



# THE TRAGEDY OVERLOAD:

SUPPRESSION TO EXODUS OF AFGHAN HINDUS AND SIKHS (1992-2021)



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Authors: A. Wali Rasta, Ali Dad Mohammadi

Consultant: Dr. M. Nazif Shahrani

Map Developer: Abdul Wahed Andisha

Cover Design & Layout: Ali Shekarchi

Project Lead: Ehsan Shayegan

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# Abstract

The exodus of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs hastened with every regime change in Afghanistan. From the high of 220,000 before 1992, their numbers were reduced to merely 65 individuals in 2021.

Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the start of war against Soviet army caused Afghans to flee the country including the Hindus and Sikhs.

The marching of Mujahidin parties into Kabul, in 1992, resulted in full scale civil war in the country, the starting point of the worst situation for these religious minorities. Since then, the Hindus and Sikhs have encountered several threats—socially deprived, politically neglected, and religiously intimidated. Their economic, cultural, and educational conditions sunk into their worse in history. Although the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was considered the beginning of their exodus from the country, the fact is that they had been forced to leave Afghanistan since the reign of Abdul Rahman Khan in 1880s. As a result of such unfortunate circumstances, Afghanistan's long-established religious minorities are now on the brink of extinction. This research report attempts to map out the reasons and circumstances, including suppression, which have led to the mass exodus of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs.

# Keywords

*Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, exclusion, suppression, exodus, mass migration.*

# Introduction

The history of the exodus of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs is inextricably linked to the 1980s Soviet occupation and the rise of jihad resistance movements against their puppet Communist governments in Afghanistan. Since then, daily suppression, persecution, mass displacement, and the exodus of minorities have persisted from the country. According to Inderjeet Singh, the exodus of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, is not without precedent. He reports that it goes back further to the reign of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan (1880-1901). The Iron Amir suppressed all groups, especially the Hazara Shi'ite who were one of the larger ethnic minorities in the country. Amir's persecutions and massacres also affected the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs<sup>1</sup>. Abdul Rahman Khan had imprisoned some Hindus and Sikhs on the charges of embezzlement. During his reign, many Hindus and Sikhs left the country and migrated to British-controlled India<sup>2</sup>. Singh, quoting Umesh Sharma, a 72-years old man from Bangalore (in current India) states that his great grandfather, Pundit Guru Dass, moved out of Herat in 1888 when the local Muslims boycotted the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs' shops. The family came to Gujranwala (in current Pakistan), and then to Lahore, Pakistan, and finally settled in Meerut in 1943. Mr. Sharma adds that 90% of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs left Herat permanently. And, from among them only thirty percent (30%) settled in other parts of Afghanistan, the rest migrated to India<sup>3</sup>.

The Hindu and Sikh communities, however, were treated better during the reign of Amir Habibullah Khan (1901-19) and Amir Amanullah Khan (1919-29). In the first constitution of the Afghanistan, approved in 1923, religious minorities were recognized in Article 2, which

stated: "The religion of Afghanistan is the sacred religion of Islam. Followers of other religions such as Jews and Hindus residing in Afghanistan are entitled to the full protection of the state provided, they do not disturb the public peace."

<sup>4</sup> Hindus and Sikhs enjoyed a short relief before the rise of religiously motivated rebellion against Amir Amanullah Khan, resulting in a civil war and ultimately his abdication from the throne. The war, violence and chaos affected those living in the eastern and southern parts of the country, where more Hindus and Sikhs were settled. As a result of these disturbances, many Hindus and Sikhs were forced to migrate to British-controlled India.

It is reported by Singh that before 1931, most of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs were living in the rural peripheries of the country. The conflict between the Mangal tribe of the Pashton and Sikhs in Nangarhar,<sup>5</sup>, eastern Afghanistan, over a robbery in 1931 resulted in the killing of two robbers from the Mangal Tribe and a Sikh. Because of this incident, the Kabul government decided to resettle the rural Hindus and Sikhs in major cities, especially in Jalalabad and Kabul. <sup>6</sup> Singh estimates the numbers of Afghan Sikhs settled in Jalalabad city of Nangarhar alone were around 12,000 at the time of the incident (before 1931).<sup>7</sup>

The Afghan Hindus and Sikhs lived in harmony, participated in social, economic, and political activities in the country, and enjoyed good relationships. They were called Lala, elder brother, by their fellow Afghans. The period between 1960 to 1980 was considered the apex of tranquillity in Afghanistan for the Hindu and Sikh communities. Their youths were attending schools and universities, with a large number of

educated cadres in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup>

In 1978, the country's first president Sardar Muhammad Daoud Khan was ousted from power and assassinated by pro-Soviet army officers who proclaimed the country a Peoples' Democratic Republic. A year later, in Christmas 1979, the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan to rescue the Kabul Communist regime from collapse, plunging the country into full-scale civil war. The Communist regimes in Kabul were considered to be atheistic and had no hostility toward Hindus and Sikhs. However, with the intensification of the war of resistance (jihad), Afghans from all communities, including Hindus and Sikhs left the country in very large numbers, taking refuge in neighbouring Pakistan, Iran and beyond.

The mass exodus of the Hindus and Sikhs, however, started in 1988. On the day of Vaisakhi<sup>9</sup> (April 13th 1988), a gunman entered the Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar in Jalalabad and killed thirteen Sikhs devotees and four Muslim security guards.<sup>10</sup> In late 1989, Mujahidin attacked Jalalabad to capture it from the communist regime forces. They started a full-scale war, firing rockets and bombs on the city. In the same year, Gurdwara Guru Teg Bahadur Singh in Jalalabad was hit by a rocket, killing 17 Sikhs. Over a period of six months, Jalalabad witnessed thousands of rockets and missiles being fired by both sides, killing some 102 Afghan Sikhs and wounding over 500 more.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the escalation of the armed conflict in the city left the citizens of Jalalabad with no choice but to leave the city. The Hindus and Sikhs communities migrated to Peshawar-Pakistan while some opted to resettle in Kabul. Singh quoting the Indian Today reports that 50,000 odd Hindus and Sikhs, who dominated foreign trade and currency exchange businesses, were living in fear in Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, there has been a lack of solid demographic data available on the exact number of Hindu and Sikh populations in Afghanistan. Scholars, however, have estimated the numbers of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs around 25,000-30,000 in the 1970s.<sup>13</sup> It is also claimed that before the 1990s, the Afghan Hindu and Sikh populations numbered around 200,000.<sup>14</sup> Khaliq and Aslam quoting Shalizi that there were 220,000 Hindus and Sikhs prior to 1992.<sup>15</sup> The report by Khaliq and Aslam adds that most of them settled in the provinces of Kabul, Kandahar, Parwan, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Paktia, Helmand, Logar, Ghazni, and Laghman. Based on the data provided by the Afghan Professional Alliance for Minority Rights (APAMR), only in Gardiz, the capital of Paktia province, around a hundred Afghan Hindu and Sikh households were living.<sup>16</sup> The city has a Singh Sabha Gurdwara and a temple. But prior to 1991, most of them moved to Kabul. By 1992, they migrated to India and other foreign countries.

The population of Hindu and Sikh minorities considerably dwindled over the last thirty years. There are many factors that have contributed

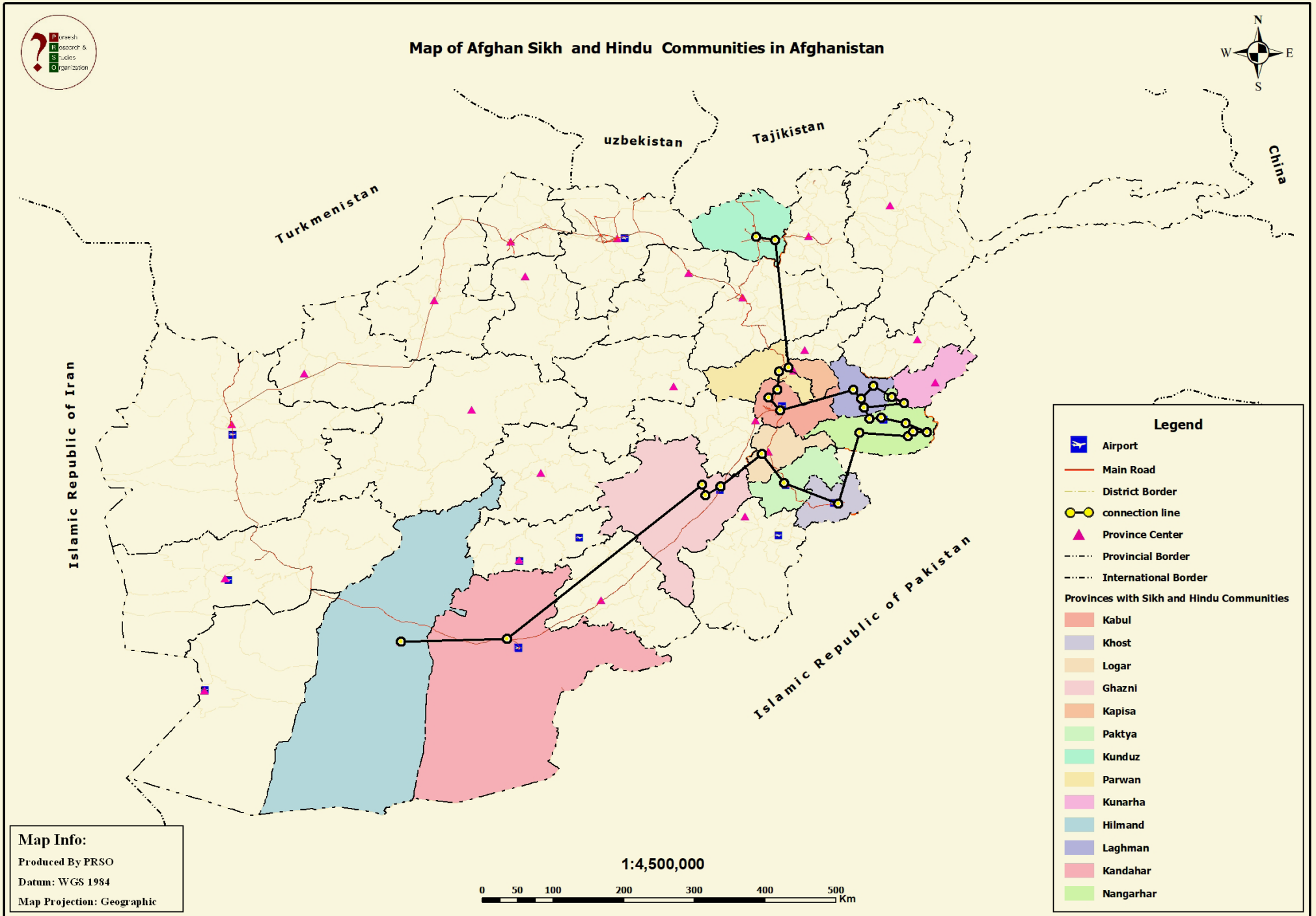
collectively to the rapid decline of the religious minority group in the country. Almost all of the community members have chosen to leave the country of their birth, once a thriving community in Afghanistan with a population of 25,000<sup>17</sup>, by 2020 only 700 souls<sup>18</sup> and now (2021) around 65 individuals mostly from Sikh community, residing in Kabul and Nangarhar provinces. The Afghan Hindu and Sikh minority groups have been continuously harassed, kidnapped, persecuted and their land and properties grabbed during 1992-2021.<sup>19</sup> As a result, these non-Muslim groups in Afghanistan have suffered and their numbers diminished. In a survey conducted by Porsesh Research and Studies Organization (PRSO) in 2019, almost 60.7% of the respondents<sup>20</sup> expressed their desire to immigrate out of the country, if they were given the opportunity. The migration was triggered mainly due to insecurity, war, and suicide attacks.<sup>21</sup>

Afghanistan constitution and laws discriminated against non-Muslim groups in terms of civil laws and criminal procedure code.<sup>22</sup> Hanafi Sunni jurisprudence is used by judges even in cases dealing with these religious minorities. There is no separate Hindu or Sikh personal law, while there is one for Shi'ite, in Afghanistan. There are evidence of societal discrimination against Hindus and Sikhs taking place in Afghanistan in employment, education, and performance of religious rituals.<sup>23</sup> Emadi quotes Abdurrah Rasoul Sayyaf, an ex-member of the Afghan National Assembly, and a Jihadi religious leader, stating that:

*The Sikhs and Hindus of Afghanistan are considered part of the Dhimmi in line with Sharia law. The government has an obligation to protect them but they are required to pay a poll tax. They can hold civilian occupations, such as doctors, but they cannot be in charge of a governmental body or office. Upon meeting a Muslim, a Hindu is required to greet the Muslim first. If a Muslim is standing and there is a chair, the Hindu is not allowed to sit down on the chair.<sup>24</sup>*

The Hindu and Sikh citizens of Afghanistan who have lived in the country for centuries, currently are around 65 people. Over the course of history, these communities have been facing structural discrimination in all aspects of their lives. They often experienced severe discriminatory practices as non-Muslim minorities in Afghanistan, leaving no option for them but to leave the country. Jasbir Singh resident of Jalalabad stated: "We never wanted to leave our land in which we were born and grew up, but the difficult situations left us with no other options".<sup>25</sup> The protracted persecution of this minority group led to a significant number of the community leaving Afghanistan over the course of time. The overwhelming majority of the Hindus and Sikhs left the country to India.

FIGURE 1



## Notes

- 1 ) Inderjeet Singh, "Afghan Sikhs—Tracing Their Origins and History," *Abstracts Of Sikh Studies* 551, (2020), 72.
- 2 ) Fabrizio Foschini, "The Other Fold of the Turban: Afghanistan's Hindus and Sikhs," *Afghanistan Analysts Network* 23, (2013), 1-6.
- 3 ) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 73.
- 4 ) Ibid.
- 5 ) The province was called Mashriqi, it became Nangarhar after 1964 Constitution.
- 6 ) Inderjeet Singh, "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs: History of a Thousand Years," *Readomania*, (2019), 183.
- 7 ) Singh, "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 183.
- 8 ) Ibid.
- 9 ) Vaisakhi, also pronounced as Baisakhi, is a historical and religious festival in Sikhism. It is usually celebrated on either 13th April every year. For Sikhs, the day commemorates the formation of Khalsa panth of warriors under Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.
- 10 ) Singh, "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 184.
- 11 ) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 75.
- 12 ) Ibid.
- 13 ) Hafizullah Emadi, "Minorities and marginality: pertinacity of Hindus and Sikhs in a repressive environment in Afghanistan," *Nationalities Papers* 42, (2014), 310-12.
- 14 ) Afghan Professional Alliance for Minority Rights (APAMR), "Report on Hindu/Sikh Community in Afghanistan," (2003), 109.
- 15 ) Bushra and Kashif, "The State of Minorities in Afghanistan," 7.
- 16 ) APAMR, "Report on Hindu/Sikhs," 110-13.
- 17 ) Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 310.
- 18 ) Tamim Akhgar, "Islamic State gunman kills 25 in attack on Sikhs in Kabul," *Afghanhindu*, Sept 27, 2020, <https://afghanhindu.wordpress.com/2020/09/27/facing-is-last-embattled-sikhs-hindus-leave-afghanistan/>.
- 19 ) Udeerna Tippabhatla, "Five things to know about Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan," *Hindu American Foundation*, August 28, 2020, <https://www.hindu-american.org/blog/5-things-about-hindus-sikhs-afghanistan>
- 20 ) This survey was conducted between September 2018 to Feb 2019 in provinces such as Kabul, Ghazni, Nangarhar, and Kunduz aiming to understand Hindus and Sikhs's social, cultural, political and economic rights and to build a ground for advocacy. Along with the survey, 10 Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) were also conducted.
- 21 ) Shayegan, Frough and Sadat, "Survey of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," *Porsesh Research and Studies Organization*, 11, (2019), 7.
- 22 ) Shayegan and Ammar, "Ignored Identities: The status of Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan's legal system," *Porsesh Research and Studies Organization*, 8, (2016), 4.
- 23 ) European Asylum Support Office (EASO), "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," (2020), 5.
- 24 ) Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 310.
- 25 ) Hakim Jasbir Singh, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta and Ali Dad Mohammadi, Feb 15, 2021.



# Research Method

The data for this research is gathered through a multi-method qualitative approach. A combination of various qualitative methods; (a) case study, (b) Key Informant Interviews (KIs), (c) Field Observation, and (d) Media Monitoring conducted with the Hindu and Sikh community members and those who have first-hand knowledge about the exodus of these vulnerable communities.

Multiple-case study is conducted to get an in-depth look at the protracted suppression and exodus of the Afghan Hindu and Sikh communities. Considering the situation and context, a qualitative case study provides a detailed analysis of the Afghan Hindu and Sikh minority groups and their mass migration as a social phenomenon. It allowed us to describe characteristics of the real-life of the community from various vantage points and helped us to discover detailed information from the respondents. Totally, 15 cases were conducted and as is typical in most in-depth interviews, the interview format used open-ended questions. An instrument of 15 questions served as a guide for the interviews. The collected data was transcribed and coded and thematically analysed. The research is conducted in ten provinces of Afghanistan (i.e., Kabul, Parwan, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Laghman, Khust, Paktia, Ghazni, Kandahar and Helmand) where Hindus and Sikhs live or used to live.

Key Informant Interviews (KIs) were conducted with subjects who have in-depth knowledge and information about the history and situation of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs. The purpose of KIs is to fill the missing data collected through case studies. KIs target a wide range of people who are able to provide first-hand information about the community. This included; four (4) with community elders & representatives, two (2) with CSOs and social activists, three (3) with scholars and academics, two (2) with government officials, two (2) with the Afghan Hindus & Sikhs diaspora, and two (2) with personal friends, colleagues and neighbours.

Field observation is also used to gather data about places, activities, behaviours, and interactions of the communities. This was conducted during the course of fieldwork in the aforementioned provinces and frequent visits were made to the religious rites and participated at the community gatherings.

Media used to monitor local (Dari and Pash-to) and international (English) media coverage of

events and incidents about the Hindus and Sikhs suppression and exodus by daily checking and following reports, reviewing existing documents, and relevant studies related to the community in order to ensure credibility and accuracy of the data.

In total, thirty (30) interviews, fifteen (15) case studies and fifteen (15) KIs conducted in this research. There is also a large gender distribution gap among the informants –i.e., twenty seven (27) male and only three (3) females. This unbalanced gender distribution is quite understandable in this research, as the women and girls were not allowed by their male elders to be interviewed due to their traditions and security concerns. Although the research attempted to target both the Hindus and Sikhs, the number of the Sikhs interviewees are more than Hindus. This selection is because on their availability and population in various provinces of Afghanistan. Overall, out of thirty (30) respondents, fifteen (15) are Sikhs and four (4) Hindus, the rest were from other aforementioned groups.

## Research Limitations and Challenges

The exodus of Afghan Hindu and Sikh minorities has further accelerated in recent months. Available data show that around 420 individuals have left the country since November 2020, and the rest plan to follow suit. Because of this unprecedented mass exodus and other circumstances the field researchers faced the limitations as follows:

- During the interview process, it was very difficult to interact with female family members of those interviewed due to social and cultural restrictions.
- The members of these communities, because of their fear and insecurity were not easily accessible to us, making data collection difficult.
- Due to the high level of insecurity in the country, field visits to some remote areas (districts) were very difficult.
- Covid-19 was another limitation for the face-to-face interview.
- The collapse of the government on August 15, 2021, led to the collapse of all the Afghanistan civil society including physical collapse of our research institution (PRSO) and forced our team to relocate in remote areas in Afghanistan and shelters in neighbouring countries.

# Historical Trends of the Hindus and Sikhs Exodus

The Hindus and Sikhs' exodus from Afghanistan is connected to chronic warfare and the rise of radical Islam in the country, forcing thousands of these communities of small religious minorities to flee abroad. Their exodus and mass migration happened over the past three decades of war. Some of them moved from provinces to the capital Kabul first, and then to India and western countries. In this research, three key periods are considered in the historical trends of the exodus of Hindus and Sikhs from the country: Pre-2001 era, 2001-2020, and 2021-current and future prospect

## The Exodus of the Hindus and Sikhs: Pre-2001 era

Prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979, the Hindu and Sikh community enjoyed a peaceful life in Afghanistan, according to Singh.<sup>1</sup>

In 1992, the pro-Soviet government headed by Dr. Najibullah collapsed and Mujahidin took power in Kabul. During this period, some six million Afghans, including the Afghan Sikhs and Hindus, took refuge in neighbouring countries, due to the fear of persecution.<sup>2</sup> With the fall of Dr. Najibullah's government, violence inflicted on religious minority groups increased noticeably and continued to escalate. The minority groups faced torture, abduction for ransom, destruction of property and belongings, threats, and intimidation, precipitating displacements.

The Hindus and Sikhs, as the most vulnerable non-Muslim religious minority groups, became the prime victim of the conflict, and were forced to leave the country en masse. According to Singh, around 60,000 Hindus and Sikhs were living in Afghanistan in 1992 and after various infighting, significant numbers of

them left the country.<sup>3</sup> According to The Indian Express, around 50,000 Hindus and Sikhs left Afghanistan between 1992 and 1994.<sup>4</sup> Tolo News reported, during the Mujahidin regime (1992-1996) around 15,000 Hindus and Sikhs remained in Afghanistan while the rest migrated to foreign countries.<sup>5</sup>

A Muslim man from Jalalabad, well informed about the local Sikhs community said: "Hindus and Sikhs' properties [houses] were occupied and their belongings were looted by Mujahidin parties. There were rumours of rapes but remained unreported."<sup>6</sup> Prior to the fall of Jalalabad, more than 500 Hindu and Sikh families were living in Nangarhar. Around 15-25 families in Surkh Rud district, Sultan Puri Sufila, Sultan Puri Uleya and Chahar Bagh villages. The remnants of a demolished village still can be seen there, but is occupied by fellow Muslims, while 'Kota Chashma', a holy place for Sikhs, a garden with a lungar (community kitchen) are still owned by the Sikh community.

In Chahar Bagh village, where many Hindus had been living, two temples remained untouched. Likewise, Hindus and Sikhs had been living in Khogyani, Muhammad Dara, Shinwar, and Behsud districts of the Nangarhar province. Due to suppression and insecurity, they moved to Jalalabad city and then to Kabul. While the middle class and wealthy Hindus and Sikhs left for India. With the advancement of Mujahidin into districts and provinces, these minority communities were compelled to move to the centre of provinces or become refugees in India. Dr. Raghunat Ashna, the sole Hindu physician in Kandahar said: "As security deteriorated in Uruzgan province, the Hindus and Sikhs moved to Kandahar city and settled in Darwaza-e Kabul

FIGURE 2

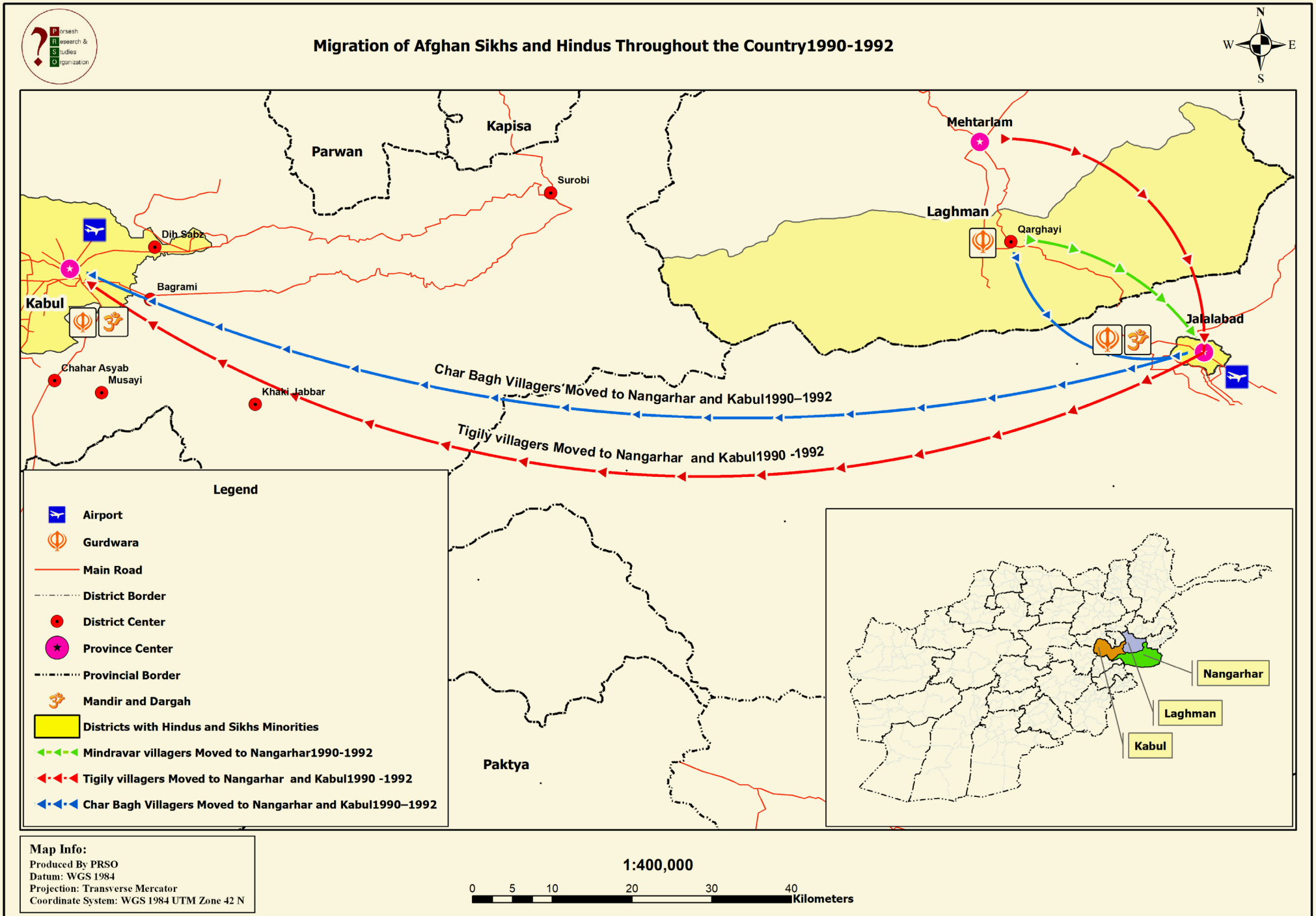
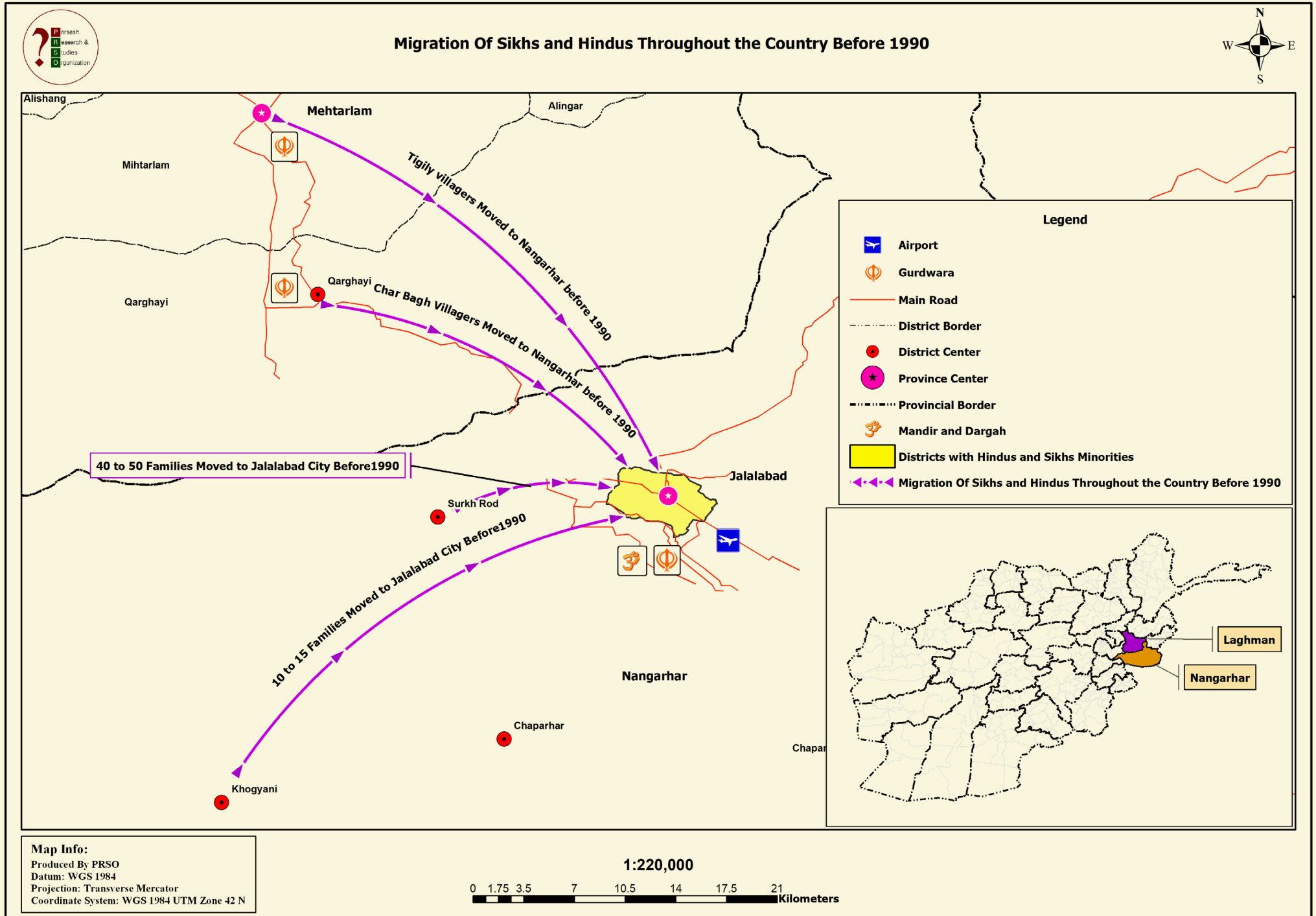


FIGURE 3



area".<sup>7</sup> And during this time, some families were forced to leave the country. Similarly, this pattern followed in other provinces such as Ghazni, Paktia, Paktika, Laghman, Kunduz, Helmand, and Parwan, where Hindus and Sikhs lived.

Along with other suppressions, the Mujahidin desecrated the temples (Dharamshalas/Gurdwaras and Mandirs) across the country. As a result, the Indian embassy set up an on-the-go visa department in 1992 at Gurdwara Guru Har Rai Sahib in Shor Bazaar, Kabul, to rapidly issue visas without any checks. So that, the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs could flee the civil war. It is reported that around 50,000 to 65,000 visas were issued to Afghan Hindus and Sikhs during this time which Singh calls "the mass exodus of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs community in the history of the country".<sup>8</sup> While around 10,000 Hindus and Sikhs decided not to leave the country despite the turmoil and thus, some of the remaining members of the community used to live in Dharamshalas/Gurdwaras and Mandirs in Kabul with their families. Demographically, the exodus of Hindus and Sikhs was higher this time than ever.<sup>9</sup>

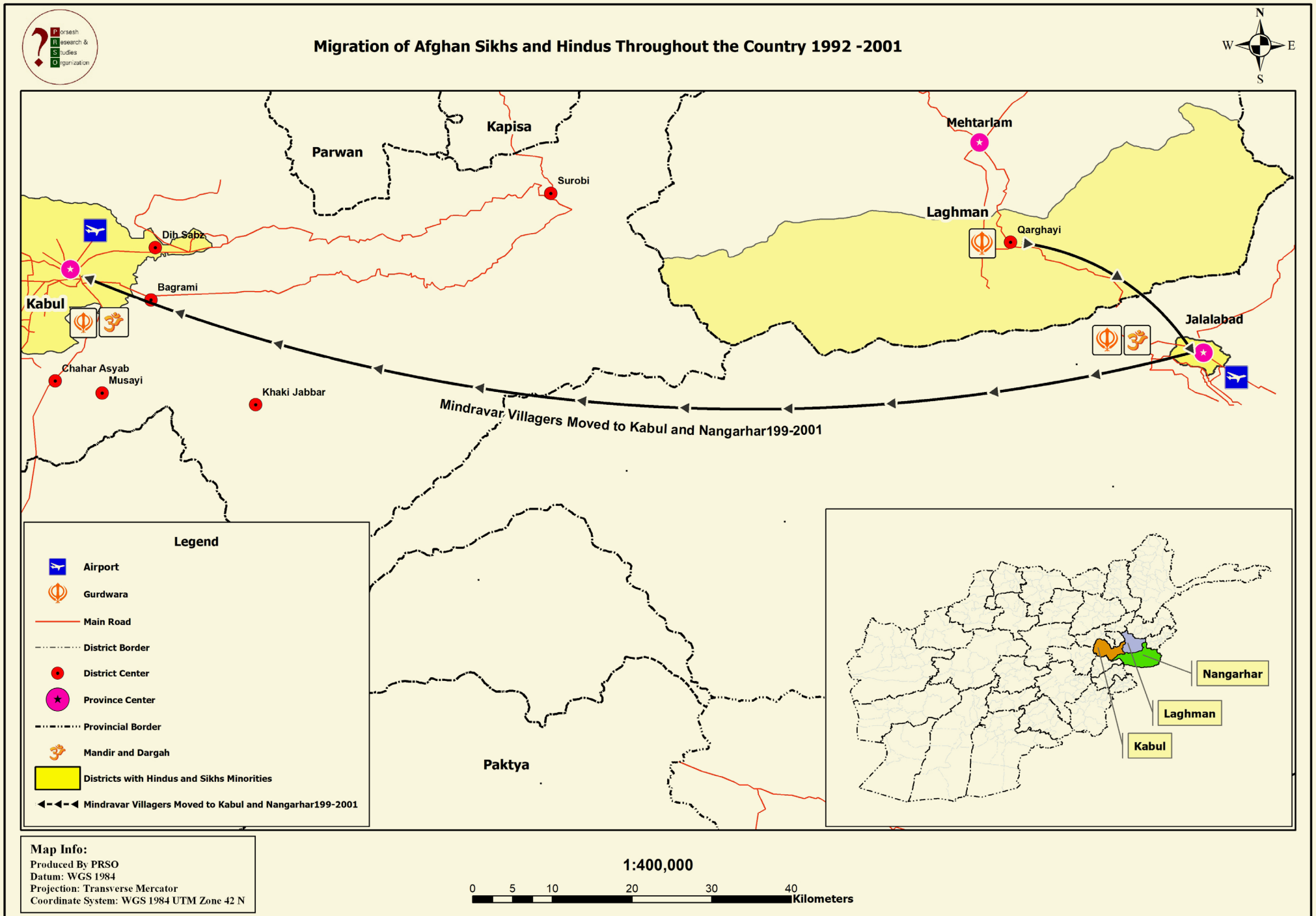
The exodus of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs hastened as the conflict surged. With the rise of the Taliban, however, the exodus accelerated when harassment, religious discrimination, and kidnappings increased. Tippabhatla describes in a report published by Hindu American Foundation that Afghan Hindus and Sikhs' life under the

Taliban was the darkest times. They experienced persecution, kidnapping and their properties were forcefully taken.<sup>10</sup> The Taliban as a Sunni Islamic extremist group ruled the country allegedly according to Hanafi jurisprudence from 1996 to 2001, where the rights of other religious-sectarian groups were hardly considered. Studies of this period show that along with other Muslim factions, the lives of non-Muslim, such as the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, as socio-religious communities were negatively impacted.<sup>11</sup>

Because of these oppressive conditions, the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs under the Taliban rule had only two options: to stay in the country and withstand all forms of discrimination, or to leave the country and face the consequences. As a result, a considerable number of this highly vulnerable community migrated to India, while some stayed in the country but relocated from the provinces to the capital Kabul. During the earlier Taliban regime (1996-2001), around 15,000 Hindus and Sikhs remained in the country, while some managed to move to Pakistan and India.<sup>12</sup> Those who left the country, their properties (houses, temples, lands, and shops) were confiscated by the Taliban and later by the powerful Mujahidin commanders, tribal leaders, and other armed groups.<sup>13</sup> Those who preferred staying in the country were provided a modicum of support and shelter by their Muslim neighbours especially by those with whom they had sustained relationships of reciprocity over many generations. There



FIGURE 4



are controversies on the remaining number of Hindus and Sikhs during the Taliban regime. According to Singh, in 2001—the year when the Taliban regime was overthrown and a democratic government came to power—the population of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs living in the country was reduced to around 3000 individuals.<sup>14</sup>

## **The Exodus of the Hindus and Sikhs: 2001–2020**

After the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan started rebuilding its infrastructure and hopes were raised about a better future. During this period, a striking number of people including Hindus and Sikhs returned to the country expecting to build a better future in what was once a peaceful and relaxed country at least according to their perspectives. The actual numbers of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs who returned to the country between 2001 and 2004 from India varies in published reports. For instance, Singh reports only twenty-five men and five families<sup>15</sup> while in APARM's report, 50 Hindus and Sikhs are reported.<sup>16</sup>

After their returns, it seems their raised hopes, according to Ballard were “quickly dashed after a short honeymoon period”.<sup>17</sup> Due to repeated changes in the government of Afghanistan, the houses, schools, temples, lands, and shops which were occupied by various influential people were not given back to Hindu and Sikh returnees, despite their struggle through formal (Judiciary) and informal (community-based) institutions. Initiation courts cases to reclaim their properties have always resulted in death threats from accused. Therefore, a striking number of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs dwell in Gurdwara rather than in their former privately owned houses.<sup>18</sup> In a handful of land dispute cases by the Afghan Hindu and Sikh returnees, Ballard reports that none of them received their lands back after they were occupied during Mujahidin and Taliban periods.<sup>19</sup> Kapoor, a Hindu resident of Kandahar, has been pursuing his land dispute for years, but he is hopeless now. Discrimination is the only reason he cannot win the case.<sup>20</sup>

Many security incidents made the communities to protest and call on the state to protect them but received no results, causing more Hindus and Sikhs to leave the country. According to Emadi, in late 2014, approximately 30 Hindus and Sikhs entered the United Kingdom illegally, requesting that the authorities grant them asylum. While many others left Afghanistan for India, where the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, granted citizenship particularly to those who had settled in India prior to 31 December 2009.<sup>21</sup>

According to the published reports, during the new democratic government, the number of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs in the country has dwindled, noticeably after 2014. The UK Home Office Report stated that in the spring of 2014,

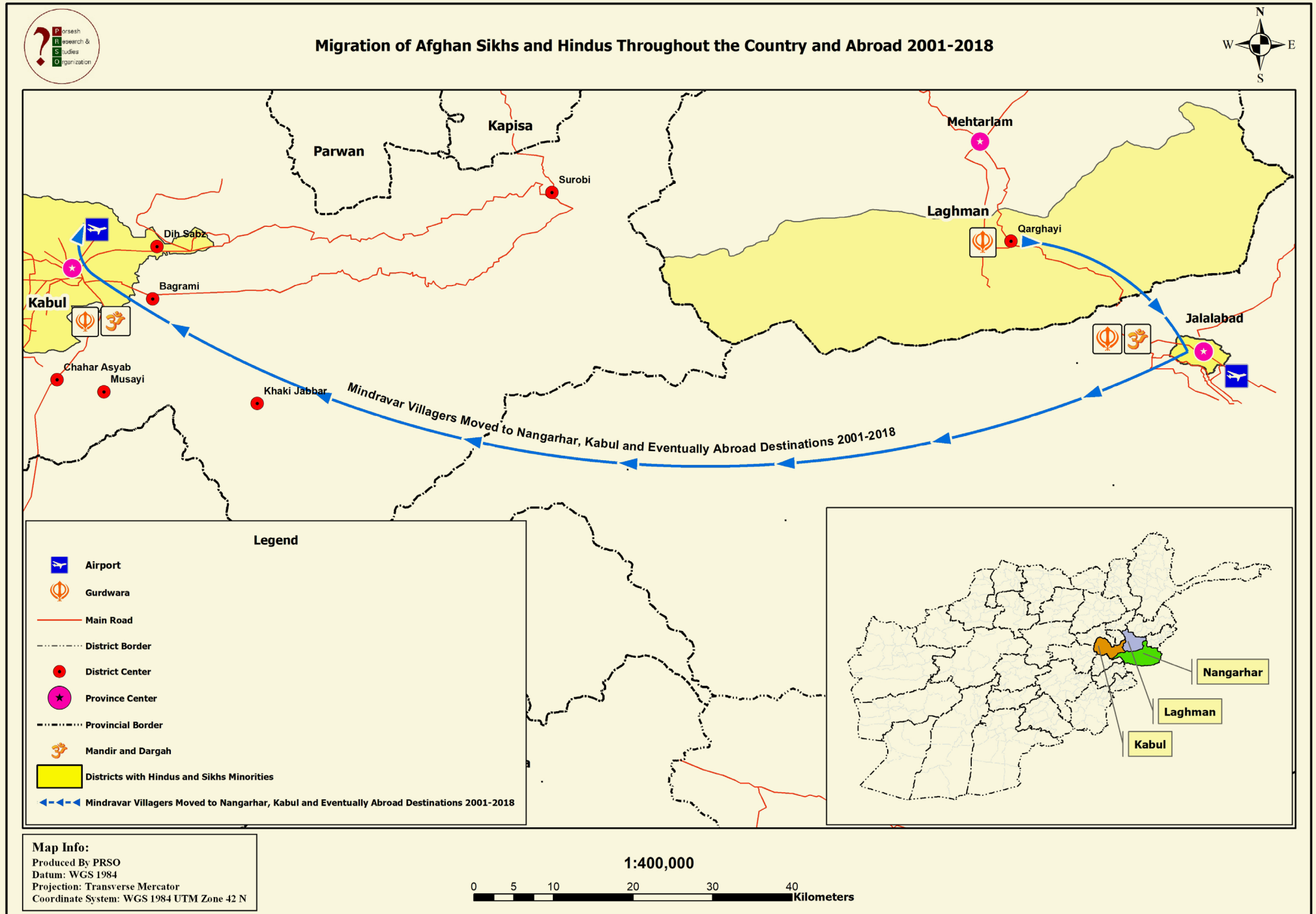
around 400 more Sikhs and Hindus have left Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup> Since 2014, the government of Afghanistan has failed to provide the Hindu and Sikh communities with protection and adequate housing and reinstate their properties which were illegally occupied by warlords or powerful neighbours during the 1990s.<sup>23</sup>

Although Ashraf Ghani's Administration, according to Singh, was sympathetic toward Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, in reality he played a hypocritical game.<sup>24</sup> He installed a few members of the community in some positions, and made use of them to enhance his own politics. Two members of the community were given seats, one in the Wolusy Jirgah (lower house of parliament), another in Meshrano Jirgah (the Senate), and the third was assigned as an advisor to the president on the Hindus and Sikhs affairs. In addition, two primary schools were opened for their children in Kabul and Jalalabad, and around \$650,000.00 were budgeted in plans for the renovation of Hindu and Sikh places of worship<sup>25</sup>, but our findings showed that they just remained on paper. A Gurdwara in Jalalabad and a Mandir in Ghazni were also supposed to be renovated in 2020, but were not.

The UK Home Office Report on Country Policy and Information Note Afghanistan: Sikhs and Hindus, stresses that according to Sikh and Hindu leaders, “There are 343 Hindu and Sikh families totalling 2,000 individuals in Afghanistan, although the number is declining because of emigration”.<sup>26</sup> Tolo News, in 2016 estimated the number of Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan to be around 1350.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, in 2017, Aljazeera reported that there were around 100 families in Khust, with the intensifying conflict they moved to Kabul and then to India.<sup>28</sup>

The report by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published in 2020, estimates the population of Hindus and Sikhs between 10,000 and 700.<sup>29</sup> More importantly, by the end of August 2020, some 450 of the remaining Afghan Hindus and Sikhs in the country were also seeking to immigrate to India.<sup>30</sup> Geographically, most of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, who lived in Kabul, Kandahar, Parwan, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Paktia, Helmand, Logar, Ghazni, and Laghman provinces, where they lived for many years; had resettled in two cities, the capital Kabul and Jalalabad. Only one person is reportedly left in Ghazni province, who looks after their temple.<sup>31</sup>

FIGURE 5





## The Exodus of the Hindus and Sikhs: 2021-Present

Two decades after the wars (of 1980s and 1990s) the forced migration of thousands of these religious minorities continued. The current rise of Islamist radical groups, sudden collapse of state combined with the victory of Taliban and re-emergence of the ISKP are resulting to a new wave of the exodus. The ongoing demographic decline is inducing fears among many Hindus and Sikhs that they are losing their ancestral properties and heritage in Afghanistan.

During the past years unprecedented brutal atrocities have been committed against Hindus and Sikhs because of their religious identity by ISKP, first in Jalalabad and then in Kabul. These incidents showed the gravity of the situation. As a consequence, Hindu and Sikh families migrated from Jalalabad and Kabul to India en masse. These recent departures are the culmination of a longer-term process of exodus related to violence, persecution, and discrimination against these small religious communities going back a few decades. Some had abandoned their private homes and taken refuge inside Dharamshalas/ Gurdwaras in Kabul when threatened. Before the attack on Gurdwara Har Rai Sahib in Kabul on March 25, 2020 there were 700 members of these communities living in Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup> After the March 25 attack, 600 of them left the country, and in June 2020, 66 Hindus and Sikhs from Jalalabad also obtained passports aimed at leaving the country to India.

By the time of this research, the Hindu and Sikh communities in Afghanistan have shrunk to

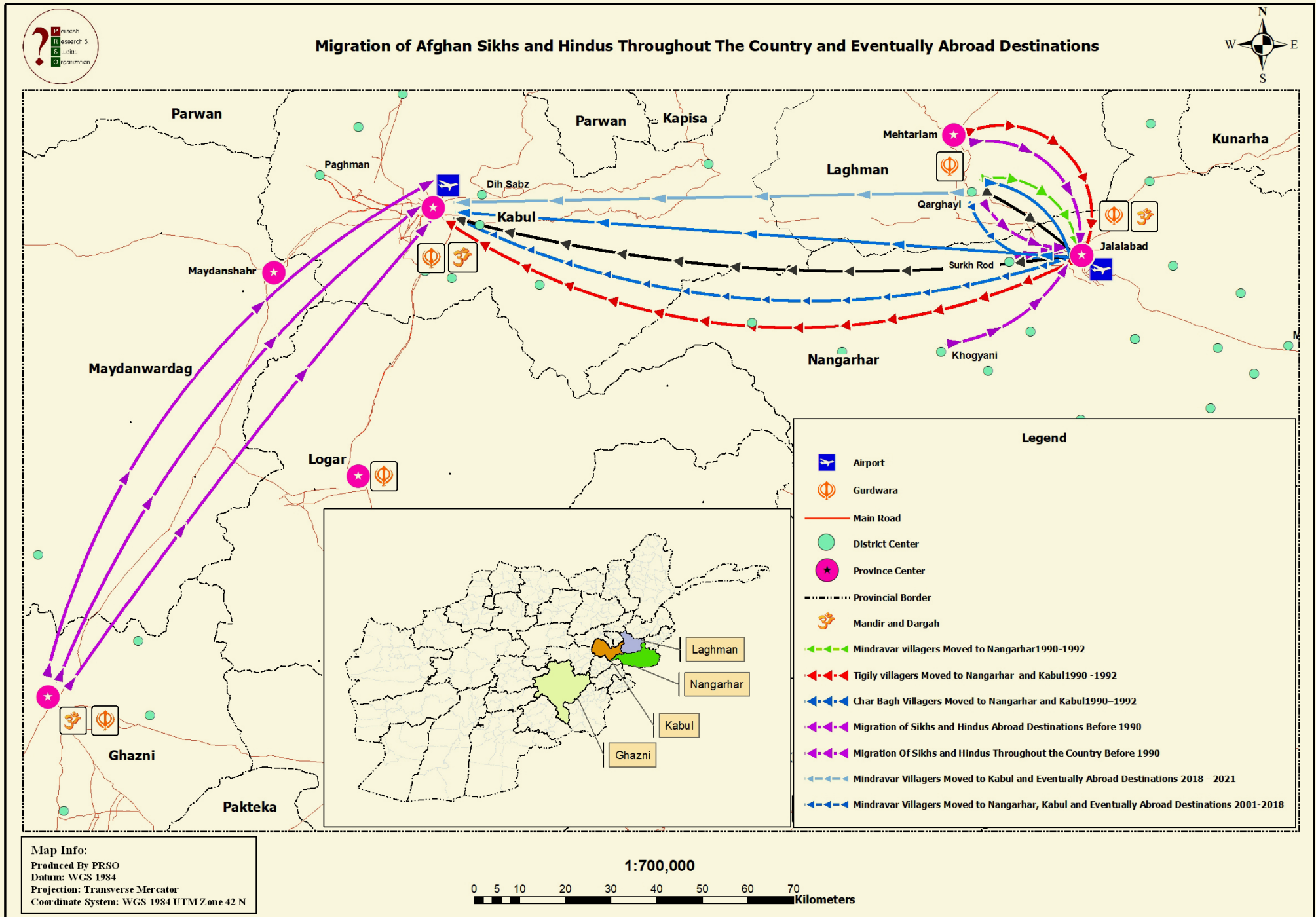
an estimated range of only 65 to 100 individuals, with the largest numbers living in Gurdwara Guru Singh Sabha in Karte Parwan, Kabul. These numbers fluctuate considerably because many of them are shuttling constantly between Kabul and New Delhi. Their total number increased considerably during festivals and Vaisakhi. However, 2021 was a devastating year for Hindus and Sikhs with a huge decline in number.

Our research findings show that the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs have suffered gravely and are seriously ignored by the government, their concerns are rarely discussed by both local and responsible international institutions. Their conditions have steadily deteriorated. The ongoing situation in the country has left only two options: either stay in the country and tolerate all the abuse, humiliation and insecurity or flee to India. However, some of them have a strong desire to remain in the country, but harbour a deep sense of distrust of the government and constant fears of deliberate attacks and exclusion. After the withdrawal of international forces and the collapse of the government, and takeover by the Taliban, these highly vulnerable minority communities are in grave danger.

The outlook for the future of these communities is alarmingly negative. If the rate of their exodus, who are the only non-Muslim religious group in Afghanistan continues as is, in coming years we might not have any Hindus and Sikhs living in the country. Following the departure of the United State and NATO troops, and reduced financial and political engagement with the country, the situation for betterment of this highly vulnerable community has become nil.



FIGURE 6



## Notes

- 1) Singh, "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 13.
- 2) Koser and Martin, "The migration-displacement next us," Patterns, processes and policies, (2011), 14
- 3) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 74.
- 4) Divya Goyal, "Sikhs and Hindus of Afghanistan — how many remain, why they want to leave," The Indian Express, July 28, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/sikhs-and-hindus-of-afghanistan-how-many-remain-why-they-want-to-leave-6524825/>
- 5) Tolonews, "Nearly 99% Of Hindus, Sikhs Left Afghanistan in Last Three decades," Tolonews, June 20, 2016, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/nearly-99-hindus-sikhs-left-afghanistan-last-three-decades>
- 6) Abdul Raqib Ahmadi, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta and Ali Dad Mohammadi, Feb 16, 2021.
- 7) Dr. Raghunat Ashna, interviewed by A.Wali Rasta and Ali Dad Mohammadi, March 15, 2021.
- 8) Singh, "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 186.
- 9) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs communities' representatives in New Delhi on February 19, 2022. Modi assured them of continuous support in the future as well to resolve all issues and address the difficulties faced by them. The Afghan Hindus and Sikhs thanked him for bringing about the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) as well as standing up for them in times of distress. The CAA act facilitates granting of Indian citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim minorities of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, was passed by Parliament on December 11, 2019.
- 10) Tippabhatla, "Five things to know," August 28, 2020.
- 11) Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 310, Singh, "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," and Ballard, "The History and Current Position," 6.
- 12) Melanie Abbott, "Why are Afghan Sikhs desperate to flee to the UK?" BBC News, Sept 4, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-29062770>
- 13) APAMR, "Report on Hindu/Sikhs," 9.
- 14) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 76.
- 15) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 75.
- 16) APAMR, "Report on Hindu/Sikhs," 9.
- 17) Roger Ballard, "The History and Current Position of Afghanistan's Hindu and Sikh Population," Centre for Applied South Asian Studies, (2011), 5.
- 18) APAMR, "Report on Hindu/Sikhs," 6.
- 19) Ballard, "The History and Current Position," 6.
- 20) Monawarlal Kapoor, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta and Ali Dad Mohammadi, Mar 15, 2021.
- 21) Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 14.
- 22) United Kingdom Home Office, "Country Policy and Information Note Afghanistan: Hindus and Sikhs," Home Office, 3, (2017), 17.
- 23) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 72.
- 24) Ibid.
- 25) WION Web Team, "Afghanistan government to rebuild Temples and Gurudwaras," WION Web Team, Feb 12, 2020, <https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/afghanistan-government-to-rebuild-temples-and-gurudwaras-280364>
- 26) UK Home Office, "Country Policy and Information," 19.
- 27) Tolonews, "Nearly 99% of Hindus and Sikhs Left Afghanistan," June 20, 2016.
- 28) Ruchi Kumar, "The decline of Afghanistan's Hindu and Sikh communities," Al-jazeera, Jan 1, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/1/1/the-decline-of-afghanistans-hindu-and-sikh-communities>
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- 30) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 73.
- 31) Shayegan, Frough and Sadat, "Survey of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 7. Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 310. Singh, "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 183.
- 32) Goyal, "Sikhs and Hindus of Afghanistan," July 28, 2020.

# Reasons for Exodus

People migrate for various personal reasons and under a variety of social conditions. In Afghanistan, the decades of political unrest, war and violence made thousands of people migrate. Among other migrants, minority communities endured years of repression and were systematically targeted as the civil war erupted in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> The Hindus and Sikhs, who believed that migration could be the only way to save their lives and their families' honour and dignity, are among minority groups whose exodus were the result of historical discrimination and prosecution, though the reasons for the exodus and mass migration of this religious minority are not a linear and one-dimensional process, rather there are many causal factors which needs to be considered.

Respondents mentioned social, economic, and religious problems in various provinces of Afghanistan, however, security threats were the primary reasons for exodus and mass migration. The Hindus and Sikhs consider Afghanistan as their homeland, but unfavourable situations made the majority of them to leave the country. Staying has never been a desirable option, especially after the two deadly targeted attacks in Nangarhar and Kabul. Following the announcement of Hamid Karzai's (first term) administration, few families returned from India. Most of the returnees were male members, aimed to run their businesses and to look after their religious sites. In response to a question on why they decided to migrate en masse, their most frequent answers were to save their lives and their family's honour and dignity. Most of them also said they wanted first to reach India and then migrate to the USA, Canada, or some European countries. Reasons for choice of countries of destinations

depended on already existing social networks, like the presence of family, community members, and close friends.

For the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, their decision to migrate for a better standard of living, culture, and educational opportunities have not played an important role. Rather fear of conversion, economic losses intimidation, threats of revenge attack, property confiscation and land grabbing, under-representation in politics and government, communal violence and discrimination, lack of access in education and social exclusion were among compelling issues which made them decide to leave the country en masse.

## Khalsa adds:

*We have never felt so compelled to leave our homeland. We are unable to live here because no one ensures our security and pays attention to us. The wounds of the Nangarhar and the pain of the Shor Bazaar attack still hurt our hearts and souls. . . . Due to the fear of threats, Sikh families live in Shor Bazaar en masse, the place where the government has taken few measures to ensure its security. They hired one or two guards, but the unprofessional guards could not defend us while facing a serious issue.<sup>2</sup>*

## Exclusion

The Hindus and Sikhs played a leading role in the education, politics, medical culture, and especially economy of the county. Despite facing the discrimination and exclusion in every part of the society, they always worked hard to be integrated part of the diverse society. Their sense of inclusion and exclusion, however, was de-

pendent on the policies of each regime in Kabul, because the evidence from our research shows that this religious minority has always been treated as strangers. Based on our respondents' information, one can hardly find a Hindu or Sikh who did not directly or indirectly experience discrimination. Along with the discrimination, their rights as citizens are hardly respected both by the government and the people of Afghanistan.

**Honaryar adds:**

*Although I was born and grew up in Afghanistan, my homeland is still unknown. While mentioning our good deeds, the neighbours still say that they love the Indian people. When I meet friends who are very close to me, they tell me about the kindness of Indians, whereas I have never seen India and have only had one official trip there. How can I tell them that I am an Afghan, not an Indian?<sup>3</sup>*

**Also, Kumar adds:**

*When [Afghan Hindus and Sikhs] watch Afghan television channels, they do not see themselves represented. When reading the history books, they do not see their histories and themselves represented. When they study higher education, again there is very little literature about their history on the curriculum. Their presence in politics is also symbolic. They do not see themselves really represented. Therefore, they are hardly integrated and included in society.<sup>4</sup>*

The exclusion of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs is reciprocal. Reciprocal in the sense that not only themselves but also the people and government did not create an atmosphere in which they feel and see themselves as part of the Afghan society. As mentioned above, the Hindus and Sikhs were treated differently in every regime in Afghanistan; the situation of their life fluctuated always between 'bad' and 'worst'. Despite some harsh behaviours before the 1980s, they always remember that time period as their golden time in Afghanistan. For instance, they prospered, and their rights were considered in the 1923 constitution during the reign of Amanullah Khan (1919-29). In the 1980s, when war and insecurity affected many aspects of life in Afghanistan, the Hindus and Sikhs were also not spared. While considering the situation then as the worst, they started migrating en masse to India and other foreign countries. During the Taliban regime, in order to be easily identified, the Afghan Sikhs were ordered to have a Khanda, a symbol of Sikh faith, placed outside their house and Afghan Hindus were ordered to wear special caps and yellow Tilak, mark on the forehead when in public. Based on our collected data from the field, the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs are excluded in the following areas since the 1990s.

• **Education**

The educational institutions are places where tolerance and compatibility are practiced; whereas, the importance of the role of these institutions are hardly considered in the educational system of Afghanistan. Lack of access to proper education is a big problem that caused the exclusion of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs in the country. The exclusion from education caused that the Hindus and Sikhs feel the society is not interested, over the last twenty years (2001-2021) to integrate them within the country. This research found that the absence of this integration can be one factor of the exodus of this vulnerable religious minority from society.

Based on our respondents' information, very few Hindu and Sikh children attended public or private schools since 1992. Instead, they are getting religious education inside Gurdwaras/Dharamshalas. As a result of this, one hardly can find a Hindu or Sikh with higher education. Singh is also concerned about the situation of education among the Hindus and Sikhs. He stresses that: "Not a single Hindu or Sikh is currently enrolled in higher education and even in high school. This has been the case for the past twenty years and none of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs in their 20s, 30s, and even early 40s are educated beyond high school. . . . In the previous generation, we had doctors, professors, engineers, and other professionals."<sup>5</sup>

Along with the war and insecurity which affected many aspects of life in Afghanistan, there are many reasons behind this discouragement. For example, the poor economic conditions that the Hindu and Sikh families face is a significant reason. Most Hindu and Sikh men are shopkeepers, and a small number of them, perhaps two or three, have an official duty. Due to the social restrictions and imposition, women are not only able to help the men in expenditures, but they hardly could come out of their homes. Therefore, women prefer staying at homes rather than attending schools and social spheres. Another reason is verbal and physical harassment which causes the Hindu and Sikh students not to be interested to attend schools. Singh added: "When I was a child, the children used to annoy me. I had to study in private schools from the third to the eighth grade. They called me Kachalo (potato) and Hindu. They threw tomatoes at us. We are Sikhs" .<sup>6</sup>

Similar to Singh, Marwan Singh and Ajay also recalled their school days: "My classmates were like a snake inside sleeves; they pretended to be friends, but after getting a chance, used to insult me. In sixth grade, I was threatened directly because of my religion". "In school, they called us Hindu-e Diwana (the crazy Hindu) and Hindu-e Kafir (Hindu, the infidel). They pulled my hair. Therefore, I could not go to school for several years and studied in Dharamshala/Gurdwara" .<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the lack of inclusive govern-

ment policy is another reason for the deprivation of the Hindu and Sikh students from school. The government did not create the atmosphere and design a comprehensive curriculum in which the Afghan Hindu and Sikh students could find themselves.

**Kumar stated:**

*The schools and the society were not built to accommodate them, so the children had no place to study appropriately. There were not enough resources allocated to ensure the Hindus and Sikhs students have the proper or relevant education they need[ed]. And the public schools do not teach the curriculum to include this highly excluded community. The schools do not teach their history and their faith. In school, the children are harassed for looking and dressing in a certain way.*<sup>8</sup>

Honaryar also added: "I was born in a family where no girl was allowed to go to school, study and work. It was not because of the restrictions imposed by family but rather because society cannot tolerate such a thing. In the society where I live, even the Hindu and Sikh boys could not go to school; girls were much more vulnerable than them."<sup>9</sup>

In the last two decades, not a single school was built for Hindu and Sikh students. According to Singh, only two primary schools were re-opened in Kabul and Jalalabad during the second period of Mohammad Ashraf Ghani's presidency.<sup>10</sup> During our field visit in various provinces, we could not find any active Hindu and Sikh schools. As a result of the mass migration, some of their school buildings are grabbed by influential people and the rest are used for accommodating non-Hindu and Sikh students.

- **Politics**

The Hindu and Sikh communities' rights of access to political participation and decision-making positions have been limited in comparison with other groups in society. Although they enjoyed some political rights earlier, at the beginning of the political chaos in the country, both deliberately and unintentionally they became the victim. During the Mujahidin and Taliban regimes, these communities were politically excluded, but after 2001 and the new government, they were politically discriminated. Before the 1980s, the Hindu and Sikh communities enjoyed relatively active participation in politics. They were appointed in high official positions in various provinces of Afghanistan. Singh, one of our informants told us that "Devin Niranjan was Finance Minister during the reign of Mohammad Zahir Shah [1933-1973]. During the leftist rule and Dr. Najibullah's government, Hindu and Sikh gained higher political positions."<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Ashna stated: "In politics, they [Afghan Hindus and Sikhs] were well known people. You might have studied in history which

for the first time the diplomatic convention which was signed with the British Empire, the signatory was an Afghan Hindu [Naranjan Dass]—the diplomatic team went from Kabul."<sup>12</sup>

**Also, Kapoor told us:**

*[In Kandahar,] they [the Hindus and Sikhs] had established life and successful businesses. They had a representative; [A Hindu] was the Deputy Director of Afghanistan International Chamber of Commerce (AICC). Furthermore, the Director of (AICC) was Hindu. They had a prospered life in Kandahar during the last period of Noor Mohammad Taraki to the period of Dr. Najibullah. They were qualified people who worked as government officials. . . . The teller of Da Afghanistan Bank was Hindu and also the teller of Bank-e-Millie Afghan was a Hindu.*<sup>13</sup>

**Dr. Zadran, researcher at the Academy of Science of Afghanistan added:**

*During the reign of Mohammadi Zahir Shah when the political parties were founded, the Hindu and Sikh students were members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) [Hezb-e Demokratik-e Khalq-e Afghanistan]. During this time, I was in Khost province and knew many of them who took part in the activities of the Party. This could have been a reason for Mujahidin hostility towards them then.*<sup>14</sup>

The civil war caused a deep wound for this religious minority group in Afghanistan. Since 1989, the Hindus and Sikhs have not found their former significance again in the country. The protracted war led to massive migration of these communities and their political participation dropped to one or two in politics until 2016. In the political arena, Hindus and Sikhs were marginalized. They only held one seat in Shura-e-Milli, the National Assembly, even though they lobbied the government for two seats, one for each community. During the parliamentary election in 2010, candidates from the community, Pripatal Singh Pal, a former army officer in the 1980s, and Honaryar competed for a seat from Kabul but were defeated and Karzai appointed Honaryar to the Senate.<sup>15</sup> Afghan president Hamid Karzai passed a decree on 3 September 2013 adding a reserved seat for the Hindus and Sikhs in the lower house of Afghan parliament that was opposed by members of parliament.<sup>16</sup> In September 2016, the National Unity government approved the reserved seat for Hindus and Sikhs in parliament.<sup>17</sup> In response to whether these appointments have in any way lessened or solved the challenges they faced; the Hindus and Sikhs said, these legislative posts provided them an address to approach, otherwise made no difference.

Kumar, who followed the news regarding the Hindu and Sikh minorities in the last seven

years, explained “When they are appointed in some higher positions in the government, they are so limited in decision-making and hardly play a significant role. . . . When they see that the government is talking about the inclusive cabinet, they don’t see themselves represented. If they don’t see themselves represented, they will not connect strongly with the Afghan identity as their parents did.”<sup>18</sup>

- **Economic**

Afghanistan was once home to non-Muslim traders, including Hindus and Sikhs, Jews, and Armenian Christians. Among them, the Hindu and Sikh minorities played a striking role in the economics of the country. Before the 1980s, they were well-known traders and businessmen that had prosperous commerce in the big cities of Afghanistan. Hindus and Sikhs ran successful businesses in cities and small towns until the onset of the civil war in the 1990s. However, now their business is limited to owning herbal shops in the centers of some provinces. Since the beginning of the civil war in the country, this community has been systematically excluded from access to desirable economic goods, conditions, or positions that are open to other groups in their society. Their Economic exclusion and discrimination have been a matter of deliberate practice by the ruling regime or government. The economic exclusion experienced by Hindus and Sikhs can be linked to continuous discriminatory practices such as the inadequate economic intervention of the government. Historically, these communities once owned the market of the country but the continued discrimination against them changed their economic life from senior government official and high-income businesses constraint to small low-income herbal shops.

And subsequently this community was systematically isolated from the government and job market. The Afghan Hindus and Sikhs remained vulnerable to all aspects of a free life.

Ram Saran Bhasin, a 56-year-old Afghan Hindu, resident of Kart-e Parwan district, in Kabul recalled that “During the reign of Mohammad Zahir Shah, Mohammad Daoud Khan and Dr. Nabibullah, almost all the important affairs in the field of economics were in the hands of Hindus and Sikhs. . . . During that time, we ran our business freely. We faced no restrictions wherever we went, but now cannot go anywhere outside of Kabul.”<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Zadran also added: “I remember when there was no bank in Khost province, people gave their money to Hindus and Sikhs. They were very trustworthy and big businessmen and every time people wanted their money, they refund then. At that time, it was said that in business and trade, the Hindus and Sikhs are more trustworthy than Muslims.”<sup>20</sup>

The Hindus and Sikhs, as religious minority groups in Afghanistan, have had difficult time constantly battling inequality and have experi-

enced a long history of structural discrimination. They have not enjoyed equal opportunities in comparison to the majority of Muslim citizens. Facing multiple discriminations in the labour market and access to equal economic opportunities, their businesses shrunk from a prosperous trade to small herbal shops. Consequently, they have been forced to self-segregation with limited job markets rather than being integrated into the larger economic activities, they were limited to fewer opportunities. As such, they have not been given equal access to socio-economic opportunities, national decision-making, state resources, resulting in the lack of access and influence to enjoy the rights to a non-discriminatory society.

**An Afghan Sikh Diaspora, Afghan Singh (pseudonym) bemoaned that:**

*Before the 1990s, we had a harmonious life and successful business in Kart-e Parwan, Kabul. Our financial situation was such that each family possessed two-three vehicles. . . . during the decline of Dr. Najibullah’s regime, we had a shop in a basement in front of the Ministry of Information and Culture. There were several shopkeepers from Panjshir province who were harassing us and warning that one day will expel us from the county, and it happened. After the Mujahidin came to power, the first thing they did was expelling us.”<sup>21</sup>*

Restrictions on Hindus and Sikhs’ business have taken place systematically over the past years. Hindus and Sikhs continued to suffer from economic discrimination, despite the influx of billions in the form of foreign aid and development assistance, they have not benefited from the economic help. The UK Home Officer Report stated that Sikh leaders claimed they lacked access to the labour market and cited it as the main cause for mass emigration.<sup>22</sup> The same source also noted that Sikhs and Hindus had reported unequal access to government jobs. A survey of these communities by Porsesh Research and Studies Organization in 2019 showed that 89.7% of the population of these groups earned their main income from owning herbal shops. Some 31.5% of them claimed unemployment and access to the job market, followed by insults and humiliation (17.8%), bigotry and discrimination (9.6%), and harassment (6.8%) were the challenges they faced then.<sup>23</sup>

Currently, most of them in Kabul do not have their own shop, Sikh residents of Kabul rent shops in Shor Bazaar and Chowk areas, whereas in Jalalabad majority of the shops are adjacent to the Dharamshala. Many such incidents of insult, abuse, discrimination, bigotry are continuing to be reported in Kabul and Jalalabad. In some cases, due to market competition, the Sikhs and Hindus were bullied, and their shops were attacked by their Muslim neighbours.

## Notes

- 1 ) Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 11.
- 2 ) Surbhi Singh Khalsa, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 9 June 2021.
- 3 ) Anarkali Kaur Honaryar, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta and Ali Dad Mohammadi, 10 May 2021.
- 4 ) Ruchi Kumar, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta, 25 July 2021.
- 5 ) Inderjeet Singh, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta, 5 June 2021.
- 6 ) Vicky Singh, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 16 Feb 2021.
- 7 ) Marwan Singh and Ajay, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 15 Feb 2021.
- 8 ) Kumar, interview.
- 9 ) Honaryar, interview.
- 10 ) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 72.
- 11 ) Kartar Singh, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, March 20, 2021.
- 12 ) Ashna, interview.
- 13 ) Kapoor, interview.
- 14 ) Dr. Sharif Zadrán, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 7 June 2021.
- 15 ) Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 12.
- 16 ) Fabrizio Foschini, "A Lost Opportunity? Hindus and Sikhs do not get a reserved seat in parliament," *Afghan Analysts Network* 16, (2013), 5.
- 17 ) UK Home Office, "County Policy and Information," 20.
- 18 ) Kumar, interview.
- 19 ) Ram Saran Bhasin, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta, 13 April 2021.
- 20 ) Dr. Zadrán, interview.
- 21 ) Afghan Singh (pseudonym), interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 15 July 2021.
- 22 ) UK Home Office, "County Policy and Information," 19.
- 23 ) Shayegan, Frough and Sadat, "Survey of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 7.



# Other Aspects of Exclusion

Education, politics, and economics are not only aspects in which the Hindus and Sikhs are excluded in Afghanistan. Religion, culture, and social public spheres are other facets in which these vulnerable communities are hardly included. This exclusion can be traced to the latest constitution of Afghanistan, approved in January 2004. Article 2 of the constitution declares that “the sacred religion of Islam is the religion of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Followers of other faiths shall be free within the bounds of law in the exercise and performance of their religious rituals.” Based on this constitution, the Hindus and Sikhs’ religions come under the category of ‘others’. Although their rights are implicitly considered, their otherness puts their exercise of those rights more in doubt. On the one hand, there is not a clearly written law according to which these religious minorities could carry out their rites and, on the other hand, every administration might treat them differently.

In a predominantly Muslim country like Afghanistan where the culture of tolerance and compatibility is hardly practiced, the Hindu and Sikh minorities live under constant turbulence. Furthermore, the rise of the extremist religious group (i.e., Taliban and ISKP), make their situation precarious, to say the least. The activities of religious extremists are a de facto threat to Hindus and Sikhs for celebrating their religious and cultural rites. For example, as Singh, a 46-year-old Afghan Sikh from Jalalabad states:

*As the situation deteriorated, we are unable to celebrate the Vaisakhi in Kota Chashma, [a religious site in Surkh Rod district of Nangarhar province]. In the past, people were also harmless. We used to hold on to the holy book, Guru Granth Sahib, and walk from Guru Nanak Darbar, [a Gurdwara in the cen-*

*tre of Jalalabad] to the Kota Chashma and spend seven to eight days there. During these days, the Hindus and Sikhs gathered from around Afghanistan and celebrated the rite. Also, most of the weddings were held during these holy days.*<sup>1</sup>

## Suppression

Exclusion of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs from public life resulted in their suppression, including discrimination and restrictions regarding practice of their faith, general insecurity, target killings, threats of abduction/killing, harassment/bullying, erosion of their basic rights, and safety of their land/property. And this suppression led to their exodus and mass migration.<sup>2</sup>

## Conversion and Restriction on the Practice of Their Faith

In a self-proclaimed Muslim country, Afghanistan, unfortunately the rights of the followers of other religions are hardly considered. The Hindus and Sikhs have faced many restrictions in society while practicing their faith. The survey conducted by Porsesh Research and Studies Organization (PRSO) in 2019, found that 18.2% of the respondents claimed they have been forced to convert to Islam.

Since Islamic laws place restrictions on inheritance, marriage, and re-conversion, the implications of conversion has significant impact over generations, and affects individual’s property rights and those of their family. Honaryar said:

*“Now, I have Muslim relatives; aunts, uncles, and cousins. They had neither higher education nor a deep understanding of Islam. Some*

*of them are even illiterate, but what made them Muslims was the tyranny of time and discrimination. Working as representative of people, I received many complaints against my Muslims brothers who directly forced Hindus and Sikhs to convert to Islam. Every one might be follower of a religion but to me being a human is very important.”*

<sup>3</sup>Honaryar is not the only Sikh whose family members converted to Islam due to threat and fears of persecution, but many other Hindus and Sikhs have experienced the pressure to convert in various times. Surpal Singh is one of the other interviewees, who told us he was also treated in school into becoming Muslim: “When we went to school, everyone called us Kafir (infidels). In Religious Studies Courses, We Were Pressured into Conversion.”<sup>4</sup>

The Hindus and Sikhs are the indigenous residents of the country and have been practicing their faith for decades in a Muslim country, Afghanistan, where tolerance and religious freedom are hardly practiced. They stated that they practice their religion and celebrate their festivals only to a limited extent, as they fear their safety and possible targeted attacks. High security is taken when they get together inside their Gurdwara/Dharamshala or pray and sing together. Some interviewees, such as Jagtar Singh, a

56-year-old, Afghan Sikh, from Jalalabad-Nangarhar, mentioned the following:

*Every time a funeral is held, they throw stones and bricks at us and at the corpses. During the Taliban regime, Hindus and Sikhs only had to wear a yellow scarf/turban to distinguish themselves from other citizens of the country; they were able to hold all their religious ceremonies freely. . . . You know, our day begins with fear and trembling. When you are not a Muslim, they don't consider you as a human being. Worse than that, you have no idea what to do and where to go.<sup>5</sup>*

A 50-years-old Sikh women, Kuldip Kaur, from Shor Bazaar-Kabul also added:

*We grew up with war and raising our children in war. All governments were overthrown and the rulers buried, but what was never overthrown and buried was war. The war as an inauspicious phenomenon caused us to lose everything. Now we have no place to live. According to our religion, living inside the Dharamshala/Gurdwara is like committing sin. But due to compulsion, we have been committing this sin for ten years. <sup>6</sup>*

## Case Study I

“Laghmani, one of our interviewees, told us the most painful of his memories: “One day, as



*I was setting up my shop, a stout man with his head tied in a kerchief walked into my shop.” Jagtar Singh began trembling although it was broad daylight. He approached Jagtar Singh, pointed a dagger to his abdomen, and whispered in his ear to read the Kalima-e Shahada<sup>7</sup> and convert to Islam. Utterly confused, Jagtar Singh quickly pushed the stranger away from himself. “What are you doing?” Jagtar Singh screamed intentionally so the neighbours could hear him. “Do you want to kill me? What is my fault?” The man pointed the dagger to his throat and told him again to read the Kalima, threatening that he would slit Jagtar’s throat if he fails to obey. “The neighbours wanted to help me, but nobody dared to approach him,” recounted Jagtar. “The dagger was on my throat for ten minutes and I felt death every second!”*

*Finally, the neighbours intervened and Jagtar Singh was rescued from his Muslim compatriot. “I felt utter death,” he told us. “I was sure he would have killed me if the neighbours did not intervene. But the fact is that I died that day. Now I only have a body with no soul. I was killed on that day.”<sup>8</sup>*

## **Intimidation, Threats, and General Insecurity**

The Hindu and Sikh communities have encountered numerous problems, including growing discrimination and strong opposition by local Muslims. Emadi writes that in 1992 when Babri Masjid in India was destroyed by a Hindu mob, Muslims in Afghanistan retaliated by destroying the local temples and looting their contents.<sup>9</sup> Singh has also mentioned that, in retaliation for the Babri Masjid incident, some Afghan Militants fired a rocket on a Gurdwara in Khost province.<sup>10</sup>

Intimidation and target attacks continued to threaten the lives of these communities. In recent years, Hindus and Sikhs have been driven underground without the ability to publicly practice their religious rituals due to fear of reprisal by terrorist groups or the society at large. Even after the government assured their protection, many incidents took place. In 2016, Royal Singh was abducted in Jalalabad and shot dead. Shortly after that, on 29 December, 2016 Lala Del Souza, head of the Sikh community in Kunduz, was killed by an unknown gunman.<sup>11</sup>

## **Case Study II**

*“The financial situation of the family of Narinder Singh, Member of Parliament, kept improving. They could make ends meet. One evening they closed their shop, went home and listened to the BBC radio only to hear a breaking news: “It was 8 pm and BBC reported that Hindu and Sikh worship places are attacked in a number of provinces, including Kabul and Ghazni. The reason [for the attacks were] that Indians had set on fire a mosque in India called ‘Babri Masjid’. The Afghan Hindus and Sikhs were citi-*

*zens of Afghanistan and had no relations with the Indians.” The news was so shocking to Narinder Singh’s father that he had no idea what to do. He knew that the Muslims would also attack the Dharamshala/Gurdwaras in Gardiz as soon as they learn about the news.*

*As his father was bracing for a sad turn of events, the gate of their home was heavily knocked. It was one of Narinder Singh’s uncles who lived in the same street. He told them that they are under attack and that they needed to move the women and children to the basement immediately.*

*Narinder Singh’s father, saw his dignity, religion and reputation is in danger, pulled out the weapon that had hidden under earth when he was in military and was poised to defend his home and family. The Muslims stormed the Dharamshala/Gurdwara as Narinder Singh’s father and uncle were in defence. The war intensified as the bullets were piercing into the sky. Rockets, PKs and grenades were fired. As casualties on both sides increased, mediators proceeded to negotiate a ceasefire. The mediator was a person named ‘Qari’ who was a trustworthy person by both parties. “Anup Singh, stop fighting,” Narinder’s uncle was addressed from the loudspeaker. “We will convince this side as well. Except the Dharamshala/Gurdwara itself, burn rest of the items and put down your flags to end the war.”*

*Narinder Singh’s uncle didn’t understand why they had to do this when they were Afghans, grew up here and have no relations with Indians. When he opened the door for the Qari, he had a feeling that he handed over his life with his own hands to those who were thirsty for the blood of their compatriots in the wake of a dispute in another country. In a glimpse, Anup Singh was shot and fell on the ground. Eight to nine bullets were fired on his chest. They did not just kill Narinder Singh’s uncle but threw grenades into the Dharamshala/Gurdwara.*

*In the early morning, Narinder Singh’s father went barefoot from Shahr-e Kuhna (old city) of Gardiz to take his complaint to Haqqani, a Mujahidin commander. He explained to Haqqani what had taken place in the community the previous night and went on to explain that he is an Afghan and had served the country. After hearing his complaint, Haqqani even didn’t look at him. Instead, he told his soldiers, “Call the bulldozer guy, take him to his home, and demolish his home, Dharamshala/Gurdwara and whatever else he has. Don’t leave them alive.” Narinder Singh’s father fretted and quickly left the place. “I will send you two buses,” said a man who was accompanying him. “Save the women and leave everything else.”*

*Narinder Singh’s father and others got on the buses, took their holy books, the corpses and the wounded and secretly left Gardiz city. Narinder Singh’s father, uncle and cousins were not allowed to leave. “They were not allowed to*

leave Gardiz until the Dharamshala/Gurdwara, their houses and their furniture were burned down," said Narinder Singh. "When everything was reduced to ashes, the people rescued my father, uncle and his sons. Several other tribal elders accompanied them to Ghazni so that no one would harm them along the way."<sup>12</sup>

In recent years, when cities have been frequently facing suicide attacks and bomb blasts, the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs also have been victimized. In addition to the other challenges, the rise of new extremist Islamic movements, in particular ISKP in Afghanistan increased the Hindu and Sikh religious minority vulnerability. They have also reported receiving threats of violence at the neighbourhood level through leafleting, text messages to mobile phones, and one-on-one intimidation. Hindus and Sikhs confirmed that unknown groups throw leaflets into the shops and houses, threatening them. A young Sikh in Kabul said, "We face intimidation in our everyday lives; when we are out for shopping and running shops."<sup>13</sup> "After all, while all Afghans are living under the threat of violence, but evidence supports those attacks are targeting them because of their faith. Many recent incidents, during the last few years which targeted small faith-based communities, prompt them to flee the country. More recently, on May 2019 a member of the Hindu and Sikhs; Arijit Singh, was kidnapped and killed, a Sikh home in Kabul was attacked and robbed.<sup>14</sup> Since 2018, two attacks targeted the community in Kabul and Jalalabad. These attacks forced the Hindu and Sikh communities to appeal to the international community and the UN for protection and resulted in mass migration. According to Singh: "We have never felt so compelled to leave our homeland. We are unable to live here because no one ensures our security and pays attention to us. The wounds of the Nangarhar and the pain of the Shor Bazaar attack still hurt our hearts and souls."<sup>15</sup> "Due to the fear of imminent threat, Sikh families live in Shor Bazaar en masse, the place where the government has taken few measures to ensure its security. They hired one or two guards, but the unprofessional guards could not defend us while facing a serious issue.

Recent incidents and attacks against the Hindu and Sikh communities gained global attention and became the breaking point for them after decades of persecution and leading many more of them to leave the country. Some of the more tragic events that reported by EASO accelerated the exodus of Hindu and Sikhs minorities from Afghanistan occurred:

- On 28 February 2020, a Hindu woman was robbed and later killed in a Kart-e Parwan, Kabul.
- On 22 June 2020, it was reported that an Afghan Sikh leader was kidnapped by 'terrorists'. No further details about the case were disclosed by the sources. An Indian source

indicated that 'local land mafia' was behind the incident.

- On 25 March 2020, at least 25 Sikhs were killed in an attack on a temple in Kabul. The Islamic State—Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed responsibility for the attack and declared that the attack was for revenge of the Muslims killed in Kashmir by the Indian forces.<sup>16</sup>
- On March 2019, a Sikh man was kidnapped and later killed in Kabul. The police arrested two suspects afterwards.
- On 1 July 2018, a suicide bomber killed some 20 people in Jalalabad, most of them were Hindus and Sikhs. The attack was later claimed by the ISKP. The victims included a delegation intending to meet President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, among them the only Sikh parliamentary candidate was killed.

## Land/Property Grabbing

The Hindu and Sikh communities also experienced land confiscation by local authorities including their cremation sites. Historically, members of the Hindu and Sikh communities were virtual owners of the financial market of the country. Continued discrimination and bias against them, however, changed their economic life from serving as senior government officials and high-income business owners to becoming proprietors of small low-income herbal shops. Gradually, this community was systematically excluded from serving the government and managing the financial market. Sadly, Hindus and Sikhs could not pursue legal recourse in regaining their land or seeking restitution for fear of retaliation and looming threats by powerful individuals who grabbed their properties. They encountered a hostile reception and often outright discrimination from the Islamic fundamentalists in positions of authority, when they requested state services.<sup>17</sup> The Hindu and Sikh sources reported members of their communities continued to express concern over land disputes and said they often chose not to pursue restitution through the courts for fear of retaliation, particularly when powerful local leaders occupied their homes and possessed their property.

According to a Sikh in Jalalabad, "Almost all cremation sites are confiscated by the local power holders in all provinces."<sup>18</sup> He added that Hindus and Sikhs owned huge areas in Nangarhar that are now in possession of local Muslims. They gradually built one room and expanded their living area and now they have them all. In Kandahar city, Darwaza-e Kabul, almost all residents were Hindus and Sikhs, but currently only two Hindus are left living there. In Shor Bazaar, Kabul, Sham Singh, a 56-year-old Sikh, told us: "The herbal shop from which I am currently running my business was my own before the civil war, but now I pay 3,000 Afghani rent per month. Homelessness is another problem; I live in Dharamshala/Gurdwara, where I do not

feel safe. The Dharamshala/Gurdwara I live in was attacked by terrorists in 2020, killing and injuring a handful of members of my religion.”<sup>19</sup>

**Arinder Singh Khalsa, 54-year-old Sikh man, from Kabul recalled the following:**

*Despite losing all my properties, I still live in Kabul. Once, I migrated to India with my family but returned after fourteen years during the Hamid Karzai presidency. Now, I am the sole member of the family who lives in the country. My wife and children are miles away; they are living in India. I owned a house in front of Dharamshala (Shor bazaar), but it was grabbed by influential people when I returned from India. Telling me ‘your mother sold the house before she died; you have to sign the document,’ I was threatened by some unknown persons when I returned to the country after several years of living away from home. After realizing they are influential, I preferred to save my life in the house and had no option except to sign the document, and by doing so, I lost my house. Those who grabbed my house are among the influential gunmen in the area that are out of the government’s control.”<sup>20</sup>*

## **Discrimination and Erosion of Basic Rights**

Regardless of individual behaviour, the Afghan Hindu and Sikh religious minority groups are negatively perceived by their fellow Afghan Muslim compatriots. During the first Taliban regime (1996-2001), the Hindus and Sikhs, in order to be easily identified, were instructed to place a Khanda, a symbol of Sikh faith, outside their houses. The Afghan Hindus were ordered to wear special caps and yellow Tilak, a mark on the forehead, when in public. Also, the Afghan Hindu and Sikh women were told to put bindi, colored dot in the center of the forehead, and wear a chador, a veil cloak covering their bodies. Further, the Hindus and Sikhs’ women were not allowed to go outside unless they are accompanied by an adult male member of their family. Singh explains how the members of this victimized community were facing religious discrimination and various forms of harassment, when he says: “They [Taliban] would spit on the road at the sight of the Sikhs. The Sikhs wore a distinct style of turban and most of them would tie their beard, unlike the natives. The untrimmed moustaches of Sikh men were another distinction”.<sup>21</sup> Spitting and humiliations were not the only issues. They had to pay Jizya, poll-tax, for the Taliban ruling government to help finance their Jihad.<sup>22</sup> One of the interviewees from Helmand told us, “The people in Lashkar Gah are very good, except a small number of Jahil (foolish/ignorant) which exist in every society. They threw stones at me and called me Hindu-Kachalo (Hindu the potato). I usually went from my home (now we have no home, we live

in Dharamshala/Gurdwara) to shop by bicycle. Thankfully, the stone-throwing is now replaced by teasing.”<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, infidelity is another major dominant issue for the Hindus and Sikhs. Muslim majority labelled Hindu and Sikhs communities as infidels, and this caused adverse impact on human relationships, equal rights and opportunities. This common perception of Muslim population further exacerbated the hostile relationship between Muslims majority and Hindus and Sikhs, a marginalized and isolated minority in the country.

Against the background of the last twenty years (2001-2021) developments in Afghanistan, Muslim extremists have a negative attitude toward them. While many moderate Muslims surely see cultural and religious diversity as valuable. “When we take our dead bodies to the crematorium, we take the police with us. Even so, local people throw stones at us.”<sup>24</sup>

## Notes

- 1 ) Hakim Jasbir Singh, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 16 Feb 2021.
- 2 ) Shayegan, Frough and Sadat, "Survey of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 7-10.
- 3 ) Honaryar, interview.
- 4 ) Surpal Singh, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, Feb 15 2021.
- 5 ) Jagtar Singh, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 12 May 2021.
- 6 ) Kuldip Kaur, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 10 June 2021.
- 7 ) Kalima-e Shahada is one of the five pillars of Islam, and part of Adhan. And literally reads: "I bear witness that none deserves worship except God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God."
- 8 ) Jagtar Singh Laghmani, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 25 April 2021.
- 9 ) Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 13.
- 10 ) Singh, "Afghan Sikhs," 71.
- 11 ) UK Home Office, "County Policy and Information," 21.
- 12 ) Narinder Singh Khalsa, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta and Ali Dad Mohammadi, July 21 2021
- 13 ) Singh and Ajay, interview.
- 14 ) Jagriti Chandra, "PM welcomes 'home' a team of Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," The Hindu, May 19, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/afghan-hindus-and-sikhs-meet-pm-modi/article65065659.ece?homepage=true>
- 15 ) Sukbir Singh, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 14 Apr 2021.
- 16 ) EASO, "Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms," 2-8.
- 17 ) Emadi, "Minority and Marginality," 7.
- 18 ) Singh, interview.
- 19 ) Sham Singh, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 3 July 2021.
- 20 ) Arinder Singh Khalsa, interviewed by Ali Dad Mohammadi, 25 May 2021.
  
- 21 ) Singh, "Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," 197.
- 22 ) Ballard, "The History and Current Position," 5.
- 23 ) Satnam Singh, interviewed by A. Wali Rasta and Ali Dad Mohammadi, 20 June 2021.
- 24 ) Habib and Abdali, "Tough Times for Afghan Hindus and Sikhs," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 459, (2013), 5.

# Conclusion

This study of the exodus of the Afghan Hindus and Sikhs demonstrates that threats of targeted attacks, life insecurity, hostility, communal violence and social exclusion have been the most pressing reasons for their migration and exodus from Afghanistan. Moreover, political exclusion, lack of economic opportunities, illegal appropriation of their land and properties, lack of educational opportunities, and forced religious conversion were other reasons mentioned for instigating their mass exodus. These small religious minority groups were void of organized political parties in the country. They were politically represented at the discretion of the regimes by very small numbers (i.e., two to three persons). As such they were unable to advocate for their rights, or bargain for their safety and physical security. The rampant government corruption (during 2001-2021), and discriminatory judicial system prevented the Afghan Sikhs and Hindus to be able to regaining rights to their land and properties. Leaving them with little choice other than the mass exodus from their homeland, Afghanistan. The return of the Taliban to power in the country may have sealed their prospects of being able to return to their home and re-establishing their communities, anytime soon.

**Annexure: List of Mandirs, Dharamshalas/Gurdwaras and Crematoriums in Afghanistan**

List of Mandirs in Afghanistan							
No.	Name	Provinces	PDs/Districts	Villages/Ar-eas	Status	Historical Oldness	
1	Pirath Nath Dargah	Kabul	1st	Shor Bazaar	Active	100 Year Old	
2	Behro Nath Dargah		Not-Active				
3	Mah Koko Mandir		Demolished				
4	Asmaee Mandir		Active				
5	Koh-e Asmaee Mandir, 1st Phase		Asmaee	2nd	Asmaee	Not-Active	200 Years Old
6	Koh-e ZAsmaee Mandir, 2nd Phase						
7	Pirath Nath Dargah	Ghazni	3rd	Shahr-e Kuhna (Old City)	Active	Not Known	
8	Baba Jagdish Dargah	Kandahar		Darwaz-e Kabul			
9	Pirath Nath Dargah	Nangarhar	4th				
10	Charbagh Mandir		Surkh Rud	Charbagh, 1st Phase	Not Known		
11	Charbagh Mandir		Charbagh, 2nd Phase				
12	Surkh Rud Dargah						
13	Matha Dewi Mandir	Khost	4th	Prim Nagar, Hindu Qala	Demolished		



## List of Dharamshalas/Gurudwaras in Afghanistan

No.	Name	Provinces	PDs/ Districts	Villages/ Areas	Status	Historical Oldness	
1	Shri Guru Hari Rai Sahib	Kabul	1st	Not Known	Active	70 Years Old	
2	Baba Almas Dharamshala				Not Known	Not Known	Not Known
3	Baba Shri Chand Dharamshala				Demolished	100 Years Old	
4	Geyan Bakshi Dharamshala				Demolished		
5	Jhoti Surubh Dharamshala			Koch-e Saraji (Saraji Street)	Demolished		
6	Khalsa Ji Dharamshala			Not Known	Active	70 Years Old	
7	Baba Ghem Dharamshala			Demolished	Not Known		
8	Takar Dharamshala			Chawk		Demolished	
9	Deshmish Patha Shri Guru Guband		4th	Kart-e Parwan	Active	50 Years Old	
10	Kothla Sab Dharamshala		Kalakan	Yakh Sarai	Demolished	Not Known	
11	Takar Dharamshala		Shakar Dara	Sulaiman	Demolished		
12	Shahr e Kohna Dharamshala	Parwan	Center	Shahr-e Kuhna (Old City)	Active		
13	Singh Saba Dharamshala			Shar-e Naw (New City)	Active		
14	Tat Madra Dharamshala			Titam Dara	Not-Active		
15	Jamal Agha Dharamshala	Kapisa	Not Known	Jamal Agha	Demolished	Not Known	
16	Singh Saba Dharamshala	Ghazni	4th	Plan-e III	Active		
17	Pai Nand Lal Dharamshala		2nd	Not Known	Active		
18	Shah Mir Sahib Dharamshala				Active		
19	Shri Kothla Sahib Dharamshala				Active		
20	Takar Dharamshala			Darwaz-e Ganj	Not-Active		
21	Baraki Rajan Dharamshala	Logar	Baraki	Not Known	Occupied		

22	Singh Saba Dharamshala	Helmand	Lashkar Gah	Shahr-e Kohna (Old City)	Not-Active	Not Known
23	Singh Saba Dharamshala			Shahr-e Naw (New City)		
24	Singh Saba Qala-e Bost Dharamshala	Kunar	Posht	Qala-e Posht	Demolished	
25	Baba Shri Chand Dharamshala	Kandahar	3rd	Bazaar-e Shikarpur	Active	
26	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Not Known	Darwaz-e Kabul		
27	Chashma Guru Baba Nanak Dharamshala	Nangarhar	Surkh Rud	Not Known	Demolished	
28	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Behsud	Baland Ghar		
29	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Muhamand Dara	Not Known		
30	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Laal Pur			
31	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Shinwari			
32	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Dara-e Noor	Amla	Demolished & Occupied	
33	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Shiwa	Kaltak Bazaar	Demolished	
34	Sultan Pur Dharamshala		Surkh Rud	Shahr-e Kohna (Old City)		
35	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Not Known	Bala Bagh	Occupied	
36	Singh Saba Dharamshala		Khugyani	Shahr-e Naw (New City)	Demolished	
37	Singh Saba Dharamshala	Not Known	Shahr-e Kohna (Old City)			
38	Guru Baba Nanak Darbar		1st	Mukhabirat Chawk	Active	
39	Guru Dek Bahadur		4th	Not Known		
40	Singh Saba Norgar Dharamshala	Kunar	Norgar	Not Known	Demolished	
41	Singh Saba Manda Wor Dharamshala	Laghman	Center, Mehtarlam	Manda Wor		
42	Singh Saba Takree			Takree		
43	Singh Saba Char Bagh Dharamshala			Char Bagh		

44	Singh Saba Narin Kari	Khost	Center	Prim Nagar (Qala-e Hindu-an)	Not Known	74 Years Old
45	Singh Saba	Paktia		Shahr-e Kohna (Old City)	Demolished	Not Known
46	Heli Naw	Kunduz		Bazaar-e Kucha-e Morgha	Active	
47	Singh Saba Dharam-shala	Baghlan		Bagh-lan-e Markazi	Shahr-e Naw (New City)	

### List of Crematoriums in Afghanistan

No.	Provinces	PDs/ Districts	Villages/Areas	Status
1	Kabul	8th	Qala Cha	Active
2	Ghazni	3rd	Khak-e Ghariban	
3	Kandahar	Center	Bazar-e Shikarpur	Occupied
4	Parwan		Bayan	
5	Paktia		Rig Rishan-e Pul-e Khost	Not-Active
6	Khost		Prim Nagar (Qala-e Hindu-an)	Active
7	Nangarhar	Khugyani	Shahr-e Kuhna (Old City)	Occupied
8		Muhmand Dara	Bazaar-e Muhmand Dara	Demolished
9		Laal Pur	Not Known	Occupied
10		Shinwari	Pash Palaq	
11		Surkh Rud	Bala Bagh	
12		Dara-e Noor	Not Known	
13		Surkh Rud	Sultan Pur	Not-Active
14		1st	Public Health Street	Active
15	Laghman	Center	Char Bagh	Not Known
16			Takree	Occupied
17			Occupied (Child Cemetery)	

# Annexure: Distribution of Afghan Hindu and Sikhs Population in Afghanistan and Some of Their Archeological Sites

FIGURE 7

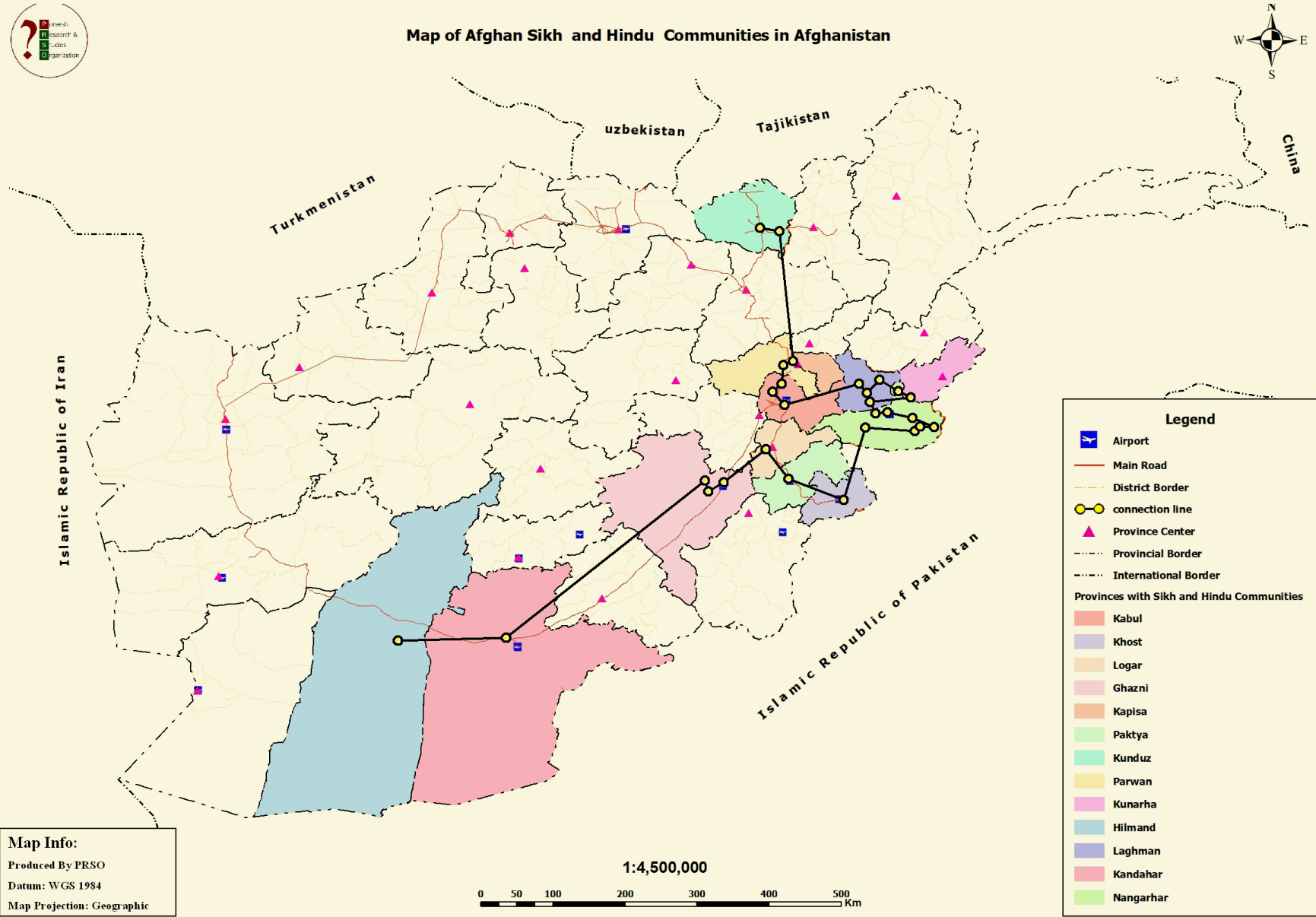


FIGURE 8

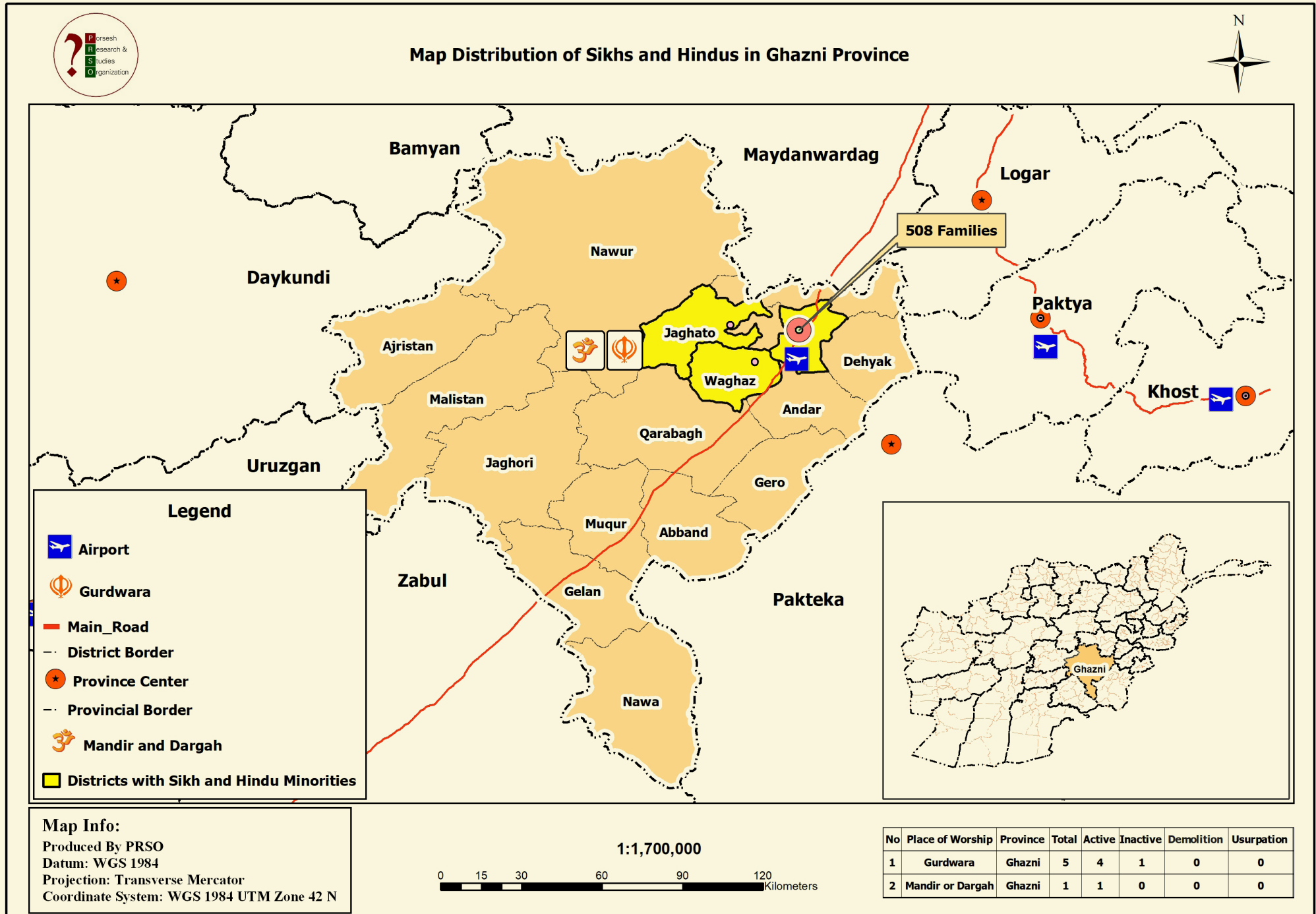


FIGURE 9

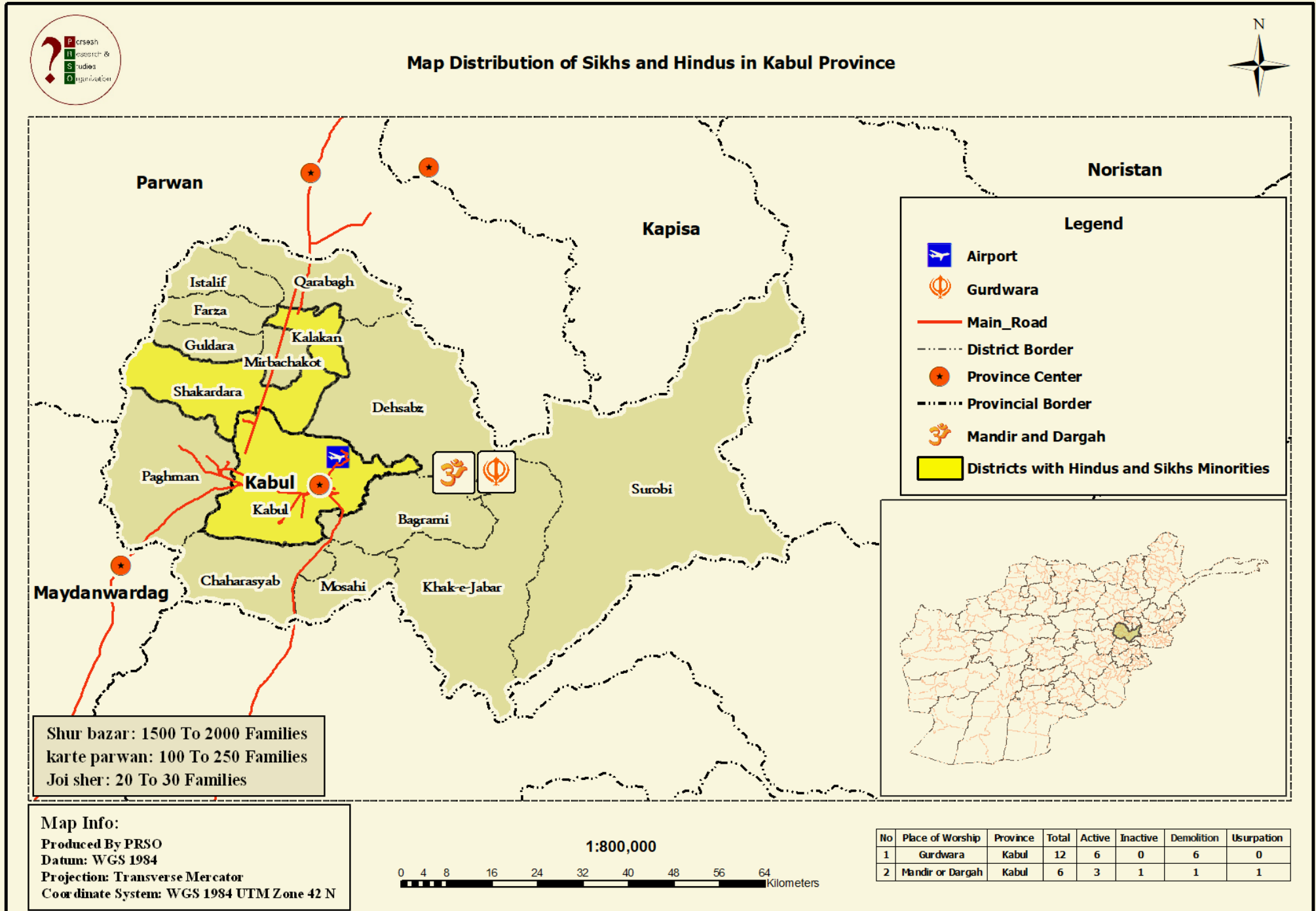


FIGURE 10

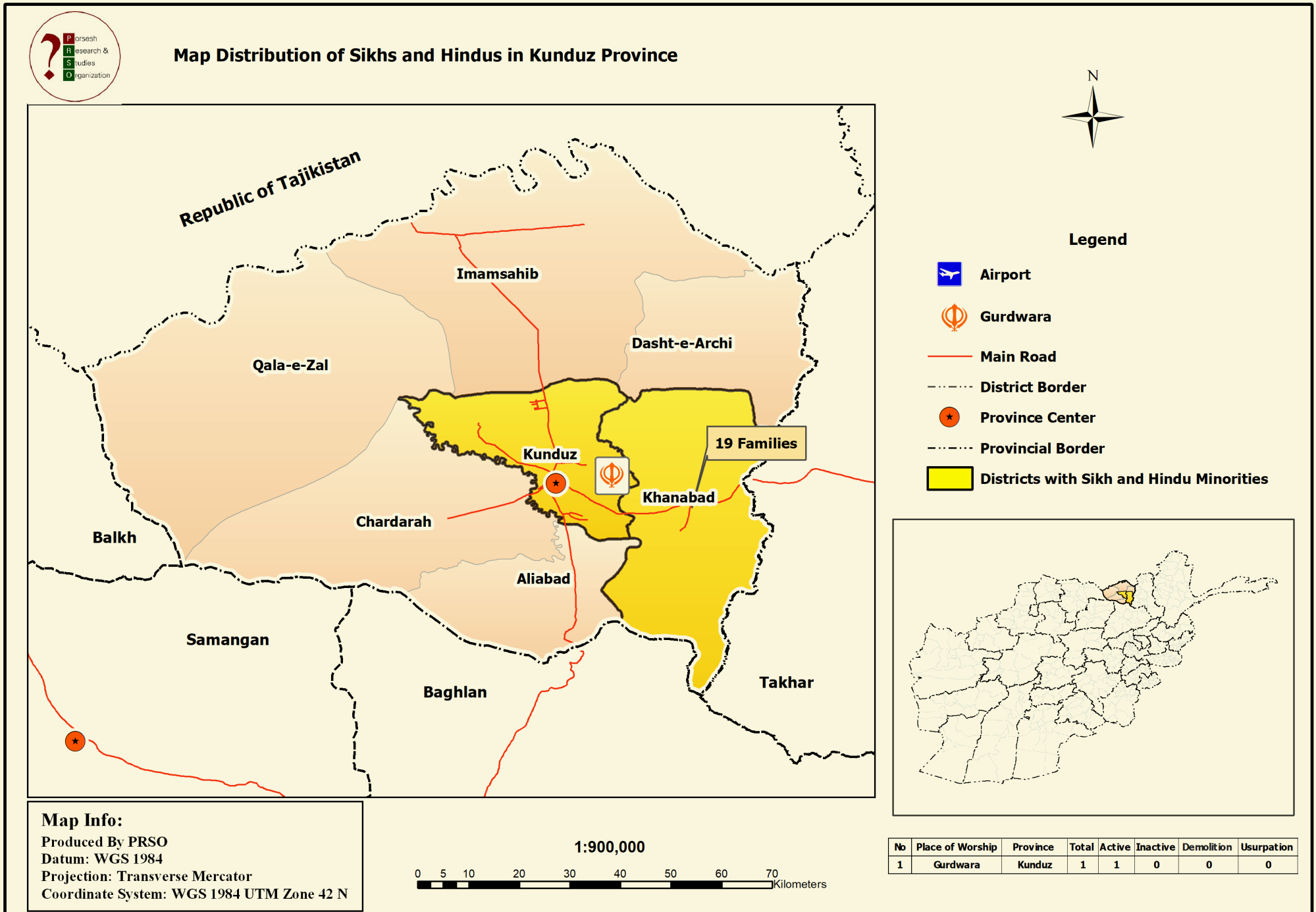


FIGURE 11

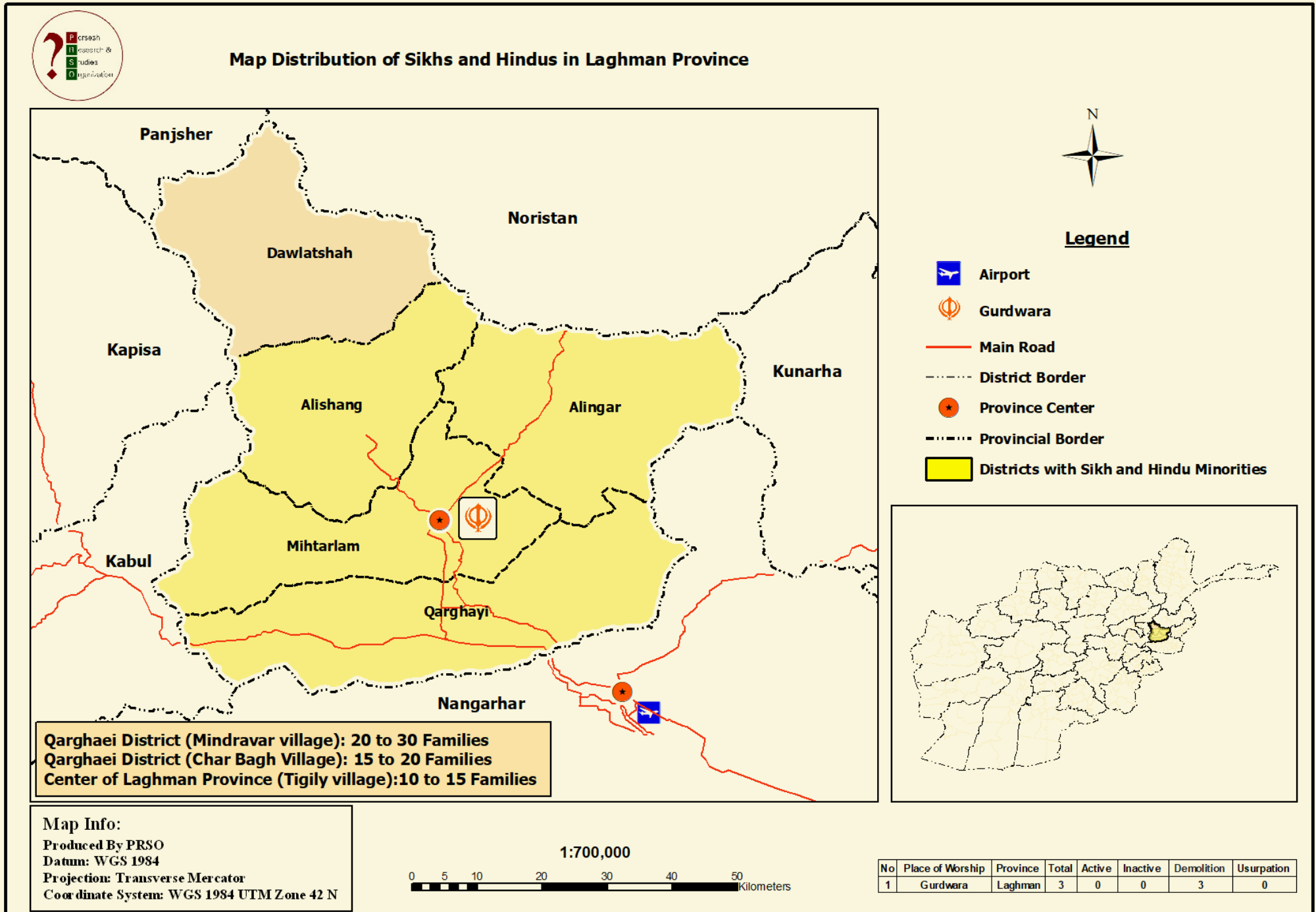
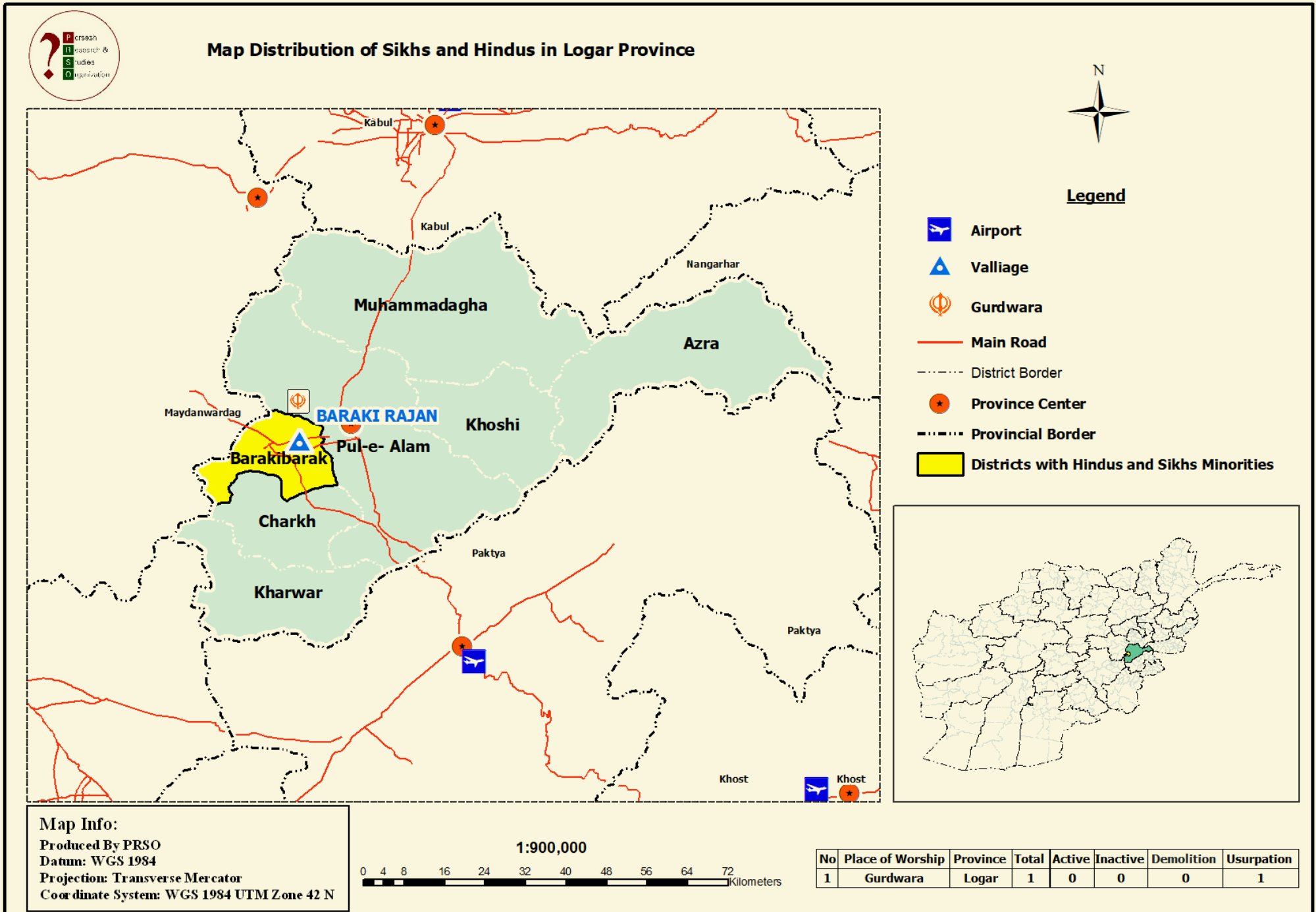




FIGURE 12



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