle-borne explosives, and suicide attacks. Today, however, they are targeted directly by individuals operating with the support or protection of the Taliban.

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Overall, during five years of Taliban rule, at least 862 Hazaras have lost their lives as a result of terrorist attacks, including suicide bombings, bomb explosions, mass killings, and targeted assassinations. The table below summarizes casualties among Hazaras during this period.

Terrorist Attacks			Targeted Assassination
Killed	Injured	Total	
450	363	813	47

Table 1. Hazara casualties during the past five years

Yahya Baiza, a university professor and researcher specializing in the security situation of Hazaras in Afghanistan, stated:

"What has made the situation more alarming for all citizens of the country, especially the Hazaras, are two issues. First, there is the absence of accountable institutions. When schoolchildren are attacked in schools, worshippers in mosques, or travelers on the roads become victims of terrorist attacks, the Taliban suppress any public demands for security and accountability. Second, there is a complete lack of intelligence, early warning, and strategic planning to prevent future attacks. Under these circumstances, citizens, particularly Hazaras are trapped between ongoing terrorist attacks and the Taliban's refusal to accept responsibility."¹³

In addition to the repeated and deliberate attacks directed against the Hazara community throughout Afghanistan, the creation and expansion of a pervasive sense of insecurity has become one of the most significant threats facing this community. Security studies and sociology distinguish between objective security (the actual existence of threats and violence) and subjective security, or the individual's sense of security or insecurity. Within the framework of human security, insecurity is not limited to military threats; rather, any factor that threatens human dignity, freedom, identity, or well-being can generate a profound sense of insecurity.

For the Hazara community, the continuation of targeted violence, structural discrimination, inadequate security protection, and repeated attacks on educational, religious, and social institutions have endangered not only physical safety but also everyday life by fostering fear, distrust, and collective anxiety. This has significantly affected daily routines, social participation, and citizens' sense of belonging. The persistence of such conditions may lead to social isolation, restrictions on individual and collective freedoms, erosion of social capital, and declining public trust in the governing authorities.

As Mohammad Zaman, a resident of Bamyan, explained in an interview with the Bolaq Analysts Network:

"Although it is claimed that nationwide security exists, the Taliban's presence in power, given their past treatment of the Hazara people, their conduct over the past two decades, and their policies during the past four years, mean that I constantly feel insecure and at risk. Whenever I encounter caravans of Kuchi nomads on the road to Kabul, especially in Hazara areas; whenever I reach a Taliban checkpoint in

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/blog-viewpoints-61348197>

Jalrez; or whenever I visit a government office to conduct official business, I simply do not feel safe."¹⁴

Mohammad Kazem (a pseudonym), a member of the People's Commission of West Kabul,¹⁵ likewise told the Bolaq Analysts Network:

"People are deeply afraid. Although there are continual assurances that security has been established, far fewer people now participate in public religious ceremonies such as Ashura commemorations, Friday prayers, and Eid prayers than in the past."¹⁶

He attributed this fear to Taliban restrictions on public gatherings as well as the continuing insecurity. The widespread detention of women and girls from Hazara neighborhoods in Kabul has also become a major source of fear, following Hazara women and girls like a shadow. The media outlet Zan Times documented the testimony of one detained woman:

*"They took us to Police District 13 (Dasht-e Barchi in western Kabul), where they beat us with their fists, kicked us, and whipped us. They forced our heads under water. They questioned us about how we prayed and said, 'You are Hazara. You are not Muslim.' I will never forget that I was arrested simply because I was Hazara and because I was a woman."*¹⁷

Our findings likewise indicate that Hazara women and girls cannot travel safely even to nearby markets or friends' homes without fear of encountering the Taliban. Zohal, a resident of Omid-e Sabz Township in western Kabul, explained:

"Even when I go just two streets away to visit my friends, my parents call me repeatedly to make sure I've arrived safely, and they do the same when I return. They

¹⁴ Interview with Mohmmad Zaman a resident of Bamian via WhatsApp on May 29, 2026.

¹⁵ People Commission of West Kabul, is a public community initiative that was formed to coordinate cooperation between people and the security forces in large public religious gatherings like the Ashura religious events and the Nawroz festivities for the new year. After the reemergence of the Taliban, and serious limitations it functions as a ceremonial and formative entity.

¹⁶ Interview with Mohammad Kazem(pseudonym), a member of the People Commission of West Kabul, via WhatsApp on 29, 2026.

¹⁷ Zahra Nader and Freshta Ghani, "'I was arrested for the crime of being a Hazara and a woman'": The Taliban's 'Bad Hijab' (Improper dress) Campaign Targets Hazara Women," Zan Times, January 22, 2024, <https://zantimes.com/2024/01/22/i-was-arrested-for-the-crime-of-being-a-hazara-and-a-woman-the-taliban-s-bad-campaign-targets-hazara-women/>

are genuinely worried that something might happen to me on the way, whether because of thieves or Taliban members."¹⁸

According to the [documented](#) findings of the Hazara Genocide Archive, since the Taliban returned to power 47 Hazara men and women have been directly assassinated by Taliban members or unidentified armed individuals. The victims ranged in age from an eleven-year-old child to 70 years old, and the killings occurred in at least 11 provinces across Afghanistan.

Among the most recent documented cases, two Hazara citizens were killed in Daikundi and Ghazni Provinces. According to local reports, Mohammad Ali Toofan, originally from Shahrstan District of Daikundi Province and a former member of Afghanistan's National Security Forces who had turned to farming after the fall of the Republic, was killed in an armed attack on July 16 2026.¹⁹

Similarly, [Qader Ali Rafat](#), a resident of Shaki-Nawka village in Qarabagh District of Ghazni Province, disappeared on 16 July 2026. His body was discovered the following day in a nearby mountain. According to local reports, his body bore multiple gunshot wounds.

¹⁸ Interview with Zohal (pseudonym), one of the residents of Kabul, via WhatsApp on May 23, 2026

¹⁹ Besmellah Zahidi, "Former Intelligence Officer Killed in Daikundi as Attacks on Ex-Security Forces Continue," Kabul Now, July 17, 2026, <https://Kabulnow.com/2026/07/former-intelligence-officer-killed-in-daikundi-as-attacks-on-ex-security-forces-continue>

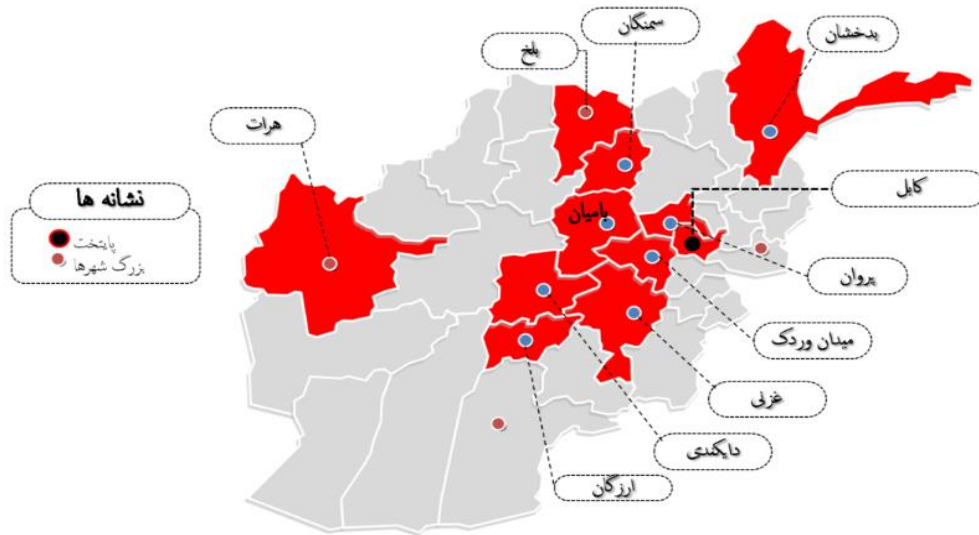


Figure 2. Provinces in which Hazaras were subjected to targeted assassinations between 15 August 2021 and August 2026.

Causal Analysis in Personal Security Dimension

The personal insecurity of Hazaras under Taliban rule stems from multiple interwoven structural, institutional, ideological, and geographic factors that together shape current conditions. From an ideological standpoint, the Taliban's radical narrative based on an exclusivist interpretation of the Hanafi sect and the excommunication (takfir) of followers of other sects, particularly Shias—treats Hazaras as "Rafidha" because of their religious affiliation. This view, reproduced in textbooks and in the statements of Taliban officials, portrays violence against Hazaras as not merely justified but, in some cases, religiously obligatory. In other words, Taliban ideology provides a moral-religious framework for targeting Hazaras that operates beyond mere political or ethnic motives.

In terms of institutional factors, the Taliban's security and judicial structure lacks any form of accountability, transparency, or separation of powers. The group's security forces are a mix of military-jihadist, religious, and tribal elements who often lack professional training and whose loyalty lies more with local commanders or religious leaders than with formal institutions. Within such a structure, no independent body exists to address targeted violence against Hazaras, and even when attacks are carried out by ISIS-Khorasan, there is neither sufficient capacity nor will to identify, pursue, and punish the perpetrators. In effect, the Taliban's security institutions are themselves part of the problem, and rather than protecting Hazaras, they sometimes, through indifference or indirect complicity, help create the conditions for continued violence.

At the structural level, mention should be made of the ethnic-religious composition of Taliban armed forces, which are formed predominantly from Sunni Pashtuns (particularly from southern and eastern regions)²⁰ and the Hazaras are not present in this structure. This ethnic divide puts the Hazaras in the situation of “other” outside of the power structure. Likewise, the shift in the pattern of attacks, from large-scale bombings to targeted assassinations and arbitrary arrests, reflects a transition from "spectacular" violence to "structural" violence, in which the goal is not merely killing but generating an atmosphere of collective fear and doubt.

In terms of geographic factors, a large share of predominantly Hazara-populated areas (Bamyan, Daikundi, Ghor, Samangan, Sar-e Pul, parts of Ghazni, Maidan Wardak) are located in central Afghanistan, historically distant from centers of decision-making and power. This geographic remoteness has made it difficult for civil society and international institutions to gain access, allowing the Taliban to implement discriminatory policies in these areas with greater impunity. On the other hand, the proximity of some Hazara-populated regions to the seasonal migration routes of Kuchi nomads has turned these areas into hotspots for proxy conflicts and tribal rivalries.

2. Legal Security

Conceptual Framework

Legal security, as a relatively new topic in legal and security studies, is considered one of the fundamental pillars of a state based on the rule of law. More specifically, within human security studies, "legal security", as an important dimension of both individual and social security, refers to the existence of a just, accessible legal system grounded in the rule of law. Specifically, legal security can be understood as a condition and process in which individuals and groups enjoy effective legal protection, equal access to justice, and immunity from discrimination and abuse of power.

Qadri Tarak, for instance, has described legal security as "legitimate expectation" ,meaning that legal security is a condition inferable from the clarity and precision of legal rules, enabling individuals to know their rights and obligations and make decisions accordingly.²¹ Citing France's Council of State, he also regards legal security as a fundamental requirement of the rule of law,

²⁰ <https://amu.tv/fa/38995>

²¹ Qadri Tarak, “The Concept of the Principle of Legal Security and its Constitutional Value,” *Ancient land International Scientific Journal* 7, no.2(2025):152 <https://doi.org/10.36719/2706-6185/44/151-157>

emphasizing that laws must be "clear and understandable and must not be subject to unexpected excessive changes over time."

Given the above, legal security is not limited merely to the existence of formal laws; it also encompasses the actual degree to which justice is realized, the effectiveness of judicial institutions, and the guarantee of equal access for all citizens to legal mechanisms. In effect, legal security only has meaning when individuals can pursue their rights through legal institutions without fear of discrimination or reprisal.

Findings

After seizing power, the Taliban leader annulled all laws in force under the previous "Republic" government of Afghanistan and has since issued dozens of new documents, without observing democratic legislative principles, as legislative instruments, based solely on Hanafi jurisprudential sources. Under such conditions, particularly with regard to the Hazara community, legal security has faced serious challenges. The enactment of laws based on Hanafi religious doctrine, interpreted through an intensely radical Taliban narrative restricted equal access to judicial institutions, weak legal guarantees against targeted violence, and the absence of effective mechanisms for the impartial handling of complaints, have all contributed to a sense of injustice and eroded trust in the regime.

Under these conditions, legal security is weakened not only at the institutional level but is also reflected in individuals' lived experience as a feeling of vulnerability to discrimination and the absence of legal protection. This situation can lead to the reproduction of a cycle of injustice, heightened social fear, and diminished collective trust.

The Taliban through the laws that they have enacted and the content that they disseminate as sources of the group's legal framework, have effectively branded followers of the Shia faith, who constitute nearly the entirety of the Hazara community, as "Rafidha" and collaborators with infidels,²² and have deemed their religious and cultural occasions (commemorations of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, peace be upon him, and the ancient Nowruz celebration) to be heretical innovations. In July 2024, Ahmadullah Muttaqi, head of the Taliban's Information and

²² The Taliban Governor Who Called Shias Unbelievers, Now Looks to Reassure Them, "Afghanistan International, December 4, 2023, <https://www.afintl.com/202312056116>

Culture Department in Herat, in a meeting with Shia clerics, called the Ashura ceremonies a "political and foreign-inspired innovation" ²³ and stressed that such ceremonies must be prevented. At the same time, serious restrictions were imposed on how ceremonies such as those of the month of Muharram could be held, both in content and in form, with 2026 witnessing the harshest restrictions yet imposed by the Taliban in this regard, which even led to the arrest and imprisonment, accompanied by humiliation and insult, of dozens of followers of the Shia faith, especially Hazaras, across Afghanistan.²⁴

Based on credible reports journalists who gave coverage to the Muharram ceremonies were detained.²⁵ Based on these same narratives, numerous civil and criminal cases have been brought against Hazaras, whether as individuals or collectively against the residents of a locality, by individuals backed by the Taliban. As a result, over the past four years, Hazaras, without the right to a fair defense or due process, have been forced to pay millions of Afghanis in penalties, as well as to be forcibly displaced from their land. For example, an investigative report by KabulNow²⁶ shows that, after the Taliban takeover, Kuchis, with the direct support of local Taliban authorities, have brought unprecedented financial claims against Hazara villagers and, in some cases, seized their farmland.

The use of hate-filled language, whether in the official texts of the Taliban regime or in the statements of its officials, against Hazaras is becoming normalized. Although hate speech and the dehumanization of Hazaras in Afghanistan has a long history and has largely been used as a tool of oppression against this ethnic group, under Taliban rule this approach has intensified and is being employed without any fear of consequences.

In some documented cases, local officials affiliated with the Taliban's "Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" structure in Bamyan province have referred to Hazara professors and students using terms such as "apostate" conduct that human rights observers have assessed as an instance of religious stigmatization threatening social coexistence. It has also been reported that some local Taliban officials in central regions of the country, including Jaghori and Malistan, have addressed Shia Hazaras with derogatory religious language and questioned their religious

²³ <https://www.afintl.com/202407118724>

²⁴ Afghanistan's Shia Community Marks Ashura Under Tight Taliban Restrictions," KabulNow, June 26, 2026, <https://Kabulnow.com/2026/06/afghanistans-shia-community-marks-ashura-under-tight-taliban-restrictions/>

²⁵ "Taliban Detains Female Journalist in Kabul Over Ashura Coverage," Afghanistan International, June 26, 2026, <https://www.afintl.com/en/202606262262>

²⁶ Sayed Madadi, Jalil Raunaq, Sakina Amiri, and Amir Behnam, "Law of the Gun: How Local Conflicts Became Extortion Sprees," KabulNow, January 23, 2024, <https://kabulnow.com/2024/01/law-of-the-gun/>

legitimacy, with some analysts²⁷ describing this approach as spreading hatred against Hazaras and laying the groundwork for continued genocide.

The absence of codified laws grounded in Hazara social and religious values has created a persistent fear among this population regarding the Taliban's treatment of them under the pretext of law and sharia violations. The Taliban periodically enacts new laws and directives, all of which, in one way or another, disregard the social, cultural, and religious values of Hazaras and Shias, forcing them to comply even against their own beliefs and convictions. Recently, the Taliban issued a multi-article directive titled the "Students' Pledge" in Afghan universities, requiring all students to commit to its implementation. Under Article Six of this pledge, students following other schools of thought, including Shia (Jafari, Ismaili), are obligated to convert to the Hanafi Sunni school.²⁸

Since 2021 and the Taliban's rise to power, a large number of Hazara women and girls have been arrested, imprisoned, and tortured on the pretext of failing to observe hijab, based on the Taliban's radical narrative. This is despite the fact that, according to local residents, all the women and girls who were detained had been dressed in a manner consistent with what is understood as hijab within Islamic culture, yet the Taliban claimed that this manner of dress violated the rules they had set.

Genocide Watch states that Taliban forces arrest Hazara women and girls off the streets and take them to their bases, then demand large sums of money from their families in exchange for their release. Zarin Taj, the author of this article, has argued that the arrest of Hazara women and girls may be part of a broader pattern of systematic suppression, exclusion, and harm directed against this ethnic group. In her view, the intersection of ethnic and gender-based discrimination against Hazara women has exposed them to multiple layers of structural violence²⁹.

²⁷ Bismellah Alizada, "Genocidal Attacks and Hate Speech Against Shia Hazara under Taliban Rule," trans. Maisam Iltaf, Kabulnow, November 10, 2024, <https://kabulnow.com/2024/11/genocidal-attacks-and-hate-speech-against-shia-hazaras-under-taliban-rule/>

²⁸ Nazanin Mohseni, "Taliban Require Private University Students to Pledge Adherence to the Hanafi School," KabulNow, May 25, 2026, <https://kabulnow.com/2026/05/taliban-require-private-university-students-to-pledge-adherence-to-the-hanafi-school/>

²⁹ Zarin Taj, in collaboration with Jay Simpson, "Afghanistan's Gender Apartheid: The Genocide of Hazara Women," Genocide Watch, April 10, 2024, <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/taliban-gender-apartheid-genocide-of-hazara-women>

Causal Analysis in the Dimension of Legal Security

The legal security of the Hazara community in Afghanistan under Taliban rule is not a temporary shortcoming but the result of a fundamental redesign of the legal system based on an exclusivist ideology that has transformed "legal security" from a universal right into a "group privilege." At the root-cause level, the first factor is the historical non-institutionalization of "law" as the final authority for resolving disputes in contemporary Afghan history; in the absence of a tradition of the "rule of law state," laws have always been a tool in the hands of ruling power, and the change of legal system with the change of government has become the norm. The second root cause is the structural link between "ethnic-religious identity" and "access to rights," which has enabled the Taliban to redefine the legal system according to their own religious school (Hanafi, radically interpreted).

At the level of proximate causes, four key direct factors have turned legal security into systematic violation: first, the complete abolition of the previous legal system and its replacement with radical Hanafi jurisprudence, which has destroyed the "frame of reference" and eliminated "legitimate expectation," since a Hazara citizen cannot predict what constitutes a crime or its punishment. Second, the definition of Shia identity as a "continuous crime," through excommunication and the branding of religious and cultural practices as heretical innovation, which places every Hazara at risk of accusation. Third, the elimination of judicial independence and its absorption into the power structure, meaning that in the absence of an independent prosecution service and impartial authority, any claim (such as those brought by Kuchis) can be turned into a final verdict and punishment (fines, expulsion, land seizure). Fourth, the creation of arbitrary, uncoded rules such as the "Students' Pledge," which obligates Shia students to change their religion, generating a persistent fear among Hazaras of violating the law.

These causes have led to specific tangible consequences: the de-judicialization of disputes and their transformation into tools of extortion and demographic change (payment of millions of Afghanis and forced displacement), arbitrary arrest as a form of extrajudicial punishment (the arrest of Hazara women and girls under the pretext of hijab and the extraction of ransom for their release), and denial of the right to defense and fair adjudication (absence of independent counsel and impartial judges). Alongside these, profound subjective consequences have also emerged: the destruction of collective trust in the legal system, a chronic sense of vulnerability, the normalization of discrimination, and a deep gap between "codified law" and "felt justice" that has extinguished the motivation for civic participation.

Ultimately, the causal chain of the violation of legal security runs as follows: the absence of a tradition of rule-of-law governance and the linkage of identity with rights, interacting with the

abolition of the former legal system, the definition of Hazara identity owing to their religious (Shia) and ethnic identity, as a crime, the destruction of judicial independence, and arbitrary legislation, have led to the tangible consequences of denial of the right to defense, arbitrary arrests, and demographic change, which in turn reproduce the subjective consequences of destroyed trust and normalized discrimination, ultimately reinforcing the "cycle of structural injustice." What makes the situation more than a mere legal deficiency is the systematization of legal insecurity across three levels: legislation (based on a single religion and non-democratic), adjudication (absence of guaranteed impartiality and right to defense), and enforcement (the simultaneous role of accuser, judge, and executor held by military-security forces). This triple overlap has reduced "legal security" to an arbitrary and threatening condition in which the law, instead of providing protection, has become the primary generator of insecurity and discrimination against Hazaras, and "rule of law" has given way to "rule of dominant ideology."

3. Social Security

Conceptual Framework

Social security is one of the fundamental dimensions of human and national security, referring to the preservation of social cohesion, public trust, stable social relations, and the protection of groups and communities from structural threats, violence, discrimination, and instability. Barry Buzan, a prominent security studies theorist, conceptualized "societal security" in 1991 as the protection and continuity of collective identity against perceived threats to language, culture, religion, and national identity.³⁰ If we examine the current situation of Hazaras based on Buzan's definition, we find that all the elements identified as constituting collective identity, such as language, culture, and the religious values of Hazaras, are seriously threatened by official Taliban policies in Afghanistan.

Within the human security approach as well, social security refers to the protection of individuals and social groups from fear, instability, violence, and social deprivation. This concept is not limited merely to the absence of physical threats but also includes a sense of social belonging, trust in governing institutions, the possibility of social participation, and access to social support.

³⁰ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991, 118-134.

Accordingly, the spread of insecurity, distrust, crime, discrimination, and a sense of social abandonment can severely weaken a society's social security.

Furthermore, the UN Human Development Report of 1994 itself notes that most people derive their sense of security from membership in a group, such as a family, community, organization, or a racial or ethnic group, which can provide cultural identity and a reassuring set of values.³¹ However, an examination of the situation of Hazaras in Afghanistan shows that belonging to an ethnic group, Hazara, has itself become a source of social and individual insecurity. Hazara-populated regions have been deliberately exposed to insecurity, and the Taliban regime, despite understanding this situation, has taken no precautionary or preventive measures whatsoever.

Findings

From 2021 to the present, despite widespread Taliban claims of providing security in Afghanistan, evidence and field findings show that social security in many Hazara-populated regions has deteriorated. Findings of the Bolaq Analysts Network published in the 2025 [report](#) show that 48.5 percent of interviewees believed the security situation in Hazara-populated areas had worsened compared to the previous year.

The findings of the current research also show that residents of various Hazara-populated regions, including Kabul city, Herat city, Mazar-e-Sharif city, and certain areas of Ghazni province, particularly Jaghori district, have a noticeable increase in social insecurity and crime. According to this data, 78 percent of respondents stated that the security situation in their areas had worsened compared to the previous year.

Mohammad Ali, a resident of District 13 of Kabul city, states in an interview:

Insecurity in this district grows day by day. People have even taken precautionary measures such as increasing the number of private guards [chowkidars] and installing security cameras to protect their property and belongings; even so, reports of theft and mugging are heard almost every week.³²

³¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 31.

³² Interview with Mohammad Ali a resident of 13th district in Kabul via WhatsApp on May 18, 2026

Meanwhile, some media outlets³³ have also reported an increase in insecurity and crime in these areas, writing that local residents have been forced to individually and locally adopt security measures to protect their lives and property. This situation reflects the growing sense of social insecurity in Hazara-populated regions and also points to the Taliban's diminishing attention to providing security in these areas.

Mohammad (pseudonym), a resident of Jaghori district, Ghazni province, also says:

Jaghori used to be one of the safest areas in Afghanistan, especially within Ghazni province; but over the past four years, there have been several cases of armed home invasions, murder, and robbery of commercial premises.³⁴

According to him, insecurity has increased to such an extent that people have been forced to guard equipment and tools used at deep agricultural wells around the clock, since in numerous cases, people's tools and equipment have been stolen. Meanwhile, according to reports from credible media outlets, in June 2026, Mohammad Ali Ataei, a dual Afghan-Australian citizen who had traveled from Australia to Afghanistan, was killed by gunfire near his father's home in the Baba area of Jaghori district.³⁵ While some sources claimed he was killed by a relative over a family dispute, the availability of weapons and the sense of lawlessness in society have emboldened the perpetrator to feel he could easily kill another person.

This situation shows that insecurity in Hazara-populated regions is not limited merely to physical threats, but has gradually led to the erosion of social trust, a diminished sense of collective security, restricted economic activity, and the spread of social anxiety. The continuation of such conditions could have far-reaching consequences for social cohesion, civic participation, and the sense of civic belonging among the Hazara community.

According to statistics documented by the Hazara Genocide Archive, since the Taliban's rise to power, at least 36 terrorist attacks targeting large gatherings of the Hazara and Shia community have occurred. These attacks have taken place in 12 provinces, using various methods such as suicides, bombings, and armed attacks directly targeting Hazara and Shia populations.

³³ <https://www.afintl.com/202604268501>

³⁴ Interview with Mohammad a resident of Jaghori district of Ghazni province via WhatsApp on May 10, 2026

³⁵ <https://amu.tv/242982/>

In conversations conducted with many Hazaras residing inside Afghanistan, we found that no one is free from the struggle for survival. Everything else, including human rights and freedoms, education, and so on, has fallen to a second or third priority, or even lower, in people's real lives. In other words, the conditions the Taliban has imposed on a large part of Afghanistan's population, particularly the Hazara people, have reduced them to simply struggling to stay alive, with everything else valued far less than survival itself. This condition is clearly visible in Hazara behavior. Taliban laws and conduct have imposed every possible restriction on this population. Due to the absence of necessary international and local support, nearly everyone has concluded that there is no hope for a lasting accommodation with the Taliban, and so, instead of being able to trust others, they spend their energy trying to prevent further harms to themselves. Setting up local night watches, families imposing restrictions on the movement of women and girls, returning home early before sunset and nightfall, avoiding contact or encounters with the Taliban as much as possible especially in major cities, and self-censorship even regarding the expression of one's own pain, are among the mechanisms the Hazara people have adopted for survival. The issue of Taliban support for the Kuchis, as discussed in the legal security section and elaborated in more detail elsewhere in this research, also arises as one of the threats to the social security of the Hazara people. Kuchis enter Hazara farmland without any fear of confrontation from villagers and seize their property. In the most recent incident, according to local media reports, Kuchis, with Taliban support, in several areas including Panjab district of Bamyan³⁶ province, Behsood district of Maidan Wardak province, and Kajran and Khadir districts of Daikundi province, seizing land, causing extensive damage to irrigated and rain-fed farmland belonging to local residents, and also beating the local residents.

Causal Analysis in the Dimension of Social Security

The social dimension of Hazara insecurity, like other dimensions of insecurity, is rooted in structural, institutional, ideological, and geographic factors that, interacting with one another, have created the conditions for the collapse of social cohesion. From a structural standpoint, the Taliban, as a group composed predominantly of Pashtun Sunni men, seeks to redefine Afghan national identity based on its own race, ethnicity, and religion. This approach defines Hazaras as the "other" within the power structure, not only excluded from governance, but their cultural, linguistic, and religious identity are also stripped of legitimacy. Taliban policies on language (relegating Dari to a secondary language), religion (denial of the Shia faith), and culture (banning

³⁶ Farhaad Farhaad, "Kuchi and Villager Clashes in Bamyan Leave Several Injured, Sources Say," 8am Media, June 16, 2026 <https://8am.media/eng/kuchi-and-villager-clashes-in-bamyan-leave-several-injured-sources-say/>

Nowruz, music, etc.) are all aimed at forced homogenization and the denial of pluralism, challenging Hazara social security. In terms of institutional factors, local Taliban institutions (governors, security commanders, judges, etc.) lack accountability to the people, and their conduct is shaped by loyalty to central leadership and group interests. In such an environment, not only are Hazaras left unprotected, but these very institutions sometimes play a direct role in creating insecurity (such as supporting Kuchis, arbitrary detention, extortion, etc.). The absence of independent civil institutions and the suppression of any form of social organizing have made the social environment deeply stifling.

At the ideological level, the Taliban's narrative of "Islamic unity" is, in practice, a form of forced unity based on the Hanafi school, which regards any independent Shia or Ismaili identity as "heretical innovation" and "deviation." This approach places Hazaras in a position where, for social survival, they are forced to deny part of their identity or conceal it. Self-censorship, concealment during religious ceremonies, and reduced participation in collective activities are among the psychological and social consequences of this ideological pressure.

From a geographic standpoint, Hazara-populated regions in central and western Afghanistan, owing to their mountainous and remote location, have always been deprived of infrastructure development, access to government services, and the presence of international civil institutions. This geographic deprivation, in addition to lowering living standards, has also reduced the possibility of oversight and pressure on local institutions, allowing the Taliban greater freedom to implement discriminatory policies in these areas. Additionally, the presence of armed opposition groups in some of these areas has turned them into sites of proxy conflict, which has not been without impact on the social security of residents.

4. Political Security

Conceptual Framework

Based on the explanation the United Nations provided in 1994 regarding political security, it can be understood that political security refers to a condition in which individuals can live in a society where basic human rights are respected and where they are protected from state repression,

torture, arbitrary detention, forced disappearance, and other forms of violation of political and civil rights.³⁷

Also, according to the definition provided by "Human Security and International Affairs," political security is a condition and set of mechanisms in which the political system is able to ensure the stability of governance, the rule of law, and citizens' fundamental rights; withstand internal and external threats; and, through legitimate and accountable governance, preserve the participation and political rights of all social groups without discrimination.³⁸

Findings

Examining both definitions of political security, the current situation in Afghanistan under Taliban control can be considered entirely unstable, and the condition of Hazaras in particular can be considered deeply concerning. Based on the Taliban's demonstrated approach over the five years, not only does the current regime lack the necessary political and legal legitimacy, but Hazaras, as one of the social groups residing in the country, face some of the worst forms of human rights violations and collective persecution, owing to the enactment of radical laws and the imposition of severe restrictions on their social life, and are also clearly exposed to security threats across multiple dimensions, to an extent that constitutes serious evidence of genocide.

Civil protests are entirely banned, and any form of protest is suppressed in the harshest possible manner. In the first year, a number of women and girls in major cities, including Kabul, protested against Taliban laws and governance, but they were collectively arrested, tortured, humiliated, and imprisoned. Among them, Hazara girls and women have faced a fate worse than other protesting women and girls. The media outlet Jaddeh-e-Abrisham [Silk Road] reported that Hazara girls, due to their ethnicity and religion, have been subjected to more torture and humiliation than others. Meanwhile, Zan Times, in a 2024 report, quoted a protesting girl detained by the Taliban as saying: "I was arrested and tortured by the Taliban for two things: one, my ethnicity (Hazara), and the other, my gender (being a woman)."³⁹ According to findings of the Bolaq Analysts Network, Hazara Genocide Archive in its fourth-year [report](#) (August 2024-August

³⁷ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 32.

³⁸ Centre for Human Security and International Affairs (CHSIA), "Political Security," [CHSIA.org](https://chsia.org/political-security/), March 25, 2024, <https://chsia.org/political-security/>

³⁹ Zahra Nader and Freshta Ghani, "'I was arrested for the crime of being a Hazara woman: 'The Taliban's 'Bad Hijab' Campaign Targets Hazara Women,'" Zan Times, January 22, 2024, <https://zantimes.com/2024/01/22/i-was-arrested-for-the-crime-of-being-a-hazaras-and-a-woman-the-talibans-bad-hijab-campaign-targets-hazara-women/>

2025), titled "The Situation of Hazaras Under Taliban Rule," 85.6 percent of interviewees reported an increase in cultural and religious discrimination and psychological insecurity in Hazara-populated regions due to the appointment of Taliban members to government offices. In the same document, 51.3 percent claimed that access to healthcare services has become more difficult since the Taliban took power. This situation clearly shows that Hazara political security, particularly regarding the guarantee of their fundamental and human rights, has been damaged, and they face serious political insecurity.

In the most recent case, on June 9, 2026, forces from the Taliban's so-called Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice department went to Sharak-e-Jibrael in District 13 of Herat city, a predominantly Hazara area in western Herat, to arrest women on the pretext of hijab violations (as defined by the Taliban themselves), which was met with a collective public reaction, prompting the Taliban to carry out a widespread crackdown on the population under this pretext.⁴⁰ According to credible media reports, at least 2 people were killed and several others wounded. UNAMA, in its report dated June 10, 2026,⁴¹ confirmed one death and the wounding of several others.

A man named Morteza Karimi, who had been wounded in this Taliban attack, died on June 16, 2026.⁴² According to published reports, after being wounded, when he sought treatment at private hospitals, they refused to treat him under Taliban orders, and it was only after several hours that he was taken to a government hospital in the city center. His death resulted largely from the Taliban's order banning the treatment of those wounded in the protest, combined with severe bleeding and subsequent inadequate care at the government hospital, as he had been wounded in the leg, an injury unlikely to be fatal if treated promptly and properly. Some experts⁴³ believe that the Taliban feel no guilt or sense of wrongdoing regarding their repression and violence against Hazaras, since, in the Taliban's view, Hazaras, due to their religious affiliation (Shia), are in some sense deserving of such pressure.

⁴⁰ Flora Drury, "Two Reportedly Killed as Women Take Part in Rare Protest in Afghanistan," BBC News, June 8, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c992vdk3g3yo>

⁴¹ UNAMA, "UNAMA Alarmed by Arrests of Women in Herat Afghanistan and Excessive Use of Force Against Protesters," Press Release, June, 10, 2026, <https://unama.unmission.org/en/press-release/unama-alarmed-by-arrests-of-women-in-herat-afghanistan-and-excessive-use-of>

⁴² Nazanin Mohseni, "Death of Herat Protest Injured; Morteza Karimi buried Under Taliban Surveillance," KabulNow, June 16, 2026 <https://kabulnow.com/2026/06/death-of-herat-protest-injured-mortaza-karimi-buried-under-taliban-surveillance/>

⁴³ Besmillah Taban, "What is the Threshold for Action?: A Question Afghanistan Asks the World," The Diplomat, June 12, 2026, <https://thediplomat.com/2026/06/what-is-the-threshold-for-action-a-question-afghanistan-asks-the-world/>

Causal Analysis in the Dimension of Political Security

The political security of the Hazara community in Afghanistan under Taliban rule is not a temporary state of instability but the result of a fundamental redefinition of the concept of "governance" based on ethnic-religious monopoly and the elimination of any non-aligned political participation, which has transformed "political security" from a universal right into a state of "structural repression."

At the root-cause level, the absence of a tradition of participatory, accountable governance in contemporary Afghan history, and the structural link between "ethnic-religious identity" and "access to political power," are the historical foundations that have enabled the Taliban to monopolize governance for their own group (Sunni Hanafi Pashtuns) and define Hazaras as a "political other" with no share in power.

At the level of proximate causes, four key factors have turned Hazara political security into systematic violation: first, the denial of Hazara political legitimacy through the redefinition of "active citizenship" as "membership in the ruling group," and the complete exclusion of Hazaras from decision-making structures. Second, the absolute prohibition of any form of civil protest and preemptive violence against it, such that any expression of grievance is treated as a "security threat" and met with mass arrest, torture, and humiliation (particularly against Hazara women, given the dual burden of ethnicity and gender). Third, the destruction of independent civil and political institutions, leaving Hazaras with no structure through which to pursue their political rights. Fourth, the imposition of discriminatory policies in public services (such as restricted access to healthcare and education) as a tool for exerting pressure and forcing Hazaras into passivity.

These causes have led to specific tangible consequences: arbitrary arrest and torture as tools of political repression (as in the suppression of women's protests and mass arrests in Sharak-e-Jibrael, Herat), denial of the right to life and health through the denial of urgent medical care (as in the refusal to treat the wounded, leading to the death of Morteza Karimi, as well as the refusal to accept blood donations for the wounded of the terrorist attack on Abdul Rahim Shaheed school in west Kabul in 2022), and the spread of political insecurity across all dimensions of life (with 85.6 percent of Hazaras reporting increased discrimination and 51.3 percent reporting difficulty accessing healthcare).

Alongside these tangible consequences, profound subjective consequences have also emerged: the complete destruction of trust in any existing political mechanism, a chronic sense of political isolation and the absence of any "hope for reform," and the normalization of political violence, which over time reinforces the belief that "Hazaras deserve such treatment." Ultimately, the causal chain of the violation of political security runs as follows: the absence of a tradition of participatory governance and the linkage of identity with power, interacting with the denial of Hazara political legitimacy, the prohibition of protest, the destruction of civil institutions, and discriminatory policies, have led to the tangible consequences of arbitrary arrest, denial of the right to life, and the spread of insecurity, which in turn reproduce the subjective consequences of destroyed trust, political isolation, and normalized violence. What places this situation beyond simple political repression is the systematization of political insecurity across three levels: identification (being Hazara as a political crime), decision-making (complete exclusion from the power structure), and enforcement (compounded violence against Hazaras in crackdowns). Within such a structure, Hazaras are not only denied the right to political participation, but their very "political existence" is treated as a permanent threat, and "governance" is transformed into "domination," and "politics" into "a tool for elimination."

Chapter Summary

A multidimensional examination of the security situation of the Hazara community during the five years of Taliban rule 2021-2026 (1400-1405 [solar-hijri]) shows that this ethnic-religious group, in the absence of any rule of law grounded in international human rights standards, faces an overlapping combination of personal, legal, social, and political insecurity that, taken together, systematically threatens their daily life, collective identity, and possibility of survival. This situation, beyond objective and episodic insecurity, has become a pattern of structural discrimination and targeted violence that, based on existing findings, can be examined as falling within the category of crimes against humanity and even instances of genocide.

In the dimension of personal security, despite Taliban claims of providing nationwide security in Afghanistan, the Hazara community continues to be the target of terrorist attacks, individual assassinations, arbitrary arrests, torture, and forced disappearance. Documentation by the Bolaq Analysts Network and the Hazara Genocide Archive records show that at least 36 terrorist attacks during this period, including attacks in central and previously secure provinces such as Bamyan and Daikundi, as well as 47 direct assassinations by Taliban agents or unidentified armed individuals in eleven provinces, resulting in the deaths of at least 497 people, of whom 81 were women and 44 were children, and the wounding of 363 others, reflecting the continuation of violence that, in nature, differs little from the targeting pattern of the previous two decades,

even though its form and tools have changed. The statistical decline in attacks does not signify reduced danger but is better understood as a shift in tactics as well as constraints stemming from a suppressed information environment. Causal analysis showed that ideological factors (excommunication of Shias), institutional factors (unaccountable security structure), structural factors (ethnic composition of armed forces), and geographic factors (remoteness of Hazara-populated areas) have all played a direct role in shaping and sustaining this insecurity.

Within this same framework, the subjective sense of insecurity, as one component of personal security, has spread to a level where daily life, movement, social participation, and even presence in public and religious spaces are accompanied by constant fear and anxiety. This is broadly reflected in the lived narratives of residents of Hazara-populated regions, especially women and girls, and mechanisms such as self-censorship, restricted movement, increased reliance on private guards, and early return home have become institutionalized as survival strategies against structural insecurity.

In the dimension of legal security, the annulment of all laws from the Republic era, the enactment of new regulations based solely on a radical interpretation of the Hanafi school, and the non-recognition of the Shia faith and its cultural and religious occasions, have effectively left the Hazara community without any legal or judicial protection. Hate-filled language, both official and unofficial, including addressing Shias with terms such as "Rafizi" and "apostate", has become normalized not only in the statements of officials but also in official texts, contributing to the delegitimization of Hazara religious and ethnic identity. This approach, together with financial pressure, land seizures, forced displacement, and widespread arrests of women and girls under the pretext of hijab, points to the fundamental collapse of legal security and the absence of any enforceable guarantee for the protection of this community's basic rights. Among the clearest examples is the issuance of pledges requiring students who follow the Shia faith to adopt the Hanafi school, an act itself constituting forced homogenization and the denial of religious pluralism.

In the dimension of social security, findings indicate a significant increase in insecurity and crime in Hazara-populated regions. According to field data and surveys, 78 percent of respondents assessed the past year's security situation as worse than the year before. The spread of armed robbery, murder, mugging, and property seizure, alongside direct Taliban support for Kuchis in seizing irrigated and rain-fed farmland, and the killing of Hazara residents, have severely weakened collective security structures and social cohesion in these regions. Additionally, the threat to collective identity based on language, culture, and religious values, per Barry Buzan's theory, all of which are exposed to Taliban policies, reflects the collapse of the social foundations

of security. Causal analysis showed that structural factors (redefinition of national identity), institutional factors (absence of accountable institutions), ideological factors (excommunication and branding as heresy), and geographic factors (remoteness and deprivation), together, have created an atmosphere of distrust, isolation, and social anxiety in which social trust and civic belonging have been replaced by passive survival strategies.

In the dimension of political security, the absence of political legitimacy, the widespread suppression of any civil protest, the prohibition of political participation, and the arrest and torture of protesters, particularly Hazara women and girls, who, due to the intersection of ethnic and gender discrimination, face the harshest forms of violence, reflect the systematic violation of this community's political and civil rights. Documentation shows that even in cases of professional or local protests, the Taliban responds with the harshest methods and without any accountability, carrying out arrests and torture in which "being Hazara" and "being a woman" are treated as crimes.

Overall, this research shows that five years of Taliban rule have not only turned Afghanistan into a country devoid of human security for all its citizens, but have placed the Hazara community, as a deliberately targeted group, at the center of a multilayered system of discrimination, violence, and deprivation. The overlap of personal, legal, social, and political insecurity has created a pervasive cycle of vulnerability in which survival takes precedence over every other right, forcing people to adopt individual strategies to minimize harm. The absence of accountable institutions, the legal vacuum regarding citizenship rights, and the Taliban's ideological approach to redefining national and religious identity have laid the groundwork for cultural and physical genocide, making the urgent need for attention from the international community, human rights institutions, and monitoring mechanisms to protect this at-risk community more evident than ever.

The continuation of this situation not only endangers the survival of the Hazara community but will also pose fundamental challenges to Afghanistan's future stability and the possibility of any lasting peace. Therefore, any approach to political transition and the provision of security in Afghanistan that does not take into account the specific situation of Hazaras and guarantee their equal rights, political participation, and existential security will be neither comprehensive nor sustainable.

Chapter Two

Economic Situation

Introduction

With the collapse of Afghanistan's republican system and the Taliban's military takeover of the country on August 15, 2021, Afghanistan's economic system also collapsed: employees' salaries stopped, commercial markets lost their vitality, logistics and service companies that had contracts and dealings with the Afghan government went bankrupt and their money was mostly never paid, and a large number of Afghans tried to flee the country. Some of these people left during the evacuation process organized for the local staff of foreign countries, while many others sold their household goods and belongings at negligible prices and set out illegally and through smuggling networks toward Iran and Pakistan, just to escape hunger for a while, enduring all kinds of humiliation and insult in order to feed themselves and their children in other countries. This dealt a double economic blow to the community: first, the small savings a family had accumulated over many years were sold off cheaply and lost; second, Afghanistan's already semi-active commercial market fell into recession, as everyone was selling but no one was buying.

Others who remained in Afghanistan, due to the dire economic situation, resorted to selling their children⁴⁴ in order to provide a little food for the family and to save the sold child from starvation; still others, having already sold their children, were forced by the disastrous economic conditions to sell parts of their own bodies [organs].⁴⁵

Meanwhile, after the fall of the Republic, Afghanistan's banks suspended their operations, freezing the small savings many people had in these banks, leaving people to experience an extremely dire livelihood and economic situation. When Afghan banks gradually resumed operations in early 2022, people formed long lines in front of bank doors, waiting for days and weeks for their turn to withdraw the small sums trapped in the banks just to get by. These long

⁴⁴ Tolo News, "Sale of a girl child because of poverty", October 22021, video

https://youtu.be/h*rSxKAYz6E?is=SL35-lhAEatpDh-Y

⁴⁵ Sale of new born due to poverty, <https://8am.media/fa/sell-babies-due-to-poverty-friday-i-dropped-four-daughters-42000-afghani/>
<https://8am.media/fa/selling-children-in-three-northern-provinces-about-70-children-were-sold-last-year>

lines gradually shortened, but withdrawing money from banks has to this day never returned to its previous, normal state.

Since human settlements in Afghanistan are highly dispersed, the economic conditions, economic resources, and daily work of the population are similarly dispersed and fragmented, which makes a comprehensive analysis of Afghanistan's economic situation very difficult, both because of this dispersion and because of the current conditions under a totalitarian regime in Afghanistan.⁴⁶ In addition, the statistics and figures published by the current regime in Afghanistan can never be trusted, since they bear no correspondence to objective reality and field research within the community. Therefore, the present research focuses on field study of the economic situation of Hazaras during the five years of Taliban rule in Afghanistan. It should be noted that, due to limited resources, lack of time, political conditions, social repression, and the geographic dispersion of Hazaras, a comprehensive examination and analysis of every detail from all Hazara-populated regions was not feasible. Instead, as a sample, the greatest economic problems and challenges facing Hazaras during the five years of Taliban rule in Afghanistan were examined in regions where preparing the report and gaining access was relatively easy and did not require extensive resources. It is hoped that, in the future, the groundwork will be laid for a comprehensive study of the security, social, cultural, and economic conditions of all vulnerable segments of Afghanistan's population, whether conducted by the Bolaq Analysts Network or by other human rights networks and institutions, with greater resources and time, so that the suffering of the vulnerable peoples of this region during these years of Taliban rule can be recorded and documented.

In this chapter, we examine the economic situation of Hazaras over the five years of Taliban rule under two main headings, and finally briefly address the reasons behind the economic weakness of Hazaras.

⁴⁶ For looking at the general economic situation of Afghanistan during two years of the Taliban rule please refer to an article by Mohammad Uruzgani under the title of "The Economic Situation of Afghanistan During the Second Rule of the Taliban", "Adalat Way" publication the official organ of Adalat and Freedom Party of Afghanistan, no.2, August 9, 2023, pages 8,9.

1. Economic Production

Social welfare and a society's or country's scientific and technological progress are directly related to the amount of economic output generated by members of that society, whether through the production of raw materials, the conversion of raw materials into usable goods, or other means. Below, we examine the most important means of economic production within the Hazara community, review the state of each over the five years of Taliban rule, and compare it with the republican era.

A. Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

The most important means of economic production in the Hazara community is agriculture and animal husbandry, such that few Hazara families in the rural areas of Afghanistan can be found without engaging in agriculture, animal husbandry, or both simultaneously. Agriculture and animal husbandry are indeed the sole secret to Hazara survival in the mountainous, cold Hazara-populated regions. Over the past five years, Hazara agriculture and animal husbandry have generally been on a yearly decline, since on one hand they face natural disasters such as avalanches, untimely floods, successive droughts, and various livestock and plant diseases, and, due to the non-cooperation of the Taliban regime's Directorate for Natural Disaster Response, much farmland and grazing land has been destroyed. On the other hand, in areas not seriously affected by natural disasters, another problem has emerged: the Kuchis, who arrive in the area with Taliban support. Additionally, if a portion of agricultural or livestock produce survives all these natural and man-made disasters and is harvested by its owners, part of it is then taken by the Taliban through various taxes, such as ushr (tenth) and zakat (alms), and deposited into the Taliban regime's accounts. Below, we focus more closely on these latter two issues (Kuchis and Taliban taxation); it should be noted that a major portion of the agricultural and livestock produce and farmland of Hazara regions has been lost through land grabbing and forced displacement of Hazaras, compounding the economic weakness, this is examined in the final section under land grabbing, and to avoid lengthening the report and repeating content, it is not addressed here

Kuchis (Nomads)

Although Kuchi incursions into Hazara-populated areas have a long history that is beyond the scope of this brief discussion, until 2021, due to the existence of relative freedom under Afghanistan's nominal democracy, Kuchis were unable to invade all Hazara-populated regions, although in some areas, such as Behsood, annual incursions destroyed local people's crops and, in some years, resulted in loss of life. However, after the Taliban's takeover on August 15, 2021,

Kuchis in spring 2022 invaded a much larger area of Hazara-populated regions, entering Hazarajat⁴⁷ with their herds and destroying Hazara livestock pastures. In some Hazarajat regions, for various reasons, they made some efforts not to create serious problems with local residents; but in many other areas, from the moment they arrived, they began engaging in coercion, extortion, threatening villagers with forced displacement, beatings, and destruction of pastures⁴⁸. The same pattern occurred when they entered Hazarajat regions the following spring (2023): in addition to Hazara livestock pastures, they attempted to destroy Hazara agriculture in many areas⁴⁹, though in some other areas they remained relatively calm and tried to maintain good relations with villagers. By the time winter passed and the Kuchis returned the following spring (2024), they no longer showed the restraint of previous years, but instead actively destroyed Hazara economic resources, including agriculture⁵⁰, cutting down fruit-bearing and non-fruit-bearing trees⁵¹, burning harvests and homes, looting property⁵², and destroying animal pastures and the fodder Hazaras had gathered for their livestock's winter, severely damaging the Hazara economic situation. Likewise, in 2025, Kuchis entered Hazarajat regions fully armed and with the decisive support of the Taliban regime, trampling Hazara crops in most villages⁵³. When Hazaras approached Kuchi elders peacefully to ask why they were doing this, or stood in front of Kuchi herds to protect their crops, the only response they received was beatings, and in some cases, killings.⁵⁴ When they took their complaints to local or provincial authorities, the response was either silence or reproach as being told to why they are not treating the Kuchis with more respect.⁵⁵ In one case, a Taliban governor ruled that 120,000 Afghans be paid to an injured person; the son of the man who was beaten said:

I told the governor that even setting aside compensation for the injury itself, I had spent nearly 250,000 Afghans just on my father's treatment. The Taliban governor replied that if I accepted

⁴⁷ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/142598/armed-nomads-attack-several-villages-in-gham-qool-area-of-khadir-daikundi-district/>. <https://www.etilaatroz.com/144748/multilateral-pressure-on-pollens-of-people-of-central-regions/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/155547/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/169777/>.

⁵⁰ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/199079/>.

⁵¹ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/204026/>.

⁵² <https://www.etilaatroz.com/233989/>.

⁵³ Speaking with people in the region and also "The Situation of Hazaras during the fourth year of the Taliban Rule" Bolaq Analysts Network, (August 15, 2025), pages 14-18.

⁵⁴ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/233989/> also; <https://www.etilaatroz.com/255603/>

⁵⁵ Views of the majority of the people of Behsud, Panjab, Nahor, Malistan, Khedir and also "The Situation of Hazaras during the fourth year of the Taliban Rule" Bolaq Analysts Network, (August 15, 2025), pages 20 and 26.

the ruling, I would be paid 120,000 Afghanis, but if I didn't accept it, I was free to go to court, he had no more time for me.⁵⁶

The Kuchis' conduct, backed by the full support of the Taliban regime, has grown worse toward Hazaras year by year, and they have destroyed Hazara livestock pastures. They have not stopped at destroying pastures alone, they have turned Hazara farmland into grazing land for their herds, blocked water from reaching Hazara crops, and in most areas of Hazarajat, destroyed and razed to the ground the fodder people had gathered for their livestock's winter, resulting in the destruction, on a very large scale, of Hazaras' most important economic resource: agriculture and animal husbandry.

Taliban Regime Taxation

After the destruction of the conditions for livestock development, and after Kuchis, backed by the full support of the Taliban regime, trampled Hazara agriculture, the small amount of produce Hazaras manage to harvest from what survives destruction faces various taxes imposed by the Taliban regime. The most significant of these heavy taxes are ushr and zakat. Ushr was collected in 2021 and 2022 from most Hazarajat regions through community councils; the Taliban demanded a specific sum from each community council in autumn, without precisely assessing people's actual harvests. But from 2023 onward, they began collecting ushr precisely and house by house. The Taliban has often collected ushr and zakat multiple times on the same product. Initially, ushr is taken once from the producer at their home; it is taken again from small traders who buy the produce and sell it in major markets such as Kabul, Mazar, and elsewhere; and sometimes a third time, ushr is collected on the same product in major markets, all of this money being deducted from the original price of the product (agricultural or livestock), which is what sustains families' economies. Moreover, in most places, ushr is assessed based on the amount of arable land or the number of fruit-bearing trees, rather than on the actual amount of produce harvested.⁵⁷

We spoke with several men who, due to poverty, had migrated from various parts of Daikundi to Kabul. According to their account:

⁵⁶ From a conversation with Hassan Abdullahi son of Ishaq Fard who was beaten in Draz Qul by Kuchis.

⁵⁷ "Situation of the Hazaras During the Fourth Year of the Taliban Rule" Bolaq Analysts Network, (August 15, 2025), page 43.

During the years of the Republic, things were good; we made a living from our agricultural produce, especially almonds, and supported our families. But with the Taliban's arrival, on top of other problems that already existed, Taliban ushr was added as well. We could no longer sustain ourselves. We were forced to move to Kabul, where, as you know, there's no work either. One year, the people responsible for collecting Taliban ushr demanded a large sum from me. I told them that this year, due to drought and other natural disasters, I hadn't harvested a good yield; the entire produce of my trees this year could barely cover your ushr, let alone leave anything for my children's food. The ushr collectors told me that what I said was not their concern, the ushr on the trees is whatever they say it is; they want ushr, not reasons.⁵⁸

Similarly, another person said:

A year or two ago, when people came to buy my almonds, they offered a very low price. I told them the price was too low. They said it wasn't up to them, and they couldn't pay more, because by the time they reach the big markets they pay ushr twice, plus road tolls, vehicle rental, and several other charges, and if the scale inspectors or the checkpoints at provincial borders demand additional money as well, they would take a loss.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the Taliban's ushr has no fixed rate; although in theory they claim it is one part in forty, in practice the ushr collectors demand whatever they wish. For example, in Lal wa Sarjantal district, in one area they demanded 6,000 Afghanis for 600 sers(4200 kg) of potatoes, while elsewhere they demanded 16,000 Afghanis⁶⁰ for the same amount. In addition, the absence of a robust sales market, due to the closure of the Pakistani border over the past two years, and low prices for agricultural produce have compounded these problems; most farmers and landowners complain about this, especially those who have fruit-bearing trees like apples, since the fruit cannot be stored for long periods.

One landowner from Yakawlang told us:

⁵⁸ Statements of Abdullah(pseudonym) from Miramore district, Dai Kundi province.

⁵⁹ Jawad's (pseudonym) statement from Giro in Shahrستان district.

⁶⁰ "The Situation of the Hazaras During Fourth Year of Taliban Rule" Bolaq Analysts Network, (August 15, 2025), page 24.

I have many apple trees. Last year and the year before (2024 and 2025), I didn't even harvest the fruits from my trees. I told the local people that everyone was free to take as much as they wanted for themselves, because when I calculated the sale price of the produce against the cost of harvesting labor, plastic packaging, and transport, it wasn't worth it. Some of the fruit was gathered by neighbors, and the rest fell under the trees and was eaten by sheep.⁶¹

Another resident of Waras told us in an interview:

Last year (2025), I completely cut down my apple trees, even though they used to bear a very good crop every year. The market was weak, but I still had to pay ushr on it according to what the ushr collectors demanded. I calculated it and decided I'd rather cut down the trees, at least to be rid of the ushr burden.⁶²

Overall, the economic situation of Hazaras, which relies heavily on agriculture and animal husbandry, has been weakened on one hand by natural disasters and climate change, and on the other by the Taliban regime's ethnic policies, its support for Kuchis, and the imposition of multi-layered taxation. Over these five years, the economy has been driven into a steady decline, with conditions growing tighter for Hazaras and the Hazara economy worsening every year compared to the year before.

B. Productive Trades

The second major economic source for Hazaras, after agriculture and animal husbandry, is productive trades, works that convert raw materials into usable goods and supplies them to the market, such as handicrafts, tailoring, and confectionery/bakery businesses, through which people earn a living. Below, we briefly examine each as far as possible:

Handicrafts

Handicrafts among the Hazara community have a history as old as the people themselves. For generations, these people's clothing and garments were handmade by themselves. Here we examine a few examples of Hazara handicrafts:

⁶¹ Statement of Qader (pseudonym) from Chaman, Yakawlang district.

⁶² Statement of Khodadad (pseudonym) from Waras district.

One is carpet weaving. For many years, carpet weaving was an important economic outlet for Hazaras in the cities. Among the families who, in the years after 2008, migrated from villages to cities in hopes of a better and more comfortable life, one of their greatest hopes was carpet weaving. In their view, learning to weave carpets could sustain the family economy. This industry was so thriving that it was rare to find a Hazara family in the cities without carpet-weaving looms in their homes. With the Taliban's takeover, this industry faced an unprecedented decline in its sales market and lost its vibrancy.⁶³ Today, few families can be found with active carpet-weaving looms in their homes, with family members engaged in weaving. Similarly, gelim [flatweave rugs], felt, and barak [a traditional woolen fabric], made in most Hazarajat regions from sheep's wool, have in recent years seen reduced use due to the economic recession, falling prices, and a shortage of labor for traditional production. In a conversation with someone who sews barak garments, he said:

The barak business used to be very good; I received orders from inside and outside the country, and sometimes I even ran short of barak fabric. With the arrival of the Islamic Emirate government, business has basically been cut in half. Domestically, we hardly get orders anymore, people can barely find food, let alone afford to buy or wear barak. Orders from abroad have also decreased and are not what they used to be.⁶⁴

Another handicraft is khamak-doozi (a traditional embroidery). This craft has become more popular over the past decade. Before the Taliban came to power, khamak-doozi was used mostly within Afghanistan, since the number of migrants was lower compared to the years following the Taliban's second takeover. Since the Taliban's return, this handicraft sector has become more popular, including among migrants in first-world countries, and most women and girls who have lost their jobs in government offices, or who have been kept out of school and university, have turned to this trade, working both online and in person. Through this work, the economic cycle of women in Hazarajat villages is kept somewhat active, while urban residents, through new ideas and designs, are helping to revive Hazara culture and identity.⁶⁵ We spoke with several people engaged in this work. According to them, if the work relied solely on the domestic Afghan market, there would be little profit left for people; but interest from migrants in Western countries has somewhat improved the situation.

⁶³ <https://8am.media/fa/carpet-exports-decreased-by-84-compared-to-last-year/>

Also: <https://8am.media/fa/increase-in-production-and-decrease-in-sales-balk-carpet-weavers-complain-about-the-lack-of-a-market/>

⁶⁴ statement of Khelifa Ewaz (pseudonym) barak tailor.

⁶⁵ <https://8am.media/fa/world-handicrafts-day-a-story-of-resilience-and-standing/>

Beadwork [mohra-doozi] also has a long history among Hazaras. After Hazara migration to Pakistan and Iran, it was used with various new designs. Today, after years, people are once again using it in modern forms, but due to the poor economic situation, it has not gained much popularity. We spoke with women engaged in this work; according to them, compared to khamak-doozi and other handicrafts, beadwork has not grown as it should. One of these women said:

Khamak-doozi is very good, it has a market. But the market for beadwork is weak, especially over the past two years, it has become very weak. Both the [labor] rate has dropped and, because there isn't much of a market, there isn't much work either.⁶⁶

Tailoring

During the 1390s [solar-hijri decade, roughly 2011-2020], tailoring became one of the higher-income occupations for urban Hazaras. Many families sustained their lives and livelihoods through this trade. With the Taliban takeover on August 15, 2021, the commercial and economic market fell into a severe recession, directly affecting tailoring and weakening the trade. Furthermore, with the closure of schools above sixth grade to girls in 2022 and universities in 2023, the tailoring market became even more disrupted, as girls who had been shut out of school and university turned to tailoring to fill their idle days and escape the psychological pressure of being denied education. This sudden influx, combined with the lack of a sales market, drove the trade into decline; at the same time, tailoring wages dropped dramatically. We spoke with one tailoring workshop owner on this matter. According to him:

“During the Republic, business was very good. I had 50 sewing machines, and my apprentices worked in two shifts, day and night. Even then, my machines were not quite enough. I also had several outside tailors who took work from me and sewed it at home, bringing it back at the end of the week to collect their pay. I was even planning to buy a few more machines and hire more apprentices. Right around that time, the government collapsed. After the collapse, business got worse day by day. From 1403 [2024-25], I gradually stopped night shifts, and since last year (1405

⁶⁶ Marzia(pseudonym) statement who works in embroidery and beadwork.

*[2026]], I've been letting go of my outside tailors one by one. Currently, it's hard to find work for even 30 tailors, most of whom are acquaintances. On top of that, the Taliban impose various restrictions, no music allowed, I can't have female apprentices, and they show up unannounced from time to time to inspect and make sure everything is "in its place."*⁶⁷

We also spoke with several people who had sewing machines at home and took clothing from workshops to sew. All of them complained about low wages and lack of work; almost all told nearly the same story:

During the Republic, business was very good. There was both work and good pay. For instance, depending on the type, we would charge 150 to 250 Afghanis to sew a garment, and a type of trousers that was easy to sew went for no less than 30 to 50 Afghanis. But in the very first year after the collapse, wages were cut in half, and from then on, wages kept dropping year after year. Especially since the Pakistani border closed, wages have dropped very low. For example, a garment we used to sew for 250 Afghanis during the Republic now only gets 70 to 90. Most garments that used to be between 150 and 200 Afghanis now go for only 30 to 40, and those same trousers that were between 30 and 50 Afghanis during the Republic are now sewn for just 5 to 10 Afghanis. Similarly, during the Republic there was so much work we couldn't keep up, and we would try to take on less work; we often chose easier jobs or those with higher pay and picked what we liked. But now there's no work at all. These days I'm in touch with three tailoring factories, and I may have work for only three days a week, while the other four days, I'm idle. We say, if only there were work even at these low wages, but there isn't even that. Work only picks up a bit before Eid and Nowruz, but at other times, there can even be a month without any work at all.⁶⁸

We spoke with several other tailors, and they nearly all told the same story. Overall, they said that sewing wages have dropped by an average of 60 to 80 percent, and even at these low wages, work is hard to find, overall work volume has dropped by more than 70 percent.

⁶⁷ Mohammad Ali's (pseudonym) statement, one of the people who has a tailoring shop in Barchi (Western Kabul).

⁶⁸ Rahmatulla's (pseudonym) who works as a tailor from home.

Confectionery/Bakery

Alongside tailoring, many people worked in small and large confectionery factories, but due to the country's economic weakness, most of these factories have lost their production capacity and gone bankrupt, while others have seen their business drop significantly. One person who was forced to sell his factory in 2024 said:

Under the previous government, business was very good. I always had between 20 and 30 apprentices, and often that wasn't even enough. For deliveries, I would hire other people on a daily-wage basis. First, when COVID came, everything was quarantined and business weakened. Before the quarantine was even fully lifted, the Ghani government collapsed. After the collapse, on one hand, the market kept getting weaker day by day; on the other, Taliban members extorted us under various pretexts. Sometimes a delegation would come from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce looking for excuses [to fine us], ultimately demanding a bribe. Sometimes it was the Food and Drug Administration. Even when we completed all our legal documentation, they would still find fault, asking why we used a certain type of flour or oil instead of another. In the end, I saw that it was impossible to keep working. In spring 1403 [2024], I was forced to close the factory, sell my equipment, and now I get by doing day labor.

Similarly, those still active in the business complain about the lack of a sales market and the high cost of raw materials. Nasir (pseudonym), owner of a cake and cookie factory, said:

There was a time when this factory alone, not counting the branches I had in other provinces, employed 70 people. But now, as you can see, there isn't even enough work for 15. Things get worse not just year by year but month by month. Even during the Taliban's rule, business was good in the first couple of years, but this year it was only somewhat better around Eid al-Adha. During Eid al-Fitr, the market wasn't much different from other times. Lack of sales is one issue; another is that the raw materials have become very expensive. Whenever there's the slightest trouble or dispute at the global or international level, the price of raw materials shoots up immediately, but as for it coming back down, God only knows.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Nasir (pseudonym) statement who has a confectioner shop in Kabul.

Government Employees

During the twenty years of the Republic and until the second Taliban government, Hazaras went full force in pursuit of education. They funded their education through agricultural produce, animal husbandry, handicrafts, tailoring, and by enduring hard labor, and through diligence and around-the-clock effort achieved great success. Hazaras, relying on their merit and competence, rose to high and low-level government positions and worked there. Employment in government offices, alongside agriculture, animal husbandry, and productive trades, formed another important and fundamental part of the Hazara economy. Through this, they earned their living, and their economic markets stayed active. With the collapse of the Republic, more than 95 percent of Hazara military and legal-affairs employees lost their jobs, and many left the country. Those who remained were, in later years, gradually dismissed from their posts. Furthermore, with the removal of female employees from government offices, an important economic part for many families was crippled, and civil servants who remained within the Taliban regime's structure did not fare much better. They first faced salary cuts, the Taliban paid the same Republic-era salaries only for the remaining six months of the year 1400 [2021], and starting in 1401 [2022], civil servants' salaries were significantly reduced according to their positions. In addition to reduced salaries, over the five years of Taliban rule, Hazara civil servants in government offices have faced removal and various forms of systematic discrimination. Some were transferred without reason to remote regions, some were dismissed from their posts without reason, and others were purged from their institutions under the guise of "downsizing" processes.⁷⁰ Those Hazara employees transferred to remote provinces often could not endure the conditions there and eventually abandoned their posts one way or another.

After a Hazara employee was transferred or removed, department heads filled the vacancy with friends and relatives of their own. Approximately 80 percent of the budget allocated to a Hazara-populated province or district is transferred, through these very employees, to other provinces, having very little effect on the economic circulation of Hazara-populated markets. As a result, Hazaras remain trapped in poverty.

Furthermore, most government employees closely tied to local Taliban authorities in Hazara-populated regions engage in extortion of local people. The purchase and collection of weapons, and the collection of money under various names, form an important part of the Taliban's extortion methods. For example, in Dara-e-Sof, people were repeatedly asked to provide

⁷⁰ "Situation of the Hazaras under the Fourth Year of the Taliban Rule", Bolaq Analysts Network, (August 15, 2025), pages 21 and 44.

weapons, being told: "Those who don't have weapons and military ammunition should sell their land and property to buy weapons from us and then hand them over to us." ⁷¹ Similarly, deadlines were set for weapons collection in Nahur;⁷² in Jaghori too, money and weapons were collected from people through force and torture.⁷³ In addition, in collusion with Kuchis, they extort money from people. For example, the Taliban detained and imprisoned several people in the Ghamqol area of Khadir district, Daikundi province, for not paying tribute to the Kuchis.⁷⁴

Discrimination is also clearly evident in the selection of government employees and academic staff. For example, from 2023 to 2025, when Osman Solaizai was appointed academic vice-chancellor of Bamyan University, he filled the university's academic and administrative posts with his relatives and friends. The exam for Bamyan University's academic positions was administered by Nangarhar University. In many appointments, Solaizai directly wrote letters to Nangarhar University. In Nangarhar, the chances for Hazaras to succeed were essentially at the lowest possible level, both because of the importance placed on ethnic discrimination there and because the exam was conducted in Pashto, a language in which few Hazaras, Tajiks, or Uzbeks have academic-level fluency. This is despite the fact that 95 percent of Bamyan's students are Persian [Dari]-speaking and have little familiarity with Pashto. In this way, Hazaras are stripped of both economic resources and opportunities for advancement, while universities are left without a common language of communication between students and faculty.

International Community Assistance

After August 15, 2021, the international community assistance has played an important role in stabilizing Afghanistan's economy, especially household economies. This humanitarian aid from the international community passes through a Taliban filter. First, the Taliban embezzles and misappropriates as much of the aid as it can, for example, the misappropriation of international aid in Jaghori can be cited.⁷⁵ Second, when embezzlement is not possible, the Taliban pressures aid implementers and dictates where aid should and should not be distributed. The Taliban often uses force to redirect aid to areas populated by its own relatives and tribe members. For example,

⁷¹ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/239389/request-for-weapons-from-the-residents-of-dara-suf/>

⁷² -<https://www.etilaayroz.com/154222/>

⁷³ <https://www.etilaatro.com/153291/sources-in-ghazni-jaguri-taliban-take-weapons-or-money-from-people-by-torture/> Also <https://www.etilaatroz.com/154539/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/146440/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/146440/>

in late 2021 and early 2022, aid from Islamic Relief that was supposed to be distributed in Yakawlang, Panjab, and Waras districts of Bamyan was instead transferred and distributed by Taliban government officials to the Ghandak area of Shibar district and Kahmard district.⁷⁶ If neither of these two methods works and international organization staff distribute aid to previously designated areas, in some Hazara-populated regions, Taliban members go door to door, forcibly reclaiming part of the in-kind or cash assistance from families under the guise of ushr or other names, telling them: "You received aid from an organization, so you must pay ushr on it."⁷⁷ Of course, over the past two years, international community assistance has also to some extent diminished.

Medicinal Plants

The mountains of Hazara-populated regions are home to various wild medicinal plants, some of which have significant commercial value and, in some areas, form a major part of the local economy. For years, people supplemented part of their economic and livelihood needs by gathering and selling these plants, considering them an important economic resource to some degree. With the Taliban's rise to power and the arrival of Kuchis in the region, the gathering and sale of these plants became restricted. From 2024, the Taliban banned the gathering of these plants in some areas, and in 2025, they signed contracts covering the entire region with certain companies affiliated with Taliban members, whose staff began gathering these plants. Taliban agents collected these plants region by region and village by village.⁷⁸ But this year (2026), residents of several regions resisted the unchecked gathering by these individuals, a resistance that led to tension between local people and the Taliban. In some areas, this resulted in local residents being beaten while the plants were gathered and taken away regardless.⁷⁹ This form of uprooting and mass gathering of these plants both destroys an important economic resource for

⁷⁶ Conversation with Ahwar and Yahya (pseudonyms) from the region.

⁷⁷ Conversation with Habibullah (pseudonym) and also "The Situation of Hazaras in the Fourth year of Taliban Rule, Bolaq Analysts Network (August 15, 2025), page 44.

⁷⁸ "The Situation of Hazaras during the Fourth Year of Taliban Rule", Bolaq Analysts Network (August 15, 2025), page 47.

⁷⁹ <https://www.reel/faceboo.com/2100539990865504/>

Also <https://www.afintl.com/202606109477/>

Also <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1031631486045315/>

local people and devastates the land's vegetation cover, making the terrain highly vulnerable to wind, rain, erosion, and landslides.

Mines

Minerals are among the most important economic resources of a country, especially for people living near mines. Some parts of Hazarajat are rich in mineral deposits. Under Taliban rule, due to political problems, operations at the Dara-e-Sof and Balkhab coal mines were largely halted; and other mines, such as the lead and zinc deposits of Yakawlang, whose extraction had begun under Taliban rule, initially saw trucks removing earth and rock daily from the Siah Dara area of Yakawlang for two years, without it being clear why or to where they were taken. In 2024 and 2026, the extraction of these mines was contracted out to companies close to the Taliban. The contracting companies pledged that, in exchange for extracting these mines, they would use the profits to build hospitals, roads, and universities in other provinces such as Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Maidan Wardak. The Hazaras' share of these mines is only noise pollution, environmental pollution, and traffic accidents.⁸⁰ Even the mine workers have not been hired from the local population, but brought in from elsewhere.

Tourism

In countries with historical, natural, religious, and scenic sites, tourism plays a fundamental role in the economy. Afghanistan is also among the countries with many historical and natural sites worth visiting. Years of war and insecurity kept these places from being introduced to international and domestic tourists, leaving them overlooked. With the start of democracy and freedom of expression in Afghanistan, and the beginning of operations by national and international media within the country, a number of these places began attracting the attention of domestic and foreign tourists. For example, Bamyan was known as Afghanistan's tourism hub. In recent years under the Afghan republican government, Bamyan hosted hundreds of thousands of domestic tourists and hundreds of foreign tourists annually, an important source of income for merchants and for the city of Bamyan and Band-e-Amir. In the Republic's last year, the sale

⁸⁰ "The Situation of Hazaras during the Fourth Year of Taliban Rule", Bolaq Analysts Network (August 15, 2021), page 46. Also <https://www.afintl.com/202606225611/>

of entrance tickets to Band-e-Amir's gate alone was contracted out to a domestic company for three million Afghans, equivalent to about 47,000 US dollars at current value.⁸¹

Most of these domestic and foreign tourists, upon returning home, bought handicrafts made by local people as gifts for their loved ones. Alongside handicraft sales, there was cultural exchange and marketing for these crafts, which further boosted the handicraft market. But in the early period of Taliban rule, tourism completely lost its vitality for two years; after that, there was some slight change, but it never reached the level it had been at before the Taliban regime.

Most of the tourists we spoke with in Bamyan complained about the ban on women entering Band-e-Amir, the "vice and virtue" laws, and economic hardship, acknowledging that these factors kept them from even enjoying their leisure and tourism. We spoke with several domestic tourists spending the Eid al-Adha holiday in Bamyan and Band-e-Amir. Javed (pseudonym) is one of them; he had come from Mazar-e-Sharif to Bamyan. According to him:

*"Under the previous government, we were very eager, and I decided several times to bring my family to Bamyan for a trip and go to Band-e-Amir to have a good time. But due to various problems and difficulties, it never happened. When the government collapsed, we became hopeless, thinking we could never make the trip. We had given up on the idea, but this year my friends insisted a lot that we go to Bamyan, so I was persuaded and came with them."*⁸²

When we asked him how he felt seeing Bamyan and Band-e-Amir, he replied:

*"Right now, seeing Bamyan fills me with regret, and I think of my family. Bamyan is a beautiful, worth-seeing place. The Buddhas, Band-e-Amir, Azhdar [Dragon Valley], and other sites are truly sights to see. My family wanted so much to come here and see this together, to walk around and enjoy this beautiful nature. But they couldn't come, because of the government's "vice and virtue" laws and the ban on women entering Band-e-Amir. I hope the day comes when once again I can bring my family here to Bamyan and truly enjoy a full trip. This has become one of my wishes."*⁸³

⁸¹ "The Situation of Hazaras during the Fourth Year of Taliban Rule, Bolaq Analysts Network (August 15, 2025), page 47.

⁸² Javed's Statement who had come to Bamyan.

⁸³ Ibid.

Similarly, all the revenue sources from Bamyan's tourist sites are now in the hands of the Taliban and people close to them, and for Hazaras, aside from some boost to Bamyan's local market, there is no other economic benefit.⁸⁴

2. Economic Circulation

In this section, we focus more on activities related to the circulation of the existing economy within the Hazara community, rather than economic production. After production, the most important part of any human society's economy is circulation, ensuring money is distributed to everyone, preventing economic stagnation, and maintaining economic balance.

Small Trade

Small domestic trade is a fundamental part of gathering raw materials and supplying them to domestic markets, and from there to international markets. On the other hand, the community's necessary goods are also supplied through this small trade. During the years of the Afghan republican government, this small trade was flourishing. With the Taliban takeover, this sector faced serious problems. First, every small trader must obtain an operating license from the Taliban regime by paying a hefty sum. Given the fragile state of the country's economy, this licensing requirement alone prevents a large number of small traders from operating, and further, once a small trader obtains a license, they must pay ushr whenever transporting goods. The repeated collection of ushr, zakat, or religious taxes lowers the original price of goods and causes losses for small traders as well. One small trader, who gathers and transports potatoes from Waras district to Kabul and Mazar during the autumn harvest, told us:

“During the years of the Republic, potato cultivation had just begun in earnest in this region. Buying and transporting potatoes was a very good, profitable business. With the arrival of the Islamic Emirate, many problems arose that didn't exist before. For instance, first we have to get an operating license just to transport our goods from the region to the city. Getting the license is a huge headache and hassle. After that, once we have the license, from the time we buy and load the potatoes until we transport and sell them, on top of several types of taxes, we pay ushr several times.

⁸⁴ “Situation of Hazara during the Fourth Year of the Taliban Rule” Bolaq Analysts Network, (August 15, 2025), page 47.

In short, let me tell you, from buying in the regions to selling in Kabul and Mazar markets, the only thing we don't pay money for is the air we breathe. Otherwise, we have to pay money everywhere, for everything. Many times, this potato buying and selling brings us no profit at all."⁸⁵

Similarly, urban street vending can also be considered a form of small trade in some respects, and it too has faced excessive weakening under the Taliban. In cities across Afghanistan, street vendors have long operated in various corners of the streets, supporting their families. In 2023, the Taliban regime removed their stalls from the roadside and replaced them with other stalls. After the replacement, they imposed heavy rents on each stall, increasing the rent every year. This year (2026), for each small stall, depending on the size of the stall they collect over 2,000 Afghanis monthly. Some stall owners said that in some months, they cannot cover the stall rent alongside family expenses, and are forced to borrow money from someone to pay it.

Day Labor

In most countries, day labor and construction work in urban areas rank among the most important sources of employment and play a fundamental role in the distribution of money. During the republican era, urban construction was steadily increasing, and many people were engaged in construction and day labor. With the Taliban's arrival on August 15, 2021, some urban construction and building work continued to a limited extent in certain areas during that first year. From 2022, urban construction was almost entirely halted. In 2025, work permits are

granted to some extent, in exchange for very large sums of money; first, the sum demanded for a work license is beyond the means of approximately 95 percent of the population. Second, even among those who do manage to pay the hefty sum for a work license, the number is very small, meaning it makes virtually no dent in Afghanistan's unemployment rate.

Transportation

Another sector that plays a role in economic distribution is domestic transportation and passenger travel, both within cities and between provinces. After the Taliban's rise to power in

⁸⁵ Ahmad's (pseudonym) statement, the potato trader from Waras district.

Afghanistan, transportation remained largely unchanged for more than a year. But after that, the Taliban regime sought to multiply its revenue from transportation. As a result, transportation and travel fares rose. Also, starting in 2023, they began establishing road-toll collection booths on highways, and by 2024, toll booths had been set up on all highways. These booths collect 80 Afghanis from small private vehicles and 180 Afghanis from larger passenger vehicles. Accordingly, revenue increases in proportion to more passengers and cargo. This has been added on top of passenger fares. As fares rose, most people try to travel less. Furthermore, a regulation requiring urban and inter-provincial taxis to be repainted placed a heavy financial burden on drivers. Some could not afford the cost of repainting their vehicles, since obtaining the repainting license cost more than 40,000 Afghanis. As a result, many Hazara drivers sold their vehicles and joined the ranks of the unemployed. One of these drivers told us:

*"I was a driver for nearly 10 years. I traveled from Kabul to Mazar, Ghazni, Bamiyan, and other provinces, carrying passengers. When the Islamic Emirate came, we became more and more restricted day by day, and we could no longer travel to several provinces. They also collected money from us under various names. Each time I traveled from Kabul to Bamiyan, we would wait three or four days for our turn, and when our turn came, we'd pay about 300 Afghanis to the government for a one-way trip, and at the end nothing was left for us. And God forbids if we happened to be carrying a female passenger without a mahram [male chaperone], we'd have to deal with countless other complications. This continued until about two years ago (2024), when I still had my car and was driving passengers, until they forced us to repaint our vehicles in a specific color. When I went to get it repainted, it cost about 45,000 to 50,000 Afghanis; other problems came up, and I couldn't afford the repainting cost, because I could no longer work. I was forced to sell my car, and now it's been two years that I've been unemployed."*⁸⁶

Similarly, most drivers face numerous difficulties, being extorted under various pretexts. Additionally, in Kabul city, the confiscation and banning of "Tonus"-type vehicles has both dealt an economic blow to the large number of people who own this type of vehicle and disrupted urban transportation, resulting in high demand for travel but few available vehicles.

Ultimately, over the five years of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, the economic situation of the entire country has worsened year after year, and the conditions for economic development in the

⁸⁶ Hussain's (pseudonym) statement, the former driver between Kabul and Bamiyan.

country have not grown. The Taliban regime extorts the entire Afghan population under various pretexts. Afghanistan's mines are being extracted without control, with the resulting profit going mostly into the pockets of a few individuals close to senior Taliban figures. The Afghan population grows poorer by the day, and the economic situation worsens. The situation of Hazaras, affected by the country's overall conditions, has also worsened day by day. The Hazaras, due to their ethnicity, race, religion, and geographic location, bear these pressures many times over. Following extensive field research, visits to most of these areas, and conversations with various segments of the community, summarized very briefly above, it can generally be said that over these five years of Taliban rule, the economic situation of Hazaras has deteriorated excessively in every respect, and the conditions for these people's economic production have been destroyed to a very large degree. Hazaras face multi-layered extortion; Kuchis, with the support of the Taliban regime, have inflicted loss of life and property on these people, and conditions are becoming tighter and tighter for them day by day. Only in certain handicraft items is there a small glimmer of hope, largely thriving due to marketing toward first-world migrants, even this, however, faces various Taliban restrictions and is affected by them.

3. Summary: Reasons for Economic Weakness

As stated, the Hazara economy has been declining and has been continuously weakened over these five years. This section briefly examines the reasons for Hazaras' economic weakness. Although most reasons have already been noted throughout the discussion, they are summarized here in a coherent form:

1. **Increased unemployment following the closure of education above sixth grade for girls:** With the closure of schools above sixth grade in 2022 and universities in 2023 to girls, a large number of girls became idle and turned toward economic and productive work, while the growing demand for work was met with a lack of available jobs; combined with the halting of certain other trades, this has weakened the economy and opportunities for earning money.
2. **Taliban regime policies:** Trade with neighboring countries has historically been a source of economic stability for Afghanistan. When the Taliban regime took control, it entered into tension with both its southern and western neighbors in turn. The result of these tensions was the closure of trade borders to the country; consequently, prices for domestic products fell, while the price of imported goods rose several times over. Both

factors dealt a blow to the country's already fragile economy and pushed Hazaras in particular toward the edge of collapse.

3. **Influx of returning migrants:** Alongside the previous two factors, the sudden expulsion of hundreds of thousands of migrants from Iran and Pakistan back into Afghanistan, combined with the lack of a job market, destroyed the country's economic prospects. The expelled migrants added to the ranks of the domestically unemployed. This led to a multi-fold increase in urban housing rents, further weakening the economy.
4. **Natural disasters and the lack of mechanisms to address them:** Natural disasters such as drought, untimely floods, avalanches, and plant and animal diseases have been among the greatest problems facing Hazaras. Under Taliban rule, these disasters have increased on one hand, while the lack of any mechanism to combat them, on the other, has left the Hazara economy vulnerable and doubly weakened.
5. **Ethnic discrimination and monopolization:** Another reason for the Hazara economic weakness is discriminatory treatment and the monopolization of administrative offices. Most employees in Hazara-populated regions are relatives and friends of Taliban members, and a large share of the economy is transferred by these very employees from Hazarajat markets to other regions.
6. **Ban on urban construction:** The prohibition of urban construction, occurring simultaneously with the return of hundreds of thousands of migrants expelled from neighboring countries, has thrown the community's economy into recession, and the resulting lack of money distribution has weakened the community's economy.
7. **Kuchi nomadism:** The influx of tens of thousands of sheep into the mountains of Hazarajat has destroyed Hazara livestock pastures and, in many regions, led to the destruction of Hazara crops and agriculture. Furthermore, with the support of the Taliban regime, they have laid claim to and seized a number of regions. In other areas, they have turned to extortion and coercion under various names, placing Hazaras in dire economic conditions.
8. **Extortion by local administrative employees:** In most Hazara-populated regions, government employees carry out large-scale extortion under the guise of weapons and ammunition collection, ushr, zakat, and other names, sometimes imposing these levies multiple times, driving the community's economy toward ruin.

Chapter Three

The Cultural Situation

Introduction

Culture is one of the fundamental pillars of the shared identity of societies. This pillar encompasses elements such as language, religion, rituals, arts, literature, and historical heritage. Protection of this pillar and all its components is recognized in international human rights instruments.⁸⁷ Afghanistan is a country with ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, and the Hazaras are among its most important minority groups. Their religious rituals, oral literature, local music, traditional arts, cultural centres, and historical heritage form a significant part of their cultural identity. However, throughout modern history, the Hazaras have faced cultural and religious discrimination and restrictions.⁸⁸

After 2001, a relatively open cultural environment allowed the expansion of educational, media, and cultural activities among Hazaras. But with the return of the Taliban on 15 August 2021, concerns about the future of the community's cultural rights resurfaced.⁸⁹ Reports published by

⁸⁷ United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Paris: United Nations, 1948), art. 27, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf; United Nations, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (New York: United Nations, 1966), art. 15, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>; United Nations, *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* (New York: United Nations, 1992), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic>.

⁸⁸ Niamatullah Ibrahim, *The Hazaras and the Afghan State: Rebellion, Exclusion and the Struggle for Recognition* (London: Hurst, 2017); Alessandro Monsutti, *War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras of Afghanistan* (New York: Routledge, 2005), chap. 3, 41–102, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203959107>.

⁸⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *Human Rights in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021–15 June 2022* (UNAMA, 2022), <https://afghanistan.un.org/en/191313-human-rights-afghanistan-15-august-2021-%E2%80%9315-june-2022>; <https://parsi.euronews.com/2021/11/04/afghanistan-the-return-of-the-taliban>; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), *Afghanistan Chapter, Annual Report 2025* (USCIRF, 2025), 18–20, <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025%20USCIRF%20Annual%20Report.pdf>. (Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/gbz/news/2025/08/05/afghanistan-relentless-repression-4-years-into-taliban-rule>; Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, *Reports to the Human Rights Council* (2022–2025), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4081103?v=pdf>).

media outlets, human rights organizations, and cultural activists describe restrictions on Shia religious ceremonies, removal of Ja'fari jurisprudence from the education system, bans on music, limitations on cultural centres, censorship of cultural works, pressure on media, and concerns regarding the protection of cultural heritage, especially in Bamiyan.⁹⁰

Assessing these developments requires more than documenting cultural restrictions; it also involves evaluating the impact of Taliban policies on the identity, historical memory, and cultural rights of the Hazara community. This report aims to document the cultural situation of the Hazara community from August 2021 to August 2026. It examines the most significant cultural challenges and restrictions based on Bolaq's annual reports published to date, media reports, human rights documentation, academic research, reports by civil society organizations, and other credible sources published between 2021 and 2026. These developments.

1. Historical Background of Cultural Discrimination Against the Hazaras

Analysing the cultural situation of Hazaras under Taliban rule without considering the historical background of discrimination provides an incomplete picture. For more than a century, Hazaras have faced various forms of religious discrimination, cultural erasure, and marginalization of their collective identity, alongside political and economic exclusion.⁹¹ Hazara cultural identity is rooted in religion, language and local dialects, oral literature, music, religious rituals, traditional arts, historical memory, and the ancestral homeland of Hazarajat (Hazaristan). These elements form part of Afghanistan's cultural diversity, yet they have been subjected to political, religious, and ideological pressure in different periods.⁹²

One of the most prominent examples is the military campaign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan against the Hazaras between 1891 and 1893, aimed at their complete destruction. This

⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan: Events of 2022* (Human Rights Watch, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/afghanistan>; Human Rights Watch, "Afghanistan: Taliban Tramples Media Freedom," October 23, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/gbz/news/2025/10/23/afghanistan-taliban-tramples-media-freedom>; United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *Human Rights in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021–15 June 2022* (UNAMA, 2022), <https://afghanistan.un.org/en/191313-human-rights-afghanistan-15-august-2021-%E2%80%9315-june-2022>; <https://parsi.euronews.com/2021/11/04/afghanistan-the-return-of-the-taliban>; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), *Afghanistan Chapter, Annual Report 2025* (USCIRF, 2025), 18–20, <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025%20USCIRF%20Annual%20Report.pdf>; (Human Rights Watch), <https://www.hrw.org/gbz/news/2025/08/05/afghanistan-relentless-repression-4-years-into-taliban-rule>; Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, *Reports to the Human Rights Council (2022–2025)*, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4081103?v=pdf>

⁹¹ Hassan Poladi, *The Hazara* [Stockton, CA: Mughal Publishing Co., 1989]), chap. 6, 182–234

⁹² Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton University Press, 2010), page 31 and 119–160

widespread violence including mass killings, land confiscation, forced displacement, and population dispersal weakened Hazara social and cultural institutions, with long-lasting effects. In subsequent decades, although direct violence decreased, structural discrimination persisted. Hazara-populated regions were deprived of development, education, and public services, and Hazaras were scarcely represented in official historical narratives, textbooks, and state publications. This symbolic erasure reinforced cultural marginalization and perpetuated discriminatory stereotypes.⁹³

Because much of Hazara culture is intertwined with religious practices, religious discrimination has been a major factor in cultural exclusion.⁹⁴ With the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s, cultural and religious restrictions intensified.⁹⁵ During their first regime (1996–2001), music, artistic activities, and many Shia religious ceremonies were restricted.⁹⁶ The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in March 2001 became a symbol of the annihilation of Afghanistan’s cultural heritage and a direct threat to the historical identity of central regions, especially for Hazaras.⁹⁷

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, a relatively open environment allowed the growth of media, cultural centres, educational institutions, cultural festivals, and research related to Hazara history and culture. Bamiyan became one of Afghanistan’s most important cultural hubs.⁹⁸ However,

⁹³ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), *Reports on Discrimination and Minority Rights*, <https://www.ecoi.net/en/source/10940.html>.

⁹⁴ Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Hazaras*, <https://minorityrights.org/?s=Minority+Rights+Group+International%2C+World+Directory+of+Minorities+and+Indigenous+Peoples%3A+Hazaras>; Amnesty International, *Afghanistan Annual Reports*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>.

⁹⁵ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 31, 119–60; Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), *Reports on Discrimination and Minority Rights*, <https://www.ecoi.net/en/source/10940.html>; Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 119–60; Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Hazaras*, <https://minorityrights.org/?s=Minority+Rights+Group+International%2C+World+Directory+of+Minorities+and+Indigenous+Peoples%3A+Hazaras>; Amnesty International, *Afghanistan Annual Reports*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>.

⁹⁶ William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 175–99 (chap., The rise and rule of Taliban 1994–2001); Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, *Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan (2023–2025)*, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/60/2>; Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, *Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan*, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/afghanistan/sr/hrc-58-74/a-hrc-58-74-farsi-dari-complete-updated.pdf>.

⁹⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Bamiyan World Heritage Reports*, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/208>; UNESCO World Heritage Committee, *Destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas Documentation*, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/208>.

⁹⁸ Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), Social and Cultural Developments in Afghanistan after 2001. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/political-landscape/the-pastures-of-heaven-an-update-of-kuchi-hazara-disputes-as-spring-approaches/>

targeted attacks on Hazara educational, cultural, and religious centres showed that discrimination and threats persisted.⁹⁹

The Taliban's return on 15 August 2021 revived historical fears. Restrictions on education, cultural activities, religious ceremonies, media, and cultural heritage demonstrate that current challenges continue a long historical pattern of cultural discrimination and erasure.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, evaluating the present cultural situation is only possible by considering this historical background.

2. Removal of Ja'fari Jurisprudence from Schools and Universities and Pressure to Change Religious Affiliation within the Ismaili Community

The Taliban regulate culture, education, and religion based on their interpretation of Sharia, emphasizing a single cultural and religious model rather than acknowledging Afghanistan's diversity. A clear example is the Taliban's "*Principles Charter*" issued in 2025, which recognizes only Hanafi jurisprudence as the basis for regulations, leaving no place for Ja'fari jurisprudence, the Ismaili faith, or other religious traditions. This charter sparked widespread reactions from religious scholars, civil activists, and social actors inside and outside Afghanistan, widely reported by credible international media.¹⁰¹

This approach is also evident in the education sector. In May 2022, the Taliban halted the teaching of Ja'fari jurisprudence at Bamiyan University. Additionally, the "*Commitment Form*" issued by the Taliban Ministry of Higher Education in April 2026 required Ja'fari and Ismaili students to declare adherence to Hanafi jurisprudence in order to continue their studies. The publication of this document triggered strong objections from students, religious scholars, and

⁹⁹ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), Reports on Discrimination and Minority Rights. <https://www.ecoi.net/en/source/10940.html>, and UNAMA, Human Rights Reports (2022–2025). https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_human_rights_in_afghanistan_report_-_june_2022_english.pdf
https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/english_-_unama_-_update_on_hr_situation_in_afghanistan_-_july-sept_2024.pdf

¹⁰⁰ USCIRF, Religious Freedom Conditions in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan (2024–2025). <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/Afghanistan.pdf>, and Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan (2023–2025). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/60/2>, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/afghanistan/sr/hrc-58-74/a-hrc-58-74-farsi-dari-complete-updated.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ <https://amu.tv/fa/223038/>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/213079/>, <https://parsi.euronews.com/2025/04/01/taliban-leader-we-dont-need-democracy-and-western-laws>.

[illegible]

This policy was not limited to universities. Reports and findings from the *Balkh Analysts Network* indicate that the teaching of Ja'fari jurisprudence in schools has also effectively been halted. Many critics view this trend as an attempt to establish an education system based on a single religious interpretation, a policy that undermines Afghanistan's religious and cultural diversity.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Amnesty International. Afghanistan: Annual Report 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25.

61

In this regard, the Bolaq Analysts Network collected opinions from education-sector activists. For example, one activist, *Mohammad Taher Rasa* (pseudonym), who works as a teacher in a school in western Kabul, stated:

“The suspension and removal of Ja’fari jurisprudence from schools and universities ignores the cultural diversity of the Afghan people. This action by the Taliban amounts to cultural erasure, because they are targeting the culture of a specific segment of the population. All these measures, from removing Ja’fari jurisprudence from schools and universities to collecting books related to the Hazara community and imposing heavy censorship on the publication of works by Hazara writers, can be described as cultural erasure. These actions have created deep mistrust among the Hazara community toward the current rulers of Afghanistan.”¹⁰⁴

The **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)** also stated in its 2024 annual report that freedom of religion and belief in Afghanistan has steadily deteriorated since the Taliban’s return to power. The report emphasizes that members of religious minorities, especially Shia Muslims, face increasing restrictions on religious rituals, religious education, and the exercise of their religious rights.¹⁰⁵

In September 2025, the Taliban implemented extensive changes to the school curriculum. According to published reports, the group removed **51 educational titles** from textbooks for grades 1 to 12, claiming they contradicted their interpretation of Islam and the policies of the “Islamic Emirate.” Education experts, cultural activists, and human rights organizations have described this move as part of an ideological restructuring of the education system, reducing intellectual, cultural, and religious diversity in Afghanistan’s educational content.¹⁰⁶

Overall, Taliban policies in the fields of culture and education demonstrate that the group seeks to establish a structure based on a single religious and cultural narrative rather than accepting Afghanistan’s diversity. The removal or restriction of Ja’fari jurisprudence, changes to educational content, disregard for other religious traditions in official documents, and limitations on cultural and religious practices have been analyzed by many human rights institutions and

¹⁰⁴ Interview conducted by the Bolaq Analysts Network with Mr. Mohammad Tahir Rasa (pseudonym), one of the current teachers at a school in western Kabul, in April 2026. The name of the individual mentioned has been given as a pseudonym for security reasons.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/news/174545/>, <https://zantimes.com/fa/2025/01/14/restrictions-on-afghan-shia-schools-and-books/>, <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/note/188797/>, <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/note/188797/>.

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/241152/what-subjects-have-been-removed-from-school-textbooks/>, <https://www.afintl.com/202509261280>, <https://amu.tv/fa/198702/>.

researchers as part of the Taliban's cultural and religious homogenization policy, with significant consequences for the cultural and religious rights, especially the Hazara community.

The removal or weakening of Ja'fari jurisprudence education is one of the most significant religious and educational developments since the Taliban's return to power. For the majority of Afghanistan's Shia population particularly the Hazaras, Ja'fari jurisprudence is not merely a legal tradition; it is part of their religious, cultural, and social identity.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, its place in the education system is directly connected to the right to education, freedom of religion, and preservation of cultural identity.

During the Republic era (2001-2021), Ja'fari jurisprudence was taught in some schools and universities, especially Bamiyan University, as part of religious studies, and this was considered a sign of recognizing religious diversity within the education system.¹⁰⁸ However, after 2021, the Taliban halted the teaching of Ja'fari jurisprudence at Bamiyan University and several other educational institutions, replacing it in some cases with Hanafi jurisprudence.¹⁰⁹

This decision faced objections from the Shia Ulema Council of Afghanistan, civil activists, and human rights organizations. The Council's request to resume teaching Ja'fari jurisprudence was rejected by the Taliban. The Bolaq Analysts Network, citing credible media reports and interviews with Hazara social activists inside and outside Afghanistan, confirmed the suspension of Ja'fari jurisprudence and identified it as one of the major concerns of the Shia community regarding religious education and preservation of religious identity.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibrahim, Niamatullah. *The Hazaras and the Afghan State: Rebellion, Exclusion and the Struggle for Recognition*. London: Hurst Publishers, 2017, pp. 221–245, and United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). 2024 Annual Report: Afghanistan Chapter. Washington, DC: USCIRF, 2024, pp. 38–40. <https://www.uscifr.gov/resources/afghanistan-annual-report-chapters-and-translations>.

¹⁰⁸ United States Department of State. 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2024. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/afghanistan/>, and United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). 2024 Annual Report: Afghanistan Chapter. Washington, DC: USCIRF, 2024, pp. 38–40. <https://www.uscifr.gov/resources/afghanistan-annual-report-chapters-and-translations>.

¹⁰⁹ Bennett, Richard. *Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan*. UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/55/80, February 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4045185>, and Human Rights Watch. *World Report 2024: Afghanistan*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/afghanistan> United Nations. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. New York: United Nations, 1966, arts. 13 and 15 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>, and Ibrahim, Niamatullah. *The Hazaras and the Afghan State: Rebellion, Exclusion and the Struggle for Recognition*. London: Hurst Publishers, 2017, pp. 221–245.

¹¹⁰ <https://dari.bolaq.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/One-Year-Taliban-in-power-Dari2.pdf>

Published reports also indicate the removal or reduction of content related to Ja'fari jurisprudence, the halt of developing educational resources, and decreased activity of specialized instructors in this field. This trend could, in the long term, weaken the academic and educational capacity related to Ja'fari jurisprudence in Afghanistan.¹¹¹ An interview conducted by the Bolaq Analysts Network with *Sima Nouri*, a human rights activist, in May 2026 further supports this claim. She stated:

"Yes, the restrictions are extremely severe and systematic. I will give two clear examples: In the religious sphere, during the recent Muharram ceremonies, we saw how Taliban intelligence forces removed mourning flags in Dasht-e-Barchi and other parts of the country, stopped processions in the streets, and forced reciters to obtain permits. These actions violate Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of religion and religious practice.

*In the cultural sphere, banning Nowruz celebrations and preventing the raising of the Jahenda-e Sakhi in Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul is another example of Taliban cultural restrictions. Although Nowruz, Yalda Night, Teacher's Day, Farmer's Day, and similar celebrations are not limited to the Hazara community, they are shared heritage among Persian-speaking communities and other ethnic groups such as Tajiks and Uzbeks. However, by labeling these traditions as bid'ah (religious innovations), the Taliban have effectively waged a campaign against the culture of the entire region. Their increasingly rigid approach has further exposed their exclusionary nature and pushed people even further away from them."*¹¹²

Nouri also highlighted restrictions in education and publishing:

"The education system in Afghanistan has been completely ethnically and religiously cleansed. Removing Ja'fari jurisprudence and collecting books related to Hazara history and Ja'fari jurisprudence from universities and schools violates fundamental human rights principles. This action is a blatant violation of UNESCO's Convention Against Discrimination in Education.

¹¹¹ <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c3g5yvpwqejo>, <https://www.afintl.com/202304129834>, <https://www.facebook.com/jehadfarhangi.a.m/posts/>; United States Department of State, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2024), [suspicious link removed]; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), *Religious Freedom Conditions in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: USCIRF, 2023–2025), <https://www.uscifr.gov/countries/afghanistan>.

¹¹² Interview conducted by Bolaq Analysts Network with Ms. Sima Noori, a human rights activist, regarding her views on the Taliban's religious restrictions in Afghanistan.

The removal of the Persian language from official government correspondence and the replacement of Persian-language signs with Pashto constitute a form of cultural cleansing that the Taliban are deliberately and systematically implementing.”¹¹³

From a human rights perspective, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities* emphasize the right of minorities to receive religious education consistent with their beliefs and to preserve their religious and cultural identity. Within this framework, the removal or restriction of Ja’fari jurisprudence education has raised questions regarding respect for the cultural and religious rights of minorities.¹¹⁴

In the years following 2021, several reports from media outlets and civil society organizations have pointed to pressures on religious educational activities in Shia-populated areas. These reports include restrictions on certain independent educational activities, increased monitoring of religious educational content, and reduced operational space for Shia religious educational institutions. Although not all of these reports have been officially confirmed, their repetition and the diversity of sources have made them a serious concern in analyses of the Hazara cultural situation.¹¹⁵

At the societal level, these developments may create distrust toward the education system among parts of the population. When an ethnic or religious group feels that its educational and religious identity is ignored in official structures, it may turn toward informal educational institutions or seek educational migration.¹¹⁶ In the long term, this can lead to educational and cultural fragmentation within society.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Continuation of the interview with Ms. Sima Noori, a human rights activist, and her views on the educational restrictions imposed by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

¹¹⁴ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). 2024 Annual Report: Afghanistan Chapter. Washington, DC: USCIRF, 2024, pp. 38–40. <https://www.uscifr.gov/resources/afghanistan-annual-report-chapters-and-translations>, and United Nations. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. New York: United Nations, 1966, arts. 13 and 15. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

¹¹⁵ Bennett, Richard. Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan. UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/55/80, February 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4045185>, and Human Rights Watch. World Report 2024: Afghanistan. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/afghanistan>.

¹¹⁶ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). 2024 Annual Report: Afghanistan Chapter. Washington, DC: USCIRF, 2024, pp. 38–40. <https://www.uscifr.gov/resources/afghanistan-annual-report-chapters-and-translations>, and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan. Various Reports, 2024. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights>.

¹¹⁷ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). 2024 Annual Report: Afghanistan Chapter. Washington, DC: USCIRF, 2024, pp. 38–40. <https://www.uscifr.gov/resources/afghanistan-annual-report-chapters-and-translations>

Overall, the issue of Ja'fari jurisprudence in Afghanistan's education system is not merely an academic or curricular matter; it is directly connected to the recognition of religious diversity, the cultural rights of minorities, and the preservation of the collective identity of the Hazara community. Any change or removal in this area, without the participation and consent of the affected community, can have profound social, cultural, and psychological consequences.¹¹⁸

Because Hazara religious rituals, ceremonies, and many cultural traditions are closely tied to Ja'fari jurisprudence, restricting its teaching is not simply a curricular change, it can affect the transmission of religious and cultural identity to future generations. Reports of increased monitoring of Shia religious educational centres and restrictions on some independent educational institutions have intensified these concerns.

After the Taliban's return in August 2021, reports from the United Nations, UNESCO, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and other human rights bodies have documented increasing restrictions in the areas of culture, education, religion, and media.¹¹⁹ For example, the teaching of Ja'fari jurisprudence at Bamiyan University was halted in May 2022. The Taliban Ministry of Higher Education issued an official directive ending Ja'fari jurisprudence instruction. This decision faced objections from religious scholars, intellectuals, and cultural activists. The Shia Ulema Council requested the resumption of these courses, but the Ministry rejected the request, citing the *"necessity of a unified curriculum and legal framework,"* as documented in a copy of the decree published by the Bolaq Analysts Network.¹²⁰

[chapters-and-translations](#), and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan. Various Reports, 2024. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights>

¹¹⁸ Minority Rights Group International. World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Hazaras. London: Minority Rights Group International. <https://minorityrights.org/communities/hazaras/>

¹¹⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *Human Rights in Afghanistan Reports (2022–2025)* (UNAMA, 2022–2025), https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/english_-_unama_hrs_update_on_human_rights_in_afghanistan_april-june_2025_final.pdf
https://afghanistan.un.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/AFG_AR_2025_HiRes_Final%20for%20print%20and%20website%20posting-20AP26.pdf

: United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), *Religious Freedom Conditions in Afghanistan (2023–2025)* (Washington, DC: USCIRF, 2023–2025), <https://www.uscifr.gov/events/hearings/religious-freedom-conditions-taliban-controlled-afghanistan> <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-releases-report-religious-freedom-afghanistan>; Amnesty International, *Afghanistan Annual Reports (2022–2025)* (London: Amnesty International, 2022–2025), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/annual-report-archive/>
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>.

¹²⁰ <https://www.afintl.com/202304129834>, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c3g5yvpwqejo>,
<https://8am.media/fa/taliban-and-the-prohibition-of-jafari-jurisprudence-in-schools-and-universities/>,
<https://www.etilaatroz.com/144949/elimination-of-teaching-jafari-jurisprudence-from-bamyan-university-taliban-should-respect-peoples-opinions/>, <https://8am.media/fa/taliban-conflict-with-islamic-religions-nadim-all-the-people-of-afghanistan-are-hanafi/>, <https://fa.shafagha.com/news/1560980/>,

Pressure on followers of the Ismaili jurisprudence is another example of cultural discrimination. In its October 2025 report, UNAMA stated that the Taliban, in several districts of Badakhshan, including Nusay, pressured Ismaili residents to change their religious affiliation, and in some cases made adherence to Hanafi jurisprudence a condition for receiving certain social assistance. The Balkh Analysts Network, citing UNAMA and other sources, confirmed these cases. In independent interviews conducted with several Hazara Ismailis inside Afghanistan, these pressures were also verified. For example, an interviewee named *Nouruddin Hesam* (pseudonym), a resident of Badakhshan, stated:

“What can I say about the oppression? We cannot openly perform our religious rituals. Out of necessity, we must send our children to Sunni madrasas for religious education. We must pray with folded hands. The Taliban in our village said that if we need assistance, we must become Hanafi. They call us infidels and polytheists. They forced several people to renounce the Ismaili faith and recite the Shahada again. God knows what is in our hearts. We cannot hold our special religious ceremonies or travel freely between villages. In some areas, no one is allowed to openly say they are Ismaili.”¹²¹

Additionally, the *Hasht-e Subh Daily* in February 2025 and Human Rights Watch in its March 2025 report expressed concern about pressure on followers of Ja’fari and Ismaili jurisprudence and the continuation of discrimination against religious minorities.¹²²

¹²¹ Interview with Nooruddin Hesam (pseudonym). Due to security concerns, Bolaq Analysts Network is unable to disclose the interviewee’s real identity.

¹²² <https://8am.media/fa/imposing-the-taliban-religion-on-the-shiites-of-badakhshan-religious-repression-and-changing-the-direction-of-media-activity/>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/244426/taliban-pressure-on-the-ismaili-community/>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/229320/ismaelis-of-badakhshan/>, <https://www.hrw.org/gbz/news/2025/03/20/religious-freedom-afghanistan-three-years-after-taliban-takeover>.



Figure 4: Photo showing the Taliban forcing a follower of the Ismaili faith to follow Hanafi jurisprudence in Badakhshan (Photo source: Hasht-e Subh Daily).

The Taliban have also imposed extensive restrictions on cultural and religious ceremonies. The “*Hazara Cultural Day*,” held annually on 19 May since 2018, was halted after the Taliban takeover. Cultural festivals such as the *Dambora Festival*, the *Almond Blossom Festival* in Daikundi, and the *Potato Blossom Festival* in Bamiyan were restricted or prevented from taking place. Furthermore, the Taliban declared Nowruz contrary to Sharia and prohibited its official celebration. The Bolaq Analysts Network, domestic media, and several human rights organizations have assessed these actions as part of broader restrictions on Afghanistan’s cultural heritage and the cultural identity of various communities, including the Hazaras.¹²³

In this context, the Bolaq Analysts Network collected opinions from Afghan citizens. Most respondents viewed these restrictions on cultural celebrations and events as violations of basic civic and social principles. For example, *Tahera Naseri*, a human rights activist and founder of a protest movement opposing Taliban policies. Ms. Naseri believes that imposing cultural

¹²³<https://dari.bolaq.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/TalibanY2-DariFinal.pdf>, , <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cw4wjpy9ylo>, <https://www.afintl.com/202403208630>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/226017/%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%9>, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-60797393>,

restrictions on a particular segment of the population constitutes cultural genocide in itself. She stated in an April 2026 interview:

“In their five years of rule, the Taliban have shown that they adhere to no principles and instead impose their own narrative and ideology on the people, giving all of it a religious cover. From removing the Persian language, the second language of Islam, to restricting cultural celebrations shared by Persian-speaking communities, such as Nowruz, Yalda Night, Teacher’s Day, Farmer’s Day, and restricting Hazara cultural festivals such as Hazara Cultural Day and Eid al-Ghadir, these actions demonstrate Taliban policies have systematically targeted the culture of people, and this constitutes cultural genocide, creating mistrust among different segments of society, especially between the Hazara community and Pashtuns.”¹²⁴

Restrictions on Shia religious ceremonies are not merely religious limitations; they directly affect the cultural life of the Hazara community. During Ashura in 2023 in Ghazni province, Taliban forces opened fire on mourners in the Nowabad area. According to reports, four people were killed and dozens injured. The Bolaq Analysts Network, after reviewing published videos, confirmed the shooting and the removal of Ashura symbols.¹²⁵ Amnesty International also reported that in 2023 the Taliban imposed restrictions on Muharram ceremonies and, on 28 July



Figure 5: Photo of Taliban forces opening fire on a Shia mourning procession in Nowabad, Ghazni Province.

¹²⁴ Interview conducted by Bolaq Analysts Network with Ms. Tahera Naseri, a human rights activist, in April 2026.

¹²⁵ <https://dari.bolaq.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/One-Year-Taliban-in-power-Dari2.pdf>

of that year, opened fire on mourners in Ghazni, killing four people including a woman and a child and injuring six others.¹²⁶

The ban on music has also had far-reaching consequences for Hazara culture.¹²⁷ Following their return to power, the Taliban banned music and, on numerous occasions, confiscated and destroyed musical instruments. This policy has forced many artists to emigrate or cease their activities. Given that local music and the *dambura* are considered important elements of Hazara cultural heritage, the ban has directly affected the preservation and transmission of this heritage. Many citizens, artists, and cultural activists have also described the policy in media interviews as an assault on Afghanistan's culture and arts.¹²⁸

The findings of this report clearly demonstrate that, through severe restrictions on music, the Taliban are effectively seeking to eliminate an important component of Afghanistan's cultural life. Although the ban on music is not limited to the Hazara community, it has nevertheless had a particularly detrimental impact on Hazara artists and their artistic activities. A considerable number of local Hazara musicians and artists, including Sayed Anwar Azad, Sayed Dawood Yakawlangi, Mohammad Wakili, Mohammad Gholami, Morteza Gharib Nawaz, and Zargham Wasa, have left the country. At the same time, many other artists, including Ustad Safdar Tawakoli, Mir Chaman Soltani, and Zia Soltani, have been forced to remain inactive at home amid an environment of severe censorship. This situation has raised serious concerns within the community, as music is widely regarded as a living expression of a society's cultural identity. For the Hazara ethnic minority, which has endured years of severe cultural censorship, the Taliban's policies can therefore be characterized as a form of systematic restriction targeting Afghan society, particularly the Hazara community.

Media outlets and cultural institutions have also faced extensive restrictions.¹²⁹ In August 2025, following the detention of the director and two journalists of *Radio Nasim* by the Taliban

¹²⁶ <https://amu.tv/fa/110175/>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/174326/%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%86%DB%8C>.

¹²⁷ UNESCO, Emergency Measures for the Protection of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (2022). <https://www.unesco.org/en/culture-emergencies/heritage-emergency-fund/emergency-assessment-and-urgent-measures-protection-cultural-objects-and-cultural-sites-within>

¹²⁸ <https://www.rfi.fr/fa/3>, <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/1>, <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/2>, <https://amu.tv/fa/215173/>, <https://www.darivoo.com/a/taliban-s-reforms-lead-to-21-000-musical-instruments-destroyed-in-afghanistan/7749770.html>, <https://www.rfi.fr/fa/>.

¹²⁹ UNESCO, Emergency Measures for the Protection of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (2022). <https://www.unesco.org/en/culture-emergencies/heritage-emergency-fund/emergency-assessment-and-urgent-measures-protection-cultural-objects-and-cultural-sites-within>, and Amnesty International, Afghanistan Annual Reports (2022–2025).

intelligence services, the outlet ceased its operations in Daikundi and Bamiyan.¹³⁰ The radio station was the only active local media outlet in Daikundi and devoted a significant portion of its programming to Hazara culture and the arts.



Figure 6: Photo showing Taliban forces raiding the Radio Nasim office (Source: Etilaatroz Daily).

In May 2026, the Taliban also shut down *Radio Bamiyan*.¹³¹ The Bolaq Analysts Network, citing reports from reputable media outlets, has corroborated this incident and considers it part of the restrictions imposed on local media outlets and cultural institutions in Hazara-populated areas.

In March 2026, the operations of *Rah-e-Farda Television* were halted after Taliban forces seized its media equipment. The Afghanistan Journalists Centre condemned the action, describing it as a violation of media freedom and the right of citizens to access information. This media outlet played an important role in covering social and cultural issues, particularly those related to the Hazara community.¹³²

¹³⁰ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/237509/stopping-radio-nasim-broadcasts/>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/237917/radio-nasim-ceases-operations-after-13-years/>, <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/6>, <https://www.afintl.com/fa/video/>.

¹³¹ <https://www.afintl.com/202605213412>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/253974/stopping-the-broadcasts-of-radio-bamiyan/>.

¹³² <https://8am.media/fa/afghan-journalists-center-condemns-talibans-suspension-of-rah-farda-tv/>, <https://amu.tv/fa/228748/>, <https://www.afintl.com/202504290625>.

Overall, available evidence shows that restrictions on religious education, cultural and religious ceremonies, music, media, cultural centres, and historical heritage have weakened the Hazara community's ability to preserve and transmit its cultural identity. Examining this trend within the framework of cultural genocide provides a clearer understanding of the scope of these restrictions and their long-term consequences for the cultural rights of Hazaras.

In summary, the removal of Ja'fari jurisprudence from parts of Afghanistan's education system goes beyond a curricular change; it has become an issue directly tied to freedom of religion, minority rights, and the preservation of the cultural identity of the Hazara community. It is one of the most significant educational challenges facing this community in recent years.

3. Restrictions on Books, Publications, and Cultural Works of Hazaras and Shia Communities

Books, publications, and written works are among the most important means of preserving historical memory, transmitting knowledge, and sustaining cultural identity. For Hazaras and Shia communities, freedom to publish and access resources related to their history, religion, and culture constitutes an important component of cultural rights and freedom of expression.¹³³

Following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, numerous reports have documented restrictions on book publishing, the activities of publishers, and access to intellectual resources. These restrictions have particularly affected works related to Hazara history, Ja'fari and Ismaili religious traditions, and alternative narratives of Afghanistan's history.¹³⁴ In some cases, Shia religious books and historical works on the Hazaras have reportedly been removed from bookstores and distribution centers or prevented from being widely published and distributed.

Although the Taliban have not issued a formal written policy in every instance, the environment they have created has resulted in widespread self-censorship among publishers and booksellers. Many have refrained from printing or distributing works related to the religious and cultural

¹³³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Paris: UNESCO, 2 November 2001. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/unesco-universal-declaration-cultural-diversity>, and United Nations Human Rights Council. Report of the Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights. Geneva: United Nations, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cultural-rights>

¹³⁴ Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Afghanistan: Press Freedom at Its Lowest Point as Taliban Closed 12 Media Outlets in Less Than a Year. Paris: RSF, 2024. <https://rsf.org/en/afghanistan-press-freedom-its-lowest-point-taliban-closed-12-media-outlets-less-year>, and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Afghanistan: Public Reporting Cycle. Kabul: UNAMA, 2024. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights>

identity of Hazaras and Shia communities in order to avoid potential repercussions. This situation has reduced the diversity of cultural content and restricted the community's access to its own historical and religious sources.¹³⁵

One of the Taliban's most significant measures was the issuance of a directive on 14 December 2023 ordering the collection of books related to Ja'fari jurisprudence from universities, libraries, and certain cultural institutions. The measure prompted criticism from researchers, religious scholars, cultural activists, and human rights organizations. Critics have viewed the policy as more than an educational decision, characterizing it as part of a broader process of religious and cultural homogenization and the weakening of the intellectual and cultural heritage of Afghanistan's Shia community.¹³⁶

The findings of this report indicate that the Taliban are effectively seeking to eliminate parts of Afghanistan's cultural diversity. Their censorship of publications and restrictions on books associated with particular religious, historical, and ethnic communities have made this trend more apparent than ever. In this regard, a bookseller in Kabul, interviewed by the Bulaq Analysts Network, who spoke under the pseudonym Mohammad Hossein Jahangir, stated:

"The Taliban closely monitor books and bookstores. They have even sealed many bookstores. In one case, they arrested the director of Maqsoudi Publishing, although he was later released. The Taliban collect books associated with the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence and books related to Hazara history. Books written by women are also collected. Every day or every week, personnel from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice enter bookstores and libraries to inspect them. They examine the books very strictly, and in

¹³⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Afghanistan. New York: Committee to Protect Journalists, 2023–2025, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Safeguarding Living Heritage in Afghanistan. Paris: UNESCO, 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/intangible-cultural-heritage>, Human Rights Watch. Afghanistan: Freedom of Expression under Taliban Rule. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2023–2025. <https://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan>, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Culture in Afghanistan. UNESCO Kabul Office, 2023–2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/fieldoffice/kabul/expertise/culture>, Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Afghanistan: Press Freedom at Its Lowest Point as Taliban Closed 12 Media Outlets in Less Than a Year. Paris: RSF, 2024. <https://rsf.org/en/afghanistan-press-freedom-its-lowest-point-taliban-closed-12-media-outlets-less-year>, and PEN International. Reports on Freedom of Expression and Publishing. London: PEN International, 2024. <https://www.pen-international.org/reports>

¹³⁶ <https://af.shafaqna.com/FA/616793>, <https://8am.media/fa/religious-conflict-between-taliban-and-shiites-the-entry-of-religious-books-is-prohibited-and-shiites-are-called-polytheists/>, <https://fa.shafaqna.com/news/1818170/>, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cg3d173390vo>, <https://8am.media/fa/taliban-enmity-with-books-everything-that-is-against-their-ideology-is-collected/>, <https://www.afintl.com/202505078207>, <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/21>.

cases of violations, they respond harshly, ranging from sealing the premises to imprisonment and fines. In reality, this policy prevents the dissemination of the culture of the Afghan people, particularly the Hazara community. It will have a negative impact on the future of our culture, as people will gradually become alienated from their own cultural heritage. This is cultural genocide.”¹³⁷



Figure 7: Taliban directive ordering the removal of books related to Ja'fari jurisprudence from university libraries (photo sourced from social media).

¹³⁷ Interview by the Bolaq Analysts Network with Mohammad Hossein Jahangir (pseudonym), a bookseller at a bookstore in western Kabul.



Figure 8: Photo of a Taliban directive ordering the removal of books related to Ja'fari jurisprudence from schools in Bamiyan Province (Source: social media).

Alongside books, printed and digital media have also faced extensive restrictions. Many media outlets that, before 2021, covered cultural, historical, and social issues related to the Hazara community have been shut down or severely limited in their operations. Reports have also emerged of censorship or removal of content related to ethnic histories, religious diversity, and

cultural identities, leading to a reduction in the diversity of cultural narratives in the public sphere. Examples of media closures affecting Hazara and Shia communities were discussed in earlier sections of this report.¹³⁸

In Hazara-populated regions, there have been reports of restricted access to books related to Hazara history, works by Shia authors, and religious educational materials. Such restrictions can affect the historical and cultural awareness of younger generations.¹³⁹

Findings from this research indicate that restrictions on publishing works related to Hazara history, Shia authors, and the import of Ja'fari jurisprudence books from other countries have been officially enforced. The Balkh Analysts Network interviewed several booksellers in Herat to gather their perspectives. They stated that restrictions on jurisprudence and historical books related to Hazaras have been implemented, and in some cases, such books have been removed from bookstores in Herat. One bookseller, who requested anonymity, said:

“Brother, these Taliban actions have harmed the cultural and social diversity of the Afghan people, especially in Herat. What the Taliban are doing is essentially a campaign against a specific religion, a specific history, and a specific geography. Any book that does not align with their worldview is labelled ‘anti-Islam.’ Even philosophy books and romantic novels are being collected by the Taliban. They monitor book sales closely, and out of fear, we cannot sell the books that customers most want. This has severely affected the book market. With these actions, the Taliban have effectively declared war on the culture of this country.”¹⁴⁰

From the perspective of international law, the right to free access to information, books, and participation in cultural life is recognized in international human rights instruments. Therefore,

¹³⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Afghanistan. New York: Committee to Protect Journalists, 2023–2025, and Human Rights Watch. Afghanistan: Freedom of Expression under Taliban Rule. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2023–2025. <https://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan>, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Afghanistan: Public Reporting Cycle. Kabul: UNAMA, 2024. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights>, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Culture in Afghanistan. UNESCO Kabul Office, 2023–2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/fieldoffice/kabul/expertise/culture>

¹³⁹ Amnesty International. Afghanistan 2024. In The State of the World's Human Rights. London: Amnesty International, 2024. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>

¹⁴⁰ Interview by the Bolaq Analysts Network with a bookseller in the city of Herat who requested that his name not be disclosed, even under a pseudonym. Interview conducted in April 2026.

systematic restrictions on publishing or accessing the cultural and religious works of a particular group may conflict with the cultural rights and freedom of expression of minorities.¹⁴¹

Given the importance of books and publishing in preserving Hazara cultural identity, restrictions in this domain can have long-term consequences. Reduced production and distribution of works related to the history, religion, and culture of this community can gradually weaken historical memory and diminish its cultural presence in the public sphere.¹⁴² This issue is particularly significant for younger generations, who rely heavily on education and books to understand their cultural identity.

Overall, restrictions on books, publications, and cultural works after 2021 have been part of a broader policy aimed at controlling Afghanistan's cultural space. For the Hazara and Shia communities, this trend has reduced their ability to preserve and transmit their history, religion, and cultural identity, raising serious concerns about the weakening of historical memory and cultural heritage.

The Bolaq Analysts Network also sought the opinion of Dr. Mohammad Maskan Kawi, one of the founders of the National Council of Sunni Hazaras, regarding restrictions on books related to Hazaras and internal religious diversity within the group.

He stated:

“These restrictions can be categorized as cultural erasure. When we cannot read our historical and cultural books, how can we learn about our past, history, and culture, and how can we preserve them? What the Taliban are doing is essentially distancing people from their true identity, an idea that resonates within parts of the Pashtun community, as it continues the same ‘Pashtun ethno-nationalism’ under the slogans of Afghanistanism and Islamism. This targets other ethnic groups, especially Persian-

¹⁴¹ UNESCO. Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form. Paris: UNESCO, 2015. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-concerning-preservation-and-access-documentary-heritage-including>, and United Nations Human Rights Council. Report of the Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights. Geneva: United Nations, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cultural-rights>

¹⁴² Bennett, Richard. Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan. UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/55/80, February 23, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4045185>, and PEN International. Reports on Freedom of Expression and Publishing. London: PEN International, 2024. <https://www.pen-international.org/reports>

*speaking communities such as Tajiks and Hazaras. Examples include the removal of Persian from government offices and university signs. But the situation for Hazaras is particularly severe because a large portion of the Hazara community follows Ja'fari and Ismaili jurisprudence. These restrictions on followers of these sects are essentially a ban on their religious and cultural activities. This reflects the Taliban's explicit opposition to Afghanistan's cultural diversity and their disregard for a large segment of the population, something that can be considered cultural erasure."*¹⁴³

4. Restrictions on Religious Ceremonies

Religious ceremonies in Shia communities, particularly among the Hazaras of Afghanistan, are not merely individual acts of worship. They constitute an essential part of collective identity, historical memory, and social cohesion. Rituals such as Muharram, Ashura, Arbaeen, mourning gatherings, and religious assemblies play a significant role not only in religious life but also in cultural reproduction, transmission of values, and strengthening social solidarity.¹⁴⁴ From this perspective, any restriction on these ceremonies can have consequences beyond the religious sphere and directly affect the cultural life of the community.

After the Taliban's return to power in 2021, numerous reports and concerns emerged regarding changes in the environment surrounding Shia religious ceremonies. Although the Taliban have claimed in some official statements that they guarantee religious freedom for all citizens, in practice, multiple reports document restrictions, surveillance, and interference in the organization of certain religious ceremonies, especially in Shia-populated areas.¹⁴⁵

One of the most significant issues raised is the indirect restriction of Muharram ceremonies in some regions. These restrictions have included strict security conditions, limiting procession routes, reducing the possibility of large gatherings, and monitoring the content of religious

¹⁴³ Interview by the Bolaq Analysts Network with Mr. Mohammad Maskan Kawi, one of the founders of the National Council of Sunni Hazaras of Afghanistan. Interview conducted on June 1, 2026.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: February–April 2024 Update. Kabul: UNAMA, 2024. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights>, and United Nations General Assembly. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Resolution 47/135, December 18, 1992. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic>

¹⁴⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council. Bennett, Richard. Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan. A/HRC/55/80. Geneva: United Nations, February 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4045185>, and United States Department of State. 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Afghanistan. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2024. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/afghanistan/>

speeches and slogans.¹⁴⁶ Although the intensity of these restrictions varies across regions, overall, they have created an atmosphere of caution and limitation around the free organization of ceremonies.

Some reports also point to administrative interference in how religious ceremonies are conducted, such as requiring prior coordination for gatherings or imposing restrictions on the use of loudspeakers and public spaces. Even if such measures are justified under the pretext of security, they can transform religious spaces into controlled environments and undermine the communal nature of these ceremonies.¹⁴⁷

The Bolaq Analysts Network interviewed several mosque committees in western Kabul and other provinces regarding restrictions on ceremonies such as Ashura, Arbaeen, Eid al-Ghadir, Eid prayers, Friday prayers, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Abdul Ali Mazari, the late leader of the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan (Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami Afghanistan), the birth of Imam Ali, the birth of Imam Mahdi, and Laylat al-Qadr. All committees expressed strong dissatisfaction with severe restrictions imposed by the Taliban. One committee member from western Kabul stated that the Taliban collected Ashura symbols, prevented mourning processions from entering the city, and in some cases forced reciters and mosque committees to obtain permits, something unprecedented in Afghanistan.

He said:

“From the first day of Muharram, the Taliban verbally instructed all mosques not to allow the setup of saghakhana (mourning stations). Mourning processions were banned from appearing in the city. Ceremonies after 9 p.m. had to stop. Shopkeepers who hung Ashura flags were arrested. Many mosques were not allowed to hold mourning ceremonies at all. Regarding Eid al-Fitr, the Taliban announced Eid on a different day than other Muslim countries. Many Ja’fari followers were still fasting because the moon had not been sighted, but the Taliban forced people to break their fast and compelled them to perform Eid prayers. The next day, they closed all

¹⁴⁶ Center for information resilience. “Reports on Ashura and Muharram Restrictions in Afghanistan.” <https://www.info-res.org/afghan-witness/reports/restrictions-on-shias-during-muharram/>, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: February–April 2024 Update. Kabul: UNAMA, 2024. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights>

¹⁴⁷ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Afghanistan Country Update. Washington, DC: USCIRF, 2023. <https://www.uscifr.gov/countries/afghanistan>, and United Nations. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). New York: United Nations, 1966, art. 18. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

*mosques and prevented people from performing Eid prayers. The Taliban declared the birth of Imam Ali Birthday as forbidden and do not allow people to celebrate them publicly. The same applies to the birth of Imam Mahdi and hundreds of other ceremonies, including the anniversary of Mazari's martyrdom, when Hazara-populated areas effectively turn into militarized zones."*¹⁴⁸

In Hazara society, religious ceremonies, especially during Muharram, are not only religious rituals but also major cultural events involving elements such as lamentation, religious poetry, ritual music, traditional clothing, and social gatherings. Therefore, any restriction on these ceremonies directly affects a wide range of cultural elements and can reduce the public visibility of Shia culture in social spaces.¹⁴⁹

Another concern relates to the public environment surrounding Shia rituals. In some areas, reports indicate restrictions on installing religious symbols, flags, or signs related to religious occasions. Although such actions may be justified under security or public order considerations, they can reinforce feelings of cultural and religious suppression.¹⁵⁰

From a social perspective, reduced freedom to hold religious ceremonies can also have psychological and identity-related consequences. In communities where religious and cultural identity is deeply intertwined with collective rituals, restrictions on such ceremonies may contribute to feelings of marginalization, reduced social visibility, and a weakened sense of collective belonging.¹⁵¹ This issue is particularly significant among young people, as an important part of their cultural identity is shaped through participation in these rituals.

At the level of international law, freedom of religion and the right to conduct religious ceremonies are considered fundamental human rights. Under international human rights instruments, including the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, every

¹⁴⁸ Interview with a member of the board of trustees of a mosque in western Kabul. Interview conducted on June 28, 2026, three days after Ashura.

¹⁴⁹ BBC Persian: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c3gdpky5wxwo>, and <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cld9l59dyzwo> Amu TV, Taliban limits Muharram rituals to three days, imposes unprecedented restrictions, Report by Hasiba Atakpal July 10, 2024. <https://amu.tv/109450/>

¹⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch. Afghanistan: Taliban Policies Continue to Restrict Fundamental Freedoms. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan>, and Center for information resilience. "Reports on Ashura and Muharram Restrictions in Afghanistan." <https://www.info-res.org/afghan-witness/reports/restrictions-on-shias-during-muharram/>

¹⁵¹ United Nations General Assembly. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Resolution 47/135, December 18, 1992. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic>, and United Nations. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). New York: United Nations, 1966, art. 18. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

individual has the right to freely participate in religious ceremonies and to practice religious rites, either individually or collectively.¹⁵² Within this framework, any unnecessary or discriminatory restrictions on religious practices may be inconsistent with fundamental human rights principles.

For Shia communities in Afghanistan, this issue is directly connected to the cultural identity of the Hazara community, as many Shia religious rituals in Afghanistan are historically intertwined with Hazara culture and constitute part of the community's intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, restrictions on religious ceremonies simultaneously represent restrictions on cultural and social traditions.¹⁵³

In addition to direct restrictions, changes in the broader public environment have also affected the quality of religious ceremonies. Reduced activity of independent cultural institutions, migration of religious and cultural activists, and increased surveillance over public gatherings have indirectly influenced how these ceremonies are conducted.¹⁵⁴

Overall, the situation of Shia religious ceremonies in Afghanistan after 2021 can be understood as part of a broader trend of managing and controlling cultural and religious public space. Although restrictions vary across regions, evidence shows that the space for freely and widely organizing these ceremonies has become more limited compared to previous periods. For the Hazara community, whose cultural and social identity is deeply rooted in these rituals, these changes may have profound consequences. Therefore, examining this issue alongside other cultural dimensions are essential for understanding the cultural situation of this community under Taliban rule.

5. The Ban on Music and Destruction of Art: Impacts on Hazara Culture

Music and performing arts are among the most vital elements of a living culture. They are not only forms of entertainment but also carriers of historical memory, collective emotions, social

¹⁵² United Nations General Assembly. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Resolution 47/135, December 18, 1992. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic>

¹⁵³ <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c3gdpky5wxwo>, and <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cld9l59dyzwo> Amu TV, Taliban limits Muharram rituals to three days, imposes unprecedented restrictions, Report by Hasiba Atakpal July 10, 2024 <https://amu.tv/109450/>

¹⁵⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council. Bennett, Richard. Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan. A/HRC/55/80. Geneva: United Nations, February 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4045185>, and United Nations. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). New York: United Nations, 1966, art. 18. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

narratives, and cultural identity. In communities such as the Hazaras, local music, folk songs, ritual poetry, and traditional arts are inseparable from social life and religious and cultural occasions.¹⁵⁵ From this perspective, any restriction on music and art can have deep cultural and identity-related consequences.

After the Taliban's return to power in 2021, one of the first sectors to face severe restrictions was music and the arts. In many parts of Afghanistan, activities related to music, including music education, concerts, and artistic gatherings, were widely halted or restricted.¹⁵⁶ This policy was implemented within the Taliban's ideological interpretation of art and music as part of a new cultural order.

In practice, numerous reports document the shutdown of music education centres, closure of music studios, and a drastic reduction in employment opportunities for artists. Many musicians, singers, and performers were forced to leave the country or change professions to continue their livelihoods.¹⁵⁷ This trend has led to a significant decline in artistic production nationwide.

In Hazara society, music holds a special place. Hazara folk music includes traditional songs, romantic melodies, epic poetry, and ritual music performed at weddings, celebrations, social gatherings, and certain religious occasions. This music not only expresses individual emotions but also reflects the history, suffering, resistance, and collective identity of the community. For this reason, restrictions on music effectively mean restricting one of the most important tools of cultural expression for Hazaras.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Freemuse. Afghanistan: Severe Violations of Artistic Freedom after Taliban Takeover. Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2022. <https://www.freemuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/saf-report-2022.pdf>, and <https://freemuse.org/news/afghanistan-severe-violations-of-artistic-freedom-after-taliban-takeover/>, and Mousavi, Sayed Askar. The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998, 129–156.

¹⁵⁶ Amnesty International. Death in Slow Motion: Women and Girls under Taliban Rule. London: Amnesty International, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/6784/2023/en/>, and Bennett, Richard. Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan. A/HRC/55/80. Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Council, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4045185>

¹⁵⁷ UNESCO. ReShaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good. Paris: UNESCO, 2024. <https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/global-report-2024>, and BBC News. "Afghanistan's Musicians Face Uncertain Future under Taliban." BBC News, 31 July 2023 Kelly Ng. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-66357611>, and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58277463> Afghanistan's Musicians Face Uncertain Future under Taliban bbc 2021, <https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/>

¹⁵⁸ Freemuse. Afghanistan: Severe Violations of Artistic Freedom after Taliban Takeover. Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2022. <https://www.freemuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/saf-report-2022.pdf>, and <https://freemuse.org/news/afghanistan-severe-violations-of-artistic-freedom-after-taliban-takeover/>, and The Guardian. "Afghan Musicians Flee Taliban Crackdown on Music." The Guardian, January 14, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/15/when-the-music-stops-how-the-talibans-fear-of-art-is->

One direct consequence of restrictions on music has been the halt or severe reduction of artistic gatherings in Hazara-populated regions. Before 2021, Bamiyan and other central areas of Afghanistan hosted cultural festivals, artistic programs, and local music events. These activities played a significant role in preserving and promoting Hazara culture. With the political shift, many of these activities have stopped or continue only informally and in limited form.¹⁵⁹

In an interview with the Bolaq Analysts Network, Sima Nouri described the restrictions on music as follows:

*“Music is part of our people’s identity. For example, playing the dambura, ney, daf (frame drum), dido, and balbi, as well as reciting poetry during the Shab-e Chahar-dah Pal celebration, are inseparable parts of our culture. Unfortunately, the Taliban have declared all of these practices prohibited and haram. This has caused our people, whose culture was already subject to censorship and restrictions, to become increasingly disconnected from their own cultural heritage. This is the greatest danger facing our community, because keeping these cultural traditions alive under the Taliban carries significant risks. Our artists have been forced to remain at home, and many of them have chosen to emigrate. These conditions and restrictions can be described as a form of **cultural genocide** perpetrated by the Taliban.”¹⁶⁰*

From a cultural perspective, eliminating or restricting music does not simply mean the loss of an art form; it means weakening one of the most important tools for transmitting collective memory. In traditional societies, music plays a crucial role in passing down historical stories, social values, and shared experiences.¹⁶¹ Without this tool, parts of cultural memory gradually fade or lose their natural means of transmission.

Alongside music, other forms of performing arts have also faced restrictions. Theatre, cultural performances, artistic festivals, and public cultural programs have decreased or stopped in many

[killing-afghan-culture](#), and the New York times Musicians Flee Afghanistan, Fearing Taliban Rule, Published Oct. 3, 2021 Updated June 23, 2023

¹⁵⁹ UNESCO. Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Afghanistan. Paris: UNESCO, 2023.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/intangible-cultural-heritage/afghanistan>, and Amnesty International. Death in Slow Motion: Women and Girls under Taliban Rule. London: Amnesty International, 2023.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/6784/2023/en/>

¹⁶⁰ Interview by the Bolaq Analysts Network with Ms. Sima Nouri, human rights activist, May 2026

¹⁶¹ Human Rights Watch. “Afghanistan: Taliban Intensify Assault on Freedom of Expression.” New York: Human Rights Watch, March 25, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/25/afghanistan-taliban-intensify-assault-freedom-expression>, Index on censorship “Afghan Musicians Silenced after Taliban Return.” Report, Feb 06, 202. <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2025/02/afghanistan-taliban-music-banned-musicians-exile-silent/>

areas. This has reduced public space for cultural and artistic expression and limited opportunities for cultural participation.¹⁶²

For Hazara artists, these restrictions have had two interconnected consequences. On the one hand, they have reduced the space for artistic activity within the country; on the other, they have contributed to an increase in cultural migration. Many artists, particularly young people, have migrated to other countries in order to continue their artistic activities.¹⁶³ This large-scale migration, which can also be understood as a form of “**cultural capital flight**,” has weakened the capacity for artistic production within the community

Findings of this report show that the Taliban have effectively banned the broadcasting and production of music, even listening to it, declaring it contrary to their interpretation of Islamic values. Human rights activists view this as a campaign against Afghan culture, particularly Hazara culture, which threatens the survival of local folk music. Socially, eliminating or restricting music can also have psychological consequences. Music plays an important role in reducing stress, creating social hope, and strengthening collective solidarity. In societies facing political and social crises, art can help maintain psychological and social balance. Restricting this space may increase feelings of social pressure and reduce opportunities for healthy emotional expression.¹⁶⁴

From the perspective of cultural rights, artistic expression is a fundamental human right. International human rights instruments emphasize the right of individuals to participate in cultural life, express themselves artistically, and access art. In this framework, widespread restrictions on music and art, especially when applied structurally and nationwide, raise serious questions about respect for citizens’ cultural rights.

For Hazaras, this issue is even more significant because art and music are inseparable parts of their cultural identity. Many Hazara rituals, celebrations, and social events are unimaginable

¹⁶² United Nations. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. New York: United Nations, 1966, Articles 13 and 15. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>, and Amnesty International. Death in Slow Motion: Women and Girls under Taliban Rule. London: Amnesty International, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/6784/2023/en/>

¹⁶³ Freemuse. The State of Artistic Freedom 2023: Afghanistan Chapter. Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2023. <https://freemuse.org/>, and BBC News. “Afghanistan’s Musicians Face Uncertain Future under Taliban.” BBC News, 31 July 2023 Kelly Ng. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-66357611>, and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58277463>, and Afghanistan’s Musicians Face Uncertain Future under Taliban bbc 2021 <https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video>

¹⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch. “Afghanistan: Taliban Intensify Assault on Freedom of Expression.” New York: Human Rights Watch, March 25, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/25/afghanistan-taliban-intensify-assault-freedom-expression>, and Freemuse. The State of Artistic Freedom 2023: Afghanistan Chapter. Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2023. <https://freemuse.org/>

without music and art.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, restrictions on music represent not only a change in the artistic sphere but also a transformation of the cultural and social structure of the community.

Overall, restrictive policies toward music and art after 2021 can be understood as part of a broader trend of reshaping Afghanistan's cultural landscape. Although these policies affect the entire population, their impact on communities like the Hazaras, for whom art is a core element of cultural identity, is deeper and more lasting.

Examining this trend shows that the current situation of art and music in Afghanistan is not merely an artistic issue but part of a larger question about the protection or erosion of cultural diversity in the country, a matter that directly affects the future of Hazara culture.

One of the most significant aspects of Taliban cultural policy after 2021 has been widespread restrictions on art, music, cultural and religious rituals, and activities related to cultural heritage. These policies have affected all Afghan citizens, but for the Hazara community, whose identity is deeply tied to religion, music, traditional rituals, and historical heritage, the consequences have been particularly severe.

In this context, the Bolaq Analysts Network interviewed Shafiqullah Kohzad, a young poet. He stated:

*"The greatest threat is the gradual silencing of collective memory. A society that cannot freely pass its history, language, literature, music, and art to the next generation will lose part of its identity. Another threat is the mass migration of cultural elites, which distances the younger generation from cultural heritage. Reduced cultural presence in public spaces can lead to the gradual invisibility of Hazara identity. All these concerns stem from discrimination and authoritarianism against Hazaras, as well as the widening gap between those who impose such discriminatory measures and the principles of human reason, dignity, and tolerance."*¹⁶⁶

The Taliban, based on their strict interpretation of Sharia, have banned music and halted its teaching, performance, and broadcasting. As a result, many artists and musicians have been

¹⁶⁵ The Guardian. "Afghan Musicians Flee Taliban Crackdown on Music." The Guardian, January 14, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/15/when-the-music-stops-how-the-talibans-fear-of-art-is-killing-afghan-culture>, and Freemuse. Afghanistan: Severe Violations of Artistic Freedom after Taliban Takeover. Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2022. <https://www.freemuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/saf-report-2022.pdf>, and <https://freemuse.org/news/afghanistan-severe-violations-of-artistic-freedom-after-taliban-takeover/>

¹⁶⁶ Interview by the Bolaq Analysts Network with Mr. Kahzad, a poet and human rights activist. Interview conducted on June 1, 2026.

forced to migrate or abandon their professions.¹⁶⁷ In numerous cases, the Taliban have confiscated and burned musical instruments. Human rights activists and cultural organizations view these actions as attempts to erase part of Afghanistan's cultural heritage.¹⁶⁸ For the Hazara community, this policy is particularly significant because local music, especially the *dambora*, is one of the most important elements of their cultural identity.

Alongside music, cultural festivals and programs have also been severely restricted. Many events that were held before 2021 in Bamiyan and Daikundi, including cultural, artistic, and tourism festivals, have been stopped or cancelled. This has significantly reduced opportunities to showcase and transmit Hazara culture.

Restrictions were not limited to the arts. Reports indicate that in August 2021, the Taliban raided a sports club in western Kabul and arrested several women athletes, most of whom were Hazaras.¹⁶⁹ Also, in January 2026, Khadija Ahmadzadeh, a Hazara taekwondo athlete, was detained by the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, an action that sparked widespread reactions from women's rights and human rights organizations and was seen as an example of restricting women's participation in public life, especially Hazara women.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights. Reports on Cultural Rights and Artistic Freedom. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cultural-rights>, and Human Rights Watch. World Report 2022: Afghanistan; World Report 2023: Afghanistan; World Report 2024: Afghanistan; World Report 2025: Afghanistan. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report>

¹⁶⁸ International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Heritage at Risk Reports: Afghanistan. <https://www.icomos.org/en/what-we-do/focus/heritage-at-risk>, UNESCO. Safeguarding Living Heritage in Afghanistan (Intangible Cultural Heritage Programme). <https://www.unesco.org/en/intangible-cultural-heritage>

¹⁶⁹ <https://8am.media/fa/from-detention-and-torture-to-resistance-a-look-at-the-situation-of-female-athletes-in-afghanistan/>

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/dari/articles/cje1z8ee5z9o>, <https://www.facebook.com/bbcdari/photos/>, <https://www.afintl.com/fa/202603087197>, <https://www.afintl.com/>. <https://www.afintl.com/fa/202603087197>.



Figure 9: Khadija Ahmadzadeh, a sports coach detained by the Taliban (Photo: BBC Persian)

Human rights activists interviewed by the Bolaq Analysts Network described Taliban actions against Hazara women and girls as a form of multilayered discrimination. For example, human rights activist Sima Nouri stated:

“The situation of our women and girls is extremely painful. They are at the centre of a deadly intersection: they face the harshest misogynistic laws because they are women, and they face additional discrimination because they are Hazara and Shia.”

According to reports by Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur, these Taliban actions constitute clear examples of **gender persecution**, which under international law, specifically Article 7 of the Rome Statute, can amount to crimes against humanity.

Hazara girls, long known for their strong motivation to pursue education and who were even targeted in deadly attacks such as the Kaj Education Centre bombing, are now not only banned from schooling beyond grade six and from university, but are also arrested and disappeared in the streets of Dasht-e-Barchi under the pretext of “*improper hijab*,” in what appears to be an attempt to break the resolve of this pioneering generation.¹⁷¹

Human rights poet and activist Kohzad added:

¹⁷¹ Interview with Ms. Sima Nouri, human rights activist, conducted on June 28, 2026.

“During the years of partial democracy in Afghanistan, Hazara women and girls were more present than any other group in educational centres, university entrance exams, the security sector, civil society, and human rights institutions. But now, under the extremist ideology of the current regime, there is no space for their presence. Hazara women face two simultaneous restrictions: gender-based discrimination and ethnic-based discrimination. Their exclusion from education and universities has reduced their opportunities in literature, arts, and research.”¹⁷²

From a sociological perspective, excluding women from cultural production means losing half of society’s capacity to transmit culture to future generations. In the realm of religious freedom, media and human rights organizations continue to report restrictions on Shia ceremonies. During Ashura 2026, the Taliban arrested dozens of mosque committee members and caretakers of Shia mourning halls in western Kabul. Observers consider these actions part of a broader pattern of restricting religious and cultural freedoms of Shia communities. Since religious rituals form a major part of Hazara cultural identity, these restrictions directly affect the cultural life of the community.¹⁷³

Cultural heritage is another area of concern. Bamiyan, the most important historical centre of the Hazara people, faces challenges such as illegal excavations, weak protection of historical sites, and reduced cultural and research activities. UNESCO and other international organizations have warned about the dangers of illegal digging, trafficking of historical artifacts, and declining preservation efforts. Media outlets and cultural activists have expressed concern about unauthorized excavations in Bamiyan’s historical sites and called for urgent international action to protect this heritage.¹⁷⁴

Civil society activist Abdul Danishyar from Bamiyan stated:

“Unlawful excavations by the Taliban at historical sites in Bamiyan City represent a serious blow to Bamiyan’s cultural heritage. These unauthorized excavations are reportedly being carried out systematically and deliberately by the Taliban. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas during the group’s first period in power serves as a stark reminder of the threat

¹⁷² Interview with Mr. Kohzad, a young poet and human rights activist, conducted on June 24, 2026.

¹⁷³ <https://atlaspress.news/taliban-muharram-arrests-kabul/>, <https://www.etalatroz.com/256217/aliban-restrictions-on-muharram-ceremonies-in-afghanistan/>, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c51n579k7r1o>, and <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/news/192929/>.

¹⁷⁴ UNESCO. Safeguarding Living Heritage in Afghanistan (Intangible Cultural Heritage Programme). <https://www.unesco.org/en/intangible-cultural-heritage>; United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights. Reports on Cultural Rights and Artistic Freedom. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cultural-rights>, and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Heritage at Risk Reports: Afghanistan. <https://www.icomos.org/en/what-we-do/focus/heritage-at-risk>

posed to the region's cultural heritage. Unfortunately, there appears to be no effective mechanism to prevent these unprofessional and potentially destructive activities—not from the local population, nor from international organizations that are actively involved in protecting cultural heritage.”¹⁷⁵

He continued:

“Through restrictions on religious ceremonies, cultural events, books, media, and the closure of cultural educational centres, the Taliban have deliberately waged war on our culture. By eliminating the Persian language, they are attempting to erase the cultural identity of a large part of Afghanistan that belongs to the Persianate civilization. The Taliban are essentially continuing Pashtun ethno-nationalism, suppressing other cultures and religious identities. These policies deepen social divisions, and within Pashtun communities lacking full awareness, they find support. Ultimately, these divisions, alongside restrictions on cultural and individual freedoms, will lead to disaster.”

Alongside these restrictions, the mass migration of writers, university professors, artists, and cultural activists since 2021 has further weakened Afghanistan's cultural capacity. The Hazara community has lost a significant portion of its cultural capital due to this migration.¹⁷⁶

Overall, the evidence indicates that the Taliban's cultural policies have been centered on controlling and restricting the arts, media, education, religious practices, and cultural activities.¹⁷⁷ These policies, coupled with pressure on cultural institutions and concerns over Bamyan's historical heritage, have significantly constrained Afghanistan's cultural environment. For the Hazara community, given its distinctive religious and cultural characteristics, these measures have had particularly profound consequences for the preservation and transmission of its cultural identity.

6. Pressure on Hazara Media Outlets, Cultural Centers, and Educational Institutions

One of the most significant dimensions of the Taliban's cultural policies following their return to power has been the restriction of independent media and increased pressure on journalists,

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Mr. Abdul Daneshyar, a civil society activist from Bamyan Province. Interview conducted in June 2026.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights. Reports on Cultural Rights and Artistic Freedom. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cultural-rights>

¹⁷⁷ Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). Reports and analyses on cultural and social developments under Taliban rule, 2022-2025. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/07/un-report-details-taliban-abuses-afghanistan>

writers, and cultural activists.¹⁷⁸ Reports by human rights organizations and media freedom advocacy groups indicate that these policies have had a particularly significant impact on local media outlets and media organizations associated with ethnic and religious minorities, including the Hazara community.

In the years following August 2021, dozens of media outlets have ceased operations or faced extensive restrictions, while a large number of journalists, writers, researchers, and cultural activists have been forced either to leave Afghanistan or suspend their professional activities.¹⁷⁹ This situation has significantly narrowed the space for public discussion of Afghanistan's cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity.

As noted in the previous section of this report regarding the closure of several media outlets, the arbitrary detention of journalists and media personnel has also become a tool for restricting freedom of expression. Citing reports from reputable international organizations, the Bulaq Analysts Network has documented such cases. Human Rights Watch, in its October 2025 report, likewise identified the arbitrary detention of journalists and cultural activists, as well as restrictions imposed on media outlets, as violations of freedom of expression and fundamental civil rights.¹⁸⁰

The *Etilaatroz Daily*, citing a Human Rights Watch report, also reported that the Taliban have treated detained journalists from ethnic minority communities, particularly Hazaras, more harshly and discriminatorily. According to the report, Hazara journalists have been disproportionately exposed to pressure, mistreatment, and discriminatory treatment. Human rights organizations have identified this pattern as an indication of the heightened vulnerability of journalists belonging to ethnic minorities.¹⁸¹

One of the most notable examples of this trend was the detention of the director and two journalists of *Radio Nasim* in Daikundi Province in August 2025. According to reports, Taliban intelligence forces detained the three individuals on August 6, 2025 and also confiscated some of the radio station's equipment. The action resulted in the suspension of Radio Nasim's

¹⁷⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Afghanistan: Attacks on the Press and Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2026/03/taliban-shut-down-and-seize-rah-e-farda-tv-station-in-afghanistan/>, and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Freedom of Expression and Media in Afghanistan. Thematic reporting and press releases, 2024. <https://unama.unmissions.org/en/press-releases-and-statements>

¹⁷⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Afghanistan: Attacks on the Press and Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2026/03/taliban-shut-down-and-seize-rah-e-farda-tv-station-in-afghanistan/>

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/gbz/news/2025/10/23/afghanistan-taliban-tramples-media-freedom>

¹⁸¹ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/244202/hazars-journalists-in-taliban-prison/>, <https://www.hriui.com/fa/>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/221982/>.

operations in Daikundi and Bamyan. Given that the outlet devoted a significant portion of its programming to Hazara culture, arts, Hazara music, and social issues affecting the Hazara community, its suspension was viewed by many observers as going beyond the closure of a local media outlet and as part of the broader restriction of Hazara cultural institutions.¹⁸²

The detention of journalists has also continued in recent years. On October 6, 2025, for example, the Taliban detained Mehdi Ansari, a journalist with the Afghan News Agency, in western Kabul. The detention prompted widespread reactions from human rights organizations and media freedom advocates. Amnesty International, in a statement, called for his immediate and unconditional release and urged the Taliban to end the arbitrary detention of journalists and restrictions on freedom of expression.¹⁸³

Continuing this pattern, in May 2026, the Taliban also detained Mehdi Mehran, a digital content creator and YouTuber in Malistan District of Ghazni Province, and transferred him to an undisclosed location. The detention raised widespread concern among journalists, media activists, and human rights organizations, particularly because information about his whereabouts and condition was unavailable for some time. Many observers regarded the detention as part of the growing pressure on independent content creators and the restriction of freedom of expression in Afghanistan.¹⁸⁴

As part of the continuing restrictions on independent media, in June 2026, the Taliban raided the offices of Tamadon TV in Kabul and halted the outlet's operations. During the operation, the television station's director and one of its employees were also detained by Taliban forces.¹⁸⁵ The action prompted widespread reactions from journalists, media freedom organizations, human rights groups, and civil society activists. Many observers viewed it as part of the intensifying restrictions on independent media, particularly media outlets associated with religious minorities. The closure of Tamadon TV and the detention of its officials further heightened concerns over freedom of expression, media freedom, and the right of religious minorities to access independent media in Afghanistan.

¹⁸² <https://www.afintl.com/202508115461>, <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/>.

¹⁸³ <https://amu.tv/fa/155542/>, <https://www.rfi.fr/fa/11>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/news/192265/>

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.afintl.com/202606270009>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/256325/the-managing-director-and-an-employee-of-tamadon-tv/>, <https://www.darivoo.com/a/tamadon-tv-afjc-condemn-taliban-action-to-detain-tamdon-director-and-personal-and-asked-to-release-them/8165496.html>

Taken together, these cases indicate that the Taliban's policy toward the media has extended beyond administrative restrictions. It has involved the closure of independent media outlets, the detention of journalists, the confiscation of media equipment, and increasing pressure on cultural activists. This trend, particularly in Hazara-populated areas, has significantly reduced the capacity of media outlets to document, preserve, and represent the culture, history, and identity of the Hazara community. Human rights organizations have criticized these measures as part of the broader restriction of freedom of expression and cultural rights in Afghanistan.

Media outlets and cultural institutions play a fundamental role in shaping public opinion, preserving cultural diversity, documenting contemporary history, and transmitting collective identity in every society. In a country such as Afghanistan, characterized by extensive ethnic and religious diversity, the media also play an important role in amplifying diverse social voices and preventing minority groups from being excluded or marginalized.¹⁸⁶ In this context, the Hazara community had established a significant presence in Afghanistan's media and cultural landscape over the previous two decades; however, this presence underwent substantial changes after 2021.

Following the Taliban's return to power, Afghanistan's media environment as a whole came under extensive restrictions. Reduced freedom of expression, the imposition of stringent regulations on media content, the suspension of some media outlets, and increased administrative and security pressure on journalists have been among the most significant developments during this period.¹⁸⁷ This situation has directly affected media outlets and cultural institutions associated with the Hazara community.

Prior to 2021, numerous media outlets operated across Afghanistan, some of which were established or managed by Hazara journalists and activists. These outlets played an important role in covering developments in the central regions, Hazara cultural issues, civil society activities,

¹⁸⁶ UNESCO. World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Afghanistan Monitoring and Assessments. Paris: UNESCO, 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists>, and Freedom House. Freedom in the World 2024: Afghanistan. Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2024. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/afghanistan/freedom-world/2024>.

¹⁸⁷ Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Afghanistan: Press Freedom Report, 2022–2025. Paris: RSF, 2022–2025. <https://rsf.org/en/country/afghanistan>, and Human Rights Watch. "Afghanistan: Taliban Intensify Assault on Freedom of Expression." New York: Human Rights Watch, March 25, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/25/afghanistan-taliban-intensify-assault-freedom-expression>.

and historical narratives of the community. Following the political transition, however, many of these outlets either ceased operations or faced significant restrictions.¹⁸⁸

One of the most important consequences of this situation has been reduced access among Hazaras to independent media outlets that represent their community. Media are not merely instruments of information dissemination; they also provide a platform for expressing and reflecting cultural and social identities. When this space becomes restricted, the ability of a community's narratives to be seen and heard is likewise diminished.¹⁸⁹

In some cases, reports have emerged of restrictions on media content concerning sensitive cultural, religious, and ethnic issues. Such restrictions may include the removal or censorship of reports concerning Hazara history, Shia religious issues, or criticism of cultural policies. If this trend continues, it could contribute to the emergence of a one-sided media environment in which the diversity of narratives is progressively diminished.¹⁹⁰

Cultural institutions have also faced significant challenges in this context. Prior to 2021, many Hazara-populated areas were home to active cultural centers, literary associations, libraries, and arts organizations engaged in education, research, the arts, and the promotion of local culture. These institutions played an important role in strengthening the cultural identity of the Hazara community. Following the change in the political environment, however, the activities of many of these institutions have declined or ceased altogether.¹⁹¹

The decline in the activities of cultural institutions also means fewer opportunities for informal education. These centers typically provided spaces for teaching language, literature, history, and the arts, enabling young people to develop a closer connection with their cultural identity. The

¹⁸⁸ International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). Afghanistan Media under Taliban Rule. Brussels: IFJ, 2023. <https://www.ifj.org/>, and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Human Rights in Afghanistan: July–September 2023 Update. Kabul: UNAMA, 2023. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights-reports>.

¹⁸⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Attacks on the Press: Afghanistan. New York: CPJ, 2022–2025. <https://cpj.org/asia/afghanistan/>, and Amnesty International. Afghanistan: Death in Slow Motion—Women and Girls under Taliban Rule. London: Amnesty International, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/6784/2023/en/>

¹⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch. “Afghanistan: Taliban Intensify Assault on Freedom of Expression.” New York: Human Rights Watch, March 25, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/25/afghanistan-taliban-intensify-assault-freedom-expression>

¹⁹¹ UNESCO. Afghanistan: Education in Emergencies and Crisis Response. Paris: UNESCO, 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/emergencies/afghanistan>, and Amnesty International. Afghanistan: Death in Slow Motion—Women and Girls under Taliban Rule. London: Amnesty International, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/6784/2023/en/>.

restriction of such spaces could, in the long term, contribute to a decline in the transmission of cultural knowledge within the community.¹⁹²

Alongside media outlets and cultural centers, the educational environment has also been affected. Following 2021, universities and schools in Afghanistan have undergone changes to curricula, restrictions on certain fields of study, and a reduction in academic freedoms. In this context, some disciplines and subjects related to the social sciences, contemporary history, and cultural studies have also faced restrictions, indirectly affecting opportunities to conduct research on Hazara cultural identity.¹⁹³

In Hazara-populated areas, particularly in former educational centers such as Bamyan, Ghazni, and other provinces, a decline in independent cultural and educational activities has also been reported. Prior to this period, universities and educational institutions in these areas played an important role in producing cultural and academic knowledge. Changes in the political and administrative environment, however, have led to a reduction in some of these activities.¹⁹⁴

Another measure taken by the Taliban to restrict Shia religious institutions was the closure of the office and religious school of *Ayatollah Waezzada Behsoodi*. According to a statement issued by the office of the Shia religious scholar, the Taliban sealed his office and religious school in July 2025 in the Dasht-e Barchi area of western Kabul.

Given the status of *Ayatollah Waezzada Behsoodi* as one of the prominent Shia religious authorities in Afghanistan, the closure of his office and religious school is viewed by many researchers as more than the shutdown of an educational or religious centre. It is analysed within

¹⁹² UNESCO. Afghanistan: Education in Emergencies and Crisis Response. Paris: UNESCO, 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/emergencies/afghanistan>, and Scholars at Risk. Academic Freedom Monitoring Project: Afghanistan. New York: Scholars at Risk, 2022–2024. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/academic-freedom-monitoring-project/>

¹⁹³ UNESCO. Afghanistan: Education in Emergencies and Crisis Response. Paris: UNESCO, 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/emergencies/afghanistan>, and Scholars at Risk. Academic Freedom Monitoring Project: Afghanistan. New York: Scholars at Risk, 2022–2024. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/academic-freedom-monitoring-project/>

¹⁹⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Human Rights in Afghanistan: July–September 2023 Update. Kabul: UNAMA, 2023. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights-reports>, and UNESCO. Afghanistan: Education in Emergencies and Crisis Response. Paris: UNESCO, 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/emergencies/afghanistan>

the broader context of the Taliban's restrictive policies toward Shia religious and cultural institutions.¹⁹⁵

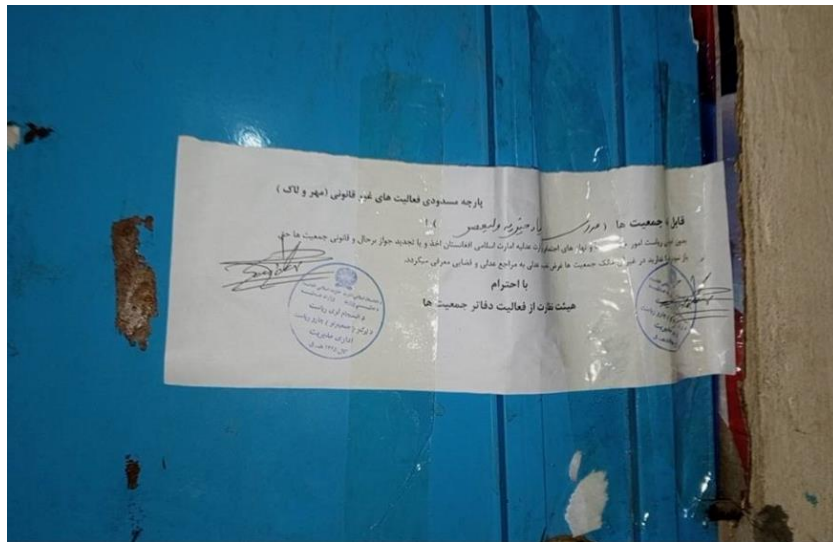


Figure 10: Photo of the sealing of the office of Ayatollah Waezzada Behsoodi, a prominent Shia religious scholar in Kabul Province (Source: Etilaatroz Daily).

Another major consequence of pressure on media and cultural institutions has been the increase in migration among cultural and media activists. Many Hazara journalists, writers, researchers, and cultural workers have left the country in recent years. This trend has not only reduced the capacity for cultural content production inside Afghanistan but has also resulted in the transfer of part of the community's intellectual and cultural capital abroad.¹⁹⁶

Findings indicate that migration among Hazara cultural elites, especially journalists, has sharply increased since the Taliban's return to power. Mohammad Ali Sazesh (pseudonym), an independent journalist, stated:

“Many of my colleagues have left the country because of the restrictions imposed by the Taliban. Journalists and media outlets are under the most severe restrictions and censorship, and freedom of expression has become nothing more than a wish. I have been summoned to the Taliban intelligence service several times and have been required to sign written pledges stating that I will not publish or broadcast reports

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/236309/ayatollah-vaezzadehs-office/>, <https://jade-abresham.com/reports/15637/>.

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/persian>, <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/>, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/6784/2023/en/>.

critical of the Taliban or their so-called Sharia-based system. I am only allowed to publish and broadcast news that serves the interests of the group. I am truly exhausted by this situation. If an opportunity arises, I too will leave the country.”¹⁹⁷

Socially, the decline of independent media and cultural institutions can reduce public participation in cultural and social discussions. In the absence of diverse media, the public sphere may shift toward uniformity and reduced diversity of viewpoints. For a society with extensive ethnic and religious diversity like Afghanistan, this creates serious challenges for cultural coexistence.¹⁹⁸

Before the Taliban’s return to power, media outlets in Hazara-populated central regions played an important role in information dissemination, raising awareness, promoting local culture, and reflecting issues related to these areas. With the Taliban’s takeover in 2021 and the imposition of widespread restrictions on media, the media environment in central Afghanistan became severely constrained. As a result of widespread censorship, administrative and security pressures, and the shutdown of several independent outlets, many media organizations either closed due to economic difficulties or were directly shut down by the Taliban.

According to researchers and media observers, this trend has significantly affected citizens’ access to information, freedom of expression, and the preservation and promotion of local culture in Hazara regions. It is considered one of the major consequences of Taliban media policy in central Afghanistan.¹⁹⁹

From the perspective of international law, media freedom and cultural freedom are fundamental human rights. These rights include access to information, freedom of expression, and participation in cultural life. Any widespread and systematic restriction on these rights can have serious implications for the human rights situation in the country.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Mohammad Ali Sazesh (pseudonym), a journalist and cultural activist. For security reasons, the Bulaq Analysts Network has withheld the journalist’s real name. Interview conducted in June 2026.

¹⁹⁸ Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Afghanistan: Press Freedom Report, 2022–2025. Paris: RSF, 2022–2025. <https://rsf.org/en/country/afghanistan>, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Radio Azadi). Reports on Media Restrictions and Civil Society in Afghanistan. Prague: RFE/RL, 2022–2025. <https://www.rferl.org/afghanistan> <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-taliban-media-restrictions-censorship/33137534.html> September 27, 2024 15:02 CET, and Freedom House. Freedom in the World 2024: Afghanistan. Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2024. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/afghanistan/freedom-world/2024>

¹⁹⁹ <https://ijnet.org/fa/story/33>, <https://ijnet.org/fa/story/>.

²⁰⁰ United Nations. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). New York: United Nations, 1966, arts. 19 and 27. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>, and United Nations. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). New

For the Hazara community, the importance of this issue is even greater, as media and cultural institutions are among the most important tools for preserving collective identity and resisting cultural erasure. Reducing these spaces can, in the long term, weaken the cultural presence of the community at the national level.²⁰¹

Overall, pressure on media, cultural centres, and educational institutions after 2021 is part of a broader trend of reshaping Afghanistan's cultural landscape. This trend, in addition to its general impact on society, has had specific consequences for cultural and religious minorities, including the Hazaras, and has affected their ability to preserve, produce, and represent their culture.

7. Arrest of Hazara Scholars, Cultural Figures, and Activists

The arrest of scholars, cultural figures, and activists is one of the most sensitive issues related to the cultural and social situation of any community, as these groups play a direct role in producing knowledge, preserving cultural identity, providing religious guidance, and organizing social activities. In the Hazara community, religious scholars, writers, university professors, civil society activists, and cultural workers are key pillars in maintaining and reproducing religious and cultural identity. Any pressure or restriction on these groups can have wide-ranging effects on the cultural structure of the community.²⁰²

After the Taliban's return to power in 2021, numerous reports emerged of arrests, interrogations, or threats against certain scholars and cultural activists in various parts of Afghanistan. These cases have not always been officially acknowledged and often appear in media reports, personal testimonies, or local sources. However, the repetition of such reports over time has made this issue a serious concern in discussions of cultural and religious freedoms.²⁰³

Within the Hazara community, religious scholars play an important role in religious guidance, preserving Ja'fari jurisprudence, and organizing religious ceremonies. Cultural figures and civil

York: United Nations, 1966, arts. 13 and 15. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

²⁰¹ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Attacks on the Press: Afghanistan. New York: CPJ, 2022–2025. <https://cpj.org/asia/afghanistan/>, and Amnesty International. Afghanistan: Death in Slow Motion—Women and Girls under Taliban Rule. London: Amnesty International, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/6784/2023/en/>.

²⁰² United Nations Human Rights Council. Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett. A/HRC/55/80. Geneva: United Nations, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4048450>

²⁰³ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Human Rights in Afghanistan: July–September 2022 Update. Kabul: UNAMA, 2022. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights-reports>.

activists contribute to education, media, literature, art, and social activities. Therefore, any pressure on these groups directly affects the cultural and social life of the community.²⁰⁴

Some reports indicate that after 2021, several scholars and preachers in various regions, especially in central Afghanistan, faced restrictions in their religious or social activities. These restrictions may include monitoring sermons, limiting the content of speeches, or administrative summons. Although details are not officially confirmed in all cases, they have created widespread concern among the religious community.²⁰⁵

Cultural and civil activists have also faced a more restricted environment. Many of these individuals were active in media, education, arts, and social work before 2021. After the political transition, some stopped their activities or migrated abroad. Others continue to face pressure, surveillance, or limitations on their work. These individuals have faced administrative or security restrictions that have made their activities increasingly difficult.²⁰⁶

For example, in May 2026, the Taliban arrested a Shia religious scholar in Kabul after beating him. This incident received widespread coverage in domestic and international media and prompted reactions from civil society activists, human rights organizations, and religious figures. Many of these groups viewed the Taliban's treatment of this cleric as an example of increasing pressure on Shia religious scholars and restrictions on religious freedoms in Afghanistan, calling for an end to arbitrary arrests and respect for citizens' rights.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Human Rights in Afghanistan: Annual Report 2023. Kabul: UNAMA, 2024. <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights-reports>

²⁰⁵ Amnesty International. Afghanistan: The Taliban's Assault on Human Rights. London: Amnesty International, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>

²⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch. World Report 2024: Afghanistan. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/afghanistan>

²⁰⁷ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/253371/beating-of-a-shiite-religious-scholar/>.



Figure 11: Religious scholar detained by the Taliban (Photo source: Etilaatroz Daily).

Another example occurred in November 2024, when two Shia religious scholars were arrested in Herat province by Taliban intelligence forces. This incident also sparked reactions from civil society activists, human rights organizations, and religious leaders, intensifying concerns about growing pressure on Shia clerics and restrictions on religious freedoms.

The arrest of these two scholars, alongside other Taliban actions targeting Shia religious institutions and figures, has been widely interpreted as part of a broader pattern of restricting religious activities within the Shia community.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ https://www.afintl.com/video/ott_7dc3a6e8d0b9490687d4156684f69ac0



Figure 12: Hazara religious scholars detained by the Taliban in Herat Province (Photo source: Afghanistan International news outlet).

There have also been cases of targeted killings of religious and cultural figures associated with the Hazara community. For instance, in December 2023, two prominent Shia scholars were assassinated in Al-Mahdi township in Herat province. This incident triggered widespread reactions from religious scholars, civil society activists, human rights organizations, and Afghan citizens, raising concerns about the safety of Shia religious and cultural leaders.²⁰⁹

Observers have interpreted this incident as further evidence of ongoing security threats against Shia and Hazara religious leaders, emphasizing the need to ensure their protection and safeguard religious freedoms in Afghanistan.

Another example of pressure on cultural activists is the arrest of Seyed Sekandar Bamdad, a writer, poet, and cultural figure, who was detained by Taliban forces in Balkh province in 2025. This incident prompted reactions from cultural activists, writers, poets, journalists, and civil society actors, raising concerns about increasing pressure on intellectuals and cultural figures in Afghanistan.²¹⁰

The arrest of Seyed Sekandar Bamdad has been widely viewed as part of a broader pattern of restricting cultural, literary, and intellectual activities in the country. According to observers, the arrest of writers, poets, and other cultural figures can negatively affect freedom of thought,

²⁰⁹ <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/22>, <https://www.etilaatroz.com/237488/human-rights-of-the-hazara-community/>.

²¹⁰ <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/news/188826/>, <https://www.afintl.com/fa/202511295607>.

cultural production, and the cultural environment, especially when such actions target individuals belonging to ethnic or religious minorities.

At the cultural level, the arrest or pressure on cultural activists is not merely an individual restriction; it represents a reduction in society's capacity to produce and transmit culture. When writers, researchers, artists, and cultural educators are restricted, the flow of cultural knowledge and social narratives becomes disrupted.²¹¹

In the Hazara community, this issue is particularly significant because much of the community's cultural production in recent decades has been carried out by these groups. From establishing media outlets and educational institutions to producing literary and historical works, cultural activists have played a central role in preserving the collective identity of Hazaras. Therefore, any pressure on these groups can have long-term consequences for the cultural sustainability of the community.²¹²

At the social level, the environment created by arrests or threats against cultural activists can lead to self-censorship. In such conditions, individuals may refrain from expressing cultural, historical, or religious views to avoid potential consequences. Over time, this phenomenon can reduce intellectual and cultural diversity within society.²¹³

Under international human rights law, freedom of expression, cultural activity, and religious practice are fundamental human rights. Any arrest or pressure on individuals due to cultural or religious activities, without a clear and fair legal framework, can conflict with human rights principles. This issue becomes even more sensitive when specific ethnic or religious groups are disproportionately affected.²¹⁴

Alongside these developments, some reports also point to a broader climate of fear and caution among cultural activists. This environment has led many cultural activities to continue informally,

²¹¹ Human Rights Watch. "Afghanistan: Taliban Crack Down on Critics." Human Rights Watch, 2022–2024. <https://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan>.

²¹² Front Line Defenders. Global Analysis 2023: Afghanistan. Dublin: Front Line Defenders, 2023. <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/location/afghanistan>

²¹³ CIVICUS Monitor. Afghanistan: Civic Space Remains Closed. Johannesburg: CIVICUS, 2023–2025. <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/afghanistan/>

²¹⁴ Freedom House. Freedom in the World 2024: Afghanistan. Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2024. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/afghanistan/freedom-world/2024>

on a limited scale, or in highly cautious forms. This shift in the broader cultural environment has directly affected the cultural vitality and dynamism of the community.²¹⁵

Overall, the situation of Hazara religious scholars and cultural activists in the post-2021 period can be understood as part of a broader transformation of Afghanistan's cultural and social structures. Beyond its individual consequences, this trend has collective implications for cultural production, the transmission of knowledge, and the preservation of cultural identity.²¹⁶

Examining this issue shows that the role of religious scholars and cultural figures in the Hazara community is not only religious or professional, but also historical and identity-based. Therefore, any restriction on these groups effectively means restricting one of the main pillars of preserving the culture and identity of this community.²¹⁷

8. Restrictions on Clothing, Cultural Symbols, and Visible Identity

Clothing in any society is not merely a personal choice or a matter of taste; it is one of the most important expressions of cultural, historical, and social identity. In ethnic communities such as the Hazaras, traditional clothing, specific styles, colours, and even stitching details carry cultural meaning and identity symbols passed down through generations. From this perspective, any restriction or pressure on clothing can directly affect cultural identity and the sense of belonging.²¹⁸

After the Taliban's return to power in 2021, reports and concerns emerged regarding informal or social restrictions on certain cultural symbols and clothing styles. These restrictions have been applied directly in some areas and indirectly through social pressure or administrative

²¹⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Journalists under Threat in Afghanistan. New York: CPJ, 2022–2025. <https://cpj.org/asia/afghanistan/>.

²¹⁶ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Azadi. "Reports on Detentions of Clerics, Journalists and Civil Society Activists in Afghanistan." 2022–2025. <https://www.rferl.org/afghanistan/>, and <https://www.hriui.com/en/news-report-restrictions-and-arrests-of-civil-and-media-activists-in-afghanistan/> report on 2025-09-08.

²¹⁷ <https://www.dw.com/fa-af/11>, United Nations. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. New York: United Nations, 1966, Articles 18, 19, 21, and 22. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

²¹⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Paris: UNESCO, 2001. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127162>

recommendations in others. The Hazara community, with its distinct cultural identity, has also been affected by these changes.²¹⁹

Hazara traditional clothing, especially in central Afghanistan, has unique features in design, colour, and structure. These clothes are used in religious ceremonies, celebrations, weddings, and cultural gatherings, reflecting the collective identity of the community. Some local reports indicate that in recent years, sensitivities have emerged in certain areas regarding wearing fully traditional clothing or specific cultural symbols.²²⁰

After returning to power in August 2021, the Taliban imposed widespread restrictions on clothing, dress, and certain cultural symbols. These restrictions affected all ethnic groups, including the Hazaras. Enforcement of these rules, especially regarding women's clothing and limitations on cultural symbols, faced widespread criticism from civil society activists, cultural advocates, and human rights organizations.

According to many researchers, traditional clothing and cultural symbols are part of a community's historical and cultural identity and restricting them can affect the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage. Therefore, some cultural activists consider Taliban restrictions on clothing and cultural symbols part of the group's cultural homogenization policies, policies that challenge Afghanistan's cultural and identity diversity, including that of the Hazara community.²²¹

Although no official nationwide policy banning Hazara traditional clothing has been announced, the broader social atmosphere has created caution around using certain cultural symbols. This can indirectly affect the preservation and transmission of traditional clothing culture.²²²

Taliban restrictions on clothing have not only targeted women but also men, school students, and university students. Through directives and regulations, the Taliban have required citizens to

²¹⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Culture and Human Rights. Paris: UNESCO, 2022.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/culture-and-human-rights>

²²⁰ United Nations General Assembly. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Resolution 47/135, 18 December 1992. New York: United Nations, 1992. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic>

²²¹ <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cj5d42nrjmro> , <https://8am.media/fa/return-to-tradition-or-retreat-increasing-traditional-dress-in-the-shadow-of-taliban-restrictions/>, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-58560327>.

²²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation. Geneva: United Nations, 2010. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/MinorityRights_en.pdf.

follow their preferred dress code, often enforced by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

Civil society activists, human rights experts, and cultural researchers have criticized these policies. They argue that imposing a single dress code limits individual freedoms and affects cultural diversity and traditional clothing styles of various Afghan ethnic groups. From this perspective, some observers view these actions as part of Taliban efforts to impose a cultural and social model based on their ideological interpretation.²²³

Culturally, traditional clothing is not merely physical covering; it carries historical and social messages. Each design, colour, or stitching style can reflect history, climate, social status, or religious beliefs. In the Hazara community, these clothes are part of cultural memory and symbols of intergenerational continuity.²²⁴

Beyond clothing, cultural symbols such as traditional jewellery, specific styles of dress in religious ceremonies, and traditional grooming practices also form part of the community's cultural identity. Any change or restriction in these symbols can gradually diminish a community's cultural presence in public spaces.²²⁵

Some reports indicate social changes in various regions where specific traditional clothing styles are less visible in public, and people prefer simpler or more general clothing. These changes may result from security concerns, social pressure, or broader cultural shifts.²²⁶

Socially, clothing plays an important role in identity security. When individuals feel that using cultural symbols may provoke negative reactions, they may gradually distance themselves from them. Over time, this can reduce cultural diversity in public spaces.²²⁷

²²³ <https://amu.tv/fa/179790/>, <https://www.afintl.com/202304056780>,

²²⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council. Report of the Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, Alexandra Xanthaki. A/HRC/49/54. Geneva: United Nations, 2022.
<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g22/004/39/pdf/g2200439.pdf>

²²⁵ United Nations. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. New York: United Nations, 1966, Articles 18, 19, and 27. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

²²⁶ United Nations. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. New York: United Nations, 1966, Article 15. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

²²⁷ Human Rights Watch. World Report 2024: Afghanistan. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2024.
<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/afghanistan>

From the perspective of cultural rights, freedom to choose clothing and preserve cultural symbols is part of fundamental human rights. International human rights instruments emphasize the right of individuals to preserve and express their cultural identity. Any direct or indirect restriction on this right can have consequences for minority cultural rights.²²⁸

For the Hazara community, clothing and cultural symbols have heightened importance because they represent historical and social identity. In many religious, cultural, and social ceremonies, traditional clothing plays a key role in expressing collective solidarity and preserving cultural ties.²²⁹

Overall, the situation of clothing and cultural symbols in Afghanistan after 2021 reflects broader cultural and social changes. Although not always expressed through formal written policies, these changes are visible socially and culturally and affect how cultural identities are expressed.²³⁰

One example is a report from 29 May 2023, stating that the Taliban verbally instructed residents of Jaghori district to change their clothing style to match Taliban standards. This action was criticized by citizens and civil activists as an example of Taliban interference in lifestyle, clothing, and cultural identity in Hazara-populated areas.

According to many observers, such verbal directives indicate Taliban efforts to impose a uniform dress code and social behaviour across Afghanistan, a policy that can affect cultural diversity, local customs, and the identity of various ethnic groups, including the Hazaras.²³¹

For the Hazara community, preserving traditional clothing and cultural symbols is not merely an aesthetic matter but part of the struggle to preserve cultural and historical identity. Therefore, any change in this area must be analysed within the broader context of cultural restrictions affecting the community.²³²

²²⁸ Amnesty International. The State of the World's Human Rights: Afghanistan. London: Amnesty International, 2023–2024. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>

²²⁹ Freedom House. Freedom in the World 2024: Afghanistan. Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2024. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/afghanistan/freedom-world/2024>

²³⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council. Cultural Rights and Cultural Participation: Report of the Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights. Geneva: United Nations, various reports, 2022–2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cultural-rights>

²³¹ <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/news/160916/>

²³² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Texts of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Paris: UNESCO, 2022 edition. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

Conclusion: Cultural Genocide or Cultural Erasure

The evidence and documentation presented in this chapter show that the Taliban's cultural policies since their return to power in August 2021 have not been limited to administrative or religious restrictions. Rather, they comprise a coordinated and systematic set of actions that have directly affected the core pillars of the Hazara community's cultural, religious, and historical identity. The removal of Ja'fari jurisprudence from the education system, pressure on followers of Ja'fari and Ismaili sects, restrictions on religious rituals and ceremonies, bans on cultural celebrations and festivals, censorship and confiscation of books and works related to Hazara history and culture, the shutdown of media outlets and cultural centres, prohibition of music and art, and weakened protection of historical heritage, all together indicate a pattern that goes beyond temporary limitations and has resulted in the gradual erosion of the community's cultural identity.

From the perspective of international law, although "*cultural genocide*" is not recognized as an independent crime under the 1948 Genocide Convention,²³³ the concept is widely used in human rights literature, minority rights discourse, and reports by international bodies to describe actions aimed at destroying or weakening the cultural, religious, linguistic, or historical identity of a group.²³⁴ Within this framework, the evidence documented in this report aligns with many recognized indicators of cultural erasure, forced cultural assimilation, or cultural destruction. These policies restrict the transmission of language, religion, traditions, art, historical memory, and cultural heritage to future generations, and they significantly weaken the Hazara community's capacity to preserve its collective identity.

At the same time, under international legal standards, applying the term *cultural genocide* to these actions requires assessment and determination by competent judicial and international bodies. Based on the available evidence, however, it can be stated with confidence that the Taliban's policies constitute clear examples of cultural erasure, systematic elimination of cultural diversity, and weakening of minority cultural rights. From the perspective of many researchers,

²³³ United Nations, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948. <https://www.un.org/en/genocide-prevention/1948-convention>, and Niamatullah Ibrahimi, *The Hazaras and the Afghan State: Rebellion, Exclusion and the Struggle for Recognition* (London: Hurst, 2017). Page 53-87

²³⁴ Elisa Novic, *The Concept of Cultural Genocide: An International Law Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198787167.001.0001>, and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/ccpr.pdf>

human rights activists, and international organizations, these actions possess characteristics commonly discussed under the term *cultural genocide* in human rights literature.

Overall, the continuation of these policies not only violates the cultural and religious rights of the Hazara community but also poses a serious threat to Afghanistan's cultural diversity. If this trend continues, it may lead to the erosion of historical memory, the disappearance of cultural heritage, reduced transmission of cultural values and traditions to future generations and deepening social and ethnic divides. Therefore, documenting these actions, ensuring continuous monitoring by international bodies, and adopting effective measures to protect the cultural, religious, and identity rights of Hazaras and other ethnicities in Afghanistan are essential to prevent further cultural erasure and safeguard the country's cultural diversity. For the Hazara community, this concept carries particular significance due to the long history of cultural and religious discrimination, from the repression of the Abdul Rahman Khan era to the exclusion of Hazaras from official historical narratives. Various elements of the community's cultural identity have consistently been under pressure. One of the most notable historical examples was the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001, which faced widespread international condemnation.²³⁵

²³⁵ UNESCO, Report on the Destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas (2001). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2253>, and Francesco Francioni and Federico Lenzerini (eds.), *The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Oxford University Press, 2008). <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-2003-unesco-intangible-heritage-convention-9780198824787?lang=en&cc=pk>

Chapter Four

Legal Status

Introduction

When the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021, they abolished all enacted laws and regulations of Afghanistan, including the Constitution, and eliminated the principle of the rule of law in the country. This is despite the fact that, both in Islamic interpretations and under international norms, the rule of law is a fundamental and indispensable principle of governance. Following the Taliban's return to power, the foundations and principles of their governance have consisted of the religious decrees of the Taliban leader and the religious interpretations of clerics presented as "Sharia rulings." Mullah Hibatullah, the Taliban leader, issued an order abolishing the Constitution of Afghanistan and laws deemed contrary to Sharia rulings, and undertook the "Sharia-isation" of laws as a religious obligation. By abolishing the laws in force in Afghanistan, the Taliban have allowed each faction and local ruler to govern according to their own understanding and interpretation of religion. In doing so, the Taliban dealt a severe blow to Afghanistan's legal system and transformed it from a "system based on citizens' rights" into a "system based on decrees, systematic discrimination, and the deprivation of minority rights."

In this chapter, we examine the legal status of Hazaras under Taliban rule through four separate sections. In the first section, we examine the collapse of the rule of law and the establishment of a decree-based system, focusing on the abolition of the 2004 Constitution, the Taliban's definition of law, the process of Sharia-isation, and the monopolisation of legislation. In the second section, we examine the theoretical foundations and overarching instruments of discrimination, focusing on the Taliban's legal manifesto, the structural exclusion of minorities, and religious monopolisation. In the third section, we examine the Penal Regulations of the Courts, which institutionalise apartheid and deprive individuals of the right to a fair trial. In the fourth section, we examine law as an instrument of repression and study the legal frameworks created by the Taliban for the repression of Hazaras.

1. The Collapse of the Rule of Law and the Establishment of a Decree-Based System

The rule of law, as a fundamental principle underpinning relations between the state and citizens and as one of the most important pillars of good governance, has universal value. It is based on the premise that governing authorities must exercise power in accordance with the law and refrain from arbitrary action, so that individuals' rights are not undermined but are instead protected and secured as a fundamental objective. On the other hand, if the governing powers of a country, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, which exercise state power, are not constrained within a legal framework and instead act arbitrarily, individuals' rights will inevitably be violated, despotism and authoritarianism will prevail, and conditions for oppression and corruption will emerge. It is therefore necessary that these powers act in accordance with law²³⁶. [240] The theory of the rule of law, as a principle and even as a political and legal value, emerged in response to personalistic, autocratic, and despotic governments and established the necessity of limiting political power in order to prevent its abuse and prohibit arbitrary decisions and actions by rulers.²³⁷

By nullifying Afghanistan's Constitution from 2004 and other laws in force, the Taliban effectively destroyed the rule of law in the country and established a system based on decrees, systematic discrimination, and the deprivation of minority rights. The Taliban completely rejected the principles of civic equality and equality before the law and, by introducing a new definition of law and endorsing new Taliban laws, transformed law into an instrument of repression against the citizens of Afghanistan, particularly Hazaras. Under the pretext of Sharia-ising laws, the group monopolised legislative authority.

In this section, we address two important issues. First, we examine the abolition of the 2004 Constitution and its consequences for Hazaras. Second, we examine the Taliban's approach through their new definition of law, with particular attention to the enforcement of new Taliban laws and the monopolisation of legislation.

²³⁶ [The Principle of the Rule of Law and Its Impact on the Three Branches of Government.](#)

²³⁷ Ibid.

Abolition of the 2004 Constitution and Its Consequences for Hazaras

According to legal scholars, a constitution functions as a national compact reflecting the agreement of all inhabitants of a territory regarding the distribution of power and the recognition of their identities and social and religious rights. The rationale underlying the binding character of, and obedience to, a constitution is precisely that this legal document emanates from the collective will and constitutes the product of a collective agreement. All citizens and different social groups must therefore regard themselves as participants in the drafting and adoption of the constitution so that they can represent and defend their rights and demands. Otherwise, as in the monarchical systems of half a century ago, even where the state provides for the rights of citizens including minorities and women, those rights take on the character of rights “granted” from above and can subsequently be withdrawn.

After coming to power, the Taliban abolished the 2004 Constitution. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir Haidar, Deputy Minister of Justice under the Taliban, stated at a press conference that non-Islamic countries require constitutions, whereas the constitutions of Islamic countries are based on the commands of the Quran, Hadith, and jurisprudence. This contrasted with statements made during the first days after the takeover by Zabihullah Mujahid, who indirectly told the media that the Taliban respected the Constitution of Afghanistan and would reject only those provisions that contradicted Islam.²³⁸ A constitution is not simply a superior law; it is the supreme law, and in reality constitutes the foundation upon which other ordinary laws are drafted and designed. Afghanistan under Taliban rule exists in a legal vacuum, although Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid has claimed that Afghanistan has no legal vacuum.

The abolition of Afghanistan’s 2004 Constitution has had numerous negative consequences for Hazara. These include the elimination of the principle of civic equality, exclusion from political participation, reduced legal protection against discrimination, increased vulnerability to violence, restrictions on religious and cultural rights, and social and economic consequences. The 2004 Constitution provided a legal framework for political participation, representation within state structures, and access to judicial protection. Following the Taliban’s return to power in 2021, however, this constitutional system effectively ceased to exist and was replaced by a system based on decrees, rulings, and directives issued by the Taliban leadership. Consequently, formal guarantees of equality and minority rights became ineffective in practice, and Hazaras lost effective legal protection against discrimination. The weakening of oversight and judicial

²³⁸ [Taliban Announce the Abolition of the Constitution and Political Party Activities in Afghanistan.](#)

institutions also restricted access to justice and reduced opportunities to seek legal redress for human-rights violations. Under these circumstances, legal protection for Hazaras became increasingly dependent on the administrative and religious interpretations and decisions of the ruling authorities rather than on codified and enforceable rules, substantially altering their legal status.

Article 22 of the 2004 Constitution emphasised the principle of equality before the law and explicitly stated that: “The citizens of Afghanistan, whether man or woman, have equal rights and duties before the law.” As a universal principle, this means that individuals have equal rights and obligations before the law. This equality extended to political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Following the abolition of the Constitution, however, this principle disappeared in Afghanistan, adversely affecting the people of Afghanistan generally and women and Hazaras in particular.

As a consequence of the Taliban’s violation of this principle, Hazaras have been deprived of political, social, economic, and cultural rights. According to a survey conducted by the Bolaq Analysts Network during the first year of Taliban rule, 96% of respondents believed that Hazaras had been completely marginalised by the Taliban in the political and social spheres, while 4% believed that Hazaras had been relatively marginalised.²³⁹ From the first day of the Taliban cabinet until the present, no Hazara minister has been appointed, while the group has imposed severe social and cultural restrictions on Hazaras.

The Taliban Definition of Law and the Process of Sharia-isation and Monopolisation of Legislation

On 21 March 2023 the Taliban published the Law on the Duties and Authorities of the General Directorate for Supervision and Follow-up of Decrees and Orders in the Official Gazette. Paragraph 1 of Article 3 defines law as follows: “Law is a collection of rules drafted within the framework of Sharia for the purpose of regulating the internal affairs and activities of a ministry or administration, endorsed by the Leadership Authority, and whose implementation is mandatory.” By contrast, Article 94 of Afghanistan’s 2004 Constitution defined law as follows: “Law is the resolution of both Houses of the National Assembly that has been endorsed by the President, unless otherwise stipulated in this Constitution.” Under this definition, legislation had a popular basis because it was adopted by representatives elected by the people - directly to the

²³⁹ [Hazaras Are Experiencing Their Worst Days in Afghanistan under Taliban Rule](#)

Lower House and indirectly to the Upper House - and endorsed by a president elected by the people. In this way, the law became binding upon everyone. Under the Taliban definition, however, Taliban appointees who administer state affairs formulate laws within the framework of Sharia, and the Taliban leadership endorses them, after which they become binding. Under this definition and within this system, citizens have no role whatsoever in law-making, either directly or indirectly. Citizens are merely subjects who are compelled and required to obey laws produced by the government.

The Taliban have published collections of rulings and decrees issued by Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, the group's leader, in the Official Gazette, thereby conferring upon them the status of law and requiring everyone to comply with them.²⁴⁰ The Taliban leader has also issued a decree concerning the procedure for processing legislative documents.²⁴¹ Comparatively, the differences between the legislative process under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and that of the Taliban government can be presented as follows

Stage	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004–2021	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2021–present
Legal basis	2004 Constitution	Decrees, rulings, and interpretation of Sharia by the leadership
Legislative initiative	Government and members of the National Assembly	Ministries, administrations, and leadership
Initial review	Specialised parliamentary committees	Jurisprudential derivation and review by the Ministry of Justice
Approving authority	Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga	Final Review Commission for Legislative Documents
Public participation	Indirectly through elected representatives	Limited and predominantly non-elective

²⁴⁰ [What Message Does the Publication of the Taliban Leader's Decrees in the Official Gazette Convey?](#)

²⁴¹ [Decree of Taliban leader regarding the Procedure for Processing Legislative Documents](#)

Resolution of disagreements	Joint committee of the two Houses	Final decision by the leadership
Final endorsement	President	Leader of the Emirate
Publication	Official Gazette	Official Gazette and administrative notification
Character of the system	Parliamentary and multi-stage legislation	Centralised and executive legislation

Table 2: Differences between the legislative process under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban government

From August 2021 to the present, the Taliban have issued at least **470 decrees**.²⁴² According to statistics available in the database of Afghanistan’s Ministry of Justice, 59 publications have so far appeared in the Ministry’s legal database, including laws, regulations, codes/regulations, decrees, procedures, and announcements.²⁴³ The Taliban have also issued administrative bylaws within government institutions. The material published in the Ministry of Justice’s legal database is as follows:

Type of document	Number
Laws	19
Decrees	16 decrees, each containing multiple orders
Procedures	5
Codes/Regulations (<i>Usulnama</i>)	3
Announcements	16

Table 3: Number of laws, regulations, codes, decrees, procedures, and announcements published by the Taliban

²⁴² Nazanin Mohseni, “UN: Taliban Have Issued at Least 470 Decrees since August 2021,” *KabulNow*, December 30, 2025, [UN: Taliban have issued at least 470 decrees since August 2021 – KabulNow](https://www.kabulnow.com/en/news/470-decrees-issued-since-august-2021/), Seen on June 20, 2026.

²⁴³ <http://laws.moj.gov.af/ShowLawPersian.aspx>

The laws that have entered into force are:

1. Law on the Duties and Authorities of the General Directorate for Supervision and Follow-up of Decrees and Orders
2. Law on the Prevention of Land Grabbing and Restitution of Grabbed Lands
3. Law on Hearing Complaints
4. Law on the Collection of Beggars and Prevention of Begging
5. Law on Money Exchangers and Monetary Services
6. Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice
7. Law on Industrial Areas
8. Law on the Lease of Emirate Lands
9. Law on the Establishment, Verification, and Appointment of Teachers and Employees of Madrasas
10. Law on Financial Accounting
11. Law on the Regulation of Poetry Gatherings
12. Law on Contracts of Ministries and Emirate Administrations
13. Law on Teachers of Pilgrims
14. Law on the Prevention of Smuggling of Foodstuffs, Medicines, and Health Products
15. Law on the Tariff Board
16. Law on Religious Preachers
17. Law on the Sale and Distribution of Emirate Land Plots and the Granting of Construction Permits
18. Law on the Examination of Movable and Immovable Property of Absent Persons
19. Law on the Preservation of Jihadi Heritage

The procedures are:

1. Procedure of the Board for Distribution of Land to Returning Migrants
2. Procedure for Regulating Benefits and Facilities for Returning Entrepreneurs and Traders
3. Procedure for Purchasing Farmers' Surplus Wheat
4. Procedure for the Enforcement Committees of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice
5. Procedure for Implementing the Decision of the Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing and Restitution of Grabbed Emirate Lands and the Related Special Court

The Regulations are:

1. Penal Regulations of the Courts
2. Regulations on the Separation of Spouses
3. Sharia Regulations of the Special Court for Adjudicating Cases Concerning Grabbed Royal (Emirate), Public Pasture, and Endowment Lands

2. Theoretical Foundations and Overarching Instruments of Discrimination

Like every other ideological system, Taliban thought has been closely connected to its social context. The Taliban's ideological system gradually took shape in response to crises within Afghan society and adapted itself to certain new conditions in order to preserve and consolidate its dominance. The effects and manifestations of crises within Afghan society, and attention to those crises, occupy a prominent position in the Taliban's ideological framework. In formulating their views, Taliban intellectual leaders have consistently highlighted Afghanistan's domestic and external political and social crises, adopting an objective approach aimed at challenging and destabilising competing systems of meaning. In their view, Afghanistan's principal internal crises and challenges are "political," "socio-economic," and "jahiliyya (ignorance)", and these problems are to be resolved through the establishment of an ideal society.

The Taliban's claimed desired and ideal society is an Islamic government that seeks to implement what it regards as pure Islamic Sharia, establish peace, create stability and order, and eradicate the cultivation, trade, and consumption of narcotics. To fulfil these preconditions and establish its ideal Islamic government, the Taliban also proposes a range of solutions to these problems. They claim that their solutions are the unification of political authority, the elimination of jihadi

parties, the obligation to promote virtue and prevent vice, and the eradication of corruption.²⁴⁴ The reality so far have shown otherwise.

The Taliban consistently refers to proclamations, statements, instructions, and political texts issued by its self-proclaimed leader as “decrees.” In public and constitutional law, however, this term has a specific meaning and entails particular conditions and requirements. A decree is a generally applicable and binding legal decision issued by a legally competent authority within a legitimate legal system founded upon a constitution and laws in force, and in accordance with the principle of separation of powers. None of these conditions exists within the Taliban structure. The group neither came to power through free and fair elections nor possesses domestic or international legitimacy; it suspended Afghanistan’s Constitution and laws in force and has provided no codified and legitimate legal system as a replacement. Consequently, what the Taliban issues and publishes is neither formally nor substantively a “decree” in the proper legal meaning of the term.

On the one hand, the authority issuing these texts lacks legal legitimacy and competence; on the other, these instructions are not situated within a legitimate constitutional legal system. Moreover, rather than regulating legal relations fairly, their content is directed towards intensifying control, repressing citizens, normalising violence, imposing discrimination, and violating human rights. Formally, these instructions lack even the most basic standards applicable to legal instruments. Accordingly, these texts are nothing more than a collection of political-security decisions and orders issued by an individual of uncertain identity and possessing no legal or democratic legitimacy.²⁴⁵ In this section, we examine three important issues concerning the theoretical foundations of the Taliban and the instruments that the group follows in establishing a discriminatory system.

The Taliban’s Legal Manifesto

The Taliban do not have a single, recognised legal manifesto that fully expresses their legal outlook. The book *Al-Imāra al-Islāmiyya wa Niẓāmuḥā* (The Islamic Emirate and Its System), written by Abdul Hakim Haqqani, Chief Justice of the Taliban government, is currently the only

²⁴⁴ Hamdollah Akvani, Jaseb Nikfar, Mohammad Mojahedzadeh and Marzieh Karami, “The Taliban Intellectual Foundation Based on Spriggan’s Research Method: from collapse to Recovery”, Scientific Bi-Quarterly Journal of Shahed University/Political Sociology of Islamic World, Vol.2, No.2, April 18 2022, [article 4121_c79ec57a8e72a87d8a69d2c6b8a2a8d4.pdf](https://www.scribd.com/document/4121-c79ec57a8e72a87d8a69d2c6b8a2a8d4). Seen on July 3, 2026.

²⁴⁵ [The Taliban and the Systematization of Torture and Arbitrary Detention in Afghanistan](#), *Hasht-e Subh*, 25 Jādi 1404. Accessed 9 July 2026.

comprehensive document through which Taliban thought and beliefs can be understood. It addresses the structure and form of an Islamic state and, while explaining the Taliban's political philosophy and jurisprudence, sets out the group's approach to the state on the basis of its ideological system. An important feature of the book is that Taliban leader Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada wrote an introduction in it and thereby endorsed its contents.²⁴⁶ Some experts have referred to the book as the "manifesto of the Taliban Emirate"; some have characterised it as an extremist theory of governance, while others regard it as an example of the Taliban's superficial and literalist outlook.²⁴⁷

Two principles are vital and fundamental to drafting a constitution. First, constitutional provisions must be founded on firm and sound foundations. Second, the spirit of the constitution must remain alive and dynamic so that it can adapt to the requirements and necessities of its time. Those responsible for drafting a constitution must therefore, first, have mastery and knowledge of the principles and foundations necessary for constitutional drafting and, second, be capable of adapting to developments and contemporary necessities. Otherwise, a constitution that is incompatible with scientific foundations and contemporary requirements itself becomes a source of difficulty. Although a constitution inherently governs within a "territorial jurisdiction," subsidiary laws derived from it in areas such as trade, transit, customs, and cultural and commercial relations between states will produce positive and negative effects beyond that territorial jurisdiction.

Following the establishment of the Taliban's caretaker government and in the absence of a constitution, Sheikh Abdul Hakim Haqqani, the Taliban's Chief Justice, published *Al-Imāra al-Islāmiyya wa Nizāmuhā* in Arabic, with an introduction and endorsement by Taliban leader Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada. From the outset, observers regarded it as a charter of governance and a potential foundation for a future Taliban constitution. There is little doubt that the provisions and approach of this book, which reflect the author's own thinking, will significantly influence the work of the Taliban Chief Justice, as the book's author, in the process of drafting a Taliban constitution. Some provisions of a future Taliban constitution can therefore already be predicted to a certain extent. The book contains specific provisions and approaches concerning the fundamental rights of the people of Afghanistan and incorporating them into a new Taliban constitution would make Afghanistan's challenges more serious and complex.²⁴⁸ In 2023, the

²⁴⁶ [A Critique and Review of the Taliban's Theoretical Model of State-Building](#)

²⁴⁷ [Shafaqna's Interview with Dr Ahmadi: Taliban Differences Are Not Fundamental and They Remain Deeply Committed to the Emirate System.](#)

²⁴⁸ <https://www.iess.ir/fa/analysis/3573/>

Taliban officially announced that a constitution for their government was being drafted under the supervision of Sheikh Abdul Hakim Haqqani, Taliban Chief Justice and author of *Al-Imāra al-Islāmiyya wa Niẓāmuḥā*.²⁴⁹

Structural Exclusion of (Religious) Minorities and Religious Monopolisation

The basis for excluding minorities and women from the Taliban system is explicitly set out in *Al-Imāra al-Islāmiyya wa Niẓāmuḥā*. Under the heading “Conditions and Characteristics of the Imam” (*Shurūt al-Imām wa Mawāsifātuhu*), the third condition specifies that the Imam must be male, explaining: “Because women have been commanded to remain in the home, and the fundamental rule concerning their condition is concealment (*satr*).” The author then cites the hadith: “A people who entrust their affairs to a woman will never prosper,” and argues that if Aisha, the wife of the Prophet, was not qualified to assume authority, then other women are even less qualified to do so. The text continues: “Because this undertaking [assuming authority] entails grave tasks that the nature of a woman cannot bear; as expressly stated in an authentic hadith, woman is deficient in intellect and religion.” It further states: “Know that God has preserved the position of woman and placed her among her children and in their protection. Woman is weak and therefore cannot ward off harm from herself, let alone ward off harm from others if she becomes Imam. On this basis, the scholars have reached consensus that the imamate of a woman is impermissible.” Abdul Hakim Haqqani then enumerates, one by one, what he considers the consequences of female leadership, including the mixing of women with men, women leaving the home, women exercising authority over men, and other matters and, by citing traditions attributed to the Prophet of Islam, argues that these are improper.²⁵⁰

The book prohibits religious minorities from positions of leadership and the judiciary and regards the presence of religious minorities as comparable to the presence of foreigners, capable of weakening and bringing down the system. In addition, the system recognises Hanafi Islam as its sole official school of jurisprudence, and its justification explicitly states: “The people of Afghanistan regard any school other than the Hanafi school as a source of shame and disgrace.” According to the provisions of this book, elections and democracy produce corruption. A ruler who assumes power by force possesses legitimacy; opposition to an unjust ruler is impermissible; and anyone who opposes the ruler is regarded as a *baghi* [rebel] whose killing is obligatory.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ <https://amu.tv/fa/65369/>

²⁵⁰ <https://www.iess.ir/fa/analysis/3118/>

²⁵¹ <https://www.iess.ir/fa/analysis/3573/>

Given the Taliban system's foundation in religious monopolisation, Most Hazaras and other followers of Shia Islam have encountered numerous problems, including being compelled by the group to change their religious affiliation. As discussed in the previous chapter, in June 2022 the Taliban officially halted the teaching of Ja'fari jurisprudence at universities, particularly Bamyan University, and restructured the relevant faculty. Several months later, in September 2022, poor cave-dwelling families in Bamyan were forcibly removed from their homes; Taliban members told these families: "Infidels! Your turn to rule is over." In May 2023, the Taliban prevented the distribution of qualification-assessment forms to Shia religious scholars. Bamyan clerics stated that Taliban officials explicitly told them: "The form is not for Shias." In September 2023, the Taliban leader ordered the establishment of a "Taliban Council of Ulema." Approximately 30 Shia scholars from Bamyan were nominated, but none was approved by the Taliban leadership. Instead, a Sunni council, predominantly Salafist in orientation, was established in Shia-populated areas. According to local sources, many members of this group regard Shias as "najis" [ritually impure]. In June 2024, the Taliban also removed subjects relating to Ja'fari jurisprudence from schools in Bamyan. After protests intensified, a staged programme involving individuals affiliated with the Taliban was organised, and the removal of Ja'fari jurisprudence was denied.²⁵²

The Taliban have also compelled Shias to change their religious affiliation. Afghanistan International reported that a number of students at Balkh University stated that the Taliban had distributed a document requiring them to pledge to change their school of jurisprudence to Hanafi. In the 14-point document, the Taliban made beards and Afghan clothing mandatory, prohibited listening to music, and required students to comply with the Law on the Promotion of Virtue. Article 6 of the document states:

"Given that the people of Afghanistan are followers of the school of Imam-e-Azam Abu Hanifa, I too, for the purpose of preserving unity and solidarity, choose to follow this same school."²⁵³

In addition, the Human Rights Service of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that between 17 January and 3 February 2025, the Taliban forced 50 Ismaili men in Badakhshan Province to change their religion and convert to Sunni Islam. According to the report, the men were taken from their homes at night by the Taliban for "religious

²⁵² <https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/note/188797/>

²⁵³ <https://www.afintl.com/fa/202604101698>

interrogation,” and those who refused to change their religious affiliation were threatened with death, beaten, and subjected to coercion.²⁵⁴

3. Penal Regulations of the Courts: Institutionalisation of Apartheid and Deprivation of Fair Trial

On 7 January 2026, following endorsement by the leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban published the Penal Regulations of the Courts in the Official Gazette, comprising an introduction, three books, ten chapters, and 119 articles, and announced that the courts of the Islamic Emirate were responsible for its implementation. The Regulations, which provide for *ta'zir* punishments, were drafted within the framework of Hanafi jurisprudence and reflect this government's particular interpretation of Islamic Sharia.

Through deliberately vague and open-ended wording, these Regulations grant an extensive range of unrestricted powers to the Taliban's unilateral and non-independent courts. These courts, which lack even the minimum international standards of fair trial, have now, through this instrument, received legal authorisation for arbitrary detention, the issuance of severe sentences, and the suppression of any dissenting voice. Through this measure, the Taliban place the outward appearance of “law” over the authoritarian and exclusionary nature of their rule and endanger legal security for all people of Afghanistan.²⁵⁵

In this section, we examine three fundamental issues concerning the Taliban's Penal Regulations of the Courts. First, we examine how the Taliban have disregarded fair-trial standards in these Regulations. Second, we examine their deliberate ambiguities and the unlimited powers granted to Taliban appointees. Third, we examine the return to slavery and the stratification of justice in light of the provisions of these Regulations.

Absence of Fair-Trial Standards

The administration of justice is the ultimate objective of every judicial proceeding, and fair trial is one of the most important indicators for assessing the social and judicial development of any

²⁵⁴ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/229320/ismaelis-of-badakhshan/>

²⁵⁵ <https://dari.bolaq.org/2026/01/27/bayaniya-e-matboaati-shabak-e-tahlilgaran-bolaq/>

society. Determining whether proceedings are fair is possible only by defining standards that constitute the minimum requirements for a judicial process to be considered fair.²⁵⁶

On 24 July 2026, Richard Bennett, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, wrote on X:

“I am still reviewing the Taliban’s new criminal procedure law, including from human-rights and Sharia perspectives, but it is already abundantly clear that its implications for Afghans are deeply concerning. I will issue more detailed statements in due course.”

He added that the Regulations are inconsistent with internationally accepted human-rights standards and may adversely affect public access to justice.²⁵⁷

In the Penal Regulations of the Courts, the Taliban have failed to incorporate any of the basic standards of fair trial, including equality before the law, the principles of legality and personal criminal responsibility, the presumption of innocence, the prohibition of torture, freedom from arbitrary detention, the right to remain silent, and the right to defence. Nowhere in the Regulations are the right of access to defence counsel, the right to remain silent, or the right to compensation recognised, nor are other minimum requirements of a fair trial guaranteed. The Taliban have also failed to specify minimum and maximum punishments and, by removing an independent investigative process for establishing criminal acts, have designated “confession” and “testimony” as the principal means of proving an offence.²⁵⁸

Ambiguity and Unlimited Powers

These Regulations contain a series of deliberate ambiguities that give the Taliban broad discretion in implementing their provisions. For example, Article 4 states: “Hudud punishments are fixed and determined, while *ta’zir* is delegated to the discretion of the Imam.” Upon reading this provision, an immediate question arises: Who is the Imam? Article 2, which defines the terminology used in the Regulations, provides no definition of “Imam.” The legal meaning of Imam is therefore left open, and any Taliban member may, according to his own understanding,

²⁵⁶ <https://www.noormags.ir/view/fa/articlepage/828531/>

²⁵⁷ “UN Human Rights Expert Expresses Concern Over Taliban’s New Criminal Code,” Atlas Press News Agency, January 25, 2026, [UN Human Rights Expert Expresses Concern Over Taliban’s New Criminal Code – AtlasPress News Agency](https://atlaspressnewsagency.com/un-human-rights-expert-expresses-concern-over-talibans-new-criminal-code/), Seen n July 10, 2026.

²⁵⁸ <https://rukshana.com/what-is-the-content-of-the-criminal-procedure-code-of-the-taliban-courts/>

regard himself as an Imam and, under this provision, impose a *ta'zir* punishment. Paragraph 5 of Article 4 appears to confirm this, providing: “The punishment of *hadd* belongs to the Imam, and the husband and master (*badar*) may also administer *ta'zir* punishment.” A husband may administer *ta'zir* punishment because, according to the Taliban’s ruling, a man is an Imam, since no definition of Imam is provided. Furthermore, this paragraph uses the term “*badar*” [master]. Who is this “master” who, alongside the Imam and husband, is granted authority under these Regulations to administer *ta'zir* punishments? Are the terminology and concepts used in these Regulations, which are commonly found in classical jurisprudence, signs of the Taliban’s traditional outlook and its incompatibility with the requirements of the contemporary world? The Taliban government defines itself as a government based on a religious interpretation and has explicitly declared that the basis for regulating its laws and regulations is traditional jurisprudence, particularly Hanafi jurisprudence. Within such a framework, it is natural that the language, terminology, and concepts employed in the Penal Regulations of the Courts reflect the same jurisprudential tradition.²⁵⁹

By giving family members discretion to administer *ta'zir* punishments, the Taliban effectively violate women’s rights, empower male family members, and create conditions conducive to abuse and domestic violence. The Regulations prescribe corporal punishment, including flogging, for a broad range of offences, although such punishments are regarded under international law as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

Return to Slavery and the Stratification of Justice (Articles 9 and 15)

Through the use of terminology and concepts drawn from classical jurisprudence in these Regulations, the Taliban seek to return the country to the era of slavery. Article 15, for example, uses the terms “slave” (*ghulam*) and “free person” (*hurr*), stating: “For every offence for which no fixed *hadd* punishment has been prescribed, *ta'zir* shall be imposed. Whether the offender is free or a slave, male or female, Muslim or non-Muslim, adult or a discerning child, he or she shall be considered liable to *ta'zir*.”²⁶⁰ Given the history of Taliban oppression of Hazaras, these Regulations and these provisions constitute a warning sign for the Hazara people. The Regulations employ expressions such as “true Muslims” and “*mubtadi*” [religious innovator/heretic]. Paragraph 8 of Article 2 defines *mubtadi*’ as: “A person whose belief is

²⁵⁹ <https://afgreview.com/>

²⁶⁰ <https://dari.bolaq.org/2026/01/27/bayaniya-e-matboaati-shabak-e-tahlilgaran-bolaq/>

contrary to the belief of Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jama'a." Under this definition, Most Hazaras and non-Hazara Shias are *mubtadi'*, and are regarded as deserving any form of oppression.

These Regulations completely reject the principle of equality before the law and grant Taliban personnel within administrative institutions broad authority to administer *ta'zir* punishments. Because Hazaras have no position within the Taliban system, they are directly victimised by the provisions of these Regulations.

Equality before the law is a universal principle recognised in international instruments. Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides: "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination." Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights similarly provides:

"All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law ..."

The Taliban, however, explicitly violate the principle of equality before the law in Article 9 of these Regulations by dividing society into classes and stipulating different treatment where a *ta'zir* offence is committed by high-ranking persons, members of the nobility, middle-ranking persons, or lower-ranking members of society.²⁶¹ Article 9 expressly provides that *ta'zir* punishment varies according to the status of the offender:

1. **Ta'zir for ulema and high-ranking persons:** a warning from the judge.
2. **Ta'zir for the nobility, such as tribal elders and merchants:** notification and summons to court by the judge.
3. **Ta'zir for middle-ranking members of society:** summons to court and imprisonment.
4. **Ta'zir for lower-ranking members of society:** threats and beating (flogging).

Despite criticism from the United Nations and the European Union Special Representative for Afghanistan, these Regulations were published in the Official Gazette and are being implemented in Taliban courts. In response to criticism of the Regulations, the Taliban Ministry of Justice stated

²⁶¹ Article 9 of the Penal Regulations of the Courts.

that objections to Taliban laws “have no Sharia or scholarly basis, but rather arise from ignorance or deliberate ignorance, and constitute an offence under Sharia.”²⁶²

4. Law as an Instrument of Repression

When law is formulated and implemented on the basis of the rule of law, judicial independence, and respect for fundamental rights, it functions as an instrument for protecting freedoms, limiting governmental power, and guaranteeing justice. In legal and political-science literature, law is not inherently an instrument of repression; rather, it is an instrument for protecting rights and freedoms. In authoritarian systems, however, in the absence of fair-trial guarantees, law can become an instrument of repression.

By abolishing Afghanistan’s Constitution and other laws that derived their legitimacy from the people and from the people’s vote, the Taliban formulate laws according to their own preferences and wishes, without even minimal participation or awareness on the part of the people of Afghanistan, whether directly or indirectly, and enforce those laws following endorsement by their leader. Through deliberate ambiguities and the delegation of authority to Taliban leaders, these laws are used as instruments of repression against the people of Afghanistan, particularly Hazaras.

In this section, we address two important issues that have directly and deliberately harmed the Hazara people and examine how the Taliban, by clothing their illegitimate demands in the form of law, have violated rights of Hazaras. First, we examine the legalisation of the seizure of Hazara lands through the Law on the Prevention of Land Grabbing. Second, through examination of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, we examine the Taliban’s cultural repression of Hazaras.

Creating a Legal Framework for Land Seizure

In October 2022, the Taliban endorsed the Law on the Prevention of Land Grabbing and Restitution of Grabbed Lands. Article 2 defines the objectives of the law as follows:

“The objectives of this Law are:

1. Restitution of grabbed Emirate (government), public-pasture, and endowment lands.

²⁶² <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/33663175.html>

2. Prevention of the grabbing of Emirate (government), public-pasture, and endowment lands.”

Under this provision, the stated objectives of the law are the restitution of grabbed government lands and other categories of land, and the prevention of their seizure. But what constitutes government land?

Paragraph 4 of Article 2 defines government lands as lands that are unowned and identifies eight categories of unowned land. Paragraph 5 provides: “Land that is registered in the documents of Emirate (government) lands and in the principal register, or that, as a result of clearance, examination, and investigation, is established as Emirate (government) land.” By relying on this provision, the Taliban provide a legal cover for the seizure of Hazara lands by declaring their lands government property and confiscating them.

In early 2025, the Taliban established the Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing and Restitution of Grabbed Lands. In late 2025, on the basis of an official letter from Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Commission was elevated to the status of a ministry.²⁶³

Hazara-populated areas have been direct victims of this law and of the activities of this Commission. According to findings of the Bolaq Analysts Network during the previous year, the mean score for Hazaras being subjected to forced displacement and internal displacement was 3.6 out of 5. On the basis of this mean, most Hazaras displaced during the previous year had been displaced forcibly. Among the 355 participants in the survey, 140 individuals (39.40%) had been subjected to internal displacement and forced displacement.²⁶⁴ Reports published by the Bolaq Analysts Network in previous years examined in detail the seizure of Hazara lands and their transfer to Kuchis.

Creating a Legal Framework for Cultural Repression

The Taliban have used various forms of pressure and violence in the country with the objective of changing Hazaras’ religious affiliation and erasing their identity. These measures include coercion and repression aimed at imposing Hanafi Islam; homogenisation and cultural depletion through the education system; systematic ethnic and religious discrimination; prohibitions on the

²⁶³ <https://www.afintl.com/fa/202602129646>

²⁶⁴ Bolaq Analyst Network, “The Situation of Hazaras in the Fourth Year of Taliban Rule”, August 15 2025, [Bolaq-Taliban-Fourth-Year-English.pdf](#), Seen on July 8, 2026

publication and dissemination of books and artistic works; destruction of cultural identity; and changes imposed upon ways of life.²⁶⁵

As discussed in the second section of this chapter, drawing on the provisions of *Al-Imāra al-Islāmiyya wa Niẓāmuhā*, the Taliban regard Hanafi Islam as the official school of jurisprudence, and the justification given in the book explicitly states:

“The people of Afghanistan regard any school other than the Hanafi school as a source of shame and disgrace.”

Similarly, Paragraph 8 of Article 2 of the Penal Regulations of the Courts defines a *mubtadi'* as: “A person whose belief is contrary to the belief of Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jama'a.” Paragraph 1 of Article 6 of the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice explicitly states: “The Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue, Prevention of Vice and Hearing of Complaints is obligated, in accordance with the rulings of Islamic Sharia and Hanafi jurisprudence, to command what is virtuous and prohibit what is reprehensible.” These explicit legal provisions effectively create a legal framework for the cultural repression of Hazaras. Over the course of five years, the group has used force and violence in various cases and provinces to compel Shias to change their religious affiliation. These pressures to change religion have been imposed by local Taliban officials in Badakhshan and other remote parts of the country while, over the same five-year period, senior officials of the group have systematically propagated rhetoric against Hazaras and Shias.

The Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom states in this regard: “In June, the [Taliban] acting Minister of Higher Education denied the existence of other Muslim communities in the country and stated that every Afghan follows Sunni Hanafi jurisprudence.”²⁶⁶ As a consequence of this *takfir* and negative propaganda, Hazaras and Shia religious scholars in particular, have been exposed to a wave of targeted killings by extremist groups and repeated arrests by the Taliban, which were examined in detail in the chapter on the cultural situation of Hazaras (the previous chapter).

²⁶⁵ <https://jade-abresham.com/reports/16582/>

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

Chapter Conclusion

Based on the material presented in this chapter concerning the legal status of Hazaras under Taliban rule, we conclude that Hazaras in Afghanistan today are not merely victims of arbitrary violence; rather, they face a legal vacuum and institutionalised legislative discrimination that have deprived them of any meaningful possibility of seeking legal redress. Under the Taliban system, law is not created and implemented to protect Hazaras as equal citizens before the law; it is created and applied against Hazaras and for the repression of this group. In Taliban legal texts, Shia Hazaras are explicitly classified, first, as *mubtadi'* and non-Muslims, and subsequently measures are taken through various means to eliminate and expel this group.

By abolishing Afghanistan's Constitution and other laws, the Taliban placed the country in a legal vacuum in which Hazaras lost their fundamental rights. In the next stage, through the drafting and endorsement of Taliban laws, they subjected this population to legally sanctioned repression. Through the publication of *Al-Imāra al-Islāmiyya wa Nizāmuḥā*, the Taliban characterised Hazaras and Shias as a source of shame and disgrace; subsequently, through the endorsement of laws and regulations such as the Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the Penal Regulations of the Courts, and the Law on the Prevention of Land Grabbing and Restitution of Grabbed Lands, they provided a legal basis for oppression and injustice against Hazaras and deprived them of the possibility of seeking legal redress.

By endorsing these laws, the Taliban have clearly violated the international obligations by which Afghanistan is bound. They have characterised criticism of Taliban laws as arising from ignorance and have declared critics to be criminals.

Chapter Five

The Land Seizure

Introduction

Land in Afghanistan is not merely an economic asset; it constitutes the foundation of collective identity, security, livelihoods, historical memory, and the continuity of life for local communities. For the Hazaras, who have repeatedly experienced forced displacement, dispossession, and denial of access to land over the past century, the issue of land has consistently been intertwined with survival, justice, and the right to remain in their ancestral homeland.

Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, numerous reports have documented land disputes, forced evictions, land seizures, restrictions on property rights, and the transfer of control over land in Hazara-populated areas. Documented cases in the provinces of Bamyan, Daikundi, Ghazni, Maidan Wardak, Uruzgan, Baghlan, and several other areas indicate that a significant proportion of these disputes have emerged within a context characterised by unequal access to justice, ineffective handling of complaints, and structural support for more powerful parties.

An examination of victims' testimonies, field reports, legal documents, and information collected during this period indicates that, in many cases, Hazara residents have encountered serious challenges in establishing and defending their property rights. Local sources and affected individuals have repeatedly alleged that their historical documents and legally valid title deeds have been disregarded, that judicial proceedings have lacked the necessary transparency, and that, in some instances, claims of ownership have been accepted without the presentation of sufficient evidence. In a number of cases, Hazara families have reportedly been compelled to pay substantial sums of money, accept coerced settlements, or abandon their homes and lands in order to retain, or attempt to preserve, their property.

A considerable proportion of these disputes has involved the presence of, and competing claims advanced by, Kuchi nomads. In numerous instances, local communities have accused the Taliban of favouring the claimants, exerting pressure on community elders, detaining influential local figures, and facilitating changes in the ownership status of land. At the same time, restrictions on, and disputes concerning, the assets and properties of several prominent Hazara political and economic figures have raised concerns regarding the security of property rights and the use of

administrative and judicial mechanisms to exert pressure on political opponents or marginalised groups.

The consequences of this process extend far beyond the loss of land and property. Dispossession, forced displacement, economic insecurity, the collapse of livelihoods, the erosion of confidence in the judicial system, and the growing perception of injustice have had profound effects on both the individual and collective lives of the Hazara community. In many areas, land constitutes not only a source of income but also the last remaining guarantee of household security and stability. Consequently, its loss may lead to poverty, forced migration, and increased vulnerability among local communities.

This chapter examines the principal cases of land appropriation, land disputes, forced displacement, and restrictions imposed on the property rights of Hazaras during the period under review. It seeks to document the patterns, underlying factors, and consequences of these developments on the basis of the available evidence and documented information.

1. Kandir, Uruzgan Province, and Tagabdar, Daikundi Province

Approximately one month after the Taliban's military takeover of Afghanistan, Kuchi groups from Helmand Province, in cooperation with the Taliban, asserted ownership claims over the areas of Kandir and Tagabdar in Gizab District, Uruzgan Province. In September 2021, the Taliban reportedly issued an in-absentia ruling ordering the residents of these villages to refrain from removing their agricultural produce including wheat, maize, almonds, and other crops from the disputed areas, permitting them only to take their personal clothing and belongings. According to *Etilaat Roz*, fifteen villages in the Lura Shiw and Tagab Dar areas became the subject of the dispute, and large numbers of residents from Kandir, Bala Sar-e Tagabdar, Dahaneh-ye Nala, and the newly established settlements along the irrigation canals (Juy-e Nawabad) were forcibly displaced. The same source, quoting local residents, reported:

“Today, the Taliban expelled 3,500 families from various villages in Tagabdar. They gathered their livestock and agricultural produce in a central location, divided them among themselves, and then sold them back to the local people.”²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/131727/forced-migration-in-daikundi/>

Based on information obtained from local sources and affected residents, *Jadeh-ye Abrisham* (Silk Road Weekly) reported the number of families subjected to forced displacement and the amount of land allegedly appropriated from fifteen villages in the Gizab and Patu districts as follows²⁶⁸:

No.	Village	Families Displaced	Land (Jeribs)
1	Kandir	400	approximately 900
2	Maidan Malik	100	200
3	Shaaghaljah	150	400
4	Kharkak	160	420
5	Bala Juy	300	700
6	Rah-e Ramah	90	270
7	Chapa Juy	650	1,700
8	Dahan-e Nala	380	900
9	Mian Qashu	100	500
10	Sina Khazak	150	700
11	Kontay	70	250
12	Sialash	90	200
13	Tagabdar	300	400

²⁶⁸ <https://jade-abresham.com/reports/10099/>.

14	Warag	50	300
15	Kata Anar	30	150

Table 4: Number of Families Subjected to Forced Displacement and the Amount of Land Allegedly Appropriated in Fifteen Villages of Gizab and Patu Districts in Bamyan province.

After several months of displacement, the Taliban governor reportedly authorized the displaced residents of Kandir and Tagabdar to return to their homes in early 2022.²⁶⁹

Following more than two years of uncertainty, the Taliban Primary Court in Gizab ruled on 26 December 2023 (5 Jadi 1402) in favour of the Kuchi claimants. The court ordered the local residents to pay 30 million Afghanis as a settlement payment to the Pashtun claimants within approximately seven months, by 18 July 2024, in exchange for receiving a Shar'i (Islamic legal) title deed.²⁷⁰

Ultimately, the residents of Kandir paid the 30 million Afghanis in three instalments by October 2024 (Mizan 1403) to three Pashtun tribes from Gizab and Kuchi groups from Helmand as compensation and payment for the disputed land. However, instead of issuing a formal legal (Shar'i) title deed, the Pashtun claimants provided only a customary ('urfi) document and declined to issue the promised legal deed.²⁷¹ This occurred despite the fact that the Pashtun claimants reportedly produced no documentary evidence to substantiate their ownership claims, whereas the Hazara residents possessed a registered ownership document for the disputed area dated 28 April 1974.²⁷²

2. Forced Displacement in Lal wa Sarjantal

According to a report by Etilaat Roz, during the autumn of 2022 (1401), residents of the village of Boom in the Chahar Asiab area and the village of Tangi Nawishta in the Kerman area, both located in Lal wa Sarjantal District of Ghor Province, were forcibly displaced from their lands. The residents of Boom had purchased the village's land approximately eighty years earlier from an

²⁶⁹ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/135039/taliban-governor-in-daikundi-kandir-and-tagabdar-displaced-can-return-to-their-homes/>.

²⁷⁰ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/192977/>.

²⁷¹ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/223752/>, <https://youtu.be/YUpjG0AwgyQ?si=44P1Lu8ihpEFv0jS>.

²⁷² For more information on the aforementioned topic, please refer to issue No. 214 of the weekly *Silk Road*, published on December 17, 2025, titled "Land Displaced Persons."

individual named Sadiq Khan under customary ('urfi) title deeds. However, Sadiq Khan's heirs, with the support of the Taliban, forced approximately twenty families to leave their homes during the winter season.

Local residents told *Etilaat Roz* that they possessed five official orders issued by the courts requiring the case concerning the village of Boom to be reconsidered. Nevertheless, the Director of the Department of Rights and the judge of Lal wa Sarjangan, allegedly acting in cooperation with Sadiq Khan's heirs, proceeded to enforce their original decision despite these orders.²⁷³

3. Rashk Village, Bamyan Province

Rashk is a village located in the Pushta-ye Ghurghuri area of Panjab District, Bamyan Province. In 2022 (1401), two Kuchi individuals, identified as Tata and Yagul, asserted ownership claims over the village's land. After these claims failed to succeed, two other Kuchi claimants, Awal Gul and Wardak, submitted a petition to the District Governor's Office of Panjab, Bamyan Province, on 27 October 2024, claiming ownership of part of the land in Rashk village and initiating a new legal dispute.

On 25 July 2025, the research team of the Bolaq Analysts Network interviewed one of the village's residents, who was in Kabul pursuing a complaint before the Supreme Court. By the time this report was being prepared, the village had reportedly been handed over to the Kuchi claimants, and its residents had been compelled to leave their homes.

Another resident of Panjab District stated that the villagers possessed both **Shar'i** (Islamic legal) and customary ('urfi) title deeds and that several generations of their families had lived in the village. According to this source, the official title deeds of a number of residents of the Pushta-ye Ghurghuri area, who had purchased their land, date back to 1947. By contrast, the title deed presented by the opposing claimants is alleged to be fraudulent, dating from 1958. Furthermore, the deed is reportedly not registered in the court archives, and the purported seller of the land was himself a Kuchi rather than a resident of the local community.

On 29 July 2025, the Taliban reportedly forcibly displaced 25 families from Rashk village in Panjab District, Bamyan Province, and transferred their homes and land to Pashtun Kuchi claimants.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ <https://www.etilaatroz.com/159250/>

²⁷⁴ Analysts Network Bolaq. *Research Report: The Situation of the Hazaras During the Taliban's Rule*. Published in 2025, p. 17

4. Jaghori

As land disputes and the appropriation of Hazara land continued in Ghazni Province during 2025, Jaghori District also emerged as one of the principal centers of land confiscation and the conversion of privately owned property into *Emirati* (state-controlled) land. During this period, the Taliban's Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing declared more than 10,000 jeribs of land in various parts of Jaghori including Sangmasha, Ghojur, Sabz Chub, Dawood, and Anguri as Mamnu' al-Tasarruf (prohibited from transfer, sale, or use), and in some cases reclassified them as *Emirati* or state property.

According to complaints submitted by local residents, the process of reviewing these lands was carried out without a comprehensive assessment of ownership documents, historical records, or the customary property rights of the local population. Many of the affected areas included agricultural land, residential neighborhoods, housing developments, marketplaces, grazing land, and inherited properties that had remained in the possession of local residents for generations.

According to an investigative report published by *Etilaat Roz* and researched by the newspaper's investigative journalist Jalil Ronaq, approximately five months earlier August 2025, the Office of the Taliban Governor of Ghazni announced that a technical delegation from the Taliban's Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing had travelled to Jaghori. Approximately one and a half months 24 September 2025, the Taliban's Provincial Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing in Ghazni issued a letter to the district authorities in Jaghori identifying at least fifteen separate parcels of land in Sangmasha, Sabz Chub, Ghajur, Chub Maska, Dawood, Anguri, and Loman as Mamnu' al-Tasarruf (prohibited property).

The designated areas included Dasht-e Ashtar Korbala in Sabz Chub; Moradi Township, the Technical High School, Habibullah Sarai, and the open area surrounding the district administration building in Sangmasha, the district center. In Ghajur, the prohibited areas included the airport zone, the Ghajur Bazaar, and the residential townships of Naw Kariz, Imam Ali, and Tabassum. Other designated areas included Anguri Bazaar, Saidan and Kalandeh in Anguri, Dalkachi in Dawood, and a parcel of land situated between the villages of Khusha, Chub Maska, and Sartala.

Areas Declared *Mamnu' al-Tasarruf* (Prohibited from Disposition)

No.	Area	Area (Jeribs)	Location
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1	Land located between Chub Maska, Sartala, and Khusha	2,975	Chub Maska, Sartala, and Khusha
2	Shafqal Pa'in	1,562	Hutqul
3	Moradi Township	1,041	Sangmasha
4	Dalkachi	1,037	Dawood
5	Tabassum Township	783	Ghajur
6	Imam Ali Township	658	Ghajur
7	Lower Dasht-e Ashtar Korbala	484	Sabz Chub
8	Naw Kariz Township	456	Ghajur
9	Saidan and Kalandeh	333	Anguri
10	Ghajur Airport Perimeter	71	Ghajur
11	Sangmasha Bazaar	61.03	Sangmasha
12	Ghajur Municipality Shops	53	Ghajur
13	Department of Agriculture Orchard	51	Ghajur
14	Anguri Bazaar	7.8	Anguri
15	Technical High School	7	Sangmasha
16	Habibullah Sarai	0.7	Sangmasha

17	Remaining Land of Ghajur Airport	508	Ghajur
Total		10,089 jeribs (20.18 km²)	

Table 5: Areas in Jaghori District, Ghazni Province, declared Mamnu' al-Tasarruf by the Taliban

According to *Etilaat Roz*, the newspaper obtained access to the Taliban's cadastral sketch maps (*karoki*) for part of the areas designated as Mamnu' al-Tasarruf. In addition to the areas listed in the letter issued by the Taliban's Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing, the Taliban also classified a parcel of land in Shafqal Pa'in in the Hutqul area as state property. However, the Taliban's cadastral map does not include the Sar Dasht area of Loman. Nevertheless, according to the map, the total area placed under restriction exceeds 10,000 jeribs of land.

The largest designated parcel consists of 2,975 jeribs located between the villages of Chub Maska, Sartala, and Khusha. This is followed by 1,562 jeribs in Shafqal Pa'in, 1,041 jeribs in Moradi Township, 1,037 jeribs in Dalkachi, 783 jeribs in Tabassum Township, 658 jeribs in Imam Ali Township, 484 jeribs in Lower Dasht-e Ashtar Korbala, 456 jeribs in Naw Kariz Township, and 333 jeribs in Saidan and Kalandeh, all of which were declared Mamnu' al-Tasarruf. The Taliban also designated as state property 71 jeribs in the Ghajur Airport area, 61.03 jeribs in Sangmasha Bazaar, 53 jeribs comprising the Ghojur Municipal Shops, 51 jeribs belonging to the Department of Agriculture Orchard in Ghojur, 7.8 jeribs in Anguri Bazaar, 7 jeribs occupied by the Technical High School, and 0.7 jeribs comprising Habibullah Sarai. In addition, the Taliban included a further 508 jeribs at Ghojur Airport, designated as "remaining land," among the areas classified as Mamnu' al-Tasarruf.

The letter issued by the Taliban's Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing in September 2025 states that any form of private use or occupation of these areas is prohibited. Although neither the commission's letter nor the accompanying cadastral maps specify the legal classification of the land, local sources report that Taliban officials described the designated areas as state-owned land when communicating their decision to residents.

Furthermore, village elders from Sabz Chub, Hutqul, Dawood, and Ghajur, in a petition addressed to Abdul Samad Javid, the Taliban governor of Ghazni Province, stated that privately owned land in these areas had been classified by the authorities as "grabbed land," "state land," and "private public pasture" (*Mar'i-ye Khassah*).



Figure 13: Letter issued by the Taliban's Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing to the Taliban district administration in Jaghori. (Source: Etilaat Roz)

One of the most significant cases concerns Dasht-e Oshtor Korbala in the Sabz Chub area. Part of this area falls within the Jaghori Urban Master Plan and, over the past two decades, has served as an important centre for residential expansion and educational development. The Taliban have declared part of this area to be state property, whereas local residents maintain that ownership of the land can be substantiated through customary deeds, *waqf* (endowment) documents, and records of property transactions conducted over previous years.

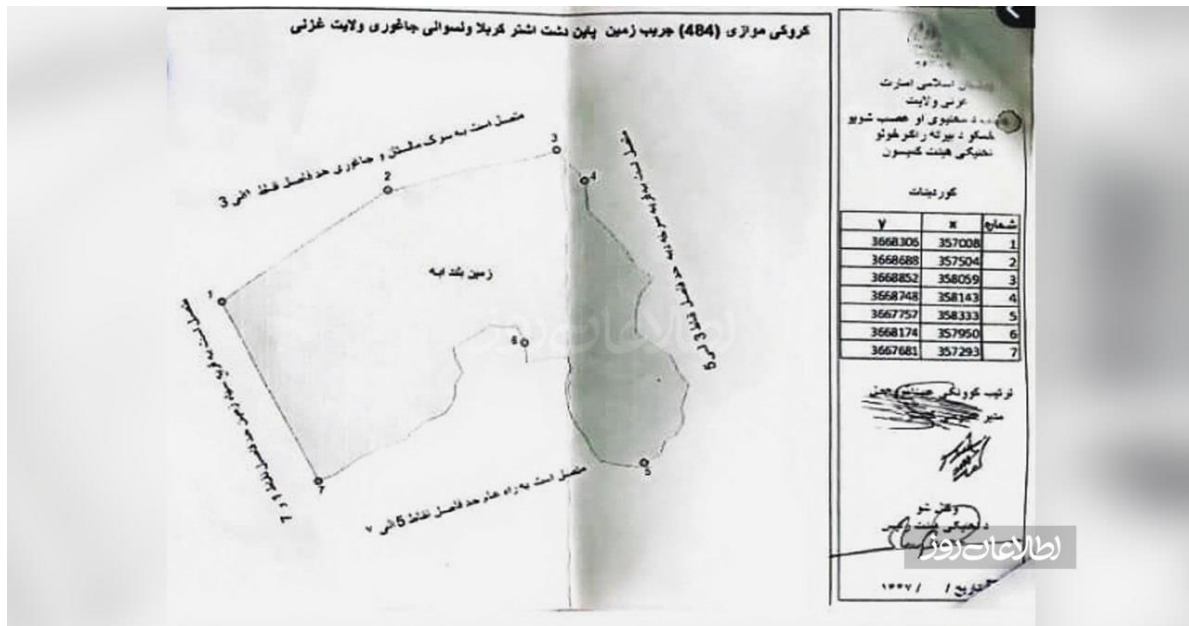


Figure 14: Cadastral sketch map (karoki) of the Lower Dasht-e Oshtor Korbala area. (Source: Etilaat Roz)

In Ghajur, several residential townships, the airport lands, and areas designated for public use were likewise declared state property. Local residents contend that many of these lands were inherited family properties and had been allocated for public projects without due legal process or the payment of compensation.

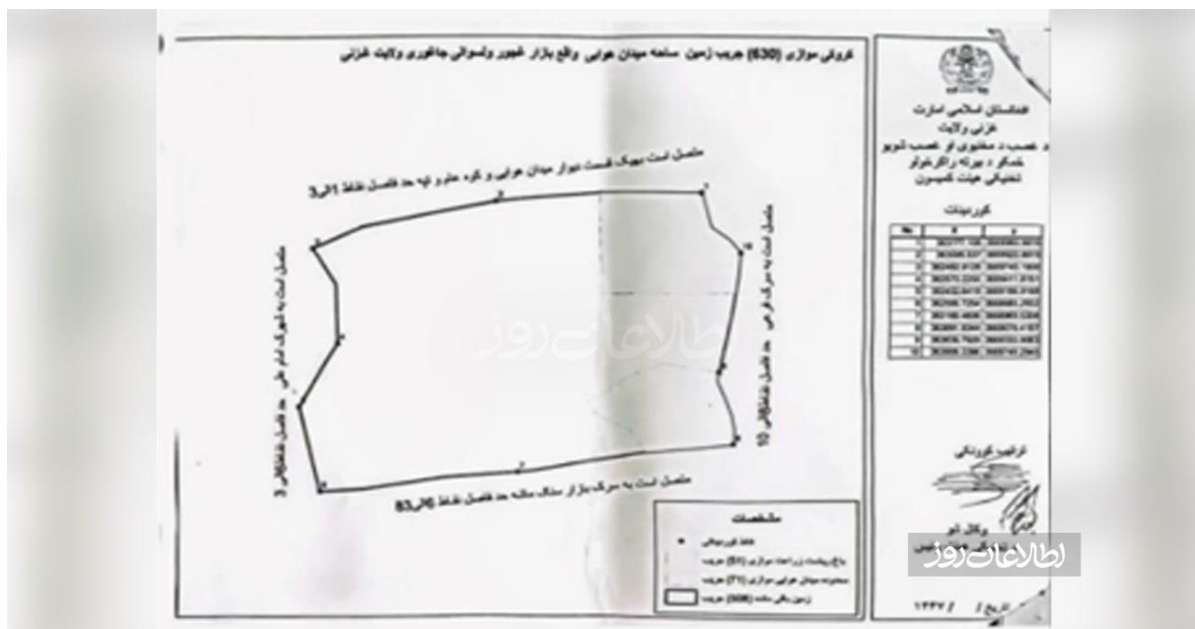


Figure 15: Cadastral sketch map (karoki) of the Ghajur Airport area and the Ghajur Municipal Shops. (Source: Etilaat Roz)

In Moradi Township, more than 1,000 jeribs of land were declared Mamnu' al-Tasarruf, although, according to local sources, the actual area of the township is substantially smaller than the figure designated by the Taliban. Local residents regard this measure as part of a broader campaign of pressure directed against the families and relatives of former anti-Taliban commanders and officials.

In the Dalkachi area, land was likewise declared state property despite the fact that it had previously been recognized as the private property of local residents in several legal proceedings, including cases adjudicated by Taliban courts themselves. Local sources have described this decision as a clear violation of earlier judicial rulings and as evidence of the absence of a transparent and independent mechanism for resolving land disputes.

In response to these measures, village elders and community leaders from several areas of Jaghori submitted formal complaints to the Taliban authorities in Ghazni Province. They argued that the recent decisions had been taken without proper consideration of historical documentation, inherited property rights, the customary land rights of village communities, or the legal provisions governing rangelands and public lands.

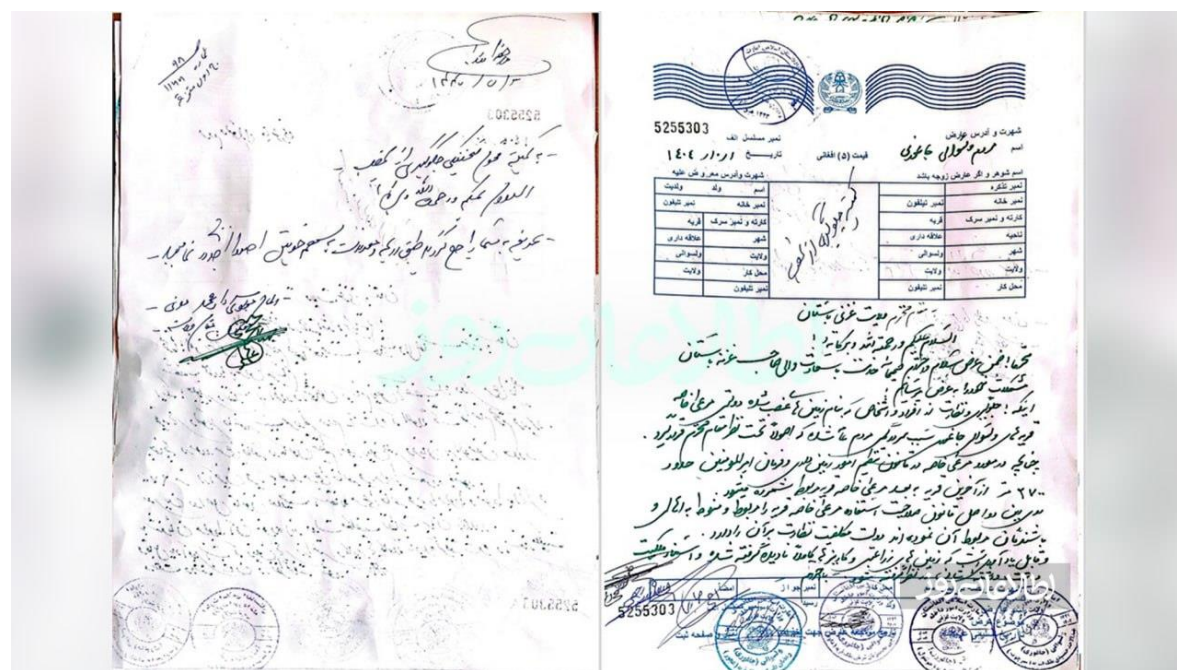


Figure 16: Petition submitted by residents of Jaghori District to the Taliban authorities.

Taken together, these developments have generated widespread concern among residents of Hazara-populated areas. Many fear that the ongoing process of reclassifying privately held land

as *Emirati* (state-owned) property may facilitate the transfer of ownership, undermine the economic security of local communities, contribute to forced displacement, and gradually alter the demographic composition of certain regions.

5. Dahan-e Nala Pa'in Village, Uruzgan Province

According to a report by *Jadeh-ye Abrisham* (Silk Road Weekly) and documents provided by local residents, a land ownership dispute concerning the village was brought before the Taliban courts by several Pashtun claimants. According to the residents, despite substantial documentary and testimonial evidence demonstrating the village's historical ownership of, and reclamation of, the disputed land, the courts ruled in favour of the claimants.

According to one local resident, who requested anonymity for security reasons, the inhabitants of Dahan-e Nala Pa'in submitted a range of evidence to the Taliban courts, including historical judicial decisions, testimony from village elders and respected community leaders, records documenting the payment of taxes and ushr (agricultural tithe) to the previous Taliban administration, and the findings of a local investigative committee. These documents reportedly demonstrate that the disputed land had been *mawat* (uncultivated or unclaimed land) prior to the 1980s (before the 1360s SH) and was subsequently reclaimed, cultivated, and developed by the present residents of the village.

Nevertheless, according to *Jadeh-ye Abrisham*, both the Taliban Primary Court and the Court of Appeal found these documents insufficient and instead accepted the ownership claims and witness testimony presented by the opposing claimants. Local residents have characterised the proceedings as unfair, arguing that the adjudication of the case was influenced by ethnic affiliations, local influence, and the absence of an independent judicial mechanism.

The case remains ongoing, and residents have expressed concern regarding its potential consequences. According to another local resident, who also requested anonymity, should a final judgment be issued against the villagers, they face the prospect of losing their agricultural land, the forced displacement of local families, and the imposition of substantial financial burdens to preserve their property rights.

The Dahan-e Nala Pa'in case illustrates broader concerns regarding the security of land tenure in Hazara-populated areas under Taliban rule. It demonstrates how the absence of transparent and independent mechanisms for resolving land disputes may contribute to increasing insecurity,

erode public confidence in the judicial system, and heighten the risk of the forced displacement of local communities.²⁷⁵

6. Detention of Local Community Leaders During Land Disputes in Gizab

During the period under review, land disputes in Gizab District, Uruzgan Province, remained a major source of concern in Hazara-populated areas. According to a report by *Jadeh-ye Abrisham* (Silk Road Weekly) and information provided by local sources, on 15 Dalw 1404 (4 February 2026), several village elders, respected community leaders, and influential local figures from the villages of Khara Kak and Shaghuljah Sofla in the Lura Shiw area of Gizab District were detained by the Taliban.

According to local sources, the detentions followed ownership claims advanced by a number of Pashtun residents from the districts of Gizab and Chawarchino over land located in these two villages. Local sources further alleged that those detained were subjected to pressure during the proceedings in an effort to compel them to accept a settlement with the claimants.

According to one local source, who requested anonymity because of security concerns, the residents had asked the claimants to produce documentary evidence substantiating their ownership claims and had maintained that they would not recognise the claims in the absence of valid legal documentation. The same source further stated that many local residents viewed the detention of village leaders as an attempt to exert pressure on the community during the adjudication of the land dispute.

This incident occurred against the backdrop of broader concerns regarding the resolution of land disputes in the Hazara-populated areas of Uruzgan Province. According to *Jadeh-ye Abrisham*, local residents, referring to similar cases in previous years, including the land dispute in the Kandir area, expressed concern that the existing judicial processes would be unable to provide effective protection for their property rights.²⁷⁶

The detention of local community leaders during the course of land disputes has, in addition to directly affecting the pursuit of legal remedies, heightened concerns among local residents regarding the security of land tenure, access to justice, and the risk of future forced displacement.

²⁷⁵ <https://jade-abresham.com/reports/16408/>

²⁷⁶ <https://jade-abresham.com/reports/16327/>

This case represents another example of the challenges associated with the adjudication of land claims in Hazara-populated areas under Taliban rule.

7. Appropriation of the Dasht-e Miyangi Area in Sheikh Ali District, Parwan Province

In March 2025, Qari Bilal Hashemi, the former Taliban Director of Intelligence in Bamyan Province, reportedly appropriated the Dasht-e Miyangi area in Gandab village, located in Sheikh Ali District, Parwan Province. The area includes agricultural land, public property, and grazing land. According to a report published by the newspaper *Hasht-e Subh*, Qari Bilal Hashemi entered the Dasht-e Miyangi area in March 2025 accompanied by armed personnel under his command. He reportedly summoned the village elders of Gandab and warned them that no one was permitted to harvest or make use of the produce of Dasht-e Miyangi.

According to the same report, when local residents sought to submit complaints to higher-ranking Taliban authorities, Qari Bilal Hashemi's forces established a checkpoint along the route in an attempt to prevent them from reaching the authorities and filing their complaints. Despite these obstacles, the residents eventually succeeded in presenting their grievances to the district governor and other local Taliban officials. However, they were reportedly informed that, apart from the provincial governor, no local government official possessed the authority to summon or investigate Qari Bilal Hashemi.²⁷⁷

8. Land Dispute in Baghlan Province

In Dalw 1404 (February 2026), a land dispute in Dahan-e Piazqul village, Doshi District, Baghlan Province, escalated into violence. According to a report by *Jadeh-ye Abrisham* (Silk Road Weekly) and information provided by local sources, on 10 February 2026, tensions over the ownership and use of local grazing land between the Hazara residents of the area and a group of Gujar Kuchi nomads resulted in an armed confrontation, during which two local residents were injured by gunfire.

According to local sources, following the incident, Taliban forces entered the area and detained a number of local residents. Although some of those arrested were subsequently released, reports indicate that several influential community leaders and village elders remained in

²⁷⁷ <https://8am.media/fa/allegation-of-land-grab-by-taliban-in-sheikh-ali-parwan-residents-complain/>

detention for a period of time. Local sources also reported that the condition of the injured individuals had deteriorated.

According to documents and information published in a special report by the *Jadeh-ye Abrisham* website, the Hazara residents of the area, collectively known as the Dosti community, maintain that they possess historical title deeds establishing their ownership of the disputed land and grazing areas. The report further states that an investigative committee appointed by the Baghlan provincial authorities acknowledged the existence of ownership documents as well as evidence demonstrating the long-standing possession and use of these lands by the local residents.

According to one local source, who requested anonymity for security reasons, although local Taliban authorities issued a number of decisions and directives intended to address the dispute, the implementation of these measures encountered significant obstacles, and the conflict over the land and grazing areas has continued. The same source expressed concern that the persistence of the dispute could further intensify local tensions and increase insecurity for the residents of the area.

This incident occurred within the broader context of long-standing disputes over land and grazing rights in parts of northern Afghanistan. Local sources contend that similar disputes have arisen in previous years in Doshi District and neighboring areas and, in some instances, have resulted in violent confrontations and legal proceedings.

The Dahan-e Piazqul case represents another example of the concerns surrounding the security of land tenure, equal access to dispute-resolution mechanisms, and the risk of violence arising from land-related conflicts in Hazara-populated areas. It also illustrates that disputes over land and grazing rights continue to constitute one of the principal challenges facing Hazara communities in different regions of Afghanistan.

9. Omid-e Sabz Township, Kabul

On 2 October 2024, the Taliban prohibited the sale, purchase, and any form of construction within Omid-e Sabz Township, commonly known as Haji Nabi Township, located in District 6 of Kabul, pending the issuance of a final judgment by the Taliban courts. This constitutes one of the most significant cases involving the assets of prominent Hazara political figures during the period under review.

According to publicly available documents, the dispute concerns approximately 1,761 jeribs of land over which Mohammad Nabi Khalili, the brother of Karim Khalili, the former Vice President

of Afghanistan, has asserted ownership on the basis of four Shar'i (Islamic legal) title deeds. According to *Hasht-e Subh*, acting on claims submitted by the State Cases Administration (*Edara-ye Qazaya-ye Dawlat*) and subsequent decisions of judicial authorities, the Taliban suspended all transactions relating to the township until the legal proceedings are concluded.

The available documents indicate that the case has a lengthy legal history. In 2007, the Primary Court of Kabul's Third Judicial District issued a ruling in favour of Mohammad Nabi Khalili. This decision was subsequently upheld at different stages by the Court of Appeal in 2009 and by the Supreme Court of the former Afghan government in 2010. However, in 2020, following a request for judicial review submitted by the State Cases Administration on the grounds of what was described as the "emergence of new evidence," some of the earlier judicial decisions were reopened for reconsideration.

As part of this process, on 3 April 2024, the Taliban's "Commission for the Prevention of Land Grabbing" announced that the Omid-e Sabz Township case had been referred to a specialised court for adjudication. According to published information, approximately 1,595 jeribs of land within the township fall within the scope of the commission's investigation.

According to informed sources, who requested anonymity, the case has generated concerns within the Hazara community regarding the security of property rights and the status of assets associated with prominent Hazara political and economic figures. These sources contend that the restrictions imposed on the transfer of property, together with the review of ownership documents, may adversely affect the economic security of both property owners and residents of the township.

The Omid-e Sabz Township case illustrates a broader pattern in which certain properties and assets associated with political figures from the former Afghan government, including Hazara leaders, have become subject to investigation, legal restrictions, or property disputes. In the absence of independent judicial institutions and effective oversight mechanisms, it remains difficult to assess these claims impartially, and concerns regarding the security of property rights continue to persist.

10. Qarabagh District, Ghazni Province

One prominent example concerns the alleged seizure of land by an individual known as Kamran, a powerful Taliban commander in the Qarabagh area of Ghazni Province. According to local sources, following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Kamran used his military authority and political influence to alter the traditional boundaries of Hazara-owned land in the Haftad Madyan

area and forcibly occupied dozens of jeribs of land. Local residents reportedly travelled to Kabul on several occasions to seek the return of their property. According to these accounts, Kamran initially refused their requests and later agreed to return only part of the land after receiving 300,000 Afghanis, providing the residents with what they described as a forged ownership document and warning them not to publicise the matter through the media.

Kamran has long been regarded as one of the Taliban's most influential figures in Ghazni Province. Prior to the Taliban's return to power in 2021, he served first as a local Taliban commander and later as the Taliban's shadow district governor for Qarabagh. According to documented local reports, before 2021 he was responsible for making the roads used by Hazara civilians unsafe. Local sources attribute a number of targeted killings of Hazara travelers passing through Qarabagh to forces under his command. Among those reportedly killed were Moallem Sikandar and Bismillah Mobarez, both of whom local sources allege were killed by individuals operating under Kamran's authority.

Following the Taliban's takeover in 2021, Kamran allegedly began appropriating land belonging to the residents of Tamaki village through the use of military power, intimidation, political pressure, and personal influence. During late 2024 and early 2025, he reportedly used privately owned tractors to alter the traditional and natural boundaries of agricultural land, excavated water wells within land belonging to Hazara residents, and cultivated these areas. According to local residents, these actions were carried out without permission, consent, or any valid legal title, resulting in the loss of dozens of jeribs of agricultural land belonging to the local community.

According to another local resident:

*"After the inhabitants of Tamaki became aware of the alleged land appropriation, a delegation of village elders travelled to Kabul several times to meet with Kamran. During these meetings, they informed him that the seizure of the land was unlawful and unjust. However, Kamran reportedly rejected their requests, accused the villagers of possessing weapons, and in some instances threatened them with military action."*²⁷⁸

In response, the residents of Tamaki collectively filled in the water well that had been dug on the disputed land. Following this action, Kamran allegedly intensified his threats. Eventually,

²⁷⁸ Analysts Network Bolaq. *Research Report: The Situation of the Hazaras During the Taliban's Rule*. Published in 2025, p. 16

however, a meeting between the two parties was held in Kabul. According to local accounts, Kamran stated that he would return the land only if the villagers compensated him financially. As a result, the residents were required to pay 300,000 Afghanis. Despite this payment, only a small portion of the disputed land was reportedly returned, and the accompanying ownership document issued to the residents was alleged by local sources to be fraudulent.²⁷⁹

According to a report published by *Hasht-e Subh* on 15 November 2023, the Taliban allegedly appropriated hundreds of jeribs of land belonging to Hazara residents in Qarabagh District, Ghazni Province. The report states that the Taliban seized hundreds of jeribs of land in Dasht-e Bagh-e Attar, located in the Gul Kuh area of Qarabagh District, for the purpose of constructing a residential township and subsequently commenced construction activities on the site.²⁸⁰

According to local sources cited in the report, the land has belonged to Hazara residents for many years, and they possess documentary evidence establishing their ownership. However, the Taliban reportedly did not recognise or give effect to these ownership documents. The sources further stated that the seizure of the land and the commencement of what they described as a controversial housing project prompted widespread objections from local residents, leading the Taliban to suspend construction temporarily. They further alleged that, after approximately one week, the Taliban resumed construction and accelerated work on the township, while complaints submitted by local residents to the Taliban courts failed to produce any effective remedy.

According to one local resident:

"Over many decades, the Hazaras of Qarabagh District in Ghazni Province have lost all of their fertile and productive lands under successive atrocious and oppressive governments. What remains in their minds and memories are only the names and recollections of their ancestral lands. The only tract of land that, in terms of both quality and size, had remained in the possession of the Hazaras of Qarabagh was Dasht-e Bagh-e Attar in Gul Kuh. It is now being converted into a residential township for Pashtuns from across the border and fighters of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). This is despite the fact that the residents of Gul Kuh possess legal (Shar'i) title deeds for the area and have paid taxes on the land during previous successive administrations, including the previous Taliban reign. Community representatives have knocked on every door in the hope of securing their

²⁷⁹ Report received from local sources.

²⁸⁰ Analysts Network Bolaq, citing *Hasht-e Subh* Daily, "Transfer of Indigenous Landowners' Properties to Kuchis: Taliban Decisions Are Based on Ethnic and Linguistic Discrimination," in the research report *The Situation of the Hazaras During the Taliban's Rule*, 2025, p. 16.

rights. Thus far, however, they have encountered only indifference, humiliation, and discrimination, and have received no effective response."

Chapter Summary

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that, since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, land disputes, land appropriation, dispossession, forced displacement, and restrictions on property rights have increased significantly in Hazara-populated areas. The documentary evidence, official records, and witness testimonies examined in this chapter indicate that many of these disputes have unfolded in a context where equal access to justice, independent judicial review, and effective protection of property rights have been subject to serious challenges.

Conclusion

The report you have read demonstrates that the situation of Hazaras in Afghanistan following the Taliban's return to power on 15 August 2021 cannot be explained merely by referring to a series of isolated incidents or individual human rights violations. The findings from the five principal areas examined in this report present a picture of a multidimensional, interconnected, and structural process in which the security, economic, cultural, legal, and land-related dimensions do not operate independently, but rather interact with and reinforce one another. Taken together, these dimensions have created conditions in which the Hazara community faces a persistent decline in human security, reduced capacity for survival and development, weakened fundamental rights, and increased vulnerability to various forms of discrimination and exclusion.

One of the most significant findings of this report is that, under the Taliban's second government, the concept of security for Hazaras has extended far beyond mere protection from physical violence. Security in its broader sense, that is, the ability to live freely, enjoy the protection of the law, have equal access to economic opportunities, preserve cultural identity, and participate in public life; has been undermined in various ways. Although targeted attacks against civilians, the successive assassinations of former government personnel, indiscriminate bombings, extrajudicial killings, and security threats remain among the most serious concerns facing this community, the findings of this report indicate that insecurity among Hazaras has become more structural than ever before. In other words, its roots must be sought in the institutional, legal, and political changes that emerged following the collapse of the republican system and the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

According to this report, in the area of security, the evidence indicates that Hazaras, in addition to facing continuing threats to their lives, have experienced a decline in institutional protection. The breakdown of accountability mechanisms, restrictions on access to justice, the absence of independent institutions for addressing complaints, and declining public trust in the judicial system have caused insecurity to extend beyond violent incidents and become part of the everyday experience of this community. Under such circumstances, security no longer means merely protection from armed attacks. It also encompasses access to justice, legal predictability, and trust in public institutions, elements that, according to the findings of this report, have been seriously weakened.

In the economic sphere, the report also demonstrates that the livelihood crisis facing Hazaras is not merely the result of Afghanistan's economic collapse or the reduction of international aid. Although these factors have affected the entire country, a range of additional factors in Hazara-populated areas including limited access to productive resources, declining investment, weak

infrastructure, increased tax pressures, restrictions on the exploitation of mines, problems arising from land disputes, and declining employment opportunities, have further exacerbated the economic situation. Alongside widespread insecurity, these factors have reduced productive capacity, increased poverty, intensified migration, and increased families' dependence on external assistance. The continuation of such trends will not only impede the economic development of Hazara-populated areas but will also deepen historical development gaps among different regions of Afghanistan.

The report's findings concerning the cultural situation indicate that pressures on the cultural and religious identity of Hazaras are not limited to restrictions on cultural and artistic programs or the removal of certain educational texts. The removal of Ja'fari jurisprudence from the education system, restrictions on the publication of books and cultural works, pressure on cultural institutions, restrictions on the observance of religious rituals, and reduced opportunities for the public expression of religious and ethnic identity point to a process that has gradually narrowed the space for cultural diversity. Although the legal assessment of these policies requires further examination within the framework of international law, the findings of this report indicate that their practical consequence has been a reduction in the ability of the Hazara community to preserve and reproduce its cultural identity. The effects of this development will not be confined to the present generation; they may also affect historical memory, the transmission of cultural heritage, and the sense of belonging among future generations.

In the legal sphere, the report points to one of the most fundamental developments following the Taliban's return: the transformation of the nature of Afghanistan's legal system. The abolition of the Constitution, the removal of a significant portion of statutory laws, the concentration of legislative and judicial powers within the Emirate's structure, the erosion of judicial independence, and the gradual replacement of a law-based system with a decree-based system have resulted in the loss of many previous legal safeguards. Within such a structure, the possibility of independent oversight of government decisions, the guarantee of equality before the law, and effective access to fair trial have been severely restricted. For a community such as the Hazaras, which has historically faced persistent structural discrimination, the weakening of the legal system can have particularly severe consequences, as the absence of independent legal institutions significantly reduces the capacity to defend civil rights.

One of the report's most significant findings is the connection between legal changes and the increase in land encroachment in Hazara-populated areas. Examination of numerous cases in Bamyan, Ghazni, Uruzgan, Baghlan, and other areas indicates that a significant proportion of land disputes have emerged in an environment where equal access to justice, transparency in judicial

proceedings, and effective protection of property rights face serious challenges. In many of these cases, local residents have claimed that historical documents, religious and customary deeds, or records of possession were disregarded and that decisions were made to their detriment. In some cases, these developments have also been accompanied by forced displacement, the detention of local influential figures, or changes in land ownership status. Although each case should be assessed on the basis of documentation and independent investigations, the totality of these cases points to a widespread pattern of concern regarding the security of property rights in Hazara-populated areas.

A simultaneous examination of the five chapters of this report makes clear that none of the problems under review can be analyzed in isolation. Insecurity contributes to economic stagnation; economic weakness reduces the community's capacity to preserve its cultural identity; cultural restrictions undermine social participation; weaknesses in the legal system limit citizens' ability to defend their rights; and legal insecurity creates conditions for intensified land disputes and dispossession. Therefore, the current situation of Hazaras should be understood as an interconnected cycle of mutually reinforcing vulnerabilities rather than as a collection of separate crises. The findings of this report also indicate that many of the developments examined do not affect only the current situation of Hazaras but may have long-term consequences for the future of Afghanistan. A country in which a segment of its citizens does not feel secure, equal, or a sense of belonging will face greater difficulties in achieving lasting stability, public trust, and comprehensive development. The experience of many societies has shown that sustainable peace cannot be achieved merely through the end of war; it requires a system in which all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, language, or political affiliation, enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities. Any political or economic development based on the exclusion or marginalization of a segment of society will ultimately face challenges to its legitimacy and sustainability.

This report also demonstrates that documenting the situation of Hazaras is important not only for recording their suffering and human rights violations, but also as part of a broader effort to preserve truth, counter historical forgetting, and lay the groundwork for future accountability. Afghanistan's experience has repeatedly shown that the absence of accurate documentation paves the way for the denial, distortion, or forgetting of human rights violations. Therefore, the systematic documentation of evidence, collection of testimonies, analysis of trends, and preservation of records constitute not only a research responsibility but also an ethical responsibility toward victims and future generations. At the same time, the findings of this report should not be interpreted as disregarding the suffering of other ethnicities, minorities, and social groups in Afghanistan. Many Afghan citizens, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation, have

faced widespread restrictions in the areas of human rights, civil liberties, economic conditions, and security since 2021. Nevertheless, the focus of this research on the Hazara community stems from the report's specialized mandate and the need to examine the situation of a group that, because of its historical experience of discrimination and its ethnic and religious characteristics, faces particular and additional challenges.

In conclusion, improving the situation of Hazaras and other minorities in Afghanistan will not be possible without fundamental transformations in governance, the legal system, the protection of civil rights, equality before the law, the preservation of cultural diversity, the protection of property rights, and the establishment of independent accountability mechanisms. Afghanistan's stable future depends on recognizing the reality that security, justice, and development can be sustainable only when all citizens, without discrimination, enjoy human dignity, equal rights, and opportunities to participate in the country's political, social, and economic affairs. This report is an effort to document part of the realities of Afghanistan that, if given due attention, can help create the basis for more serious dialogue on justice, human rights, accountability, and peaceful coexistence.

Recommendations

A) To the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Office of the Prosecutor

The Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the International Criminal Court is requested to expand its investigation into the situation in Afghanistan, with particular focus on crimes committed against the Hazara community. Targeted killings, forced displacement, and organized land grabbing as documented in Uruzgan, Daykundi, Ghazni, Bamyan, and other areas, constitute, where the applicable legal elements are established, serious violations potentially falling within Article 7 of the Rome Statute (Crimes Against Humanity), including “forcible transfer of population” and the systematic persecution of minorities.

Given the overlap between physical repression, policies of cultural erasure, the removal of Ja’fari jurisprudence from educational institutions, and the imposition of severe religious restrictions, the Court should conduct a thorough assessment of whether the required specific intent (*dolus specialis*) to destroy the ethnic or religious group, in whole or in part, exists, as contemplated under Article 6 of the Rome Statute.

B) To the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and Special Rapporteurs

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief are requested, in their future reports, to document and condemn the compulsory imposition of Hanafi jurisprudence, the suppression of Muharram ceremonies, censorship of historical books, prohibition of indigenous religious practices, and the compounded restrictions faced by Hazara women as clear violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and as manifestations of “cultural cleansing.”

C) To the International Community, Donor Countries, and Humanitarian Organizations

Any normalization of diplomatic relations, allocation of international seats at the United Nations, and provision of development assistance (as opposed to humanitarian assistance) should be directly conditioned on the immediate repeal of discriminatory decrees, the cessation of land seizures, the restoration of religious freedoms for minorities, and the guarantee of equal access to fair judicial proceedings for all citizens.

Targeted sanctions, including travel and financial sanctions, should be imposed and strengthened against those Taliban leaders, judges, and local commanders who are directly involved in issuing or implementing orders for forced displacement, property confiscation, and religious and cultural repression.

International organizations, including the World Food Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), should establish stringent monitoring mechanisms to prevent local Taliban authorities from extorting humanitarian assistance under the pretexts of ushr, zakat, or taxation, and to ensure that such assistance reaches the most vulnerable communities fairly and without ethnic discrimination.

D) To Neighboring Countries and Host Countries for Refugees

In light of this report's documentation of threats to life, economic deprivation, dispossession, and legislative discrimination against Hazaras, all refugee-hosting countries, particularly Iran, Pakistan, and European countries, are urged to immediately halt the forced expulsion and deportation of Hazara asylum seekers.

Migration and asylum authorities should recognize Hazaras as a "group facing heightened and systematic risk" due to the intersection of their ethnic and religious identities, and should facilitate the processing of their cases and the granting of asylum in accordance with the principles of the 1951 Geneva Convention and international protection.

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