



Q11118 - Afghanistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 27 October 2009

Any clear information about risks to people who run foul of Taliban and also the local commander (who also happens to be a local administrator). What are the risks to a potential victim of Taliban revenge, or revenge from a local commander?

In a section titled “Summary of main groups at risk” (sub-section titled “Afghans perceived as critical of factions or individuals exercising control over an area”) a *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* eligibility guidelines document published in December 2007 states:

“Afghans expressing their political opinions are exposed to risk if these opinions are perceived as opposing the interests of local and regional commanders, powerful factions or armed opposition forces, primarily the Taliban and forces allied with the Taliban movement or with veteran Pashtun warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s groups. These risks extend but are not limited to journalists and those persons known to have political affiliations different from those of persons linked to armed factions exercising de facto power at the local level.” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (31 December 2007) *UNHCR’s Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Afghan Asylum-Seekers*, p.8)

In a section titled “Main categories of claims” (sub-section titled “Blood feuds”) a *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* eligibility guidelines document published in July 2009 refers to risks for victims of blood feuds as follows:

“Women and men may be at risk of becoming victims of a blood feud in Afghanistan. In Afghan tradition, blood feuds are conflicts between opposing families, tribes and armed factions. Blood feuds are often initiated in reaction to perceived violations to the honour of women, property rights, and land or water issues. In accordance with the norms of the Pashtunwali code the causes of blood feuds are the violation of ‘zar, zan, zamin’ – gold, women and land. Blood feuds in Afghanistan can be long-running conflicts, with a cycle of retaliatory violence between parties. This violence often targets individuals by association with the family or tribe of the person seen as wrongdoer. In such situations, the victim’s tribe or family members seek revenge by killing, physically injuring or publicly shaming the perpetrator or persons related by family or tribe. This is a practice well recognized as part of the traditional moral code of the Pashtuns or Pashtunwali. However, this tradition has also entered the practices of other ethnic groups.” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (July 2009) *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, p.39)

An *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* report quotes an Afghan village elder as saying:

“I was threatened by a local commander named Samadi,’ said a village elder in Kajabad. ‘He said that I would face very unpleasant consequences if the villagers do not vote for [incumbent president Hamed] Karzai. I am doing what they tell me. [Karzai] is the most powerful person in our country. How could I resist, and put myself in danger by not following orders?’ From every part of the district, the stories pile up. Bribery and threats seem to be the preferred tactics. Jan Gul (not his real name) owns an auto parts store in the district centre. He is a popular man, and said he had been courted by campaigners for his influence among the people. ‘People come to me all the time asking me to campaign for Karzai,’ he said. ‘I participate in gatherings and read a speech that has been written for me. Powerful people have forced me to do this. I have been threatened. I have to follow orders.’” (Institute for War and Peace Reporting (14 August 2009) *Herat Officials Accused of Dirty Tricks*)

The Summary of a *Human Rights Watch* report states:

“Since early 2006, Taliban, Hezb-e Islami, and other armed groups in Afghanistan have carried out an increasing number of armed attacks that either target civilians or are launched without regard for the impact on civilian life. While going about ordinary activities—walking down the street or riding in a bus—many Afghan civilians have faced sudden and terrifying violence: shootings, ambushes, bombings, or other violent attacks. These insurgent attacks have caused terrible and profound harm to the Afghan civilian population. Attacks have killed and maimed mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, parents, and children, leaving behind widows, widowers, and orphans. Many civilians have been specifically targeted by the insurgents, including aid workers, doctors, day laborers, mechanics, students, clerics, and civilian government employees such as teachers and engineers.” (Human Rights Watch (15 April 2007) *The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan*, p.2)

In a section titled “Justifications by Insurgents” this report states:

“Insurgent forces in Afghanistan often claim that their military operations are generally lawful, or that the targeting of civilians is legally permissible. Media statements by various Taliban commanders and spokesmen, and documents attributed to the Taliban shura (council), indicate that Taliban leaders consider it permissible to attack Afghan government workers and teachers, employees of nongovernmental organizations, or anyone who supports the government of President Hamid Karzai. Taliban spokesmen have claimed responsibility for various kidnappings and killings of foreign humanitarian aid workers, claiming that they are killed because they are ‘spying for the Americans’ or for NATO or coalition forces.” (ibid, p.5)

In a section titled “Types of Illegal Attack” this report states:

“Some insurgent attacks also appear to be primarily intended to spread terror among the civilian population, a tactic that violates international humanitarian

law. Insurgents have targeted civilian government personnel and humanitarian workers, apparently with the intent of instilling fear among the broader population and as a warning not to work in similar capacities, and have delivered numerous messages and announcements threatening Afghans to not work for government offices or nongovernmental humanitarian organizations. Insurgent groups have also carried out several bombings in civilian areas which appear to be specifically intended to terrorize local populations. In addition, anti-government forces have regularly threatened civilian populations by posting written documents, so-called night-letters, warning civilians not to cooperate with the government or with international forces.” (ibid, pp.6-7)

An *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* report refers to alleged intimidation by the Taliban as follows:

“The Taleban and other opposition groups had conducted a very effective intimidation campaign over the past few weeks, threatening to maim and kill voters if they participated in what they described as ‘infidel’ elections. Voters were asked to dip their fingers into bottles of indelible ink, in order to prevent one person from voting more than once. The Taleban had publicly threatened that they would cut off any inked finger.” (Institute for War and Peace Reporting (20 August 2009) *Taleban Tactics Take Their Toll*)

An *Agence France Presse* report on the killing of alleged spies by the Taliban states:

“The Taliban have shot dead at least seven Afghan civilians whom they captured on suspicion of working for the government or other organisations, police and the militants said Monday. The civilians were taken from cars, buses and taxis that were stopped on the main road between Kabul and the southern city of Kandahar on Sunday, said the deputy police chief for Zabul province, Jailani Khan. ‘They have shot them dead. Their bodies are with police,’ he said. The seven were abducted in Ghazni province, south of Kabul, and killed in neighbouring Zabul, he said. The police chief of Ghazni, Khan Mohammad Mujahed, said he had reports that 15 people were taken from the road and had all been killed. His men were trying to locate the bodies, he said. Mujahed said the men were dragged from cars along the highway over the past several days.” (Agence France Presse (14 July 2008) *'Taliban' kill seven Afghans accused of spying: police*)

An *Asian News International* report states:

“The Taliban has reportedly gunned down a 19 year old Afghan tribal boy following his alleged confession of planting transmitters which guided US drones to carry out strikes against militant hideouts.” (Asian News International (19 April 2009) *Taliban executes alleged US spy in North Waziristan*)

This report also states:

“According to a government official the Taliban has killed more than 100 alleged spies in North Waziristan in the recent past.” (ibid)

An *Associated Press* report states:

“A Taliban firing squad killed a young couple in southwestern Afghanistan for trying to elope, shooting them with AK-47s in front of a crowd in a lawless, militant-controlled region, officials said Tuesday. The woman, 19-year-old Gul Pecha, and the man, 21-year-old Abdul Aziz, were accused by the militants of immoral acts, and a council of conservative clerics decided that the two should be killed, officials said.” (Associated Press (14 April 2009) *Afghan Taliban kill young woman, man for eloping*)

A report published by the *Business Recorder* states:

“Taliban militants claimed Sunday to have publicly executed two suspected thieves in eastern Afghanistan after their Islamic court sentenced them to death. The two men, Farid and Gul Nabi, were hanged in a public place in the Sabari district of south-eastern province of Khost on Sunday after they confessed to their crimes before the Taliban court, Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman said.” (Business Recorder (25 May 2009) *Taliban Publicly Execute Two Thieves in Afghanistan*)

A *Xinhua News Agency* report on the killing of three civilians in September 2009 states:

“Taliban, in efforts to terrify government servicemen, have executed three civilians in Herat province, west of Afghanistan, police said Saturday. The rebels sprayed bullets and killed three innocent brothers on charge of spying for the government in Gazara district on Friday,’ Ikramudin Yawar, senior police officer in west Afghanistan, told Xinhua. He added that the victims were innocent civilians and did not work for the government.” (Xinhua News Agency (26 September 2009) *Taliban execute 3 civilians in W. Afghanistan*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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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