News Published: 19 September 2016

EASO publishes a Country of Origin Information (COI) report on recruitment by armed groups in Afghanistan



Today, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published a Country of Origin Information (COI) Report entitled 'Afghanistan – Recruitment by armed groups'. The report is an update of a previous report published in 2012 and provides an overview of recruitment practices of armed groups in Afghanistan, providing information relevant for protection status determination of Afghan asylum applicants. In the first seven months of 2016, Afghanistan ranked 2nd in the top countries of origin in EU+ countries[1], with a total of almost 110 239 applicants.

The EASO COI report on recruitment by armed groups in Afghanistan provides a description of the of recruitment practices in Afghanistan, by the insurgent factions of the Afghan Taliban, the Islamic State in Khorasan (IS) and the Hezb-e Islami group led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The report also looks into recruitment by the Afghan Local Police (ALP) and pro-government militias (PGM). In a last chapter, information is presented on the specific issue of under-age or child recruitment. This is a topic of particular concern since a high percentage of the Afghan asylum applicants in Europe concerns Unaccompanied Minors. Depending on the EU+ country, this percentage varies from 0 to 54 % and on average it is over 14 %.

The report was co-drafted by EASO and Cedoca, the COI unit of the Belgian Office of the Commissioner-General for Refugees and Stateless persons. The report was written in accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology and presents information until 19 August 2016, stemming from publicly available sources and a series of interviews conducted with experts on the matter, named in the report. The report was reviewed by peers from EU Member States, by UNHCR, and by an expert from the Afghanistan Analysts Network.

The report describes the transition of the Taliban into a more conventional armed force since the withdrawal of foreign troops, as well as the establishment of a new Taliban mobile elite force, called qet'a. Furthermore, opinions of experts are presented on the traditional role of the tribe or family in the recruitment process. The Taliban are still an overwhelmingly Pashtun movement, but some episodes of Hazaras joining the Taliban's ranks have been noted. The report covers the important topic of 'forced recruitment' by Taliban and IS, both insurgent groups but with a different ideology. Regarding recruitment by ALP and PGM, the report highlights the formal role of the local community council (shura) or local strongmen, but also problems related to this. Of particular concern is the recruitment of minors or children by all parties in the conflict. The report discusses the economic incentives, the role of schools or madrassas, the mechanisms to prevent underage recruitment in the Afghan National security forces, including age-verifications procedures, and how these mechanisms can fail.

The report can be accessed by clicking here

[1] EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland
[2] All reports are available via EASO's website

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