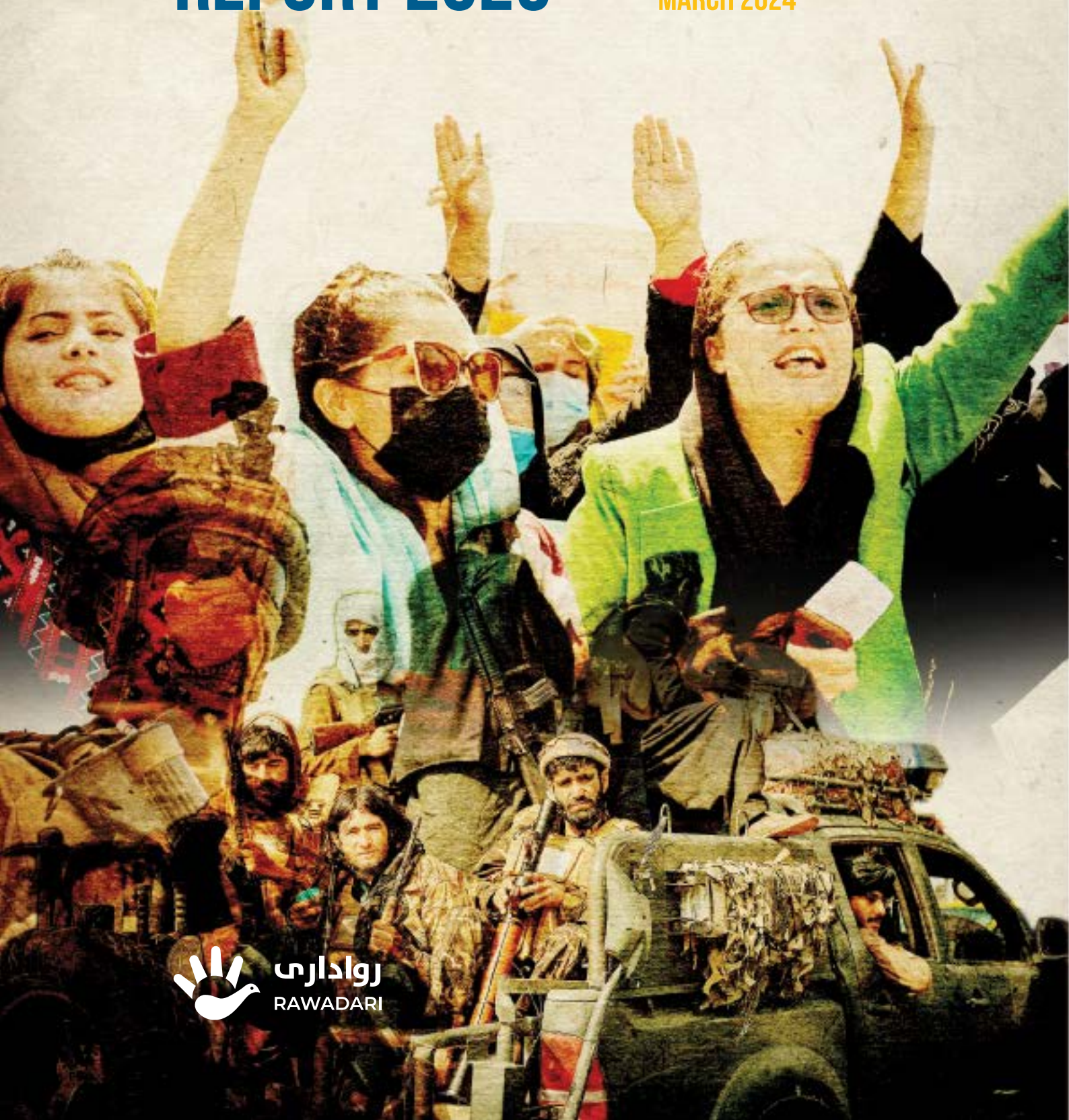


AFGHANISTAN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION REPORT 2023

MARCH 2024



رواداری
RAWADARI

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.

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INTRODUCTION

The human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly the human rights situation of women and girls has continued to deteriorate in 2023. Taliban have introduced new restrictions to women's work, education and movement and there is increased enforcement of bans and limitations. In 2023, Rawadari has documented various forms of violations of the right to life, including targeted, mysterious, and extrajudicial killings, particularly retaliatory attacks against former government officials, their family members and relatives. Additionally, the increase in arbitrary and unlawful detentions, torture, mistreatment, and killing of prisoners, enforced disappearances, and the implementation of cruel and inhumane punishments are other significant indicators of the dire and human rights situation in Afghanistan.

Taliban's brutal crackdown of the civic space was a continuing trend in 2023. Rawadari recorded over 600 cases of arbitrary and unlawful detention of protestors, former government employees, human rights defenders, journalists and Taliban critics. Access to legal aid is limited or non-existent and there are widespread claims of torture in detention.

The situation is particularly grim for women and girls in Afghanistan. In 2023, Taliban introduced new restrictions on women's rights as well as more severely enforcing the prior restrictions through public punishments and detentions of women. Taliban restricted Afghan women working for the UN from reporting to work in April 2023. The restrictions on education, employment and movement continued and were more severely enforced, including the restrictions on women's access to higher education, women's travel and movement and women's outfit and public appearance. Women and girls were further eroded from the public space in 2023 with exclusion from university entrance exams, order of closure for beauty salons, banning entry to the National Park in Bamiyan, and in some provinces bans on women visiting shrines and going to restaurants. Afghanistan is on a trajectory of increased violations of women's rights both in public and private sphere with no access to remedy or justice for victims and survivors.



METHODOLOGY

Over the course of 2023, Rawadari monitored the human rights situation in Afghanistan and collected information and evidence on violations of civil and political rights. During this period, Rawadari observers gathered information from local sources in 28 provinces¹ of Afghanistan. This information was registered in Rawadari's information bank and analysed for the purpose of this report. Victims and survivors, eyewitnesses, officials from health centres and teachers from educational institutions, human rights advocates, defence lawyers, former and current employees of judicial and legal institutions and released detainees have been among the most important sources for this report. The cases of human rights violations reflected in this report have been verified by at least three sources. Findings from previous Rawadari reports and other relevant reports published by human rights organizations have also been utilized in the drafting of this report. In addition, documents, decrees, and official letters issued by the Taliban in 2023, and available to Rawadari's documentation team are among other sources of information included in this report.

Access to information about human rights violations was more challenging in 2023 compared to 2022 indicating further restrictions and increased intimidation by the Taliban. There are a few ways in which Taliban are actively suppressing information related to violations of human rights: Taliban have required released detainees and prisoners to commit to not sharing any information with media and human rights organizations. The pressures on survivors, their family members and even those close to them to not share any information have intensified. A number of victims and eyewitnesses told Rawadari that Taliban have threatened them to not provide any information to media and human rights organizations. The same approach has been taken with local media and journalists, to the extent that the Taliban have detained, imprisoned and tortured a number of reporters for covering news on human rights violations. **Additionally, in some cases Taliban have banned the use of smartphones to prevent the dissemination of information about violations. For instance, in Panjshir province, Taliban have banned the use of smartphones. They monitor the adherence to this ban through physical inspection of citizens at checkpoints.** Although the official pretext for banning smartphones in this province is addressing security concerns, in effect it is intended to conceal human rights violations and prevent dissemination of information about the human rights situation.

Due to the pervasive environment of fear and intimidation, a number of victims, survivors and their relatives refrain from being interviewed and sharing information with human rights organizations. Some of these individuals have told Rawadari that they have no hope for justice, hence sharing information with human rights organizations does not alleviate any of their past suffering.

In light of the limitations on access to information, the high risks for human rights monitors and observers, the limitations on women's movement and work which has further restricted Rawadari's access to women survivors and eyewitnesses, the numbers and cases included in this case may not

¹ Kabul, Ghazni, Maidan Wardak, Nangarhar, Herat, Balkh, Bamiyan, Badakhshan, Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, Takhar, Samangan, Sar-e-pul, Daikundi, Jawzjan, Helmand, Uruzgan, Farah, Ghor, Nimruz, Panjshir, Parwan, Baghlan, Laghman and Nuristan



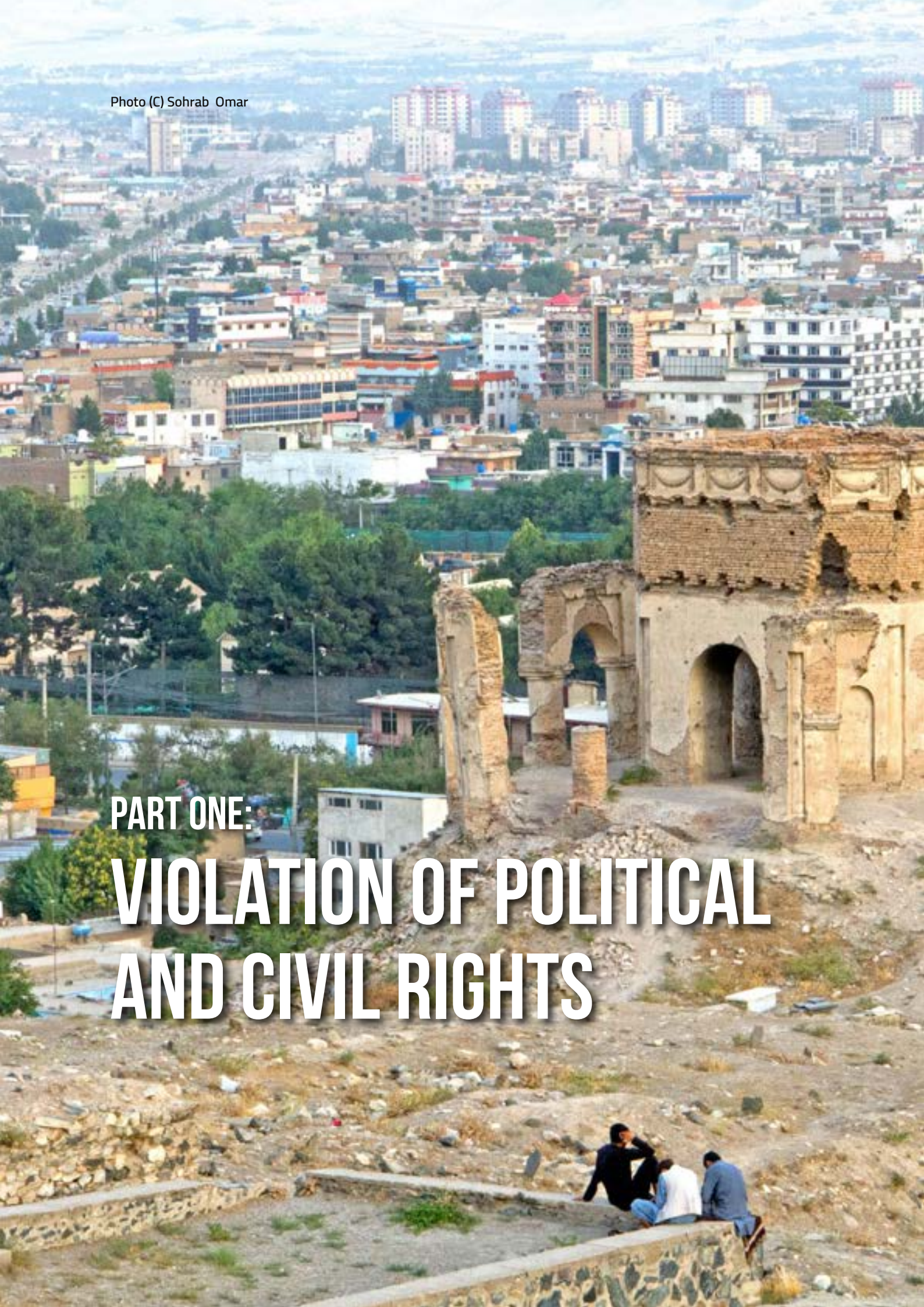
reflect the full extent of violations in 2023. There are also numerous cases that Rawadari has been unable to verify and include, which might be included in subsequent reports if and when additional information becomes available.

Details about the identity of victims and survivors as well as the exact dates and locations of a number of incidents have been deliberately withheld to ensure the security of sources and victims. Additionally, since Rawadari has previously published a [mid-year report](#) on the human rights situation in the first six months of 2023, the examples in this report are mostly from July-December 2023 period.

Photo (C) Sohrab Omar

PART ONE:

VIOLATION OF POLITICAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS



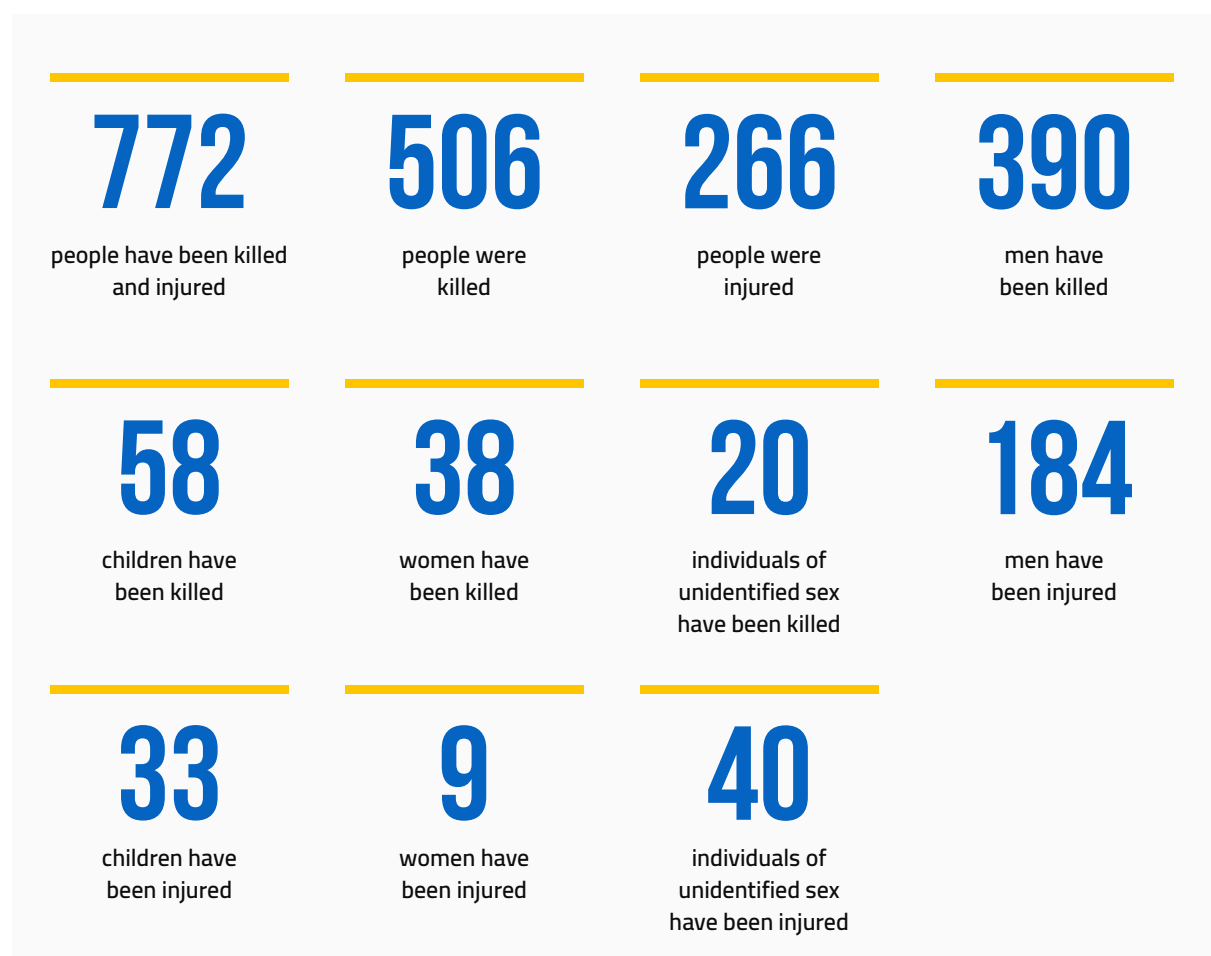


PART ONE: VIOLATION OF POLITICAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS

This report mainly focuses on events involving violations of civil and political rights that occurred across different parts of Afghanistan in 2023 and have been documented by Rawadari. This section specifically examines various forms of violations of the right to life, the right to freedom and personal security, the right to human dignity and the right to peaceful assembly.

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO LIFE

In 2023, at least 772 people have been killed and injured in various human rights violations across the country, of which 506 were killed and 266 others were injured. The dead include 390 men, 58 children, 38 women and 20 others. The injured comprise of 184 men, 33 children, 9 women and 40 others with unidentified sex. Former government employees and their family members, human rights advocates, tribal elders and Taliban opponents are among the victims of these events.



The violation of right to life examples discussed in this section includes targeted, mysterious and extrajudicial killings, suicide attacks, and death and injury due to mines and explosive remnants of war.



1 - Casualties Resulting from Explosions and Suicide Attacks:

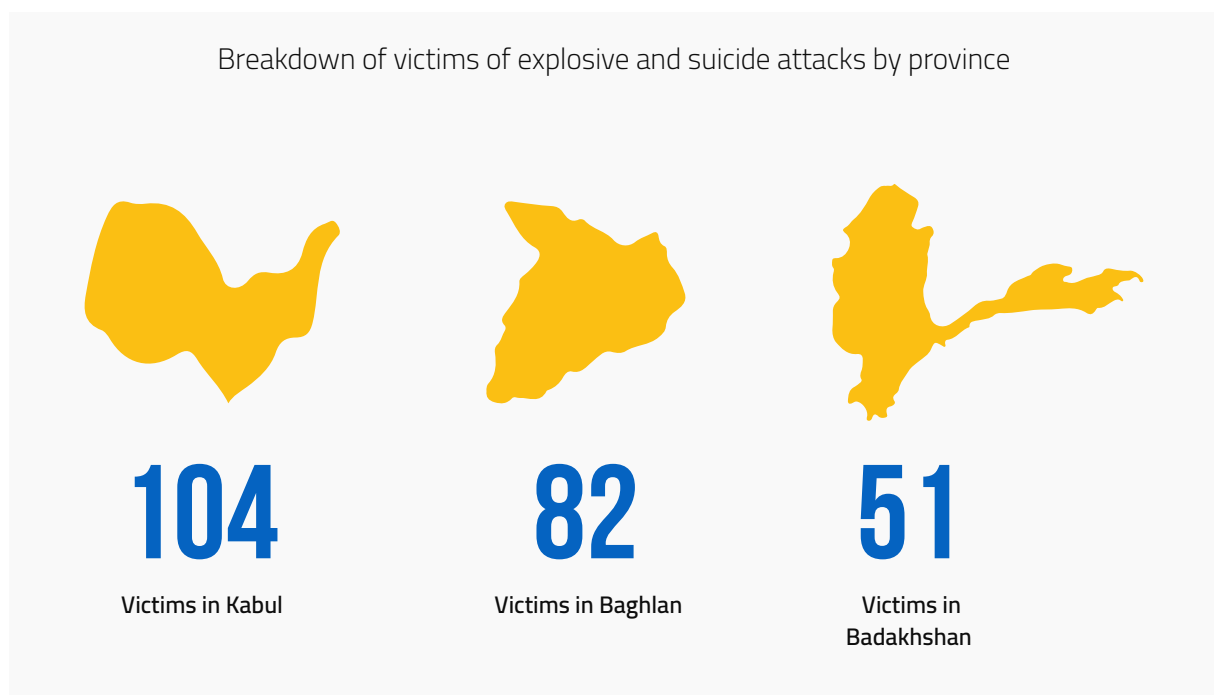
In 2023, as a result of 6 suicide attacks and explosions in Kabul, Badakhshan and Baghlan provinces, at least 235 people were killed and injured, of which 84 were killed and 151 others were injured. The majority of the victims of these attacks are Hazara and Shite citizens of Afghanistan who were targeted for their religious and ethnic identity.



On 11th January 2023, as a result of a suicide attack in the city of Kabul, at least 20 civilians were killed and 40 others were injured. Similarly, in two suicide attacks on the 6th and 8 June 2023 in Faizabad, provincial centre of Badakhshan, at least 21 people were killed and 30 others were injured.

On 26th October 2023, in a terrorist attack on the "Millat Sports Hall" in the Hazara and Shiite-populated Dasht-e-Barchi area west of Kabul, at least 6 people were killed and 11 others were injured. Also, on the 7th November 2023, following the explosion of an improvised mine planted in a minibus in the "Mehtab Qala" area of Dasht-e-Barchi in West of Kabul, at least 7 people were killed and 20 others were

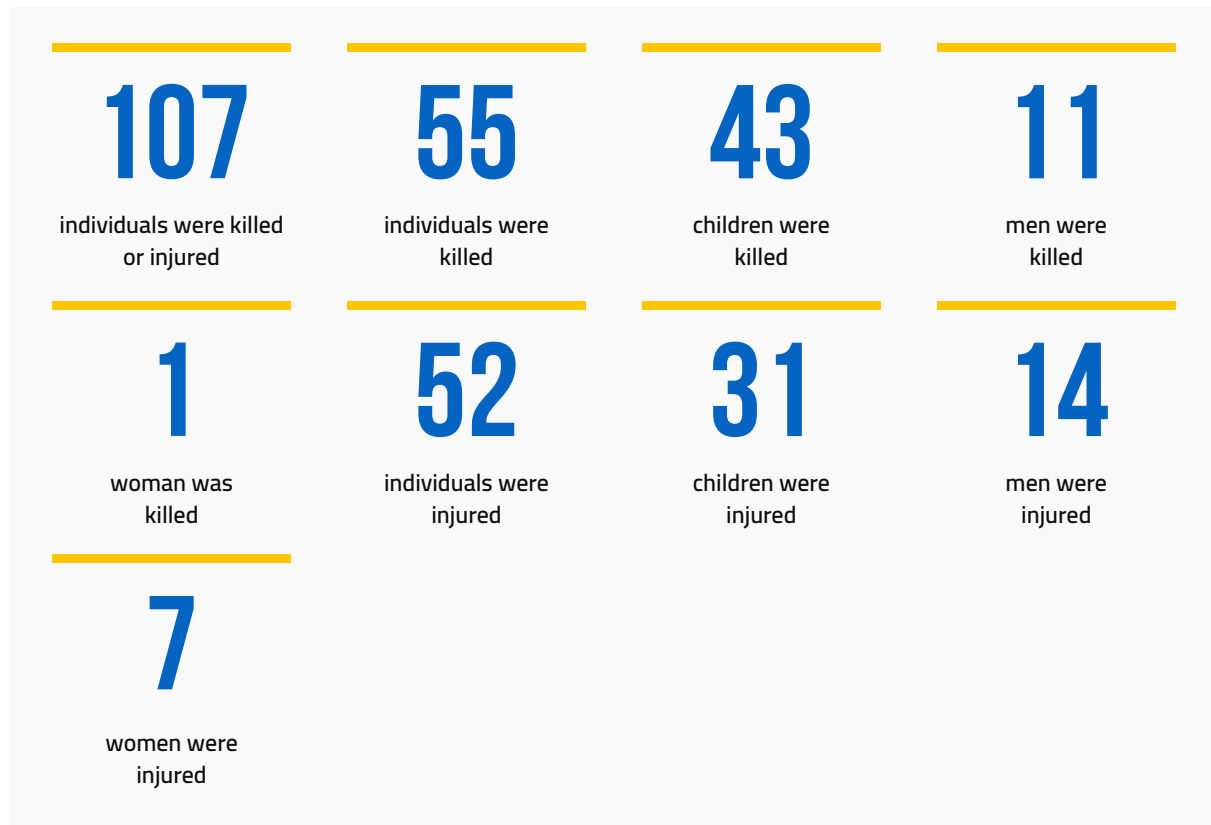
On 13th October 2023, an explosion occurred during Friday prayers at a Shia mosque in the second district of Pul-e Khumri city, of Baghlan province, resulting in at least 32 deaths and 50 injuries. DAESH (ISIS) has claimed responsibility for all these attacks.





2 - Civilian casualties resulting from explosions of landmines and explosive remnants of war

In 2023, at least 107 individuals were killed or injured as a result of explosions from planted mines, unexploded ordnance, and other remnants of explosive materials from armed conflict. Among them, 55 individuals, including 43 children, 11 men, and 1 woman, were killed, and 52 others, including 31 children, 14 men, and 7 women, were injured. The majority of the victims of these explosions are children.



Mines and other remnants of explosive materials from previous wars are now the biggest challenge and the most significant contributor to civilian casualties, especially in the Southern and Eastern provinces of Afghanistan.

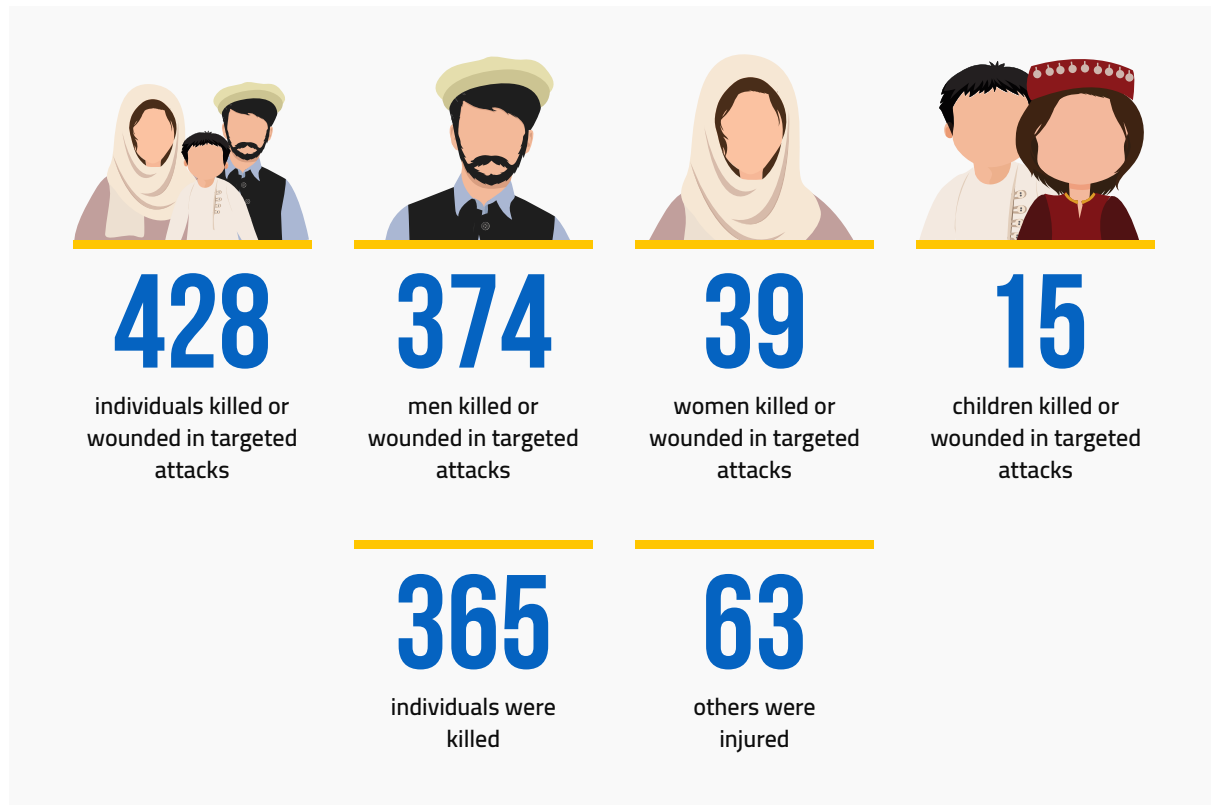
Mines and explosive materials are typically placed in high-traffic areas such as public roads, pilgrimage sites, agricultural lands, and even people's homes, causing casualties among non-combatants. For example, in September 2023, three members of a family were killed in an explosion of a landmine in the Moqur district of Ghazni province. The mine detonated when the individuals were bringing stones from the mountain for building their new house, and their tractor hit the mine, causing it to explode. In this incident, the father and his two sons were killed. Local sources from this province have stated that areas contaminated with mines and explosive remnants from past wars are now the most significant security challenge, continually victimizing residents, especially children.

In another incident, on 12th December 2023, as a result of the explosion of a grenade in the Sherzad district of Nangarhar province, 10 members of a family were killed and injured. In this incident, three children lost their lives, and seven others, including three women, were injured.



3 - Targeted, mysterious and extrajudicial killings

In the period of January 1st to December 31st, 2023, at least 428 individuals, including 374 men, 39 women, and 15 children, have been mysteriously and extrajudicially killed or wounded by the Taliban and unidentified individuals. Among them, 365 were killed and 63 others were wounded.



Former government officials, human rights activists, opponents and critics of the Taliban, and other non-combatants are among the victims of these killings and attacks. Rawadari couldn't document the precise reason behind some of these events due to the circumstance of the attacks as well as the deliberate efforts by the Taliban to suppress information. Taliban tightly control information related to these incidents and prevent its dissemination. Families of victims and local journalists fear detention in case of providing information about such killings. In case of some targeted killings in the Kandahar province, families of victims have left their homes and relocated due to warnings and threats from the Taliban to not provide information to the media and human rights organizations.

The Taliban's intelligence and information and cultural departments have also verbally warned local journalists and media outlets to refrain from covering targeted and extrajudicial killings and other security incidents that reflect "badly" on Emirates. Consequently, media outlets within Afghanistan are currently not reporting on extrajudicial and targeted killings. Taliban officials and spokespeople have consistently denied involvement in targeted killings and have attributed them to unidentified armed individuals, but the authorities have not taken any action to identify and detain these unidentified individuals. This lack of action has created an atmosphere of fear and serious concern among citizens. Taliban's efforts to suppress information about such incidents further compounds the fear of survivors and communities.

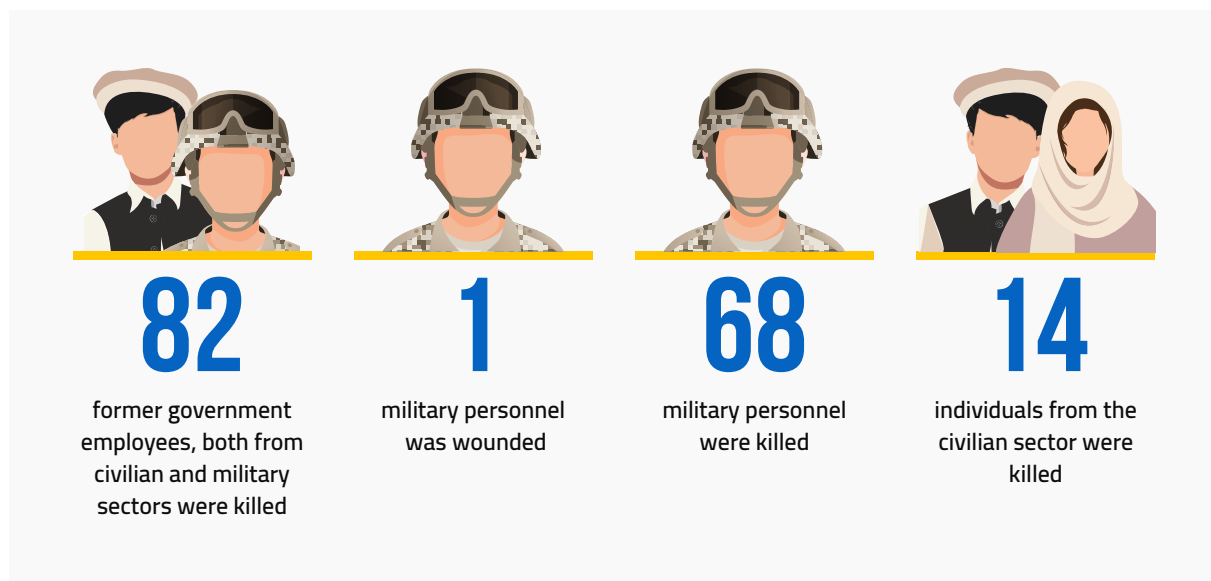


It is not clear if the de-facto authorities have any oversight mechanisms in place to prevent human rights violations by their forces and soldiers and to prevent abuse of power. Additionally, in provinces outside Kabul, in most cases, the forces associated with the Taliban's ministries of defence, interior and intelligence in the provinces do not have official uniforms and wear traditional civilian clothes, which make it difficult to distinguish them from other "unknown armed individuals". Taliban have also collected weapons and have attempted widespread disarmament since their return to power.

Families of victims claim that the "unknown armed individuals" are in fact Taliban members themselves who take revenge on former government employees, opponents and critics through extrajudicial killings. It is hard to determine this for every case, however, it is clear is that no justification, even attributing such killings to "unknown armed individuals," takes away from Taliban's legal responsibility as the ruling group in Afghanistan to ensure the security and safety for all and put an end to the horrific trend of extrajudicial and targeted killings.

A - Targeted killing of former government employees

Among those who were deliberately and extrajudicially killed and wounded during the year 2023, 83 of them are former government employees, both from civilian and military sectors, of whom 82 were killed and 1 individual was wounded. The victims include 68 military personnel and 14 individuals from the civilian sector of the former government.



Over the past nearly three years, numerous reports of targeted and extrajudicial killings of former government employees by the Taliban have been published, sparking a wave of international concern. Despite this, the killings have continued.

In some cases the Taliban, especially their intelligence agency, assassinate former government employees and then announce that these individuals were affiliated with the ISIS group or committed suicide. Examples of such cases have also been included in Rawadari's midyear report for 2023.



On 10th September 2023, a commander of the Local Uprising Forces of the former was assassinated by Taliban intelligence in Takhar province. Similarly, on 16th August 2023, in a similar incident in the same province, another commander affiliated with the former government was killed. Sources close to the victim have stated that a local Taliban commander in Takhar province is responsible for the killing.

On 16th November 2023, a former government employee and his sister, who had travelled from Kabul to Jalalabad to attend a family gathering, were killed. The family members and acquaintances of the victims claim that they were severely tortured before murder.

Also, in August 2023, a former local police officer was killed by unidentified individual in Paktika. Evidence suggests that this individual was killed by a local Taliban official. Similarly, on the 27 November 2023, a member of the former Local Uprising Forces in the Pato district of Daikundi province was shot dead by "unidentified armed individuals." The victim's brother was also a member of the former Local Uprising Forces and had ongoing disputes with local Taliban in this district.

On 21st November 2023, a former employee of the Maidan Wardak provincial security command was abducted in the fifth district of Kabul city and his body was found two days later in the Maidan Shahr in Wardak province. An eyewitness who had seen the victim's body told Rawadari that he saw signs of severe torture and burning on the body of the victim.

There are also cases of abduction and killings of family members of former security forces and former government employees. For example, on 25th August 2023, a 13-year-old child residing in the Shohada district of Badakhshan province was killed by unidentified individuals. The father of this child was a member of the former government's Local Uprising Forces. The father was killed by unidentified individuals about two years ago during the early months of the Taliban rule while irrigating his agricultural land. Similarly, on the 28 July 2023, an eight-year-old boy was abducted in Bamiyan province, and his body was found a week later at the back of the market in the centre of this province. The mother of this child was a former member of the national police forces.



B - Killing of civilians on the charges of collaborating with Taliban's armed opposition groups

In 2023, the Taliban killed at least 21 civilians on charges of collaboration or membership in armed opposition groups. The victims were accused of affiliations with the National Resistance Front (NRF) and other opposing groups. For example, on the 4th August 2023, the Taliban killed a resident of the Arghanj Khwah district in Badakhshan province on the charges of collaborating with the National Resistance Front. Sources close to the victim have stated

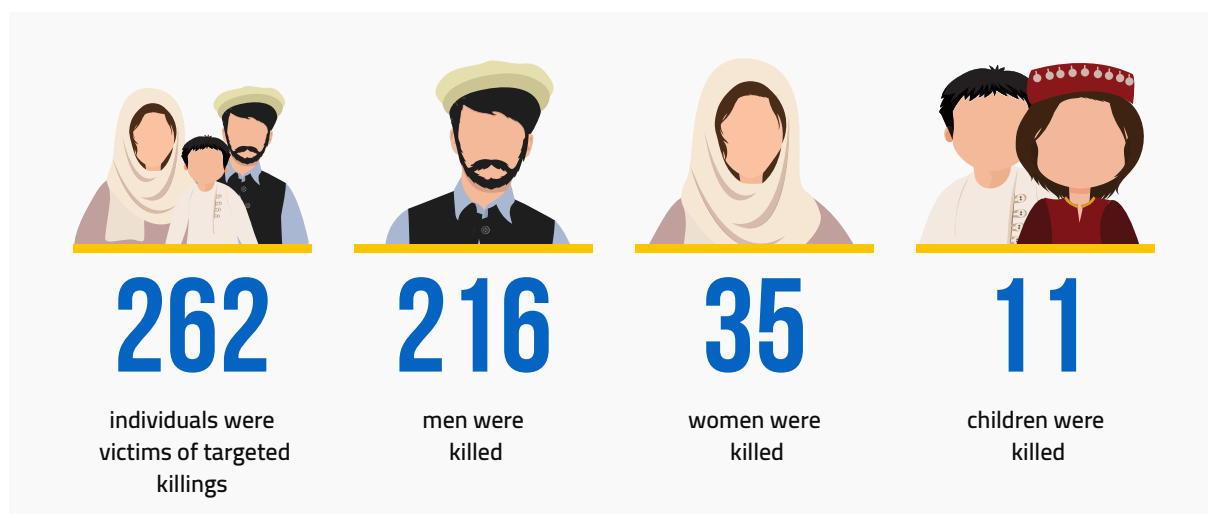
that he was a member of the former government's security and defence forces and was shot dead by the Taliban on the charges of collaborating with the National Resistance Front.



In another example, on the 22 August 2023, the Taliban killed an individual in Herat province due to his alleged association with the National Resistance Front. He had travelled to Herat from Iran to renew his visa when the Taliban found pictures of Ahmad Shah Massoud, former anti-Taliban commander and Ahmad Massoud, current leader of NRF, on his computer and then shot him dead.

C - Mysterious and targeted killings of other civilians

Based on Rawadari's findings, in 2023, at least 324 civilians in various parts of the country were mysteriously shot and wounded by the Taliban and unidentified armed individuals. Among them, 262 individuals, including 216 men, 35 women, and 11 children, were killed, and 62 others, including 58 men, 2 women, and 2 children, were wounded. Ethnic and tribal elders, religious scholars, local supporters of the former government, social and cultural activists, and businesspeople are among the victims.



These targeting killings have been committed by unidentified individuals, and so far, the Taliban have not taken any effective action to identify and apprehend the killers or those involved in attacks. Taliban have kept information related to these types of events hidden and have threatened the families of the victims to refrain from providing any information to human rights organizations and the media. However, families and individuals close to the victims believe that the perpetrators of these killings are the Taliban themselves. For example, local officials have attributed the assassination of 4 Shia scholars in November and December 2023 in Herat province, the killing of a former jihadist commander, and several other cases to unidentified individuals, stating that they will arrest the perpetrators of these attacks however, local residents claim that the Taliban intelligence agency is involved in these incidents.

FORCED DISAPPEARANCE

During the year 2023, at least 30 former government employees and members of their families, individuals accused of collaborating with armed groups such as NRF, human rights activists, and other civilians disappeared after being detained by the Taliban. The Taliban have detained these individuals and refrained from providing any information about their fate and whereabouts to their families. For example, in September 2023, a former National Police officer in (province name redacted due to security concerns) was detained by the Taliban and transferred to an undisclosed location. The



victim's family has stated that they have repeatedly visited local Taliban offices over the past months but have not received any information about his fate, and they do not know whether he is alive or not.

On 7th November 2023, a former government employee in Panjshir province was detained by the Taliban and transferred to an undisclosed location. Since then, there has been no information available about the fate of this individual. Furthermore, a resident of Badakhshan province was abducted by the Taliban on charges of links with the NRF in late 2023 with no information shared about his fate and whereabouts with his family.

Since Taliban have imposed strict restrictions on access to information and particularly prevent the dissemination of any information related to forced disappearances, the number of forced disappearance cases in Afghanistan could be much higher compared to the figures presented in this report.

ARBITRARY AND UNLAWFUL DETENTION

The findings of this report indicate that during the year 2023, at least 623 individuals, including 55 women were arbitrarily and unlawfully detained by the Taliban in 22 provinces. The detained individuals include former government employees -both civilian and military-, members of previous People's Uprising forces, human rights activists, journalists, religious scholars, ethnic leaders, businessmen, and critics and opponents of the Taliban.



Photo (C) BULENT KILIC/AFP via Getty Images. Amnesty International website

While international human rights treaties guarantee the right to freedom and personal security and emphasize the prohibition of arbitrary and illegal deprivation of individuals' freedom, the Taliban have, without regard to legal norms and without authorization from competent authorities, arbitrarily and illegally carried out widespread arrests of former government employees and other civilians.



In addition to the Taliban's intelligence directorate, police, and courts that arrest and imprison individuals without due process, other de facto government departments and even ordinary Taliban soldiers play a role in the arrest and detention of individuals. In addition to the police and members of the intelligence, employees of the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV), municipalities, provincial governors, district governors, and other civil sector officials also arrest and detain individuals. Any local Taliban official who arrests these individuals has the authority to decide on the duration of their detention, the nature of the investigation, and the punishment of these individuals.

ILLEGAL ARREST OF FORMER GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

At least 118 of the 623 individuals detained in 2023 were former government employees and their family members. Among these, 91 were military personnel, 6 were employees of the civil sectors of the former government, and 21 others were relatives and family members who were arrested and imprisoned by the Taliban in 2023.



In July 2023, the Taliban arrested former military personnel in the district of "Spin Boldak" in Kandahar province. This individual had moved to another district due to security concerns and to protect himself and his family, where he was identified and arrested by the Taliban intelligence. The Taliban told his family that he was arrested over a legal dispute concerning land; however, his family rejects this claim, stating that the reason for his arrest was his work with the former government.

On 11 November 2023, the Taliban arrested a member of the special forces of the former government in Takhar province. A source close to the victim reported that this individual had been living in hiding in Kabul after the fall of the republic and had recently returned to his home in Takhar province with the guarantees of safety from a Taliban commander; however, he was arrested by the intelligence unit and taken to an unknown location.

The Taliban have even arrested and imprisoned relatives and family members of former military personnel. For instance, on the 14 April 2023, the Taliban arrested a 17-year-old child from Panjshir



province because he had not disclosed his father's hiding place to the Taliban. In another case, on 2nd February 2023, the Taliban arrested a civilian because his son had served in the security forces of the former government. The son had fled to one of the neighbouring countries following the fall of the republic.



90 human rights defenders, civil activists, and journalists were unlawfully detained

ILLEGAL DETENTION OF CIVIL ACTIVISTS, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND JOURNALISTS

In 2023, the Taliban arbitrarily and unlawfully detained at least 90 human rights defenders, civil activists, and journalists on the charges of protest, criticism, and advocacy against the "Islamic Emirate."

On 10th July 2023, Taliban officials in Ghazni province arrested and imprisoned a journalist. On 6th August 2023, the Taliban arrested and imprisoned two local journalists in Nangarhar province. These individuals were released after 20 days but were forced to leave their jobs. The Taliban have warned these journalists that they will face harsher penalties if they criticize the "Islamic Emirate."

On 29 September 2023, Taliban halted the activities of a private local radio in Daikundi province and arrested three of its journalists. The outlet was accused of broadcasting programs from "Radio Free Europe" which is currently banned in Afghanistan. The outlet was also accused of not covering the activities of the local Taliban government. The Taliban's higher education chief stated, "They had repeatedly warned this media outlet to include the activities and programs of the Islamic Emirate at the national and local levels in their news programs, but the leadership of this media outlet did not comply with the orders, so the intelligence forces closed its gate and arrested its employees." Two of the journalists from this outlet were later released, but its chief editor was sentenced to one year in prison based on a Taliban court ruling. Additionally, on the 28th November 2023, a civil activist in this province was detained for meeting with a UNAMA official. The accusation against this individual was "meeting with a foreigner"

There are also cases where social media users have been detained by the Taliban for criticizing them. For example, on the 20 August 2023, a university professor in Herat province was arrested by the Taliban after criticizing the discriminatory policies of the Taliban against women, particularly the ban on girls' education, on social media. In another incident on the 2nd November 2023, in the same province, a former employee of the Information and Culture Directorate was detained by the Taliban intelligence forces for criticizing the Taliban's treatment of LGBTQI.

On 21 November 2023, Taliban intelligence arrested a student from Bamiyan University who had criticized the policies of the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban and particularly the increase in insecurity and civilian killings in the province during his speech. This student is still in prison. In another incident,



in July 2023, the Taliban arrested and imprisoned a local comedian in Ghazni province for creating and sharing satirical and critical programs through local media and social media.

124

individuals were detained on the charges of membership in the National Resistance Front and other opposition groups

ARBITRARY DETENTION OF INDIVIDUALS ACCUSED OF COLLABORATING WITH THE TALIBAN'S ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

In 2023, Taliban unlawfully detained and imprisoned at least 124 individuals on the charges of membership in the National Resistance Front and other opposition groups. For instance, on 28 August 2023, the Taliban arrested and imprisoned a student from a religious school of Panjshir province in Kabul who had gone to the capital to obtain a passport, accusing him of having connections and collaborating with the NRF. The family of the

detained individual stated that he had no affiliation with Taliban opposition groups. Two years prior to this, his brother had also been killed by the Taliban on the same charges.

There are also cases where the Taliban have detained and imprisoned their opponents on the charges of collaborating with DAESH (ISIS). For example, on 30 August 2023, Taliban raided a residential house in Nimruz province and arrested five individuals on the charges of collaborating with the ISIS, subjecting them to beatings and detention. Additionally, the intelligence forces of the Taliban have detained relatives and close associates of members of the NRF in some provinces. For instance, on the 24 August 2023, in Badakhshan province, the Taliban detained the sons and several family members of a local commander of the NRF. This local commander had previously been killed by the Taliban. Moreover, 52 relatives of NRF fighters in this province, who had participated in the funeral prayers for some of the deceased members of the NRF, were beaten up by the Taliban and Taliban members disrupted the funeral ceremony. Some of the mourners were also detained by the Taliban.

Individuals arrested on the charges of collaboration with Taliban's armed opposition groups are kept in separate sections in prisons and are treated more harshly. For example, these individuals are subject to the severest forms of torture and mistreatment, and their families are not allowed to visit them.

OTHER CASES OF ARBITRARY AND UNLAWFUL DETENTION

291

other cases of unlawful detention

Among the civilians who have been unlawfully and arbitrarily detained and imprisoned by the Taliban during the reporting period, 291 individuals are those accused of various charges, including carrying weapons, affiliation or membership in "Hizb ul-Tahrir," violation of regulations of the Department of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice such as trimming beards and hair, listening to music, not adhering to the department's directives regarding hijab, not having a religious guardian,

and other reasons. These individuals are primarily detained by the employees of the MPVPV and are not included in the groups mentioned in previous sections.



For example, in September 2023, Taliban forces in Kiti district of Daikundi province detained 18 young men on charges of shaving their bread. These young men were held in a hotel room for two days, and after paying a fine of 2500 Afghanis (equivalent of 34 USD) each, they were released.

VIOLATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY RIGHTS

Human dignity rights are inherent and inalienable rights of individuals that are recognized and acknowledged without any qualification or condition in international human rights documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights². Based on the provisions of these documents, no one under any circumstances should be subjected to torture, abuse, or cruel and inhuman treatment and punishment³. However, evidence and documentation indicate that the Taliban have extensively engaged in torture and mistreatment of prisoners and have also carried out degrading punishments without regard for the principles of fair trial.

TORTURE AND MISTREATMENT OF PRISONERS

Since Rawadari does not have access to prisons and detention facilities and Taliban have imposed strict restrictions on access to information, it is not possible to provide accurate statistics on the number of torture and mistreatment incidents. However, based on interviews with defence lawyers and released prisoners in 2023, the majority of detainees claim to have experienced torture and mistreatment by the Taliban at least once during their detention. **The findings of this report indicate that most cases of torture occur in intelligence detention centres, and the most severe forms of torture are inflicted on individuals suspected of cooperating with Taliban's armed opposition groups.**

On 28 September 2023, Taliban forces arrested a doctor in the Nawur district of Ghazni province on the charges of "possessing weapons and collaborating with the previous government". The Taliban subjected this individual to severe torture, including cutting pieces of his flesh. In July 2023, a resident of Maidan Wardak province was detained by the Taliban on the charges of theft. He spent six months in Taliban detention centres and was severely tortured during this time. He was accused of theft but was recognized as innocent by the court after six months and released from prison.

Another victim from Panjshir province has stated that: **"Waterboarding is one of the most common torture and interrogation methods in Taliban detention centres. They place a wet cloth over the victims' mouth and then pour hot or cold water over the cloth for twenty minutes. This causes short-term suffocation and severe agony for the victim. The Taliban continue this until the victims**

² The UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human rights, adopted in 1948, Preamble and Article 1

³ The UNGA, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in 1966, Article 7. The UNGA, Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted in 1984, Article 1



confesses/speaks and reveal the desired information. Suffocation with plastic bags is another commonly used torture method. The Taliban cover the victims' heads with a plastic bag and tie it tightly to deprive them of oxygen and render them unconscious. They continue this until confessions are obtained. Another method is called 'Chapa Walchak.' This type of torture occurs with the slightest disciplinary error. It involves bringing the victim's arms to the back and holding them in handcuffs. One hand is brought from over the shoulder and the other hand is brought from under the arm and then the hands are handcuffed together in this painful position. As a result of muscle fatigue, the victim experiences weakness or swelling in the hands and arms. There are other methods for torturing victims as well. For example; hanging them with chains. In this method, victims are hung with metal chains to ceiling metal bars or metal water pipes in a way that their feet are a few centimetres above the ground, and this continues until the victims becomes weak and faints. Another method is cold-water torture. They soak the victims' bodies with cold water and then take them to a room with intensely cold, air-conditioned temperature'

KILLING OF PRISONERS

Rawadari has obtained credible evidence indicating that several detainees have been killed as a result of severe torture by the Taliban in prisons. In 2023, Rawadari has recorded at least 16 cases of torture leading to death in the Taliban prisons. Civilians are among the victims who have been detained, tortured, and then killed on various charges. For example, on 6th May 2023, Taliban detained a tribal elder in the Nahrain district of Baghlan province. A relative of this individual told Rawadari "We tried several times to release him from Taliban detention. But after a few days, they informed us that he had died under Taliban torture." On 23 March 2023, in the Tala wa Barfak district of Baghlan province, a schoolteacher was detained by the Taliban. Relatives of this individual went to see him several times, but the Taliban did not allow any meetings, and after a few days, they left his corpse in the city of Pol-e Khomri.

A year and a half ago, the Taliban arrested a young man on the charges of sharing pictures NRF members on Facebook. As a result of severe torture, on 17 October 2023, he was killed in Pol-e Charkhi prison, and then the Taliban handed over his dead body to his family. The Taliban attributed the cause of this incident to health problems; however, the victim's family stated that he had no health problems and was killed as a result of torture by the Taliban as they could see signs of severe torture on his body.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CRUEL AND INHUMANE PUNISHMENTS

There were public floggings of at least 942 individuals in 8 different provinces⁴ in 2023 carried out by the Taliban. There were also cases of punishments that were carried out but not made public.⁵

In most cases, the Taliban subject suspects of crimes to flogging without any form of investigation or gathering of evidence to prove the crime. In 2023, only in Kandahar province, 788 individuals, were

⁴ Bamyan, Badakhshan, Kandahar, Daikundi, Ghor, Jozjan, Zabul and Sar-e-Pul

⁵ The Taliban publicly enforce and announce Hudud punishments such as flogging and other forms of physical punishment for crimes, but usually implement them non-publicly for punitive crimes.



flogged publicly and in private on various charges, and in Uruzgan province, 85 individuals including 13 women, were subjected to flogging.

In November 2023, Taliban subjected an individual from Khost province to mistreatment after detaining him, forcibly cutting his hair, despite the fact that the individual had not committed any crimes. Additionally, Rawadari has documented cases in Helmand province where Taliban have paraded suspects of theft in busy urban areas to display their faces to the public as punishment.

SUPPRESSION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTS AND DETENTION OF PROTESTERS

Rawadari has recorded fewer public protests in 2023 compared to 2022. Street protests were mostly replaced with gatherings at home or individual acts of protests in hidden locations, filmed and broadcast via social media for outreach.

The main reason for the decrease in protests and public demonstrations in Afghanistan is the atmosphere of fear and intimidation created by the Taliban. Over the past two years, as the Taliban marginalized Afghan women from various social, political, economic, cultural, and scientific spheres, tens of protests and gatherings took place across the country by women's rights activists. However, the Taliban brutally suppressed all these protests and gatherings. **They detained protesters, subjected them to torture, sexually assaulted some of the female protesters, and even killed some protesters⁶. As a result, dozens of women and men who were involved in organizing and managing these protests and demonstrations have left Afghanistan and are now in exile in the region or in Western countries. Fewer people now take the risk of expressing their criticism and opposition to the discriminatory policies of the Taliban.**

On 19 September 2023, the Taliban detained and imprisoned a female protester and her husband due to their activities. Additionally, on the 27 September the Taliban intelligence department arrested a female protester in Kabul who had played a role in organizing protests against the Taliban. These 3 individuals were released from Taliban custody after three months. On the 19th July 2023, some women in Kabul held a peaceful protest and march in protest to the closure of women's hair salons. This peaceful protest was violently suppressed.

In the provinces of Kandahar and Zabul, Taliban violently suppressed three instances of peaceful citizen demonstrations in the months of July, October, and November 2023 and beat up the protestors. One of the protesters in Kandahar province was killed as a result of Taliban's indiscriminate firing.

⁶ RAWADARI, Regression and Suppression, December 2022. <https://rawadari.org/10122022251.htm/>

Photo (C) Sohrab Omar

A woman wearing a black chador is walking away from the camera down a dusty, unpaved street. The street is flanked by simple, multi-story buildings. In the background, a large, rocky hillside is visible, densely packed with small, light-colored buildings. The lighting suggests late afternoon or early morning, with long shadows and a warm, golden glow. The overall atmosphere is one of a densely populated, possibly urban or semi-urban, area in a developing region.

**PART TWO:
THE HUMAN RIGHTS
SITUATION OF WOMEN
AND GIRLS**



PART TWO – THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Since regaining control over Afghanistan, Taliban have systematically implemented policies to exclude women from the public life. In the past nearly three years, Taliban have deprived Afghan women and girls of their most fundamental human rights and freedoms, including the right to education, the right to work and participate in public affairs, and the right to freedom of movement, without any regard to their legal commitments to respect international human rights obligations⁷.

1 - VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

The right to education is among the most fundamental human rights, with an emphasis on equal and equitable access to educational opportunities for all individuals.⁸

Since returning to power, the Taliban have gradually banned Afghan women and girls from attending schools, universities, and other educational institutions. On 28 January 2023, the de facto Ministry of Higher Education officially banned women and girls from participating in the university entrance exam (Kankor) by issuing a formal letter to both public and private universities.⁹ The letter instructed all active universities across the country not to allow women to participate in the entrance exam until further notice. Currently only girls below the sixth grade and female nursing/healthcare students are permitted to attend primary schools and nursing schools, subject to strict compliance with the Taliban's dress code and other stringent regulations. There are also restrictions on female students attending primary schools and nursing schools in some provinces. For instance, in November 2023, local authorities prohibited women from attending public and private health education centres in Kandahar province, and women and girls in this province cannot study in these institutions. On 8 August 2023, the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) verbally instructed officials and school administrators in Ghazni province not to allow girls over the age of ten and those with tall stature to enter school, even if they are students of grades 1-6.

In Bamiyan province, a private school was secretly conducting classes for girls deprived of education. The school was identified by the intelligence department of the Taliban in October 2023 and their programs were halted.

⁷ The Taliban, as the governing group with political power, are obligated to adhere to the commitments and regulations outlined in all international human rights documents to which Afghanistan has previously acceded.

⁸ UNGA, Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Adopted in 1948, Article 26. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted in 1966, Article 13.

⁹ Taliban Ministry of Higher Education Affairs, Letter No 3519, 28 January 2023



On 16 June 2023, the MPVPV and the provincial department of Education in Ghazni province banned girls from learning English and computer skills in private educational centres, and warned private educational institutions to stop their activities for girls. There are also instances where Taliban authorities have arrested and imprisoned heads of private educational centres for teaching English to girls. For example, on 23 September, the Taliban's department of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice detained the head of a private English language education centre in Ghazni province for allowing girls to attend classes.

Similarly, during the months of September and October 2023, the intelligence department of the Taliban detained three staff of private educational centres in Daikundi province for teaching English and computer skills to girls, and closed down their centres. Similarly, in Herat province, the Intelligence department of the Taliban closed down at least three educational and artistic centres in September and November 2023 for providing educational opportunities to girls.

2 - DEPRIVATION OF THE RIGHT TO WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

Equal access to the right to work and employment is another human right. This right is identified and guaranteed in international human rights treaties. Any discrimination and exception based on gender, ethnicity, religion, and language in accessing the right to work is prohibited¹⁰. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women obligates member states to eliminate all forms of employment discrimination against women and take effective measures to create conditions for access to employment opportunities based on the principle of gender equality¹¹. However, during their nearly three years of governance in Afghanistan, Taliban have issued decrees, declarations, and numerous regulations prohibiting women from working in national and international government and non-governmental institutions, embassies, media, and sports, artistic and cultural sectors. Currently, only female teachers in primary schools up to sixth grade and employees in health departments, mainly in provincial centres, are allowed to continue their work, subject to observing the hijab and having a male guardian (Mahram). Following are a few examples of new and increasing restrictions on women's employment in 2023:

On 5 April 2023, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan announced that the Taliban had informed them that no woman would have the right to work with United Nations entities.¹²

On 6 June 2023, the Head of the Department of Migrants and Returnees Affairs of Kandahar Province warned all non-governmental organizations active in the province and working on migration and refugee issues to uphold the Taliban leader's order on banning women from work.¹³

¹⁰ United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, Article 23. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted in 1966, Articles 6 and 7

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979, Article 11.

¹² The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan "UNAMA protests against the Taliban's directive banning women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan," April 5, 2023, Kabul: https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2023-04-05_-_un_protests_order_from_taliban_dfa_prohibiting_afghan_women_from_working_the_un_in_afghanistan_dari_0.pdf

¹³ The Directorate of Coordination of Non-Governmental Organizations, Financial Determination and Coordination, Ministry of Economy, Taliban, Letter No. 4293.



On 23 November 2023, in Nimruz Province, Taliban collectively expelled women from health sectors and replaced them with male employees.

Additionally, in some parts of the country, Taliban closed the gates of vocational training centres to women, restricting women's access to training and destroying the future possibility of employment. For instance, in July 2023, the Department of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Kandahar Province blocked a tailoring centre created for women, depriving them of this opportunity. In a similar move in August 2023, in Daikundi Province the local authorities closed a vocational training centre for women supported by the 'Agha Khan Foundation' and mistreated the head of the NGO's local office. They also warned other NGOs in the province against providing any vocational training to women. In July 2023, in Khost Province, the activities of an NGO that focused on awareness raising among women was halted by the local provincial officials.

LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Access to healthcare services and care is recognized as a human right for all individuals in international human rights treaties, and intentionally depriving individuals of this right based on gender or other reasons is prohibited.¹⁴ Taliban's restrictive measures on women has limited women's access to healthcare services.

Women are banned from leaving their homes to access and receive healthcare services without a male companion according to the orders issued by MPVPV. Numerous examples illustrate mistreatment of women who have visited healthcare centres without the accompaniment of a male guardian.

On 24 October, officials of the Public Health Department in Bamiyan Province informed female nurses, women working in pharmacies, and female doctors that they are not allowed to continue their duties without a male guardian accompanying them. Meanwhile, in Nimruz province, the Taliban's Public Health Department expelled over 100 women who were working in healthcare sector and replaced them with local Taliban's male relatives. These discriminatory policies have implications for female patients utilizing the healthcare facilities.

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

In the past nearly three years, Taliban have restricted the freedom of movement and access of women to recreational and sports facilities, parks, and even religious sites. In 2023, Taliban further increased these instructions and took further steps for enforcement.

There are numerous reports of Taliban mistreatment of women who were not accompanied by men, especially by the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. Women have been detained and tortured for being outside without a male companion.

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, Article 25. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted in 1966, Article 12.



For instance, on 24 September 2023, the Vice and Virtue department in Bamiyan province publicly lashed two young women for not adhering to the department's regulations regarding the veil, in the presence of dozens of people in the city. In another similar incident in the same province, the employees of Vice and Virtue subjected two young women to violence and mistreatment for wearing white shoes.

In Kandahar, Taliban interrogate women who have a mahram and examine their identification cards to ensure their familial relationship with the accompanying men. In Herat province, Taliban inspect vehicles to identify women without male companions and prevent their travel. On 17 July 2023, MPVPV department in this province warned taxi drivers and three-wheeler operators that if they had women and girl passengers not wearing the full Hijab, the drivers would be detained and imprisoned. Additionally, the MPVPV in the Helmand province's Lashkar Gah city regularly monitor the women's market to identify women who have ventured out alone for shopping. They subject these women and girls to humiliation, insult, and mistreatment. They have instructed market vendors not to allow women inside their shops; instead, women must view desired items from outside the shop, and at the shop entrance.

On 26 August 2023, Taliban's Minister for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice travelled to Bamiyan and warned that from then on, women were not allowed to go to the market, Band-e Amir National Park, and other cultural and historical sites without full Hijab and a male companion. Since then, the employees of provincial MPVPV department have been monitoring women's attire by setting up inspection checkpoints. Whenever a woman leaves her house without Taliban-mandated hijab, or is not accompanied by a male from her immediate family, they are escorted back to their homes from the checkpoints. Meanwhile, in Nimruz province, the Taliban have prohibited women from participating in religious ceremonies and even going to mosques.

LACK OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Since Taliban came to power, various forms of harassment, abuse, and violence against women have increased across the country. Taliban have repealed previous laws and dismantled specialized institutions created to address crimes of violence against women. In the absence of laws and institutions to prevent violence against women and hold perpetrators to account, women who are victims of violence cannot access justice. Additionally, due to Taliban's misogynistic and discriminatory approach dominating the judicial system, women subjected to violence and mistreatment face exacerbated harm while seeking justice and remedies.

Rawadari's findings illustrate that Taliban deal with cases related to women's personal affairs in a discriminatory manner and either do not address cases of violence against women or decide against the victims. Currently, in Taliban judicial institutions, no formal proceedings are conducted based on complaints from women victims of violence, and serious criminal cases involving women are either



resolved in Taliban's religious courts or referred to non-judicial mechanisms such as local councils (Jirga).¹⁵

In Ghazni province, judicial and legal institutions do not allow women who are victims of violence to enter these institutions without a mahram. Subsequently, women who are subjected to violence and mistreatment by their relatives and family members cannot resort to Taliban judicial and legal institutions for justice. Furthermore, in cases of violence against women, Taliban judicial and legal institutions do not allow the presence and participation of defines lawyers.

In Kandahar province, the authorities of the Department of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice detain women who flee their homes along with other female detainees. All the staff of the Department of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in this province are men, which has raised concerns about the safety of women detainees. There are also cases where the staff of this department have imprisoned women who have used taxis and transportation without a male guardian, holding them in detention with no certainty and sometimes for several days.

¹⁵ Rawadari. Report on the Status of Access to Justice in the Judicial System of the Taliban, June 2023.. <https://rawadari.org/040620231612.htm/>

Photo (C) Sohrab Omar



PART THREE:
CONCLUSION AND
RECOMMENDATIONS



PART THREE – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

As the findings of this report have indicated, the human rights situation in Afghanistan has worsened in 2023. This is evident in the increasing limitations on the rights of women and girls, in increase in number of targeted, suspicious, and extrajudicial killings, the continuation of deadly and retaliatory attacks against former government officials and their families, torture, mistreatment, and killing of prisoners, enforced disappearances, and the violent suppression of civil and political rights, well as the imposition of strict restrictions on access to information.

The human rights situation of Afghan women and girls is devastating and unlike anywhere else in the world. Afghan women and girls are now deprived of their most basic human rights such as the right to work, the right to education, and the rights to freedom of movement, and Taliban, without any accountability or responsibility, continue to commit further discrimination and violations of rights and freedoms of women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address the current state of human rights in Afghanistan and to prevent irreparable harm, Rawadari makes the following recommendations to the international community and de-facto authorities.

To the de facto authorities:

- We urge the de facto authorities to fulfill their legal obligations and commitments to respect & uphold Afghanistan's international human rights commitments. They must take action to prevent further violations of the human rights of the people of Afghanistan.
- We demand that the de facto authorities respect the fundamental rights of women, ethnic and religious minorities and other marginalized groups as integral parts of the Afghan society. They must take practical measures to uphold the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of women and all communities in Afghanistan.
- We demand that the de facto authorities put an end to the extrajudicial killings of former government employees, human rights defenders, opponents, and critics. They should take actions to ensure the safety and security of former government employees and announce and implement measures in this regard. Additionally, they should publicly report on their efforts to investigate suspicious and targeted killings.
- We demand that the de facto authorities put an end to their arbitrary and unlawful detentions, torture, and mistreatment of prisoners and facilitate regular and unannounced monitoring of all places of detention by human rights organizations.
- We demand that the de facto authorities pay particular attention to the clearance of areas



contaminated with explosive remnants of war and take urgent effective measures in this regard to save lives.

To the international community:

- We demand the international community to take effective action using legal tools and international human rights mechanisms to hold Taliban accountable for widespread human rights violations, particularly the widespread and systematic discrimination against women and girls. All available mechanisms and strategies, including the United Nations Human Rights Council and its relevant mechanisms, the International Criminal Court, International Court of Justice and other relevant bodies, should be utilized to hold the de-facto authorities accountable.
- The global community, including regional countries and Islamic nations, must acknowledge the gender apartheid in Afghanistan and devise appropriate and proportionate response.
- We urge the international community to take action to ensure the safety and security of former government employees and their families in Afghanistan, who are at risk of retaliation by the Taliban. In this regard, the international community should seek assurances from the de-facto authorities. Additionally, a safe and impartial mechanism should be developed to track and resolve complaints of victims and survivors about abuse and harassment.
- We call on UNAMA to investigate the situation of prisons under the control of the Taliban, particularly incidents of torture and mistreatment of prisoners, as well as the existence of private and unlawful prisons. We urge them to share their findings with the people of Afghanistan and human rights organizations.

The background is a solid dark blue. On the right side, there are several overlapping light blue geometric shapes: a large circle at the bottom right, a smaller circle above it, and several elongated, rounded rectangular shapes radiating from the top right towards the center. The text is positioned in the bottom left corner.

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