

An OSINT Assessment of the Taliban in Afghanistan (2025)

Marie Seshat Landry with ChatGPT and Google Gemini

June 2024

Abstract

This report provides an Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) assessment of the Taliban's control and influence in Afghanistan as projected for 2025, synthesizing publicly available information to derive intelligence-grade insights. The analysis covers the regime's political structure, security dynamics, human rights record, gender-based and ethnic/minority persecution, economic and humanitarian conditions, international relations, and active resistance threats. Key findings highlight the solidification of authoritarian rule, Afghanistan's continued role as a haven for transnational terrorist groups, systemic human rights abuses (particularly against women and minorities), a deepening humanitarian crisis, and a fragmented international response marked by increasing de facto acceptance from some states despite Western sanctions. The report concludes with strategic implications and identifies areas for further OSINT engagement.

1 Introduction

This report leverages open-source information to provide an intelligence-grade assessment of the situation in Afghanistan under Taliban rule as of 2025. It aims to synthesize disparate data points to offer a cohesive understanding of the regime's control, its domestic and international impact, and the ongoing challenges within the country. The analysis spans various critical domains, from governance and security to human rights and economic stability, culminating in strategic implications and recommendations for future OSINT engagement.

2 Regime Control & Political Structure

Since reclaiming full control in August 2021, the Taliban have systematically reshaped Afghanistan's political and legal landscape.

- **Centralized Islamic Emirate:** The previous constitution and justice systems have been effectively dismantled, being replaced with Sharia-based rule enforced by entities like the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.
- **Suppression of Dissent:** Political pluralism is explicitly banned—most opposition parties, including Hezb-e Islami, have been dissolved, with staff detained.

3 Security & Terrorist Dynamics

The Taliban's security apparatus is characterized by pervasive domestic surveillance and controversial alliances with transnational terrorist groups.

- **Domestic Surveillance:** Kabul is reportedly monitored by an extensive CCTV and facial recognition network, which includes approximately 90,000 cameras, enabling domestic repression and crime control.

- **Terrorist Safe Haven:** Al-Qaeda maintains camps and personnel within Afghanistan, with reports indicating their integration into high-ranking Taliban echelons. Concurrently, Islamic State – Khorasan Province (IS-K) continues to harass minority and educational institutions, with a particular focus on the Hazara Shia community.
- **State Backing for Transnational Groups:** The Taliban are reported to support Pakistan’s Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) through funding, training, and cross-border logistical assistance.

4 Human Rights & Civil Repression

Systematic human rights violations remain a defining feature of Taliban governance, documented by international observers.

- **Systematic Rights Violations:** UNAMA and Human Rights Watch (HRW) continue to document widespread arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances, and public floggings. Recent data includes at least 147 men, 28 women, and 4 boys subjected to public corporal punishment.
- **Media Persecution:** Hundreds of independent/broadcast outlets have been closed. Journalists are frequently detained without due process; female reporters are effectively silenced.
- **Domestic Indoctrination:** Boys are educated to enforce morality codes inside homes, reporting non-compliant female family members.

5 Gender-Based Oppression

Women and girls in Afghanistan face severe and systematic discrimination, recognized by international legal bodies.

- **Harsh “Virtue” Laws:** Women must cover entirely, refrain from speaking loudly or traveling without a male guardian, or face family and societal enforcement.
- **Education and Employment Bans:** Secondary education, university attendance, and employment opportunities are barred for women; NGOs are barred from hiring women, worsening humanitarian outcomes.
- **Gender Persecution Recognized:** The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued requests for arrest warrants for Taliban leaders for gender persecution, and Human Rights Watch considers the repression a likely crime against humanity.

6 Ethnic & Minority Persecution

Minority groups, particularly the Hazara community, face targeted violence and systemic exclusion.

- **Hazara Targeting:** Over 61 targeted attacks against the Hazara community were reported in recent years by IS-K and Taliban affiliates, resulting in hundreds killed and injured.
- **Exclusion of Religious Minorities:** Sikhs, Hindus, and Shia face eviction and social marginalization, while the Taliban lack meaningful inclusion policies.

7 Economy & Humanitarian State

Afghanistan's economy remains severely depressed, leading to a profound humanitarian crisis.

- **Economic Contraction:** GDP is approximately 25% below pre-takeover levels. Unemployment and hunger are widespread—23.7 million people require humanitarian aid; 12–15 million face food insecurity.
- **Healthcare Collapse:** Severe shortages of medical staff and ICRC withdrawal from hospitals have created a critical access gap.

8 International Relations & Legitimacy

The Taliban's international standing remains complex, marked by a growing de facto acceptance from some states contrasted with continued Western isolation.

- **De Facto Acceptance:** Russia has delisted the Taliban as a terrorist group, and diplomatic ties are rising with China, India, and Gulf states, predicated on security and economic interests.
- **Western Sanctions:** ICC has issued requests for warrants for Taliban leadership; U.S. travel bans remain in effect, and refugee programs stay suspended.

9 Resistance & Insurgent Threats

Despite Taliban control, internal resistance and insurgent activities persist, challenging the regime's authority.

- **NRF Activity:** The National Resistance Front (NRF), under Ahmad Massoud, remains active in Panjshir and surrounding provinces with an estimated several thousand fighters.
- **IS-K and Resistance Attacks:** IS-K continues insurgent campaigns, particularly against minority and Taliban infrastructure.

Key OSINT Insights

- **Surveillance Infrastructure Expansion:** The growth of the surveillance infrastructure highlights the regime's tightening control and poses a significant risk to privacy and dissent.
- **Gender Policies Enforced by Domestic Actors:** The reliance on domestic actors for enforcing gender policies reveals a strategy of state-coerced community participation in repression.
- **Regional Ties Deepening:** The increasing diplomatic and economic ties with regional powers suggest a growing, albeit fragmented, international legitimacy for the Taliban, despite ongoing human rights violations.
- **Humanitarian Collapse Risks:** The severe humanitarian crisis related to economy, food security, and healthcare risks fueling future instability, internal dissent, and potential displacement.

10 Strategic Implications

The current trajectory of Afghanistan under the Taliban carries several significant strategic implications:

- **Governance:** Taliban rule is consolidating into an increasingly authoritarian and rigid system, with no discernible path towards political pluralism or inclusive governance.
- **Security:** Afghanistan continues to function as a terror incubator, with threats from groups like IS-K and TTP extending regionally, destabilizing neighboring countries.
- **Humanitarian:** The deepening humanitarian crises may trigger broader regional destabilization and significant displacement flows.
- **International Posture:** The diplomatic thawing by some states, contrasted with ICC requests for indictments and Western sanctions, signals a fractured and pragmatic geopolitics where human rights concerns are often secondary to perceived security and economic interests.

11 Methodology and Sources

This report synthesizes information through open-source verification, relying on a diverse range of publicly available data.

- **Primary OSINT Sources:** Government briefings, reports from UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan), Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports, International Criminal Court (ICC) filings.
- **Media and Social Media Analysis:** Cross-referencing local and international news outlets, and analysis of social media platforms (e.g., photographic evidence from Reddit, satellite mapping where available) for real-time situational awareness and visual confirmation.
- **Triangulation:** Information from local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), international agencies, and direct online testimonies from diaspora and local networks are cross-referenced to triangulate narratives and enhance reliability.

12 Next Steps for Further OSINT Engagement

To deepen the understanding of Afghanistan's evolving landscape, the following OSINT activities are recommended:

- **Geospatial tracking:** Monitor Taliban checkpoints and military movements via satellite imagery.
- **Online ecosystem analysis:** Map Taliban and IS-K propaganda channels on social platforms.
- **Civil monitoring:** Leverage diaspora and local networks to continue documenting human rights and gender persecution trends.