

Afghanistan: New investigation reveals 'cruel pattern' of Taliban torturing and executing Hazaras



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Six people including a 12-year-old girl killed in night raid on family home

Taliban killings indicate pattern of attacks on ethnic minorities and members of former security forces

'These violent deaths are further shocking proof that the Taliban continue to persecute, torture and extrajudicially execute Hazara people' - Agnès Callamard

Taliban fighters killed six Hazara people in a deliberate attack against the ethnic minority in Afghanistan's Ghor province, Amnesty International said today following a new investigation.

On 26 June, the Taliban detained and unlawfully executed four men during a night raid. The body of at least one of those executed showed signs of torture. A woman and a 12-year-old girl were also killed during the raid.

The attack is part of a wider pattern of unlawful targeted killings against people who the Taliban see as adversaries. In this case the victims were both members of the Hazara community and associated with the former Afghan government.

"These violent deaths are further shocking proof that the Taliban continue to persecute, torture and extrajudicially execute Hazara people. "The Taliban must immediately end this cruel pattern of targeted killings and, as the de facto

authorities, ensure the protection of all Afghans. “The Taliban must investigate these killings and ensure that those responsible are prosecuted in accordance with international human rights obligations and standards. If the de facto authorities cannot provide justice, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court should immediately open full investigations into all cases of extrajudicial executions. “In addition, along with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation in Afghanistan, Amnesty International calls for an independent accountability mechanism in and for Afghanistan.”

Amnesty International documented similar extrajudicial executions of Hazara people in Ghazni province in July 2021, and Daykundi province in August 2021. Despite publicly promising not to target former government officials, the Taliban have still not investigated or prosecuted anyone for the killings.

Amnesty conducted eight remote interviews, including with witnesses to the June attack this year, analysing 38 photos and three videos taken in the attack’s aftermath, consulted a forensic pathologist to review the images of the bodies, and reviewed satellite imagery of the area to confirm the location of one of the killings. Several of the photos analysed were published online by Taliban media, including the Ghor Province Governor Media Office, which deleted the post soon after it was published.

On the night of 26 June this year, Taliban forces raided the home of Mohamad Muradi, a Hazara man and security official under the former government. He had also previously led a People’s Uprising Program force – a local militia – against the Taliban in 2020 and 2021.

Muradi had recently returned to his home in Chahar Asyab, in the Lal wa Sarjangal district in Ghor province, following an unsuccessful attempt to flee to Iran, after which he was in hiding in other cities around the country. Like many who had been involved in opposing the Taliban, Muradi had not accepted the offer of a personalised ‘amnesty letter’ due to the fear of reprisal attacks by the Taliban. These letters are

often issued to former security and government officials, offering permission to return home in exchange for a promise to lay down arms.

Witnesses told Amnesty that on the night of the attack, Taliban forces fired rifles and rocket-propelled grenades at Muradi's home, killing Taj Gul Muradi, his 22-year-old daughter, who had studied medicine and had been providing health care in the community. The attack wounded Muradi and two of his other children: a son and his 12-year-old daughter. The girl suffered severe stomach injuries and died the next day.

Muradi's left leg was injured, and he surrendered to Taliban forces through the intervention of local elders. However, the Taliban then dragged him outside the house and shot him dead. An analysis of photos of Muradi's body shows damage to the front of his shirt, indicating a likely chest wound, and an exit wound in his forehead.

Amnesty reviewed photos and videos that show damage to Muradi's home consistent with witness testimony. The images were also geolocated by analysing visible features – including vegetation, nearby pavements and the buildings' layout – and satellite imagery.

Three other men who had been staying at Muradi's home were detained and then extrajudicially executed. Two of them, like Muradi, had previously been members of the People's Uprising Program force, though none had taken part in fighting with the militia for some time.

Ghulam Haider Mohammadi, Muradi's nephew, had been visiting relatives. Photos of his body indicate he was executed with at least one gunshot to head, while kneeling and with his hands bound behind him. Locals found his body approximately 50 meters from Muradi's home, left between some rocks in a tree-covered area.

Witnesses told Amnesty that the other two victims – Asif Rezayee and Arif Sangaree – were put in a vehicle and driven away to be killed in a separate location. The bodies of the two men were later discovered in an uninhabited part of Takeghal,

more than 30 minutes' drive from where they were initially detained.

Asif Rezayee had been living in Kabul but had returned to his home village a few days before visiting relatives. Rezayee was shot dead while his hands were cuffed behind his back. Photos and a video of his body show four distinct gunshot wounds to his head, chest, right thigh, and left hand. Based on the nature of his wounds, apparent bullet trajectory and gun powder stains, the wounds to his leg and hand were done at close range prior to execution. Such intentional infliction of pain on a bound detainee constitutes torture, a crime under international law.

Photos indicate that Arif Sangaree was also executed while bound and detained, with at least one close range shot to the head. One of the photos posted by the Taliban on Facebook, claiming credit for the successful operation, shows Sangaree with a significant facial wound surrounded by fresh bright red arterial blood, indicating the Taliban took the photo immediately after his death. In contrast, photos provided by people who discovered the body show Sangaree with the identical wound, but the blood dark and dried, meaning time had passed.

The Taliban news sources that posted the image of Arif Sangaree's body described the night raid as a "targeted operation" that culminated in a fight between "rebels" and "Mujahideen", or the Taliban. The account claimed seven rebels had been killed, detained and wounded, and that one Taliban member was killed, with two others wounded.

To justify the deaths, the statement went on to say that the raid had occurred after fighters associated with Mawlawi Mahadi, the Hazara leader of a Taliban defector group, had attacked the Taliban in Balkhab district of Sar-e-Pul province, and then fled and established themselves in the village of Chahar Asyab. This Taliban statement is incorrect.

While this fighting has been documented by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation in Afghanistan in his 6 September 2022 report, which includes cases of Taliban executions of

fighters hors de combat. Muradi and his family members were not members of Mahadi's group or taking part in this round of attacks. Rather, Amnesty believes the Taliban justification is a pretext for targeting ethnic minorities and soldiers associated with the former government.

The Taliban seized power in Afghanistan following the collapse of the government in mid-August 2021. Amnesty has called for the protection of thousands of Afghans at serious risk of Taliban reprisals. There have been numerous cases of raids and extrajudicial executions targeting those the Taliban perceives as adversaries – those affiliated with the former government particularly Hazaras/Shias or those fighting with the National Resistance Front (NRF).

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