

**Ethnic Hazara in Afghanistan Need Urgent British Protection** by Dr Homira M Rezai (Chair, [Hazara Committee UK](#)), Hasan Pandor (SOAS) and Rana Osman (SOAS) (07 October 2021)

**The UK Government must protect the ethnic Hazara community in Afghanistan from the grave danger they are currently facing.** Since their takeover of the country on 15 August 2021, Taliban retaliations include killing [21 Hazara in Daikundi](#), Behsud, and Parwan province, and sporadic [torture, extortion, and intimidation](#) against Hazaras across the Hazarajat region. With at least 8000 Hazara already taking refuge in [Pakistan](#) and [Iran](#) alone, thousands more are now being forcibly displaced from [the Daikundi province](#) in central Afghanistan. Members of the international humanitarian community are [calling](#) for emergency resolutions that protect Afghanistan's ethnic and religious minorities, and **are warning of a possible [repetition of the Taliban's brutal onslaught](#), particularly against the Hazara community.**

Demographically, the Hazara are the largest ethnic and religious minority group in Afghanistan. Ethnic Hazara mostly practice Shi'a Islam, and ethnically, they have distinct Asiatic features and speak Hazaragi (the less common of Afghanistan's two official languages). **Historically, the Hazara have suffered persecution and ethnic cleansing by political elites who forcefully sought to [unify Afghanistan](#) into a centralised state in the 1880s.** This led to 'as much as [60 percent of the Hazara population \[being\] killed](#), sold into slavery, or forced into exile from the Hazarajat region (p. 3-4). While some exiled Hazara were granted amnesty in 1901, they '**continued to face considerable social, economic and political discrimination**', including intense societal enmity.

Despite receiving socioeconomic support from the 2001 US-led NATO military intervention, **the US-installed Afghan government failed to protect the Hazaras.** Instead, according to a 2019 OHCHR [report](#), the Hazara continued to experience systemic discrimination, which resulted in the denial of essential services and political rights, including [unlawful killings by the Afghan police in 2018](#) (p. 8). In fact, **since the creation of the National Unity Government in 2014, [attacks on Hazara areas increased in public spaces such as schools, mosques, and Hazara cultural festivals](#)** (p. 11, 22). Despite public assurances of inclusivity and representation made by the Taliban government on 07 September 2021, **Hazaras have been excluded from political office and have been killed in cold blood.**

The humanitarian and security situation in Afghanistan is dire, and the Hazara community is in a particularly vulnerable situation that requires immediate attention and leadership from the international community. **We urge the UK Government to:**

- **recognise ethnic Hazara as a separate "vulnerable group" category** for the UK's newly introduced Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)
- **implement a visa quota for the resettlement of Hazara at considerable risk (with their families)**, particularly women, academics, journalists, human rights advocates, and those who worked with NATO
- **establish a regular line of communication with the [Hazara Committee in the UK \(HCUK\)](#) and [Friends of Hazara \(FoH\)](#)**, who can provide critical up-to-date information on people at high risk and threat levels, to inform swift, targeted life-saving interventions
- **advocate for and oversee internationally mandated Fact-Finding Missions** to document abuses by the Taliban against minorities, including Hazaras
- **advocate for human rights monitoring as a substantial part of the UN's mandate in Afghanistan**, alongside principled engagement with the Taliban government on particular cases, such as the illegal arrest of journalists and the rights of minorities and women.

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