



UN RELEASES REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN (15 AUGUST 2021 – 15 JUNE 2022)

KABUL, 20 July - The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today released a report (*Human rights in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021 – 15 June 2022*) outlining the human rights situation in Afghanistan over the 10 months since the Taliban takeover.

The report summarises UNAMA's findings with regards to the protection of civilians, extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detentions, the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, fundamental freedoms and the situation in places of detention. The report also contains recommendations to both the *de facto* authorities and the international community.

Despite an overall, significant reduction in armed violence, between mid-August 2021 and mid-June 2022, UNAMA recorded 2106 civilian casualties (700 killed, 1406 wounded). The majority of civilian casualties were attributed to targeted attacks by the armed group self-identified "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province" against ethnic and religious minority communities in places where they go to school, worship and go about their daily lives.

"It is beyond time for all Afghans to be able to live in peace and rebuild their lives after 20 years of armed conflict. Our monitoring reveals that despite the improved security situation since 15 August, the people of Afghanistan, in particular women and girls, are deprived of the full enjoyment of their human rights," said Markus Potzel, Acting Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan.

While the *de facto* authorities have taken some steps seemingly aimed at the protection and promotion of human rights, such as the amnesty for former government officials and security force members, the 3 December decree on women's rights and a code of conduct relating to prisoners, they also bear responsibility for a broad range of human rights violations.

The erosion of women's rights has been one of the most notable aspects of the *de facto* administration to date. Since 15 August, women and girls have progressively had their rights to fully participate in education, the workplace and other aspects of public and daily life restricted and in many cases completely taken away. The decision not to allow girls to return to secondary school means that a generation of girls will not complete their full 12 years of basic education. At the same time, access to justice for victims of gender-based violence has been limited by the dissolution of dedicated reporting pathways, justice mechanisms and shelters.

"The education and participation of women and girls in public life is fundamental to any modern society. The relegation of women and girls to the home denies Afghanistan the benefit of the significant contributions they have to offer. Education for all is not only a basic human right, it is the key to progress and development of a nation," said the UN envoy.



On 17 August 2021, the *de facto* authorities announced an amnesty for former government officials and Afghan National Security and Defense Force members. This amnesty does not, however, appear to have been consistently upheld, with UNAMA recording at least 160 extrajudicial killings of former government and security officials by members of the *de facto* authorities between 15 August 2021 and 15 June 2022.

UNAMA is concerned about the impunity with which members of the *de facto* authorities appear to have carried out human rights violations. UNAMA's report details extrajudicial killings of individuals accused of affiliation with armed groups, as well as cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments and extrajudicial killings of individuals accused of "moral" crimes and the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials. Human rights violations must be investigated by the *de facto* authorities, perpetrators held accountable, and ultimately, incidents should be prevented from reoccurring in the future.

UNAMA's report highlights specific concerns with respect to two bodies within the *de facto* authorities – the *de facto* Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (*Amr bil Maruf*) and the *de facto* General Directorate of Intelligence (*Istikhbarat*). Many of the directives issued by the *de facto* Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice limit the human rights and freedoms of Afghans, in particular women and girls. Although such directives are said to be recommendatory in nature, at times members of the *de facto* authorities have taken a harsh stance on their implementation, including carrying out physical punishments for alleged infringements of their directives.

Officials of *de facto Istikhbarat* have been identified for their particularly severe treatment of people deprived of their liberty. UNAMA's report details instances where the *de facto Istikhbarat* was involved in perpetrating human rights violations against individuals in their custody, including extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, as well as arbitrary arrests and detentions.

In the 10 months since they took control of Afghanistan, the *de facto* authorities have made clear their position on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. They have limited dissent by cracking down on protests and curbing media freedoms, including by arbitrarily arresting journalists, protestors and civil society activists and issuing restrictions on media outlets.

"The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion are not only fundamental freedoms, they are necessary for the development and progression of a nation. They allow meaningful debate to flourish, also benefiting those who govern by allowing them to better understand the issues and problems facing the population," said Fiona Frazer, UNAMA Chief of Human Rights.

With regards to places of detention: encouragingly, the *de facto* authorities do appear to be seeking to fulfil their obligations in relation to the treatment of detainees, with the Taliban leader having issued guidance on this issue in January 2022. Progress is hindered by financial constraints, resulting at times, in inadequate food, medical care and hygiene supplies for detainees and the cessation of vocational education and training programs for prisoners that were previously funded by the international community.



This is compounded by detainees remaining in extended pre-trial detention in some cases, due to the functioning of the justice system.

The human rights situation has been exacerbated by a nationwide economic, financial and humanitarian crisis of unprecedented scale. At least 59% of the population is now in need of humanitarian assistance – an increase of 6 million people compared with the beginning of 2021. UNAMA’s report calls on the international community to continue its support for the people of Afghanistan by ensuring that urgent humanitarian and basic needs are met. Further, the international community has an obligation to ensure that sanctions, while they remain in place, do not have a negative impact on human rights.

The findings and recommendations contained in the report reflect many of the concerns raised by UNAMA with a number of *de facto* entities over the past 10 months. UNAMA has appreciated the level of engagement to date and remains committed to supporting the *de facto* authorities in protecting and promoting the human rights of all Afghan women, men, girls and boys.

“As reflected by the United Nations Security Council in the extension of UNAMA’s mandate, Afghanistan as a state remains party to a number of instruments concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms. With this in mind, I urge the *de facto* authorities to do their utmost to address the concerns outlined in our report and meet their international obligations to protect and promote the human rights of all Afghans,” said Marcus Potzel, Acting Secretary General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan.

Key findings for the period 15 August 2021 – 15 June 2022:

Over the reporting period, UNAMA documented:

- **2106 civilian casualties** (700 killed, 1406 wounded) predominantly caused by improvised explosive device (IED) attacks attributed to ISIL-KP and unexploded ordnance (UXO).
- 160 extrajudicial killings, 178 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 23 instances of incommunicado detention and 56 instances of torture and ill-treatment of **former ANDSF and government officials** carried out by the *de facto* authorities.
- 59 extrajudicial killings, 22 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 7 incidents of torture and ill-treatment by the *de facto* authorities of individuals accused of affiliation with **self-identified “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province”**.
- 18 extrajudicial killings, 54 instances of torture and ill-treatment and 113 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention and 23 cases of incommunicado detention of individuals accused of **affiliation with self-identified “National Resistance Front”**.
- **217 instances of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments** carried out by the *de facto* authorities since 15 August 2021



- 118 instances of **excessive use of force** by the *de facto* authorities between 15 August 2021 and 15 June 2022.
- Human rights violations affecting 173 **journalists and media workers**, 163 of which were attributed to the *de facto* authorities. Among these were 122 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention, 58 instances of ill-treatment, 33 instances of threats and intimidation and 12 instances of incommunicado detention.¹ Six journalists were also killed during the period (five by self-identified Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province, one by unknown perpetrators).
- Human rights violations affecting 65 **human rights defenders**, 64 of which were attributed to the *de facto* authorities. Among these were 47 arbitrary arrests, 17 cases of incommunicado detention, 10 cases of ill-treatment and 17 cases of threats and intimidation.

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¹ Since one individual may have suffered more than one violation (e.g., one person may have been arbitrarily arrested, held incommunicado, tortured and/or threatened), the number of violations is higher than the number of individuals affected.