



## COI QUERY

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>AFGHANISTAN</b>
<b>Main subject</b>	<b>Situation of Sikhs</b>
<b>Question(s)</b>	Situation of Sikhs, including in Kabul, since the Taliban take-over of Afghanistan; population; reports of violence and discrimination by society, the state, and by armed groups, including the Taliban and Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). (Reference period: 15 August 2021 – 18 March 2022)
<b>Date of completion</b>	23 March 2022
<b>Query Code</b>	Q18-2022
<b>Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)</b>	N/A

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### Disclaimer

This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#) and [EASO Writing and Referencing Guide](#).

The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EUAA and makes no political statement whatsoever.

The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision-making authorities. The answer was finalised on 23 March 2022. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.

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## COI QUERY RESPONSE – Afghanistan

### **Situation of Sikhs, including in Kabul, since the Taliban take-over of Afghanistan; population; reports of violence and discrimination by society, the state, and by armed groups, including the Taliban and Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). (Reference period: 15 August 2021 – 18 March 2022)**

For background information on the treatment of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, see EASO COI Report (2017) [Afghanistan: Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms, Section 2.6](#) and EASO [COI Query \(2020\): Situation of Hindus and Sikhs \(2018-2020\)](#).

#### **1. Sikh population**

Historically, there were once 250 000 Sikhs in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> While according to AFP, in the 1970s, Afghanistan's Sikh population numbered 100,000.<sup>2</sup> In 1992, a reported 65 000 Sikhs fled the country upon the Taliban takeover.<sup>3</sup> Sources report that there has been a significant reduction in the number of Sikhs in Afghanistan in recent decades<sup>4</sup> due to 'conflict, poverty and intolerance [that] have driven almost all of them into exile.'<sup>5</sup> When the Taliban had regained power in the capital in August 2021 following the withdrawal of US troops, 'a fresh wave of Sikhs fled' Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup>

#### **1.1. Evacuation of Sikhs since Taliban take-over since August 2021**

Following the Taliban take-over on 15 August, the Taliban made public statements saying that Afghan Sikhs and Hindus were allowed to travel to India, and stated that the rights of Sikhs would be protected.<sup>7</sup> However, after the takeover and despite these reassurances, Sikh leaders expressed fear in media statements made on behalf of their community, about the security of Sikhs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Guardian (The), 'We can never go back': Taliban surge spreads fear in Delhi's 'Little Kabul', 25 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>2</sup> AFP, 'Stay or go? Dilemma facing last of Afghan Sikhs', 20 January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>3</sup> Telegraph (The), 'Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist persecution after Taliban takeover', 13 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>4</sup> Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Report 2021 – Events of 2020: Afghanistan, 2021', [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022; SBS Pashto, 'Grave fears' for the last remaining Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, 28 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>5</sup> AFP, 'Stay or go? Dilemma facing last of Afghan Sikhs', 20 January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>6</sup> AFP, 'Stay or go? Dilemma facing last of Afghan Sikhs', 20 January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>7</sup> UNI, 'Afghan Hindus, Sikhs can travel to India: Taliban', 30 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>8</sup> UNI, 'Sikhs in Kabul are afraid, though Taliban assured them safety: Manjinder Singh Sirsa', [url](#), 19 August 2021, accessed 22 March 2022; ANI, 'Taliban silent on rights of minorities, we had high hopes from peace process, says Afghan MP Anarkali Kaur Honaryar', 24 August 2021, available at [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022



After the Taliban took over control of the country, many Afghan-Sikhs left their homes from different parts of Afghanistan and took shelter inside Gurdwaras (Sikh temples),<sup>9</sup> and in particular at the Dashmesh Pita in Karte Parwan Kabul, while trying to leave the country from Kabul airport.<sup>10</sup>

After the Taliban took over Kabul in August 2021, the Indian government introduced humanitarian emergency visas for Sikhs, enabling them to go to India.<sup>11</sup> Without providing details, sources reported in late August that, that 140 Afghan Sikhs and Hindus were prevented by the Taliban from accessing Kabul airport for evacuation<sup>12</sup> with the Sikhs taking shelter at the Sikh temple in Kabul.<sup>13</sup> The 140 Sikhs and Hindus located near the airport, were unable to board evacuation flights, as Kabul's airport was inaccessible after an alleged attack by the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP), in which a suicide bomb exploded at the airport.<sup>14</sup> Deccan Herald on 2 September 2021, reported that 'the chaos at the Kabul airport further escalated after the twin bomb attacks last week that killed scores of people including US servicemen.'<sup>15</sup> As reported on 8 September 2021, before the last US plane had left Afghanistan, nearly 600 people were able to via Kabul through Indian-initiated evacuation flights from Kabul airport; 67 Sikhs and Hindus were among those evacuated by India.<sup>16</sup> The suspension of flights and security issues prevented further evacuation of Sikhs.<sup>17</sup>

## **1.2. Remaining Sikh population as of March 2022**

Information on the exact number of Sikhs remaining in Afghanistan varied. According to sources, in 2021, including from around the period of the Taliban takeover, there were

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<sup>9</sup> Guardian (The), 'We can never go back': Taliban surge spreads fear in Delhi's 'Little Kabul', 25 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022; DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>10</sup> DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>11</sup> New York Times (The), India says it will prioritize Hindus and Sikhs in issuing 'emergency visas' to Afghans, 17 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022; Outlook India, Afghanistan: India Extends Humanitarian Assistance To Taliban Ruled Region, 11 December 2021, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>12</sup> Hindu (The), Taliban stops 140 Hindu, Sikh Afghans from leaving Kabul, 26 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022; Telegraph (The), Taliban stop 140 India-bound Afghan Sikhs and Hindus from taking flight, 29 August 2021, Factiva, accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>13</sup> Telegraph (The), Taliban stop 140 India-bound Afghan Sikhs and Hindus from taking flight, 29 August 2021, Factiva, accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>14</sup> DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>15</sup> Deccan Herald, Gurdwaras: Taliban assure Sikhs safe passage to India, 2 September 2021, available at [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>16</sup> DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>17</sup> Telegraph (The), Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist persecution after Taliban takeover, 13 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022; Telegraph (The), Taliban stop 140 India-bound Afghan Sikhs and Hindus from taking flight, 29 August 2021, Factiva, accessed 22 March 2022; Hindu (The), Taliban stops 140 Hindu, Sikh Afghans from leaving Kabul, 26 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022



approximately 200<sup>18</sup> to 250 Sikhs left in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> However, sources further reported that an estimated that 140 Sikhs remained in Afghanistan<sup>20</sup> as of January 2022.<sup>21</sup> They were located mostly in the eastern city of Jalalabad, Kabul<sup>22</sup> Ghazni and Kandahar.<sup>23</sup> Although large numbers of Sikhs left Afghanistan, some decided to stay in order to take care of their places of worship and remaining heritage sites.<sup>24</sup> According to AFP, in Kabul, there is one remaining functional Sikh temple: the Karte Parwan Gurdwara (Gurdwara Dashmesh Pita).<sup>25</sup>

In September 2021, it was reported that most of the ‘stranded’ Sikhs who had taken refuge in the Karte Parwan Gurdwara trying to escape Afghanistan had returned to their homes,<sup>26</sup> and reopened their businesses in Kabul.<sup>27</sup> Reporting in September 2021, the Taliban stated that the group of 140 who had been prevented from leaving in August ‘may be’ permitted to depart, reportedly when the airport situation was more stable.<sup>28</sup> In December 2021, 94 Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, reportedly from among those 140 left behind, were airlifted by India out of Afghanistan, along with 3 scriptures saved from defunct temples.<sup>29</sup> The final number of those evacuated and remaining were not verifiable within the time constraints of this response.

## **2. Reports of discrimination and violence against Sikhs since Taliban take-over**

### **2.1. Treatment by society**

Specific incidents relating to societal violence against Sikhs since August 2021 could not be found among the sources reported within the time constraints of this query.

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<sup>18</sup> AFP, Afghanistan’s last Sikhs in a dilemma: To stay or leave, January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022; Telegraph (The), Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist persecution after Taliban takeover, 13 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022; Guardian (The), We can never go back’: Taliban surge spreads fear in Delhi’s ‘Little Kabul’, 25 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>19</sup> DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022; AFP, Afghanistan’s last Sikhs in a dilemma: To stay or leave, January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>20</sup> Telegraph (The), Taliban stop 140 India-bound Afghan Sikhs and Hindus from taking flight, 29 August 2021, Factiva, accessed 22 March 2022; AFP, Afghanistan’s last Sikhs in a dilemma: To stay or leave, January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>21</sup> AFP, Afghanistan’s last Sikhs in a dilemma: To stay or leave, January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>22</sup> AFP, Afghanistan’s last Sikhs in a dilemma: To stay or leave, January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022; SBS Pashto, ‘Grave fears’ for the last remaining Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, 28 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>23</sup> SBS Pashto, ‘Grave fears’ for the last remaining Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, 28 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>24</sup> DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>25</sup> AFP, Afghanistan’s last Sikhs in a dilemma: To stay or leave, January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>26</sup> Indian Express (The), Taliban has offered minorities ‘safe passage’ to India for Gurdwaras: organisers, 2 September 2021, Factiva, accessed 22 March 2022; Times of India, Afghan Sikhs, Hindus sheltering at Kabul gurdwara return home, 1 September 2021, Factiva, accessed 23 March 2022

<sup>27</sup> Times of India, Afghan Sikhs, Hindus sheltering at Kabul gurdwara return home, 1 September 2021, Factiva, accessed 23 March 2022

<sup>28</sup> Times of India, Afghan Sikhs, Hindus sheltering at Kabul gurdwara return home, 1 September 2021, Factiva, accessed 23 March 2022

<sup>29</sup> Tribune (The), Afghan Sikhs, Hindus among 104 airlifted, scriptures brought back, 11 December 2022, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022



AFP reported that Afghan Sikhs have ‘long faced discrimination’ from the Muslim majority in Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, DW characterised the situation of minorities in Afghanistan as involving ‘years of systematic and institutional discrimination.’<sup>31</sup> Puja Kaur Matta, an Afghan Sikh anthropologist reported on the societal treatment of Sikhs in an interview with DW. The anthropologist described that Sikhs in Afghanistan are perceived as Indian, while the Sikhs in India are perceived as Afghans; leaving Sikhs with no sense of a place to call home.<sup>32</sup> However, in contrast, according to the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) analyst Fabrizio Foschini, ‘almost no Afghan government or political group has indulged in openly discriminating or abusing the only recognised non-Muslim minority in the country.’<sup>33</sup>

Sources reported that Sikhs had encountered interference with their efforts to cremate the dead during cremation rituals including from threats of violence.<sup>34</sup>

In its 2020 report on religious freedom, USDOS stated that Sikhs and Hindus reported instances of discrimination and avoided settling disputes over commercial or civil matters in the court systems over ‘fear of retaliation by the local community’ and chose to settle disputes through community councils instead.<sup>35</sup> AAN similarly stated that Sikhs complain of

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<sup>30</sup> AFP, Stay or go? Dilemma facing last of Afghan Sikhs, 20 January 2022, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>31</sup> DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>32</sup> DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>33</sup> AAN, Blood in the Abode of Peace: The Attack on Kabul’s Sikhs, 1 April 2020, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>34</sup> USDOS, International Religious Freedom Report – Afghanistan 2022, 21 May 2021, [url](#), p. 3, accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> USDOS, International Religious Freedom Report – Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> AFP, Stay or go? Dilemma facing last of Afghan Sikhs, 20 January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> AAN, Blood in the Abode of Peace: The Attack on Kabul’s Sikhs, 1 April 2020, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022; DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> AAN, Blood in the Abode of Peace: The Attack on Kabul’s Sikhs, 1 April 2020, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> Telegraph (The), Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist persecution after Taliban takeover, 13 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> Telegraph (The), Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist persecution after Taliban takeover, 13 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> ANI, Taliban silent on rights of minorities , we had high hopes from peace process, says Afghan MP Anarkali Kaur Honaryar, 24 August 2021, available at [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022; BBC, Taliban flaunts Sikhs and Hindus living in Kabul, 19 August 2021, Factiva, accessed 21 March 2022; ANI, Our policy is to provide safety to all residents in Afghanistan including minorities: Top Taliban leader to Sikhs, 23 December 2021, available at [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> Hindu (The), Taliban stops 140 Hindu, Sikh Afghans from leaving Kabul, 26 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022; The Logical Indian, Taliban Assures Safety To Afghanistans Sikh, Hindu Communities; Asks Them Not To Leave Country, 17 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> The Logical Indian, Taliban Assures Safety To Afghanistan’s Sikh, Hindu Communities; Asks Them Not To Leave Country, 17 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

DW, A<sup>35</sup> UNOHCHR, 31<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the Human Rights Council – The serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>35</sup> AI, Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men – new investigation, 19 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022 Afghanistan 2020, 12 May 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022



discrimination in courts and education as well as being targets for police bribery.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the same source remarked that ‘there has never been a widespread feeling of hatred, contempt or rancour directed at this particular community among the Afghan population at large, at least in Kabul and other major cities’ however decades of war have caused ‘communal clashes’ to increase occasionally.<sup>37</sup>

The law mandates an additional seat in the parliament is reserved for a member of the Hindu or Sikh communities and that person is not obliged to swear allegiance to Islam. However, information on how parliamentary representation of minorities has been or will be affected by the Taliban take over could not be found. In 2020, USDOS reported that there were Sikhs serving in the government: one presidentially appointed member of the upper house of parliament, one elected member of the lower house, and one presidential advisor on Sikh and Hindu affairs.<sup>38</sup> However, two Afghan Sikh MPs were evacuated in the wake of the Taliban seizure of power: Narendra Singh Khalsa<sup>39</sup> and Anarkali Kaur Honaryar.<sup>40</sup>

## **2.2. Treatment by ISKP**

Information on incidents targeting Sikhs by ISKP could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) is a regional affiliate of the Islamic State extremist group.<sup>41</sup> ISKP has claimed attacks against Afghan Sikhs and Hindus in the past.<sup>42</sup> AFP explained in January 2022 that Sikhs face threats from ISIL’s Afghan arm.<sup>43</sup> The two recent major attacks on Sikhs were claimed by ISKP: in 2018, a suicide bomb hit a motorcade carried a Sikh parliamentary candidate and the detonation killed 17 people. In 2020, 25 Sikhs were killed in an attack on a Gurdwara attack in Kabul claimed by ISKP.<sup>44</sup> Afghanistan analyst Fabrizio Foschini, of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), states that while it is most plausible that ISKP carried out the attacks, there have been reports that the government’s security officials at that time accused the Taliban’s Haqqani network of responsibility.<sup>45</sup>

Narendra Singh Khalsa, appointed as Afghanistan’s only Sikh Member of Parliament believed that Afghanistan was no longer safe for Sikhs. According to her, ‘there was no government to

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<sup>36</sup> AAN, Blood in the Abode of Peace: The Attack on Kabul’s Sikhs, 1 April 2020, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>37</sup> AAN, Blood in the Abode of Peace: The Attack on Kabul’s Sikhs, 1 April 2020, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>38</sup> USDOS, International Religious Freedom Report – Afghanistan 2020, 12 May 2021, [url](#), p. 12, accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>39</sup> WION, Situation is serious, says Afghan Sikh MP Narendra Khalsa, 24 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>40</sup> DNA WebTeam, ‘Why is world silent?’ asks Afghanistan’s first female Sikh MP Anarkali Kaur Honaryar, 24 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>41</sup> DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>42</sup> BBC, Taliban flaunts Sikhs and Hindus living in Kabul, 19 August 2021, Factiva, accessed 21 March 2022; DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>43</sup> AFP, Stay or go? Dilemma facing last of Afghan Sikhs, 20 January 2022, [url](#), accessed 15 March 2022

<sup>44</sup> AAN, Blood in the Abode of Peace: The Attack on Kabul’s Sikhs, 1 April 2020, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022; DW, Afghanistan: What does Taliban rule mean for Sikhs and Hindus?, 8 September 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>45</sup> AAN, Blood in the Abode of Peace: The Attack on Kabul’s Sikhs, 1 April 2020, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022



protect us and there is no peace.’ The Member of Parliament reported that she had received ‘constant death threats from ISIS [...] I still don’t know the reason they want to kill us’.<sup>46</sup> The Telegraph explained that Afghans Sikh community ‘is nearing extinction’ as the Taliban’s arrival and general increase of violence by ISIL contributed to the reduction of Sikhs in Afghanistan.<sup>47</sup>

### **2.3. Treatment by the Taliban since August 15 take-over of the government**

#### **Efforts and public statements by the Taliban about Sikhs since the take-over**

Sources report that the Taliban leadership has made public statements after the takeover stating that, despite past treatment, minorities such as Sikhs would be safe under their rule,<sup>48</sup> and urged them not to leave Afghanistan.<sup>49</sup> The Taliban’s reassurance came at a time when Sikhs were seeking safety in their Kabul-based Karte Parwan Gurdwara/temple shortly after the takeover.<sup>50</sup>

Speaking on 24 August 2021, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that ‘Afghanistan’s diverse ethnic and religious minorities are also at risk of violence and repression, given previous patterns of serious violations under Taliban rule and reports of killings and targeted attacks in recent months.’<sup>51</sup> While not specifically mentioning Sikhs, Amnesty International similarly stated that ‘ethnic and religious minorities remain at particular risk under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.’<sup>52</sup>

Anarkali Kaur Honaryar, a female Sikh member of Member of Parliament serving in the Parliament, fled Afghanistan to India shortly after the Taliban took over. On 24 August, after her evacuation, she gave media statements in which she stated that Afghanistan was under control of ‘terrorists’ and there was a ‘threat of reprisal killings’. She stated that the Taliban had been ‘silent on the rights of minorities’ and that such rights in the future were ‘uncertain’.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Telegraph (The), Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist persecution after Taliban takeover, 13 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>47</sup> Telegraph (The), Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist persecution after Taliban takeover, 13 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>48</sup> ANI, Taliban silent on rights of minorities , we had high hopes from peace process, says Afghan MP Anarkali Kaur Honaryar, 24 August 2021, available at [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022; BBC, Taliban flaunts Sikhs and Hindus living in Kabul, 19 August 2021, Factiva, accessed 21 March 2022; ANI, Our policy is to provide safety to all residents in Afghanistan including minorities: Top Taliban leader to Sikhs, 23 December 2021, available at [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>49</sup> Hindu (The), Taliban stops 140 Hindu, Sikh Afghans from leaving Kabul, 26 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022; The Logical Indian, Taliban Assures Safety To Afghanistans Sikh, Hindu Communities; Asks Them Not To Leave Country, 17 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>50</sup> Logical Indian (The), Taliban Assures Safety To Afghanistan’s Sikh, Hindu Communities; Asks Them Not To Leave Country, 17 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>51</sup> UNOHCHR, 31<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the Human Rights Council – The serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>52</sup> AI, Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men – new investigation, 19 August 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>53</sup> ANI, Taliban silent on rights of minorities , we had high hopes from peace process, says Afghan MP Anarkali Kaur Honaryar, 24 August 2021, available at [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022



In December 2021, the Taliban leadership met again with members of the Sikh community and Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi stated that the Taliban government's policy is to 'provide safety and security for all residents in Afghanistan, including minorities'.<sup>54</sup> Further information on how the Taliban government policy and practices to protect minorities could not be found.

### **Reports of violence by the Taliban since 15 August 2022**

Information about reports of violence against Sikhs by the Taliban since August 2021 was scarce among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this query.

The following incidents were found:

- The Telegraph reported anecdotal information from a male Sikh merchant in Jalalabad who claimed he was allegedly told to continue to pay protection money to the Taliban, convert to Islam, and stop selling herbs, and who also claimed to have received Taliban death threats in August 2021.<sup>55</sup>
- In October 2021, Indian news source, India Today, reported that there were two incidents against the Gurdwara Dashmesh Pita shrine in Karte Parwan in Kabul since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan: In early October, suspected Taliban fighters allegedly 'stormed' into the Kabul gurdwara,<sup>56</sup> and tied up the guards, rummaged through the offices, and smashed CCTV cameras.<sup>57</sup> On October 9, the Taliban claimed that those who had done the vandalism and harassment had been arrested by Kabul police.<sup>58</sup> On 15 October 2021, suspected Taliban fighters who were heavily armed from a special unit allegedly entered forcibly, threatened the Gurdwara's security guards, and 'allegedly intimidated and abused worshippers' when they 'raided' the Gurdwara. During the incident, they also reportedly raided the adjacent office and residence of MP Narinder Singh Khalsa.<sup>59</sup> Reporting on the second incident, India Today reported that on Twitter, the 'former Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh condemned the attack on religious minorities by Taliban-led government in Afghanistan.' The article further explained that 'Taliban allegedly intimidated and abused the worshippers inside the sanctum [temple].'<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> ANI, Our policy is to provide safety to all residents in Afghanistan including minorities: Top Taliban leader to Sikhs, 23 December 2021, available at [url](#), accessed 21 March 2022

<sup>55</sup> Telegraph (The), Sikh exodus from Afghanistan as community flees extremist persecution after Taliban takeover, 13 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 16 March 2022

<sup>56</sup> India Today, Taliban's special forces 'forcibly' enter Kabul Gurdwara, Sikh community seeks India's help, 15 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>57</sup> UNI, Those who harassed Hindu [sic] minority arrested, says Taliban spokesperson on gurdwara vandalism, 9 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>58</sup> UNI, Those who harassed Hindu [sic] minority arrested, says Taliban spokesperson on gurdwara vandalism, 9 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

<sup>59</sup> India Today, Taliban's special forces 'forcibly' enter Kabul Gurdwara, Sikh community seeks India's help, 15 October 2021, [url](#), accessed 22 March 2022

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