



Home Office

# **Country Information and Guidance**

## **Afghanistan: Security and humanitarian situation**

**Version 2.0**  
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# Preface

This document provides country of origin information (COI) and guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the guidance contained with this document; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

## Country Information

The COI within this document has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

## Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve the guidance and information we provide. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this document, please [e-mail us](#).

## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy.

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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# Guidance

Updated: 15 August 2015

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of Claim

- 1.1.1 That the general humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is so severe as to make removal a breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and/or
- 1.1.2 That the security situation in Afghanistan presents a real risk which threatens life or person such that removal would be in breach of Article 15(c) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 ('the Qualification Directive').

## 2. Consideration of Issues

### 2.1 Is the person's account a credible one?

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see sections 4 and 5 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview: see [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing: see [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#).

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### 2.2 Does the person have a well-founded fear of persecution?

- 2.2.1 A state of civil instability and/or where law and order has broken down does not of itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason.
- 2.2.2 However, even where a person comes from a place where there is a state of civil instability and/or where law and order has broken down, they may have a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason. This might include, but is not limited to, being targeted because they are perceived to support the government and/or international forces. See the country information and guidance on [Afghanistan: persons supporting or perceived to support the government and/or international forces](#).
- 2.2.3 Where the person qualifies for protection under the Refugee Convention, decision makers do not need to go on to make an assessment of the need for protection under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) or under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive.

### 2.3 Does the person fall to be excluded from a grant of protection?

- 2.3.1 Human rights abuses have been committed against the civilian population by both pro-Government armed groups as well as anti-government elements (see [Nature and levels of violence](#)). Decision makers must consider if there

are serious reasons for considering that a person was involved in or associated with such acts, or with the groups concerned.

- 2.3.2 If so, decision makers must consider whether one of the exclusion clauses is applicable, seeking advice from a Senior Caseworker if necessary.
- 2.3.3 Where a person is excluded from protection under the Refugee Convention they are also excluded from Humanitarian protection but if there is a real risk of a breach of Article 3 ECHR or Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive, they may be entitled to Discretionary Leave or Restricted Leave.
- 2.3.4 For further information on the exclusion clauses, discretionary leave and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#), the [Asylum Instruction on Discretionary Leave](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).
- 2.4 **Is the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan so severe that removal would be a breach of Article 3 of the ECHR?**
  - 2.4.1 The armed conflict in Afghanistan has led to a significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The number of IDPs doubled between 2012 and 2014, from approximately 400,000 to over 800,000, rising to 850,000 by March 2015. The worst affected areas overall are the west, central and southern regions. Increasing numbers of IDPs live in informal settlements in Afghanistan's major urban centres. Displaced persons, compared to their Afghan counterparts, were more likely to be illiterate; to have lower rates of school enrolment; to have lower household incomes, whilst living in larger households; to be unemployed; and to be food insecure.
  - 2.4.2 Displaced women and girls were considered to be at disproportionate risk of harm, living with fewer freedoms and opportunities than when living in their own homes and villages. Displaced females face significant enhanced gendered constraints to accessing education, health and employment opportunities. The overcrowded living situation increases the risks of violence for women. Many are subjected to domestic violence and forced marriages. Special displacement-related vulnerabilities refer not only to inadequate livelihood opportunities and standard of living but also to the situation of children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and victims of violence, including domestic violence, (see [Impact on women and children and Internally Displaced Persons \(IDPs\)](#)).
  - 2.4.3 The Upper Tribunal in [AK \(Article 15\(c\)\) Afghanistan CG \[2012\] UKUT 00163\(IAC\)](#) found that there was little evidence of significant numbers of the urban poor and IDP population in Kabul suffering destitution or inability to survive at subsistence levels (paragraph 225). It further noted that, whilst the importance of return and reintegration packages for UK returnees to Kabul should not be exaggerated, they did, nevertheless, place returnees in a better position than that of other IDPs (paragraph 224).
  - 2.4.4 Since the country guidance case of [AK](#) was promulgated in 2012, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has not deteriorated to the extent that it represents, in general, a real risk of harm contrary to Article 3 of the ECHR (see [Humanitarian situation](#)). However decision makers must consider on

the facts of the case whether a returnee, by reason of his or her individual vulnerability, may face a real risk of harm contrary to Article 3 of the ECHR as a result of the humanitarian situation. Factors to be taken into account include age, gender, medical conditions, ill-health, disability, the effect on children, other family circumstances, housing opportunities, the ability to sustain themselves and available support structures.

- 2.4.5 Decision makers should also take into account that all individuals who are returned to Afghanistan by the UK are offered support in re-establishing their lives, whether or not they applied for an Assisted Voluntary Return whilst in the UK (the 'Choices' scheme run by Refugee Action on behalf of the Home Office), or whether they had enforced return. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), provides the reintegration provision as part of the UK Government's reintegration programme for all returnees. The IOM's reintegration support for enforced returns is available for up to three months after an individual's return and up to six months for an assisted voluntary return.
- 2.4.6 For further information see the [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection](#).
- 2.5 **Is there indiscriminate violence in Afghanistan, which is at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that the person, solely by being present there, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person?**
- 2.5.1 Unlike Article 3 ECHR, Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive applies only to civilians, who must be genuine non-combatants and not those who are party to the conflict. This could include former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.
- 2.5.2 An assessment of protection needs under Article 15(c) should only take place if the person is unable to establish a need for refugee protection or for humanitarian protection. Decision makers must therefore consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might place them at risk.
- 2.5.3 In the country guidance case of [AK \(Article 15\(c\)\) Afghanistan CG \[2012\] UKUT 00163\(IAC\)](#), promulgated in May 2012, which considered evidence up to early 2012, the Upper Tribunal (UT) found that, despite a rise in the number of civilian deaths and casualties and an expansion of the geographical scope of the armed conflict in Afghanistan, the level of indiscriminate violence in the country taken as a whole was not at such a high level as to mean that, within the meaning of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive, a civilian faces a real risk to his life or person solely by being present in the country (paragraph 249. B(ii))
- 2.5.4 The Upper Tribunal in [AK](#) found that those parts of Kabul city where returnees are most likely to live are 'the poorest areas of the city or its environs' and have been less affected by indiscriminate violence, stating that the 'great majority [of attacks] have concentrated on areas where the government or international organisations have their offices or where their employees frequent.' (Paragraph 226.)

- 2.5.5 The Tribunal further found that, even in the provinces worst affected by violence, (which may now be taken to include Ghazni but not to include Kabul), the level of indiscriminate violence did not reach the Article 15(c) threshold (paragraph 249Bii and iii). In regard to Kabul city, the UT found that, ‘... given the fact that this has a reported population of around 5 million and that Kabul province does not feature in any list of the most violent provinces, the argument for any engagement of the Article 15(c) threshold, if based primarily on civilian deaths, is even weaker [than Kandahar and Helmand, the provinces with the highest number of civilian deaths, and Ghazni, a province with a significant rise in violent incidents]’ (paragraph 219).
- 2.5.6 Since the promulgation of AK in May 2012 the number of civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan has increased according to UNAMA figures (which may be under-reported). Whilst injuries to civilians steadily increased between 2010 and 2014, the number of deaths fluctuated, increasing in 2011 compared to 2010, then reducing in 2012 and 2013 before rising again in 2014 to 10,548 civilian casualties (3,699 deaths and 6,849 injured), the highest number of civilian deaths and injuries in a single year since recording began in 2009. (see Nature and levels of violence).
- 2.5.7 The worst affected areas for security related incidents were southern, south-eastern and eastern regions which experienced 68 per cent of all incidents, with Nangarhar Province being the most volatile. Outside the relatively secure urban areas, in many districts, particularly in the south, southeast and east regions of the country, the presence of Afghan security forces and the Government was limited to the district centre, often leaving large groups of civilians without protection. Analysts and media sources noted a significant escalation in violence in Kabul during the latter months of 2014, and a surge of terrorist attacks in Kabul in mid-May 2015. (see Nature and levels of violence).
- 2.5.8 Nevertheless, the proportion of civilians directly affected by violence remains low. The CIA World Factbook estimated the population at 31,822,848 (July 2014). Taking the numbers of civilians killed and injured in 2014, 0.03% of the population were physically directly affected by violence during this time (see Nature and levels of violence).
- 2.5.9 In a Judicial Review decision of 21 July 2015 (in the case of Naziri & Ors, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (JR – scope - evidence (IJR) [2015] UKUT 437 (IAC) (27 July 2015)), before the Upper Tribunal, it was argued that having regard to a substantial body of evidence which has materialised since 2012, it is appropriate to reconsider the guidance promulgated in AK (paragraph 8). However the Upper Tribunal found that “within the limitations of a judicial review challenge and the hearing which has taken place we find no warrant for departing from the current country guidance promulgated in AK. In particular, we find that the evidence falls short of satisfying the stringent Article 15(c) test”. (Paragraph 95).
- 2.5.10 Comments attributed to the then newly appointed Afghan Minister for Refugees and Repatriation, Mr. Hussain Alami Balkhi, in February 2015, regarding a moratorium on enforced returns pending the renegotiation of the



Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on returns, as well as his statement that the security situation in Afghanistan was not stable, and that 80 per cent of the country was insecure and unsafe (see [Returns and reintegration](#)), should be taken in the context of developments since that time, including an ongoing discussion with the Afghan government, which has resulted in an agreement to continue with the UK's return programme pending the opening of formal negotiations to review the MoU between the UK and Afghanistan. Furthermore, Balkhi's comment that 80 per cent of the country was insecure and unsafe should not be seen as an assessment of the legal test for protection under either Article 3 ECHR or Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive.

- 2.5.11 The Upper Tribunal held in [Naziri & Ors](#) that "We consider that, ultimately, the statements of Minister Balkhi were those of an isolated and unauthorised voice, at a particular point in time, ploughing a lonely furrow which the author has since abandoned... the most recent statement attributed to the Minister... specifically highlighted three of the provinces of Afghanistan as very dangerous. This stands in marked contrast with his statement at the beginning of this discrete saga, when he claimed that only two of the thirty four Afghanistan provinces were safe. We consider the evolution in his personal stance clear." (Paragraph 80) "Furthermore, taking into account his government portfolio, we find that given subsequent events Minister Balkhi himself has retreated from the stance which he adopted at the beginning of the events under scrutiny." (Paragraph 79). (see [Returns and reintegration](#)).
- 2.5.12 Even where there is no general Article 15(c) risk, the decision maker must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk.
- 2.5.13 For further information on how to consider claims based on Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive see the [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection](#).

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## 2.6 [Are those at risk able to internally relocate within Afghanistan?](#)

### **Kabul**

- 2.6.1 In the country guidance case of [AK](#), when assessing whether Kabul city was a viable internal relocation alternative, the Upper Tribunal held that 'it is necessary to take into account (both in assessing "safety" and "reasonableness") not only the level of violence in that city but also the difficulties experienced by that city's poor and also the many Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living there'. It noted, however, that 'these considerations will not in general make return to Kabul unsafe or unreasonable.' (Paragraph 249, B, (iv)) Decision makers must take account of the current humanitarian situation in Kabul when considering internal relocation there. (see [Kabul](#) and [Internally Displaced Persons \(IDPs\)](#)).

### **Women**

- 2.6.2 In the country guidance case of [AK](#), the Tribunal held that 'Nevertheless, this position is qualified (both in relation to Kabul and other potential places of internal relocation) for certain categories of women. The purport of the



current Home Office OGN on Afghanistan is that whilst women with a male support network may be able to relocate internally, "...it would be unreasonable to expect lone women and female heads of household to relocate internally" (February 2012 OGN, 3.10.8) and the Tribunal sees no basis for taking a different view'. (Paragraph 249, B, (v) of the determination). That position remains unchanged (see also paragraph 2.4.2 above).

## **Outside Kabul**

- 2.6.3 In AK, the Upper Tribunal observed that 'In relation to Ghazni... we note that it is accepted that there are significant numbers of districts in that province under Taliban control (although not the city itself) and we do not exclude that, for most civilians in such districts that is a factor that may make it unreasonable for them to relocate there, although that is not to say that a person with a history of family support for the Taliban, would have difficulties; much will depend on the particular circumstances of the case. Outside Taliban controlled districts, however, we do not find that internal relocation would in general be unreasonable.' (Paragraph 244.)
- 2.6.4 Although not making a finding, the Upper Tribunal made the following observation concerning internal travel: '... we are bound to say that nothing in the evidence before us indicates that the main routes of travel from Kabul to other major cities and towns experience violence at an intensity sufficient to engage Article 15(c) for the ordinary civilian. The position may be different when it comes to travel from the main cities and towns to villages: we note in this regard that Dr Giustozzi...said that "[m]ost indiscriminate violence occurs in the shape of pressure mines, which are indiscriminate by nature. The risk is mainly on the roads connecting the provincial and district cities to the villages." Routes of this kind may be under the control of the Taliban and/or other insurgents and hence will require a case-by-case approach. It is true that the FCO, among others, has issued travel guidance warning against travel to certain parts of Afghanistan (including Ghazni) but they have not done so seeking to apply legal criteria.' (Paragraph 245.)
- 2.6.5 Under UNHCR's assisted return programme, 12,218 Afghan refugees, from Pakistan and Iran, returned to Afghanistan in the first quarter of 2015 (1 January to 31 March), and relocated to all but two of Afghanistan's provinces. With regards to Afghani returnees from Pakistan, including undocumented Afghan nationals from Pakistan, it is reported that returning families reported incidences of coercion and harassment, as well as home and workplace raids in Pakistan and that the areas of the highest returns, like the Kunhar and Kunduz provinces, are rife with conflict. So many returnees could not go to their family villages, and became secondarily displaced inside Afghanistan.
- 2.6.6 In the context of Article 15(c), in general it may be reasonable for a person to relocate to a part of Afghanistan outside Kabul but decision makers must give careful consideration to the relevance and reasonableness of internal relocation on a case-by-case basis taking full account of the individual circumstances of the particular person. Where internal relocation is suggested, decision makers must also consider accessibility of the intended place of relocation.

- 2.6.7 For further information on considering internal relocation, see section 8.2 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Internal Relocation](#).
- 2.7 If refused, is the claim one which is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002?
  - 2.7.1 Where a claim falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
  - 2.7.2 For further information on certification, see the [Asylum Instruction on Non-Suspensive Appeals: Certification Under Section 94 of the NIA Act 2002](#).

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# Country Information

## 3. The protagonists

- 3.1.1 For information on Anti-Government Elements (AGEs) see the Country Information and Guidance [Afghanistan: persons supporting or perceived to support the government and/or international forces](#), and the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan Security situation](#), which also contains details of Pro-Government Forces.

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## 4. Nature and levels of violence

### 4.1 Trends between 2010 and 2014/2015

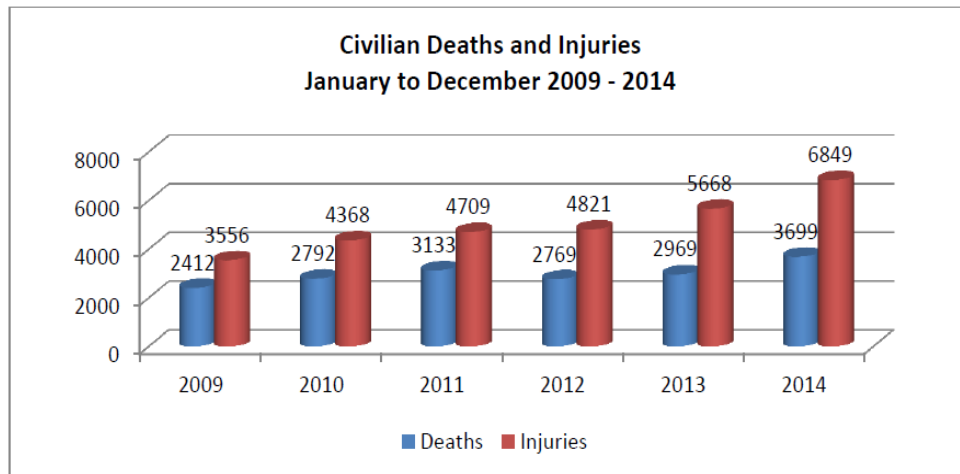
- 4.1.1 The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 47,745 civilian casualties (17,774 deaths and 29,971 injuries), as a result of conflict related violence, between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2014. Whilst injuries to civilians steadily increased between 2010 and 2014, the number of deaths fluctuated, increasing in 2011 compared to 2010, then reducing in 2012 and 2013 before rising again in 2014 to a record 10,548 civilian casualties (3,699 deaths and 6,849 injured), the highest number of civilian deaths and injuries in a single year since recording began in 2009, marking a 25 per cent increase in civilian deaths, a 21 per cent increase in injuries for an overall increase of 22 per cent in civilian casualties compared to 2013.<sup>1</sup> Note that UNAMA does not claim that statistics presented in its report are complete and that there may be under-reporting civilian casualties given limitations inherent in the operating environment.<sup>2</sup> UNAMA attributed 72 per cent of all civilian casualties in 2014 to AGEs and 14 per cent to Pro-Government Forces. Ten per cent of casualties were attributed to ground engagements in which a civilian casualty could not be attributed to a specific party.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary page 1, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>2</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Methodology page ii, date accessed 15 June 2015

<sup>3</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary page 2, date accessed 24 April 2015.



Source: UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014.<sup>4</sup>

- 4.1.2 In the first quarter of 2015 (1 January to 31 March), UNAMA recorded 1,810 civilian casualties (655 deaths and 1,155 injured), a decrease of two per cent compared to the same period in 2014, although women and children casualties increased.<sup>5</sup> (See also [Impact on women and children](#)).
- 4.1.3 UNAMA reported on 11 May 2015 that:  
 ‘From 1 January to 10 May 2015, the Taliban claimed responsibility on their website for 11 separate attacks against legal professionals and court houses which caused 114 civilian casualties (28 killed and 86 injured), an increase of more than 600 per cent from the same period last year. UNAMA documented an additional six incidents of abductions, threats, intimidation and harassment of judicial authorities so far this year.’<sup>6</sup> (see the Country Information and Guidance [Afghanistan: persons supporting or perceived to support the government and/or international forces](#))
- 4.1.4 According to UNAMA, ‘The full transfer of security responsibility from international military forces to Afghan national security forces in 2014 significantly impacted civilian protection throughout Afghanistan. The drawdown of international military forces, in particular the reduction of combat air support to Afghan forces’ ground troops, provided the Taliban and other anti-Government armed groups with more opportunities to launch large-scale ground operations in some areas’.<sup>7</sup> As international military

<sup>4</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary page 1, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>5</sup> UNAMA, Press Release: ‘Latest UNAMA figures show continuing record high civilian casualties’, 12 April 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12254&ctl=Details&mid=15756&ItemID=38675&language=en-US>, date accessed 24 April 2015

<sup>6</sup> UNAMA, Press statement: ‘UNAMA condemns Taliban attack on judges and prosecutors’, 11 May 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12254&ctl=Details&mid=15756&ItemID=38728&language=en-US>, date accessed 13 May 2015.

<sup>7</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on->

forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 2014, and U.S. troops decreased in number<sup>8</sup>, ground operations by AGE's and Afghan national security forces (ANSF) rose. In 2014, civilian deaths and injuries from ground engagements increased by 54 per cent compared to 2013 making them the leading cause of civilian casualties and the biggest killers of women and children in 2014.<sup>9</sup> The United Nations recorded 5,075 security-related incidents between 16 November 2014 and 15 February 2015, an increase of over 10 per cent compared to the same period in 2013/2014 and a 33.2 per cent increase against the same period in 2012/2013. In total, 22,051 security incidents were recorded in 2014, a 10 per cent increase against 2013. The worst affected areas were southern, south-eastern and eastern regions which experienced 68 per cent of all incidents, with Nangarhar Province being the most volatile. The Afghan National Security Forces took countermeasures to thwart the efforts of anti-Government elements to challenge control of a number of key districts and significantly disrupt the elections held in April and June 2014. However, the rise in the overall number of security incidents recorded indicates a mounting challenge to the Afghan security forces from insurgent groups. Unconfirmed reports of significant casualties among anti-Government elements and Afghan forces points to the increasingly attritional nature of the conflict.<sup>10</sup>

- 4.1.5 The highest recorded number of security incidents, compared to the same period each year since 2001, occurred between December 2014 and January 2015, and was attributed in part to a relatively mild winter allowing all parties involved in the conflict to continue their operations.<sup>11</sup>
- 4.1.6 Ground engagements between the ANSF and AGEs were the leading cause of civilian casualties in 2014, in which parties to the conflict also increasingly used high explosive weapons systems, such as increased use of mortars, rockets and grenades in civilian-populated areas.<sup>12</sup> The number of civilian casualties as a result of ground engagements more than doubled in 2014 compared to 2012.<sup>13</sup>

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[Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf](#), Observations page 11, date accessed 24 April 2015

<sup>8</sup> RFE/RL, 'U.S. To Slow Its Afghan Troop Withdrawal', 24 March 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/obama-afghanistan-troop-level-ghani-visit-slow/26918822.html>, date accessed 24 April 2015.

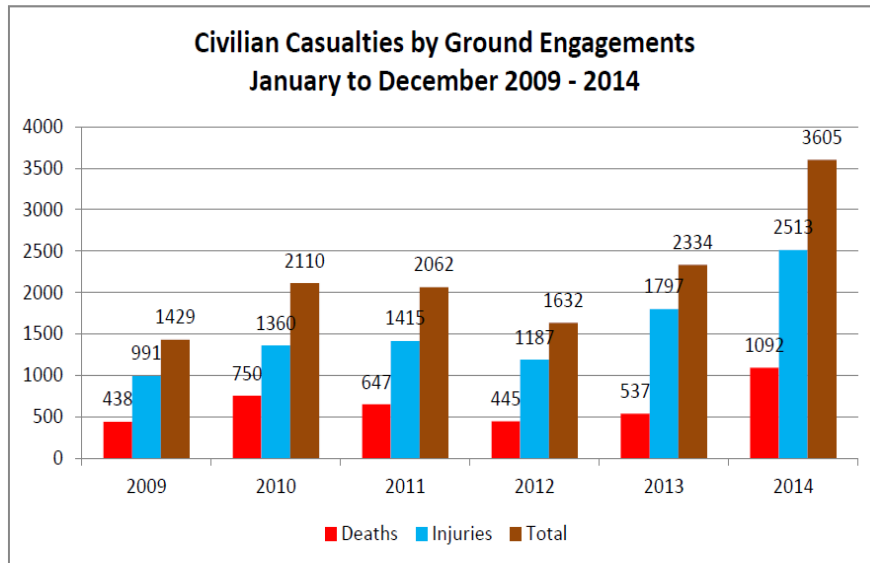
<sup>9</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary pages 1-2, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>10</sup> UN General Assembly: 'The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General', 27 February 2015, available at: [http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1226\\_1426069945\\_n1504851afg.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1426069945_n1504851afg.pdf), paragraphs 12- 13, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>11</sup> UN General Assembly: 'The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General', 27 February 2015, available at: [http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1226\\_1426069945\\_n1504851afg.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1426069945_n1504851afg.pdf), paragraph 13, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>12</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary pages 1-2, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>13</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February



Source: UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014.<sup>14</sup>

- 4.1.7 Although the total number of civilian casualties decreased in the first three months of 2015 – compared to the same period in 2014 – the number of deaths and injuries resulting from ground engagements rose by eight per cent and remained the leading cause of civilian casualties.<sup>15</sup>
- 4.1.8 Civilian casualties caused by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) rose to its highest in 2014 compared to the previous four years. The number of deaths from IEDs, however, decreased slightly compared to 2010, 2011 and 2013 .UNAMA documented 2,978 civilian casualties (925 killed and 2,053 injured) from IEDs in 2014, up three per cent from 2013.<sup>16</sup>
- 4.1.9 In the first quarter of 2015, IEDs were the second leading cause of civilian casualties resulting in 155 deaths and 275 injured, a reduction of 19 per cent compared with the same period in 2014.<sup>17</sup>

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2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary page 5, date accessed 24 April 2015.

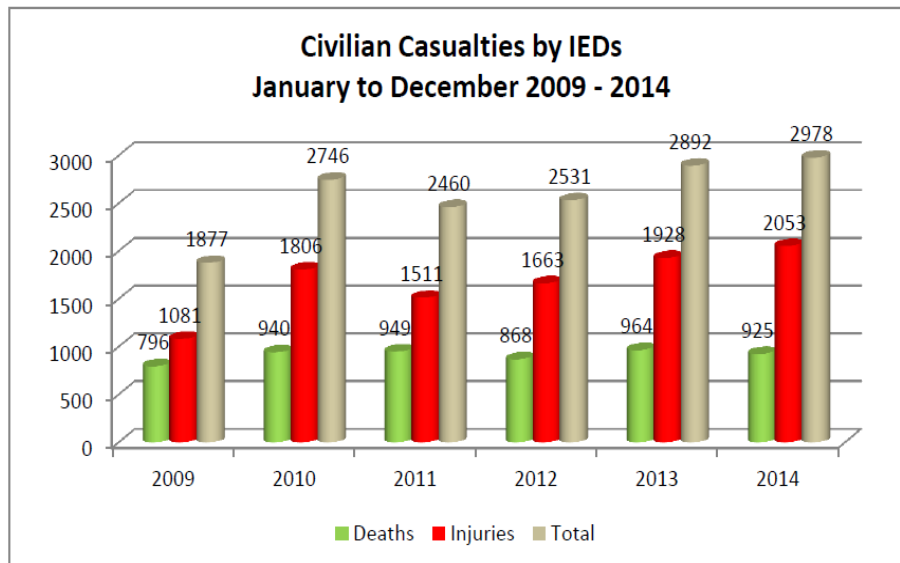
<sup>14</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary page 5, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>15</sup> UNAMA, Press Release: 'Latest UNAMA figures show continuing record high civilian casualties', 12 April 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12254&ctl=Details&mid=15756&ItemID=38675&language=en-US>, date accessed 24 April 2015

<sup>16</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary page 6, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>17</sup> UNAMA, Press Release: 'Latest UNAMA figures show continuing record high civilian casualties', 12 April 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12254&ctl=Details&mid=15756&ItemID=38675&language=en-US>, date accessed 24 April 2015





Source: UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014.<sup>18</sup>

- 4.1.10 Suicide and complex attacks increased in 2014 and caused 1,582 civilian casualties. Targeted killings, including against tribal elders, civilian government and justice officials, and mullahs, reduced by five per cent compared to 2013, but still accounted for 1,114 civilian casualties (752 killed and 361 injured). The remaining civilian casualties were caused by: explosive remnants of war, which has more than doubled since 2012, and was the highest since 2009; aerial operations by international forces; summary executions by AGEs, including beheadings and amputations; and abductions and unlawful killings by all parties to the conflict. There were also incidents of house burnings by the Taliban against civilians who expressed opposition to the group.<sup>19</sup> For further information on the profiles of persons specifically targeted, see the Country Information and Guidance [Afghanistan: persons supporting or perceived to support the government and/or international forces](#).
- 4.1.11 In 2014, UNAMA observed ‘a significant increase in human rights abuses committed against the civilian population by Pro-Government armed groups, together with a widespread failure by Afghan authorities to hold these armed groups accountable, and to protect affected civilians and communities.’<sup>20</sup> A March 2015 Human Rights Watch report noted that ‘More than 13 years after the overthrow of the Taliban government, Afghans continue to suffer serious human rights abuses by government and military officials and their agents. Perpetrators are rarely held to account and the victims are rarely able to gain

<sup>18</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary page 6, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>19</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary pages 7-9, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>20</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Executive summary page 7 date accessed 15 June 2015.



legal redress. This impunity hinges on the inability or unwillingness of the Afghan government and its institutions, including the military, police, and courts, to challenge the strongmen and militias who operate throughout much of the country. The administration of former President Hamid Karzai installed many powerful warlords and failed to confront others, while many others have been funded by and worked alongside international forces, further entrenching them politically into the fabric of Afghan society.’ The report described ‘allegations of mass killings, murder, rape, torture, beatings, enforced disappearances, theft, and arbitrary detention. The perpetrators of these abuses are persons in positions of authority or persons who operate with their backing.’<sup>21</sup>

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## 4.2 Impact on women and children

See [paragraph 5.1.4](#) for the affect of internal displacement on women.

- 4.2.1 As well as a general rise in civilian casualties, UNAMA also documented the highest number of women civilian casualties in 2014 since recording began in 2009. Compared to 2013, 2014 saw a 21 per cent increase in women casualties – 298 deaths and 611 injured. On average 17 women were killed or injured each week during that year as a result of the conflict. Ground engagements caused over half of the women civilian casualties.<sup>22</sup>
- 4.2.2 In addition to being casualties of the conflict, women were placed in the position of becoming sole-income providers to their families when their husbands were killed or injured, though few women were able to find employment, suffering long-term negative social and economic consequences. Although financial compensation was provided by the government, most of the 60 women interviewed by UNAMA did not know how to access this, or received only a small, single payment. Most women were dependent on their extended families to support them.<sup>23</sup>
- 4.2.3 UNAMA also reported that one in four of the 60 women interviewed suffered violence following the loss of their husbands (from relatives and the wider community), including ‘verbal abuse, expulsion from the family home, forced re-marriage, physical abuse and social ostracism’, although many felt renewed tolerance or support from their communities. All of the women

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<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Today We Shall All Die” Afghanistan’s Strongmen and the Legacy of Impunity, 3 March 2015, Summary p.1

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2015/03/03/today-we-shall-all-die-0> date accessed 15 June 2015

<sup>22</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, I. Human Rights Protection in Conflict Areas, Women and the armed conflict page 14, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>23</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, I. Human Rights Protection in Conflict Areas, Women and the armed conflict page 15, date accessed 24 April 2015.

whom UNAMA interviewed stated their financial situation had worsened significantly since their husband had been killed or injured.<sup>24</sup>

4.2.4 An unprecedented number of children casualties occurred in 2014, up 40 per cent since 2013. UNAMA recorded 2,474 child casualties – on average seven deaths or injuries a day. There was an increase in all causes of child casualties compared to 2013, including a rise of 65 per cent from ground engagements; a 21 per cent rise from IEDs; and a 14 per cent rise from explosive remnants of war (ERW). Incidents of sexual violence were also recorded, perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. In 2014, recruitment and use of children both in support and combat roles was observed throughout the country.<sup>25</sup>

4.2.5 Children's education, especially girls, has been affected by the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan; at least 500 schools were closed across the country due to security threats and according to UNICEF figures, 3 million Afghan children, 60 percent of which are girls, had never been inside a school.<sup>26</sup> The Ministry of Education reported with regards to 'access challenges' that:

- Approximately 42% or five million of the estimated 12 million school-aged children and youth do not have access to education;
- Over 5000 schools are without usable buildings, boundary walls, safe drinking water or sanitation facilities;
- Long walking distances to school and lack of safe/proper learning environments are a major impediment toward female participation in schooling;
- No female students enrolled in grades 10-12 in 200 of 412 urban and rural districts;
- 245 out of 412 urban and rural districts do not have a single qualified female teacher;
- 90% of qualified female teachers are located in the nine major urban centers (Kabul, Herat, Nangrahar, Mazar, Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Jozjan and Faryab);
- 453 schools are still closed or have been damaged in the past two years, resulting in 300,000 students deprived of schooling; and, Some 11 million adults remain illiterate.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, I. Human Rights Protection in Conflict Areas, Women and the armed conflict pages 14-15, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>25</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, I. Human Rights Protection in Conflict Areas, Children and Armed Conflict pages 17-18, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>26</sup> The Killid Group, 'Long way from education for all', 9 May 2015, <http://tkg.af/english/reports/others/1737-long-way-from-education-for-all>, date accessed 15 May 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Education, 'Our Key Challenges', undated, <http://moe.gov.af/en/page/2020>, date

### 4.3 Geographical distribution of violence

- 4.3.1 The EASO Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan Security situation, dated January 2015, provided a regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan including incidents of violence, the impact of the violence, and the actors involved in the conflict.<sup>28</sup>
- 4.3.2 UNAMA observed that ‘Outside the relatively secure urban areas, in many districts, particularly in the south, southeast and east regions of the country, the presence of Afghan security forces and the Government was limited to the district centre, often leaving large groups of civilians without protection. .... The proliferation and expanded power of a range of armed groups in 2014 - often aligned with provincial and district Government authorities - particularly in the north, northeast and southeast regions was of increasing concern. UNAMA observed an increase in human rights abuses committed against civilians by Pro-Government armed groups which the Government has not addressed. This impunity – and lack of accountability - contributed to rising insecurity in some parts of the country and decreased protection for civilians.’<sup>29</sup>
- 4.3.3 Increased civilian casualties from ground engagements occurred in all regions of Afghanistan in 2014, the majority in the south, where the number of casualties almost tripled compared to 2013; followed by the eastern region; then northern, central, south east, north east and western regions. The highest number of civilian casualties were recorded in Helmand, then Kunar and Faryab provinces.<sup>30</sup>
- 4.3.4 The Institute for the Study of War reported that in 2014, major Taliban attacks occurred in the province of Helmand, most notably in the district of Sangin and, despite a clearance operation by Afghan and international forces in September, the Taliban had returned to the district by the end of the year. Attacks also took place in the neighbouring provinces of Kandahar, Farah, Nimroz and Uruzgan. The report added:
- ‘Taliban attack patterns in 2014 were not typical of the previous two years. The Taliban conducted high-profile attacks on district centers and security checkpoints throughout the country in late 2014, often with massed,

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accessed 15 May 2015.

<sup>28</sup> EASO, ‘Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan Security situation’, January 2015, <https://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Afghanistan-security-situation-EN.pdf>, date accessed 30 April 2015.

<sup>29</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, Observations page 11, date accessed 15 June 2015

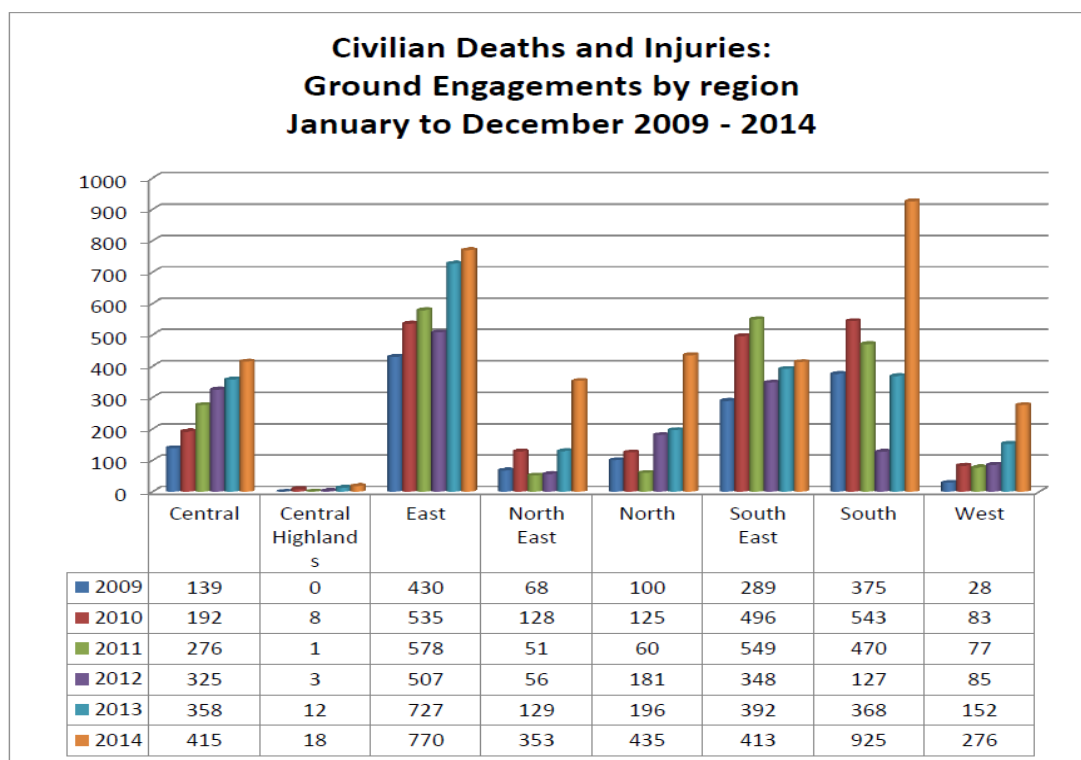
<sup>30</sup> UNAMA, ‘Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, II. Ground Engagements between Parties to the Conflict: Civilians Caught in Crossfire, Regional breakdown of civilian casualties from ground engagements: 2009 through 2014 page 30, date accessed 24 April 2015.

coordinated assaults. These factors led to casualty rates for both Afghan security forces and Afghan civilians in 2014 higher than in any of the last six years. A persistent Taliban presence outside of Kabul indicates that the insurgency is fighting for more than remote district centers, and furthermore that it can regenerate itself and strengthen its military capability. This continued threat will set conditions for greater security challenges in 2015. The escalation in high-profile attacks within Kabul also indicates that the Taliban maintains the capability to threaten the presence of Western interests in the capital. ... For the northern, northeastern, and western regions, civilian casualties from ground engagements in 2014 doubled as compared to 2013. Civilian casualties from ground engagements nearly tripled for the southern region. Taliban activities in Afghanistan's peripheral territories are significant to the overall stability of the state. Notable Taliban activity occurred in four separate Taliban systems, including the southern region, the eastern provinces, Kabul, and the Afghan north. An increased Taliban presence in rural areas in 2014 allowed the Taliban to develop safe-havens and launch attacks against more precious targets, including Kabul.

'... Waves of violence throughout the summer and fall of 2014 demonstrate that Afghanistan's south remains the country's most restive region. ... Significant Taliban attacks and skirmishes in nearby Uruzgan province also increased during the 2014 fighting season, particularly in September and October 2014. Uruzgan, Daikundi, and western Ghazni province comprise a remote and mountainous region east of Sangin that has historically served as sanctuary for the Taliban in central Afghanistan. ... Taliban attacks in eastern Ghazni along the Ring Road in 2014 were likely perpetrated by a separate Taliban system. ... Taliban activity also escalated in Afghanistan's northern provinces according to UNAMA civilian casualty statistics. Insurgents seized and held large swaths of territory, particularly in Kunduz, Sar-e Pul, and Faryab provinces. These provinces were centers of Taliban influence before the 2010 surge of ISAF troops. With the support of other insurgent groups, including the IMU and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), the Taliban used the Pashtun communities in these areas to expand its presence in the non-Pashtun majority northern provinces. With the ANSF stretched thin across much of the northern region, the Taliban reportedly established a basic government structure in several of these areas.'<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> McNally, L., and Bucala, P., 'Afghanistan Report II, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security', Institute for the Study of War, March 2015, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AFGH\\_Report.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AFGH_Report.pdf), pages 4, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 20 date accessed 30 April 2015.



Source: UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014.<sup>32</sup>

- 4.3.5 Consistent with previous years, UNAMA continued to document the highest number of civilian deaths and injuries from IEDs in the south, southeast and eastern regions of the country, with the highest numbers recorded in Helmand, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Faryab, Khost and Ghazni provinces.<sup>33</sup>
- 4.3.6 On 22 April 2015, the Taliban announced that it would launch its annual spring offensive, named Azm (determination), on 24 April, stating its main targets as 'foreign occupiers, especially their permanent military bases... officials of the stooge regime, their military constellations, especially their intelligence, interior ministry, and defense ministry officials.'<sup>34</sup> The Taliban claimed to have launched 108 attacks across the country on 24 April 2015 at Afghan government buildings and to have "killed and wounded many Americans" at the U.S. Bagram Air Base, though no fatalities were reported.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, II. Ground Engagements between Parties to the Conflict: Civilians Caught in Crossfire page 30, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>33</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, III. Anti-Government Elements and Protection of Civilians, IEDs by region page 44, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>34</sup> RFE/RL, 'Afghan Taliban Announces Spring Offensive', 22 April 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-taliban-offensive/26971361.html>, date accessed 27 April 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Reuters, 'Taliban launch spring offensive with rocket attack on U.S. base', 24 April 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/24/us-afghanistan-war-idUSKBN0NF14F20150424>, date accessed 27 April 2015.



- 4.3.7 Reporting in April 2015, UNHCR stated that military operations since mid-February 2015 targeted several districts in the north of Helmand Province, especially Sangin, Kajaki, Musa Qala, and Nawshad.<sup>36</sup> Tolonews reported that February 2015 saw 848 security incidents across Afghanistan, the majority in the southern province of Helmand, with high numbers of security incidents also in Nangarhar, Kandahar, Herat and Kunar.<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of March 2015, ground operations turned to the western areas of Marjia, Sistani and Nada Ali.<sup>38</sup> In March, Helmand witnessed 90 security incidents – the highest in the country – followed by Ghazni, Herat, Nangarhar and Kandahar respectively. Afghan forces reportedly conducted around 400 anti-insurgent operations around the country during March.<sup>39</sup> No incidents were recorded in the province of Bamiyan and Panjshir in February<sup>40</sup>, nor in Bamiyan and Samangan in March.<sup>41</sup>
- 4.3.8 Deutsch Welle (DW) reported on 4 April 2015 that many districts in Afghanistan were falling under the control of the Taliban. The report stated ‘The government is aware that militants are overrunning most of the districts of the southeastern provinces. “Government forces have control only of provincial capitals,” one police officer told DW on condition of anonymity. “We [the police] only operate in the capital cities of these provinces. We don't go inside”.’ An Interior Ministry spokesperson denied that there was any significant threat.<sup>42</sup>
- 4.3.9 A total of 900 security incidents in April 2015 were reported by Tolonews showing an overall increase of 28 percent in insecurity occurrences against March. It also showed a 169 percent increase in civilian casualties that were largely due to suicide bombings. The survey found that a total of 254 civilians lost their lives due to suicide bombings, armed attacks, roadside mines and other insurgent-related incidents.<sup>43</sup> A suicide bomb attack in Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province, killed at least 35 people and

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accessed 27 April 2015.

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, ‘IDP Task Force Kandahar - Update on Helmand’, 10th April 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/552b6e094.html>, date accessed 1 May 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Tolonews, ‘22 Percent Increase in Security Incidents’, 8 March 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/18533-22-percent-increase-in-security-incidents-tolonews>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

<sup>38</sup> UNHCR, ‘IDP Task Force Kandahar - Update on Helmand’, 10th April 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/552b6e094.html>, date accessed 1 May 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Tolonews, ‘88 Percent Increase in Civilian Casualties’, 5 April 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/18919-88-percent-increase-in-civilian-casualties-tolonews>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Tolonews, ‘22 Percent Increase in Security Incidents’, 8 March 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/18533-22-percent-increase-in-security-incidents-tolonews>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Tolonews, ‘88 Percent Increase in Civilian Casualties’, 5 April 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/18919-88-percent-increase-in-civilian-casualties-tolonews>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

<sup>42</sup> DW, Taliban make inroads in Afghan provinces, 4 April 2015, <http://dw.de/p/1Ew3n>, date accessed 15 May 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Tolonews, ‘TOLONews’ April Roundup Notes Sharp Spike In Civilian Casualties’, 5 May 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/19384-tolonews-april-roundup-notes-sharp-spike-in-civilian-casualties>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

injured more than 100 others on 18 April 2015.<sup>44</sup> Positions held by Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the province of Kunduz were attacked by the Taliban on 24 April.<sup>45</sup> Clashes took place in the districts of Imam Sahib, Qala-e-Zal and Gor Tapa, areas within Kunduz City<sup>46</sup>, Chahrdara and Aliabad.<sup>47</sup> Kunduz government officials reported that 190 Taliban militants were killed in the fighting.<sup>48</sup> In April, heavy fighting also took place in Faryab, Farah and Kunar provinces<sup>49</sup>, as well as Helmand, Herat and Nangarhar. Bamiyan and Daikundi were reported to be the safest provinces in April, with no recorded security incidents.<sup>50</sup>

- 4.3.10 The Afghanistan Analysts Network's co-director Thomas Ruttig argues that the fighting underlined some of the well-known weaknesses of the ANSF: a lack of coordination between different forces (army, police, local police), possibly exacerbated by recruitment problems that are hidden both by corruption (producing 'ghost soldiers' and 'ghost policemen') and the current reporting system. The fighting also showed the Taleban able to mount large and simultaneous operations in different areas, but also that they were still a long way from a military victory.<sup>51</sup>
- 4.3.11 The Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs (MIA) reported on 7 May 2015 that, during the past 24 hours, ANSF anti-terrorism operations were carried out in Kabul, Kunar, Baghlan, Kunduz, Faryab, Badakhshan, Sar-e-Pul, Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan, Ghazni, Paktiya, Herat, Badghis and Helmand provinces resulting in the death or injury of 166 armed insurgents, and 15 arrests.<sup>52</sup> The May 2015 Tolonews security report noted over 1,000 insecurity incidents taking place around the country, mostly in southern Kandahar

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<sup>44</sup> OHCHR, 'United Nations Assistant Secretary-General For Human Rights Condemns Suicide Attack During Visit To Jalalabad', 20 April 2015, available at:

[http://www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/301156/423897\\_en.html](http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/301156/423897_en.html), date accessed 30 April 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Ruttig, T., 'ANSF Wrong-Footed: The Taleban offensive in Kunduz', ANN, 3 May 2015, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/ansf-wrong-footed-the-taleban-offensive-in-kunduz/>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Tolonews, 'Clashes Continue in Kunduz As More Troops Deployed', 27 April 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/19254-clashes-continue-in-kunduz-as-more-troops-deployed>, date accessed 30 April 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Ruttig, T., 'ANSF Wrong-Footed: The Taleban offensive in Kunduz', ANN, 3 May 2015, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/ansf-wrong-footed-the-taleban-offensive-in-kunduz/>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Tolonews, '222 Taliban Insurgents killed in a Week', 1 May 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/19320-222-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-a-week>, date accessed 1 May 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Ruttig, T., 'ANSF Wrong-Footed: The Taleban offensive in Kunduz', ANN, 3 May 2015, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/ansf-wrong-footed-the-taleban-offensive-in-kunduz/>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Tolonews, 'TOLONews' April Roundup Notes Sharp Spike In Civilian Casualties', 5 May 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/19384-tolonews-april-roundup-notes-sharp-spike-in-civilian-casualties>, date accessed 8 May 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Ruttig, T., 'ANSF Wrong-Footed: The Taleban offensive in Kunduz', ANN, 3 May 2015, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/ansf-wrong-footed-the-taleban-offensive-in-kunduz/>, date accessed 15 June 2015

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of Interior Affairs, 'Armed Insurgents Suffer Heavy Casualties in Afghan Forces Joint Operations', 7 May 2015, <http://moi.gov.af/en/news/armed-insurgents-suffer-heavy-casualties-in-afghan-forces-joint-operations>, date accessed 8 May 2015.



province. Uruzgan, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Helmand and Herat were respectively reported as the five most unsafe provinces.<sup>53</sup>

4.3.12 The MIA website provided regular news on its counterterrorism operations.<sup>54</sup>

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#### 4.4 Kabul

4.4.1 The Institute for the Study of War reported that:

'Analysts and media sources alike have noted a significant escalation in violence in Kabul during the latter months of 2014. Insurgent violence in Kabul increased in July 2014 and maintained a consistent level of intensity through March 2015. In these attacks, militants focused on targeting Afghan government and Western interests, including foreign military and diplomatic personnel, Afghan security forces, and western NGOs. According to ISW's estimate, at least 77 attacks occurred in Kabul in 2014, compared to the 29 attacks recorded in 2013. An analysis by IHS Jane's supports this assessment, showing that at least 80 attacks occurred in 2014, again more than double the number of attacks recorded in 2013.'<sup>55</sup>

4.4.2 A surge of terrorist attacks in Kabul in mid-May 2015 saw at least 26 deaths and over 80 injuries: On 13 May, an assault on the Kabul Park Palace Hotel killed 14 people.<sup>56</sup> An explosion on the Kabul University campus left two professors wounded over the weekend of 16 May. On 17 May an explosion in the Kart-e-Naw neighbourhood was followed by an explosion on Hawashenasi Road, which killed three people, including two young sisters and wounded 20.<sup>57</sup> A suicide bomb attack near Kabul airport killed three people on 17 May, while at least 18 people were injured.<sup>58</sup> On 19 May a car bomb exploded next to the Ministry of Justice building, killing five and wounding at least 43 others.<sup>59</sup> For a timeline of security incidents in Kabul up to 4 May 2015 see: ACCORD - Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation: [Themendossier zu Afghanistan:](#)

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<sup>53</sup> Tolonews, Civilian Deaths Drop in May Amid High Insurgent Casualties: Report, 6 June 2015 <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/19875-civilian-deaths-drop-in-may-amid-high-insurgent-casualties-report> date accessed 15 June 2015

<sup>54</sup> MIA, News, <http://moi.gov.af/en/news>, date accessed 14 May 2015.

<sup>55</sup> McNally, L., and Bucala, P., 'Afghanistan Report II, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security', Institute for the Study of War, March 2015, THE SECURITY SITUATION IN KABUL p. 17-18

[http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AFGH\\_Report.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AFGH_Report.pdf), date accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>56</sup> BBC News, 'Kabul Park Palace Hotel attack kills 14', 14 May 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-32732083>, date accessed 19 May 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Tolonews, 'Wave of Terrorist Attacks Rattles Kabul', 19 May 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/19588-wave-of-terrorist-attacks-rattles-kabul>, date accessed 19 May 2015.

<sup>58</sup> BBC News, 'Taliban suicide attack kills three near Kabul airport', 17 May 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-32771099>, date accessed 18 May 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Deadly bombing hits Afghanistan's capital', 19 May 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/deadly-bombing-hits-afghanistan-capital-150519131153556.html>, date accessed 19 May 2015.

Allgemeine Sicherheitslage in Afghanistan & Chronologie für Kabul, 04 May 2015.

- 4.4.3 The UN Secretary General provides quarterly updates on the situation in Afghanistan, which includes the security situation; reports on civilian protection are published bi-annually by UNAMA.

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## 5. Humanitarian situation

### 5.1 Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

- 5.1.1 The National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons was launched by the Afghan government in February 2014, and implemented in September 2014. Working with the UN and NGOs, it aimed to safeguard the rights of IDPs in Afghanistan.<sup>60</sup>
- 5.1.2 Armed conflict in Afghanistan is the leading cause of internal displacement. As of March 2015, approximately 850,000 IDPs were recorded by UNHCR since 2002, and more than 21,000 people were reported to have been displaced in March 2015.<sup>61</sup> Around 23,000 people were displaced due to natural disasters in 2014, and over 166,000 due to conflict. The number of IDPs doubled in 2014 compared to 2012, from approximately 400,000 to over 800,000.<sup>62</sup> The areas worst affected by conflict induced displacement are the west, central and southern regions, with the provinces of Faryab and Helmand experiencing the most displacement during March 2015.<sup>63</sup> The most common driver of displacement included ground engagements, threats and intimidation by AGEs, and inter-tribal conflicts. Other causes included general insecurity, criminality and cross-border shelling. Patterns of displacement remained largely localized, meaning that IDPs either moved from rural districts to the provincial capital or across a provincial boundary

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<sup>60</sup> Samuel Hall Consulting, 'Policy brief : National policy on IDPs in Afghanistan - From Policy to Implementation: Engaging with national procedures, national and international stakeholders in 2015', 8 April 2015, p.8 and p.10 <http://samuelhall.org/REPORTS/Afghanistan%20National%20IDP%20Policy%20Brief.pdf>, pages 5-6 and 11, date accessed 1 May 2015.

<sup>61</sup> UNHCR, 'Afghanistan Conflict Induced Internal Displacement, Monthly update', March 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/country,COI,UNHCR,,AFG,,5534d99e4,0.html>, pages 1-2, date accessed 1 May 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Samuel Hall Consulting, Policy brief : National policy on IDPs in Afghanistan - From Policy to Implementation: Engaging with national procedures, national and international stakeholders in 2015, 8 April 2015, <http://samuelhall.org/REPORTS/Afghanistan%20National%20IDP%20Policy%20Brief.pdf>, pages 5 and 7, date accessed 1 May 2015.

<sup>63</sup> UNHCR, 'Afghanistan Conflict Induced Internal Displacement, Monthly update', March 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/country,COI,UNHCR,,AFG,,5534d99e4,0.html>, pages 1-2, date accessed 1 May 2015.

into neighbouring provinces in the same region.<sup>64</sup> UNHCR provides a monthly update of the situation in the major provinces of displacement.<sup>65</sup>

- 5.1.3 Increasing numbers of IDPs live in informal settlements in Afghanistan's major urban centres. Displaced persons, compared to their Afghan counterparts, were more likely to be illiterate; to have lower rates of school enrolment; to have lower household incomes, whilst living in larger households; to be unemployed; and to be food insecure. Displaced women and girls were considered to be at disproportionate risk, living with fewer freedoms and opportunities than when living in their own homes and villages. According to a research study investigating the impacts of IDPs living in poor urban settlements, displaced females face significant enhanced gendered constraints to accessing education, health and employment opportunities. They have lost freedoms, social capital and networks they may have previously enjoyed.<sup>66</sup>
- 5.1.4 The May 2015 report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences noted that 'There has been a significant increase in internal displacement over the past few years as a consequence of the conflict. Other causes of displacement include generalized violence, serious violations of human rights, natural disasters, development projects and man-made disasters. It has been reported that, at the end of September 2014, 755,011 individuals had been internally displaced in Afghanistan. Afghan internally displaced persons do not live in camps, but in informal settlements on the outskirts of major cities. The overcrowded living situation increases the risks of violence for women. Many of them are subjected to domestic violence and forced marriages. Furthermore, the switch in traditional housing conditions, including the move from rural to urban environments, have an effect on women's freedom of movement, as they cannot benefit from the protection of their courtyards, gardens and villages.'<sup>67</sup>
- 5.1.5 Similarly, Samuel Hall reported that 'Data show that IDPs' household income decreases as a result of internal displacement, with skills unfit for their new environments. Higher rates of unemployment lead to irregular and insufficient income and to widespread (over 90%) borrowing of money for

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<sup>64</sup> UNAMA, 'Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', February 2015, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>, I. Human Rights Protection in Conflict Areas, Conflict-Related Displacement of Civilians page 24, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>65</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, regularly updated <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idp-task-force/documents> date accessed 15 June 2015

<sup>66</sup> Schmeidl, Dr. S. and Tyler, D., 'Listening to women and girls displaced to urban Afghanistan', NRC and TLO, January 2015, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5513bec24.html>, Executive summary page 8, date accessed 5 May 2015.

<sup>67</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo; Addendum; Mission to Afghanistan, 12 May 2015 [http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1930\\_1433945982\\_a-hrc-29-27-add-3-eng.doc](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1433945982_a-hrc-29-27-add-3-eng.doc) date accessed 15 June 2015, paragraph 27

basic needs during displacement. Lack of land tenure security, proper housing and informal settlements increase health and protection concerns. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to multiple protection risks, with more than a third of IDP children lacking access to education. Special displacement-related vulnerabilities refer not only to inadequate livelihood opportunities and standard of living but also to the situation of children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and victims of violence, including domestic violence. ... Assessments in Afghanistan have revealed that IDPs are generally more vulnerable than other poor, especially in the first phases of displacement: 1) IDPs live in more precarious housing conditions; 2) IDPs show greater food insecurity in the initial years of displacement; and 3) IDPs live in poor hygiene and sanitation conditions, with few essential services, inadequate access to electricity, water and sanitation facilities. Yet, their needs are not fully met by current levels of assistance.<sup>68</sup>

5.1.6 Further localised information about the humanitarian situation can be found in the following sources:

Afghan Government Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations – this source provides information about assistance provided for IDPs by the Afghan Government.

[Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit publications \(AREU\)](#)

[British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group \(BAAG\) resources](#)

[ICRC \(Red Cross\) Afghanistan country page](#)

[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre - Afghanistan](#)

[IRIN News Afghanistan Country page](#)

[Relief Web Afghanistan country page](#)

[UNHCR Afghanistan country page](#)

[UN reports of the Secretary-General \(See V. Humanitarian assistance\)](#)

[UN OCHA Humanitarian response - Afghanistan](#)

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## 5.2 Aid workers and human rights defenders

5.2.1 According to the ICRC's Director of Operations reporting in April 2015 'Humanitarian needs in Afghanistan are not diminishing. They are growing. We see the fighting is increasing in intensity'. The ICRC helped 345 wounded reach health facilities from remote areas and across battle lines in the first three months of 2015 – an increase of 19% compared with the same period last year.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Samuel Hall Consulting, Policy brief : National policy on IDPs in Afghanistan - From Policy to Implementation: Engaging with national procedures, national and international stakeholders in 2015, 8 April 2015, <http://samuelhall.org/REPORTS/Afghanistan%20National%20IDP%20Policy%20Brief.pdf>, page 7, date accessed 15 June 2015.

<sup>69</sup> ICRC, Afghanistan: Concern over growing number of civilian casualties, 30 April 2015

- 5.2.2 As of December 2013 there were 2,320 humanitarian groups registered with the Afghan government, employing 90,000, the majority of whom were Afghan nationals.<sup>70</sup> Aid workers in Afghanistan faced significant security challenges. Deaths and injuries to staff have been caused by IEDs in deliberately targeted attacks, or as an effect of the blast against other targets. A large proportion of NGO staff casualties were caused by IEDs. The impact of IEDs is a daily reality for NGOs operating in Afghanistan, entailing specific direct costs. These may be financial costs (expensive mitigation or avoidance strategies such as GPS tracking software or armoured vehicles); time and efficiency costs (identifying alternative, less direct but safer routes); or reputational costs (distancing NGOs from local communities or identifying too closely with a military presence). All are highly relevant in a contested and competitive environment where many NGOs are forced to face a choice about whether they can afford or are able to operate as they wish, or whether they can operate at all.<sup>71</sup>
- 5.2.3 According to the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD), 42 humanitarian workers were killed in Afghanistan in 2014 in 116 security incidents. A total of 126 aid workers were casualties of the conflict, which included deaths, injuries and kidnappings.<sup>72</sup> In 2013 there were 167 casualties, including 44 deaths.<sup>73</sup> The International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO) recorded the deaths of 50 humanitarian aid workers in Afghanistan in 2014, 54 injuries, 149 abductions and a total of 232 incidents<sup>74</sup>, compared to 30 fatalities in 2013, 73 injuries, 117 abductions and a total of 228 incidents.<sup>75</sup> According to UNAMA, 57 aid workers were killed in 2014.<sup>76</sup> The UN Humanitarian Coordinator reported that nine members of People in Need's national staff were killed on 2 June 2015, in an attack on its compound in Zari district, Balkh province. 'This most recent attack highlights the challenges aid workers face and the unacceptable sacrifices aid workers make when

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<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/afghanistan-concern-over-growing-number-civilian-casualties> date accessed 15 June 2015

<sup>70</sup> The New York Times, 'Attacks on Aid Workers Rise in Afghanistan, U.N. Says', 2 December 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/03/world/asia/attacks-rise-on-aid-workers-in-afghanistan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/03/world/asia/attacks-rise-on-aid-workers-in-afghanistan.html?_r=0), date accessed 7 May 2015.

<sup>71</sup> Bryce, H., and Dodd. H., 'The Impact of IEDs on the Humanitarian Space in Afghanistan', April 2015, [http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field\\_document/20150409IEDs.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150409IEDs.pdf), pages 8 and 15, date accessed 7 May 2015.

<sup>72</sup> Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD), 'Security Incident Data', 2014, <https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents/search?start=2014&end=2014&detail=1&country=AF>, date accessed 5 May 2015.

<sup>73</sup> Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD), 'Security Incident Data', 2013, <https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents/search?start=2013&end=2013&detail=1&country=AF>, date accessed 5 May 2015.

<sup>74</sup> International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO), 'Country Data 2014', Reporting period : 01/01/14 - 31/12/14, Afghanistan, <http://www.ngosafety.org/#!/country-data/ctnn>, date accessed 5 May 2015.

<sup>75</sup> International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO), 'Country Data 2013 Afghanistan', <http://www.ngosafety.org/#!/country-data-2013/c1fe6>, date accessed 5 May 2015.

<sup>76</sup> UN News Centre, 'UN official 'shocked' by killing of aid workers in Afghanistan', 11 April 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50550#.VUjTzYG3fcs>, date accessed 5 May 2015.



working in Afghanistan. Since the start of 2015, 26 aid workers have been killed, with another 17 injured and 40 abducted.<sup>77</sup>

- 5.2.4 Amnesty International reported that women human rights defenders were targeted not only because of their words or actions in promoting and protecting women's rights, but also because of who they are women in public life. These women are particularly vulnerable as they are seen as defying cultural, religious and social norms concerning the role of women in society. Amnesty International also found that existing support and protection services for women human rights defenders are especially lacking. They are under-resourced, overstretched with limited capacity and lack adequate security provision.<sup>78</sup>
- 5.2.5 Access to health care was hampered due to the security situation, including the occupation of health facilities by armed groups, deliberate delays and harassment at checkpoints, and attacks on medical vehicles and personnel; attacks occurred against health workers and health care facilities.<sup>79 80</sup> The Agency Coordinating Body of Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) heard reports by NGOs of some health facilities being forced to close due to security checkpoints being situated too nearby; soldiers using health facilities as look-out posts, or for shelter; and the destruction of aid workers' motorcycles by security forces who associate their use with militants.<sup>81</sup>
- 5.2.6 For further information on aid workers being directly targeted, see the Country Information and Guidance [Afghanistan: Persons supporting or perceived to support the government and/or international forces](#), section 2.2 Targeted groups, Human rights activists, humanitarian workers and health workers.

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<sup>77</sup> United Nations, Statement from the Humanitarian Coordinator, Mark Bowden, Aid workers killed in Afghanistan, 2 June 2015

<sup>78</sup> Amnesty International, 'Their lives on the line: Women human rights defenders under attack in Afghanistan', 7 April 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/Submitted%20after%202015-05-11T11%2024%2035/ASA1112792015ENGLISH.PDF>, 1. Executive summary pages 10 and 11, date accessed 5 May 2015.

<sup>79</sup> HRW, 'Attacks on Health: Global Report', May 2015, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related\\_material/HHR%20Attacks%20on%20Hospitals%20brochure%200515%20LOWRES.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/HHR%20Attacks%20on%20Hospitals%20brochure%200515%20LOWRES.pdf), High risk countries, Afghanistan page 10, date accessed 21 May 2015.

<sup>80</sup> UN General Assembly: 'The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General', 27 February 2015, available at: [http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1226\\_1426069945\\_n1504851afg.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1426069945_n1504851afg.pdf), paragraph 43, date accessed 24 April 2015.

<sup>81</sup> ACBAR, 'Newsletter – April 2015', <http://www.acbar.org/news/107/ACBAR-Newsletter-April-2015.html>, date accessed 21 May 2015.

## 6. Returns and reintegration

- 6.1.1 Under UNHCR's assisted return programme, 12,218 Afghan refugees, from Pakistan and Iran, returned to Afghanistan in the first quarter of 2015 (1 January to 31 March), which represents a substantial increase compared to the 2,346 Afghan refugees who returned during the same period in 2014. Since January 2015, the return trends from Pakistan have markedly increased following the terrorist attack against the school in Peshawar (KPK) as refugees are facing increasing challenges such as arrests, detention, termination of lease agreements by local landowners, closure of business, extortion and harassment by local Police. The driving factor for nearly 60 per cent of returnees from Pakistan interviewed by UNHCR was cited as the improvement in the security situation. Returns occurred to all but two (Panjsher and Nuristan) of the country's provinces; the majority returned to the east and central regions. UNHCR also recorded the enforced return of 53,590 undocumented (non-refugees) Afghan nationals from Iran (49,071) and Pakistan (4,519) between 1 January-31 March 2015.<sup>82</sup>
- 6.1.2 Reporting on Afghani returnees from Pakistan, the February 2015 UN Secretary-General report notes that 'The majority of families are returning from the Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab areas and have resided there for an average of 15 to 25 years. Returning families have reported incidences of coercion and harassment, as well as home and workplace raids, with many of those interviewed stating that returning to Afghanistan was the only viable option'.<sup>83</sup> UNOCHA reports that 'IOM has recorded more than 53,000 spontaneous returns, an influx 14 times greater than the same period in 2014. UNHCR has also witnessed a significant increase in documented returns, more than five times higher compared to the same period in 2014'.<sup>84</sup> It is reported that 'The areas of the highest returns, like the Kunhar and Kunduz provinces, are rife with conflict. So many returnees could not go to their family villages, and became secondarily displaced inside Afghanistan. Thirty percent of the returnees need help. Mathew Graydon, the spokesman for IOM in Kabul, said they had the resources to help only 10 percent, which meant that only the most vulnerable received some assistance'.<sup>85</sup>
- 6.1.3 In February 2015 it was reported that newly appointed Afghan Minister for Refugees and Repatriation, Hussain Alami Balkhi, stated that he wished to

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<sup>82</sup> UNHCR, 'Afghanistan - Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update, 01 January – 31 March 2015', 31 March 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5534da524.html>, pages 1 and 6, date accessed 7 May 2015.

<sup>83</sup> UN General Assembly, 'The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General', 27 February 2015, available at: [http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1226\\_1426069945\\_n1504851afg.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1426069945_n1504851afg.pdf), paragraph 37 date 15 June 2015.

<sup>84</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 39, 1-30 April 2015 [http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/mhb\\_april\\_2015\\_final\\_lr\\_0.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/mhb_april_2015_final_lr_0.pdf) date accessed 15 June 2015

<sup>85</sup> Voice of America News, Life for Returning Afghan Refugees Goes from Bad to Worse, 29 May 2015 <http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/life-returning-afghan-refugees-goes-bad-worse> date accessed 15 June 2015



reconsider the terms of the existing Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with European countries, concerning returns, and that until new agreements had been made no enforced returns should take place.<sup>86</sup> The Minister also reportedly commented that the security situation in Afghanistan was not stable, that there has been a significant deterioration in security in the past few years since the MoUs were signed, and that 80 per cent of the country was insecure and unsafe.<sup>87</sup> In the most recent statement attributed to the Minister, he “specifically highlighted three of the provinces of Afghanistan as very dangerous. This stands in marked contrast with his statement at the beginning of this discrete saga, when he claimed that only two of the thirty four Afghanistan provinces were safe.”<sup>88</sup>

- 6.1.4 Human Rights Watch also reporting in February 2015 stated that ‘A recent increase in Afghans repatriating from Pakistan appears related to coercive pressure from local governments on Afghans to return to their country since the December 16, 2014 attack by the Pakistani Taliban splinter group Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) on a school in Peshawar in northwestern Pakistan. The attack left at least 148 dead – almost all of them children. “Pakistani officials should not be scapegoating Afghans because of the Taliban’s atrocities in Peshawar,” said Phelim Kine, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “It is inhumane, not to mention unlawful, to return Afghans to places they may face harm and not protect them from harassment and abuse.” Nine times as many Afghan refugees were repatriated from Pakistan in January 2015 as in December 2014, according to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR). UNHCR analysis of the returns indicated that a significant percentage of these 3,829 returns were coercive. Nearly all of the refugees returned from three Pakistani provinces – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Kashmir, and Punjab – where an increase in arrests, detentions, and evictions of Afghans were reported during the same period.’<sup>89</sup>

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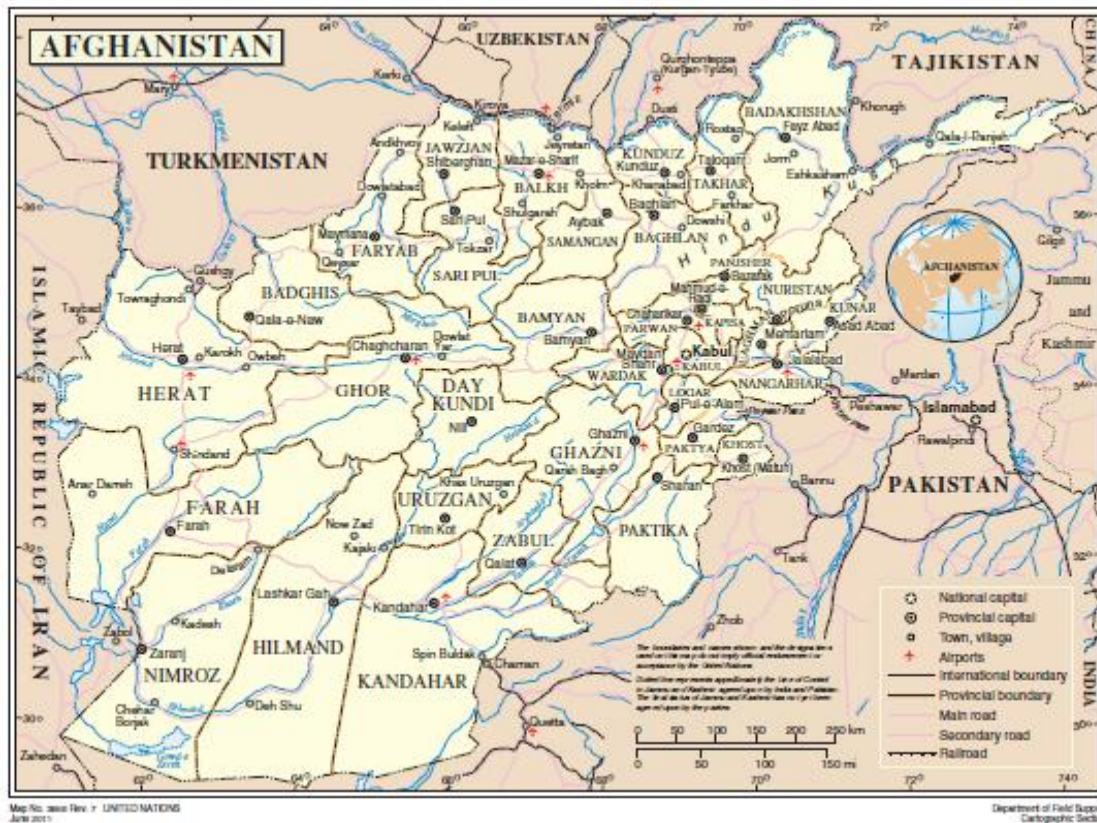
<sup>86</sup> Ghafoor, A., ‘Afghan minister for refugees and repatriation “stop deportation to Afghanistan”’, Kabulblogs [weblog], posted on 21 February 2015, <https://kabulblogs.wordpress.com/2015/02/21/afghan-minister-for-refugees-and-repatriation-stop-deportation-to-afghanistan/>, date accessed 5 June 2015.

<sup>87</sup> Schuster, L., and Ghafoor, A., ‘Afghan minister for refugees and repatriation warns against force returns’, Kabulblogs [weblog], posted on 28 February 2015, <https://kabulblogs.wordpress.com/2015/02/28/afghan-minister-for-refugees-and-repatriation-warns-against-force-returns/>, date accessed 5 June 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber), Naziri & Ors, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (JR – scope - evidence (IJR) [2015] UKUT 437 (IAC) (27 July 2015), <http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2015/437.html>, paragraph 80, date accessed 20 August 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Human Rights Watch, Pakistan: Stop Forced Returns of Afghans, 22 February 2015 <http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/02/21/pakistan-stop-forced-returns-afghans> date accessed 15 June 2015

## 7. Map



Map Afghanistan 1

Source: UN Cartographic map of Afghanistan, June 2011.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> UN Cartographic map of Afghanistan, June 2011, <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/afghanis.pdf>, date accessed 7 May 2015.

# Version Control and Contacts

## Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email [the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

## Clearance

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- valid from 20 August 2015

## Changes from last version of this guidance

Update to Country of Origin Information and inclusion of new legal judgement in the Guidance section.

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