



Afghanistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 29 September 2014

Any information as to whether civilians working with American forces in Afghanistan (for example people supplying materials to American bases) are at risk from the Taliban.

A report published by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), in a section titled “Statements directing the deliberate targeting of civilians”, states:

“Inconsistent with internationally-accepted definitions of —civilianll and laws prohibiting the targeting of civilians, the Taliban relayed in statements in 2014 an intention to directly target civilians. For example, the Taliban statement announcing the commencement of their ‘Khaibar’ Spring Offensive lists civilian contractors, translators, administrators, logistics personnel, Cabinet ministers, members of parliament, attorneys and judges as potential targets.” (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (July 2014) *Afghanistan: Mid-Year Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2014*, p.24)

A UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) eligibility guidelines document, in a section titled “Civilians Associated with or Perceived as Supportive of the ANSF or the IMF”, refers to threats and attacks by Anti-Government Elements (AGEs) on civilians working for the International Military Forces (IMF) as follows:

“AGEs have reportedly threatened and attacked Afghan civilians who work for the IMF as drivers, interpreters or in other civilian capacities. AGEs are also widely reported to target civilians who are suspected of collaborating with, or ‘spying for’ the ANSF or the IMF. UNAMA reports having documented many cases of AGEs murdering or mutilating persons suspected of collaborating with pro-government forces.” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (6 August 2013) *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, pp.34-35)

A document published by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), in a section titled “International Military Forces” (section 2.2.1), states:

“In 2005, insurgents started attacking civilians who were perceived to be cooperating with the US military. Farmers in Khost reported that PKR 15 000 Pakistani rupees (USD 250) were offered to kill civilians working with the US Army. In 2007, the Haqqani network targeted an Indian company working on the Gardez-Khost Road. The company was a subcontractor to the US Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and Haqqani intended to destabilise the roadwork with attacks. Furthermore, construction sites for secondary roads to the district centres and the workers working on them were attacked. According to Thomas Ruttig, Afghans reported night letters in Paktia and

Khost in 2008 in which the killing of interpreters for the US Troops was described as 'Islamic'. In 2009, Graeme Smith stated that the Taliban targeted English-speaking interpreters in Kandahar province and possibly also their relatives. The UN Special Rapporteur, Philip Alston, mentioned the intimidation and targeting of drivers supplying food to foreign troops by the Taliban. ANSO explained that in Kandahar and Helmand, locals associated with the IMF were primary targets of SAF attacks from insurgents on motorcycles (European Asylum Support Office (EASO) (December 2012) *EASO Country of Origin Information Report. Afghanistan. Insurgent strategies — intimidation and targeted violence against Afghans*, p.62)

See also section of this document titled "Summary — Afghan civilians working for the IMF" this document which states:

"Afghans collaborating with the IMF are a proclaimed target of the Taliban and other insurgent groups. This is a large target group, since the IMF and foreign aid are the most important source of employment in Afghanistan. The economic situation of the country forces many Afghans to ignore the risk of being targeted by insurgents. Road construction companies contracted to the IMF, interpreters, contractors, drivers of IMF supply trucks and people frequenting PRT or IMF bases were victims of intimidation by night letters, killings, IED attacks or SAF attacks by motorcyclists. Relatives of these people have been targeted as well by insurgents. Insurgents set up illegal checkpoints to look for people with links to the IMF." (ibid, p.64)

A Danish Immigration Service fact-finding mission report, in a section titled "Association or employment with US military/ISAF", states:

"Concerning the risk run by persons who are associated or employed with US military, an independent policy research organization in Kabul informed the delegation that these employees do not run a high risk if their workplace is in Kabul, but if one works in a military base outside Kabul, then there is a risk of being targeted regardless of one's position and type of work. That includes contractors as well as service staff and drivers. As regards other people working for the US military, the independent policy research organization in Kabul stated that for instance interpreters are high targets. Another factor determining the level of risk in this connection is one's place of living. Employees who live locally outside bases run a higher risk compared to those who are originating from another area than where the bases are located. The same source stated that many of those who work for the military keep their jobs a secret if they can." (Danish Immigration Service (29 May 2012) *Afghanistan: Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process – Report from Danish Immigration Service's fact finding mission to Kabul, Afghanistan, 25 February to 4 March 2012*, p.17)

This section of the report also states:

"People working for US military or ISAF run a higher risk than other groups, according to IOM. Translators are more at risk than other employees such as cleaning staff, which IOM explained by the fact that translators are more in contact with the military staff. Family members of these employees would always be included in the threats, according to IOM. IOM further said that contractors working for the US military or American or British companies are also targeted, and contractors working for Indian companies are to some

extent also targeted. According to AIHRC, people working with international forces are targeted by the Taliban. Translators working for U.S. military or ISAF forces were mentioned by AIHRC among the Taliban's targets. As regards family members of people working for the international forces, there are examples that the Taliban has intimidated their families and acquaintances, but the real risk is for the person working for the forces. An independent research institute in Kabul informed the delegation that especially interpreters employed by the international forces are at risk, but drivers and service staff could also be targeted. They can be kidnapped, blackmailed or killed because of this association. NATO convoy drivers are also often killed. AAWU stated that men who work within the security forces and interpreters working for the foreign forces are high targets." (ibid, pp.17-18)

A Washington Post article states:

"Afghanistan's population is spread out, with a high illiteracy rate and 'dozens of languages and dialects.' The number of linguists needed by U.S. troops far 'exceeded the number of locals that could take jobs,' according to the Army. In addition, there are three types of interpreters needed - locals and others who have no security clearances; U.S. citizens who have secret clearances; and U.S. citizens with top-secret clearances and "capable of supporting continuous operations on a 24/7 basis in austere/hostile locations throughout Afghanistan," according to the Army. Salaries can range from as low as \$900 a month for an Afghan to \$200,000 or more a year for an American working at forward operating positions. It is a dangerous business, and even more so for Afghans, who become special targets for the Taliban. MEP in September said that over the years 73 of its employees had been killed, with 312 injured and 10 missing." (Washington Post (13 February 2012) *Profiting in Afghanistan*)

A Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report on Afghans working for NATO-led forces states:

"They have been branded 'traitors' by the Taliban, which has said for years that it will kill any Afghans working for the NATO-led coalition. With the majority of U.S. and NATO-led troops set to leave the country in 2014, many Afghans working in support positions look ahead with trepidation. Their fears appear to be well-grounded. Scores of Afghans working for foreign military forces have already been targeted by the Taliban. On November 14, in the latest such killing, the Taliban shot dead two Afghan interpreters working for NATO troops near Kabul. Their bodies were left next to their cars. There have been other killings and many others have received death threats warning them to quit their jobs or face a similar fate." (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (21 November 2012) *Afghans Working With NATO-Led Forces Fear For The Future*)

See also Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report which states:

"Afghan police say Taliban militants have shot dead two young Afghan men working as translators for NATO troops. The two were killed November 14 as they drove from Kabul to work at Camp Shank, a NATO outpost in Logar Province, about 80 kilometers south of Kabul. Officials said the militants left the men's bodies next to their car on the side of the road. Thousands of Afghans, mostly young men, are hired by NATO's International Security

Assistance Force in various capacities to assist soldiers fighting Taliban insurgents. These locals are frequently targeted by militants. (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (14 November 2012) *Taliban Kill Two Afghans Working For NATO*)

An Al Arabiya article states:

“Noori knows that he will be a target once the troops are gone, especially if their withdrawal leads to a deteriorating security situation. The Taliban are making concerted efforts to hunt down ‘collaborators of the enemy,’ and after working alongside foreigners for the past four years, Noori’s face is well-known. According to Now Lebanon, thousands of Afghani staff, who aid western forces in many capacities including translation services and medical care, face the same threat.” (Al Arabiya (18 April 2013) *Afghanis working for foreign troops face Taliban threat, uncertain future*)

A Deutsche Welle article states:

“I wasn’t aware of the risk at the time,’ said Ahmed (not his real name). Between 2010 and 2013, the young Afghan served as an interpreter for the German army, the Bundeswehr, and other ISAF troops from different countries under NATO command. The insurgents in his own country branded him a traitor for helping foreign armies. Three times, Ahmed received direct threats from the Taliban. On one occasion, they even planted explosive devices outside his house. Fearing for their lives, Ahmed and his wife left their home last year.” (Deutsche Welle (7 August 2014) *Interpreters are caught in the crossfire in Afghanistan*)

In a paragraph headed “Dangerously close to the army?” this article states:

“The translators are not just at risk while at work by the side of soldiers. Many Afghan interpreters are afraid of potential acts of revenge by the Taliban or local insurgents. Ahmed is by far not the only one to have received threats. “Some translators try to keep their identity secret,” said Linda Fitchett, ‘but their enemies know who they are, where they are and how they can hurt them.’ In November 2013, a Bundeswehr interpreter was murdered just before his departure to Germany – probably by the Taliban. His body was discovered in a car, about one month after the Bundeswehr withdrew from the northern Afghan provincial capital Kunduz. Fitchett and the AIC estimate that several hundred translators and interpreters have been killed since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, and several thousand have been wounded.” (ibid)

An article published on the Huffington Post website states:

“Faizi is one of tens of thousands of Afghans who have been employed by the U.S. military, government and contractors during 12 years of war in Afghanistan. He has been working with U.S. troops since 2009 and embedded with units in some of the most dangerous parts of the country. He joined them on patrols, got caught up in the same attacks and suffered from the same IED blasts. ‘We are like members of a family, we and the U.S. troops,’ Faizi says. ‘We take care of each other.’ With Americans preparing to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, however, Faizi and his colleagues increasingly fear for their lives. To protect their safety, their last

names are omitted in this article. The interpreters have set their hopes on a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), a program created by Congress for Afghans and Iraqis who worked with the U.S. during the wars and are in danger because of their service. Yet the SIV application process is long and tremendously complicated, and the program is set to expire within months. While legislators are working to extend the program and expand its effectiveness and reach, many of America's allies in Afghanistan and Iraq currently remain in fear of their lives." (Huffington Post (23 June 2013) *America's Afghan And Iraqi Interpreters Risk Lives But Wait Years In Danger For Visas*)

A National Public Radio (NPR) report states:

"Ali (who asked that his full name not be used), a cook with various U.S. contractors, is hoping to qualify. He is from Ghazni province, one of the more violent places in Afghanistan. His career choice has been good for his bank account but bad for his safety. 'If I'm saying that I'm working for Americans, they are going to kill me,' he says. The 'they' are the Taliban, who have long said they will kill any Afghans who work for foreign militaries or governments. To protect his family, Ali kept people in the dark about his work. He was successful until about a year ago. Since then, his brother has been beaten and his family threatened." (National Public Radio (NPR) (11 September 2014) *As A U.S. War Winds Down, Afghans Look For A Way Out*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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