

Written evidence submitted by the Hazara Committee in the UK (AFG0040)

About Hazara Committee in the UK

Hazara Committee in the UK (HCUK) is a registered non-profit organization (13193369) working to create an inclusive platform for all Hazara communities across the UK to connect, cooperate and integrate into the wider society. Since 2013, HCUK have been supporting our community members in various ways, from hosting educational and cultural events to philanthropy works for Afghanistan and supporting Hazara refugees and individuals within our communities in the UK and around the world. Hazara Committee in the UK represents Hazaras in Great Britain and advocates for Hazara rights around the world. HCUK aims to address the real challenges Hazaras face in Afghanistan and Pakistan and clarify the Hazara people in these countries. The organization has written several reports on the situation of Hazaras in Afghanistan, providing accurate information on what is happening on the ground. These reports are distributed to various organizations and the UK government.

Summary

The Hazara Committee in the UK drafts this report in response to the call for evidence by the UK Parliament on UK Government policies in Afghanistan. In this call, we urge the UK government to recognize the genocide of the Hazaras in the 1890s by the Afghan king Abdur Rahman Khan and the Taliban massacre of the Hazaras in the 1990s. We also urge the UK Government to acknowledge the vulnerability of the Hazaras and categorize it as a community at-risk. We encourage the UK government to evacuate and resettle at-risk Hazara women and girls, social activists, atheists, and other at-risk individuals/families. The Committee also recommends that the UK government should not recognize the Taliban government until and unless the group upholds fundamental human rights of the people of Afghanistan as enshrined Declaration of Human Rights.

What should the UK's objectives be in its relationship with Afghanistan? How should these be prioritized, and what trade-offs should be made to achieve them?

1. Along with other NATO forces, the UK entered Afghanistan in 2001 to fight international terrorism. As a participant of the international intervention in Afghanistan, the UK has important responsibilities towards the people of Afghanistan, the international community, and the British taxpayers. The UN Security Council mandated the international community to stabilize the country and safeguard it from becoming a sanctuary for international terrorism. Unfortunately, despite significant efforts, Afghanistan relapsed to the Taliban rule on 15th August 2021, which has renewed fears of violence, terrorism, and violation of the fundamental human rights of the people of the country. If not managed strategically, Afghanistan has the potential to become a new terror state.
2. The Taliban have demonstrated that they cannot be trusted and have violated numerous human rights laws, including systematic discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities. The group have a history of committing serious abuses against Hazaras, including large-scale killings during fighting in [Mazar-e Sharif](#) and Bamiyan in 1998-99 and has continued to orchestrate multiple terror attacks against the Hazaras across the country. Recently, Taliban officials have singled out [Hazara journalists](#) for arbitrary detention and beating and Hazara communities for forced displacement. [400 to 2,000 families from 15 villages in Day Kundi Province](#), 4,000 families and Mazar-e-Sharif and 2,000 Hazara families from Helmand have been

evicted from their ancestral homes and lands in the recent months, which has added to the humanitarian crisis of the country. Therefore, the UK should not be quick to recognize the Taliban government and pressure them through diplomatic means to stop its discrimination against its ethnic and religious minorities.

3. The Taliban is seeking international recognition and international aid as the country's economy is crumbling. This can be utilized to pressure the Taliban government to (1) create a more inclusive government, representing all the people of Afghanistan, including the marginalized ethnic groups such as the Hazaras. (2) end its discrimination against ethnic groups, especially the Hazaras and Shias, precisely because, given their ideological dispositions and history of violence and discrimination against the Hazaras, such as the [Mazar-i-Sharif massacre in 1998](#) and its current violence and discriminations against the Hazara. The UK government and other international actors must continuously pressure the Taliban to abide by humanitarian and international laws. If managed properly, the pressure would stop the Taliban government from allowing the country to become a hub for international terrorism.
4. UK government's humanitarian aids should not end up in the hands of the Taliban. The Taliban are currently seeking to open the flow of international assistance to the country. The UK could use this as a tool to pressure the Taliban regime to listen.
5. The king Emir Abdur Rahman Khan carried a genocidal campaign against the Hazaras in the 1890s, killing, evicting, and enslaving 62 percent of the Hazara population. However, this Hazara genocide remains the least known genocide. No national or foreign government has recognized or acknowledged it. We urge the UK government to acknowledge the Hazara genocide by the British-supported Afghan king Abdur Rahman.

How well did the UK handle the international military withdrawal from Afghanistan, including on cross-Whitehall coordination? How effectively did it plan and coordinate with the US, other allies, and countries in the region, particularly around the evacuation of those eligible to come to the UK? How can decision-making structures be improved?

6. Though many at-risk individuals were evacuated from the country, most at-risk Afghans, especially members of minorities, were not evacuated. During the international evacuation phase following the fall of Kabul on August 15th 2021, there were reports of Hazaras being turned away, often violently, from the airport by the Taliban & Afghan special forces at the entrance of the airport because of their ethnicity. The UK could have made a more precise plan and employed more internal experts to aid in processing the at-risk individual and their documents and to ensure persecuted groups such as the Hazaras were not discriminated against. Early data suggest that very few Hazaras were able to leave the country and witnesses have reported that ethnic-Hazaras were specifically targeted at land borders, especially at Boldak-Chaman crossing. With the Taliban in control of airports and border crossings all over the country, access to airport and passage to regional countries to the Hazaras at high risks for evacuation will become even more difficult, leaving them exposed to high risk and at the mercy of the Taliban. The UK government should consider a quota for resettlement of and visas for the Hazaras at high risk due to the special circumstances they face in Afghanistan. Having a quota will help compensate this under-representation of Hazara evacuees.
7. At-risk ethnic and religious groups to be prioritized for the UK's newly introduced Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme.

8. The British-Hazara organisations such as Conservative friends of Hazaras, Hazara Committee in the UK and Friends of Hazaras have established relationship and connection with people on the ground. A regular line of communication between the government and these British-Hazara organisations is required to channel new information on threat levels as well as identification of people at high risks & facilitate interventions in cases where the high-risk category of individuals facing imminent threats of death.

What steps is the Government taking – alone and with partners – to mitigate the impact of the Taliban takeover on UK security, particularly to terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS?

9. The UK government works with allies to pressure the Taliban to dispel other terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda from Afghanistan. Still, as history shows, on one hand, the Taliban are not a homogenous group with a structured system, where the individuals obey the orders from top to bottom. On the other hand, they have a tendency not to abide by any agreements which they sign. Therefore, the Taliban should not be trusted and taken by their words.
10. The Taliban are using the presence in Afghanistan of the Islamic State – Khorasan (ISK) as an alibi for international recognition and foreign aid. They pose as the only alternative to IS-K, implying that either supports us or the IS-K would replace us, the even more extremist group. IS-K is feeding on [anti-Shi'ism in the region](#). The Shia Hazaras are their primary target as they attacked the Hazara-Shiite mosques in [Kunduz](#) and [Kandahar](#) last month, killing hundreds. The Taliban takes advantage of this situation and uses the Hazara blood as a bargaining chip for international recognition. We urge the UK government not to fall into the Taliban trap, instead channel its financial and diplomatic supports for the human rights of the Hazaras.

What are the humanitarian and human rights implications of the Taliban takeover? How can the UK support those at risk – particularly women and girls – both in the immediate and long term? What steps is the Government taking to do this?

11. The Taliban have a long history of committing mass atrocities, including the massacre of 10 thousand Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998. If there are no consequences or repercussions, the Taliban will massacre the Hazara ethnic group and other communities. Currently, since the presence of western media has reduced, the Taliban have begun their systematic discrimination, indiscriminate murders, and mass displacement of Hazaras in Day Kundi, Tajiks in Panjshir, and to a lesser degree, other communities.
12. During the last two decades, the Hazara women and girls have had tremendous achievements. They have been active in art, cinema, business, military, police, sports, education, and other sectors. With the collapse of the Government in Afghanistan on 15th August 2021, not only have they lost all their privileges, but they face life threats. For instance, the Taliban killed a Hazara woman who ran the female prison in Herat province during the previous Government. We urge the UK government to evacuate at-risk Hazara girls and women from Afghanistan.
13. During the last two decades, education flourished among the Hazaras, and some Hazara youths and intellectuals no longer identify with any religion. With the fall of Kabul into the hands of the Taliban, the lives of the secular and atheistic oriented Hazaras threaten. We encourage the UK government to evacuate them.

How should the UK approach any opposition or armed resistance to the Taliban?

14. The UK government should assist any opposition against the Taliban by recognizing them and possibly channelling humanitarian and military aid.

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