

Taliban Attitudes towards Ethnic Minorities: A Case Study of Hazara Ethnic Group

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Abstract

The Hazaras of Afghanistan have long been persecuted by the Taliban and the Islamic State, based on their ethnicity and religious beliefs. There is much debate about the origin of the Hazara community. Common myths suggest that the Hazaras came from the Genghis Khan army in the 13th century, but there is no historical evidence to support these claims. The Hazaras, as well as the Taliban, were persecuted and oppressed by the majority of Sunnis in Afghanistan. After the Taliban hijacked Afghanistan in 1996, ethnic minorities such as Hazaras and women were subjected to Taliban torture. Despite of being the biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan, the Hazara were undergoing oppression from Pashtun rulers and governments, which includes slavery, systematic expulsion from ancestral houses and lands, and massacres.

Introduction

Afghanistan is a landlocked country situated at the intersections of Central and South Asia. It is adjoined by Pakistan to the east and south, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan to the northwest, Uzbekistan to the north, Tajikistan to the northeast, and China to the northeast and east. According to the United State data on Afghanistan from 2010, there are as many as 14 acknowledged ethnic groups in the country. Pashtuns counts between 40 to 50 percent of the community. Tajiks consists about 27 percent, while Hazaras and Uzbeks are about 9 percent each. There are also many scattered minority groups. The Constitution gives official recognition to Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwui and other tribes. The Afghan government has recently begun issuing ID cards that show the ethnicity of each citizen.

Afghans have long recognised or affiliated with ethnic groupings, although detailed data on the composition and importance of these

groups is still debated. It's critical to understand the groups affected and their status in society as Afghanistan prepares to enter another period of transition.

Historical Context of Hazare Ethnic Group

The Hazaras of Afghanistan have long been persecuted by the Taliban and the Islamic State, based on their ethnicity and religious beliefs. There is much debate about the origin of the Hazara community. Common myths suggest that the Hazaras came from the Genghis Khan army in the 13th century, but there is no historical evidence to support these claims. Other more compelling theories suggest that the Hazaras are likely descendants of communities that lived in the area long before the advent of Genghis Khan. The Hazara are Dari speakers, believed to be of the Turk-Mongol race, the third largest ethnic group in the country, making up about 10% of Afghanistan's population. As expected, the Taliban completely left the Hazaras from its caretaker government. The new Taliban regime has a 33-member cabinet, which the Taliban calls "inclusive". But the cabinet consists not a single Hazara, not even a Sunni Hazara token.

The history of the Hazara persecutors

The Hazaras, as well as the Taliban, were persecuted and oppressed by the majority of Sunnis in Afghanistan. After the Taliban hijacked Afghanistan in 1996, ethnic minorities such as Hazaras and women were subjected to Taliban torture. Despite of being the biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan, the Hazara were undergoing oppression from Pashtun rulers and governments, which includes slavery, systematic expulsion from ancestral houses and lands, and massacres.

Shi'a Hazaras are traditionally the maximum discriminated ethnic minority in Afghanistan and feature lengthly confronted violence and discrimination. Partly, that is to do with non-secular faith. During the reign of Amir Abdul Rahman (1880-1901), Hazaras suffered extreme political, social and financial repression, culminating in a state-subsidized announcement of jihad or holy struggle towards Hazaras from 1890 to 1893. Abdur Rahman Khan, a Pashtun, mobilized huge contingents of presidency forces in addition to ethnic and tribal militias withinside the struggle fare towards Hazaras, promising them Hazara lands and males and females as slaves. Thousands of Hazara guys had been killed, their ladies and kids taken as slaves, and their lands occupied and redistributed to Pashtun tribes. To make stronger the forces towards

Hazaras, he appealed to Sunni non secular sensibilities to mobilize Tajiks and Uzbeks (each Sunnis) to assist Pashtuns combat towards the Shi'a Hazaras. Those Hazaras who survived the preliminary duration of raids fled to then British India.

Although slavery was officially abolished with the help of King Amanullah Khan in 1923, the persecution of the Hazara continued. Hazara faced political, monetary, and social marginalization and stigmatization of the Hazara way of life and identity. The authorities also racked up exorbitant taxes. To mitigate the effect of this discrimination, many Hazaras hid their identities to obtain country identification. In 1970s, a few Sunnis preached that the killing of Hazaras become a key to paradise. As a result of these rules, many Hazaras lived on the brink of monetary destruction in Afghanistan. Since the 1960s, the Hazaras have actively campaigned against discriminatory rules against them. The highest Hazara political organizations emerged during Afghanistan's resistance to the Soviet invasion in the 1980s. Several organizations appear to have merged during this decade to form Hezbe Wahdate Islami Afghanistan (Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan) in 1989. Following the crumble of the ultimate pro-Soviet authorities in April 1992, the previous anti-Soviet resistance organizations, called Mujahidin, have been not able to agree on a brand-new country-wide authority. These organizations waged bloody civil wars over the management of Kabul and various elements of Afghanistan.

Between 1992 and 1995, Abdul Ali Mazari led Hezb-e Wahdat to talk out on the global stage for, and on behalf of Hazaras, setting their case to the UN and the global community. In February 1993, loads of Hazara citizens within the Afshar district of western Kabul have been massacred with the aid of forces.

In the years that accompanied the takeover of Kabul by Taliban in 1995, Hazaras confronted with excessive repression and persecution, together with a sequence of mass killings in numerous provinces, forcing many to escape from their homes. The biggest massacres of Hazaras happened in the northern town of Mazar-e Sharif wherein the Taliban massacred numerous Hazara citizens.

Another related atrocity committed by Taliban is the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in March 2001. The Buddhas of Bamiyan belongs to the 6th-century. The statues represented a later evolution of the classic blended style of ancient art in Afghanistan. Hazaras celebrated the Buddha statues as part of their historical past. The statues

were destroyed by dynamite over several weeks, starting on 2 March 2001. The destruction was carried out in stages. Initially, the statues were fired at for several days using anti-aircraft guns and artillery. This caused severe damage, but did not obliterate them. Later, the Taliban placed anti-tank mines at the bottom of the niches, so that when fragments of rock broke off from artillery fire. This destruction was met with fierce international criticism. According to Taliban minister, Abdul Salam Zaeef, UNESCO sent the Taliban government 36 letters objecting to the proposed destruction. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas has been described by Michael Falser, a heritage expert at the Center for Transcultural Studies in Germany, as an attack by the Taliban against the globalising concept of “cultural heritage.

The wave of extremist violence additionally hindered the Hazaras from peacefully protesting within the cities. On 23 July 2016, a rally of the Enlightenment Movement at Deh Mazang Square in Kabul was attacked by a suicide bomber, which killed eighty-five protesters and injured more than four hundred people.

The Taliban’s hatred of Hazara is primarily due to their different denominations and ethnic origins. Taliban consider them “non-believers.” Former Taliban Governor of the Mazare Sharif, Mullah Manon Niazi, was known for his provocative speeches against the Hazaras on mosques and radio. “Wherever you go, we will catch you. When you climb, we will drag you with your feet. If you hide underneath, we will make you with your hair. I’ll pull it up,” he once said

Protecting the Hazaras

Despite many rhetoric about the need to protect religious minorities, local officials were unable to intervene to help the Hazaras. Tehran assisted the Taliban in the fight against the United States and even accepted some of its leaders. Its policy towards Afghanistan is based on its recognized national interests. Therefore, it is unlikely that the country will take significant steps to protect the Shiites in Afghanistan.

The only hope for the Hazara people is the international community which may remain loyal to their human rights obligations and urge the Taliban to make concessions.. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have already stopped financing Kabul, United States has frozen national assets held in US territory. These funds can be used to negotiate with the Taliban. All Afghans face unstable and dangerous situations on their lands, but the situation is especially hopeless for the

Hazaras, who have been marginalized, exploited and slaughtered. They are at the brim of Ethnic cleansing, and even risks of genocide . This is an international concern and international human rights groups must take action. The international community has legal, moral and political obligations to protect the people of Hazara. It must respect the commitment in the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide Crime.

The Hazaras group's current issues

Long before the Taliban ruled Kabul on August 15, 2021, the Hazaras faced intensifying campaigns of violence by the Taliban and the Islamic State and structural discrimination by the Kabul government. A wave of violence deliberately aimed at Hazaras mosques, Kabul's cultural and educational centres and other rural centres has claimed the lives of hundreds of Hazaras civilians. Since taking office, the Taliban have dismantled the constitutional order that gives the people basic rights and rebuilt the Islamic Emirate, which institutionalizes inter-denominational and ethnic discrimination against the Hazaras. The Hazaras lost virtually all influential government status in Kabul, and the Taliban established Pashtuns in the authority status of the entire Hazaras.

Hazaras are subjected to discriminating Taliban rules including their regulations on civil society, women's rights, and freedom of expression. Some minority women, together with Hazara women, have historically enjoyed extra freedom from their society and benefited appreciably from post-2001 political and academic reforms. Civil society and unbiased media additionally furnished crucial possibilities for Hazaras to voice their issues towards rules that discriminated against them. Currently these channels are unavailable to them.

In addition, the Islamic State-Khorasan has continued a campaign of violence to extract maximum casualties among the Hazaras. After Taliban took power, the group claimed responsibility for attacks on Shia mosques in Kunduz and Kandahar, killing dozens of Hazara supporters. Multiple attacks on passenger vehicles in Kabul's Hazara neighbourhood have claimed the lives of many others.

Conclusion

As the Taliban expands its control over Afghanistan, the level of violence across the country increases. The global awareness of the oppression

of women and girls under the Taliban is well known; less understood is the persecution of Hazaras. Hazara people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan and have faced a history of oppression, including slavery, torture, and massacre. In recent times, they have been subject to violence by governments formed by the Pashtun majority. At the hands of the Taliban, the Hazaras are subjected to institutional discrimination, systematic attacks and mass atrocities. The Hazaras have hurt from a long history of persecution, which has given them a sad title among the world's persecuted people. To save the Hazara population of Afghanistan, the international community must pressure the Taliban through diplomatic channels to protect the rights of religious minorities, and take immediate steps to accept more Hazara refugees.

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