

UNSAFE HAVEN

HAZARAS IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

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INTRODUCTION

In January 2011 the Australian and Afghan Governments signed an agreement allowing the forced repatriation of Afghan refugees 'judged not to be in need of international protection'. They argued Afghanistan has become safer, including for the Hazaras, who comprise the bulk of Afghan asylum seekers in Australia.

On the ground, Afghanistan's security situation has gradually worsened over the past few years. The first six months of 2011 have been the deadliest months since the Taliban was ousted, according to the United Nations.¹ Attacks by the Taliban and other insurgent groups have intensified, and so have Afghan and NATO counter-attacks, producing a mounting civilian and combatant death-toll. The Taliban and insurgent groups target government officials, civil servants, teachers, journalists and anyone who is seen to be supporting the government and foreign forces.

Like all Afghans, Hazaras live in a volatile, rapidly changing and dangerous environment. Post-Taliban, the Hazara situation has improved in some respects as many Hazaras participate in social, civic, political and social life and many go to schools and universities, hold government jobs, or work for the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) or the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

As outlined in this report, many Hazaras believe these improvements depend on the presence of International Community in Afghanistan. If the ISAF were to withdraw, many believe the situation would deteriorate for Hazaras. Discrimination against Hazaras is entrenched in Afghan culture, and many Hazaras state they are treated as inferior and second class citizens. In 2010 Hazaras became politically marginalized in the Afghan government as Hazara nominees for ministerial posts failed to achieve the required vote of affirmation on three occasions in the Afghan parliament. Thus there is no Hazara minister represented in current Karzai government, only acting ministers.

Hazaras suffered enormously under the Taliban rule, experienced massacres and mass forced displacement. For this reason, they were the first to support the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 by coalition forces and to back the new government and democratic process in the post-Taliban period. But they have become increasingly neglected and discriminated under the Karzai administration, with Hazara areas receiving little benefit from the international aid to Afghanistan. In Bamiyan, and many other Hazara areas, there has been minimal reconstruction, and, as outlined in this report, local

people blame this on the prejudices of the Afghan government against the Hazaras.

Hazaras remained prone to attacks by Kuchi in Central Highlands in Behsud and Daimirdad districts, which is part of Maidan Wardak. Since 2004, the Kuchis, mainly Pashtun pastoralists, have attacked Hazara areas, killing and injuring tens of people, burning down their houses, destroyed their harvests, and forcibly displacing thousands of people. The Afghan government has failed to protect Hazaras against the Kuchi attacks, and its inaction appears to have encouraged Kuchi incursions in the Central Highlands, which are believed to be supported by the Taliban.

Yet, the worst threats come from the Taliban. The increased Taliban activities across the country pose serious threats to Hazara life, security, freedom and movement. As borne out in this report, the Hazara people still live in fear of persecution from the Taliban and from rival ethnic groups. Most of the Hazara areas, such as Bamiyan, Jaghori, Malistan and Behsud, are sandwiched between areas controlled by the Taliban and are subject to constant searches, arrests, and attacks by the Taliban. In June 2010, in a particularly gruesome attack, eleven Hazaras were beheaded in Urozgan, revealing an ethnic motive behind the killings. Bamiyan's head of provincial government, Jawad Zuhak was abducted and brutally killed by the Taliban in June 2011 in the Ghorband valley.

Like in Afghanistan, Hazaras living in Quetta, Pakistan have come under threat in recent months and years. Currently they are under an unprecedented terrorist attack from a banned terrorist organization, Lashkar-e-Jangavi, which is affiliated with the Taliban and Al-Qaida. In a period of two weeks September 20 to October 5, 2011, more than fifty Hazaras were targeted and killed. On September 20, 2011, 26 Hazara refugees and pilgrimages, heading to Iran by bus were forced to get off and were shot. The lives of non-Hazaras who were on the bus were spared. This killing of Hazaras in Quetta, Pakistan appears to continue unabated.

In light of the deteriorating security situation for Hazaras, as documented in this report, the Australian government has to halt its plans to send people back to danger. They need to rethink offshore processing that denies asylum to those fleeing persecution in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Afghan government is weak, corrupt and ineffective, and would not provide protection for those forced back to Afghanistan.

METHODOLOGY

As a Hazara person fleeing the Taliban, I came to Australia over ten years ago, by boat. After so many years, I wanted to return to Afghanistan, this time with the protection of my Australian passport, to see what life was like for the places I left behind and for Hazaras in particular.

When I arrived in Kabul, checkpoints were everywhere. Security walls and sandbags guarded every government department and NGO building. Although I was born and raised in Afghanistan, this was my first visit to Kabul, and it was a shock. Just a few hundred meters away from my hotel were the ruins of the guesthouse destroyed in a massive blast that killed 18 people including a number of foreign aid workers in February, 2010.

On the streets of Kabul, I was fascinated to see Afghan women walking without burqas – some didn't even cover their face and wore a head scarf. The streets echoed with the laughter of girls on their way to school, dressed in uniforms of black coats and white headscarves. Over ten years ago, the Taliban would have whipped a woman for flashing a bare ankle under the shroud of a burqa, and girls were completely forbidden from any sort of education. I felt a thrill– it seemed that Afghanistan had completely changed.

Yet I soon discovered that Kabul was unique, reflecting Afghan government control and the heavy presence of NATO forces. Elsewhere, particularly in the South of the country, things had changed little. It became clear that the Taliban threatens Afghans almost everywhere outside Kabul.

From Kabul I travelled to Bamiyan through the Ghorban valley. I spoke to many Bamiyani residents, including the provincial governor, Habiba Surabi, to local human rights groups and other NGOs about the living conditions in the post-Taliban period. From Bamiyan I traveled through the Hajigak Pass to Behsud, East of Kabul, where I encountered many local Hazaras who stated they had lost family members and had their homes and harvests destroyed following incursions by Kuchi pastoralists.

Ghazni province, traveling in disguise via Navur. The road passing through Ghazni city and outer part of the city up to Hazara area was unsafe. I was unable leave the district for several weeks because the Taliban controlled all the roads leading to the area. I also traveled to Quetta in Pakistan, where Hazara refugees have found temporary shelter, although some have been there many years, and now face constant terrorist attacks.

The report is compiled from a trip to Afghanistan from 16 July 2010 to 1 October 2010. I collected the information through visiting local villages, districts and provincial authorities, collecting the accounts and testimony of eyewitnesses. I interviewed those directly affected, and also a range of local Hazara leaders, writers, journalists and teachers, human rights groups, and government officials. When using statistics, where it was possible, I have used reliable secondary sources such as United Nations agencies, and credible news sources.

This report does not claim to be definitive, nor completely objective, as it was hard to find reliable materials in Afghanistan, and I did not go with a specific research purpose or question in mind. In addition, the pervasive insecurity hampered my efforts to travel every part of Afghanistan. However, being trained as a social scientist, I tried to record as accurately as I could my observations on the ground as well as the views of those I interviewed. I also changed some of the names in this report to protect the identity of the interviewees. The result of my trip has led to an exhibition 'Unsafe haven; Hazaras in Afghanistan', and this report. Since writing this report, I have also consulted secondary credible sources to update on some new developments up to September 2011.

I also visited my hometown in the Jaghori district,

BACKGROUND

AFGHANISTAN IN 2011

Since the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, a new Afghan constitution has been drafted and approved, and there have been two presidential and parliamentary elections. One of the most important outcomes post-Taliban has been the introduction of equal citizenship rights. In the post-Taliban time, thousands of girls go to schools, women go to work, and the media is flourishing with hundreds of outlets in the country.

Despite some improvements, there is continuing instability and insecurity, and the country lacks good governance. The long conflict in Afghanistan has caused massive human casualties both to Afghans and the international forces since 2001, and continues to intensify. The Coalition has had almost 3000 fatalities over nearly ten years.² The first six months of 2011 were the deadliest months since the Taliban overthrow, according to the United Nations.³ The month of August in 2011 has been the worst month in terms of the average monthly incidents of violence (2,108), 39 percent up compared to the same period in 2010. There has been an average of 3 suicide attacks per month in 2011, up 50 percent compared to last year.⁴ In recent months, the Taliban have launched a series of attacks in Kabul, including the attack on the Intercontinental Hotel on 28 June, and the British Council on 19 August.

Insurgents also mounted attacks on high-ranking government officials and Afghan leaders. On September 20, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Chairperson of High Peace Council, was killed by a bomb concealed in the turban of a Taliban negotiator. In recent months the Taliban killed three chiefs of police across the country, and most notably Karzai's half-brother, the governor of Kandhar, Ahmed Wali Karzai on July 12, 2011.

Violence and intimidation of Afghans by insurgent groups was most common in the Southern part of Afghanistan but it has spread across the country, and even into the North and East, areas considered relatively safe. When I was in Kabul, nine foreign aid workers were killed by the Taliban in North-Eastern Afghanistan, in the province of Badakhshan, on August 9, 2010. In 2011, however, the violence regularly spills over into other parts of Afghanistan. The recent UN report suggests that 'The focus of suicide attacks was no longer southern Afghanistan, the central region currently accounting for 21 per cent of the such attacks'.⁵

Escalation of the conflict and instability is also attributed to the Afghan government as being ineffective and corrupt, itself creating a climate of impunity for the perpetrators of human rights abuses. There is no proper justice system; the rule of law is weak and in some areas quite absent. The President himself was elected in 2009 through a deeply fraudulent election. Following that, the September 2010 parliamentary elections were also marred with fraud. A parliamentary candidate told me a few days before the September 18 election day, that 'if the president himself skewed votes for his benefit, why not us?' In my observation, it was not only the government that through its Electoral Commission made behind-the-scene deals, but also many other candidates used undemocratic and illegitimate methods to gain support such as intimidation, buying fake voting cards, and encourage their supporters to vote multiple times on election day.

Equally important, the Afghan police system has not established sufficient trust among the Afghan people. The police and even the army are seen as incapable of protecting the people from assaults by insurgents. Thus, people resort to their own methods, for instance not letting the authorities know their movements, in case of the police have links with the Taliban.

² See more on the coalition fatalities on <http://icasualties.org/OEF/index.aspx>

³ See UNAMA, Afghanistan mid-year report 2011 <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/2011%20Midyear%20POC.pdf> (accessed September 26, 2011).

⁴ A report to the United Nations General Assembly Security Council, detailing the incidents of violence in 2011.

<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/110921%20SG%20Report%20on%20Afghanistan%20FINAL.pdf> (accessed 30 September, 2011).

⁵ A report to the United Nations General Assembly Security Council, detailing the incidents of violence in 2011.

<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/110921%20SG%20Report%20on%20Afghanistan%20FINAL.pdf> (accessed 30 September, 2011).

HAZARAS IN THE POST-TALIBAN PERIOD

Hazaras are the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, accounting for between four and six million of the total population of twenty-eight million. Unlike the majority of Afghans, who are Sunni adherents, Hazaras are Shiite. The Hazaras speak Hazaragi a dialect of Dari. From the 1880s onwards, Hazara people have suffered severe political, social, economic and cultural repression, most recently, under the Taliban. Hazaras have lost traditional lands and now mainly live in the mountains of central Afghanistan, termed Hazaristan (the lands of Hazaras), in Bamiyan and Daikundi provinces and Behsud, Malistan, Navur, and Jaghori districts, and also dispersed across Afghanistan other main cities.

In the lead-up to the war against the Taliban in 2001 led by the US and its allies, Afghan exiles met under auspices of the United Nations to form a broadly-based and representative government in Afghanistan. The Bonn conference hammered-out a multi-ethnic government that included Hazaras, creating Hazara representation for the first time, in the different tiers of the Afghan government and in the cabinet, parliament and judiciary. Karim Khalili, the leader of Hizb-e-Wahdat (Unity Party), is Karzai's second vice president. He was a popular Hazara leader but his support has been significantly reduced among Hazaras in recent years because he is seen not doing enough to address Hazaras needs.

As mentioned, Hazara representation has diminished in Karzai's current cabinet. Five of the seven ministers nominated by the government received a vote of affirmation from the lower house of the parliament in July 2010. The two Hazara-nominated Ministers, Mohammad Sarwar Danish and Dr Ali Najafi, could not win enough votes.⁶ The Hazara community saw this as a 'no confidence' vote by the parliament, and as a vote against Hazaras. Hazaras were better represented in the first Karzai's cabinet: currently, there are only two acting Hazara ministers in Karzai's heavily Pashtun-dominated cabinet.

Another Hazara, Haji Muhaqiq, is the leader of Hizb-e-Wahdat Islamic Mardume Afghanistan (the Unity Party for the people of Afghanistan), a breakaway from the original Hizb-e-Wahdat. He was a Planning Minister with Karzai and now is in opposition, with strong support among the Hazaras.

However, his reputation was tarnished when he agreed to support Karzai in the 2009 presidential elections in exchange for including five Hazaras in his cabinet as ministers, and that Jaghori and Behsud be promoted from districts to provinces. None of these promises have been implemented.

Currently, Hazaras work for NGOs and hold government positions but some Hazaras complain the agencies are dominated by patronage and by Pashtun and Tajik ethnic groups. Mehdi Meraeen, 35, said in Bamiyan:

I as a Hazara have to wait for three days in Kabul if I have a paper work with the Afghan government but for a Pashtun it takes 30 minutes. I worked for the UN. My colleague from Kandahar who did not know how to write in Farsi or English or could write in Pashtu, got the same salary as me because he was a Pashtun. This is with the UN - it is much worse to work for the government. I can never work for an NGO in Khost or Kandahar and even I have little opportunity in Mazar-e-Sharif or Kabul. Yet I am very capable, with nine years experience working for NGOs. I know computers and my English is good but have little opportunity to find work because of discrimination.⁷

Many Hazaras also work for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commissions (AIHRC) and many Afghans believe it is dominated by Hazaras. The Chairperson of the Commission is Sima Samar, a Hazara, who told me 'our selection is based on merit. If some Hazaras got jobs, it is because we are an equal job opportunity and equity agency.'⁸ Another person in Kabul, Qasimi, in Kabul said 'I am going to go outside Afghanistan. It is difficult to get a job in government or an NGO especially for Hazaras.'⁹

In May 2009, the Ministry of Information and Culture threw tens of thousands of books into the Helmand river, in the south of the country because they believed the books would promote disharmony in Afghan society.¹⁰

⁶ BBC, Monitoring South Asia, July 2010, 'Karzai's team responsible for Afghan vote against Hazara nominees,' <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/pqcentral/docview/577046924/1321390B6F2518FFCF7/4?accountid=17095> (accessed 27 September, 2011).

⁷ Interview with Mehdy Mehraeen in Bamian, August 2010.

⁸ My interview with Sima Samar in Kabul, July 2010.

⁹ Interview with Qasimi July 2010 Kabul.

¹⁰ See when more books were destroyed in Afghan history prior to current administration. The Guardian 'Afghanistan's wars on Book,' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jun/08/afghanistan-burning-books-shia> (accessed 30 September, 2011).

Most of the books were written by Hazaras in diaspora on the subject of Hazara history, discrimination and religion. One was a short story by Jawad Khavari, a writer and researcher on Hazara culture, who I interviewed in Bamiyan.

*'This book addresses discrimination. Some government officials believed it was creating disharmony. It is an undeniable fact that Pashtuns discriminated against the Hazaras. As a writer, I have to write about the reality of our society and at least expose it. My book is not about creating disharmony but promoting harmony. Why are we scared of our national unity being tarnished? We should try to consolidate it by raising awareness not by ignorance and cover up. If we don't cover up, we can find a solution to it. This is itself discrimination if we are not allowed to talk about it.'*¹¹

The destruction of the books follows another incident in 10 February 2008, where Karim Khoram, the former Information Minister, officially banned Persian expressions in the government and state-controlled media. He fined three journalists, namely, Zabihullah Fitrat, the director of local Television in Mazar-e-Sharif, Dawood Ahmadi, communications director of Afghan national TV, and Basir Babi, a local TV reporter in Mazr-e-Sharif, for using Persian words like Danishgah (instead of Pashtu word, Pohantun) and the word Danishkada (instead of the Pashtu, Puhanzai).¹² Both words are from the Dari language (a version of Persian), that is mostly spoken by Hazaras and Tajiks, while Pashtu is spoken by Pashtuns. Both languages are recognized as the official language under the Afghan constitution. Many Dari speakers found such action discriminatory and believed that Karim Khoram wanted to reassert Pashtun culture.

In addition, some Hazara refugees returning from Iran also experience discrimination and ridicule because they have picked up some Iranian dialect. They face double discrimination because of being a Hazara and having grown-up in Iran. The discrimination is reported from government departments, education institutions and wider society. Jawad Khari, who was born in Afghanistan and educated in Iran said this is political and discriminatory.¹³

Another area, a backward step and quite discriminatory in nature to Hazara women, was the controversial family Shiite law. In 2009, a 'Personal Statues Shiite Law' was passed by the Parliament and signed by President Hamid Karzai that recognised Shiite family law. This law clearly discriminates against Hazara women because it would not allow a married woman to leave the house without her husband's permission and also required a married woman to consent to the sexual demands of her husband.

It caused an international outcry, with street protests in Kabul and around the world, including in Australia. The law was amended but still there are some discriminatory clauses in place. For some Hazaras, the law was welcome as it recognized Shiites in a predominantly Sunni country, but for others, it was seen as a backward step curtailing Hazara womens rights, given that gender equality is recognized in the new Afghan Constitution.

Against the background of some improvements, many Hazaras believe their status depends on the presence of international community. A journalist said in Bamiyan:

*We are talking to people every day. All their concerns are if the international troops withdraw from Afghanistan what would happen. It is because of the international community pressure and support, that the Hazaras have a minimal rule in government. We are still experiencing discrimination.*¹⁴

If the international military forces were to withdraw, many fear that the situation would deteriorate, especially for Hazaras, given the legacy of long-term discrimination. As the Afghan government remains weak and corrupt, it fails to address the grievances of marginalized groups.

Clearly the security of the Hazaras, and other minorities, is intertwined with the general condition of the country. As noted, the Afghan security situation has worsened due to the rise of the Taliban insurgency, NATO air strikes and also the narcotic trade. In 2010 Hazaras were being attacked, arrested and searched mostly when travelling outside Kabul, while going to central Hazarajat and back.

¹¹ Jawad Khavari's book one was of the eleven title books thrown in Helmand River by the Afghan government. I interviewed him in Bamiyan in August 2010 who was doing a research on cultural heritage in Bamiyan. Another book was a translated scholarly book 'the Hazaras' by Hassan Poladi, that was published in the US in 1987.

¹² BBC Persian service 'Punishment for using Farsi words' http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/story/2008/02/080210_v-hn-farsi-language-punishment.shtml (accessed 30 September, 2011).

¹³ An interview with Jawad Khavari in Bamiyan August, 2010. He said that 'It is wrong to discriminate those who have grown up in Iran and influenced by new dialogue. Hazaras speak in Iranian dialect is a natural thing. Anybody who lives in a new environment, inevitably they are affected by it. People are adapted to change. It is also political and because of discrimination'

¹⁴ An interview with a male journalist in Bamiyan, August 2010.

KABUL

There has been no census conducted in Afghanistan since the 1970s and there is no demographic information about the composition of ethnic groups in Kabul or their status. It is estimated that four to five million people live in Kabul, comprised of Pashtuns, followed by Tajiks and Hazaras. Kabul is divided between these three major ethnic groups, with Hazaras living in the West and in Afshar. Hazaras are believed to comprise about a quarter of the Kabul population, some recent arrivals and some well established.

HAZARAS IN EDUCATION

Kabul has appeared to offer new opportunities for many Afghans, including Hazaras who came to study or work there from the Central Highlands. Many Hazara students are attending universities and going to school in Kabul. In some courses at universities in Kabul, Hazara students reportedly outnumber Pashtun and Tajik students.

The Chairperson of Afghan Human Rights Commission, Sima Samar, said that out of 1,100 female students at Kabul University, around 600 are Hazaras, most of whom are from Jaghori.¹⁵ This is partly due to the school construction programme in Hazara areas, even before 2001. Now these students finish high school and come from Central Highland districts such as Bamiyan, Daikundi, Jaghori and Malistan, to study in Kabul, something that was not possible for Hazaras under the Taliban, or before. Most of those students coming to study are from rural parts of Afghanistan where there are no universities, and often take a personal risk coming and going.

However the university education is not of good quality. Students complained of lack of access to internet and to books and many students were crammed into small dormitories, for example, at Kabul University. Against the background of an influx of Hazara students at universities, there were reports of discrimination against Hazara students by Pashtun teachers. Ismael, who was studying at Kabul University, said that:

*'They [Pashtun] can't stop Hazara entering at university through the Kankor [the national admission test]. They restrict us in another ways in the class. We often hear questions about why there are so many Hazaras at university. One of our teachers, a Pashtun, asked us either to study in Pashtu language or give a test in Pashtu. They want us to fail this way.'*¹⁶

In addition, many private universities have been opened that are run by Hazaras, such as the Katib Higher Education, Ibn-e-Sina, Gharjistan, and private schools like Mar-e-fat and the Danish schools. Mar-e-fat school, for instance, is situated in Dasht-e-Barchi, a Hazara area, and most of the students are Hazaras. The school principal Aziz Roysh told me he ran a very liberal education at the school, from class eight and nine, about politics and society even using the Qur'an to teach human rights and women's rights.¹⁷ Critical teaching of the Qur'an is not available in other schools, and not even at universities. The liberal outlook of the school and students led to a clash when the 'Personal Status Shiite Law' was approved by the Afghan Parliament. In April 2009 in response to the discriminatory nature of the law, the students of Marefat protested in front of the Afghan parliament and Muhsini's Madrassa. Then Asif Muhsini supporters, a conservative Pashtun Shiite scholar and former warlord, attacked Mar-e-fat school, throwing stones and breaking its windows, and intimidating the students. A newspaper, Hasht-e-Subh, in Kabul reported that 'attacking schools was the custom of the Taliban.'¹⁸

¹⁵ My interview with Sima Samar in Kabul, August 2010.

¹⁶ An interview with Ismael in Kabul, August 2010.

¹⁷ Interview with Aziz Roysh, the principal of Mar-e-fat high school in Kabul July 2010.

¹⁸ Hash-e-Subh, is a widely circulated newspaper in Kabul that its editor, is Qasim Akhgar. See http://8am.af/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3255:1388-01-26-17-20-08&catid=90:1387-08-17-17-39-04&Itemid=489 (accessed on October 1, 2011).



**THE HAZARA PROTEST IN
DASHT-E-BARCHE, WEST OF
KABUL 13 AUGUST, 2010**

HAZARA PROTESTS

Kabul is also a congested city, with a growing population with little access to electricity, running water and proper sanitation. This has increased the possibility of land disputes. One of such incident occurred in August 2010 when Hazaras and Kuchis clashed over land in the West of Kabul, an area mostly populated by Hazaras.

On August 13 2010 Hazara protestors in Kabul demonstrated against the Afghan Government for failing to protect their rights and resolve the protracted Kuchi issue. The Afghan police were unable to deal with the protest. The army was called in, with armoured vehicles and machine guns. To disperse the protestors, the army fired on them, and a protestor was killed. Angered by this, the Hazara protestors, mostly young men, tried to enter the main city. The army responded with bullets, leaving fifteen to twenty dead, and over fifty injured. Most of the protesters were refugees from Behsud.

The Afghan National Army fired indiscriminately on protestors with machine guns. They did not have the equipment such as water canon or batons to quell the protestors, and very ill-prepared. The incident widened the gap between the government and Hazaras, and following the day of protest, the Afghan military with their military vehicles were stationed on streets in the West of Kabul. The Afghan government – the Interior Ministry, the Vice-Presidents office, and municipal office of the city, were all informed of the growing tension, but had ignored all the warnings. The government failed to resolve the conflict or take responsibility.



AUGUST 2010, ABDUL KHALIQ SITS ON HIS FAMILY MASS GRAVE IN BAMIYAN THAT THE TALIBAN KILLED EIGHT MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY IN 1999

BAMIYAN PROVINCE

Bamiyan province is located about 240 kilometres north-west of Kabul. Situated on the ancient Silk Road, the town was at the crossroads between East and West when all trade between China and Middle East passed through it. It is the capital of Hazaristan, the land of Hazaras, numbering around 600,000, with a small number from the Syed community and Tajiks. Bamiyan is famous for its two giant Buddha statues towering 55 and 35 metres, carved out of steep cliffs in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries, which were dynamited by the Taliban in 2001 on the grounds of being idolatrous.

Bamiyan has been relatively a safe area and had seen little fighting since 2001, though the routes leading to Bamiyan have become increasingly dangerous. The Governor since 2005 is Habiba Surabi, Afghanistan's first female provincial governor. Bamiyan is one of seven provinces that were transferred to Afghan security control in August 2011, in the first round of transition to Afghan control. The transition will allow international military forces to withdraw from Afghanistan in full by the end of 2014. A small number of New Zealand soldiers remained in the town: New Zealand also led the area's Provincial Reconstruction Team, but Malaysian, Singaporean and US representatives were also based in Bamiyan.

SECURITY ON THE KABUL – BAMIYAN HIGHWAY

From Kabul, two roads lead to Bamiyan, a shorter but dangerous route from the South, passing through Maidan Warkak and the Hajigak Pass, and a longer but safer route from the North, going through the Ghorband valley. Both routes have increasingly become insecure. My first destination after Kabul was Bamiyan but my travel was delayed because of the increased Taliban activities along both roads. In July 2010, a Hazara was killed in the Ghorband valley. On 9 August 2010, the 10 members of an aid group, six Americans, two Afghans, one Briton and a German were killed by the Taliban in Nuristan province, in North Afghanistan.



**THE RESIDENTS OF DAR-E-FOLADI
IN BAMIYAN REMEMBER AND
NARRATE THE TALIBAN ATROCITY
1998-2001 THAT KILLED
THOUSANDS OF HAZARAS
IN BAMIYAN, AUGUST 2010**

**BAMIYANI RESIDENTS DREAD THE
TALIBAN RETURN**

No city in Afghanistan bears more concrete witness to the atrocities of the Taliban than Bamiyan. During their reign in 1998-2001, thousands were massacred in the town and surrounding valleys.¹⁹ Almost all the people fled from Bamiyan to the mountains or neighboring regions like Behsud, or out of the country.²⁰

Ten years on, the shadow of the Taliban still dominates the city. As the Taliban has gained momentum in recent years, Hazara residents are worried that they would come back to Bamiyan. I spoke to a resident, a Bamiyan man, in August 2010:

I bought a car three months ago and its fuel is always full. I have had bad experience because of the war and the Taliban. I am scared that there is fight at night and my car should be ready if the Taliban comes I should escape immediately with my family that the Taliban can't reach me. We are Hazaras, thus an easy target by the Taliban.²¹

In many of the valleys and villages I visited, people were scared of the Taliban making a comeback. The resident's sentiment is confirmed by Habiba Surabi who said that they had bad experiences under the Taliban, and it is legitimate to be worried about them.²²

However, the residents are not at immediate risk from the Taliban inside Bamiyan. It is a peaceful area, and some foreigners and Afghans come there for tourism and recreation, away from the Kabul or other parts of the country that see much of the Taliban activity. But lack of employment and study opportunities, and lack of services in Bamiyan, push many to other provinces, most commonly to Kabul, and thus expose themselves to the risk of being arrested or caught on roads leaving Bamiyan province. Particularly vulnerable are those working with the local government, and also teachers, journalists, NGO workers or people working with Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). A Hazara journalist, aged 35, said:

I am always scared being in Afghanistan. I am a journalist and people know me. Whenever, I go to Kabul or come back, I have thousands of fears. There is no problem in Bamiyan but the routes to Bamiyan from Wardak Province and Parwan province are not safe. In both provinces, there are elements of Taliban. Whenever I go outside Bamiyan, I go every time in disguise. I pretend I am a shopkeeper. In my reports, I never put my picture in print because I am afraid to be recognised as an active Hazara journalist. I would be a good target for the Taliban, and also some people within the Bamiyan government who are Pashtuns may report me to the Talib.²³

¹⁹ See Human Rights Watch on the 'Massacres of Hazaras in Afghanistan' <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/02/01/massacres-hazaras-afghanistan> (accessed 15 September 2011).

²⁰ Interviewed with Amina in Bamiyan August 2011. I met Amina, a Hazara girl and at 18 a student in ninth grade because her education had been so badly interrupted. Though not out of her teens, she has a wrinkled forehead that makes her look much older. Her eyes filled with tears when she told me the tragic loss of her both parents at the hands of the Taliban - her father was shot in front of her eyes and her mother died of grief and shock. While fleeing the persecution, the Taliban chased them with horses. She observed another twenty Hazara men killed in the mountains and she remembered 'a boy about 15 was shot on his hand and jumped up and down like a bouncing ball.' Then 'another Talib came and finished him'. She, like, many others fleeing the town, stayed for two weeks in ko-e-baba mountains without any food or water. Many died of starvation and cold.

²¹ Interview with a male resident of Bamiyan, August 2010.

²² An interview with Habiba Surabi in Bamiyan August 2010. She complained of the central government not paying attention to her request that more work should be done. She also complained of internal conflict between different Hazara factional groups, standing on the way of any progress towards Bamiyan, mainly between Khalili and Muhqiq, as two leaders of Hazaras.

²³ Interview with a journalist in Bamiyan, August 2010.



IN CENTRAL BAMİYAN AUGUST 2010, A BOY CARRIES WATER WITH A DONKEY TO A VILLAGE

DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Bamiyan has seen little improvements in terms of infrastructure and development and is one of the poorest provinces in Afghanistan. Over the past ten years little international aid has reached Bamiyan and the region still lacks basic infrastructure – household water, electricity, bridges and paved roads. One of the visible signs of development is over two kilometres of paved road that links the main bazaar to governor’s office. Both the mountainous geography and the harsh climate work against the people; sandwiched between high mountains and the long snowy winter, residents are cut off from the outside world for almost six months of the year. Even before the current administration or indeed before the war in 1970s, development in Bamiyan was evolving at a much slower pace than in other provinces in Afghanistan.

The Akha Ghan Development Network is the biggest non-for profit organisation among the almost twenty NGOs working in Bamiyan. In 2010 the organisation was working with New Zealand government to fund eco-tourism as an industry, spending US\$1.2 million in Bamiyan over three years. Tourism could be the

only economic hope for this isolated and under-developed area. In July 2009, the government announced that Band-e-Amir, near Bamiyan, would be the first Afghan National Park. But apart from the creation of the park, there has no maintenance work or investment. Abdullah Mahmudi²⁴ director of Ecotourism Program in Bamiyan says ‘Insecurity affects people coming to Bamiyan and the Taliban penetrated in the North and surrounding Bamiyan. The security situation has worsened compared to last year. Moreover, Bamiyan does not have enough capacity to attract large number of tourists due to lack of infrastructure.’

Lack of development work is attributed to discrimination by the central government. An example is the Afghan government’s opposition to reconstruction of the Buddah statues. Abdullah Mahmudi from Ecotourism says that ‘the Afghan government is opposed to rebuilding Buddah and it turned down a proposal in a conference in Germany in 2010 to reconstruct it.’²⁵ In addition, while Bamiyan is a centre for cultural heritage, it does not have a museum.

²⁴ Interview with Abdullah Mahmudi in Bamiyan, August 2010.

²⁵ Ibid

In response to the lack of development in Bamiyan, residents have undertaken some innovative symbolic protests over the years. In April 2009, residents paved the road with clay in the main town. In March 2011, in a symbolic protest against the Afghan government, the residents of Bamiyan gave donkeys a certificate of appreciation. The certificate addressed the donkeys as follows: 'Dear respected donkey! We are thankful for your relentless efforts to carry water for each of our homes as we are disregarded by our top government officials. We are privileged to give you the first certificate of appreciation and hope you should not forget us like others.'

Similarly there is a rapid expansion of schools in Bamiyan with over 320 schools and more than 120,000 students enrolled in 2010. But the quality of teaching is low and there are not enough school buildings, with some of the students studying under the cover of tents. Most of the students who graduate from High School go to either Kabul or other provinces for higher education. There is a Bamiyan University, but this is poorly resourced. Muhammad Ullah, a teacher at Bamiyan University says:

*'We don't have enough facilities here. It is a second rate university compared to Kabul or to other provinces. No-one comes here to teach and we can't attract students because of the poor facilities and teaching quality. The central government has completely ignored this university.'*²⁶

Farzam, regional manager of the Afghan Human Rights Commission in Bamiyan said that 'there is a double standard in the distribution of aid. People have little access to services in Hazara areas. For example, no work has been done in Dai Kundi.'²⁷ Dai Kundi is an area that was recently separated from Urozgan that became a province during the current Karzai administration. Recently, Habibullah Radnish, Dai Kundi's assistant said to BBC World Service that 'little work has been in Dai Kundi. The [Afghan government] and international community have forgotten us. It is a mystery and a question why we have been forgotten. I think that it is our sin that we have not supported terrorists and the insurgency.'²⁸

²⁶ An interview with Muhammad Ullah in Bamiyan 2010

²⁷ An interview with Abdul Ahad Farzam in Bamiyan, August 2010.

²⁸ See BBC Persian Service, June 2, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2011/07/110702_k02-daikundi.shtml (accessed October 1, 2011).



THIS HOUSE IN HISSA-E-AWAL BEHSUD WAS BURNT DOWN BY KUCHI IN 2010. THE WHOLE VILLAGE IN THIS AREA WAS DESERTED

BEHSUD CONFLICT, MAIDENWARDAK

After Bamiyan, I visited Behsud and Daimirdad, which have been the site of recent Hazara-Kuchi Conflict. These districts, located in the East of Kabul, are part of the volatile Maidan Wardak province, which is under the de-facto control of the Taliban. Routes leading direct to Behsud from Kabul are so dangerous that I had to travel to the area via Bamiyan, a sixteen hour journey, as against four hours from Kabul. In August 2011, a US helicopter was gunned down in Maidan Wardak Province by the Taliban, killing thirty-nine soldiers, including thirty-one Americans and nine Afghans. Maidan Wardak is predominantly populated by Pashtuns, and the Hazaras live mostly in three districts, Hissa-e-Awal and Hissa-e-Dowum Behsud, and part of Daimirdad.

BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

Every summer Kuchis (nomads) migrate to grazing lands in Maidan Wardak crossing part of Sayadabad, Daimirdard and Behsud. The Kuchi population, predominantly Pashtun, is estimated at two to three million, scattered across Afghanistan particularly in Eastern and Southern parts of the country. The Kuchi lead a nomadic life, moving their camels, sheep, goats and donkeys from one area to another for grazing lands. Their migratory route stretches across Afghanistan, up to the Pakistan border. Since 2004, with the exception of 2009 during Afghan presidential election, Kuchi have brought their flocks to Hazara pasture lands in Behsud and Daimirdard districts, and local Hazara residents have tried to prevent this.

This has led to conflict between the Hazaras and Kuchis that has claimed lives on both sides, but mainly Hazaras.

Equipped with heavy weapons, rockets and machine guns, Kuchis started rampaging hundreds of villages and have killed tens of local Hazara villagers every year. According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), from 2005 to 2010 there have been 43 Hazaras killed and 32 injured, with almost 10,000 (9691) families displaced, 237 houses burned down and tens of thousands of livestock animals and thousands of acres of harvest destroyed.²⁹ In 2011 the Kuchi attacked another Hazara area in Navur, leaving Hazara dead and several villages destroyed.

The dispute may appear to centre on competing rights to use pastoral lands, but there is more to the conflict more than that. For many decades, Kuchis have been used as a tool of suppression. The Pashtun rulers (including the Taliban), have supported and favoured Kuchis to use Hazara land in the Central Highlands, and many Hazaras lost their traditional lands to Kuchis in this way.³⁰ This has its origin in a Firman (edict) issued by Amir Abdul Rahman Khan over a hundred years ago, at the end of Nineteenth Century, when the Amir killed over half of the Hazara population in an attempt to build the modern Afghanistan nation-state.

Amir promised Kuchis access to Hazara lands in his efforts in order to conquer the semi-independent Hazara areas. Since then Kuchis have continued using Hazara-populated areas, except during Russian occupation 1992-1992 Hazara armed factious groups were stationed in Hazarajat. When the Taliban took over the Central Highlands in 1997-2001, they supported the Kuchis in gaining access to Hazara grazing lands.

²⁹ See AIHRC report http://www.aihrc.org.af/2010_eng/Eng_pages/Reports/Thematic/REP_KOCHI_CONF_25_sep_2010.pdf (accessed 15 September, 2011).

³⁰ I met Ali, 35 male in Bamiyan in August 2010 who told how his father lost his land to Kuchis over nearly over 45 years ago. 'My father left Waraz [a district in Bamiyan] in 1964 after we lost our lands to Kuchi by order of the local court. In 1959, the Kuchi had come to our home and dropped a roll of fabric and demanded to get the full price next year. Because my father was poor and did not want it but Kuchi forced to sell it. They came next year to get the money but my father could not pay it. They came the following year. My father was doing in Askari (compulsory police service) for three years. After his time, a sergeant kept him as servant to his home as a punishment for a minor mistake he made during his duty. After four years, he came home and found that his family was becoming very poor and were in deep debt. The Kuchi came and asked him to pay the price of the fabric. My grandfather did not have money and the interest went up too high. My grandfather complained to a local court in Panjaw. The Pashtun Judges in the court ruled that the fabric roll is exchanged to the land. Our land was confiscated that way. He was imprisoned for another six months. Then our family left the area.'



A GIRL IN BEHSUD WHOSE HOUSE WAS DESTROYED AND THE KUCHI ATTACKS IN 2010 LEFT HER OUT OF SCHOOL, AUGUST 2010

HISSA-E-AWAL BEHSUD AND DAIMIRDAD

I visited Hissa-e-Awal Behsud (Behsud 1) and upper Daimirdad from the 12 to 14 August. At the time of my visit, most Kuchis had left the area five months before, following an order from the President Hamid Karzai, but there were still some Kuchis in part of Daimirdad, intimidating the local residents. I did not go to the ongoing conflict areas but instead visited the areas that were attacked by the Kuchis in May 2010.

In the spring season of 2010, on 13 April 2010, the Kuchis had begun to arrive at the border of Hissa-e-Awal and Hissa-e-Duwom Behsud and Daimirdad districts. Within a few weeks there were reportedly minor clashes with the local villagers, until a fight broke out on 16 May 2010 in Dai Mirdard district and spread across three other districts.

Following the outbreak of violence, the government initially played down widespread reports about the conflicts in Behsud. However, two days after, on 18 May, 2010, following pressure from Karzai's second vice president, Karim Khalili, a high ranking delegation from Afghan government travelled to the conflict area including Karim Khalili, the Interior Minister, Hanif Atmar, and Defence officials.

At same time, Afghan police and National Army were deployed in the conflict area. On May 20, 2010, the President, Hamid Karzai issued a decree, giving three days for the full and immediate evacuation of the conflict zones, namely Tizak and Dairmidard.

However, Kuchis ignored the presidential decree and stayed for another ten days, and continued burning houses, destroying harvests, threatening and killing local people. Most of destruction and lootings were done during this ten day period. Muhammad Ali, a local representative from Tizak, said 'Kuchi had a party for two weeks in this house, slaughtering all the animals. When they left burned down this house'. He said he lost his two storey house, his tractor, his shop, harvest, and livestock, which he estimated to be worth between 7-8 million Afghanis (\$140,000).

*The Kuchi got four million dollars compensation. They got their cash, looted Hazara materials, burnt their houses and then went back after few weeks. We got our houses burnt, lost everything, became displaced, we have got nothing. We got a few bags of wheat which is not suitable for cooking at all.*³¹

Unlike in previous years, the residents of Behsud in 2010 were prepared, and guarded the residential areas by building a stronghold on top of the mountains, to prevent Kuchi attacks. When the fight broke out, they were out-numbered by 1500-1800 armed Kuchis equipped with heavy weapons, rockets and guns. The Hazarra guards began retreating and brought the news that Kuchis were coming. Everyone in the village was caught by surprise, and had to flee the area, and had nothing left.

*Some local people were guarding their houses so that Kuchis would not harass us. They knew that they were coming because they were fired on. In the morning, they came and said to leave the area because Kuchis had captured the area. We left in the morning. We could not take anything with us, just my wife and children. That is all. We travelled one night by foot until we got to Sia Khak.*³²

Some of the most affected areas in 2010 attacks were Tizak, Kajab, and Daimirdad, which I visited. The residents of these areas suffered a major loss of lives, property and harvests following Kuchi attacks. The devastation was enormous, nothing had been spared - shops, mosques, schools and homes were either burned down or looted. In 2010, over 35 schools were burned down, over 5000 students were out of school and over 3000 families displaced, 346 villages deserted and destroyed.³³ There was no home for me to stay in: I had to sleep at night on the bare floor of a mosque, which had also been looted.

Many of the villages I visited were completely deserted, such as the villages of Pay Nuqat, Char Pakhsa, Khush Qadigak, Qulbakhshi.

In 2010 at least six local residents lost their lives and six were injured. One of the deaths was Mahram Ali from Tizak, Hissa-e-Awal Behsud, whose widow I met:

*We were fleeing when Kuchi came. My husband was left behind taking away the cattle. He was about seventy. He was shot by the Kuchi. Now I have lost everything. I lost my husband, my property. Nothing is left now.*³⁴

The local residents have felt unprotected from the Kuchi incursions that every year terrorize the region. During the 2009 election campaign, President Hamid Karzai promised the local people he would stop the Kuchi incursions. Based on that promise, the people of Behsud and Daimirdad overwhelmingly voted for him. In that year, no Kuchis came in the area and thus there was no conflict. After the 2010 incursions the residents felt betrayed.

Ongoing attacks by the Kuchis have had severe impact in the affected areas. The residents felt unprotected by their own government. Fearing further attacks the residents could not plan to rebuild their houses and some had to leave the area altogether. The insecurity was compounded by having a Pashtun governor in Maidan Wardak who appeared to be favouring Kuchis. The residents believed that some of the people involved in the attacks were in fact from Maidan Wardak, and lived just in the vicinity.

In the recent Behsud conflict, the Taliban is said to be seeking a foothold inside Hazarajat, through the Kuchis. Many residents claimed that the Taliban are behind this as their pickup trucks and flags were seen in the area. Behsud shares a border with Wardak: the Taliban is active in this area could cross the border easily. The regional manager of Afghan Human Rights Commission in Bamiyan commented that 'Hazarajat is relatively safe. The Taliban is trying to make it unstable through the Kuchi. The Pashtun use Kuchi as a pressure to gain leverage for political purposes. The Taliban may have been working with the Kuchi because their flags seen with them.'³⁵

³² Interview with Evaz Ali 55 from Tizak, Behsud, August 2010.

³³ This figure was reported in 2010 AIHRC report.

³⁴ An interview with the widow of Mahram Ali in Tizak, Hissa-e-Awal Behsud August 2010. It is not very common to use a female name, they most identified with their husbands or fathers' name.

³⁵ An interview with Abdul Ahad Farzam in Bamiyan, August 2010.



HAZARA MEN ARE SITTING ON THEIR RUINED SHOPS IN BAZZAR TIZAK, HISSA-E-AWAL BEHSUD AUGUST 2010

THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Afghan government showed no political will to stop the Kuchi incursions or to resolve the conflict. Government inaction certainly emboldened the Kuchis to attack the local villagers. The Afghan government also ignored many warnings from people, including human rights groups such as Afghan Independent Human Rights Commissions. Abdul Ahad Farzam, the regional director of AIHRC based in Bamiyan said that 'we have warned the government for many years about this conflict but they ignored our warnings.'³⁶ The AIHRC report about Behsud conflict said in its report:

*'Unfortunately, in spite of repetition of this armed conflict every year, which has inflicted heavy casualties and calamities on the people, the state of Afghanistan has been indifferent against the documented recommendations of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. It has taken no effective steps to provide a permanent solution of this issue. The carelessness and irresponsible attitude of the state in this regard has caused the repetition of this armed conflict.'*³⁷

At the outbreak of the conflict there was a clear sign that it would lead to a crisis, but the government did not respond to resolve the issue in April, 2010 or early May 2011 or indeed in the past several years. When Hamid Karzai issued a decree for the full evacuation of the Kuchis on May 20, the Kuchis remained in the area and they continued sabotaging and rampaging the houses and harvests. The small number of Afghan police and National Army dispatched to the area were insufficient.

Article 14 of the 2004 Constitution stipulates that the State 'Shall design and implement effective programs for the... settlement and living conditions of the nomads'.³⁸ The government should have resolved the Behsud conflict through the provisions in the Constitution.

The May 2010 decree issued by Karzai stated that those who lost their properties in the conflict would be compensated. Five months after the incident there was no prospect of being compensated. Bakhtyari, a representative of the Ulya (upper) Daimirdad said, 'two years ago we were attacked by the Kuchis and 80 houses were burned down, but there was no compensation afterwards.'³⁹

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ See AIHRC 2010 on Behsud conflict http://www.aihrc.org.af/2010_eng/Eng_pages/Reports/Thematic/REP_KOCHI_CONF_25_sep_2010.pdf (accessed 15 September, 2011).

³⁸ See online http://www.afghan-web.com/politics/current_constitution.html (accessed October 1, 2011).

³⁹ An interview with Bakhtyari, a local representative in Daimirdad August 2010.



ON PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION DAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2010, ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED VOTERS PROTESTED IN FRONT THE AFGHAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION IN SANG-E-MASHA, JAGHORI DISTRICT. WHILE THE POLLING STATIONS RUN OUT OF BALLOT PAPERS, THE BRANCH OF THE COMMISSION HAD HIDDEN BOLLAT PAPERS. AFTER THE PROTEST THE CENTRAL OFFICE FROM KABUL ORDERED TO RELEASE 3000 BALLOT PAPERS. SHORTAGES OF BALLOT PAPERS EXPERIENCED IN OTHER HAZARA AREAS, INCLUDING KABUL.

GHAZNI PROVINCE

Ghazni province is located 135 kilometres Southeast of Kabul and is predominately populated by Pashtuns. The province has 19 districts and Hazaras live in four districts, namely, Jaghori, Malistan, Navur and part of Qarbagh. Ghazni is known throughout Afghanistan as a significant political, cultural and religious centre during the Ghaznavid Period (10th-12th century AD) and still has many numerous historic sites and cultural monuments. Reflecting this historical significance, Ghazni was chosen as Islamic Centre of Civilization for 2013 by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (IESCO) in 2009.

The province lies on the important Kabul-Kandahar Highway, a key trade and transport route for NATO supply. Ghazni, unlike Helmand and Kandahar, has not seen outright warfare. However, there are constant battles along this route, with attacks on NATO convoys, and also in the main and outer parts of the city.

In the past few years, suicide bombers and armed Taliban have struck down high-level government officials and civil servants and even ordinary people in Ghazni. When I was in Kabul, on September 28, 2010, the Deputy Governor of Ghazni, Mohammad Kazim Allayar (a Hazara) his son, nephew and driver along with two others were killed after a suicide bomber attacked their vehicle in Ghazni City. In July 2007, 23 South Korean volunteers were kidnapped in Ghazni province by the Taliban, two of them were killed and their bodies dumped.

This marked security deterioration in Ghazni province is closely linked to insurgency attacks and ineffective security. There are not enough Afghan police or Afghan National Army to combat the insurgency and this security gap provided the opportunity for the Taliban to flourish. The police in Ghazni are outnumbered by the Taliban forces and desertion is high among the police.⁴⁰

Violence in Ghazni disrupted the September 2010 parliamentary election as the Taliban threatened voters not take part, and launched attacks on polling stations in Pashtun areas. None of the Pashtun candidates secured majority votes in Ghazni province and eleven Hazara candidates were elected to Parliament. Karzai pushed for Pashtun representation and reportedly ballot boxes were stuffed, but the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), after some delay, finally announced the eleven Hazara candidates as the winners of 2010 parliamentary election on December 1, 2010.⁴¹

Since then, the local Hazara representatives have questioned Karzai's inclusive agenda to represent a multi-ethnic Afghanistan.

JAGHORI AND MALISTAN DISTRICTS

Jaghori and Malistan are the only districts in Ghani Province that are entirely populated by Hazaras. These districts are located between Pashtun areas that are under the de-facto control of the Taliban. During the civil war, the Taliban blockaded these Hazara districts before capturing them in 1997.

In the post-Taliban period, Jaghori and Malistan are relatively safe but the general upsurge of violence and insecurity in Ghazni has spilled over into these areas. In an attempt to penetrate Jaghori, the Taliban staged attacks from neighbouring districts. In July, 2010, the Taliban attacked Tamki, killing one person and wounding another. In another incident, in June 2007, the Taliban attacked the Bashi Habib family, the district commander, killing five of his family member, on the Jaghori border with Rasna, a Taliban dominated area.⁴²

Jaghori is also known to have a high literacy rate both among men and women due to the high numbers of schools. There are over 51 high schools in Jaghorim some of which were running for many years before the current administration. Most of them are self-funded with minimal support from the government. However, schools in Jaghori, like in any other area of Afghanistan, have been subject to attacks by the Taliban in recent years. In July, 2010, for instance, the Taliban rampaged and burned a girls school in Tamki, Jaghori district and another two schools in Qarbagh district.

In September 15, 2010, I visited a school in Shaki Nuka, in Qarbagh district where the head teacher, Syed Sekander Muhammadi, was killed by the Taliban on the way to Ghazni while travelling from Tamki, Jaghori, in July 2010. The principal of the school in Shaki Nuka, Qarbagh district said:

We are under constant threats by the Taliban to close the school. A few months ago our school was closed down by the Taliban for a month. Muhammadi (the head teacher) was my best friend and he was serving at this school for 22 years. He was killed by the Taliban. I am determined to follow his way to educate children despite the threats.

⁴¹ Pajwak News <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2010/12/01/ghazni-election-results-announced> (accessed 25 September 2011).

⁴² BBC Persian Service, http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/story/2007/06/070602_v-afghan-police-family-killed.shtml (accessed 30 September, 2011).

SECURITY ON THE JAGHORI-QARBAGH ROAD

The security situation in Ghazni and other parts of the country poses a serious threat to life, security and freedom of movement for people in Jaghori. The residents of Jaghori travel outside the area in search of work, study, business and medical treatment. Some work for the government, NGOs or study in Kabul or in other provinces while their families are based in Jaghori or Malistan. These ongoing movements expose them to serious risk of being arrested, killed or and persecuted by the Taliban.

The two commonly used routes between Jaghori and Kabul, one from Qarbagh and another Muqur, are very insecure. From Qarbagh-Jaghori route, passengers are searched by the Taliban almost daily. Riding their motorbikes and armed, the Taliban stop the passenger cars and search them for evidence that they work for NGOs, government or the ISAF. Sometimes, teachers or even students have been targeted. For many Hazaras traveling through the Qarbagh desert, it is a death zone. Many passengers have disappeared, and been arrested or tortured along this route. Since 2001, over 150 vehicles have been stolen. The Taliban closes this road on several occasions during the year by sending letters to the residents telling them not to travel. One occasion it closed was during the Afghanistan parliamentary election on 18 September 2010. Those who broke the Taliban travel ban were severely punished. On 16 September, 2010, the Taliban arrested two people in Jaghori-Qarbagh road and seriously beat them up for carrying candidate posters.

Because of the insecurity along this road, families are separated between Kabul and Jaghori and do not travel for the fear of being caught by the Taliban. Karim Haidari, originally from Jaghori, who resides in Kabul, said. 'I haven't visited my family because of insecurity on the way for many years'.⁴³

The Taliban usually arrest people through their informants embedded in the Afghan community. It is not so much the physical presence of the Taliban that threatens people's lives but the role of these informants. The informants usually report a person, for instance, who may be working for the government or the ISAF or an NGO when travelling outside Jaghori, by passing specific information to the Taliban such as the kind of passenger car the person is travelling in, and what kind of clothes they wear. Often the informant is placed in travel agencies. For example, Ehsani, a former Provincial member of Ghazni Province, was arrested by the Taliban in Rasna, bordering with Jaghori, in September 2010 in this way.

The people of Jaghori like most Afghans are not only threatened by the physical takeover the territory but also by having Taliban informants among the general population. In this way, they feel insecure and unsafe anywhere, and most importantly, when crossing Taliban controlled areas. Even during the Taliban period such tactics existed: there is an atmosphere of complete distrust among the populace that they may be reported to Taliban. Often the reason is that long-term conflict and rivalries among Afghans including Hazaras have created enemies who use this tactic to take revenge and report people to the Taliban; others work for the Taliban in return for money. The Taliban has a system of establishing street courts, where they pass judgement and punish the person on the spot rather than investigate them.



THE MEN ARE DIGGING A MASS GRAVE FOR THE 29 HAZARAS WERE KILLED BY A TERRORIST GROUP LASHKAR-E-JANGAVI, IN MASTUNG, QUETTA, PAKISTAN 20 SEPTEMBER, 2011.

HAZARAS IN QUETTA, PAKISTAN

Afghan refugees first fled to Pakistan during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan (1979-1992); they also fled from the Afghan civil war in the early 1990s and from the Taliban (1992-2001). With the occupation there was a period of mass repatriation, but many refugees remained in Pakistan, and since 2005 they have been joined by people fleeing the present situation. In 2010, UNHCR estimated that nearly 2 million Afghan refugees live in Pakistan.⁴⁴ If events erupt in Afghanistan, Afghans easily cross the border and take temporary or long-term refuge in Pakistan, or use Pakistan as on transit to other countries. Most Afghan asylum seekers coming to Australia have either passed through Pakistan or have lived there for some time.

Hazara refugees predominantly live in Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan province, which borders on Afghanistan and Iran. Quetta hosts an ethnic mix of residents but it is dominated mostly by Pashtuns and Baluch who are Sunni, and live in designated areas. Hazara refugees mostly live in Hazara Town and some in Mariabad.

The exact number of Hazara refugees in Pakistan is unknown, but is estimated at 30,000-50,000, most of whom began to arrive to in Quetta in 1996, escaping Taliban persecution. They initially stayed in guesthouses and mosques and then later connected with their pre-existing networks. Hazaras rarely stay in refugee camps in Pakistan because they are dominated by Pashtuns.

Another group of Hazaras, Pakistani Hazaras, number over 600,000 and have a permanent status in Pakistan, having fled Afghanistan at the end of Nineteenth Century, escaping from Amir Abdur Rahman Khan. These Hazaras are Pakistani citizens and can attend government schools and share in the benefits and services available to Pakistanis. They are integrated in Pakistani society, holding government jobs, running businesses and are in the Pakistan army. The most notable Hazara in Pakistan was General Musa Khan, who served as Command in Chief of the Pakistani Army between 1958 to 1966. Another prominent figure is a Hazara woman, Saira Batool, the first female pilot in the Pakistan Air Force.

Hazara refugees, on the other hand, cannot attend Pakistani schools, colleges or universities. Instead, they have established businesses, run their own refugee schools, and some in recent years are registered with Afghanistan Ministry of Education, following an Afghan curriculum. Hazara refugees are restricted in terms of access to work and freedom of movement. Some Hazaras are also registered with the UNHCR. They are often mistreated by Pakistan police, who require them to register and obtain an ID card if they go to other cities like Islamabad or Karachi. They are also hampered by the lack of local language, Urdu. They cannot find jobs in the Pakistan job market because they cannot speak the language. The only work available to most Hazara refugees is in mining, which is highly dangerous. Most of the Hazaras in Quetta rely on support from overseas, with family members and relatives sending money from Western countries.

Many Afghan refugees, including Hazaras, have chosen Pakistan and in particular Quetta as their second home. For Hazaras it is a temporary choice. When the Taliban collapsed many returned to their homes in Afghanistan, but with the escalation of violence and the deteriorating security situation many have returned to Quetta. In 2008, I met Jamal Ahwahadi, who had returned to Pakistan after he lost one of his friends and a colleague in Afghanistan, and was running a stationary shop and teaching at a school in Quetta. He used to work for an NGO in Afghanistan: compared to the high position he held in Afghanistan, he preferred working in Quetta which was relatively safer than Afghanistan in 2008.

After 2001, many Taliban found sanctuary in Pakistan, including in Quetta. The city is home to several militant groups, Sunni groups and armed Islamist groups. Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, is believed to be living in Quetta and also the Quetta Shura. In the province there is a generalized situation of violence, with a local Baluch separatist movement, and broad discontent in a region that is marginalised within Pakistan.⁴⁵ The Pakistani human rights organisations have recorded numerous serious human rights violations

since 2005 by security forces in the region, including extra-judicial executions, torture, enforced disappearances, forced displacements, and excessive use of force.⁴⁶

HAZARAS TARGETED IN QUETTA

Over the last ten years, Hazara refugees and long-settlers alike have been living under constant terrorist attacks. In 2001, eight Hazaras were killed in Poodgali Chowk. Another twelve Hazara police officers were killed on June 8, 2003 in Sariab, Quetta. Yet the worst attack was on 4 July 2003, when the Imambargah-e-Kalan (great Mosque) was targeted, killing over fifty-eight people and injured over two hundred. In recent years, the targeted killing of Hazaras has intensified in Quetta. On January 26, 2011, Hussain Ali Yousufi, Chairman of Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) was assassinated in his car on Jinnah Road, Quetta, by armed men riding motorbikes.⁴⁷

I have visited Quetta numerous times: in 2005, 2008 and briefly in July 2010. On my last two trips, I have witnessed attacks on the civilian Hazara population. When I was there in 2008, a Hazara motorcyclist was attacked in Sange Loada, near Ali Abad in Quetta. In 2010, in September, seventy-three Hazaras were killed when they were rallying on Al-Quds day, in support of Palestine. Following these attacks people have been living a state of complete terror and insecurity.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan noted in its annual report, the 'State of Human Rights', in 2009:

*The Hazara community believed that security agencies and government were protecting and patronising the perpetrators of crimes against Shia community. As an example, they presented the case of two convicted criminals, Usma Saifullah Kurd and Shafeeq Rind, belonging to anti Shia organisation, Lashkar-i-Jahngavi, who had mysteriously escaped from a well-guarded jail of Anti-Terrorist Force (ATF) in Quetta Cantonment where no one could enter without a pass, implying they were helped by some elements within security agency.*⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch 'The Future at Stake,' <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/12/13/their-future-stake-0> (accessed September 20, 2011).

⁴⁶ See the The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 'State of Human Rights', annual report 2009 <http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Annual%20Report%202009.pdf> (accessed 25 September, 2011).

⁴⁷ See New York Times <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/31/world/asia/31pakistan.html> (accessed September 29, 2011)

⁴⁸ Ibid



OVER 2000 HAZARAS IN SYDNEY TOOK PART IN A PROTEST AGAINST THE TARGETTED KILLING OF HAZARAS IN QUETTA, PAKISTAN OCTOBER 1, 2011

Since 2003 500 Hazaras have been killed and over 1500 injured as a result of targeted killings in Pakistan, and in 2011, targeted attacks on Hazaras have intensified.

The Hazara community no longer believe the Pakistan justice system will punish those responsible for these violations. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan notes:

*'A number of lawyers belonging to Shia Hazara community were killed in targeted shootings during the year 2009. Sectarian hit-men were said to be responsible; they had declared in courts that on release they would again kill Shia. The Shia-Hazara community seemed to have lost trust in the provincial government's capability of bringing perpetrators of the crimes to justice.'*⁴⁹

Local political leaders lamented at the lack of security provided to the Hazara people. "For over 10 years, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has been attacking Shiites in Quetta, but successive governments and law enforcement agencies have taken no notice," said Abdul Khaliq Hazara, chairman of the Hazara Democratic Party. The local government in Quetta does not punish the perpetrators that target Hazaras. Malik Ishaq, the leader of Lashkar-e-Jangavi, was detained on a charge of attacking Hazaras on July 2011, but was released on bail by the Supreme Court on grounds of insufficient evidence.

In recent months the attacks have taken a grim pattern of picking out Hazaras among the general population. Hazaras in Quetta do not feel safe because of the terrorist attacks. A few years ago, it appeared that terrorists would kill only the Hazara leaders, police chiefs and intellectuals, but now they are targeting anyone - including women and children, as long as they are Hazaras and Shiite.

⁴⁹ Asian Human Rights Commission, 2011, 'PAKISTAN: A mass killer has been provided protection while the families of his victims continue to suffer threats' http://www.humanrights.asia/news/ahrc-news/AHRC-STM-126-2011#.ToBMnu_t_14.facebook (accessed September 27, 2011).

In September 20, 2011, for instance, a number 26 of Hazara refugees and pilgrims were killed in Quetta while heading to Iran.⁵⁰ In Mastung, 30 kilometres from the main city, a few terrorists armed with weapons on motor bikes stopped their bus and forced the Hazaras to get off and then shot them on the spot one by one. Among the passengers were Pashtun, Panjapi and Baluch passengers. They spared their lives, killing only the Hazaras, who are ethnically distinguishable. Three others were killed in a follow-up attack on a car on its way to rescue the survivors of the bus attack. Again on October 4, 2011, armed men riding in a pickup truck intercepted a bus on the outskirts of Quetta, forced non-Hazaras to get off and fired on the Hazaras remaining inside the bus. The attackers killed 13 Hazaras and wounded another six.⁵¹ This followed an attack on 31 August, on the Hazaras on Eid day, at the end of Ramadan, when a car bomb exploded in near Alamdar Road, killing 12 people and wounding 20.

These killing of Hazaras in Quetta have become almost a daily occurrence. The events in Quetta have deeply affected a large Hazara community in Australia who mourns for the killing of their relatives or ethnic members in Paksitan and yet can't do anything to stop it. In response to the targeted killing, Hazaras in almost all Australian main cities and all across the globe staged a worldwide protest against the target killing of Hazaras in Pakistan on October 1, 2011. This was the first ever coordinated protest in Australia, Europe, Canada, and Pakistan, demanding the world hear their voices, and put a stop on the indiscriminate killing of Hazaras in Pakistan, and to prevent from a genocide from unfolding.

⁵⁰ See for this incident The express Tribune, September 20, 2011 <http://tribune.com.pk/story/256419/gunmen-attack-bus-in-balochistan-20-killed/> (accessed 27 September, 2011).

⁵¹ See the New York Times, October 5, 2011 'Gunmen attack Shiite on bus Southwest of Pakistan' http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/05/world/asia/gunmen-attack-shiites-in-southwest-pakistan.html?_r=1 (accessed October 5, 2011).