

Title: Systemic Discrimination and Advocacy of Hatred against the Hazara Community based on religious beliefs in Afghanistan

Introduction: The Hazaras, a distinct ethno-religious group primarily residing in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, have endured more than a century of relentless human rights violations, constituting one of the lengthiest and ongoing genocides spanning 130 years. They have suffered massacres aimed at ethnic cleansing, land confiscations, cultural and racial genocide, as well as government complicity that subjected them to oppression. This situation prompts us to ponder the denial of fundamental human rights, such as the right to life, freedom of religion, social connections, education, and government employment. With the Taliban's recent takeover, the human rights situation for the Hazaras has further deteriorated, marked by ongoing suicide bombings in public spaces like mosques, schools, sports facilities, and hospitals, mass displacement, and the alteration of geographical landscapes, intensifying the Hazara people's suffering. The Hazara community in Afghanistan has faced persistent and systematic discrimination, rooted in advocacy of **crimes against humanity** based on their **religious beliefs and ethnic identity**. They are mainly Shias in a majority Sunni country. The Taliban view Hazaras, who practice Shia Islam, as non-believers. They deem them apostates and believe they must be killed. ⁽²⁾

Advocacy of Hatred and its Impact: The atrocities committed against the Hazara community serve as a glaring example of the Advocacy of Hatred, constituting a clear case of systematic human rights violations and discrimination. Historically, the mass killings of Hazaras began with a Religious Fatwa during Abdur Rahman's rule in the 1890s. He issued a call for a holy Jihad against the "infidel/Kafir" Hazara/Shias, summoning all ethnic groups, tribes, and forces to join this campaign. This religious call for jihad was widely disseminated through mosques and religious leaders, resulting in the mobilization of approximately 100,000 troops, tribal forces, and religious warriors from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The discrimination against this community persisted until now in various forms and resurfaced in the 1990s with another series of religious Fatwas issued by the Taliban, culminating in the mass killing of Hazaras in 1998. In general, the atrocities committed against the Hazara community can be summarized over four eras as follows:

1) *The Hazara War (1891-1893): Genocidal Massacres and Mass Slavery*⁸

During this dark period, the Hazara people endured a cruel campaign marked by deadly massacres, widespread enslavement, and a significant drop in their numbers. Abdur Rahman Khan, seeking to unite Pashtuns, unjustly labeled Hazara Shias as "infidels" and deceitfully promised their lands and women to Pashtuns. This tragic deceit resulted in the destruction of Hazara communities, leading to a devastating loss of over 60% of their population.

Over 12 years, approximately 400,000 Hazara families were forcibly displaced, with only a small fraction, around 10 to 20 percent, finding safety. A heart-wrenching 80 percent either perished or were subjected to slavery ². The suffering extended beyond just one location; within one tribe of 3,000 families, only 60 families survived, and many Hazara tribes in Uruzgan were completely obliterated. In Behsud, a government report from that time revealed that out of 20,000 households, only 6,400 endured, with some tribes suffering a staggering loss of 90% or more of their population.

The cruelty did not stop there, extending to mass enslavement. Tens of thousands of Hazaras found themselves sold into slavery, including roughly 9,000 in Kabul's markets between July 1892 and June 1894. In Kandahar alone, about 7,200 Hazara men and women were enslaved each year.

To add to the Hazara's suffering, Abdul Rahman Khan relocated 12,000 Durrani and 4,000 Gholjai households to Uruzgan, seizing lands that once belonged to the Hazaras. Consequently, the core of Hazara Jats in Uruzgan transformed, leaving only a marginalized Hazara minority landless. This systematic war, enslavement, depopulation strategies, and forced migration left an indelible mark on Hazarajat's geography. In the late 19th century, Hazarajat was three times larger, with substantial portions unjustly taken from the Hazaras and granted to Pashtuns, forever altering the course of their history.

2) *Genocidal Massacres in the 1990s*²

During this period, the Hazara community tragically endured nearly 10 mass killings. To illustrate, two of the most horrifying instances include:

a) *The Massacre and Mass Rape in the Afshar Neighborhood of Kabul, February 10-11, 1993*: This operation represented one of the most extensive military campaigns undertaken by a coalition comprised of the ruling government and non-government factions. The number of Hazara civilians killed varied between 2,000 to 1,000, with an approximate count of 700-750 casualties.

b) *The Mazar-e Sharif Massacre, August 1998*: In August 1998, the Taliban launched an attack on Mazar-e Sharif, followed by a relentless killing spree targeting Hazaras. While some sources suggested a toll as high as 8,000 Hazara civilian casualties, other accounts ranged from 3,000 to 5,000 lives lost.

3) *Systematic Violence and Discrimination Against the Hazaras (2002-2022)*⁴

Between 2002 and 2022, the Hazara community faced 294 documented incidents of targeted violence, resulting in 2,228 deaths and 2,837 injuries. These attacks targeted Hazara civilians in places such as maternity wards, educational centers, places of worship, sports clubs, weddings, funerals, protests, and public transit lines.

Strong evidence suggests that the previous Afghan government actively pursued policies and actions that systematically discriminated against the Hazara people. The report brings to light three key examples:

The alarming underrepresentation of Hazaras in government employment, despite their significant population and educational achievements.

Institutional discrimination in the distribution of social services and development assistance in Hazara-populated regions, leading to underdevelopment and a lack of basic infrastructure.

The controversial 500kV Transmission Line project, known as TUTAP, which sparked Hazara demonstrations due to perceived discriminatory routing decisions by Da Afghanistan Breshna Shirkat (DABS).

4) *Taliban 2.0: A Renewed Wave of Violence*

In recent years, the Hazaras have been subjected to escalating attacks, forced displacement, summary executions, and mass atrocities at the hands of the Taliban. Hundreds of Hazaras have been killed, thousands forcefully displaced, and Hazara government employees dismissed. The Hazara community lacks representation in the Taliban government, and international aid has been diverted away from their region¹. Employment of Hazaras in international organizations has also declined.

There is substantial evidence to suggest that the Hazara community in Afghanistan is currently enduring a genocide, as defined by the Convention. This can be demonstrated as follows:

Killing members of the group⁴: One alarming example is the systematic murder of 17 Hazara civilians in Urozgan Khas within the last two years. The evidence points to two Taliban commanders from Urozgan, currently engaged in hostilities in Panjshir and Andarab. This tragic event aligns fully with the criteria outlined in the first clause of the second paragraph of the Genocide Convention. Documented cases have been presented to Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan, and have also been investigated by UNAMA's office in Bamiyan. Many more atrocities against Hazaras across the country in such a format require further investigation.

Deportation and/or forcible transfer of population⁴: Reports abound of the Taliban compelling residents of certain villages to abandon their lands and homes. This enforced displacement occurs through judicial or government orders, often originating from claims by Taliban supporters or individuals sympathetic to the Taliban's cause. An example is the case of residents from Poshtae Ghorghory village in Bamiyan's Panjab district, detained by the Taliban governor to coerce them into yielding their lands to Pashtun nomads, the Kuchis. UNAMA has substantiated this case, alongside others like the forced displacement of seven hundred families from two villages, Kendyr and Tagab, in Gizab district, Daikundi province, following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021. In addition, informal reports suggest that a systematic and intentional effort to displace Hazaras and destroy their livelihoods, led by individuals with close ties to the Taliban, primarily of Pashtun ethnicity, has resulted in fabricated documents used to seize Hazara lands across the Hazarajat, leading to the displacement of thousands of Hazara families. In many places, particularly in Qarphanato, Shibarto, and Pasroya districts of Bamiyan, the Taliban has restricted access to pasture lands.

Persecution and apartheid: The systematic attacks and persecution that have unfolded in Urozgan Khas over the past two years, including acts like killings, beatings, house burnings, and car destruction, constitute a clear instance of systematic harassment and persecution. These actions deprive the victims of their fundamental rights and exemplify apartheid, as defined in clause (h) of the Genocide Convention. The Taliban has established a regime that perpetuates systematic oppression and dominance of one racial or religious group over others, effectively subjecting Hazaras to apartheid based on religion and race.

Taxes and access to economic opportunities: The Taliban imposes various taxes on Hazaras residing in the countryside, including government levies carried over from the former government, religious taxes like Zakat (inconsistent with Shia jurisprudence), and an arbitrary one-tenth of every income. Hazaras also experience economic discrimination through exclusion from participating in political decision-making processes, which, in turn, restricts their access to vital natural resources such as land and water. Reports also indicate that Hazaras are prohibited from utilizing resources within their own villages, perpetuating economic inequality.

Enforced disappearance of persons: While not systematic, there have been instances of enforced disappearances among Hazaras, exemplified by the case of Molave Mahdi, a former commander. The circumstances of his arrest and killing, as claimed by the Taliban, indicate elements of enforced disappearance.

In summary, these practices are carried out systematically, contributing to the broader evidence of systematic discrimination and violence against the Hazara community. The realities of blood payments, forced migration, property relinquishment, and extortion continue to dictate the lives of Hazaras, often with grave consequences, underscoring the pressing need for scrutiny and intervention⁷.

Prevalence of Prejudice: Prejudicial attitudes deeply embedded within Afghan society have perpetuated forms of hatred based on religion or belief. These prejudices stem from historical conflicts, socio-political

dynamics, and cultural biases, contributing to the marginalization and dehumanization of the Hazara community. The persistent targeting of Hazaras for displacement and discrimination based on religion reflects widespread violence and systemic oppression such as **mass illegal land grabbing in** Daikundi, Bamiyan, Wardak, Ghazni, Urozgan, Parwan and other locations. ^(4,11)

State Response and Challenges: In the wake of the Taliban's takeover, the Hazara community has been **entirely excluded** from any roles within the Taliban-led government because of their religious beliefs, leading to their disappearance from all aspects of socio-economic life. This systematic marginalization has further deepened the challenges faced by the Hazaras, exacerbating their vulnerability and restricting their access to essential resources and opportunities. The absence of representation within the current governance structure has perpetuated their sense of alienation and heightened the **urgency for comprehensive measures by UN** and other international bodies to address the entrenched discrimination and ensure the protection of their fundamental rights. ⁽⁶⁾

Intersections of Discrimination: Hatred based on religion or belief intersects with other forms of discrimination, exacerbating the challenges faced by the Hazara community. The systematic discrimination and relentless crimes against the Hazaras, compounded by their **religious identity**, demonstrate the complex interplay between multiple forms of discrimination, necessitating comprehensive strategies that promote inclusivity and equality while addressing the intersecting dimensions of prejudice. ⁽⁷⁾

Role of Stakeholders: Countering advocacy of crimes against humanity requires a collective effort from State actors and various stakeholders, including civil society organizations and international entities. Policies and initiatives that promote interfaith dialogue, education, and inclusive governance are essential in fostering social cohesion and mitigating the adverse effects of religious intolerance. Unfortunately, the Taliban who are the de facto rulers of Afghanistan **discriminate gravely against the Hazara community based on their religious belief.** ⁽⁶⁾

Data Collection and Monitoring: Comprehensive data collection and monitoring mechanisms are crucial in understanding and addressing the root causes of discrimination and violence against the Hazara community. These data serve as a critical basis for identifying patterns of discrimination and evaluating the impact of policies and initiatives, informing evidence-based decision-making processes that prioritize the protection of human rights and promote social cohesion. Importantly, many evidences indicate that **international aid is being diverted away** from the Hazarajat regions. A notable recent case in point is the International Relief effort for the earthquakes in Herat province, where the Taliban failed to acknowledge the areas with Hazara populations, which were left devastated. ^(1,3)

Conclusion: The ongoing plight of the Hazara community in Afghanistan underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and targeted measures to address systemic discrimination and advocacy of crimes against humanity based on religion or belief. The recent magnitude of displacement of the Hazara community never seen before following the Taliban's takeover has added further complexities to an already dire situation, emphasizing the critical importance of international efforts to protect the rights and dignity of the Hazara people and uphold the principles of equality and justice for all. The UN and other international bodies must address this pressing and ongoing genocide. ^(3,7)

References:

¹For additional information, please refer to the attached letter from the local community to UNDP, titled "Complaint Letter to UNDP for Depriving Hazaras from International Aid."

²For further insights, please review the list of recorded atrocities against our community, available in the attached files named "Report: Terrorist & Armed Attacks 2021-2022," "To Richard Bennett about Massacre of Hazaras in Urozghan Khas," and "Hazaras Mosque Blast 13 Oct 2023."

³"Terrorist & Armed Attacks 2021-2022," and the World Hazara Council's concise report on the human rights situation which are provided within the attached letter.

⁴For further insights, please review the list of recorded atrocities against our community, available in the attached files named "Some example of atrocity in Hazarajat in 2023", "Report on Force Displacement of Hazaras in Ghazni province(Farsi)" , "Report on Force Displacement of Hazaras in Daikundi province (Farsi)" and "Recent report on Hazara Nomad Conflict (Farsi)". Here is the link to the newspaper that conducted the investigation: <https://www.etilaatroz.com/special/report/4/view/>

⁵For more comprehensive information, including the sources, kindly consult the report titled "Terrorist & Armed Attacks 2021-2022," which is provided within the attached letter.

⁶For additional information, please refer to the enclosed files titled "World Hazara Council Report on the Human Rights Situation of Hazaras" and the "Canada Parliament Presentation."

⁷For additional information, please refer to the attached files named "Academic-Research Paper on Genocide of Hazaras", "DFAT Report On HAZARAs 2017 by Australian Government" and "THE HAZARA INQUIRY UK Report".

⁸For further details, please consult the sources cited in the World Hazara Council's concise report on the human rights status of Hazaras up to 2018, which can be found in the attached letter ("World Hazara Council Report on the Human Rights Situation of Hazaras"). Additionally, the supplementary section of Volume 3 of "Siraj-al-Tawarikh," authored by Faiza Mahmud Kateb, an Afghan historian, Afghan court chronicler and secretary to Habibullah Khan from 1901 to 1919, is included in the attached letter ("The History of Afghanistan Complementary part of Volum 3").

⁹<https://amu.tv/70576/>

¹⁰<https://amu.tv/68895/>