POLICY OPTIONS FOR PREVENTING MASS ATROCITIES IN AFGHANISTAN

Atrocity Assessment Workshop

SUMMARY REPORT AUGUST 2023

United States Institute of Peace

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide

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This report was jointly produced by the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide and the United States Institute of Peace.

COVER: A walk on the first day of Ramadan on the hills in west Kabul, Afghanistan, April 24, 2020. Nearly a year since the Taliban seized power, in Aug. 2021, schools and jobs are again off-limits for women, music has been banned, and beards are mandatory for men — just as it was in the 1990s. *Jim Huylebroek/The New York Times/Redux*

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Map of Afghanistan. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

INTRODUCTION

In March 2023, the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the United States Institute of Peace convened activists, researchers, civil society practitioners, and policy makers for an Afghanistan Atrocity Assessment Workshop. This workshop sought to (1) assess mass atrocity risks for particular groups; (2) identify plausible worst-case scenarios of mass atrocities based on current and foreseeable dynamics; and (3) brainstorm potential policy responses to anticipate, prevent, or respond to those particular scenarios and other potential mass atrocities.

This summary focuses on (1) atrocity trends and scenarios participants raised as requiring the international community's attention and (2) proposed policy recommendations to anticipate, prevent, or respond to mass atrocities in Afghanistan. The appendices detail the background materials shared with workshop participants.

TRENDS AND SCENARIOS OF INCREASED VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS

Afghanistan currently ranks seventh in the world for risk of a new onset of mass killing of civilians and has ranked among the ten highest-risk countries in the Early Warning Project's assessment for the last eight years.[1]

The strongest predictors of mass atrocity onset[2]—large-scale instability, armed conflict, exclusionary ideology, and prior discrimination and violence—are all present in Afghanistan.[3] Multiple civilian groups have endured attacks in the past and remain vulnerable. Groups at particular risk include ethnic and religious minorities (particularly the Hazara community), women and girls (particularly educated and professional women), individuals affiliated with the former government and perceived opposition groups (particularly former security personnel), the LGBTQIA+ community, media workers, activists, and other civil society actors. The irregular government transition in 2021 following the Taliban takeover has heightened atrocity risks for a wide range of groups.

See Appendix B for a description of the potential perpetrators and vulnerable groups within Afghanistan.

Several uncertainties remain regarding the nature and severity of risks for vulnerable groups in Afghanistan and the dynamics between potential perpetrators. The limits on available information because of the Taliban's restrictive policies and the dangerous operating environment for reporters and other members of civil society make understanding current dynamics and trends significantly more difficult.

However, workshop participants outlined particular dynamics the international community should monitor that may indicate increased atrocity risk, including:

- **The Taliban's alleged use of social media to target vulnerable groups**, including to threaten activists, to spread hate speech against the Hazara community and other minorities, and to target former government personnel. Hate speech and public threats may seek to create an enabling environment for violence against vulnerable groups, as the Taliban seeks to place them outside of mainstream Afghan society.

- **The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan may aggravate mass atrocity risks facing particular communities and increase civilian deaths**. Participants noted that the Taliban is intercepting humanitarian assistance and using it to drive their political agenda and/or to deepen discrimination against vulnerable communities. Participants noted the importance of ensuring and monitoring access to food aid (nearly 20 million people currently face acute food insecurity)[4] and other critical resources for communities made vulnerable by the Taliban. Additionally, participants advised monitoring aid distribution in order to flag potential Taliban diversions or potential weaponization of access to assistance.

- **Increased extremism**: One participant suggested that violent extremism and exclusionary ideology among several groups are root causes for the continued conflict and targeted attacks on vulnerable communities. Thus the broader issue of radicalization should also be monitored and addressed.

Participants identified a few potential scenarios that could result in increased violence against civilians, including:

- **Expanded armed conflict**: Participants noted the continued political, social, and economic exclusion of particular communities, namely ethnic and religious minorities and perceived opposition groups, could fuel armed resistance with the potential to spiral into a civil war. One participant suggested that when the Taliban perceive they are under threat, their tactics become more brutal, including retributive violence against perceived opponents and their families (such as in the Panjshir Valley). Participants also cautioned that the Taliban's grip on the state has limited the ability of civil society and the international community to monitor their activities. This could embolden perpetrators, including the Taliban, to carry out more widespread abuses against particular communities by allowing them to act with relative impunity.

- **The onset of warmer weather:** With warmer weather and increased mobility, participants pointed to the potential for increased forced displacement and violence perpetrated by the Taliban and Kuchis against minorities such as Hazaras and Uzbeks.

- **Natural disasters***:* One participant noted that considering Afghanistan's susceptibility to natural disasters and the ways natural disasters (including drought) may exacerbate conflict dynamics,[5] a natural disaster could pose an increased risk for violence targeting civilians, particularly given the humanitarian crisis threatening food security in Afghanistan.

POLICY OPTIONS TO HELP PREVENT ATROCITIES

The ongoing attacks and immediate risks of mass atrocities for multiple groups necessitate urgent, coordinated, and creative action to prevent escalation and promote redress. Participants discussed a range of policy options that correspond to the following complementary strategies aimed at preventing mass atrocities in Afghanistan. Note the following options do not contain the full list of potential policy responses to anticipate, prevent, or respond to the particular scenarios outlined above and other potential mass atrocities; however, they offer a starting point for further discussion.

The Simon-Skjodt Center's Tools for Atrocity Prevention project can serve as a resource for thinking through policy responses to the situation in Afghanistan.[6]

To protect vulnerable civilian populations:

- **Engage with representatives of the affected communities** to gain a clearer understanding of the mass atrocity risks faced. Participants stressed the need to engage in particular with members of the Hazara community, considering the ongoing and historic persecution they have faced. Additionally, members of the Afghanistan diaspora should be consulted by international actors developing atrocity prevention policies to ensure their interests and expertise are taken into account.

- **Support civilian self-protection efforts** considering the imminent risks for people—including human rights defenders, especially women protesters—who may be targeted for resisting the Taliban. The international community should allocate resources to provide these groups—who are best placed to identify their needs for protection—with physical safety, protection, and other forms of support.

- **Provide digital security training to civil society actors** to ensure human rights defenders, activists, and other civil society actors are equipped with best practices for identifying and mitigating risks they may face operating online. This may include training so that they can protect their personal information and communications both on- and offline. The international community should also proactively explore ways to facilitate human rights defenders, activists, and other civil society actors' access to the internet and social media, in the event the Taliban disallow its use.

- **Support local education efforts,** such as by working with representatives of affected communities in Afghanistan to develop locally-led education efforts like those the Hazara community has established over decades. International actors should also exert pressure on the Taliban to **ensure all civilians across the country have unhindered access to education.** Education can empower civilians to navigate state processes more effectively, decreasing their marginalization. To address the situation's urgency, international actors could support online education for groups who have faced attacks in schools—like girls and/or members of the Hazara community—so that they may pursue educational opportunities

more safely. However, it is important to note this would only temporarily address this critical problem while long-term solutions are pursued.

To degrade potential perpetrators' capacity to commit atrocities:

- **Restrict the Taliban's access to weapons**. Current sanctions, as one participant noted, have not reduced the weapons flow to the country. Participants encouraged international and regional actors to explore what other economic mechanisms could be used to reduce the flow of resources enabling abuses. However, one participant raised concerns that sanctions would adversely affect civilians in Afghanistan. One participant also recommended a strategy used by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar to **publicly call out the countries financing the flow of weapons to Afghanistan**.[7]

- **Develop technological systems to limit the Taliban's capability to commit mass atrocities,** such as potentially deactivating phone systems that the Taliban use—and which have reportedly become more sophisticated—to target and track perceived opposition actors.

- **Impose greater costs on the Taliban to prevent mass atrocities.** Considering the limits of international justice mechanisms and the current absence of domestic recourse, options could include, in the US context, publicly recognizing mass atrocity crimes and issuing Global Magnitsky sanctions to impose costs on and delegitimize perpetrators.

To dissuade potential perpetrators from committing mass atrocities:

- **Pursue accountability options:**
    - **Involve regional countries that may be able to exert pressure on the Taliban and other potential perpetrators to dissuade the commission of mass atrocities,** such as by holding private bilateral meetings with Taliban officials to call for halting abuses and for protecting communities and groups made vulnerable. One participant suggested regional countries may consider exploring the nexus of Islam and transitional justice as a means for bringing accountability to perpetrators of mass atrocity crimes and shifting the international discourse toward how Taliban and other armed groups' actions violate Islamic laws.

    - **Consult with civil society organizations in and from Afghanistan** to explore their views on which options for justice and accountability for mass atrocities they may support and see as feasible. The international community should exercise diligence in identifying CSOs to consult, considering reports of the Taliban and their supporters establishing CSOs and making international and local CSOs hire people they recommend.

    - **Coordinate efforts to support accountability initiatives**, informed by the demands and expertise of Afghan civil society organizations, which—as participants noted—should take a holistic approach to address alleged violations by all perpetrators both before and after August 2021.

- **Strengthen monitoring and documentation of abuses:**
    - **Map the organizations seeking to address and document mass atrocity and other human rights abuses in Afghanistan and ensure they have adequate resources and that their efforts are**

coordinated. This effort should follow a "do no harm" approach, considering the security constraints and risks members of Afghan civil society face. Additionally, organizations monitoring risks should work with established non-governmental organizations and local civil society organizations. This would help advance early warning and monitoring efforts by ensuring organizations enhance instead of duplicate efforts. Notably, the UN Human Rights Council recently expanded the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan's mandate to include "the responsibility to document and preserve information relating to human rights violations and abuses."[8] Coordination among and support for groups conducting documentation efforts could strengthen the Special Rapporteur's expanded mandate.

- To expand documentation efforts, participants suggested creating a **secure online mechanism for civilians in Afghanistan to report human rights abuses**. This information could then be verified by experts and preserved for potential future use in accountability mechanisms.
- **Focus intelligence collection efforts on atrocity risk indicators and trends** to help advance early warning efforts. The US government and other countries with these capabilities should advance these efforts.

APPENDIX A: APPLYING TOOLS FOR ATROCITY PREVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN

The Simon-Skjodt Center's Tools for Atrocity Prevention project can serve as a resource for thinking through atrocity prevention responses to the situation in Afghanistan.[9] The resource encourages practitioners to consider the most relevant types of atrocity prevention strategies with the goal of producing more effective responses. These strategies include:

- Dissuading potential perpetrators from committing mass atrocities,
- Degrading potential perpetrators' capacity to commit atrocities,
- Protecting vulnerable civilian populations, and
- Facilitating leadership or political transition.

The resource also highlights nearly two dozen atrocity prevention tools as a prompt for considering the actions potentially helpful in preventing or responding to mass atrocities. These tools include:

- Arms embargoes
- Bilateral diplomacy
- Comprehensive economic sanctions
- Cyber attacks
- Development assistance
- Diplomatic sanctions
- Fact finding
- Mediation
- Military intervention
- Military presence
- Multilateral diplomacy
- Naming & shaming
- Official amnesties
- Peace operations
- Prosecutions
- Public diplomacy
- Refugee protection
- Security assistance
- Security guarantees
- Support to civilian self-protection
- Support to non-state armed groups
- Targeted sanctions
- Trade or investment incentives

For more information on this resource, visit https://preventiontools.ushmm.org/.

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND ON MASS ATROCITY RISKS IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan currently ranks seventh in the world for risk of a new onset of mass killing of civilians and has ranked among the ten highest-risk countries in the Early Warning Project's assessment for the last eight years.[10]

The strongest predictors of mass atrocity onset—large-scale instability, armed conflict, exclusionary ideology, and prior discrimination and violence—are all present in Afghanistan.[11] Multiple civilian groups have endured attacks in the past and remain vulnerable.

Mass atrocities refer to "large-scale, systematic violence against civilian populations."[12] Types of mass atrocities include, but are not limited to, genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and mass killing.[13]

This is not a comprehensive account of these dynamics. Further documentation of abuses and analysis of potential perpetrators, targeted groups, and plausible mass atrocity scenarios are needed.

I. Perpetrators

The Taliban is a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist group formed in the 1990s, composed primarily of ethnic Pashtun members.[14] The group controlled the majority of Afghanistan and instituted oppressive practices from 1996 to 2001. Following the US government's withdrawal in August 2021, the Taliban seized power from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Since August 2021, the Taliban have sought to solidify its control over the country by enforcing a strict interpretation of Sharia law and discriminating against members of ethnic and religious minorities, restricting women's rights, and perpetrating abuses against perceived opposition, among other alleged human rights violations. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the Taliban committed the majority of reported violent acts against civilians[15] in Afghanistan between August 15, 2021, through February 2023.[16]

ISIS-K is the Afghanistan affiliate of the Islamic State group seeking to ultimately "establish a pan-Islamic caliphate."[17] It appears "ISIS-K's ultimate strategic end is to establish a "pure" Islamic system in Afghanistan," involving a campaign of highly-lethal violence marked by a "broad-reaching anti-Taliban and anti-Afghan religious minorities agenda."[18] Since 2015, ISIS-K[19] caused over 7,000 civilian casualties (including fatalities and injuries) in Afghanistan.[20] The majority of attacks have targeted ethnic and religious minorities.[21] In particular, Shia minorities—who ISIS-K views as heretics—have faced targeting.[22] According to experts, civilian risks posed by ISIS-K, while already increased, are expected to worsen: "Given the absence of multilateral counterterrorism pressure, the Taliban's limited capacity to govern, and a worsening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, ISK now finds itself perhaps in the most permissive environment yet to rebuild, rally, and expand."[23]

The Taliban and ISIS-K are two of the main identified perpetrators of reported attacks against civilians in Afghanistan. However, according to ACLED, **unidentified armed groups** committed nearly a quarter of reported violent acts against civilians from August 15, 2021, through February 2023.[24] Impunity following attacks, Taliban-enforced limitations on media coverage, and potential incentives for perpetrators to favor anonymity contribute to the uncertainty surrounding who has committed attacks.

II. Vulnerable groups

The level of detail for each group in this section is not indicative of threat severity. As stated, further analysis and documentation of abuses are necessary to better assess risks facing groups across Afghanistan.

Ethnic and religious minorities

The majority of civilian casualties in the first ten months of Taliban control were attributed to ISIS-K against ethnic and religious minorities.[25] According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, perpetrators waged 22 attacks against civilians from August 30, 2021, through September 30, 2022, 16 of which targeted the Hazara community.[26] ISIS-K has claimed responsibility for 13 documented attacks against the Hazara community,[27] who have faced violence and discrimination for over a century and particularly during the last period of Taliban rule.[28] These attacks have killed and injured hundreds of people across heavily populated areas, including mosques, public transit, and education centers.[29] The UN Special Rapporteur has described these attacks against ethnic and religious minorities as appearing "systematic in nature" and "bearing hallmarks of international crimes, including crimes against humanity."[30]

Reported attacks against Shia minorities have included, but are not limited to, the following:

- On September 30, 2022, a suicide attack killed more than 50—mostly women and girls—and injured more than 100 people at an education center in the predominantly Hazara Dasht-e Barchi neighborhood of Kabul.[31]
- In August 2022, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for multiple attacks targeting predominantly Shia areas.[32]
- In April 2022, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for multiple explosions in Mazar-e Sharif that killed at least 37 people and wounded many more.[33]
- Earlier in April 2022, multiple explosions targeted education centers in Dasht-e Barchi, killing at least 18 and wounding at least 50 people.[34]
- In October 2021, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for attacks on two Shia mosques in Kandahar and Kunduz, killing at least 135 people.[35]

The Taliban have reportedly committed recent targeted abuses against the Hazara community:

- In November 2022, the Taliban allegedly killed at least nine people, including children, in Daikundi province.[36]
- As of July 2022, reports indicate a Taliban military campaign in Balkhab district against a former Hazara official in the de facto authorities displaced at least 27,000 primarily Hazara people from their homes.[37]
- In June 2022, the Taliban allegedly executed six Hazaras during a night raid, appearing also to target individuals affiliated with the former government.[38]
- Shortly after seizing control, the Taliban allegedly killed 13 Hazaras in Daikundi province[39] and forcibly displaced thousands of Hazaras across several provinces, claiming the community had disputed rights to the land and allegedly "partly to distribute land to their own supporters."[40] Members of the Hazara community indicate these forced displacements have continued despite diminished media reports.[41]

The de facto authorities have reportedly not cooperated with Hazara community members' requests for protection, even with the apparent trend in targeted attacks.[42]

Risks for violence also extend to Sufis and Sikhs. Between April and June 2022, ISIS-K targeted its attacks against Sufis alongside Hazaras, according to the US Defense Department.[43] Two Sufi mosques were attacked in Kabul and Kunduz province in April 2022, killing an estimated 80 people.[44] In June 2022, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for an attack on a Sikh temple in Kabul, which killed at least two people and injured seven others.[45]

According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, other ethnic and religious minorities, including Hindus, Ahmadiyya Muslims, Baha'is, and Christians, may face increased risk of violence.[46]

Uzbek and Tajik communities have also reported threats and forced displacement by the de facto authorities since August 2021.[47] Additionally, Turks have reported increased risks.

Women and girls

Since August 2021, the Taliban have "systematically excluded" women and girls from Afghan society, limiting their freedom of movement and access to employment, education, and other essential services.[48] Concerning developments include, but are not limited to, the following:

- In November and December 2022, the Taliban issued bans on Afghan women working for non-governmental organizations, attending universities, and using parks and gyms.[49]
- While likely underreported, women and girls have experienced increased gender-based violence and political violence, and continued risks linked to a combination of factors, including lack of institutional support and accountability mechanisms, home confinement, and an absence of basic rights.[50]
- The Taliban have led violent crackdowns on several women-led protests.[51]
- Reports indicate the Taliban forcibly disappeared women activists throughout 2022.[52]

Women and girls from ethnic and religious minorities face compounded risks, as recent and past violent attacks against Hazara women demonstrate.[53]

Amid the Taliban's increasing restrictions and abuses, in November 2022, a group of UN experts suggested these actions "be investigated as gender persecution with a view to prosecutions under international law."[54]

Individuals affiliated with the former government and perceived opposition groups

Reports indicate the Taliban have committed revenge killings, collective punishment, and other abuses against individuals affiliated with the former government, or they perceive as affiliated with opposition groups.[55] Concerning developments include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Nearly 500 former Afghan National Defence and Security Forces members and former government officials were reportedly killed or forcibly disappeared in the first six months after the Taliban takeover,[56] with indications this targeting is ongoing.[57]
- ACLED and Afghan Peace Watch report Taliban attacks on former government and security personnel accounted for nearly 30 percent of the de facto authorities' violent attacks against civilians from August 15, 2021, to April 2022.[58]
- The Taliban have allegedly committed targeted killings, detainment, and torture of civilians they alleged to be affiliated with the National Resistance Front in Panjshir.[59] Additionally, the UN Special Rapporteur has reported "heavy suppression of communities" in Panjshir, including home searches, looting, movement restrictions, and an information blackout, among other abuses.[60]
- The de facto authorities have reportedly beaten, detained, forcibly disappeared, and killed alleged ISIS-K members or supporters.[61]

According to the US State Department, "The Taliban did not report formal efforts to hold their police or militia accountable for these abuses," and "No domestic organization was allowed to investigate abuses and killings in the country" in 2022.[62]

The LGBTQIA+ community

The Taliban have reportedly targeted members of the LGBTQIA+ community, including through alleged torture, beatings, killings, and arrests.[63] A report by OutRight Action International and Human Rights Watch detailed increased threats facing LGBTQIA+ individuals—including sexual assault and other physical attacks—in Afghanistan within the first several months of Taliban control.[64] In a recent Protection Approaches report, experts suggest that reports of violence and persistent threats indicate an "imminent and medium-term risk of widespread and systematic persecution of and violence against LGBTQI+ people, those who are believed to be queer, and their families" in Afghanistan.[65]

Media workers and activists

In the first ten months of Taliban control, the UN reported nearly 230 human rights violations by the Taliban against journalists, media workers, and human rights defenders, including arbitrary arrests and detention amid an increasingly hostile environment.[66] The Afghanistan Journalists Center reported a total of 260 violations [against journalists] including threats, detentions, and violent confrontations" in 2022, reflecting a 138 percent increase from 2021.[67] These groups continue to face threats and risks of violence. From December 2022 to February 2023, the UN reported "28 instances of the arbitrary arrest and detention of civil society actors and human rights defenders."[68] Further, in March 2023, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for bombing an award ceremony for journalists in Mazar-e Sharif, injuring dozens and killing three people.[69]

III. Conclusion

Other factors—including marginalization, discriminatory policies, and limited access to essential services for particular communities such as ethnic and religious minorities and women and girls, the humanitarian emergency across the country, and the rising concern surrounding the relationship between social media and violence incitement—may exacerbate the risks identified above.[70]

Several uncertainties remain regarding the nature and severity of risks for vulnerable groups in Afghanistan and the dynamics between perpetrators. The limits on available information because of the Taliban's restrictive policies and the dangerous operating environment for reporters and other members of civil society make understanding current dynamics and trends significantly more difficult. Nevertheless, the ongoing attacks and immediate risks of mass atrocities for multiple groups necessitate urgent and creative action to prevent escalation.

APPENDIX C: GUIDING AFGHANISTAN ATROCITY ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS[71]

1. What are the nature and severity of mass atrocity risks in Afghanistan, and what trends indicate these risks?

2. What are the major potential triggers (e.g., discrete events or developments) that would indicate increasing likelihood of a significant escalation of mass atrocities in Afghanistan?
    a. How might perpetrator interests and/or capabilities shift in a way that could lead to significant escalation?
    b. Based on these identified current and foreseeable dynamics, what are plausible worst-case scenarios of mass atrocities?

3. What strategies might policy makers use to anticipate, prevent, or respond to the potential escalation of mass atrocities in Afghanistan? Who and what can protect vulnerable groups from targeted attacks? What role can regional actors play in prevention?

APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM THE SIMON-SKJODT CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE AND UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

- More Dangerous By the Day: The Taliban's Attack on Women and Girls (SCPG, January 2023)
- Can the Taliban's Brazen Assault on Afghan Women Be Stopped? The audacity of the Taliban's latest bans on women in public life brings two new factors into play, which may over time lead to change (USIP, January 2023)
- The Taliban Continue to Tighten Their Grip on Afghan Women and Girls: USIP has compiled a comprehensive archive of Taliban decrees and public statements on the treatment of women and girls (USIP, December 2022)
- Taliban Escalate New Abuses Against Afghan Women, Girls: Officials, armed fighters widen 'enforcement,' beatings, puberty exams for schoolgirls (USIP, October 2022)
- Urgent Action Needed: Hazaras in Afghanistan Under Attack (SCPG, August 10, 2022)
- Four Ways the U.S. Can Help Prevent Mass Atrocities in Afghanistan: The Taliban's takeover has increased the risk of mass atrocities. Here's how the United States can help prevent them (USIP, June 2022)
- Preventing Mass Atrocities in Afghanistan: How the U.S. and International Community Can Protect Hazaras and other Vulnerable Afghans (USIP and SCPG, June 2022)
- Intolerance of Atrocity Crimes in Ukraine Should Apply to Afghanistan: The international community should use the momentum around prosecuting war crimes in Ukraine to investigate atrocities in Afghanistan — and beyond (USIP, April 2022)
- Women and Hazara in Afghanistan Face Heightened Risk of Mass Atrocities After Taliban Takeover (SCPG, September 2021)
- Museum Statement on the Hazara (SCPG August 2021)

ENDNOTES

[1] "Afghanistan," Early Warning Project, accessed January 17, 2023, https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/countries/afghanistan.

[2] Mass atrocities refer to "large-scale, systematic violence against civilian populations."# Types of mass atrocities include, but are not limited to, genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and mass killing. See "Definitions: Types of Mass Atrocities," Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, accessed March 20, 2023, https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/learn-about-genocide-and-other-mass-atrocities/definitions.

[3] See Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention* (Washington, DC: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2016), 56, ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Fundamentals-of-Genocide-and-Mass-Atrocity-Prevention.pdf.

[4] "Afghanistan emergency," World Food Programme, accessed April 2023, https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/afghanistan-emergency.

[5] Jiuping Xu et al., "Natural disasters and social conflict: A systematic literature review," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 17 (2016) 38-48; Elizabeth Ferris, "Natural Disasters, Conflict, and Human Rights: Tracing the Connections," Brookings, March 3, 2010, https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/natural-disasters-conflict-and-human-rights-tracing-the-connections/.

[6] The resource encourages practitioners to consider the most relevant types of atrocity prevention strategies with the goal of producing more effective responses. These strategies include: (1) Dissuading potential perpetrators from committing mass atrocities; (2) Degrading potential perpetrators' capacity to commit atrocities; (3) Protecting vulnerable civilian populations; and (4) Facilitating leadership or political transition. See Appendix A for the nearly two dozen atrocity prevention tools included in this resource ("Tools for Atrocity Prevention," Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, https://preventiontools.ushmm.org/).

[7] "UN expert criticizes China, Russia for arms sales to Myanmar," *AP News*, February 22, 2022, https://apnews.com/article/europe-religion-russia-china-geneva-10e9effa1106880644a9a35548477f20.

[8] "A/HRC/RES/51/20: Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 October 2022," UN Human Rights Council, October 11, 2022, 6, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/520/18/PDF/G2252018.pdf?OpenElement.

[9] "Tools for Atrocity Prevention," Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, https://preventiontools.ushmm.org/.

[10] "Afghanistan," Early Warning Project, accessed January 17, 2023, https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/countries/afghanistan.

[11] See Scott Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention* (Washington, DC: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2016), 56, ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Fundamentals-of-Genocide-and-Mass-Atrocity-Prevention.pdf.

[12] Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide*, 31.

[13] "Definitions: Types of Mass Atrocities," Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, accessed March 20, 2023, https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/learn-about-genocide-and-other-mass-atrocities/definitions.

[14] Lindsay Maizland, "The Taliban in Afghanistan," Council on Foreign Relations, last updated January 19, 2023, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan.

[15] ACLED codes the following acts as violence against civilians: sexual violence, attack, abduction/forced disappearance (see "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Codebook," ACLED, January 2021, 8, https://acleddata.com/acleddatanew/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ACLED_Codebook_v1_January-2021.pdf).

[16] Exported ACLED data of violence against civilians from August 15, 2021, through February 28, 2023 (downloaded March 14, 2023), https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/; acleddata.com.

[17] Seth G. Jones, "Countering a Resurgent Terrorist Threat in Afghanistan," Council on Foreign Relations, April 14, 2022, https://www.cfr.org/report/countering-resurgent-terrorist-threat-afghanistan.

[18] Asfandyar Mir, "The ISIS-K Resurgence," Wilson Center, October 8, 2021, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/isis-k-resurgence.

[19] In January 2016, the US State Department designated ISIS-K as a foreign terrorist organization ("Foreign Terrorist Organizations," US State Department, accessed January 17, 2023, https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/).

[20] Akmal Dawi, "Afghanistan Tops 2021 Global Survey of Islamic State Casualties," *Voice of America*, January 27, 2022, https://www.voanews.com/a/afghanistan-tops-2021-global-survey-of-islamic-state-casualties-/6415735.html.

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