

## **Schnellrecherche der SFH-Länderanalyse vom 4. März 2016 zu Afghanistan: Drohbriefe der Taliban**

Frage an die SFH-Länderanalyse:

- Stellen die Taliban Drohbriefe aus?

Die Informationen beruhen auf einer zeitlich begrenzten Recherche (Schnellrecherche) in öffentlich zugänglichen Dokumenten, die uns derzeit zur Verfügung stehen.

### **1 Drohbriefe der Taliban**

**Drohbriefe der Taliban weitverbreitet.** Drohbriefe der Taliban an Gemeinden und Individuen werden als «*Night letters*» bezeichnet. Das *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* hat im Februar 2015 einen ausführlichen Bericht zu den so genannten «*Night letters*» veröffentlicht. Gemäss einem im Jahr 2015 vom IRB befragten Professor der *Naval Postgraduate School in California*, welcher unter anderem Studien zu den Taliban in Afghanistan veröffentlicht hat, werden in diesen Briefen Forderungen gestellt und mit Gewalt und Tod gedroht, sollten diese nicht erfüllt werden. Laut einem unabhängigen Afghanistanexperten (2015) dienen die Briefe dazu, Angst zu verbreiten und dafür zu sorgen, dass die Bevölkerung sich nicht in irgendeiner Weise mit der afghanischen Regierung oder der internationalen Gemeinschaft einlässt.

Gemäss verschiedenen vom IRB zitierten Quellen sind Drohbriefe eine beliebte und sehr weitverbreitete Taktik der Taliban (Professor, 2015; USDOS, 2014; UNHCR, 2012; *Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission* (AIHCR), 2012). Die Hauptzielgruppe ist gemäss dem befragten Professor (2015) die lokale Bevölkerung, insbesondere in den von Paschtunen dominierten südlichen und östlichen Provinzen Afghanistans. Gemäss verschiedenen vom IRB (2015) zitierten Quellen kommen die Briefe in sehr unterschiedlichen Formen daher (Afghanistan-Experte, 2015; AIHCR 2015; Professor, 2015; EASO 2012). Gemäss einem unabhängigen Experten (2015) sind sie jedoch oftmals kurz (eine Seite lang) und handgeschrieben und enthalten in vielen Fällen einen Briefkopf der Taliban, einige Zeilen mit kurzen klaren Aussagen dazu, was die Person falsch gemacht hat sowie Instruktionen, wie sie sich zu verhalten hat, dazu einen offiziellen Stempel und eine Unterschrift. Diese Elemente sind jedoch nicht immer vorhanden, es gibt grosse Variationen. So schrieb das *European Asylum Support Office* (EASO) im Dezember 2012, zitiert im IRB Bericht von Februar 2015, dass auf den Drohbrieffen der Taliban in der Kopfzeile das Logo und der Titel «Islamisches Emirat Afghanistan» und eine Unterschrift des lokalen Taliban-Führer figurieren können, aber nicht müssen.

Die meisten Drohbriefe werden nachts an die Türe der betroffenen Person genagelt oder unter deren Türe durchgeschoben. Richtet sich der Brief an die ganze Gemeinde, wird er an der Türe der Moschee festgemacht (Afghanistan-Experte, 2015; Professor, 2015). Verschiedene Quellen gaben dem IRB (2015) an, dass die Betroffenen in vielen Fällen nicht zur Polizei gehen, da diese über ungenügende Ressourcen und Kompetenzen verfügt. Ob und wie die Behörden reagieren, hängt von vielen

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Faktoren wie den persönlichen Beziehungen und der Position der bedrohten Person ab. Jedoch sind die meisten Bedrohten auf sich alleine gestellt (AIHRC, 2015).

Die Folgen für Personen, welche einen Drohbrief erhalten, können schwerwiegend sein. Sie hängen gemäss verschiedenen von IRB konsultierten Experten von der Region und den verschiedenen lokalen Taliban-Gruppen ab. Die Briefe sind ernst zu nehmen, da es im Extremfall tödliche Folgen haben kann, wenn die darin enthaltenen Instruktionen nicht befolgt werden (Afghanistan-Experte, 2015; Professor, 2015; Danish Immigration Service (DIS), 2012); UNHCR, 2012).

Weitere Quellen berichten ebenfalls von den Drohbriefen der Taliban. So erhalten Journalistinnen und Journalisten in Afghanistan laut *Journalism is not a Crime* (25. November 2015) zum Beispiel regelmässig Drohungen seitens der Taliban, auch durch Briefe. *Amensty International* erwähnt im Bericht *Their Lives on the Line: Women Human Rights Defenders under Attack in Afghanistan* vom 7. April 2015 verschiedene konkrete Beispiele von afghanischen Frauen, die Drohbriefe von den Taliban erhalten haben.

IRB, 10. Februar 2015:

**«Sources describe night letters as**

*•a means of communicating general information or specific instructions to the local populace or targeted individuals, which are hand-delivered by night, and contain instructions, threats, or warnings for local Afghan individuals or small community groups (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015), and*

*•"threatening letters" to communities or individuals that are usually hand-delivered or posted to a door or mosque by insurgent groups at night and that are "a common means of intimidation and control of local communities by insurgents" (Human Rights Watch July 2010, 25). (...)*

*According to the Professor, night letters are a "primary method of Taliban communication" to rural populations in Afghanistan, as well as in urban areas, to express the group's "desires and demands" (Professor 19 Jan. 2015). The Professor also indicated that night letters "often threaten violence or death if demands are not met" and may also "advise" the audience (which can include an entire district, village, or community leaders) about forthcoming attacks or about expectations of conduct and behaviour (ibid.). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an independent analyst on Afghanistan [2] explained that the intention of a night letter is usually to "spread fear" and that the purpose of the messages is "generally to threaten or to encourage compliance with Taliban instructions, often to ensure the local populace do not engage in any way with the Afghan government or international community" (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015).*

*According to the Professor, night letters are "extremely prevalent" in Afghanistan (19 Jan. 2015). According to information provided by the UNHCR to the Danish Immigration Service during a 2012 fact-finding mission to Kabul, night letters are a "common tactic used by the Taliban" and their use is "very widespread" in the intimidation of those employed by the Afghan government or "Western-*

ers" (Denmark May 2012, 31-32). Similarly, according to information provided by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) [a national quasi-governmental body with a mandate to promote and protect the human rights of Afghans and to investigate alleged human rights violations (Canada 9 Feb. 2015)] to the same source, **night letters are a "well known tactic used by the Taliban to intimidate people"** (Denmark May 2012, 30). **The US Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 indicates that the Taliban "continued to distribute threatening messages in attempts to curtail government and development activities"** (US 27 Feb. 2014, 18). (...)

Sources report that **the Taliban are the main group that employs the use of night letters** (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015; Professor 19 Jan. 2015). (...)

The Professor explained that **the primary "target audience" for Taliban night letters is the "local population," specifically the population in Pashtun-dominated provinces of southern and eastern Afghanistan, regions that have traditionally been the support base of the Taliban (19 Jan. 2015)**. According to the independent analyst, the targets of night letters are generally "specific individuals believed by the Taliban to be transgressing Taliban rules or instructions, or more generally to local community groups, such as a small village" (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015). He explained that **targets include people that could be perceived as "low-level" targets, such as "officials, women, teachers, junior employees working with international organizations," among others (ibid.)**. Sources report that targets of night letters also include the following

- Afghan government employees (International Crisis Group 24 July 2008, 12; AIHRC 17 Jan. 2015; Professor 19 Jan. 2015), including police, security personnel and people perceived by the Taliban to be "spies" (ibid.);
- people working for international forces (RFE/RL 21 Nov. 2012; International Crisis Group 24 July 2008, 12; AIHRC 17 Jan. 2015) and embassies (ibid.);
- religious and intellectual scholars (ibid.), such as Ulema Islamic scholars that do not adopt Taliban religious interpretations (Professor 19 Jan. 2015);
- human rights activists, defenders (AIHRC 17 Jan. 2015), and educators and students (Professor 19 Jan. 2015; International Crisis Group 24 July 2008, 12; Pajhwok Afghan News 8 Mar. 2013);
- individuals working for national and international de-mining organizations (AIHRC 17 Jan. 2015) or non-government organizations (Professor 19 Jan. 2015);
- tribal elders (AIHRC 17 Jan. 2015; Professor 19 Jan. 2015);
- political parties (ibid.);
- religious "personalities" (ibid.);
- "businessmen (for ransom)" (AIHRC 17 Jan. 2015)

•women who work outside the home, including those working as teachers, or for the government, or in civil society (RFE/RL 7 Dec. 2012; Human Rights Watch July 2010 25-27); and

•in the March 2014 presidential and provincial elections, Taliban night letters were aimed at voters (IWPR 2 Apr. 2014; Killid Weekly 29 Mar. 2014; WSJ 11 Mar. 2014), WSJ 11 Mar. 2014), election workers, and those involved in election campaigning (ibid.; Killid Weekly 29 Mar. 2014).

### 5. Appearance and Types of Letters

According to the independent analyst, night letters are **"generally short (one page) letters or notes" that are hand-delivered, and it could be argued that each one is basically of a "specific and distinct type"** (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015). Letters are **"very often handwritten and for particular individuals or communities with particular instructions"** (ibid.). Also according to the independent analyst, a **generic night letter would have a Taliban title and heading, a few lines of very direct and simple instruction (including, if to a particular person, a description of what the individual has been doing wrong) and an official stamp, signature or closing identification. Taliban communiqués at the local level are often rushed, crude and simplistic.** Administrative resources, literacy, drafting skills - and even knowledge of what the official title of the [Taliban] organization might be - are not priority assets for the Taliban. (ibid.)

According to the AIHRC official, **night letters sometimes use the Taliban's official letterhead, but mostly they are written on a piece of paper that is stamped, or has the sender's name and signature; they are typically handwritten and "in rare cases" they are printed** (17 Jan. 2015). **The Professor similarly explained that night letters have a variety of appearances from "very professional" printing, including Taliban symbols such as the logo, and signed by an "authoritative" Taliban official, to night letters that are handwritten and "very rough"** (Professor 19 Jan. 2015). He further noted that major differences in night letters are those that are **"officially endorsed by Taliban officials or religious figures"** and those that are **"more adhoc" products of an individual Talib or Taliban commander** (ibid.). In a 2012 report on insurgent intimidation strategies in Afghanistan, **the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) [3] stated that Taliban night letters can include "[t]he heading with the logo and title 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' and the signature of the local Taliban commander" but also noted that these features are not always present on letters and that "different layouts can appear in different regions and from different insurgent groups"** (EU Dec. 2012, 24). Several examples of night letters are attached to this Response.

Sources explain that letters are often written in the Pashto or Dari languages (AIHRC 17 Jan. 2015; Professor 19 Jan. 2015), in a specific local dialect of Pashto/Dari, depending on the target region or locale (ibid.).

### 6. Delivery of Night Letters

According to the independent analyst, **"most" night letters are still delivered by hand and distributed at night, at which time they might be nailed to a door,**

wall, tree, or pushed under a door, or left on the street; he noted that "only a few" would be given out at any one time (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015). The independent analyst said further that "it would be assumed by the insurgents that much of the actual information dissemination would be carried out by the local population themselves" (ibid.). Similarly, the Professor explained that night letters are often posted on the door of the targeted individual, or on mosque doors, or the doors of the literate people in the village who would then read the message to the community at large (Professor 19 Jan. 2015). (...)

### 7. Reporting to Police and Actions Taken by Police

According to the independent analyst, whether a person reports a night letter to police depends on "individual circumstances"; however, **"there is frequently little confidence in police ability (or even interest) in investigating and dealing with the threat"** (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015). He gave the assessment that police have **limited resources and capacity** and would "only be able" to provide a "limited response" to a threat issued in a night letter (ibid.). Similarly, the Danish Immigration Service reported that, according to Cooperation for Peace And Unity (CPAU), an "Afghan-led non-profit organisation" that works to promote peace and social justice in Afghanistan (CPAU n.d.), even in Kabul, "people do not usually go to the police" when they receive a night letter or other threatening message, as police "would normally not take any action in these cases" (Denmark May 2012, 31). **The AIHRC official explained that the police commonly register "very serious" types of threats and will advise the victim to keep a low profile and report additional threats; however, "in practice, these actions are not ... effective" and, in most cases, individuals assess the seriousness of the threat themselves and take precautionary measures on their own, such as relocating (17 Jan. 2015).** Similarly, according to a co-director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), an independent, non-profit research organisation that provides research and analysis for policymakers, journalists, academics and development workers working on Afghanistan (AAN n.d.), [g]enerally, people receiving threats may go to the authorities if there is somebody they know [there]. **Whether and how authorities react to the threat depends on a variety of factors, such as personal relations and the position of the person who is threatened, but often people are left to look after themselves. (ibid. 22 Jan. 2015)**

**The AIHRC official also explained that the reporting of a night letter may depend on where the person is living, and that in larger cities where the security situation is better, people report it; however, if they are living in an area where the security situation is "vulnerable" or the government lacks control over it, they do not report it to police (17 Jan. 2015).** According to the independent analyst, some local police may have "links to insurgent groups," meaning that, for the recipient, reporting a Taliban threat "might even make the situation worse" (9 Jan. 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

### 8. Consequences of Receiving Night Letters

According to the independent analyst, the "use, style, and intention" of night letters vary depending on the context (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015). He elaborated that **different Taliban local groups will decide and act in different ways, perhaps only loosely following Taliban guidelines and driven largely by the local circumstances in which they operate. Their actions will be different if they are able to operate relatively freely within a broadly pro-Taliban area instead of having to be more covert and aggressive in their activities if the area was perceived as anti-Taliban.** (ibid.)

Similarly, according to comments obtained from a Kabul-based independent policy research group by the Danish Immigration Service, there is **regional variation** in the use of night letters, with the research group explaining that some targets "would normally expect" to receive multiple warning letters before any action against them is taken, whereas there are cases in which physical assaults and murders are carried out without advance-warning letters, or targets may be invited to defend themselves at a Taliban court (May 2012, 32).

According to Minority Rights Group International (MRG), night letters are "followed up with real violence, and in some cases murder," forcing recipients, such as women working in politics or the public sphere, to leave their employment or face risks to their family's safety (July 2011, 139). **Similarly, the Professor explained that threats in night letters are "taken seriously" by their Afghan targets, and the consequences for ignoring letters include death (19 Jan. 2015). The Danish Immigration Service reported that, according to information gathered from several sources in Kabul in 2012, the consequences of ignoring threat letters include killings or "physical elimination," kidnappings or "abduction for ransom," hijackings, assault or physical beatings, and torture, among others (Denmark May 2012, 31). The AIHRC told the Danish Immigration Service that there were "different levels of intimidation" and in some cases killings may occur, while in others "the assault is limited to beatings or nothing happens" (ibid.).**

**The UNHCR told the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission that Taliban intimidation and continued threats can lead to "physical elimination" in cases where warnings are ignored; threats "will mostly be repeated until the victim is silenced by obeying orders" (ibid.).** Similarly, according to the independent analyst, "punishments are threatened [in night letters] and often acted upon. The arrival of such letters ... can cause much fear and stress within a local community" (Independent analyst 9 Jan. 2015). The same source indicated that, while the consequences of ignoring a night letter depend on "specific circumstances ... very often the stated threats are carried out" and people can be killed; otherwise, the source notes, "the insurgents would quickly lose their credibility" (ibid.). Family members of individual targets are also often intimidated (Denmark May 2012, 31; RFE/RL 21 Nov. 2012) and given death threats (ibid.). (...)» Quelle: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Afghanistan: Night letters [Shab Nameha, Shabnamah, Shabnameh], including appearance (2010-2015) [AFG105047.E], 10. Februar 2015: [www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455723&pls=1](http://www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455723&pls=1).

*Journalism is not a Crime*, 25. November 2015:

*«For journalists in Afghanistan, threats are a part of everyday life. The government, warlords and armed groups threaten journalists so much it becomes a matter of routine, so the journalists ignore the threats and continue their work. **It's normal for a journalist in Afghanistan to receive 10 threatening phone calls a month.** It was the same for me. But sometimes these threats are serious. And it means that some journalists who've not taken the threats seriously are no longer among us. They lost their lives.*

*Likewise, **I didn't take threats over the phone or social media seriously until one morning when I found a threatening letter by my door bearing the seal and signature of the Taliban.** The letter accused me of being an infidel and said my writings were against Islam and the Muslim mujahedeen. The letter said they would kill me as soon as they had the opportunity. It also threatened my family. I knew then that it had become serious. They'd found out where I lived and had been to my house.»* Quelle: Journalism is not a Crime, Afghan reporter: «Threats are a part of everyday life», 25. November 2015:

<https://journalismisnotacrime.com/en/features/727/>.

Amnesty International, 7. April 2015:

*«Islam Bibi also received more than a dozen 'night letters'97 over the years. **Night letters are written threats delivered to the house at night. Islam Bibi received at least four signed by Mawlawi Abdul Bari Mubarez, the Special Representative of the Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Omar, with the last night letter arriving about 10 days before she died.** (...)*

*Brishna, an ethnic Pashtun medical doctor, originally from a province in eastern Afghanistan but now living in another area of the country, says the problems she faced go back several years to when she was working in a clinic with women and girls who were victims of sexual violence, including some who had been raped by their male relatives:*

*“They came to my clinic needing help [otherwise they would have been killed by their relatives or members of their community as an ‘honour’ killing]. **I would receive threatening night letters and phone calls from the Taliban, warning that they would kill me and my family because of my work. We reported [the letters and calls] to the police, but nobody listened to us.** (...)*

*Hanifa Safi's husband shares a similar experience:*

*“We are still receiving threats, even after Hanifa was killed. We informed the police and the NDS but they do nothing and ignore us. **The threats come by phone and in night letters.** It seems that human life is very cheap in the eyes of the Afghan government. Here chickens are worth more than humans, because for killing a chicken you have to buy it first. But for humans, [you don't have to buy them first before you kill them], and particularly women's lives are worthless and cheap. (...)*

*As a women human rights defender explained to Amnesty International:*

*“There are **three categories of threats** [against me]. **The first is the Taliban. I have received many night letters and telephone threats.** They have also threatened my relatives. I survived two suicide attacks [as part of two larger attacks on elected officials]. The second is the government itself. They create as many obstacles as possible. I received a direct threat from a district governor when I refused to give him a bribe to implement a project. There is also harassment from the police and NDS. The third is the discrimination I face [in general]. Because I am a woman and [an ethnic minority] – there is a lot of character assassination against me.»*  
Quelle: Amnesty International, Their Lives on the Line: Women Human Rights Defenders under Attack in Afghanistan, 7. April 2015, S. 36;46;55;61:  
[www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/Submitted%20after%202015-05-11T11%2024%2035/ASA1112792015ENGLISH.PDF](http://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/Submitted%20after%202015-05-11T11%2024%2035/ASA1112792015ENGLISH.PDF).