Hazaras are the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, mostly composed of Shia Muslims.[[1]](#footnote-1) The group makes up about 10% to 20% of Afghanistan’s 38 million population.[[2]](#footnote-2) Hazaras have been subjected to violence and discrimination by the Taliban and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) for years, due to differences in their sectarian identities and ethnic origins.[[3]](#footnote-3) Hazaras tend to live together, in closely-knit neighborhoods—like the well-known western area of Kabul called Dashte Barchi—to protect themselves from the Taliban and ISIS-K’s violence.[[4]](#footnote-4) Unfortunately, living together has also made Hazaras easy targets for attacks.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Hazaras in Afghanistan have faced violence from the Taliban for hundreds of years, even before the Taliban’s takeover in August 2021.[[6]](#footnote-6) The Taliban have carried out various mass killings of Hazaras throughout history,[[7]](#footnote-7) including the 1998 massacre in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, where at least 2,000 mainly Hazara civilians were executed.[[8]](#footnote-8) In more recent years, Hazaras have been killed and wounded by frequent bomb attacks.[[9]](#footnote-9) On May 8, 2021, an attack that deliberately targeted female students was carried out in a girl’s school in a mostly Hazara neighborhood, killing 90 people.[[10]](#footnote-10) In early July, leading up to their takeover, Taliban forces massacrednine Hazara Shia men over the course of three days—shooting six of the men and torturing the other three to death.[[11]](#footnote-11) Between July 4 and 6, Taliban fighters killed nine Hazara men in the Ghazni Province, after taking control over the area.[[12]](#footnote-12) Now that the Taliban are the government of Afghanistan, Hazaras have to rely on a group that has, and continues to, persecute them for security.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Since their takeover, the Taliban have continued to attack and displace Hazaras.[[14]](#footnote-14) In the first half of 2021, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented20 attacks against Hazaras; the attacks left 143 people dead and 357 injured.[[15]](#footnote-15) In late August, Taliban fighters reportedly killed 13 Hazaras in Daykundi Province, many of which were former government soldiers.[[16]](#footnote-16) Several commuter minibuses used by Hazaras were also bombed in the Hazara district of Dashte Barchi—killing at least 11 people and wounding up to 18.[[17]](#footnote-17) There are also voluminous reports that the Taliban forcibly displaced hundreds of Hazara families from southern Helmand Province in October, in part, to distribute land to their own supporters.[[18]](#footnote-18) The evictions were carried at gunpoint and with little notice, preventing the Hazara families from taking their belongings or finishing harvesting their crops to support themselves after the displacement.[[19]](#footnote-19) According to reports, the largest displacements occurred within 15 villages in Daykundi and Uruzgan Provinces, in Helmand, in Balkh, and in one other province. [[20]](#footnote-20) In September alone, at least 2,800 Hazara residents were forcibly displaced.[[21]](#footnote-21) Sources estimate the total number of Hazaras forcibly displaced by the Taliban reaches over 4,000.[[22]](#footnote-22) The Taliban have been accused of attempting to carry out an “ethnic cleansing” against Hazaras. [[23]](#footnote-23) Similarly, of brutally torturing Hazaras, including children, and carrying out killings in the Qarabagh district of Ghazni.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Hazaras in Afghanistan are also subject to violence by ISIS-K, which, like the Taliban, consider Hazaras “apostates,” “heretics,” and “infidels.”[[25]](#footnote-25) ISIS-K has particularly targeted Hazara schools and mosques.[[26]](#footnote-26) ISIS-K has also bombed and targeted protests, New Year’s celebrations, and even a wrestling club, since 2016, killing over a hundred persons.[[27]](#footnote-27) Between October and December alone, there were at least four attacks by ISIS-K against Hazara communities.[[28]](#footnote-28) On October 8, at least 72 members of the minority Shia community, mostly composed of Hazaras, were killed at a mosque in Kunduz by a ISIS-K suicide bomber.[[29]](#footnote-29) On October 15, there was another attack on a mosque that killed 63 persons.[[30]](#footnote-30)

As a result of the history of persecution Hazaras have faced, and continue to face in Afghanistan, many Hazaras fled the country when the Taliban took over. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that Hazaras made up approximately 40 percent of the Afghans that fled to Iran post takeover.[[31]](#footnote-31) Hazaras, however, only make up 1% of those evacuated.[[32]](#footnote-32) Hazaras are not just subject to killings and displacement in Afghanistan, they are also subject to broader societal discrimination, including extortions through illegal taxation, forced labor, physical abuse, and detention.[[33]](#footnote-33) It is reported, “the fear of terror attacks has become a daily reality for Afghanistan’s Shia Hazara minority, and as they go about their daily lives, death can strike at the most unexpected times: while coming out of school, praying at the mosque or in an urban transport vehicle.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Hazaras in Afghanistan live in a permanent state of insecurity.

1. *Freedom in the World 2022 - Afghanistan*, Freedom House (Feb. 28, 2022), https://freedomhouse.org/country/afghanistan/freedom-world/2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Desperate Hazara Leaders in Afghanistan Show Support for Taliban*, Daily Sabah (Nov. 25, 2021), https://www.dailysabah.com/world/asia-pacific/desperate-hazara-leaders-in-afghanistan-show-support-for-taliban. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Taliban Continue Crack Down on Human Rights Defenders*, Times of India (Nov. 12, 2021), https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/taliban-continue-crack-down-on-human-rights-defenders/articleshow/87668518.cms; *See also*, U.S. Dep’t of State, 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan 20 (April 12, 2022), https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/afghanistan [hereinafter DOS Report] (“ISIS-K claimed responsibility for the attack in which there were indications the gunmen may have sought to target Hazaras specifically.”); *A Bleak Future with Education Under Attack in Afghanistan*, Hum. Rts Watch (April 20, 2022), https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/20/bleak-future-education-under-attack-afghanistan (“Dasht-e Barchi is home to Afghanistan’s Hazara community, an ethnic group that has faced discrimination and abuse by both the Taliban and successive Afghan governments.”); Daily Sabah, *supra* note 2 (“A statue of a prominent Hazara political leader was decapitated in Bamiyan, a city inhabited mainly by the Shiite community.”). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Moncho Torres, *Afghanistan’s Hazaras Live in the Shadow of Fear as Attacks Increase*, La Prensa Latina (Dec. 11, 2021), https://www.laprensalatina.com/afghanistans-hazaras-live-in-the-shadow-of-fear-as-attacks-increase. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Daily Sabah, *supra* note 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. DOS Report*, supra* note 3, at 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Factsheet Afghanistan*, U.S. Comm. on Int’l Religious Freedom (Oct. 28, 2021), https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/2021%20Factsheet%20-%20Religious%20Minorities%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf (“In early July, after the Taliban took control of Ghazni province in their advance toward Kabul, villagers from Mundarakht left for shelter in the mountains during fighting between the Taliban and government forces. As some of the villagers returned to gather food and supplies, Taliban forces *massacred* nine Hazara Shi’a men over the course of three days; six were shot and three were tortured to death.”) (emphasis in the original). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. DOS Report*, supra* note 3, at 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. David Zucchino, *‘Why Was I Born a Girl?’ An Afghan Poem Inspires U.S. Students*, New York Times (Jan. 22, 2022), https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/22/world/asia/afghanistan-girls-school-taliban.html; *Cf. Afghanistan: Taliban Authorities Must Reveal Alia Azizi’s Whereabouts*, Amnesty Int’l (Jan. 21, 2022), https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/01/afghanistan-taliban-authorities-must-reveal-alia-azizis-whereabouts (Alia Azizi, a member of the ethnic Hazara community and the Head of Herat Women’s Prison, disappeared on October 2, 2021 in the context of the Taliban illegally detaining members of the former government, journalists, and assorted critics across the country. The Taliban have not responded to her family’s pleas for information or investigation. As of April 2022, she remains missing); *Cf.* Moncho Torres, *supra* note 4 (“On Friday, a sacred day when streets are full of people and the Taliban were keeping watch, twin bombings targeted two passenger vans within a span of 30 minutes. Two people were killed and three injured in the first blast, while a woman was injured in the second.”). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *See e.g.*, Freedom House, *supra* note 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. U.S. Comm. on Int’l Religious Freedom, *supra* note 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Freedom House, *supra* note 1; U.S. Comm. on Int’l Religious Freedom, *supra* note 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Zucchino, *supra* note 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *See e.g.*, DOS Report*, supra* note 3, at 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Id.*; Zarif Nazar & Abubakar Siddique, *Taliban Accused of Forcibly Evicting Ethnic Uzbeks, Turkmen In Northern Afghanistan*, Gandhara (Dec. 9, 2021), https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/taliban-evictions-uzbeks-turkmen/31601904.html; Times of India, *supra* note 3; U.S. Comm. on Int’l Religious Freedom, *supra* note 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. DOS Report*, supra* note 3, at 50; Zarif Nazar & Abubakar Siddique, *supra* note 20; Times of India, *supra* note 3; U.S. Comm. on Int’l Religious Freedom, *supra* note 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Sitarah Mohammadi & Sajjad Askary, *Why the Hazara People Fear Genocide in Afghanistan*, Al Jazeera (Oct. 27, 2021), https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/10/27/why-the-hazara-people-fear-genocide-in-afghanistan (“Taliban fighters forced over 4,000 Hazaras from their homes, claiming they had no ownership over their land, leaving them stranded without food or shelter as harsh winter approaches. In Mazar-e-Sharif, a local Taliban court decided to expel some 2,000 families, again based on false claims that they do not own their homes.”). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Times of India, *supra* note 3; Sitarah Mohammadi & Sajjad Askary, *supra* note 22 (“By now there is a clear pattern of Taliban atrocities being committed across Afghanistan, which could mean that the Hazaras may be facing imminent ethnic cleansing.”). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Times of India, *supra* note 3 (“They have been tortured inhumanly and then shot in their faces. A picture of a Hazara child drenched in clothes wet with blood was tweeted recently, reported IFFRAS.”). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Zucchino, *supra* note 13; Daily Sabah, *supra* note 2.; Times of India, *supra* note 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Hum. Rts Watch, *supra* note 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Zucchino, *supra* note 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. DOS Report, *supra* note 3, at 52; *See also,* Zucchino, *supra* note 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Freedom House, *supra* note 1; *see also*, DOS Report, *supra* note 3, at 52; U.S. Comm. on Int’l Religious Freedom, *supra* note 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Freedom House, *supra* note 1; *see also*, DOS Report, *supra* note 3, at 50; Sitarah Mohammadi & Sajjad Askary, *supra* note 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. DOS Report, *supra* note 3, at 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *An Appeal to the World Concerning the Dire Situation of the Hazara Ethnic Group in Afghanistan*, Kabul Press (Nov. 23, 2021), https://www.kabulpress.org/article240882.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. DOS Report, *supra* note 3, at 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Moncho Torres, *supra* note 4; *Cf.* U.S. Comm. on Int’l Religious Freedom, *supra* note 11 (“In August 2021, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a press release stating its grave concern about the Shi’a minority, warning that Hazaras face ‘a risk of crimes against humanity or even genocide.’”). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)