

## **Research Timeframe**

The earliest source dates from 2019 and the most recent source dates from February 2022.

## **Sources Consulted**

All web sources were consulted in September and October 2021 for the October 2021 initial report and in February and March 2022 for this updated report.

### 1. Government Sources

#### a. United States – Department of State

- i. Afghanistan 2020 Human Rights Report, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/afghanistan/>)
- ii. Afghanistan 2019 Human Rights Report, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/afghanistan/>)
- iii. (Update) The 2021 Report has yet to issue. Based on the dates of the 2019 and 2020 Reports, it may issue soon later in March or April 2022.

#### b. European Union – European Asylum Support Office

- i. (Update) Afghanistan Country Focus, Country of Origin Information Report, January 2022, pp. 48-51 ([https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2022\\_01\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Report\\_Afghanistan\\_Country\\_focus.pdf](https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2022_01_EASO_COI_Report_Afghanistan_Country_focus.pdf))
- ii. Afghanistan Security situation update, Country of Origin Information Report, September 2021, pp. 14-16, 31, 33 ([https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021\\_09\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Report\\_Afghanistan\\_Security\\_situation\\_update.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021_09_EASO_COI_Report_Afghanistan_Security_situation_update.pdf))
- iii. Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021 ([https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021\\_06\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Report\\_Afghanistan\\_Security\\_situation.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021_06_EASO_COI_Report_Afghanistan_Security_situation.pdf))

#### c. Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- i. (Update) DFAT Thematic Report on Political and Security Developments in Afghanistan (August 2021 to January 2022), January 14, 2022, pp. 9-

10, 18-19 (<https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2067344/country-information-report-afghanistan.pdf>)

- ii. DFAT Country Information Report – Afghanistan, June 27, 2019, pp. 33-34 (<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/country-information-report-afghanistan.pdf>)

## 2. International Organizations

### a. United Nations

- i. **(Update)** “Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan,” Guidance Note on Afghanistan, UNCHR – The UN Refugee Agency, February 2022 (<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=61d851cd4&skip=0&coi=AFG&advsearch=y&process=y&allwords=journalist&exactphrase=&atleastone=&without=&title=&monthfrom=01&yearfrom=2021&monthto=&yearto=&coa=&language=&citation=>)
- ii. **(Update)** “Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, and technical assistance achievements in the field of human rights,” Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, January 12, 2022, pp. 11-12 ([https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A\\_HRC\\_49\\_90\\_E.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_49_90_E.pdf))
- iii. **(Update)** Special Report: Killing of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists and Media Workers in Afghanistan 2018-2021, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, February 2021, pp. 4, 7-10, 18-26 ([https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/special\\_report\\_-\\_killing\\_of\\_human\\_rights\\_defenders\\_and\\_journalists\\_2018-2021\\_-\\_unama\\_-\\_14\\_february\\_2021\\_english\\_0.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/special_report_-_killing_of_human_rights_defenders_and_journalists_2018-2021_-_unama_-_14_february_2021_english_0.pdf))
- iv. Human Rights Report 2020, pp. 341- 343 (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHRreport2020.pdf>)
- v. Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 24 August 2021 (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27403&LangID=E>)

## 3. Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

### a. Human Rights Watch

- i. **(Update)** World Report 2022: Afghanistan – Events of 2021 (<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/afghanistan#>)

- ii. World Report 2021: Afghanistan – Events of 2020  
(<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/afghanistan#>)
- iii. “Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media; Journalists Arbitrarily Detained, Beaten,” October 1, 2021  
(<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/01/afghanistan-taliban-severely-restrict-media>)
- iv. “Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Beat Journalists; New Restrictions Indicate Crackdown on Free Speech,” September 8, 2021  
(<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/08/afghanistan-taliban-severely-beat-journalists>)

b. Amnesty International

- i. **(Update)** Afghanistan Human Rights (home page for Afghanistan accessed on March 21, 2022) (<https://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/afghanistan/>)
- ii. Afghanistan 2020 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>)
- iii. Afghanistan: Taliban wasting no time in stamping out human rights says new briefing, September 20, 2021  
(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/09/afghanistan-taliban-wasting-no-time-in-stamping-out-human-rights-says-new-briefing/>)
- iv. Afghanistan: Journalists covering conflict must be protected following death of Reuters photographer, July 16, 2021  
(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/07/afghanistan-journalists-covering-conflict-must-be-protected-following-death-of-reuters-photographer-2/>)
- v. Afghanistan: Deliberate killing of civilians must be investigated following deadly attacks, June 16, 2021  
(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/afghanistan-deliberate-killing-of-civilians-must-be-investigated-following-deadly-attacks/>)
- vi. “Afghanistan: Authorities must protect journalists and journalism amid spiralling violence,” May 3, 2021  
(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/05/afghanistan-authorities-must-protect-journalists-and-journalism-amid-spiralling-violence-2/>)

c. Committee to Protect Journalists

- i. Afghanistan / Asia – 55 journalists killed since 1992, 28 of them since 2016 (<https://cpj.org/asia/afghanistan/>)

- ii. “‘A lot of uncertainty and a lot of fear’: CPJ’s María Salazar Ferro on evacuating Afghan journalists,” Naomi Zeveloff, CPJ Features Editor, September 23, 2021 (<https://cpj.org/2021/09/uncertainty-fear-maria-salazar-ferro-evacuating-afghan-journalists/>)
- iii. “Afghan journalist Mohammad Ali Ahmadi shot and injured in Kabul,” September 22, 2021 (<https://cpj.org/2021/09/afghan-journalist-mohammad-ali-ahmadi-shot-and-injured-in-kabul/>)
- iv. “G-7 must protect and evacuate journalists and media workers in Afghanistan,” August 23, 2021 (<https://cpj.org/2021/08/g-7-must-protect-and-evacuate-journalists-and-media-workers-in-afghanistan/>)
- v. “Civil society and media organizations call on the G7 to protect and evacuate journalists and media workers in Afghanistan,” August 23, 2021 (<https://cpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Civil-society-letter-to-G7-on-Afghanistan.pdf>)

#### 4. Media

##### a. Deutsche Welle (DW)

- i. “Relative of DW journalist killed by the Taliban,” August 19, 2021 (<https://www.dw.com/en/relative-of-dw-journalist-killed-by-the-taliban/a-58912975>)

##### b. New York Times

- i. “‘Everything Changed Overnight’: Afghan Reporters Face an Intolerant Regime,” Sharif Hassan, September 11, 2021 ([https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/11/world/afghanistan-journalists-reporters.html?mc=aud\\_dev&ad-keywords=auddevgate&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI4\\_HwKDi8wIVhrbICh0BdAMCEAMYASAAEgLsz\\_D\\_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/11/world/afghanistan-journalists-reporters.html?mc=aud_dev&ad-keywords=auddevgate&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI4_HwKDi8wIVhrbICh0BdAMCEAMYASAAEgLsz_D_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds))

##### c. Los Angeles Times

- i. “Many of Afghanistan’s journalists have fled. Those who remain face a harsh new world,” Nabih Bulos, October 22, 2021 (<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-10-22/afghanistan-journalists-flee-taliban-media-control>)

##### d. USA Today

- i. “Staying could mean death. The escape nearly killed her. How one woman fled Afghanistan for freedom,” Fatema Hosseini and Kim Hjelmgaard with Kelley Benham French, Updated October 6, 2021 (<https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/world/2021/09/30/afghanistan->

[evacuation-fatema-hosseini-escape-taliban-checkpoints-kabul-airport/5822817001/](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/biden-admin-vows-help-500-afghan-journalists-u-s-funded-n1278393)

e. NBC News

- i. “Afghan VOA reporters stuck in Kabul fear they will be forgotten, says colleague who made it out,” Dan De Luce, updated September 3, 2021 (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/biden-admin-vows-help-500-afghan-journalists-u-s-funded-n1278393>)

f. NPR

- i. “Under the Taliban, it's harder than ever to be an Afghan journalist,” October 13, 2021 (<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/13/1045234373/afghanistan-journalists-taliban>)

g. (Update) VOA (Voice of America)

- i. “UN, Amnesty Decry Latest Taliban Crackdown on Afghan Journalism,” January 27, 2022 (<https://www.voanews.com/a/un-amnesty-decry-latest-taliban-crackdown-on-afghan-journalism/6414969.html>)

h. (Update) France 24

- i. “Rights groups blame Taliban for missing journalists,” February 1, 2022 (<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220201-rights-groups-blame-taliban-for-missing-journalists>)

## **Findings**

The findings in this **updated** report are based on reports from government sources, international organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs), and media outlets. **As the conditions in Afghanistan have continuously been evolving, more reports are still coming out.** Thus, the sources consulted for this updated report represent a sample of numerous reports available on the web.

1. At the time of the **initial report in October 2021**, most of the governments and international organizations had not issued their updated country condition reports on Afghanistan since the United States withdrew its troops from the country and the Taliban took control of the country in August 2021. Thus, except for a report by the European Union in September 2021, the findings **in the initial report** relating to the **then** most recent conditions after the Taliban takeover relied on reports by NGOs and media outlets.

2. **Since the October 2021 initial report, more governments and international organizations, including the European Union, Australia, and the United Nations, have issued updated country condition reports on Afghanistan. Notably, the United States has not issued its updated report on Afghanistan at the time of this updated report.**

3. According to various reports, even before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, threats, intimidations, and violence, including kidnappings, beatings, and killings, directed at journalists and other members of the media were escalating in Afghanistan. Numerous incidents of such violence were reported in government reports from the United States, Australia, and the European Union. Female journalists were especially vulnerable to targeted violence according to these government reports.

- a. **(Update) “VIII. Civic space, including the safety of journalists, media workers and civil society actors**

50. In February 2021, UNAMA issued a special report on the killing of human rights defenders, journalists and media workers in the period 1 January 2018 to 31 January 2021, noting a shift from victims being indirectly affected in the context of mass casualty attacks affecting civilians in 2018 ***towards intentional, premeditated and deliberate targeting of individuals, especially following the start of the Afghanistan peace negotiations on 12 September 2020, after which no fewer than 11 human rights defenders and media workers had been killed in targeted attacks.*** UNAMA also found that, in contrast to prior years, in 2020, responsibility had not been claimed or acknowledged for almost any of the targeted killings.

51. Targeted killings generated a climate of fear among the civilian population and had a chilling effect on civil society, with many human rights defenders, journalists and media workers seeking to leave Afghanistan. In April 2021, UNAMA and OHCHR initiated discussions with members of the international community about visa support and resettlement programmes for human rights defenders and media workers at risk. Such advocacy continued in June and July,

when, following the deterioration of the security situation, UNAMA and OHCHR supported the relocation within Afghanistan of 97 individuals, of whom 19 were women from several provinces, in close cooperation with the non-governmental organization coalition, Afghanistan Human Rights Defenders Committee. In 2021, UNAMA and OHCHR sent more than 390 letters of support to human rights defenders and journalists.

54. During the period from 1 December 2020 to 15 August 2021, UNAMA and OHCHR documented incidents affecting 44 civil society activists, 9 of whom were women, due to their work. Eight were killed, including one woman (four by the Taliban, one by ISIL-K and the other three cases could not be attributed), and one was injured by the Taliban. The remaining 35 cases involved temporary arrests, threats and abductions, attributed to the former Government and anti-government elements. ***In the same period, UNAMA and OHCHR documented incidents affecting 42 journalists and media workers, including 8 women, and six radio/TV stations due to their work. Ten of the victims were killed, including five women and one foreign journalist (five by ISIL-K, two by the Taliban and the other three cases could not be attributed). Three were injured, including one woman whose case could not be attributed. The remaining 29 cases involved threats or intimidation, temporary arrest or deprivation of liberty, abduction and/or attempted attacks attributed to the former Government and anti-government elements.*** Casualty figures decreased by 32 per cent, compared with 2020, when 9 journalists and media workers were killed and 10 were injured.”

**Source:** “Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, and technical assistance achievements in the field of human rights,” Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, January 12, 2022, pp. 11-14 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

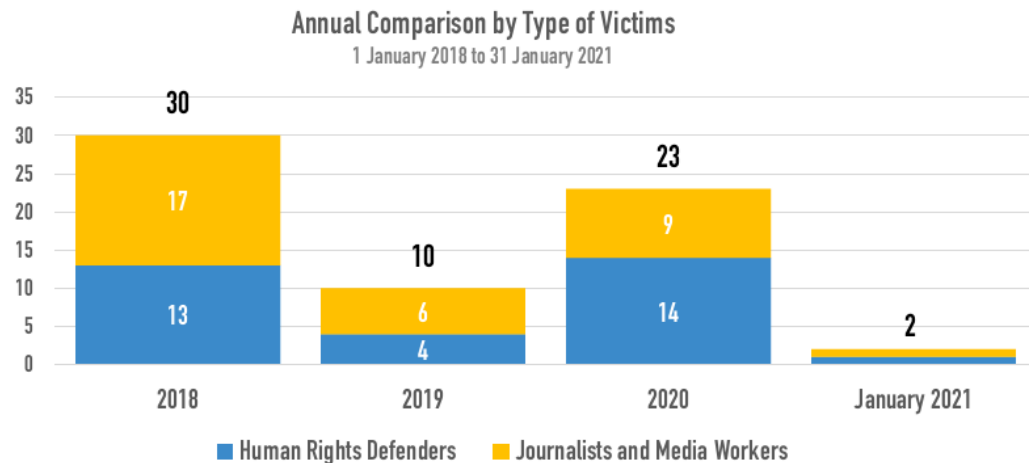
- b. **(Update)** “This report sheds light on an increase in the number of recorded killings of human rights defenders and media actors in Afghanistan. ***Even more concerning, it clarifies that these killings appear to be premeditated and targeted. The killings of human rights defenders and journalists are no longer occurring directly in the context of mass casualty attacks affecting civilians in Afghanistan. Rather, they are deliberate attacks directed at human rights defenders and journalists for their human rights work, presence in and engagement with civil society.*** Unlike before, responsibility of these killings is not claimed or acknowledged, exacerbating further a climate of fear, and constitutes an unprecedented trend, as detailed in the report.

The absence of accountability for these killings, as the report shows, has created an environment in which human rights defenders, journalists and media workers are forced to self-censor and in some instances, depart the country, as the threat of violence, and insecurity persists. This is unacceptable.

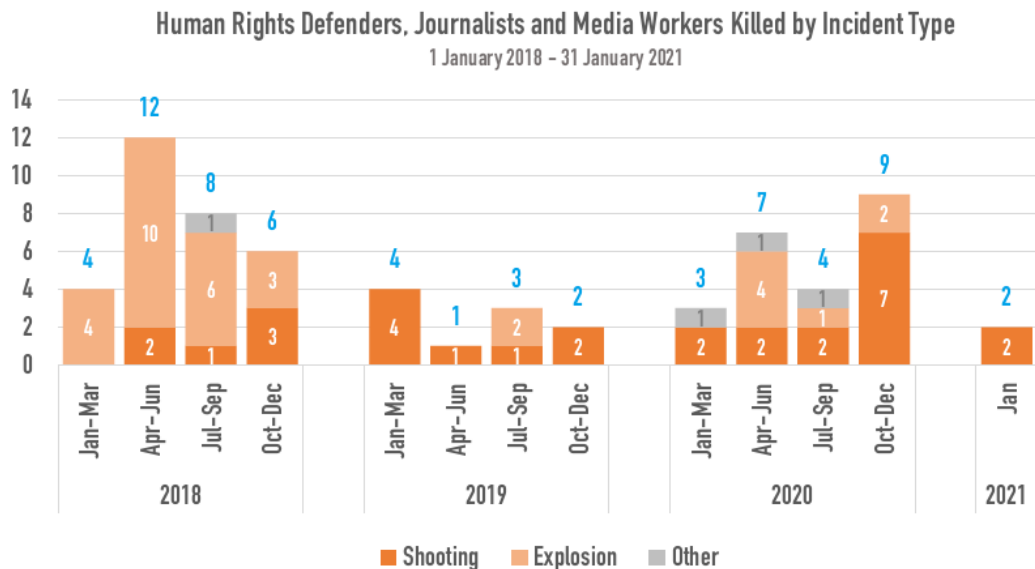
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**2020** The year 2020 witnessed a sharp increase in killings of human rights defenders. ... Four journalists and media workers were killed between 1 January and 11 September 2020. ISIL-KP claimed responsibility for an attack against a



Khurshid TV minivan involving the use of an IED placed on the roadside. One attack remained unclaimed. One journalist was killed by a stray bullet fired by the police during a clash with protesters in Ghor.

## THE START OF THE AFGHANISTAN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

The opening of APN failed to produce the long-desired decrease of violence, dampening the optimistic expectations of many Afghans. Additionally, the period starting from 12 September 2020 marked an increase in insecurity for human rights defenders and journalists. The wave of such killings witnessed during the period following the inauguration of the Afghanistan peace negotiations in Doha is thus remarkable. First, it represents a sharp increase in the number of killings affecting both human rights defenders and journalists in any equivalent period over the three years examined in this report. Second, the deliberate targeting in a limited time span of visible and outspoken civil society leaders and renowned journalists in many locations across Afghanistan (including inside Kabul's green zone), also due to the absence of claims of responsibility by perpetrators, has generated a climate of fear among the civilian population in the country in an unprecedented way.

Between 12 September 2020 and 31 January 2021, the report highlights that five human rights defenders were deliberately targeted and killed. In all five cases (including one woman), killings involved the use of small arms fire. No claim of responsibility was made for any of the attacks. ***Six journalists and media workers were documented by UNAMA as killed between 12 September 2020 and 31 January 2021. Four of them (including a woman) were shot and killed; two of them were killed in attacks using IEDs attached to vehicles. A claim of responsibility was made for one of these incidents: ISIL-KP claimed the killing of journalist Malalai Maiwand and her driver in Jalalabad. In the other cases, there was no claim of responsibility.***

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### 2018: Overview



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### 2019: Overview



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## 2020: Overview



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**Source:** Special Report: Killing of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists and Media Workers in Afghanistan 2018-2021, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, February 2021, pp. 4, 7-10, 18-26 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- c. “Although armed conflict continued in the country, on September 12, representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban commenced Afghan peace negotiations. Before and during negotiations, armed insurgent groups conducted major attacks on government forces, public places, and civilians, killing and injuring thousands. There were also targeted attacks on women leading up to the start of the negotiations, including an assassination attempt on Fawzia Koofi, one of four women on the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s negotiating team, and two incidents during the Loya Jirga (grand council) in August in which parliamentarian Belqis Roshan was assaulted and violent threats were made against delegate Asila Wardak. ***Since November 7, unknown actors killed eight journalists and activists in targeted killings, three of whom were killed between December 21 and 24.*** Many of the attacks were unclaimed; the Taliban denied involvement.”

**Source:** Afghanistan 2020 Human Rights Report, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State, p. 2 (emphasis added).

- d. “Journalists faced the threat of harassment and attack by ISIS-K, the Taliban, and government-linked figures attempting to influence how they were covered in the

news. The Afghanistan Journalists' Council said that during the year journalists' social media accounts were hacked and journalists were threatened by the Office of the National Security Council.

On May 30, a journalist and a driver from Khurshid TV were killed when their vehicle, carrying 15 employees of the station, was hit by a roadside bomb in Kabul. Four other employees of the station were wounded. ISIS-K claimed responsibility for the attack.

On November 12, an explosive in Lashkargah city killed Radio Azadi reporter Ilias Dae, as well as his brother. Journalist Malala Maiwand was killed by gunmen on December 10 in Jalalabad, and journalist Rahmatullah Nekzad was killed in Ghazni on December 21. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks. Journalists reported facing threats of violence from the internal conflict. Politicians, security officials, business owners, and others in positions of power at times threatened or harassed journalists because of their coverage. According to RSF, female journalists were especially vulnerable.

Vida Saghari, a female journalist, faced a series of online harassments, including hate speech and death threats, following her criticism of a cleric's Ramadan rallies in defiance of COVID-19 restrictions, according to RSF."

**Source:** Afghanistan 2020 Human Rights Report, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State, pp. 19-20.

- e. "Violence and Harassment: Government officials and private citizens used threats and violence to intimidate independent and opposition journalists, particularly those who spoke out against impunity, crimes, and corruption by powerful local figures. According to RSF, NDS officials arrested Radio Bayan journalist Mahboboalah Hakimi on July 1. Two days after Hakimi's arrest, the NDS released a video of Hakimi confessing to posting a video critical of the president, an action he had previously denied, and apologizing to the president. Following Hakimi's release, he alleged the NDS tortured him and forced him to record his confession.

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At least six journalists were killed during the year, and another died under suspicious circumstances. According to the Afghanistan Journalists' Council, as of September, three journalists were kidnapped, 12 were injured, and more than 30 were beaten or otherwise threatened.

The Taliban continued to threaten journalists, and civil society alleged the Taliban continued to attack media organizations. The Taliban warned media would be targeted unless they stopped broadcasting what it called 'anti-Taliban statements.'

Increased levels of insecurity created a dangerous environment for journalists, even when they were not the specific targets of violence. A radio reporter was killed in police crossfire during a demonstration in Ghor Province on May 9. During the year several journalists reported attacks by unknown gunmen connected, they claimed, to their coverage of powerful individuals.”

**Source:** Afghanistan 2020 Human Rights Report, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State, pp. 20-21.

- f. “3.52 Article 34 of the Constitution states that freedom of expression ‘shall be inviolable’, and guarantees citizens the right to print and publish on subjects without prior submission to state authorities. The Mass Media Law (2009) codifies press freedoms and limits government interference, but requires media outlets to register with the Ministry of Information and Culture. The law also prohibits the publication of materials considered to be in contradiction with Islam. Afghanistan has an Access to Information Law (2014), amended during 2018. Media advocacy groups report, however, that implementation of the law remains limited and inconsistent: the government frequently denies journalists access to necessary information or simply ignores requests. ***Authorities have also responded to attacks that have killed journalists with increased restrictions, less access, and less support.***”

**Source:** DFAT Country Information Report – Afghanistan, June 27, 2019, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government, p. 33 (emphasis added).

- g. “3.56 According to news reports, ANDSF forces forcibly prevented journalists from investigating the bombing of a mosque in Herat in March 2018. Other media reporting alleged that ANDSF forces beat several journalists covering a suicide bombing in Kabul in July 2018, and intentionally destroyed their equipment in an effort to impede their reporting. Following the release of news reports detailing corruption involving a high-ranking government official, one media outlet reported threats against the journalist by the official’s security guards. Authorities have also reportedly used the threat of defamation as a pretext to suppress criticism of government officials. Female journalists in particular have reported encountering regular harassment and threats, causing some to leave the profession. Media advocacy groups reported that many female journalists worked under pseudonyms in both print and social media to avoid recognition, harassment, and retaliation.

3.57 The government approved a new set of guidelines in August 2016 to address cases of violence against journalists. The initiative created a joint national committee in Kabul and separate committees in provincial capitals, a coordination centre to investigate and identify perpetrators of violence against journalists, and a support committee to identify threats against journalists. Press freedom organisations reported that, although the committee met and referred cases to the Attorney General’s Office, it did not increase protection for journalists. In

October 2018, President Ghani announced the expansion of the Journalists Support Fund to assist family members of journalists killed in the line of duty.

3.58 Journalists attempting to cover the continuing conflict face an acute risk of violence from both AGEs and state actors. *According to Reporters Without Borders, 2018 was the deadliest year for journalists since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, and Afghanistan the world's most dangerous country for journalists.* At least 15 journalists and media workers were killed in 2018, many in targeted attacks. The most serious attack affecting journalists in 2018 occurred in Kabul in April, when a double suicide bombing outside the National Directorate of Security killed at least nine journalists and injured six others (along with numerous other civilian casualties). While the casualties of the first explosion were mainly ordinary citizens, the second bomb was set off half an hour later, after reporters had arrived at the scene. Militants have committed further acts of violence against journalists in the first few months of 2019, including the death by shooting of two radio journalists in Taloqan, Takhar province, during an attack on their radio station on 5 February; and the summary execution by the Taliban of a citizen-journalist (and regional government employee) in Farah province on 5 January after he was removed from a bus at a Taliban roadblock (see Road safety). Reporters Without Borders allege that AGEs, particularly the Taliban, have made hundreds of threats against journalists and the media.

3.59 DFAT assesses that journalists who report on official corruption and other sensitive topics face a moderate risk of official discrimination in the form of threats, verbal harassment and other attempts to interfere with their work, which may include physical violence. Female journalists are particularly likely to receive harassment and threats. DFAT assesses that journalists attempting to cover the continuing conflict face a high risk of violence from both AGEs, particularly the Taliban, and state actors. This risk may include threats, intimidation, and targeted killings. Such journalists are unlikely to be able to operate freely.”

**Source:** DFAT Country Information Report – Afghanistan, June 27, 2019, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government, pp. 33-34 (emphasis added).

- h. “Despite ISKP’s deteriorated military capabilities in Nangahar and Kunar provinces and to maintain territorial control in the latter provinces, the group reportedly claimed responsibility for several recent high-profile attacks, including the May attack on a maternity hospital in Kabul, the August attack in Jalalabad city prison and the November attack on Kabul University, and as well as *the murder of a female Afghan journalist in Nangarhar on 10 December*. The ISKP’s August 2020 attack in Jalalabad notably demonstrated group’s new tactic and surge in its capabilities.”

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, p. 55 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- i. “In its quarterly report of 30 January 2021, SIGAR reported on an increase in the number of ‘magnetic or small, vehicle-adhering bombs (often called “sticky bombs”)’ in Kabul City used by the Taliban and other AGEs to target Afghan government officials, civil-society leaders, and journalists. During the period between 20 January and 19 February 2021, 39 IED blasts reportedly took place in Kabul.

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According to UNAMA Special Report, in 2020, 14 Human Rights defenders and 9 journalists have been deliberately killed and 2 (Human Rights defenders and journalists) were targeted and killed in January 2021. According to the source, in nearly all cases, no one claimed responsibility for these killings.

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, p. 60 (internal cites omitted).

- j. “In February 2020, as reported by the UN Secretary-General, the Afghan cabinet endorsed the regulation prepared by the Government and Media Joint Committee to protect journalists and media workers. The Council reported also on the arrest of eight out of 18 persons suspected of threatening AIHRC human rights defenders involved ‘in researching of the practice of bacha bazi’ in Logar province. Throughout 2020, the Taliban and government officials continued threatening journalists even after the government dropped a proposed law to impose restrictions on media. UNAMA reported on a ‘sharp’ increase in the number of targeted killings of human rights defenders in 2020. As noted by UNAMA, targeting of journalists and civil society leaders in various locations in the country, including Kabul’s green zone, influenced also by the lack of claims of responsibility by any of the groups, ‘has generated a climate of fear among the civilian population of the country in an unprecedented way.’”

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, pp. 65-66 (internal cites omitted).

- k. “According to analysts interviewed by Gandhara, the Taliban have adopted a new approach in 2020. ***Refraining from high profile and mass casualty attacks in major cities, the militants have shifted their tactic to the deliberate targeted killing of civilians (government employees, journalists, human rights activists, moderate religious leaders and women in public roles) in urban areas such as Kabul.*** This new tactic is described as a response to the agreement the insurgency group signed with the US in February 2020, expecting the militants not to hit

urban centres with suicide bombings and other mass-casualty attacks. A Kabul-based political analyst, cited by news agency Gandhara, explained the new Taliban strategy as ‘to win the support or submission of the population in government-controlled areas, particularly in urban centres, through intimidation and psychological warfare’. The militant’s drive to frighten and weaken Afghanistan’s civil society and to silence critical voices is additionally mentioned as part of this tactic. Although the Taliban are presumably the driving force for several of the targeted killings in Kabul, many have remained unclaimed, with the militant group often officially denying its involvement. In this regard, the New York Times reported on the Taliban’s strategy of refusing to claim responsibility for attacks in Kabul and using the unclaimed attacks for propaganda purposes to spread fear and to undermine the Afghan government’s ability to keep the capital safe.”

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, p. 86 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- l. “According to Afghan officials, cited by news agency CBS News in January 2021, members of a joint Taliban-ISKP cell, have reportedly been tasked with disguising themselves as social workers and vaccine administrators, to assassinate journalists in Kabul.”

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, p. 88 (internal cites omitted).

- m. “ACLED categorised 6 % of all violent events recorded in Ghor as ‘violence against civilians’. For instance: on 6 June 2020, the Taliban kidnapped and killed a civilian man in Shaidan village in Dow Lina district in Ghor province; on 30 September 2020, the Taliban killed a civilian in Dahan Tafrqi village of Firozkoh, who was accused of collaborating with the government; ***on 1 January 2021, local Taliban commanders reportedly killed a journalist named Bismillah Adel Aimaq in Tighi Timor village at West of Firozkoh and the group returned on 2 March 2021 and killed his brother, a niece and a cousin as well.*** On 10 March 2021, unknown gunmen killed two civilians including an employee of a health department in Kotal-e Shaidan village in Du Layna District; on 11 March 2021, the Taliban killed in a gunfire a teacher and a pro-government militia member in Maidan-e Bara Khana village in Firozkoh.”

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, pp. 178-179 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- n. “Human rights activists and media personnel faced continuous security threats in Kabul. In its 2020 Annual Report, the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC) registered 44 incidents involving violence against journalists in Kabul

province, accounting most cases (33 %) of violence and threats to the Kabul zone. According to UNAMA data, eight human rights defenders, journalists and media workers were killed in Kabul province in 2020. Mid-2020, UNOCHA indicated the impact of the unstable security situation in Kabul on government resources and law enforcement in the province, contributing to rising criminality.”

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, pp. 213-214 (internal cites omitted).

- o. “Local journalists were also victims of abuses by government friendly elements and AGEs. In July and September 2020 respectively, the NDS was accused of searching the house of two journalists without a warrant, and of detaining a journalist ‘who frequently spoke out against rights abuses’. In January 2021, two men, purportedly tasked by the Haqqani Network to kill a journalist in Khost City, were arrested.”

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, pp. 236-237 (internal cites omitted).

- p. “Jalalabad was the scene of multiple attacks on journalists and civil activists. In December 2020, Malalai Maiwand, a well-known journalist and an activist for the rights of Afghan women and children, was killed with her driver. According to Reuters, Islamic State took responsibility for the murder. In January 2021, security forces allegedly prevented the killing of another journalist, also in Jalalabad. In October 2020, another activist was shot dead in the city.”

**Source:** Afghanistan Security situation, Country of Origin Information Report, June 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, pp. 283-284 (internal cites omitted).

- q. “Sources suggested that the continued assassination of government employees, security officials, and *journalists* by the Taliban during the first quarter of 2021 was intended to weaken the morale of the Afghan forces and undermine public trust in the government. AAN described a ‘winter targeted killing campaign’ aimed at ANSF members, *journalists* and also members of the judiciary, women’s rights activists and other members of civil society noting that Taliban were ‘pre-emptively targeting independently-minded ‘public intellectuals’ in the hope of eventually capturing the capital’.”

**Source:** Country of Origin Information Report, September 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, p. 33 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- r. “In mid-May 2021, the Taliban captured Nerkh, located less than an hour’s drive west of Kabul city, a location from where the Taliban has previously used the



province as a ‘gateway’ to the capital and to launch suicide bombings and hit-and-run attacks from. Non-state armed groups remained capable of carrying out attacks in the city even before the takeover of the city by the Taliban. Whilst suicide attacks were described as ‘relatively rare’ in the 18 months prior to May 2021, the Taliban reportedly carried out a wave of unclaimed targeted attacks over winter in Kabul city, including against members of the ANSF, government employees, judges, lawyers, *journalists* and human rights defenders, although the numbers fell ahead of the announcement of the US troop withdrawal. The USDOD reported that the campaign of targeted killings had contributed to ‘an increased feeling of general insecurity among the population’, especially in Kabul, where fear is described as ‘omnipresent’ and the sense of impending danger ‘a state of being’. Targeted assassinations continued to be documented throughout March to August 2021 in Kabul. Regarding the modus operandi of the Taliban, explosions and the use of magnetic or ‘sticky bombs’ on cars in Kabul city continued to be reported, with the UN documenting 10 magnetic improvised explosive devices in Kabul between mid-March and mid-June 2021. Sticky bombs are reportedly simple and cheap to make (around \$25), consisting of explosives in a small box with a magnet and mobile attached which denotes remotely, and thus are also easy to carry. UNOCHA reported that during the second quarter of 2021, Kabul was the district experiencing the highest number of casualties from IED incidents in Afghanistan, at 281. Kabul was also one of the urban centres most affected by a spike in robberies and thefts reported by UNOCHA in the first quarter of 2021, with 36 incidents which decreased to 20 incidents in the second quarter in total. One report described daytime muggings as ‘commonplace’ in Kabul city, with increasing numbers of kidnappings for ransom.”

**Source:** Country of Origin Information Report, September 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, p. 36 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- s. “On 16 July 2021 Indian photojournalist Danish Siddiqui was killed in a Taliban ambush in Spin Boldak, and his body was later mutilated in Taliban custody.”

**Source:** Country of Origin Information Report, September 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, p. 81 (citing a July 31, 2021 New York Times report).

4. Reports indicate that numerous journalists and other media workers have already fled Afghanistan, fearing targeted violence against them and their families, as the Taliban took over the country. Those who remain face a heightened threat of targeted violence as the Taliban are reportedly hunting journalists, conducting house-to-house searches.

- a. **(Update)** “2.6 Journalists and media workers

...

Numerous journalists fled from Afghanistan after the takeover or went into hiding. Subsequent reports stated that some people in unnamed ‘non-journalistic bodies’ and institutions had used the identities of journalists to evacuate friends and families, while actual reporters were left in the country. According to a representative of the Afghanistan Civil Society And Journalist Group, press cards and media documents had been forged.

On 3 October 2021, the National Association of Journalists stated that 70 % of media outlets in Afghanistan had stopped operating following the Taliban takeover. Taliban restrictions impacted the media landscape, inter alia limiting popular content, but the main reason behind media outlets shutting down was reportedly financial issues. About 70 % of Afghan journalists had reportedly lost their jobs as of mid-October, leading to a growing feeling of desperation among media workers finding themselves without an income.

...

Soon after the takeover, some journalists were also reportedly searched for by Taliban fighters. France24 reported that the *Taliban were tracking down people perceived as a threat to their rule, including journalists, in at least four provinces, using ‘any means at their disposal’*. DW reported that *the Taliban had raided the homes of at least three of their journalists, and that a family member of one of the journalists was killed and another injured by Taliban fighters during a house-to-house search*. According to France24, *the Taliban opened fire after it was revealed that the journalist had fled abroad*. In another instance close to the takeover, armed men reportedly broke into the home of a TV station director, stole vehicles and other equipment and threatened him.

On 27 October 2021 the Afghanistan National Journalists Union (ANJU) claimed that *it had recorded more than 30 separate incidents of ‘violence and threats of violence’ against journalists the past two months, and in almost 90 % of the cases the Taliban were identified as perpetrators*.

Among incidents leading to the death of journalists, there was Fahim Dashti, who was also a NRF spokesperson. Dashti was killed in Panjsher on 6 September 2021, and while NRF representatives claimed that he was targeted and killed by Pakistani Air Force drones, the Taliban stated that he died in an internal conflict between resistance commanders. On 2 October 2021, journalist and lecturer Sayed Maroof Sadat was killed by unknown gunmen in Jalalabad City, along with three other people. In another attack, one media worker was lightly wounded by gunmen on a motorcycle in Kabul, while a journalist working for media outlet Salam Watandar was shot and ‘severely injured’ by another passengers when travelling in a taxi. Journalists were moreover subjected to physical violence by border guards. Some journalists were also reportedly abducted by Taliban fighters and subsequently released.

In August 2021, the Taliban claimed to have formed a committee that would prevent and probe acts of violence against journalists and Taliban representatives met with and apologised to the two Etilaat-e Roz journalists subjected to torture on 8 September 2021. Steven Butler, the Asia programme coordinator at the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), told Al Jazeera that the Taliban promised to investigate matters, but had not presented any actual findings. Furthermore, CPJ had experienced difficulties in establishing contacts with the Taliban to advocate for the rights of Afghan media workers.

### 2.6.1 Female journalists and media workers

...

During the first days after the takeover, women quickly disappeared from broadcasting media, but some female news anchors and reporters soon resumed work and appeared on screen. A female news anchor interviewed a Taliban spokesperson on air, and a female journalist reported from the streets of Kabul. However, both left Afghanistan and women's general appearance on broadcasting media reportedly dropped again soon thereafter.

In October 2021, a journalist told DW that the Taliban had announced that women journalists were not allowed to appear on camera in Badakshan province, and that women working with radio were only permitted to continue working if all staff members in a program were women. More recently, on 21 November 2021, the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice issued new guidelines for the media industry, where it stated that female reporters should wear a hijab when appearing on screen."

**Source:** Afghanistan Country Focus, Country of Original Information Report, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, January 2022, pp. 48-51 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- b. (Update) 2.17 Following the conclusion of the agreement and prior to taking power nationally on 15 August 2021, the Taliban launched what has been described as *a 'wave of targeted killings' directed at 'influential and prominent Afghans, including journalists, human rights activists, judicial workers, doctors and clerics'*. According to UNAMA, 2020 recorded 'a 22 per cent increase in the number of civilians killed and injured by Taliban targeted killings, which includes "assassinations" deliberately targeting civilians, and a 169 per cent increase in civilian casualties occurring during abductions of civilians by the Taliban'. After the 15 August takeover, violence generally decreased across the country, although specific groups continue to be targeted by the Taliban and others (see People associated with the government or international community, including security forces).

...

## Media

...

3.36 While a number of journalists continue to work, there are clear signs that ***Taliban tolerance of a free media is limited. Only one in seven female journalists is still working, with the rest dismissed/unemployed, in hiding or having fled Afghanistan.*** Local sources claim journalists have been beaten while attempting to report on demonstrations in Kabul and other cities. For example, two journalists working for daily newspaper Etilaat Roz were taken by the Taliban in September 2021 and whipped with cables. ***Taliban soldiers, who were reportedly searching for three Deutsche Welle reporters, killed the relative of one and injured another during a house-to-house search on 19 August 2021.*** Reporters without Borders claims that around 100 media outlets have stopped operating since the Taliban takeover, while hundreds of Afghan journalists have either gone into hiding or fled the country.

3.37 DFAT assesses that ***journalists in Afghanistan face a high risk of harassment by the Taliban, which may include violence. Taliban promises of media freedom are qualified by its expectation that reporting must be in accordance with the Taliban’s understanding of Sharia law. This means much reporting will be deemed unacceptable by the Taliban and may provoke a severe reaction.***”

**Source:** DFAT Thematic Report on Political and Security Developments in Afghanistan (August 2021 to January 2022), Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, January 14, 2022, pp. 9-10, 18-19 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- c. (Update) “6. Based on available reports about widespread human rights violations in Afghanistan [including against journalists and media workers as noted in footnote 9], including accounts provided by Afghans in flight and those already abroad as part of UNHCR broad monitoring, UNHCR is concerned that recent developments are giving rise to an increase in the need international refugee protection for people fleeing Afghanistan [including journalists and media workers as noted in footnote 10].

...

11. The current situation in Afghanistan poses a number of obstacles to the gathering of comprehensive information concerning the human rights situation in different parts of the country. Such obstacles include:

**Constraints on Afghan media organizations:** According to the Afghanistan National Association of Journalists, ***since the Taliban takeover 70 per cent of***

*Afghan media outlets have stopped working, due to a combination of financial difficulties and threats and intimidation, violence and even killings.* In addition, the Taliban are reported to have imposed wide-ranging restrictions on freedom of the media, with some of the new directives so broadly formulated that journalists are self-censoring for fear of transgressing the rules. A number of Afghan journalists have been arbitrarily detained and mistreated in other ways.”

**Source:** “Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan,” Guidance Note on Afghanistan, UNCHR – The UN Refugee Agency, February 2022, pp. 2-4 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

d. **(Update)** “VIII. Civic space, including the safety of journalists, media workers and civil society actors

...

55. In the period from 16 August to 30 November 2021, UNAMA and OHCHR documented incidents affecting 23 civil society activists due to their work. Eight were killed (three by the de facto authorities, three by ISIL-K and two cases could not be attributed). The remaining 15 cases involved temporary arrests, beatings and threats by the de facto authorities. *In the same period, UNAMA and OHCHR documented incidents affecting 48 journalists and media workers, including 2 women, and one radio/TV station due to their work. Two of the victims were killed (one by ISIL-K and one could not be attributed), and two were injured by unknown armed men. The remaining 44 cases involved temporary arrests or deprivation of liberty, beatings and/or threats or intimidation, attributed to the de facto authorities. Although the casualty figures decreased following the takeover of the country by the Taliban, there was a significant increase in temporary arrests and beatings by the de facto authorities, with 28 arrests and 10 beatings recorded since 16 August 2021.*

...

## XI. Conclusions

...

68. Civil society actors, including human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, as well as staff of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, continue to be increasingly targeted and face threats, intimidation and harassment. Several media outlets have stopped their operations due to lack of funds, fear of repercussions and lack of access to information from the de facto authorities. Human rights defenders and media workers remain concerned about the political and security situation and keep low profiles, mostly exercising self-censorship.”

**Source:** “Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, and technical assistance achievements in the field of human rights,” Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, January 12, 2022, pp. 11-14 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- e. “Reporters Without Borders (RSF) claims that around 100 media outlets have stopped operating, while *hundreds of Afghan journalists have either gone into hiding or fled the country*. Furthermore, still operating media outlets allegedly work in accordance with new conditions set by the Taliban. RSF states that Taliban promises of press freedom ‘can only be regarded with the utmost scepticism’.

Other sources also report on journalists fleeing Afghanistan and dozens of TV and radio outlets stopping their broadcasting or being seized by the Taliban.

...

*During the first days after the Taliban’s take-over, women quickly disappeared from broadcasting media.* However, some female news anchors and reporters soon resumed work and appeared on screen. On 17 August 2021, a female news anchor, Beheshta Arghand, interviewed a Taliban spokesperson on air, and a female journalist, Hasiba Atakpal, reported from the streets of Kabul. However, *both left Afghanistan soon after*. There have been reports on the Taliban hindering female journalists from resuming work. On 19 August 2021, two journalists at Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) claimed that the Taliban were barring them from returning to work by not letting them into their office, while male colleagues were allowed to enter the building. According to Pajhwok News, the Taliban in Ghazni have banned female presenters and music from broadcasting media. The Afghan Analyst Network (AAN) says that the continuation of women’s appearances in media was just an initial trend and that women once again have disappeared off air.

*Since the take-over there have been some reports on media workers being beaten by the Taliban.* On 18 August 2021, a journalist and a photographer were allegedly beaten by Taliban members while covering a demonstration in the city of Jalalabad in Nangarhar Province. On the same day a journalist was reportedly beaten when trying to interview a Taliban member in front of the airport in Kabul. *On 19 August 2021, Deutsche Welle (DW) reported that a family member of one of the media outlet’s journalists was shot by the Taliban during a house-to-house search. On 20 August 2021, a TV station director was allegedly subjected to an intrusion of armed men into his home, a vehicle and other equipment were stolen, and the director says his life was threatened.* According to Tolonews, the Taliban claimed that they are investigating this report. On 22 August 2021, the Taliban announced that they had formed a committee that will prevent and probe acts of violence against journalists. According to Tolonews, the committee was formed due to serious concerns about the safety of journalists and media workers following the reports of violence against journalists in Kabul and

Nangarhar provinces. Further information on actions of this committee could not be found.

On 24 August 2021, RSF published a press release in which private TV channels are said to be subjected to frequent threats, and in which a producer says that the Taliban have beaten five of the channel's staff in the past week and labelled them as 'takfiri' (unbelievers). The producer also accused Taliban members of 'systematically' trying to influence reporters in the field. On 25 August 2021, a journalist and a camera operator were allegedly beaten by Taliban members."

**Source:** Country of Origin Information Report, September 2021, European Asylum Support Office, European Union, pp. 14-16 (emphasis added) (internal cites omitted).

- f. **(Update)** "After the Taliban takeover of the country in August, the protracted Afghanistan conflict abruptly gave way to an accelerating human rights and humanitarian crisis. The Taliban immediately rolled back women's rights advances and media freedom—among the foremost achievements of the post-2001 reconstruction effort. Most secondary schools for girls were closed, and women were prohibited from working in most government jobs and many other areas. The Taliban beat and detained journalists; many media outlets closed or drastically scaled back their reporting, partly because many journalists had fled the country. The new Taliban cabinet included no women and no ministers from outside the Taliban's own ranks.

...

***Both the Taliban and ISKP carried out targeted killings of civilians, including government employees, journalists, and religious leaders.*** On January 17, 2021, unidentified gunmen fatally shot two women judges who worked for Afghanistan's high court and wounded their driver. ISKP claimed responsibility for killing nine polio vaccinators in Nangarhar between March and June. On June 9, gunmen killed 10 humanitarian deminers in Baghlan; ISKP claimed responsibility. In August, an ISKP suicide bombing at Kabul's airport killed 170 civilians, including many Afghans trying to flee the country.

...

### **Freedom of Media, Speech, and Assembly**

The Afghan media came under growing threat since the beginning of the year, principally from the Taliban. The ISKP also carried out a number of deadly attacks on journalists.

On December 21, 2020, Rahmatullah Nekzad, head of the Ghazni journalists' union, was fatally shot as he walked from his home to a local mosque. Although

the Taliban denied responsibility, Nekzad had previously received threats from local Taliban commanders.

The ISKP took responsibility for killing Malala Maiwand, a TV presenter for Enikass News in Jalalabad, along with her driver, Tahar Khan, on December 10, 2020. In two separate attacks in Jalalabad on March 2, 2021, gunmen fatally shot three women who worked at Enikass News dubbing foreign language news reports.

***After the Taliban takeover, nearly 70 percent of all Afghan media outlets closed, and others were operating under threat and self-censoring.*** In September, the Taliban authorities imposed wide-ranging restrictions on media and free speech that included prohibitions on ‘insulting national figures’ and reports that could have a ‘negative impact on the public’s attitude.’ On September 7, Taliban security forces detained two journalists from the Etilaat-e Roz media outlet and severely beat them in custody before releasing them. The reporters had been covering protests by women in Kabul. ***The Taliban detained at least 32 journalists after taking power in Kabul.***”

**Source:** World Report 2022: Afghanistan – Events of 2021, Human Rights Watch, pp. 1-2, 4-5 (emphasis added).

- g. “Taliban security forces have also arbitrarily detained journalists and beaten several. The head of a journalists’ advocacy group told Human Rights Watch that the Taliban have taken at least 32 journalists into custody since they took power in Kabul on August 15. Most were released after warnings about their reporting, but some were beaten. One who was badly beaten was released with the warning not to tell anyone what happened to him. As of October 1, at least one remained in custody without access to his family.

...

Many Afghan journalists have fled the country or have gone into hiding, and scores of media outlets, especially outside major cities, have closed altogether. Taliban commanders and fighters have long engaged in a pattern of threats, intimidation, and violence against members of the media, and have been responsible for targeted killings of journalists.”

**Source:** “Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media; Journalists Arbitrarily Detained, Beaten,” Human Rights Watch, October 1, 2021.

- h. “On September 7, 2021, Taliban security forces detained Taqi Daryabi and Nemat Naqdi, journalists from the Kabul-based media outlet Etilaat-e Roz. The reporters had been covering protests by women in Kabul demanding an end to Taliban violations of the rights of women and girls. Etilaat-e Roz reported that Taliban authorities took the two men to a police station in Kabul, placed them in separate



cells, and severely beat them with cables. Both men were released on September 8 and received medical care at a hospital for injuries to their backs and faces.”

**Source:** “Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Beat Journalists; New Restrictions Indicate Crackdown on Free Speech,” Human Rights Watch, September 8, 2021.

- i. **(Update)** “Since their takeover on 15 August, the Taliban promised in several press conferences and statements that they assure a general amnesty for all previous government workers, respect for women’s rights in accordance with their interpretation of Sharia law, and that journalists would be protected.

Contrary to this reassurance, the Taliban continued to crackdown on journalists and tortured them for reporting about protests in the country. ...

Human rights defenders, journalists, and others who are targeted for their work must be evacuated and given safe passage if they wish to leave Afghanistan; and women and girls, and ethnic and religious minorities who are targeted because of their gender, ethnic, and religious identity, must be guaranteed protection. All those who wish to leave Afghanistan must be assured the right to seek asylum. At the same time, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court must receive assistance from the international community to immediately recommence its investigations into crimes under international law committed Afghanistan.”

**Source:** Afghanistan Human Rights (home page for Afghanistan accessed on March 21, 2022), Amnesty International.

- j. **“Persecution of journalists**

Two Kabul-based female journalists that Amnesty International spoke to, shared the threats and intimidation they faced following the Taliban takeover. Ayesha\*, who has now fled the capital following warnings from her employer that her life was at risk, said her family had since been visited by the Taliban, and threatened after they informed the group that she was not at home.

Aadila\* described the first two weeks of Taliban rule as a time of fear and uncertainty. She had initially decided to stay in Afghanistan and continue her work, until the Taliban came to her home one night asking for her. Upon the insistence of relatives, she left the country shortly afterwards.

Abdul, a male journalist said that editors, journalists and media workers had received instructions from the Taliban that they could work only under the terms of Sharia law and Islamic rules and regulations.

‘I have not reported to my job since the fall of the republic. Taliban came to my house several times, but I hid myself. From the time of the collapse, our office is closed’ he said.”

**Source:** “Afghanistan: Taliban wasting no time in stamping out human rights says new briefing,” Amnesty International, September 20, 2021.

- k. “In Afghanistan, the situation is worsening for local journalists as Taliban fighters attack and detain journalists in the field and news outlets are shuttering amid restrictions and economic woes, according to local TV station TOLO News.”

...

**Has the nature of the threats you’re hearing about changed?**

There remains a lot of uncertainty and a lot of fear about what’s to come. The nature of the requests is about the general fear of what it means to be an Afghan journalist under Taliban control.”

**Source:** “‘A lot of uncertainty and a lot of fear’: CPJ’s María Salazar Ferro on evacuating Afghan journalists,” Naomi Zeveloff, Features Editor, Committee to Protect Journalists, September 23, 2021.

- l. “On September 18, an unidentified man shot Ahmadi, a reporter and editor with the privately owned national radio broadcaster Salam Watandar, in Kabul, the capital, according to reports by Voice of America and his employer, and a person familiar with the incident, who spoke to CPJ on the condition of anonymity, citing fear of reprisal by the Taliban.

Ahmadi was traveling in a taxi van when a man sitting next to him asked where he worked; when he said he worked for Salam Watandar, the man said that outlet was an ‘American radio station,’ pulled out a gun, and fired several shots at Ahmadi, two of which struck him in the leg, according to those sources. The gunman then fled the scene, according to Voice of America.”

**Source:** “Afghan journalist Mohammad Ali Ahmadi shot and injured in Kabul,” Committee to Protect Journalists, September 22, 2021.

- m. “Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan last week, CPJ has registered and vetted the cases of nearly 400 journalists in need of evacuation, and is reviewing thousands of additional requests. CPJ has also documented multiple attacks on the press from the Taliban in the last week, including physical attacks and female state TV anchors forced off the air.”

**Source:** “G-7 must protect and evacuate journalists and media workers in Afghanistan,” Committee to Protect Journalists, August 23, 2021.

- n. “Taliban fighters hunting a DW journalist have shot dead one member of his family and seriously injured another. The Taliban were conducting a house-to-house search to try and find the journalist, who now works in Germany.

Other relatives were able to escape at the last moment and are now on the run. DW Director General Peter Limbourg issued a strong condemnation and called on the German government to take action.

...

### **Taliban hunting journalists**

The Taliban have raided the homes of at least three DW journalists. Nematullah Hemat of the private television station Ghargasht TV is believed to have been kidnapped by the Taliban, and Toofan Omar, the head of the private radio station Paktia Ghag Radio, was, according to government officials, targeted and shot dead by Taliban fighters.

Two men, also presumably Taliban, shot and killed the translator Amdadullah Hamdard, a frequent contributor to Germany's Die Zeit newspaper, on August 2 in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, right there on the street. And a month ago, the world-renowned Indian photographer and Pulitzer Prize winner Danish Siddiqui died in Kandahar, presumably killed by Taliban militants.

...

### **Taliban promises ring hollow**

At a first press conference, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid wanted to reassure the international community, striking a conciliatory tone and insisting that women would be allowed to work.

‘Let me remind you that we forgive everyone, because it is in the interest of peace and stability in Afghanistan. All the groups that were confronting us are all forgiven,’ he claimed.

But the Taliban have already clearly demonstrated what these statements are worth. The organization Reporters Without Borders has therefore called on the UN Security Council to hold an informal special session to address the perilous situation of journalists in Afghanistan.”

**Source:** “Relative of DW journalist killed by the Taliban,” DW, August 19, 2021

- o. A large coalition of civic and media organizations around the world sent an open letter to the G7 prior to the G7 Summit on Afghanistan, pleading for help with, among other things, evacuation and protection of “all journalists, media workers and media advocates at risk, and their families.”

**Source:** “Civil society and media organizations call on the G7 to protect and evacuate journalists and media workers in Afghanistan,” Civil Society Letter to G7 on Afghanistan, August 23, 2021

- p. “The decision to take his family and escape Afghanistan wasn’t an easy one for Daryabi. When the Taliban entered Kabul in mid-August, the 31-year-old father of three refused a seat on an evacuation flight. But then Taliban members brutally beat two Etilaatroz journalists, one of them Daryabi’s own brother. In the weeks afterward, his family kept pleading with him to find an escape route out of Afghanistan.

...

Daryabi’s departure was another blow for Afghan journalists struggling to navigate their country’s wholly changed environment. Since the Taliban’s takeover of the capital, mainstays of the media landscape like Etilaatroz — many of them buoyed by Western aid and considered one of the few tangible successes of the U.S.’ 20-year attempt to remake Afghanistan — have been forced to reassess how they can function in the new Islamic Emirate, if at all.

Many have decided they can’t. The last two months have seen the shuttering of more than 150 media organizations — some 70% of the country’s news outlets, according to the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee. Like Daryabi, now in a refugee camp in Doha, hundreds of journalists have left, joining an exodus of about 120,000 people — professionals, activists and others from the ranks of Afghanistan’s nascent civil society who see no place for their ideas under the Taliban.”

**Source:** “Many of Afghanistan’s journalists have fled. Those who remain face a harsh new world,” Nabih Bulos, Los Angeles Times, October 22, 2021.

- q. “Afghan journalists with the Voice of America and other U.S.-funded media outlets were shocked they were not evacuated out of Afghanistan by the U.S. government and fear they will be forgotten, one colleague who did make it out said Friday.

...

Female journalists working with U.S.-funded Voice of America and Radio Azadi, as well as other local media outlets, now fear going out to report given the Taliban’s hostility to women’s rights and its record of repression when it ruled the country from 1996 to 2001, according to Tanzeem.

‘Several of them have told me that they don’t think they can report independently as they used to do before,’ she said.

Afghans working for Western media are under less threat than those who report in the country’s local languages, like her colleagues at VOA and Radio Azadi, Tanzeem said.

‘The local journalists who for years have stayed in Afghanistan and, in the local language, who did independent stories that included stories about human rights violations or atrocities by the Taliban, are now scared, because the Taliban read their stories. Some of them were threatened on Twitter and Facebook,’ she said.

‘The television journalists in particular are worried because the moment they go out of the house they’re worried someone might recognize their face,’ she said. ‘They’re worried about getting recognized on the streets.’

She said she had first-hand knowledge of one of her male colleagues being assaulted by the Taliban a few days ago.

‘I have at least one confirmed report of a person who was beaten up by the Taliban with sticks as he left his house to get money from the bank. He came home and had literally red stripes on his back from the beating,’ she said.”

**Source:** “Afghan VOA reporters stuck in Kabul fear they will be forgotten, says colleague who made it out,” Dan De Luce, NBC News, updated September 3, 2021.

- r. “The nightmares come easy and often for Afghan journalist Taqi Daryabi.

When they do, the 22-year-old reporter for the Afghan newspaper Etilaatroz is instantly transported back to a dank room in a Taliban-run police station, where a group of former fighters brutally beat him and his colleague Nematullah Naqdi last month for covering a women's protest in Kabul.

...

Atefa, who wants to use only her first name to protect her safety, used to write critically about the Taliban's attitudes and treatment of women for various Afghan news outlets. Now she's in hiding.

Ever since the group recaptured Herat in mid-August, her neighbors have been telling her the Taliban have been looking for her. In recent weeks, she's received text messages from unknown numbers, containing grisly video clips. She presumes they're from the Taliban, warning her of what's to come.

‘One recent video I got shows the Taliban torturing a man to death,’ she says. ‘I am ready to be killed by a bullet, but I do not want to fall into the hands of the Taliban. I don't want to be cut up into pieces.’

...

Reporting has long been a dangerous and even deadly business for Afghan journalists. They have been targeted with attacks and kidnappings, some of which have been claimed by the Taliban. Now, with the Taliban in power, the mix of

threats, detentions and vague media rules, plus a shattered economy, have set the clock back on Afghan media progress.

More than 150 media companies and radio stations across the country have shut down, according to TOLO News, Afghanistan's most prominent broadcast news outlet. Hundreds of Afghan journalists have fled the country since Taliban forces took control of Kabul in August.

Those who have stayed, like Daryabi and Atefa, say they don't know where the Taliban's red lines are. Many have stopped working for fear of retribution, violent assaults and inexplicable detentions.”

**Source:** “Under the Taliban, it's harder than ever to be an Afghan journalist,” NPR, October 13, 2021.

- s. **(Update)** “The Taliban pledged to protect media freedom after seizing power last August.

But critics allege media and freedom of speech have worsened under Taliban rule in Afghanistan, citing growing incidents of violence, harassment and torture against media workers.

In December, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) released a survey, showing that at least 40 percent of media outlets in Afghanistan have disappeared and more than 80 percent of women journalists lost their jobs since the Taliban takeover of the country.

Hundreds of journalists have also left Afghanistan since August for fear of Taliban reprisals or because of problems associated with practicing their profession under the new rulers.”

**Source:** “UN, Amnesty Decry Latest Taliban Crackdown on Afghan Journalism,” VOA (Voice of America), January 27, 2022.

- t. **(Update)** “**The Taliban have arrested two Afghan journalists working for a local news channel, rights groups said Tuesday, weeks after two women activists went missing.**

Since seizing power in August, the hardline Islamists have cracked down on dissent by detaining critics and forcefully dispersing protests against their regime.

The Afghan Media Association -- a newly formed journalists' rights group -- said Ariana TV reporters Waris Hasrat and Aslam Hijab were picked up by the Taliban on Monday ‘and taken to an unknown location’.

Without naming the Taliban, an official at Ariana told AFP the reporters were seized by masked gunmen in front of the channel's office as they went out for

lunch.

He said Taliban officials ‘have assured us of a comprehensive investigation’.

Rights group Amnesty International demanded on Twitter that the Taliban "unconditionally and immediately release" the pair.

A Taliban spokesman told AFP he had no information on the missing journalists.”

**Source:** “Rights groups blame Taliban for missing journalists,” France 24, February 1, 2022.