



## COI QUERY

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Afghanistan</b>
<b>Main subject</b>	<b>The general security situation after the Taliban's takeover</b>
<b>Question(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <a href="#">What does the general security situation look like in terms of conflict related violence?</a></li><li>2. <a href="#">Are there reports of civilian casualties?</a></li><li>3. <a href="#">Are there reports on displacements and returns?</a></li></ol>
<b>Date of completion</b>	15 November 2021
<b>Query Code</b>	<b>Q54</b>
<b>Contributing EU+ COI units</b>	BE, SE

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### Disclaimer

This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#) and [EASO Writing and Referencing Guide](#).

The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EASO and makes no political statement whatsoever.

The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on 15 November 2021 and covers events taking place from 15 August 2021 until the date of finalisation. Any event taking place before or after the reference period is not included in this answer.

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# COI QUERY RESPONSE – The general security situation after the Taliban’s take-over

## Introduction: current research limitations

### Analysing preliminary findings

The purpose of this query response is to provide information relevant for international protection status determination and contains information on developments in Afghanistan after the Taliban’s take-over on 15 August 2021 until 15 November 2021. EASO have published two additional and related query responses covering [the governance and state administration under the Taliban](#) and [the prevailing justice system and implementation of Sharia law under the Taliban](#).

The political situation and conflict dynamics radically changed in Afghanistan when the former government collapsed in mid-August 2021, the Taliban took control of the country and reinstated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), and the US withdrew their forces. Questions of great interest at the moment are related to the type of state and rule that may be established under the Taliban, and how it will impact the everyday life of the Afghan people. Such forward looking questions are impossible to answer with certainty at this stage, mainly due to a great information gap on the situation in the country and on the Taliban’s intentions, but also due to the transitional and highly volatile period that Afghanistan undergoes at the time of writing. During an EASO organised seminar focusing on Afghanistan taking place on 23 November 2021 three expert speakers, independent of each other and with different fields of interest, stressed that it is too early to draw any conclusions about the situation in Afghanistan or how it might unfold in the future.<sup>1</sup>

Against the background of prevailing research limitations, this query demonstrates security incidents and trends known to EASO, and should not be viewed as an exhaustive description of the current situation. Further, this query response focuses on recent developments, but does not contain future scenarios or predictions on how the situation may unfold.

### Media presence

During the drafting period, journalism was facing major challenges in Afghanistan. Consequently, the possibilities to cover the situation from abroad reduced significantly. One of the main monitoring challenges was the fact that a great number of international and local journalists evacuated or fled the country.<sup>2</sup> A number of international media outlets withdrew their correspondents during the evacuation efforts in the last weeks of August 2021, and relied on monitoring the situation from abroad. However, there were international correspondents that stayed in the country, returned or took up duties in Afghanistan after the evacuations<sup>3</sup>, but in some cases it remained unclear whether

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<sup>1</sup> Bette Dam, 23 November 2021; Kristian Berg Harpviken, PRIO, 23 November 2021, Roxanna Shapour, AAN, 23 November 2021

<sup>2</sup> RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>3</sup> See for instance: CNN, CNN correspondent Clarissa Ward boards flight out of Afghanistan, 20 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, Clarissa Ward returns to Kabul just a month after Taliban takeover, 28 September 2021, [url](#); Sune

international media had reporters on the ground or relied on freelancers.<sup>4</sup>

The local media landscape was severely affected by the Taliban's take-over, both by restrictions on media freedom and financial problems.<sup>5</sup> A significant number of media outlets stopped operating after the take-over.<sup>6</sup> In mid-September the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) estimated that at least 153 media organisations had ceased operations<sup>7</sup> and that about 1 300 local journalists remained in Afghanistan, primarily in Kabul.<sup>8</sup> The availability of sources on the ground and relevant open source material was impacted by local journalists fleeing or going into hiding<sup>9</sup>, as well as financial drawbacks that left many without an income, forcing journalists to search for other employments.<sup>10</sup> Especially reporting on events taking place in other areas than Kabul was sparse.<sup>11</sup>

## Source assessment

As the possibilities to cover the situation reduced<sup>12</sup>, reporting on Taliban interactions with the Afghan population was limited, and in many cases tended to be 'anecdotal'.<sup>13</sup> Fake news circulated<sup>14</sup> and social media was frequently used as a source by many reporters. Twitter was, for instance, frequently used as a source to report on Taliban policy<sup>15</sup> which made it difficult to assess whether the statements were official, verify the source, and identify nuances in stated policy changes. In some cases, dubious information was even republished by major newspapers.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, some fake social media accounts similar to established media spread false information<sup>17</sup> as well as fake social media accounts attributed to some former and incumbent government officials.<sup>18</sup> A related issue was journalists reporting from abroad who shared information on claimed atrocities and violations by the Taliban on social media.<sup>19</sup> The possibilities to verify circulating information and track the

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Engel Rasmussen, [Twitter], posted on: 15 September 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Kabul airport chaos: How the Washington Post team escaped Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, 20 August 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Q&A: Ask The Post's Susannah George about reporting on the Taliban, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> Ariana News, Crippling economy closing Afghan media outlets, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> France24, Afghanistan's media enters the unknown under Taliban rule, 24 August 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Media Activity Faces Sharp Decline: Report, 3 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Journalists Call for Access to Official Information, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> IFJ, Afghanistan: Attacks to the media escalate as Taliban control takes hold, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Guardian (The), Taliban's return 'catastrophe' for journalism in Afghanistan, 14 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> IFJ, Afghanistan: "Every minute I fear they will try to find and kill me", 30 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> Khaama Press, Degeneration of journalism, Afghan journalist making bricks to feed family, 01 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/FL/Gandhara, As Afghan Media Struggles Under Taliban, Jobless Journalists Grow Desperate, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule Begins in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule Begins in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> Deadline, Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem – Special Report, 20 September 2021, [url](#); France24, Fake photo of new Afghan central bank chief goes viral, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>15</sup> See for example: BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban deputy denies reports of leaderships row in new video, 15 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), At Afghan Universities, Increasing Fear That Women Will Never Be Allowed Back, 27 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> New York Times (The), At Afghan Universities, Increasing Fear That Women Will Never Be Allowed Back, 27 September 2021, [url](#); NPR, Kabul University chancellor says female students will be allowed, but segregated, 2 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> Deadline, Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem – Special Report, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> Pajhwok News, Tens of fake social media pages attributed to high profile figures, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> See for example: Bilal Sarwary, [Twitter], posted on: 25 October 2021, [url](#)

original or primary sources were limited.

It should also be taken into account that much of the reporting on Afghanistan during the drafting period came from Western media outlets, US media in particular, and from reporters mainly working from outside Afghanistan. Furthermore, there was a concentration of reports on events in Kabul. In an article by International Journalists' Network (IJNET), some journalists working in Afghanistan or in the region pointed out that this medial reporting situation left room for errors and misrepresentation, and also noted problematic narratives and language resonating in many reports taking the form of sensationalising content stemming from biases and a lack of cultural and contextual understanding.<sup>20</sup> In this query response, cross checking has been conducted in line with EASO's COI Methodology, checking information in Western media with local sources as far as possible. However, assessing the reliability of local media reports also became increasingly complex. Still operating media outlets and journalists reportedly adjusted to the new conditions under Taliban rule.<sup>21</sup> For instance, this could be noticed in a general decrease of potentially provocative content, as well as increased content praising the Taliban.<sup>22</sup> A tendency to self-censorship could also be noted.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the Taliban issued 11 guidelines for journalists which included rules against topics in conflict with Islam or 'insulting national personalities'. Journalists were also instructed to produce reports in coordination with the interim-government's media office.<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch described these rules as 'suffocating media freedom' and criticised them for being so broad and vague that they in practice prohibited any critical reporting about the Taliban.<sup>25</sup>

### Decrease in relevant reporting

There were a number of sources that stopped publishing or updating material that previously has been important to COI production on Afghanistan. For example, the following sources or products stopped publishing public material during the reference period:

- Afghanistan's National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA)<sup>26</sup>
- Reports on protection of civilians in armed conflict by UNAMA<sup>27</sup>
- Long War Journal mapping Taliban control in Afghanistan<sup>28</sup>
- The New York Times' Afghan War Casualty Report<sup>29</sup>
- Voice of Jihad (Taliban official website)<sup>30</sup>
- RiV Monitoring<sup>31</sup>
- Reportedly (resumed in early November 2021)<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> IJNET, Report responsibly on Afghanistan with this advice, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> BBC, Afghanistan crisis: 'Hey world, do you care what happens here?', 22 August 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fewer women, No Entertainment: Kabul's Media Scene Transforms After Taliban Takeover, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> New York Times (The), 'Everything Changed Overnight': Afghan Reporters Face an Intolerant Regime, 11 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> New York Times (The), New Taliban Guidelines Stir Fear About the Future of Press Freedom, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> Afghanistan. National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), [official website inaccessible]

<sup>27</sup> UNAMA, Reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2021, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> FDD's LWJ, Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> New York Times (The), The Afghan War Casualty Report, 5 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> Voice of Jihad, [official website inaccessible]

<sup>31</sup> RiV Monitoring, [homepage], last updated: 12 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> Reportedly, [homepage], n.d., [url](#)

- United States Department of Defense’s (USDOD) Reports on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan<sup>33</sup>

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is also a source frequently used in previous EASO COI products. ACLED continues their coding of events, but experiences increased difficulties in sourcing events.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, there were no active monitoring bodies reporting from Afghanistan, which limited the possibilities to monitor human rights violations or other misconduct. On 18 September 2021 the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) issued a statement in which it said that it could not carry out its function as all offices had been ‘occupied’ by Taliban forces. Furthermore, AIHRC stated that they were hindered in carrying out their duties as they had little confidence in the Taliban government respecting the mandate of AIHRC or female staff members.<sup>35</sup>

The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) did not publish public reports during the drafting period.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> USDOD, Publications, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>34</sup> ACLED, ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions around the Conflict in Afghanistan, September 2021, [url](#), pp. 12–13

<sup>35</sup> AIHRC, Statement on the status of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>36</sup> OHCHR, Human Rights Reports OHCHR/UNAMA, n.d., [url](#); UNAMA, Reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, n.d., [url](#)

## 1. Security trends after the Taliban's take-over

As the Taliban took power and established territorial control of more or less all parts of the country, Afghanistan saw a significant decrease in conflict-related violence such as airstrikes, armed clashes and incidents caused by improvised explosive devices (IEDs).<sup>37</sup> Armed resistance took place, most notably in Panjshir (and in bordering or close districts in the neighbouring provinces Baghlan and Parwan<sup>38</sup>) in the end of August and early September. The Taliban claimed to have defeated the so-called National Resistance Front (NRF) in a couple of weeks' time, although NRF denied this and claimed that they were still present in Panjshir.<sup>39</sup> However, in most parts of Afghanistan's countryside the local population reportedly had seen a new situation with a considerable decrease in conflict related violence.<sup>40</sup> There were also certain reports mentioning that travel by road and moving around had generally become safer in certain areas.<sup>41</sup> According to a WSJ article, travelling from Kandahar city to Helmand's capital Lashkar Gah was previously considered too dangerous whilst being reportedly 'clogged with traffic' in September 2021. Farmers in Mizan district in Zabul told Wall Street Journal (WSJ) that they could water their fields at night with a flashlight without risking to be shot, and in the provincial capital Qalat young men said that they had started with overnight picnics in the desert.<sup>42</sup> Pajhwok News reported that the second week of September could be 'marked as the second week in the past decade in which no civilian was killed or injured or no conflict related incidents happened', although other security related incidents occurred such as beheadings, explosions and killings.<sup>43</sup> On 23 October, Pajhwok News once again reported on record low levels of casualties, counting six deaths and three wounded in the past week in contrast to 56 killed and 90 injured the week before (most caused by an attack on a Shia mosque in Kandahar).<sup>44</sup>

Looking at ACLED data for the period 16 August 2021 – 15 November 2021 some regional differences could be seen, although it should be noted that ACLED face some reporting issues as mentioned in the introduction. Recorded violent events were most frequent in Nangarhar and Kabul, followed by Baghlan and Panjshir.<sup>45</sup> UNOCHA reported on security incidents being concentrated in eastern and southern provinces as well as Kabul city. A relatively calm situation was reported in northern and western provinces, with the exception of a major attack against a Shia mosque in Kunduz.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the general decrease in violence following the Taliban takeover,<sup>47</sup> Afghanistan reportedly witnessed a number of attacks claimed or attributed to the Islamic State of the Khorasan Province

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<sup>37</sup> UN General Assembly, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 2 September 2021, [url](#), p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian update, 29 August 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan, Weekly Humanitarian Update, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>39</sup> VOA, Anti-Taliban Group Registers with US to Try to Build Afghan Resistance, 1 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>40</sup> New York Times (The), This is Life in Rural Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover, 15 September 2021, [url](#); Los Angeles Times, In Afghanistan's war-torn countryside, America's exist means one thing: Peace, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>41</sup> Guardian (The), 'The challenge for us now is drought, not war': livelihoods of millions of Afghans at risk, 21 September 2021, [url](#); WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>42</sup> WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>43</sup> Pajhwok News, Afghan conflict ends but economic problems surging, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> Pajhwok News, last week, casualties in Afghanistan fall to record low, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> EASO analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Afghanistan, 15 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>46</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 29 August 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 12 September 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 19 September 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 14 November 2021, [url](#); AP, Roadside bombing targets Taliban, kills Afghan civilians, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

(ISKP)<sup>48</sup> and the violence levels in Nangarhar saw an increase with almost daily incidents.<sup>49</sup> However, experts disagreed about ISKP's strength in Afghanistan, as well as the Taliban's ability to contain them.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, it should be noted that, as before the Taliban's take-over, verifying groups and motives behind different attacks was immensely difficult as there was a tendency of ISKP to claim responsibility for attacks it had not carried out, and also being attributed attacks for which it did not claim responsibility.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, conflict expert Weeda Mehran suggested to Foreign Policy that ISKP was a 'convenient scapegoat' for attacks 'possibly committed' in the Taliban's internal power struggles.<sup>52</sup> There were also reports of several killings in Nangarhar where bodies were found with handwritten notes in their pockets accusing them of being ISKP fighters<sup>53</sup>, and some feared that accusations of ISKP affiliation made room for the Taliban to target any suspects.<sup>54</sup>

From available media coverage, ISKP used 'the same hit-and-run tactics' until recently practiced by the Taliban against the previous Afghan government, including roadside explosions and targeted killings.<sup>55</sup> As mentioned, numerous attacks took place in Nangarhar province,<sup>56</sup> defined as a 'stronghold' of ISKP,<sup>57</sup> and its capital, Jalalabad.<sup>58</sup> On several instances, ISKP targeted the Shiite (Hazara) community.<sup>59</sup> Researcher Antonio Giustozzi told Reuters in early November 2021 that ISKP 'had been carrying out a campaign of targeted killings since around the summer of 2020 and had continued since the Taliban victory in August 2021 on a "roughly comparable scale."'<sup>60</sup>

ISKP was reported to have no territorial control in Afghanistan<sup>61</sup>, and no such probability was forecasted for the imminent future.<sup>62</sup> ISKP's ability to conduct assaults against the IEA, however, reportedly raised some doubts over the Taliban's ability to contain the group<sup>63</sup> and maintain security and stability.<sup>64</sup> In October 2021, the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) noted that the presence of ISKP was 'potentially increasing the risk of civil war.'<sup>65</sup> However, this was a disputed topic, and other sources believed that the Taliban were capable of handling ISKP<sup>66</sup> or stressed that

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<sup>48</sup> AP, Bomb at Kabul mosque kills 5 civilians, Taliban say, 3 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>49</sup> Washington Post (The), Taliban sends 1,300 fighters to eastern Afghanistan to battle Islamic State, 22 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>50</sup> AP, Islamic State attacks test Taliban's control in Afghanistan, October 13, 2021, available at: [url](#); Guardian (The), US to give humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, Taliban say, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> ORF, ISKP: The exaggerated threat, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>52</sup> FP, Taliban Splintered by Internal Divisions, External Spoilers, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> Washington Post (The), Taliban sends 1,300 fighters to eastern Afghanistan to battle Islamic State, 22 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>57</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> AP, Bomb at Kabul mosque kills 5 civilians, Taliban say, 3 October 2021, [url](#); AP, Taliban arrest 4 Islamic State militants north of Kabul, 6 October 2021, [url](#); BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> AP, Suicide attack on Shiite mosque in Afghanistan kills 47, 15 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Funerals Held for Victims of Kandahar Mosque Bombing Claimed by IS-K, 16 October 2021, [url](#); UN Security Council Report, November 2021 Monthly Forecast, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>60</sup> Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> BBC, The Taliban's secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> AP, EXPLAINER: Can the Taliban suppress the potent IS threat?, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>64</sup> AP, Roadside bombing targets Taliban, kills Afghan civilians, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>66</sup> AP, Islamic State attacks test Taliban's control in Afghanistan, October 13, 2021, available at: [url](#); Guardian (The), US to give humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, Taliban say, 11 October 2021, [url](#)



the threat was exaggerated.<sup>67</sup> Sources reported that the aim of ISKP was to ‘sow sectarian divisions’<sup>68</sup> and to discredit the Taliban’s guarantee for security in the country.<sup>69</sup> As stated by Jacob Zenn, a senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, this would give ISKP ‘chances to rule in areas where the Taliban is diminished.’<sup>70</sup>

As of November 2021, Antonio Giustozzi estimated the number of ISKP militants in Afghanistan at around 4 000<sup>71</sup>, although Abdul Sayed, senior analyst with ExTrac, found it difficult to say whether they were all active.<sup>72</sup> As noted by BBC, there were fears that ISKP could recruit Afghanistan-based foreign fighters from Central Asia and Pakistan, as well as ‘disillusioned Taliban members’ in case ‘rival factions’ would ‘develop within the group in the future.’<sup>73</sup> According to reporting of Associated Press (AP), ISKP was ‘reaching out to tribes and other groups to recruit from their ranks while stamping out dissent among moderate Salafis.’<sup>74</sup> Referring to Taliban leaders, former security officers and residents of Afghanistan, WSJ reported that ‘a relatively small but growing’ number of former members of Afghanistan’s intelligence service and elite military units were joining ISKP to resist the Taliban.<sup>75</sup>

Following attacks in Nangarhar province on 18 and 19 September 2021, the Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that ISKP had no ‘genuine presence’ in Afghanistan, stating, as quoted by Reuters, that ‘some people who may be our own Afghans have adopted the ISIS mentality, which is a phenomenon that the people do not support.’<sup>76</sup> By mid-October 2021, IEA’s new acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, was cited stating that ISKP benefitted from the non-recognition of the new government in Afghanistan, while dismissing concerns that the group posed a threat.<sup>77</sup> At the end of October 2021, the head of the Taliban intelligence services in Jalalabad, as reported by BBC, similarly denied the influence of ISKP in Afghanistan and called ISKP militants ‘a group of traitors who have rebelled against our Islamic government.’<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, in the beginning of November 2021, as reported by Bakhtar News Agency, the Taliban’s deputy spokesman, stated that ISKP had no ‘fixed position in Afghanistan’ and no ‘capacity to recruit.’<sup>79</sup>

In the period between 18 September and 10 November 2021, IEA officials and affiliated media reported on IEA raids against ISKP, arrests of ISKP members, and prevention of attacks. Thus, on 23 September 2021, IEA security officials reportedly killed three ISKP members in Akhundzada area of Jalalabad city.<sup>80</sup> On 4 October 2021, hours after the ISKP attack on a mosque in Kabul city, the Taliban reported that its forces raided an ISKP ‘operations center’ in Khair Khana neighbourhood, killing ‘several insurgents.’<sup>81</sup> On 6 October 2021, IEA forces reportedly arrested four ISKP members in

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<sup>67</sup> ORF, ISKP: The exaggerated threat, 29 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>68</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> AP, EXPLAINER: Can the Taliban suppress the potent IS threat?, 12 October 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#); EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>70</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Intensifying Violence Between Taliban, IS-K Heralds New War In Afghanistan, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> Reuters, Islamic State violence dents Taliban claims of safer Afghanistan, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> National News (The), Taliban play down ISIS-K threat despite spate of attacks, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> BBC, The Taliban’s secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>74</sup> AP, EXPLAINER: Can the Taliban suppress the potent IS threat?, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>75</sup> WSJ, Left Behind After U.S. Withdrawal, Some Former Afghan Spies and Soldiers Turn to Islamic State, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>76</sup> Reuters, Taliban say no al Qaeda or ISIS in Afghanistan, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> Ariana News, Muttaqi says non-recognition of IEA govt is benefitting Daesh, 17 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>78</sup> BBC, The Taliban’s secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> Bakhtar News, Islamic Emirate Denied Reports that ISIS has Recruited Former Troops, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> Bakhtar News, Three Members of ISKP Killed in East Afghanistan, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>81</sup> AP, Taliban raid suspected IS hideout after bombing in capital, 4 October 2021, [url](#)



Pashae area of Paghman district of Kabul city,<sup>82</sup> seizing also documents and weapons.<sup>83</sup> On 10 October 2021, security forces reportedly arrested 14 ISKP members, who confessed their engagement in planning suicide attacks and explosions in Khost province.<sup>84</sup> The next day, five suspected ISKP members were arrested in Ahmadabad District in Paktia province.<sup>85</sup> On 17 October 2021, magnetic explosives placed on a passenger car were defused in Ghezel Kotal village of Kalafgan district of Takhar province.<sup>86</sup> On 6 November 2021, 25 ISKP members reportedly surrendered to IEA in Nangarhar ‘through the mediation of tribal elders,’ receiving amnesty by the order of Mullah Akhundzada; in total, 250 ISKP members were reported to have surrendered ‘in over the past two months’ and were reportedly pardoned.<sup>87</sup> In a press briefing in Kabul on 10 November 2021, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid stated that IEA security forces destroyed 21 bases of ISKP in different locations including the provinces of Kabul, Nangarhar, and Herat, capturing about 600 ISKP fighters in the past three months.<sup>88</sup>

On 29 October 2021, BBC reported that bodies of people who were shot, hanged, or beheaded were found ‘every few days’ in Jalalabad, with many having notes in their pockets claiming their ISKP affiliation. While no group claimed responsibility for these killings, the Taliban was reported to have been ‘widely assumed to be responsible.’<sup>89</sup>

Regarding al-Qaeda’s presence in Afghanistan, US Defence Secretary Lloyed Austin stated that the group ‘may attempt to regenerate’ in the country.<sup>90</sup> In June 2021, the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team estimated the human capacity of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan as ranging ‘from several dozen to 500 people.’<sup>91</sup> While during the negotiations of the peace agreement with the U.S. the Taliban stated it would not allow al-Qaeda or any other extremist group into areas under its control and renewed this statement after the takeover of 15 August 2021, it was reported that the Taliban received ‘congratulatory messages from al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates.’<sup>92</sup> Following the Taliban takeover, sources referred to reported relations between al-Qaeda and the Haqqani network,<sup>93</sup> whose leader, Sirajuddin Haqqani, became interior minister in the IEA government.<sup>94</sup> In September 2021, Zabihullah Mujahid rejected accusations that al-Qaeda maintained presence in Afghanistan.<sup>95</sup>

There were some reports on criminal activities during the reference period of this query response, however most reports covered the situation in Kabul.<sup>96</sup> Before the Taliban’s take-over Kabul was rife with crime<sup>97</sup>; according to Al Jazeera robberies and kidnappings occurred on nearly a daily basis.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Bakhtar News, Four ISIS Members Arrested in Paghman, Kabul, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> AP, Taliban arrest 4 Islamic State militants north of Kabul, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>84</sup> Bakhtar News, ISIS Plan to Carry Out Terrorist Attacks in Khost Failed, 10 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>85</sup> Bakhtar News, Five ISIS Members Arrested in Paktia, 12 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>86</sup> Bakhtar News, Tragic event prevented in Takhar, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> TOLONews, 25 Daesh Members Surrender To Islamic Emirate, 6 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> Xinhua, Afghan administration downplays IS threat, arrests 600 militants, 10 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>89</sup> BBC, The Taliban’s secretive war against IS, 29 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>90</sup> AP, Pentagon chief: al-Qaida may seek comeback in Afghanistan, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>91</sup> UN Security Council, Twelfth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2557 (2020) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan, S/2021/486, 1 June 2021, [url](#), para 45

<sup>92</sup> BBC, Afghanistan: the pledge binding al-Qaeda to the Taliban, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

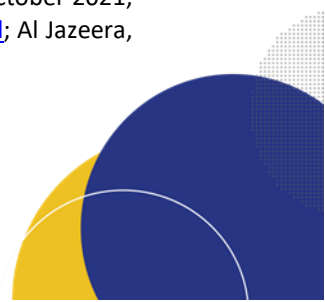
<sup>93</sup> EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 2; BBC, Afghanistan: the pledge binding al-Qaeda to the Taliban, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> EPRS, Security situation in Afghanistan, Implications for Europe, October 2021, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>95</sup> Reuters, Taliban say no al Qaeda or ISIS in Afghanistan, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>96</sup> See for example: Hasht-e Subh Daily, Kabul Residents Tired of Increasing Armed Robberies, 21 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Armed Robbers Posing as Islamic Emirate Members Arrested, 18 October 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Taliban: From Afghanistan’s rugged mountains to policing streets, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>97</sup> Guardian (The), Taliban patrols return to the streets of Kabul – in pictures, 6 October 2021, [url](#)



The Taliban reportedly quickly established security forces in the capital with Taliban fighters patrolling the streets to maintain security.<sup>99</sup> Some sources referred to residents that stated that the crime rates had reduced significantly in Kabul since the Taliban took power.<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, residents of Kabul have reportedly also seen an emergence of robberies conducted by persons in the name of the Taliban<sup>101</sup>, and there were also reports on the Taliban arresting individuals on charges of ‘misusing the name of the Islamic emirate and perpetrating crime against the people’.<sup>102</sup>

As mentioned, there were few reports on crime rates outside Kabul. In September 2021, UNOCHA reported on an increase in criminal activities in western provinces and southern provinces, mainly in Uruzgan, Helmand and Kandahar, as well as in the northern province Kunduz.<sup>103</sup>

## 2. Incidents of violence with civilian casualties

As mentioned the Taliban announced the seizure of Panjshir on 6 September 2021,<sup>104</sup> although the leader of the resistance forces in Panjshir, Ahmed Massoud, claimed the fighting was still ongoing.<sup>105</sup> During the weeks of fighting in Panjshir and after that, social media sources were reporting on human rights violations committed by the Taliban against captured resistance fighters and civilians; however, as noted by Patricia Grossman, associate director for Human Rights Watch, ‘a credible investigation’ was needed to verify them.<sup>106</sup> As reported by BBC on 13 September 2021, at least 20 civilians were killed in Panjshir valley, among whom a shopkeeper, who was reportedly tortured and killed after being accused by the Taliban of ‘selling sim cards to resistance fighters.’<sup>107</sup>

On 26 August 2021, ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack on Hamid Karzai International Airport admits the ongoing evacuation efforts, in which two suicide bombers attacked the airport’s Abbey Gate and gunmen opened fire on civilians and military personnel,<sup>108</sup> killing at least 169 Afghans and 13 US troops. On 29 August 2021, a US drone strike killed ten civilians of the same family, including seven children,<sup>109</sup> after mistaking a civilian NGO worker carrying canisters of water in his trunk for a terrorist with explosives.<sup>110</sup>

On 18 September 2021, at least three people were reported to have been killed and about 20 others wounded in a series of five blasts in Nangarhar province. It was reported that Taliban members were among the casualties and that the target of the roadside bombs were Taliban vehicles.<sup>111</sup> The next day, a roadside bomb reportedly targeted a Taliban border police vehicle in Jalalabad, killing at least

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<sup>98</sup> Al Jazeera, Taliban: From Afghanistan’s rugged mountains to policing streets, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>99</sup> Guardian (The), Taliban patrols return to the streets of Kabul – in pictures, 6 October 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Taliban: From Afghanistan’s rugged mountains to policing streets, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>100</sup> WSJ, Taliban Commander Who Launched Bombings in Kabul Is Now a Police Chief in Charge of Security, 20 October 2021, [url](#); Ariana News, Four suspected kidnappers captured in Kabul, hostages freed, 2 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>101</sup> Hasht-e Subh Daily, Kabul Residents Tired of Increasing Armed Robberies, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>102</sup> TOLONews, Armed Robbers Posing as Islamic Emirate Members Arrested, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>103</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 12 September 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 19 September 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 26 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>104</sup> AP, Taliban say they took Panjshir, last holdout Taliban province, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>105</sup> Al Jazeera, Panjshir, the last pocket of resistance, falls to Taliban, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>106</sup> New York Times (The), In Panjshir, Few Signs of an Active Resistance, or Any Fight at All, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

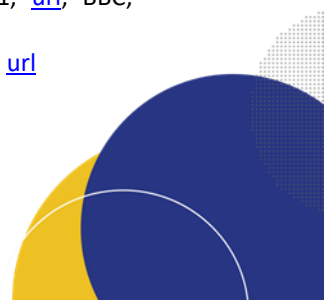
<sup>107</sup> BBC, Afghanistan crisis: Taliban kill civilians in resistance stronghold, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>108</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, At Least 72 Afghans, 13 U.S. Troops Killed in Kabul Airport Attacks, 26 August 2021, updated 27 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>109</sup> AP, Afghan killed by drone praised by co-workers in US aid group, 15 September 2021, [url](#); BBC, Afghanistan: US admits Kabul drone strike killed civilians, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>110</sup> New York Times (The), In US Drone Strike, Evidence Suggests No ISIS Bomb, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>111</sup> Reuters, Three killed in blasts in Afghan city of Jalalabad, sources say, 18 September 2021, [url](#)



five people, including a child.<sup>112</sup> ISKP claimed responsibility for the roadside bomb attacks targeting the Taliban on both days through the ISKP-affiliated Amaq News Agency, which announced that at least 35 Taliban militants were killed or injured.<sup>113</sup> On 18 September 2021, two people were reported to have been wounded after a magnetic bomb targeted a vehicle in Dasht-e Barchi area of Kabul city,<sup>114</sup> which is a predominantly Shia Hazara populated area.<sup>115</sup> On 22 September 2021, a Taliban fighter and a civilian were wounded in a roadside bomb explosion in Jalalabad.<sup>116</sup> On 25 September 2021, local officials reported that at least one person was killed and seven others, including four civilians, wounded after a roadside bomb was detonated to target a Taliban convoy in Jalalabad.<sup>117</sup>

On 3 October 2021, at least five civilians were killed in an ‘apparent roadside bomb’ explosion outside Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul during a memorial service for the mother of Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. No immediate claim of responsibility was made but three suspects were reported to have been arrested as suspicion fell on ISKP.<sup>118</sup> On 14 October 2021, an explosion of a roadside bomb targeting the IEA police chief for the Shigal district of Asadabad, the capital of Kunar province, killed the police chief, wounding four IEA fighters<sup>119</sup> and seven civilians, including a schoolboy.<sup>120</sup> On 23 October 2021, at least two civilians, one of whom a child, were killed and four other civilians wounded<sup>121</sup> after twin roadside bombs targeted a Taliban vehicle in Jalalabad.<sup>122</sup> On 3 November 2021, two Taliban security force members were killed and three others, as well as a civilian identified as a school teacher, wounded when a roadside bomb targeted a Taliban pickup truck in Police District 8 in Jalalabad.<sup>123</sup>

On 22 September 2021, as reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), gunmen in a rickshaw opened fire on a Taliban vehicle in Jalalabad, killing two Taliban members and at least one civilian; according to the Taliban, all killed people were civilians.<sup>124</sup> On 5 October 2021, at least two Taliban members were reportedly killed and three civilians wounded, after unidentified gunmen ‘opened a fire on a Taliban patrol at a vegetable market in Jalalabad.’<sup>125</sup> On 6 October 2021, two Taliban members were killed and at least three civilians wounded when unidentified gunmen attacked two Taliban members, who, as reported by eyewitnesses, were collecting taxes from vendors in Hada area of Laghman province.<sup>126</sup> On 8 November 2021, one person was reported to have been killed and three others wounded after ‘a group of bandits’ attacked ‘a convoy of passengers’ on the Ghor-Kabul highway in Kotal Bekk village, Yakaolang district of Bamyan province.

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<sup>112</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Blast Hits Taliban Vehicle In Eastern Afghanistan, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>113</sup> Reuters, Islamic state claims responsibility for attacks in eastern Afghanistan, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>114</sup> Garda World, Afghanistan: Explosion reported in western Dasht-e Barchi area of Kabul Sept. 18, 18 September, [url](#)

<sup>115</sup> Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Deadly explosion hits mainly Shia suburb of Kabul, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>116</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, At Least Five Killed In Attacks Targeting Taliban In Eastern Afghanistan, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>117</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Bomb Blasts Hit Taliban Convoy In Eastern Afghanistan Killing At Least One, 25 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>118</sup> AP, Bomb at Kabul mosque kills 5 civilians, Taliban say, 3 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>119</sup> Ariana News, District police chief killed in Kunar roadside bombing, 14 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>120</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Police Chief Killed In Bomb Attack In Eastern Afghanistan, 14 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>121</sup> AP, Roadside bombing targets Taliban, kills Afghan civilians, 23 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> Afghanistan Times, Twin Bombs in Jalalabad Kill Two Civilians, 24 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>123</sup> Xinhua, 6 killed in separate explosions in Afghanistan, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>124</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, At Least Five Killed In Attacks Targeting Taliban In Eastern Afghanistan, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>125</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Claims Arrest of Four Islamic State Militants Near Kabul, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>126</sup> Hasht e Subh, Attacks on Taliban Members Continue in Nangarhar and Laghman, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

The driver was reportedly fatally shot while attempting to escape; three passengers were wounded 'after resisting the bandits.'<sup>127</sup>

On 8 October 2021, at least 46 people were reported to have been killed and 143 wounded after an ISKP suicide bomber carried out an attack on the Said Abad (Gozar-e Sayed Abad) Mosque in Kunduz, used by Shia Muslim (Hazara) minority, during Friday noon prayers.<sup>128</sup> ISKP was reported to have stated through its Telegram channels that its suicide bomber 'detonated an explosive vest amid a crowd' and identified the attacker as 'Muhammad al-Uyguri'.<sup>129</sup> As reported by AP, ISKP-affiliated Amaq News Agency stated that 'the attack targeted both Shias and the Taliban for their purported willingness to expel Uyghurs to meet demands from China.'<sup>130</sup> On 15 October 2021, during Friday prayers, suicide bombers attacked the Fatimiya mosque in Kandahar, killing 47 people and wounding at least 70.<sup>131</sup> ISKP reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack via its Telegram channels, stating it was carried out by two suicide bombers at different parts of the mosque, the hallway and the centre. On 16 October 2021, the IEA police chief in Kandahar stated that the Taliban would be responsible for security in the mosque, which was previously guarded by the Shia community.<sup>132</sup>

On 2 November 2021, ISKP militants were reported to have conducted an attack on the Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan hospital, described as a 400-bed military health facility, situated in the 10<sup>th</sup> district of Kabul. Five ISKP attackers and three Taliban guards were reportedly killed at the hospital entrance; at least seven other people, including three women and a child, were also killed in the assault.<sup>133</sup> As reported by Reuters, 'a Taliban security official speaking on condition of anonymity' stated that at least 25 people were killed and 50 wounded, although the casualty toll was still to be confirmed. The Taliban officials identified one of the persons killed in the attack as the head of the Kabul military corps and 'one of the first senior Taliban commanders to enter the abandoned presidential palace' after the takeover of Kabul.<sup>134</sup> ISKP claimed responsibility for the attack on its Amaq News Agency's Telegram channel.<sup>135</sup>

There were also UNOCHA reports on several incidents of civilians being killed or harmed by abandoned IEDs and unexploded ordnances (UXOs), especially in rural areas of Kandahar where at least 56 civilians were injured in the six weeks between 27 September 2021 – 7 November 2021.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Bakhtar News Agency, Deadly Attack of Bandits on Convoy of Passengers on Ghor-Kabul Highway, 9 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>128</sup> AP, IS bomber kills 46 inside Afghan mosque, challenges Taliban, 8 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Scores Killed, Wounded In IS-K Suicide Blast Inside Afghan Shi'ite Mosque, 8 October 2021, [url](#); BBC, Afghanistan: Deadly attack hits Kunduz mosque during Friday prayers, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>129</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Scores Killed, Wounded In IS-K Suicide Blast Inside Afghan Shi'ite Mosque, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>130</sup> AP, IS bomber kills 46 inside Afghan mosque, challenges Taliban, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>131</sup> AP, Suicide attack on Shi'ite mosque in Afghanistan kills 47, 15 October 2021, [url](#)

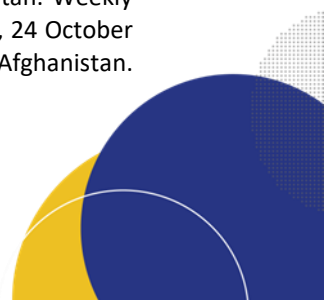
<sup>132</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Funerals Held for Victims of Kandahar Mosque Bombing Claimed by IS-K, 16 October 2021, [url](#)

<sup>133</sup> AP, IS attack on Kabul hospital leaves 7 dead, 16 wounded, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>134</sup> Reuters, Dozens killed and wounded as blasts and gunfire hit Kabul hospital, 3 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>135</sup> RFE/RL/Gandhara, Islamic State Claims Attack On Kabul Hospital That Killed At Least 19, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>136</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 3 October 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 10 October 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 24 October 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 31 October 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly Humanitarian Update, 7 November 2021, [url](#)



### 3. Displacement and return

In 2020, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) was estimated to be 2.9 million.<sup>137</sup> In its 6 November 2021 update, UNHCR estimated that around 681 300 additional Afghans were internally displaced due to the conflict since 1 January 2021. IDPs were registered in 33 Afghan provinces, and 80 % were women and children.<sup>138</sup> According to UNOCHA data on internal displacement in Afghanistan, 13 362 Afghans were internally displaced in the period between 4 August and 18 October 2021. The provinces from where displacement took place comprised Badakhshan (630 IDPs), Baghlan (847 IDPs), Balkh (385 IDPs), Farah (717 IDPs), Ghor (280 IDPs), Kandahar (271 IDPs), Kapisa (490 IDPs), Kunar (98 IDPs), Kunduz (2 660 IDPs), Logar (280 IDPs), Maidan Wardak (217 IDPs), Paktya (896 IDPs), Panjsher (3 494 IDPs), Parwan (653 IDPs), Samangan (280 IDPs), and Takhar (1 165 IDPs). The destination provinces were Farah (717 IDPs), Herat (280 IDPs), Kabul (11 100 IDPs), Kandahar (271 IDPs), Kunar (98 IDPs), and Paktya (896 IDPs).<sup>139</sup>

On 6 November 2021, UNHCR estimated that around 165 000 IDPs had returned to their homes since September 2021, with 36 % having returned to southern and 35 % to eastern regions of the country.<sup>140</sup> According to media and other reports, tens of thousands IDPs reportedly returned to their homes after a stabilising security situation in their home areas, however often facing destroyed properties and financial struggles. Some were also reportedly unable to go to their home areas due to financial problems.<sup>141</sup>

Looking at migration flows from and to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, UNHCR estimated in the end of August 2021 that around 1 435 000 registered Afghan refugees were located in Pakistan and 780 000 in Iran.<sup>142</sup> In November 2021, UNHCR reported on continuous 'movements of largely undocumented Afghans resorting to irregular land border crossing points' with Iran.<sup>143</sup> The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) noted on 10 November 2021 that 4 000 – 5 000 Afghans were leaving Afghanistan for Iran daily via informal border crossings. Referring to Iranian Students' News Agency, NRC noted that 'at least 300 000 Afghans have entered Iran' since the Taliban's take-over.<sup>144</sup>

According to an IOM Afghanistan Situation Report comprising the data until 3 November 2021, around 1 077 600 undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan since 1 January 2021, including around 1 063 400 returnees from Iran and about 14 220 from Pakistan. In the period between 28 October and 3 November 2021, IOM reported on 32 366 undocumented Afghan returnees: 31 609 returnees from Iran and 757 from Pakistan.<sup>145</sup> According to media reports in the beginning of October 2021, around 600 families, who were displaced during clashes between the Taliban and the previous government, were reported to have returned to Badakhshan from Tajikistan, as stated by the governor of Badakhshan.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> UNHCR, Afghanistan. Global Focus, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>138</sup> UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation External Update – 1 November 2021, 6 November 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>139</sup> UNOCHA, Conflict Induced Displacement in 2021, updated 7 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>140</sup> UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation External Update – 1 November 2021, 6 November 2021, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>141</sup> WSJ, Strange Quiet Arrives in Afghanistan After Decades of War, 11 October 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly update, 19 September 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Weekly update, 12 September 2021, [url](#); UNHCR, Key Displacement Figures, 1 September 2021, [url](#)

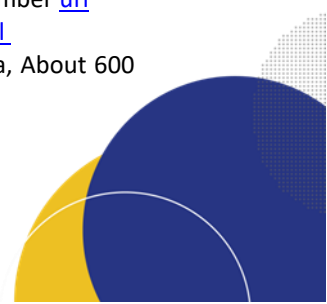
<sup>142</sup> UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Refugee Situations, Afghanistan, accessed 11 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>143</sup> UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation External Update – 1 November 2021, 6 November 2021, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>144</sup> NRC, Humanitarian needs in Iran rise as 300 000 Afghans arrive since Taliban takeover, 10 November [url](#)

<sup>145</sup> IOM, IOM Afghanistan Situation Report, 28 October – 3 November 2021, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>146</sup> Bakhtar News, Hundreds Families Returned Homes in Badakhshan, 4 October 2021, [url](#); Xinhua, About 600 displaced Afghans return home in northern Badakhshan province, 4 October 2021, [url](#)



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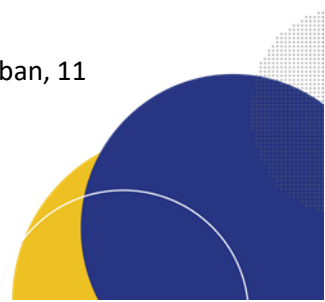
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