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 **BFA** REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA  
FEDERAL OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM



 **ZAMG**  
Zentralanstalt für  
Meteorologie und  
Geodynamik

 **IMG**  
INSTITUT FÜR MILITÄRISCHES GEWESSEN

# Atlas Afghanistan

## Comments and Sources

The “Atlas Afghanistan” can be accessed via: [http://www.ecoi.net/atlas\\_afghanistan.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/atlas_afghanistan.pdf)

The comments and sources for the “Atlas Afghanistan” can be accessed via: [http://www.ecoi.net/atlas\\_afghanistan\\_sources.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/atlas_afghanistan_sources.pdf)

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This product of the Austrian Country of Origin Information Department (COI Department) of the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum was prepared in conformity with the standards adopted by the Advisory Council of the Austrian COI Department and the methodology developed by the Austrian COI Department.

The maps used are COI documents, which are drawn up in conformity with COI standards to satisfy the requirements of immigration and asylum proceedings (regional directorates, initial reception centres, applicants, Federal Administrative Court) based on research of existing, credible and primarily publicly accessible information. The maps provide a general view of the situation with respect to relevant facts in the country of origin, independent of any given individual case.

This product is intended for use by the target audience in the institutions tasked with asylum and immigration matters. Section 5, para 5, last sentence of the Act on the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA-G) applies to these maps, i.e. they are as such not part of the country of origin information accessible to the general public. However, they become accessible to the party in question by being used in proceedings (party’s right to be heard, use in notification letter), and to the general public by being used in the notification letter.

This product does not claim to be complete and exhaustive in terms of the information being provided. This product does not give rise to any conclusions as to the legal assessment of any given proceedings. The maps do not constitute binding guidelines for any general or individual decisions. Specifically, this document may not be understood to be a political statement on the part of the Austrian COI Department or the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum.

*For the overview map the following source was used: 1 : 30 000 000: Natural Earth. For all the topographic and thematic maps 1 : 10 000 000: Collins World Explorer Premium, Natural Earth was used. The maps showing main oil and gas fields are all based on: Petroleum Economist, a division of Euromoney Global Limited, December 2014, designed by K. Fuller and P. Bush, map scale 1 : 23 000 000.*

## General Information (for all ethnic and religious maps)

*The population of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region is very heterogeneously in terms of religious and sectarian, as well as ethnic and linguistic diversity. Due to this and because of the partly inconsistent sources the maps only indicate where main settlement areas of religious or ethnic groups are. Especially the religious and ethnic composition in urban centers may differ significantly from those in rural surroundings and it is not possible to show this heterogeneity on the maps. Identification by religious or ethnic affiliation might vary within a group and external attributions of religious or ethnic affiliation might differ from self-perception, too.*

*Not all existing religious and ethnic groups can be shown on the maps (see below). A compromise between clarity and accuracy had to be found, which respects the religious and ethnic diversity of the Middle East and North Africa. The population density has not been taken into account and is therefore not shown on the maps.*

*When creating these maps, the following methodology was complied with: An ethnic or religious minority group is depicted on the map if it amounts to more than one percent of the total population of the country in question and has a settlement area that can be located. If a group amounts to less than one percent of the total population in country A, but to more than one percent of the population in country B, the minority group is shown in both of the countries. The exceptions made from this methodology were limited to the smallest possible number.*

*Further information on ethnic/linguistic and religious/sectarian groups can be found in the specific comments provided for each country and map.*

## Country Specific Information

### Comments

*Some ethnic minorities are not depicted on this map, e.g. Tat in Iran. Further information is provided in the comments concerning each country. Especially in urban centers the religious composition may differ significantly from the religious composition of the rural surroundings and it is not possible to show this heterogeneity on this type of map.*

*Some of the ethnic minorities are subsumed under the following groups: The ethnic groups of Talysh, Gilaki and Mazandarani are shown as one group, because they speak Northwestern Iranian languages which are closely related to each other. Gilaki and Mazandarani belong to the Caucasian language branch (which is a sub-group of Northwestern Iranian languages).*

*Some religious minorities are not depicted on this map. Further information is provided in the comments concerning each country. Especially in urban centers the religious composition may differ significantly from the religious composition of the rural surroundings and it is not possible to show this heterogeneity on this type of map.*

The different branches of Shia Islam (Twelver Shia Muslims, Ismailis) are depicted individually. Religious minorities like Christians, Jews, Bahais and others cannot be shown on the map, because they are mainly concentrated in the cities and/or their number is too small.

## Afghanistan

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## **Afghanistan – Ethnic and linguistic groups**

### Comments

According to CIA-factbook, the total population of Afghanistan is 32,564,342 (2015 estimates). CIA-factbook states, that there is no current statistical data on ethnicity in Afghanistan available and ethnicity data from small samples of respondents to opinion polls are not a reliable alternative. The last census was done in the 1970s. CIA-factbook enlists the following ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Baloch, Turkmens, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, Pashai and Kyrgyz. Except for Kyrgyz, the Afghan constitution of 2004 recognizes all the mentioned ethnic groups. Not all of them are depicted on this map. Brahui, Gujar, Qizilbash, Arabs and Kyrgyz are not shown on this map, either because their number is too small or because they mainly live in urban areas that are not included in this map.

According to GIZ – Länderinformationsportal, Pashtuns amount to 40 percent, Tajiks to 30 percent, Hazara to 10 percent and Uzbek to 9 percent. The Institute for the Study of War reports that 3 percent of the population are Turkmens. Minority Rights Group International says that Baloch make up to 2 percent of the Afghan population. Especially the Northern part of Afghanistan is extremely diverse regarding ethnicity and can only be shown in a simplified way. In the Northern provinces of Afghanistan settle Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazara, Turkmens and others.

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In some sources Tajiks, Pamiri and Farsiwan are depicted/referred to as individual groups, whereas for a better overview they are depicted as Tajiks on this map. Recent scientific literature separates Pamiris from Tajiks because the language they speak is only distantly related to Tajik Persian. The term “Farsiwan” refers to the inhabitants of Northwestern Afghanistan (especially around the city of Herat), who speak Persian. The majority of maps show them as Tajiks, although their life situation is very different from the one of Tajiks living in the mountains.

The term “Aimaq” is an umbrella term for various Sunni tribes, e.g. Firuzkuhi, Jamshidi, Taimani, Timuri, Zuri, etc. In many sources Sunni Hazara living around the city of Herat are referred to as Aimaq. They are depicted as Hazara, because Shia Hazara in Central Afghanistan are also shown individually. Hazara speak Hazaragi, which in some sources is described as being an own language, in other sources it is called a dialect of Persian.

The two official languages of Afghanistan are Afghan Persian (Dari) and Pashto. According to CIA – factbook, Dari functions as the lingua franca. Furthermore, the Turkic languages Uzbek and Turkmen and Balochi, Pashai, Nuristani and Pamiri are the third official languages in areas where the majority speaks them. CIA – factbook presents some numbers regarding the use of languages in Afghanistan: 50 percent of the population speak Afghan Persian, 35 percent speak Pashto, 11 percent speak Turkic languages like Uzbek and Turkmen and 4 percent of the population speak a language like Balochi or Pashai.

#### Pashtuns

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Tajiks

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## **Afghanistan – Religious and sectarian groups**

Comments

According to CIA – factbook, 99.7 percent of the Afghan population are Muslims. 84.7 to 89.7 percent are Sunni Muslims, whereas 10 to 15 percent belong to the Shia branch of Islam. Only 0.3 percent are non-Muslims. There are practically no Jews in Afghanistan. Sikh and Hindu minorities mainly live in bigger cities like Kandahar and Kabul. In general, Hazara living in Central Afghanistan and some Tajiks (not all) are Shia; almost all of them belong to Twelver Shia. Additionally, there are some Ismaili Hazara and some Ismaili Tajiks (Pamiris or Mountain-Tajiks). The Qizilbash are also Shiites.

In Afghanistan Shiites can only be depicted in a simplified manner. In each of the bigger cities there are significant Shiite neighborhoods, e.g. Chindawul, Muradkhani, Kart-e Seh, Kart-e Sakhi and Dehmazang in Kabul, parts of Aliabad, parts of Herat (especially the township Jabraeel), parts of Mazar-i Sharif (especially Kart-e Bokhdi), parts of Kandahar city and in Farah.

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**Afghanistan – Security Situation**

Comments

*As a rule, security-related incidents do not include criminal incidents, but incidents which GlobalIncidentMap ascribes to or associates with insurgents, including bomb attacks (successful or attempted), targeted assassinations or assassination attempts, abductions, arson attacks, attacks with firearms, gunfights. Activities performed by state actors are subsumed under the category “arrests, captures, kills”.*

*Relying on internet-based global news media reports, Globalincidentmap collects security-related incidents connected to terrorism worldwide and provides a georeferenced display of such incidents, broken down by types, on an online map. Any such incident listed always comes with a citation. The original classification by incident type was retained, except for the two categories “Other suspicious activity” and “General terrorism news”, which the Austrian COI-Department clustered into the broader category “other, undefined”, as they did not fit into any of the more specific categories.*

*Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is a disaggregated conflict collection, analysis and crisis mapping project. ACLED collects the dates, actors, types of violence, locations, and fatalities of all reported political violence and protest events across Africa, South Asia, South East Asia and the Middle East. Political violence and protest includes events that occur within civil wars and periods of instability, public protest and regime breakdown. ACLED primarily relies on publicly available news reports and cites at least one source for each event covered. ACLED receives financial support from the U.S. Department of State and the European Research Council.*

*The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2016 (with additional annual updates planned for the future). The GTD includes date and location of the incident, the weapons used and nature of the target, the number of casualties, and--when identifiable--the group or individual responsible on more than 170,000 transnational and international terrorist incidents that have occurred during this time period. Statistical information contained in the Global Terrorism Database is based on reports from a variety of open media sources and information is not added to the GTD unless and until the sources are determined credible. If new documentation about an event becomes available, an entry may be modified, as necessary and appropriate. The GTD is made available by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) and the University of Maryland.*



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*The Country of Origin Information Department qualifies incidents listed in this database as security-relevant. Double entries were removed manually.*

*Location of incidents: The information provided includes the coordinates (lat, long) of the village or the nearest town or city, not the actual location of the incident.*

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*The borders of Afghanistan (aggregate of province borders with neighbouring countries) as cited from the above-mentioned source feature slight differences in some areas, as geolocation data accuracy varies.*

*With respect to these documents, humanitarian aid organisations were asked whether or not they were active in certain districts of Afghanistan in the period October to December 2016 or 2017, and if they were not, whether they had operational capacities in these districts. The data stating the count of active humanitarian organisations by districts and a breakdown of organisations (name, type) by district are listed in the form of Excel spreadsheets.*

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*Satellite imagery contains modified Copernicus Sentinel data [2017] for Sentinel data (Sentinel 2). Shooting dates:*

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## **Pakistan – Ethnic and linguistic groups**

### Comments

According to CIA – factbook, the total population of Pakistan is 199,085,847 (2015 estimates). CIA – factbook reports that Punjabis amount to 44.68 percent of the total population, Pashtuns/Pathans to 15.42 percent, Sindhis to 14.1 percent, Saraiki to 8.38 percent, Mohajir to 7.57 percent and Baloch to 3.57 percent. The remaining 6.28 percent of the population are made up by other ethnic groups. The term “Pathans” refers to the Pashtun ethnic group; it comes from Hindi language and was adopted by the British.

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*There is an ongoing territorial dispute between India and Pakistan regarding the region of Kashmir since both countries claim Kashmir. There is a ceasefire line that divides Kashmir into two parts; one is controlled by Pakistan, the other one by India. The territories of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir are under Pakistani control and are therefore shown on this map. India claims both territories; at the same time Pakistan claims the territories kept under Indian control.*

*Not all ethnic minorities are shown on the map, either because they are too small or because they mainly live in urban areas, e.g. Mohajir, Hazara, Brahui and Kihals. Furthermore, more than one million of Afghan refugees live in Pakistan.*

*Mohajir are Muslims who emigrated from India to Pakistan after the partition of India in 1947. They are an important minority group (about 7 percent of the total population), but since they have no contiguous settlement area they cannot be shown on this map. Mohajir live mainly in urban areas; in the metropolis of Karachi they are a significant population group. Saraikis are not depicted as an individual ethnic group, because in most sources they are shown as Punjabis. The status of Saraiki language is disputed. Some sources call it an own language, but most of them state that it is a dialect of Punjabi. Saraiki is spoken in Bhakkar, D.I. Khan, Muzaffar Garh, Rajan Pur and other regions. It has to be mentioned that the dispute on the status of Saraiki language does not only have to do with linguistic factors, but with cultural, historical and political ones. There are also some other cases in which the status of Punjabi dialects is disputed, e.g. Hindko speakers living in the Hazara division in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Potowhari speakers.*

*The Northern part of Pakistan is extremely diverse regarding ethnicity and can only be shown in a simplified way. Therefore, all ethnic minorities, including Shina, Balti, Kalasha, Wakhi, Burusho/Hunza, Kho/Chitralis and others, are subsumed under one group.*

*Additional attention should be paid to Pakistan's population density, which varies considerably from region to region. For example, Baluchistan accounts for approximately 40 percent of Pakistan's territory, but has only 5 percent of the population. More than half of the population lives in the province of Punjab.*

*The official languages of Pakistan are Urdu and English, although the majority of the population does not speak these languages as their mother tongue. In 2015, the Supreme Court ordered the government to adopt only Urdu as official language. According to CIA-factbook, the main languages being spoken in Pakistan are the following: 48 percent Punjabi, 12 percent Sindhi, 10 percent Saraiki (Punjabi variant), 8 percent Pashto, 8 percent Urdu, 3 percent Balochi, 2 percent Hindko and one percent Brahui. English is used as a lingua franca. The remaining 8 percent refer to other languages.*

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## **Pakistan – Religious and sectarian groups**

### Comments

*The official religion of Pakistan is Islam. According to CIA-factbook, 96.4 percent of the population are Muslims; 85 to 90 percent are Sunni Muslims, 10 to 15 percent are Shia Muslims. The remaining 3.6 percent include Christians, Hindus and other non-Muslim religions.*

*Not all religious minorities can be shown on the map, e.g. Zoroastrians, Christians, Ahmadis, Buddhists, Sikhs, Kalashas (animists), Kihals, Jains and people practicing Sufism. Christians mainly live in Central Punjab and in all big cities (especially Lahore). Ahmadis amount to less than one million and have no contiguous settlement area. They live mainly in urban areas.*

*In the sources used, the areas inhabited by both Sunni and Shia Muslims were depicted in very different ways. Additionally, there were only few sources available. It was decided to depict the Sunni-Shia mixed areas according to the source with the most current date (Izady, 2016).*

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## Iran – Ethnic and linguistic groups

### Comments

According to GIZ – Länderinformationsportal, the total population of Iran is 78,800,000. In July 2015, the U.S. government estimated the population at 81,824,270. GIZ – Länderinformationsportal reports that Persians amount to 51 percent and 24 percent of the population are Azeris (Azerbaijanis). Furthermore, 8 percent of the population are Gilakis and Mazandarani, 7 percent are Kurds and 3 percent are Arabs. Turkmens, Lurs and Baloch amount to 2 percent respectively. Originally, the term Qashqai refers to various clans of different ethnic origins, but almost all of them are of Turkic origin and speak a Turkic dialect. In some sources Kugiluyeh and Bakhtiari are depicted/referred to as individual groups, whereas they are shown as Lurs on this map. Bakhtiari language can be seen as a Lurish dialect.

Some minorities are not depicted on this map, e.g. Brahui in the Southeast of Iran, Afshars and Tats. Additionally, according to some sources, there are more than one million Afghan refugees living in Iran.

Persian is the only official language in Iran, although there is a vast amount of minority languages such as Azeri Turkic, Kurdish, Gilaki, Mazandarani, Luri, Balochi, and Arabic.

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## **Iran – Religious and sectarian groups**

### Comments

*Twelver Shiism is the official religion in Iran. There are only three officially recognized religious minorities: Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. All the other religious minorities are not officially recognized. According to USDOS (Report on Religious Freedom 2015), Muslims constitute 99 percent of the Iranian population. 90 to 95 percent are Shia Muslims and 5 to 10 percent Sunni Muslims (especially Turkmen, Baloch, some Arabs and most of the Kurds). Furthermore, there are Iranians who practice Sufism, but there are no official statistics on*



their number. Several thousand of Iranians belong to the Ismaili sect of Shia Islam, especially in the Northeast. The remaining one percent of the population are Bahais, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and Yarsan (all numbers from USDOS). According to USDOS, the number of Yarsan in Iran is up to one million. Other sources state that Yarsan amount to up to 2- 4 million. In other countries, Yarsan are also known as Ahl-e Haqq or Kaka'i.

Bahais, Jews and Zoroastrians are not shown on the map because they mainly live in urban areas (e.g. Zoroastrians around Yazd). According to USDOS (Report on Religious Freedom 2015), the majority of Christians are ethnic Armenians and live in Teheran and Isfahan. Smaller Christian communities live in the Northwest of Iran. Christians living in urban areas cannot be depicted on the map, whereas Christians living in Northwestern Iran are depicted. There is a difference between "ethnic" Christians like Armenians and Assyrians (officially recognized) and converts (not officially recognized). Sources suggest that there are very few, if any, Yezidis in Iran.

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