



رواداری • RAWADARI

UNLAWFUL & TARGETED KILLINGS IN AFGHANISTAN:

KANDAHAR, NANGARHAR,
PANJSHIR AND SAR-E POL
AUGUST 2021-NOVEMBER 2022

INTRODUCTION:

On 15th August 2021, the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan collapsed after twenty years of war and conflict with Taliban. Taliban took over Afghanistan forcefully & took control of the country's affairs.

Taliban established the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” and initially issued a decree of “general amnesty”. They assured the public that they will give protection to all military and civil employees of the previous government. Although the issuance of this decree initially created some confidence among Afghans, the human rights situation deteriorated drastically very quickly and led to increased fear and despair among civilians.

Taliban declared all laws including the Constitution abolished. The constitution and the Afghan legal framework guaranteed basic rights and freedoms of the citizens. The structures and institutions created on the basis of Constitution collapsed and the legal guarantees of protection of human rights of Afghans were lost. Due to lack of active presence of international community and other national and international institutions, Taliban feel immune from all forms of accountability.

Findings of Rawadari indicate that during the past 15 months, violations of human rights in general and violation of the right to life has particularly increased.

Hundreds of citizens all over Afghanistan particularly in Kandahar, Panjshir, Nangrahar and Sar-e-pol provinces have been killed unlawfully, in targeted attacks and under suspicious circumstances in the period of August 2021-November 2022.

Based on our findings, the number of these incidents in the provinces of Kandahar, Panjshir, Nangrahar and Sar-e-pol are much higher as compared to other provinces, and for this reason the present report examines the unlawful and targeted killing in these provinces in the period of August 2021 to November 2022

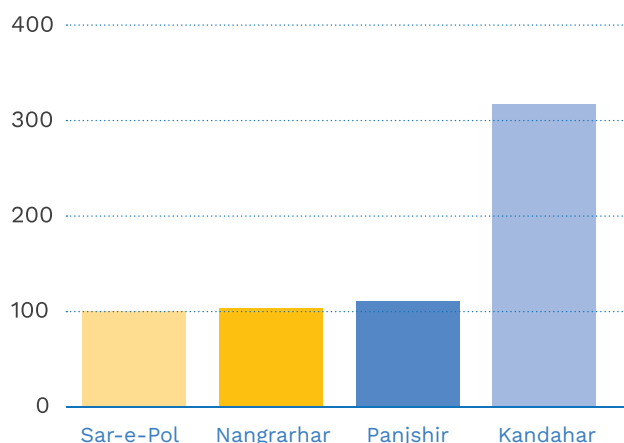
METHODOLOGY:

The findings and information contained in this report were collected through interviews with eyewitnesses, families and relatives of victims, human rights defenders and media activists in Kandahar, Panjshir, Nangrahar and Sar-e-pol provinces and verified with three different sources. For privacy and security reasons, names and details of the interviewees and local sources have been withheld in this report

REPORT DESCRIPTION

Findings of Rawadari indicate that from 15 August 2021 to November 2022, total 634 civilians including former members of security forces, Salafis, members of “National Resistance Front” and other groups have been killed unlawfully by the Taliban forces and unknown persons in Kandahar, Panjshir, Nangrahar and Sar-e-pol provinces. While most incidents in Nangrahar and Kandahar are targeted killings and suspicious murders, majority of the cases from Panjshir and Sar-e-pol are unlawful killings committed by Taliban forces.

Statistics of extra judicial killings, Assassinations and Targeted Killings as per Provinces



TARGETED AND SUSPICIOUS KILLINGS IN KANDAHAR PROVINCE:

Kandahar has always had a great influence over important policy-making in Afghanistan and played a fundamental role. In both periods of Taliban rule, this province has been the main place of residence of the former and current Taliban leaders and has been center of major political decisions. Kandahar has also witnessed targeted acts of terrorism and activities of various groups for a long-term which has caused widespread violations of human rights in the province. There were serious and credible allegations of human rights violations including enforced disappearances prior to the Taliban takeover in Kandahar.

Since the return of Taliban to power, there has been a string of suspicious & targeted killings of former security force members, tribal elders and other civilians.

Since the first day of takeover of Kandahar province by Taliban, Rawadari has monitored the human rights violations in this province and has tried to regularly and continuously investigate and document these violations. Documenting these cases has been challenging due to the environment of fear and severe restrictions imposed by the Taliban on access to information. Therefore, it is possible that the number for targeted killings in Kandahar province are much higher than has been reported here.

The findings of Rawadari indicate that from August 2001 to the end of November 2022, around 320 people including 7 women and 10 children were killed in targeted attacks and other 95 persons including 12 women and 5 children were injured in Kandahar

Among them 23 were members of the security forces of the previous government ((19 police officers and 4 employees of the Kandahar provincial National Security Directorate).

The perpetrators of the majority of these cases are unknown, and the Taliban authorities have not taken satisfactory steps to identify and arrest such perpetrators. This has raised questions and fueled allegations

that Taliban themselves might be involved or support the killings. Additionally, Taliban have not yet shared the results of their steps for prevention of targeted and unlawful killings in Kandahar province with public, while hundreds of civilians have been victims of these killings and the killings have continued.

SUSPICIOUS AND UNLAWFUL KILLINGS IN NANGARHAR PROVINCE:

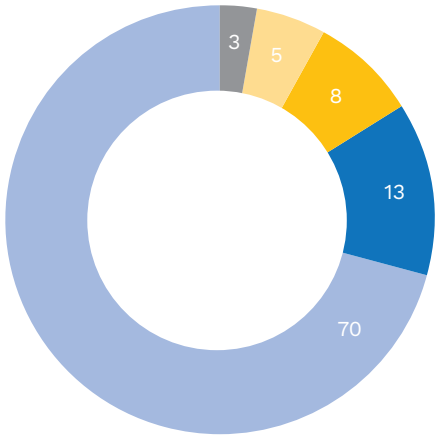
In early days of Taliban's rule, they announced that war has ended in Afghanistan and that there is no more armed conflict in the country. However, after several deadly attacks on their fighters in Nangarhar province for some of which Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed responsibility, Taliban launched a search operation against the members of ISKP in this province. During these operations, Taliban attacked and killed not only those accused of being members of ISKP, but contrary to their commitment to the amnesty announcement, they also killed a number of members of the security forces of the previous Government of Afghanistan. Even though the Taliban did not take responsibility for the majority of these killings, but considering the similarity in method, the letters left with some of dead bodies and lack of interest in investigating these cases and taking into account the vast control of Taliban over this province, there are questions about the involvement or support of the ruling group to some of these killings. In addition to suspected members of ISKP, members of Salafi religious sect were also targeted and killed in Nangarhar. This happened in the context of Taliban's disagreement with the Salafis and a widely held perception among Taliban members that Salafis support the ISKP.

Findings of Rawadari indicate that from 25 August 2021 to the end of November 2022, 101 residents of Nangarhar Province were killed in suspicious circumstances. Among them, 70 people were accused by the Taliban of being affiliated with the ISKP, 13 people including 2 women were killed for unknown reasons. Others who were killed included 5 religious scholars, 8 employees of the previous Government of Afghanistan, 3 civil society activists and a journalist.

Among the 70 individuals who were killed due to their alleged affiliation with the ISKP, bodies of 31 of them were left with letters. The letters stated that these people were punished for their actions and for the “crime” of having a relationship with the ISKP.

Regarding 7 remaining victims, the local Taliban or close relatives of victims have confirmed that they were arrested by Taliban on the charge of association with ISKP and later killed.

Change title to Victims of Suspicious and Unlawful Killings in Nangarhar Province.



- In Association with Khawarij (ISIS)
- Employees of Previous Government
- Civil Activists
- Civilians with Unknown Reason
- Religious Scholars
- Journalists

Some examples of unlawful and targeted killings in Nangarhar

- On 11th October 2021, Taliban killed a woman in Chaparhar District of Nangrahar province for “spying for previous government”. This woman’s husband was a member of the former Afghan National Army and was earlier killed in battle with the Taliban.
- 9th October 2021 was a deadly day for Nangarhar province. On this day bodies of 10 people were found in the vicinity of Jalalabad city all of whom were

beheaded. Letters found with these bodies stated that they were killed due to their association with ISKP.

- On 12th October and 2nd November 2021, civil society activists Abdul Rahman in the 4th District of Jalalabad City and Hijratullah Khogyani along with his brothers in the 7th District of Jalalabad City were assassinated by unknown armed men. Local Authorities didn’t express any interest in pursuing these cases and did not arrest perpetrators.
- On 13th October 2021, bodies of 4 beheaded people were found in the 4th District of Jalalabad City, these people were employees of the previous government. Also on 16th October 2021 bodies of 5 young men were found in the center of Jalalabad city. Local sources confirmed that these individuals were arrested and shot dead by the Taliban on the charge of association with ISKP.
- At the end of September 2022, local authorities of Taliban in Laghman Province invited Bahramuddin Khan, police commander of the previous government for Mandol District of Nuristan Province, to the center of Laghman province on the pretext of seeking his advice on aiding the flood victims in Nuristan. Taliban arrested Bahramuddin and handed over his dead body to his family after three days. He was first tortured and then killed in the detention center. Both his arms and his neck were broken and his toenails were pulled out.
- There are regular reports about bodies being uncovered in various parts of Nangarhar and other eastern provinces of the country, but due to restrictions on access to information and the environment of fear, eyewitnesses and local people do not share information about these incidents. In one instance, Rawadari has been able to identify and confirm location of a cemetery in Nangarhar province where corpses are regularly buried by the employees of municipality. This cemetery is strictly guarded by the Taliban and no one has the right to inquire about the identity of these bodies. It has not been possible for us to further investigate this cemetery and identity of the victims so far.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS IN PANJSHIR PROVINCE:

With the collapse of Kabul on 15th August 2021, Taliban took control of all provinces of Afghanistan, except Panjshir province. As Taliban attacked Panjshir, a resistance front was formed against them in the province. On 26th August 2021 a ceasefire was announced between the parties and on 1st September 2021 after failure of negotiations fighting resumed in the province and during the intensified armed conflict between the parties, National Resistance Front (NRF) carried out several military attacks against Taliban and killed a number of their military commanders.

In response to those attacks Taliban sent reinforcements to Panjshir and appointed new military commanders for Panjshir province and Andrab district of Baghlan province. These commanders started a large-scale military operation against people affiliated with the NRF in different districts of Panjshir and Baghlan provinces, as a result of which dozens of civilians were arrested and killed on suspicion of association with the NRF. Additionally, in several cases Taliban soldiers killed dozens of captured members of the NRF or those who had already surrendered.

Our findings indicate that after taking control of Panjshir province, between September 2021 and end of November 2022 the Taliban killed 63 members of NRF after they were arrested or had surrendered. Taliban also killed 50 civilians on allegations of association with the NRF in this period.

Due to the ongoing conflict, Taliban restrictions and the environment of fear, it was very difficult to gather and verify data about the number of unlawful killings in Panjshir and thus we recognize that our report is not complete in this regard

Some Examples of Unlawful Killings from Panjshir:

The findings of Rawadari illustrate that on 14th September 2022, Taliban shot 35 members of the National Resistance Front

(NRF) after they were arrested in “Abdullah Khel” village of Dara District. Similarly in another case, on 14th September 2022, Taliban killed 9 members of National Resistance Front (NRF) after they surrendered to Taliban in “Malam Khak” village of Rokha District.

As mentioned above, during this period, 50 civilians were killed by the Taliban on charges of “association with the NR). We could verify that the Taliban first tortured and then killed these individuals. Although Taliban announced that the claims of unlawful killings in Panjshir will be investigated, they have not yet taken any steps in this regard.

Torture and Murder of Abdul Munir

Abdul Munir was a shepherd from the capital of Panjshir province. On 2nd June 2022, Taliban arrested him on the suspicious of collaborating with the NRF while he was busy grazing his cattle in “Malsapah” area of Bazarak District. He was detained for 2 nights and died as a result of severe torture by the Taliban.

Murder of Agha Mohammad

Agha Mohammad was a 65 years old shepherd. He was arrested by Taliban on 31st August 2022 while returning from grazing his cattle in “Kharu” area of Khinj District of Panjshir province. He was accused of “collaborating with NRF”. Taliban tortured and subsequently shot him. Agha Mohammad’s dead body was thrown into river by Taliban which was later recovered by the villagers. These are just some of the examples of the unlawful killings in Panjshir that led to widespread intimidation and anger. Access to information on incidents in Panjshir has remained difficult since Taliban takeover. Taliban banned usage of smartphones by their soldiers in Panjshir after videos of killing of NRF detainees were posted on social media.

Torture and killing of surrendered fighters and intentional killing of civilians are clear violations of the fundamental principles of International Humanitarian Law and are examples of war crimes.

Unlawful Killings in Balkhab District of Sar-e-Pol Province”

After armed conflict broke between Taliban and Mawlawi Mehdi, a dissident commander of Taliban in Balkhab District of Sar-e-Pol province, several reports of human rights violations particularly killing of civilians were released on media. Below are Rawadari’s verified findings about these reports and allegations:

Killing of Civilians:

Our findings illustrate that between 20th June and 21 July 2022, Taliban killed at least 100 civilians after capturing Balkhab district, Sar-e-pol.

Below is a brief description of some of these cases:

- On the first day of Taliban’s arrival in Balkhab district, one of the clerics who was an impartial figure, was killed by Taliban at his home. Taliban while conducting house-to-house searches attacked this scholar along with one of his sons and his nephew.
- After breaking the front line on their way to Balkhab district, Taliban encountered a shepherd and shot him for “collaborating” with Mawlawi Mehdi without carrying any investigations.
- After a week of conflict in Balkhab, bodies of 4 men were found in the area of “Glorz and Shakhdar”. All four individuals were laborers. Local sources confirmed that these individuals were shot dead by Taliban while fleeing towards mountains for refuge.
- One civilian, resident of “Proshan” village was arrested and shot dead by Taliban upon returning home to prepare food after spending two days and nights in the mountains.
- A civilian resident of “Hush” village was shot dead by Taliban while he was farming.



CONCLUSION:

It has been 16 months since the re-establishment of “Islamic Emirate” of Taliban in Afghanistan and we have witnessed numerous cases of violation of human rights and International Humanitarian Law in the country. During this period, hundreds of citizens have been killed in targeted attacks and unlawful killings while no legal action has been taken to prosecute perpetrators.

The de facto authorities have not demonstrated any will or ability to prevent and stop the killings, deliver justice and enforce the declared “general amnesty”. Taliban have killed detained fighters and civilians in Panjshir province and civilians in Balkhab district of Sar-e-Pol province, thus violating International Humanitarian Law. The lack of will and action to prevent assassinations and targeted killings in Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces raises questions and credible allegations about Taliban’s involvement in or support for these murders.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To the de-facto authorities:

- **Put an immediate end to unlawful and targeted killings by their forces and hold perpetrators accountable**
- Prevent suspicious killings of officials of previous government and Salafis, and take appropriate measures for prosecution of perpetrators involved in these incidents.
- **Provide full access to media and human rights organizations for independent and comprehensive documentation of the human rights situation in the country.**
- Immediately provide appropriate compensation to victims and survivors

To the United Nations:

- The United Nation Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should monitor and investigate human rights violations and should report regularly and publicly on the human rights situation in the country.

To the International Criminal Court (ICC)

- Rawadari welcomes and supports ICC’s readiness to resume investigation in Afghanistan and requests the Court to take effective measures in accordance with its jurisdiction concerning International Crimes in Afghanistan.

ABOUT RAWAARI

Rawadari is an Afghan human rights organisation that aims to deepen and grow the human rights culture of Afghanistan, ultimately reducing the suffering of all Afghans, especially women and girls.

Rawadari helps build an Afghan human rights movement, monitors human rights violations, and pursues justice and accountability for violations. Rawadari works with individuals and collectives inside and outside Afghanistan.