

# AFGHANISTAN 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States has not recognized the Taliban or another entity as the government of Afghanistan. All references to “the pre-August 15 government” refer to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. References to the Taliban reflect events both prior to and after August 15.

Prior to August 15, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan had a directly elected president, a bicameral legislative branch, and a judicial branch. The country held presidential elections in September 2019 after technical problems and security threats compelled the Independent Election Commission to reschedule the election multiple times. The commission announced preliminary election results on December 22, 2019, indicating that President Ashraf Ghani had won, although runner-up and then chief executive Abdullah Abdullah disputed the results, including after official results were announced February 18, 2020. Both President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah declared victory and held competing swearing-in ceremonies on March 9, 2020. Political leaders mediated the resulting impasse, resulting in a compromise on May 17, 2020, in which Ashraf Ghani retained the presidency, Abdullah was appointed to lead the High Council for National Reconciliation, and each of them was to select one-half of the cabinet members.

Under the pre-August 15 government, three entities shared responsibility for law enforcement and maintenance of order in the country: the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the National Directorate of Security. The Afghan National Police, under the Ministry of Interior, had primary responsibility for internal order and for the Afghan Local Police, a community-based self-defense force with no legal ability to arrest or independently investigate crimes. Civilian authorities under the Ghani administration generally maintained control over the security forces, although security forces occasionally acted independently and committed numerous abuses. After August 15, security forces largely disbanded. The Taliban began to recruit and train a new police force for Kabul and announced in early October that the force had 4,000 persons in its ranks. The Taliban







































































































































in the informal sector were covered by minimum wage and workweek-hour laws, but informal workers were generally unaware of the full extent of their labor rights.

The pre-August 15 government did not provide additional social protections for workers in the informal economy. The Labor Ministry, however, was responsible for the operation of Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) units, a coalition of government agencies, NGOs, and community and religious leaders designed to combat child labor which occurred primarily in the informal sector. CPAN units received complaints of child labor, investigated, and referred cases to NGO and government shelters that provided social services. CPAN operated in 171 districts and processed more than 3,500 cases in 2020. No data were available on cases during the year or whether CPAN would continue under the Taliban.