



Timeline

1747 - Ahmad Shah Durrani unifies the Pashtun tribes and establishes Afghanistan as an independent state.

1809 - The fifth Emir, Shuja Shan Durrani signs a treaty of alliance with Great Britain.

1826 - Dost Mohammad Khan ousts Durrani and proclaims himself Emir.

1838-1842 - Britain invades and reinstates Emir Shuja Shan Durrani to the throne. First Anglo-Afghan war takes place; sixteen thousand British forces are massacred by Afghans while retreating.

1878 - Second Anglo-Afghan War takes place. To prevent an absolute occupation the Afghan government signs the Treaty of Gandamak in 1879 giving Great Britain power and control over Afghan affairs.

1919 - Afghanistan, led by Emir Amanullah Khan declares independence from Great Britain.

1926-1929 - In an attempt to modernize the country, Amanulla Khan introduces social reforms, resulting in social unrest. Public revolts force him to flee.

1933 - Zahir Shah begins his 40-year rule as the monarch.

1953 - General Mohammed Daud is appointed Prime Minister in a nonviolent transfer of power. Daud looks to the U.S.S.R. for economic and military assistance, begins reforms, and works towards the emancipation of women.

1963 - Daud's policies towards reunifying Pakistani Pashtuns with Afghanistan and his support for militias along the Pakistani border lead to his forced resignation.

1964 - A new constitution is introduced, excluding members of the royal family from the council of ministers.

1973 - Daud seizes power in a coup, declares Afghanistan a republic, and briefly experiments with democracy.

1979 - Daud is killed during a Communist backed coup. People's Democratic Party takes power, but faces violent internal discord and U.S.-backed mujahedin opposition.

1979 - The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan to support an unstable Communist regime.

1980 - Babrak Karmal, backed by the U.S.S.R., becomes leader. Anti-Communist mujahedin rebels, backed by the U.S., Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia, fight against Soviet forces.

1985 - Various Mujahedin rebels form an alliance to fight against the U.S.S.R. Many of the Afghan population flee to neighboring countries as half the population is displaced by violence.

1989 - The Soviet Union withdraws from Afghanistan.

1992 - Afghan civil war begins after Soviet backed government is toppled.

1994-1996 - The Taliban, an extremist Pakistani-sponsored movement, takes control of Kabul, establishing an extremist version of Islam, where women are banned from work and Islamic punishments, such as, stoning and amputations are implemented.

1997 - Pakistan and Saudi Arabia recognize the Taliban, who control a majority of the country, as legitimate rulers.

1998 - Osama bin Laden, accused of bombing U.S. embassies in Africa, is targeted by U.S. missile strikes.

1999 - In an attempt to force the Taliban to give up bin Laden, the UN sets up sanctions and an air embargo.

2001 - Following the 9-11 terrorist attacks, a U.S. allied and anti-Taliban Northern Alliance attack the Taliban and take over Kabul. The UN sponsored Bonn Conference establishes a process for political reconstruction that includes the adoption of a new constitution. Hamid Karzai becomes the head of an interim government.

2003 - NATO forces take charge of security in Kabul.

2004 - Hamid Karzai becomes the first democratically elected president of Afghanistan.

2005 - The first Afghan parliamentary elections in over 30 years result in warlords and strongmen in most seats.

2006 - NATO takes over all Afghan security.

2007 - The UN reports that opium production is at the highest levels ever.

2009 - Hamid Karzai reelected despite low voter turnout, alleged fraud, and Taliban attacks. U.S. increases its military presence to 100,000 troops and announces withdraw plans to take place from 2011 through 2014.

2010 - NATO announces plans to turn over security to Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

2011 - The number of civilian casualties hits record high.

2012 - Despite gains toward building a stable central government, a resurgent Taliban and continuing provincial instability - particularly in the south and the east - remain serious challenges for the Afghan Government.

Afghanistan assumes a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2012-13 term. Protests result in at least the deaths of 30 people after copies of the Koran are burnt at the US Bagram airbase.

2013 - Afghani army takes over military operations from NATO.

2014 - Taliban suicide bombers kill 13 foreigners in a restaurant in Kabul, including the country head of the International Monetary Fund. Elections are marred by violence and alleged fraud. Power sharing agreement between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah is signed in September, with Ashraf Ghani becoming President. Combat operations end in Afghanistan for both the U.S. and Britain. Opium cultivation hits record high. NATO, U.S. and Britain end combat missions. Violence continues marking 2014 as the bloodiest year since 2001.

2015 - 12,000 NATO personnel provide support and training to Afghan security forces. U.S. withdrawal is delayed at the behest of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Protests against hardline clerics and the treatment of women follow the lynching of a woman falsely accused of burning a Koran. Four men are sentenced to death for her murder. Informal peace talks are held in Qatar with agreements to continue talks in the future. Taliban states intention to continue fighting until all foreign military personnel are out of the country.



Torture Methods

SUSPENSION where detainees are hung by the wrists from chains, shackles or other devices attached to the wall, ceiling, iron bars or other fixtures for long periods. During suspension victims are blindfolded, severely beaten and subjected to other forms of physical abuse like electric shock, burning with hot water or cigarettes, or suffocation with water.

SEVERE BEATINGS where victims are punched, kicked, slapped, banged against the walls, or beaten with rubber hoses, braided electric cables, steel wires, plastic pipes, metal pipes or wooden sticks has been reported. Beating individuals on the soles of their feet after which they are forced to stand or walk on concrete or gravel is prominent. In many instances beatings occur while victims are suspended and hooded, on other occasions while they are held under a blanket. On most occasions beatings go on for hours or until loss of consciousness occurs.

ELECTRIC SHOCK is widespread across detention centers in Afghanistan and used to cause fear and excruciating pain. It is usually administered to the thumbs, feet and testicles of victims. Repeated application to the genitals can cause loss of bladder control.

TWISTING AND WRENCHING OF GENITALS until loss of consciousness is a widely used method of inflicting pain by Afghan detention center officials.

STRESS POSITIONS where detainees are forced to stand for long periods has been reported. Detainees report being forced to stand in the sun until collapsing or passing out. Another common form of a stress position has been described as twisting one arm over the shoulder and cuffing it to the individual's other arm behind the back in some cases for up to four days.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE of women and minors has been perpetuated by prison officials. Men are also pervasively threatened with sexual assault and other forms of sexual abuse.

SEXUAL HUMILIATION where victims are often stripped of their clothes and threatened with having objects like bottles or wooden sticks pasted with chili powder or other irritants inserted in their anal cavity has been reported. Men are often threatened with castration or with having their penises cut off.

SLEEP AND SENSORY DEPRIVATION where detainees are routinely blindfolded or hooded for extensive periods to the point that some of them lose the notion of time has been reported.

OTHER FORMS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE, such as dragging victims by their hair or beards, having toenails removed with knives or pliers, denial of food and water, denial of medical attention, and neglect have also been reported.

Current Situation

Language: Afghan Persian or Dari (official) 50%, Pashto (official) 35%, Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%, 30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai) 4%,

Population: 32,564,342 (July 2015 est.)

Religion: Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim 19%, other 1%

Ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, other (smaller numbers of Baloch, Turkmen, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, Pashai, and Kyrgyz)

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS include extrajudicial killings, widespread violence, torture and abuse of detainees by government officials, security forces, detention center authorities, and police. Nongovernmental organizations report that security forces continue to use excessive force, including torturing and beating civilians. The situation was exacerbated by uncertainty resulting from the inconclusive Presidential elections in 2014. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported systematic torture of detainees at five National Directorate of Security (NDS) and Afghanistan National Police (ANP) detention centers. UNAMA has documented numerous violations of basic human rights and civil rights like deplorable and unsanitary prison conditions; ineffective government investigations of abuses torture by local or security forces; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged pretrial detention; judicial corruption and ineffectiveness; violations of privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press; restrictions on freedom of religion; limits on freedom of movement; abuse of children, including sexual abuse; human trafficking; abuse of worker rights; compulsory and bonded labor; and child labor, including forced child labor.

ANTI-GOVERNMENT INSURGENCY most notably the Taliban continue to kill record numbers of civilians, using improvised explosive devices, car bombs, and suicide attacks. The Taliban increasingly used children as suicide bombers. Anti-government elements also threatened, robbed, and attacked villagers, foreigners, civil servants, and medical and nongovernmental organization workers. There are numerous reports that the Taliban and other insurgent groups commit politically motivated killings. Disappearances and abductions have been documented in connection with the ongoing insurgency. The Taliban is connected by their own claim to a string of high-profile, targeted killings of regional police commanders, provincial police chiefs, and other officials. Furthermore, the Taliban targeted individuals associated with the administering the elections in 2014 including civilians and foreigners.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS continue to be under duress into 2014, with poor legal protections for women, such as protection for domestic violence victims. Women continue to be prosecuted for 'moral crimes' and many high profile women's rights activists remain in danger of assassination.

LAND MINES and other unexploded ordnances continue to cause deaths and injuries, restricting areas available for farming, and impeding the return of refugees. The Mine Action Coordination Center for Afghanistan (MACCA) reported at the end of 2011 that land mines and other unexploded ordnances killed or injured an average of 31 persons each month. In addition to these casualties from traditional antitank and antipersonnel mines, there were 18,692 civilian casualties from IEDs during the same year. At the beginning of 2012, land mines and other unexploded ordnances still endanger 1,930 communities.

ILLICIT DRUGS, particularly opium is a key source of revenue for the Taliban. Widespread corruption and instability impede counter drug efforts. Instability and corruption make Afghanistan vulnerable to drug money laundering through informal financial networks.