



Country Information and Guidance

Afghanistan: Security

August 2014

Preface

This document provides guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling claims made by nationals/residents of - as well as country of origin information (COI) about - Afghanistan. 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.

Within this instruction, links to specific guidance are those on the Home Office's internal system. Public versions of these documents are available at <https://www.gov.uk/immigration-operational-guidance/asylum-policy>.

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 email: cpi@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

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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. 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/>

It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy.

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Contents

	Paragraphs
Preface	
Guidance	
Basis of claim	1.1.1
Summary of issues	1.1.2
Does all or a material part of Afghanistan meet the threshold of Article 15(c) of the EU Qualification Directive?	1.1.3
Are those at risk able to relocate internally within Afghanistan to escape that risk?	1.1.13
Kabul	1.1.14
Outside Kabul	1.1.17
Policy summary	
Information	
Introduction	1.2.1
Pro-Government forces	1.2.3
Drawdown of international troops	1.2.7
Transition to the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF)	1.2.9
Non-state armed groups	1.2.10
The Taliban/'Quetta Shura Taliban' (QST)	1.2.13
Al Qaeda/Bin Laden	1.2.17
Hekmatyar Faction (Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin)	1.2.19
Haqqani faction	1.2.20
Pakistani groups	1.2.21
Warlords and fiefdoms	1.2.23
Violence	1.2.26
Trends in 2013/2014	1.2.26
Casualties	1.2.34
Women and children	1.2.41
Nature of violence	1.2.46
Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)	1.2.54
Ground engagement between parties to the conflict	1.2.56
Suicide and complex attacks	1.2.60
Targeted killings	1.2.63
Mines and their clearance	1.2.65
Security by region	1.2.68
Central region and Kabul	1.2.76
Northern region	1.2.80
Western region (including southwest)	1.2.83
Southern and eastern regions (including northeast)	1.2.86
Conflict-related displacement	1.2.96
Humanitarian situation	1.2.98
Kabul	1.2.103

Context

Annex A: Map

Annex B: Background information

[Economy](#)

[Geography](#)

[History](#)

[Political affiliation](#)

Annex C: Caselaw

AK (Article 15(c)) Afghanistan CG [2012] UKUT 00163(IAC) (18 May 2012)

Law

Country conditions

1. Guidance

Basis of claim

1.1.1 That the security situation in Afghanistan presents a real risk which threatens life or person and is such that removal would be in breach of Article 15(c) of the European Council Directive (2004/83/EC) of 29 April 2004 (the Qualification Directive). In order for a person to establish that their claim meets the Article 15(c) threshold, they must demonstrate that factors particular to them place them at real risk of serious harm – more so than would normally apply to the civilian population in general – from indiscriminate violence, and that internal relocation to a place where there is not a real risk of serious harm is not reasonable. Such factors could include age, health, gender, ethnicity or occupation. When considering these, decision makers must consider whether these factors mean that the harm an applicant claims to fear is not in fact indiscriminate, but targeted, if not at them personally, at a Refugee Convention-defined population to which they belong.

See Asylum Instructions on [Considering the asylum claim and assessing credibility](#), [Internal Relocation](#) and, where appropriate, [Gender Issues in the Asylum Claim](#).

[Return to contents](#)

Summary of issues

1.1.2 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. The following issues are to be considered:

- Is there an international or internal armed conflict where indiscriminate violence in Afghanistan is at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that the person faces a real risk of harm which threatens his/her life or person solely by being present in the country?
- Are those at risk able to internally relocate within Afghanistan to escape that risk?

See [Annex C: caselaw](#) and country information on [violence and security by region](#).

Does all or a material part of Afghanistan meet the threshold of Article 15 (c) of the EU Qualification Directive?

1.1.3 In the country guidance case of AK, 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

See [Annex C: caselaw](#) and country information on [violence and](#)

conflict in Afghanistan, the level of indiscriminate violence in the country taken as a whole is 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.

- 1.1.4 The Tribunal further found that, even in the provinces worst affected by violence, 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).
- 1.1.5 Since the promulgation of AK in March 2012 the security situation in Afghanistan has fluctuated, improving in 2012 (compared to 2011) but then deteriorating in 2013 (as compared to 2012) and deteriorating again in the first six months of 2014. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 8,615 civilian casualties (2,959 civilian deaths and 5,656 injured) in 2013, marking a seven percent increase in deaths, 17 percent increase in injured, and a 14 percent increase in total civilian casualties compared to 2012. The levels of violence in 2013 were comparable to those documented by UNAMA in 2011, when there were more deaths (3,133 compared to 2,959) but fewer injuries (4,706 compared to 5,656) than in 2013.
- 1.1.6 Between 1 January and 30 June 2014, UNAMA documented 4,853 civilian casualties (1,564 civilian deaths and 3,289 injured), recording a 17 per cent increase in civilian deaths, and a 28 per cent increase in civilians injured for a 24 per cent overall increase in civilian casualties compared to the first six months of 2013. The first six months of 2014 has seen some of the highest civilian casualty rates since the fall of the Taliban regime.
- 1.1.7 Between 1 March and 31 May [2014], the United Nations recorded 5,864 security-related incidents relevant to the work, mobility and safety of civilian actors in Afghanistan. This represented an increase of 22 per cent over the same period in 2013, an increase of 45 per cent over 2012 and a decrease of 6 per cent over 2011. However, the high number of security incidents is mainly attributed to the electoral period; on 5 April, polling day, the United

[security by region.](#)

See country information on [violence](#), [casualties](#) and [security by region.](#)

See country information on [casualties.](#)

See country information on [violence](#), which refers to polling day, and [casualties.](#)

Nations recorded 476 security incidents nationwide, of which at least 271 were directly related to polling.

1.1.8 The dynamics of the conflict and the causes of casualties have also changed with the transfer of responsibility for security to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) from the International Military Forces. Civilian deaths and injuries in the first 6 months of 2014 have increased compared with the same period in 2013 due to escalating ground engagements between the ANSF and insurgent groups, particularly in civilian-populated areas. UNAMA documented increased civilian casualties from ground engagements in every region throughout Afghanistan. During 2013, the proportion of casualties caused by ground engagement and the detonation of improvised explosive devices (in particular radio-controlled devices) increased by 43% and 14% respectively. Increased ground engagement also resulted in an increase in women and children being killed and injured in 2013 compared to 2012, with levels the highest since 2009. Targeted killings accounted for the third-highest number of civilian casualties in 2013.

See country information on [drawdown, violence, trends in violence in 2013/14, nature of violence, the effect of violence on women and children, and targeted killings.](#)

1.1.9 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 the first six months of 2014, 0.02% of the population were directly affected by violence during this time; the figure was 0.03% for 2013.

See country information on [casualties.](#)

1.1.10 The violence is concentrated in certain parts of the country, with 70 per cent of security incidents in 2013 taking place in the east, south-east, and in particular, the south. Government forces are mainly in control in major towns and cities, including Kabul, with anti-Government forces pushed out to rural areas. According to official Afghan sources, only five of the 416 district centres are under permanent Taleban control, but in many others government control barely reaches beyond the immediate centres.

See country information on [security by region.](#)

[Return to contents](#)

1.1.11 The situation in Afghanistan has not deteriorated to such an extent since the Country Guidance case of AK that the Article 15(c) threshold is now met.

See [Annex C: caselaw.](#)

1.1.12 Indiscriminate violence in Afghanistan is not currently at such a level generally, or in a material part of the country, that a civilian would face a real risk of serious harm resulting in a breach of Article 15(c) solely by being present in the country.

Are those at risk able to relocate internally within Afghanistan to escape that risk?

1.1.13 If the personal circumstances of a person are such that they would be at risk of Article 15(c) harm in a part of Afghanistan, internal relocation is likely to be a reasonable alternative. This will depend on an assessment of the safety of travel routes to other areas, the prevailing security, human rights and humanitarian situation in the proposed area of relocation at the time of the decision and the individual's personal circumstances, such as whether they have access to:

- traditional support mechanisms provided by family or their ethnic group;
- access to shelter;
- the availability of basic infrastructure and access to essential services, such as health care, sanitation and education;
- livelihood opportunities;
- the scale of internal displacement in the proposed area of relocation.
- However, 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 do so (AK, paragraph 249, B (v)).

See [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection and Internal Relocation](#).

See [Annex C: Caselaw](#).

Kabul

1.1.14 In the Country Guidance case of AK, when assessing whether Kabul city was a viable internal relocation alternative, the UT 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)) Case workers should take account of the current humanitarian situation

See [Asylum Instructions on Internal Relocation and country information on violence, security by region, the humanitarian situation, and the](#)

in Kabul when considering internal relocation there.

1.1.15 The Tribunal 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.)

1.1.16 The Tribunal also 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 IDPs (paragraph 224).

[Return to contents](#)

[humanitarian situation in Kabul.](#)

[See Annex C: Caselaw.](#)

[See Annex C: Caselaw and country information on the humanitarian situation and the humanitarian situation in Kabul.](#)

Outside Kabul

1.1.17 In AK, the UT 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.)

[See Asylum Instructions on Internal Relocation.](#)

1.1.18 Although not making a finding, the UT 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

[See country information on violence and nature of violence.](#)

against travel to certain parts of Afghanistan (including Ghazni) but they have not done so seeking to apply legal criteria.' (Paragraph 245.)

- 1.1.19 In the context of 15(c), in general it may be reasonable for a person to relocate to a part of Afghanistan outside Kabul but this will depend on an assessment of the safety of travel routes to other areas, the prevailing security and humanitarian situation in the proposed area of relocation and the individual's personal circumstances.

[Return to contents](#)

Policy summary

Despite a rise in civilian casualties in 2013 and the first half of 2014, indiscriminate violence in Afghanistan is not currently at such a level generally, or in a material part of the country, that any civilian, solely by being present there, would face a real risk of serious harm resulting in a breach of Article 15(c).

Internal relocation will generally be a viable option, but the reasonableness of each case must be considered on its own merits. It will generally be unreasonable to expect lone women and female heads of household to relocate internally

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.

1.2. Information

Updated to July 2014.

Introduction

- 1.2.1 The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) annual report of February 2014 stated: 'UNAMA takes the position that the armed conflict in Afghanistan is a non-international armed conflict between the Government of Afghanistan and its armed forces (Afghan National Security Forces supported by international military forces)... and non-State armed groups...' ¹
- 1.2.2 The Congressional Research Service report of 29 May 2014 stated: 'The Obama Administration policy goal is to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a safe haven for terrorist organizations. The Administration has defined that goal as enabling the Afghan government and security forces to defend the country and govern effectively and transparently.' ²

Pro-Government forces

- 1.2.3 The UNAMA report of February 2014 described the composition of the pro-Government forces, stating: 'These forces include, but are not limited to, the ANA [Afghan National Army], ANP [Afghan National Police], ABP [Afghan Border Police], NDS [National Directorate of Security], ALP [Afghan Local Police] and other Pro-Government local defense forces.' ³
- 1.2.4 A UN report dated June 2014 stated:
- 'As at 11 May [2014], the Afghan National Army numbered 185,131 personnel, including 7,013 members of the air force, against a ceiling of 187,000. Overall attrition rates are understood to have decreased somewhat, while re-enlistment rates remain low. With only 1,138 female personnel, the Ministry of Defence continued its efforts to recruit women, including through television advertisements. The challenges encountered included a lack of female recruiters and facilities for women, a risk of abuse and cultural or family prohibitions.' ⁴ A House of Commons Research Paper, referring to an October 2013 'Media

¹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (p xi) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 3 March 2014

² Congressional Research Service, accessed via Refworld; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy; Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=52f216ab4&skip=0&query=SECURITY&coi=AFG> Date accessed: 28 February 2014

³ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (p xi) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf

⁴ UN General Assembly: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security [A/68/910-S/2014/420] (paragraph 22), 18 June 2014 (available at ecoinet) http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1403693685_n1442913.pdf Date accessed: 4 July 2014

Backgrounder' produced by NATO, stated that there are 152,600 Afghan National Police and 30,000 Afghan Local Police.⁵

- 1.2.5 The United Nations report of June 2014 stated: 'UNAMA continued to document allegations of human rights violations and impunity involving the Afghan Local Police, particularly in Kunduz Province. In other locations, the police performed to the satisfaction of the local population, including by providing security for election day.'⁶ UNAMA noted its particular concern over the impunity enjoyed by some ALP members in incidents of serious human rights violations, including summary executions and other forms of killings, punishment and revenge actions against civilians, threats, intimidation and harassment, illegal searches and the occupation of schools. The majority of incidents documented took place in Kunduz and Nangarhar provinces.⁷

See also section on [Targeted killings](#) for information about attacks on the ANSF.

- 1.2.6 The UK House of Commons research report on Afghanistan of March 2014 stated that:

'In a report on allegations of gross human rights violations published in November 2013 the International Criminal Court found that "war crimes and crimes against humanity were and continue to be committed in Afghanistan" by both pro- and anti-government forces. Human Rights Watch says that Afghanistan's human rights situation is showing signs of deteriorating and that although armed conflict is behind many of the abuses, the government is failing to live up to its obligations under international humanitarian law. As the international presence winds down, there is less attention on the activities of the Afghan government and its agencies. Also, many of the institutions built up with the assistance of the international community and crucial to protection of human rights are likely to be less effective as the international presence diminishes.'⁸

[Return to contents](#)

Drawdown of international troops

- 1.2.7 The Congressional Research Service report of 29 May 2014 stated:

'The U.S. security mission had already changed from combat leadership to a "support" role on June 18, 2013. Even with Afghan forces now in the lead, many

⁵ UK Parliament Website <http://www.parliament.uk/>; Prospects for Afghanistan as ISAF withdrawal approaches (4.2 Afghan security forces are taking the lead but problems remain), dated 19 March 2014 <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/RP14-18/prospects-for-afghanistan-as-isaf-withdrawal-approaches> Date accessed: 23 June 2014

⁶ United Nations; General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General; dated 18 June 2014, covering 7 March to 18 June 2014 (paragraph 23) http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1403693685_n1442913.pdf Date accessed: 18 June 2014

⁷ UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); Afghanistan Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2013 (III. Pro-Government Forces and Protection of Civilians, Lack of Accountability: Pro-Government Armed Groups), dated February 2014 http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1392024345_feb-8-2014-poc-report-2013-full-report-eng.pdf Date accessed: 24 July 2014

⁸ UK Parliament Website <http://www.parliament.uk/>; Prospects for Afghanistan as ISAF withdrawal approaches (9. Human rights abuses, 9.1 Getting away with it), dated 19 March 2014 <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/RP14-18/prospects-for-afghanistan-as-isaf-withdrawal-approaches> Date accessed: 23 June 2014

of the long-standing pillars of U.S. and NATO security strategy remain intact until the end of 2014. The United States is partnered with 49 other countries and the Afghan government and security forces. On February 10, 2013, Marine General Joseph Dunford succeeded Lieutenant General John Allen as top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan.’⁹

1.2.8 The same Congressional Research Service report stated:

‘The United States and its partner countries are in the process of winding down the current international security mission by the end of 2014. A planned post-2014 mission will consist mostly of training the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF).

‘The number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, which peaked at about 100,000 in June 2011, was reduced to a “pre-surge” level of about 66,000 by September 2012, and to about 34,000 as of February 2014. The U.S. force will be about 28,000 as of June 1 and will decline further to 22,000 by the end of October. President Obama announced in late May 2014 that the follow-on mission will include 9,800 U.S. forces, declining in the beginning of 2015 to 4,900 mostly in Kabul and at Bagram Airfield, before winding down to a small force (about 1,000) after 2016, engaged mostly in handling military sales to Afghanistan. The post-2014 force is contingent on Afghanistan’s signing a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the United States. All the candidates in the April 5, 2014, presidential election—which took place with apparent high turnout and minimal violence—publicly support the agreement. A successor will take office in late July or August—after votes from a June 14 runoff are certified. Fearing instability after 2014, some ethnic and political faction leaders are reviving their militia forces should the international drawdown lead to a major Taliban push to retake power.’¹⁰

See also [Warlords and fiefdoms](#) and [Trends in 2013/2014](#)

Transition to the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF)

1.2.9 IHS Jane’s provided the following information, dated 14 January 2014:

‘The responsibilities of the fledging Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) began to increase in June 2011 following the beginning of transition of security responsibility from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The withdrawal of foreign troops and their replacement by Afghan security forces are now known as “retrograde and reset operations”. The transition process took place in five “tranches”, of which the fifth and final tranche occurred in June 2013.

‘Seven regions were transferred in the first phase including the provinces of Bamiyan, Panjshir, and Kabul (except Surobi district) and the cities of Lashkar Gah, Mazar e Sharif, Herat, and Mehterlam. The second phase of transfer was announced in November 2011 as recommended by the Joint Afghan-NATO

⁹ Congressional Research Service <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy (Summary, p 13); Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> Date accessed: 24 July 2014

¹⁰ Congressional Research Service <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy (Summary, p 13); Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> Date accessed: 24 July 2014

Inteqal Board (JANIB), a mechanism to assess the transition process. This phase included Balkh, Daikundi, Takhar, Samangan, Kabul, and Nimruz provinces as well as the settlements of Jalalabad, Cheigh Charan, Shebregan, Faizabad, Ghazni, Maidan Shar, and Qalai Naw, and around 40 districts in different provinces. The third of the five tranches began in July 2012, following a similar pattern of transition and was the largest in the process, covering more than 100 districts and 75% of the Afghan population. The fourth tranche allowed ANSF to lead security for 23 out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, while the fifth tranche covered the remaining 11.’¹¹

See also [Trends in 2013/2014](#)

[Return to contents](#)

Non-state armed groups

1.2.10 IHS Jane’s provided the following information, dated 10 September 2013:

‘The deteriorating security situation in the south and east of the country can be attributed to the increased tempo and scale of operations launched by militant Islamist insurgents from either side of the Afghan-Pakistan border. While these are invariably depicted as falling under the convenient Taliban/al-Qaeda banner, the reality is far more complex. The relatively limited pool of hardcore Taliban ideologues is swollen by a blend of local men hired to fight, local leaders keen to preserve their revenue streams, opium farmers angered by government crop eradication programmes and foreign fighters seeking to use Afghanistan as part of a global jihad.

‘The fluidity and highly localised nature of these alliances means that they are unlikely to solidify into a single, unified entity. Indeed, inter-factional fighting is commonplace. However, given the sheer number of actors willing to coalesce, however temporarily, into anti-coalition insurgent forces, there is a genuine concern that competing elements will be keen to prove themselves as the most radical.’¹²

1.2.11 The United Nations General Assembly Security Council’s report of 6 December 2013 stated that anti-Government elements have not succeeded in seizing significant population centres.¹³

1.2.12 For further information on non-state armed groups in Afghanistan you may wish to consult the following sources:

- [Australian National Security](#) – Listed terrorist organisations
- [Global Security](#) – Anti Government Elements (AGE)

¹¹ IHS Jane’s (subscription only) Armed Forces, dated 14 January 2014 (Armed Forces) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304782> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

¹² IHS Jane’s (subscription only) Security, dated 10 September 2013 (Religious militant) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304897> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

¹³ United Nations; General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General; dated 6 December 2013, covering 6 September to 6 December 2013 (Section B. Security, paragraph 13) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/SC_report_6_Dec_13.pdf Date accessed: 3 March 2014

- [UK Home Office – Proscribed terror groups or organisations](#)
- [Institute for the Study of War](#)
- [Jamestown Foundation - Afghanistan](#)
- [National Consortium for the study of terrorism and responses to terrorism](#)
- [RAND Corporation](#)
- [Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium](#)
- [U.S. Government Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations](#)

[Return to contents](#)

The Taliban/'Quetta Shura Taliban'(QST)

1.2.13 The Congressional Research Service report of 29 May 2014 stated:

'The core insurgent faction in Afghanistan remains the Taliban movement, much of which remains at least nominally loyal to Mullah Muhammad Umar, leader of the Taliban regime during 1996-2001. He and those subordinates reportedly still operate from Pakistan, probably areas near the border or near the Pakistani city of Quetta. This accounts for the term usually applied to Umar and his aides: "Quetta Shura Taliban" (QST)... The Taliban warned Afghans not to vote on April 5, 2014, and claimed responsibility for several attacks on election-related targets in Kabul in the weeks leading up to the vote.'¹⁴

See also [Pakistani groups](#)

1.2.14 IHS Jane's provided the following information, dated 10 September 2013:

'Taliban militants are a serious threat to the stability of Afghanistan and their attacks on infrastructure and international and Afghan military forces have increased dramatically since 2006. Audacious attacks since 2008 in Kabul point to a sustained campaign by militants to undertake asymmetric attacks upon high value targets in the capital.'¹⁵

See also [Central region and Kabul](#)

1.2.15 IHS Jane's added the following information, dated 10 February 2014: '... with the Taliban far from defeated, the US has stepped up efforts to talk to the militants in what some view as a tacit admission that the Taliban will continue to be important political actors after 2014.'¹⁶

See also [Targeted killings](#) for information about groups targeted by The Taliban and more generally see also [Nature of violence](#) for human rights violations by non-state armed groups.

1.2.16 The following reports provide further information about the Taliban:

¹⁴ Congressional Research Service <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy (Who is 'The Enemy?' p 13); Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> Date accessed: 24 July 2014

¹⁵ IHS Jane's (subscription only) Security, dated 10 September 2013 (Terrorism and insurgency) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304897> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

¹⁶ IHS Jane's (subscription only) Executive Summary, dated 10 February 2014 (Risk pointers) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304775> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

- [Afghanistan Analysts Network, Can the Taleban outwrestle the government? An assessment of the insurgency's military capability, 25 March 2014](#)
- [EASO COI Report; Afghanistan; Insurgent strategies - intimidation and targeted violence against Afghans](#)
- [EASO COI Report; Afghanistan; Taliban strategies - recruitment.](#)
See also the following two reports for UNHCR's and Amnesty International's opinions on this publication: [Amnesty International opinion on the EASO COI Report 'Afghanistan: Taliban Strategies – Recruitment,' July 2012](#) and [UNHCR, Forced recruitment by the Taliban in Afghanistan: UNHCR's perspective, July 2012](#)

[Return to contents](#)

Al Qaeda/Bin Laden

1.2.17 The Congressional Research Service report of 29 May 2014 stated:

'U.S. officials have long considered Al Qaeda to have a minimal presence in Afghanistan itself, characterizing the organisation as more a facilitator of rather than active participant in insurgent violence there. U.S. officials put the number of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan at between 50-100, who operate mostly in provinces of eastern Afghanistan such as Kunar. Some of these fighters belong to Al Qaeda affiliates such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which is active in Faryab and Konduz provinces. Still, there are concerns that Al Qaeda could regroup in Afghanistan if the security situation there becomes unstable'¹⁷

1.2.18 The report added that, following the death of Bin Laden in May 2011, Ayman al-Zawahiri was named the new leader of Al Qaeda.

See also section on [Southern and eastern regions](#) for information about the group's activities in these regions and the [Nature of violence](#) section.

Hikmatyar Faction (HIG) Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)

1.2.19 The Congressional Research Service report of 29 May 2014 stated:

'Another significant insurgent leader is former mujahedin party leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, who leads Hizb-e-Islami-Gulbuddin (HIG)... HIG currently is ideologically and politically allied with the Taliban insurgents, but HIG fighters sometimes clash with the Taliban over control of territory in HIG's main centers of activity in provinces to the north and east of Kabul. HIG is not widely considered a major factor on the Afghanistan battlefield and has focused primarily on high-profile attacks... HIG is nonetheless widely considered amenable to reconciliation with Kabul.'¹⁸

See also [Northern region](#) and [Southern and eastern regions](#) for further information, as well as the [Nature of violence](#) section.

¹⁷ Congressional Research Service <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy (Who is 'The Enemy?' p 13); Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> Date accessed: 24 July 2014

¹⁸ Congressional Research Service <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy (Who is 'The Enemy?' p 13); Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> Date accessed: 24 July 2014

Haqqani faction

1.2.20 The Congressional Research Service report of 29 May 2014 stated:

‘The “Haqqani Network,” founded by Jalaludin Haqqani, a mujahedin commander and U.S. ally during the U.S.-backed war against the Soviet Union, is often cited by U.S. officials as a potent threat to Afghan security. The Defense Department report on Afghan security calls the faction “the most virulent strain of the insurgency, the greatest risk to coalition forces, and a critical enabler of Al Qaeda.” Jalaludin Haqqani served in the Taliban regime (1996-2001) as Minister of Tribal Affairs, and his network has since fought against the Karzai government. The Haqqani Network is believed closer to Al Qaeda than to the Taliban... The Haqqani Network had about 3,000 fighters and supporters at its zenith during 2004–2010. The Haqqani Network’s [sic] earns funds through licit and illicit businesses in Pakistan and the Persian Gulf and in controlling parts of Khost Province.

‘Suggesting it has been acting as a tool of Pakistani interests, the Haqqani network has targeted several Indian interests in Afghanistan, almost all of which were located outside the Haqqani main base of operations in eastern Afghanistan. The network claimed responsibility for two attacks on India’s embassy in Kabul (July 2008 and October 2009), and is considered the likely perpetrator of the August 4, 2013, attack on India’s consulate in Jalalabad and the May 23, 2014 attack on India’s consulate in Herat. U.S. officials also attributed to the group the June 28, 2011, attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul; a September 10, 2011, truck bombing in Wardak Province (which injured 77 U.S. soldiers); and attacks on the U.S. Embassy and ISAF headquarters in Kabul on September 13, 2011.

‘The attacks on Indian interests and the fact that it is at least tolerated in the North Waziristan area of Pakistan supports those who allege that it has ties to Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) which might view the Haqqanis as a potential ally in a future Afghan political structure.’¹⁹

See also sections on [Central region and Kabul](#) and [Southern and eastern regions](#) for further information as well as the [Nature of violence](#) section.

Return to contents

Pakistani groups

1.2.21 IHS Jane’s provided the following information, dated 10 September 2013:

‘Insurgents operate in and from the Pashtun-dominated southern and eastern areas of Afghanistan and are given refuge in the contiguous tribal areas of Pakistan... The growth of the Pakistani Taliban's influence since 2006 has

¹⁹ Congressional Research Service <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy (Who is ‘The Enemy?’ p 15-16); Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> Date accessed: 24 July 2014

created the false impression of a strong and unified cross-border movement. The movement claims loyalty to Mullah Omar, and supports his campaign to expel foreign forces from Afghanistan and re-establish the Taliban's "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan". However, closer examination reveals that the Pakistani Taliban is a collection of disparate groups that are heavily divided along regional and tribal lines.' ²⁰

See also [The Taliban and Southern and eastern regions](#).

1.2.22 The CRS report of 29 May 2014 provided the following information:

'A major Pakistani group, the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, TTP), primarily challenges the government of Pakistan but also supports the Afghan Taliban. Some TTP fighters reportedly operate from safe havens in Taliban-controlled areas on the Afghan side of the border...Another Pakistani group said to be increasingly active inside Afghanistan is Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LET, or Army of the Righteous). LET is an Islamist militant group that has previously been focused on operations against Indian control of Kashmir. Some assess the group as increasingly active in South Asia and elsewhere. Another Pakistan-based group that is said to be somewhat active in Afghanistan is Lashkar-i-Janghvi—it was accused of several attacks on Afghanistan's Hazara Shiite community during 2011-2012.' ²¹

See also [Nature of violence](#)

Warlords and fiefdoms

1.2.23 IHS Jane's provided the following information, dated 10 February 2014:

'Regional chieftains protect ethnic interests and operate militias with impunity, while a multinational NATO-commanded force (the International Security Assistance Force: ISAF) struggles with an enduring insurgency.' ²²

1.2.24 IHS Jane's further stated: 'President Hamid Karzai has failed to unify Afghanistan and leads a dysfunctional government based on patronage. Its authority does not extend far beyond Kabul because it lacks the military power to enforce its will.

'Before and immediately after the invasion of the country in 2001, some warlords were supported by bribes and other inducements from US agencies in the hope of maintaining stability in outlying regions. The re-emergence of these warlords as key political figures has contributed to the weakness of the central Afghan government. However, as criminal activity increases in the provinces, their militias often represent the only viable security guarantee. These powerful regional figures have no reason to support a central administration and for as

²⁰ Congressional Research Service <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy (Who is 'The Enemy?' p 17); Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://fas.org/spp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> Date accessed: 24 July 2014

²¹ Congressional Research Service <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy (Who is 'The Enemy?' p 17); Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated 29 May 2014 <http://fas.org/spp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> Date accessed: 24 July 2014

²² IHS Jane's (subscription only) Executive Summary, dated 10 February 2014 (Recent developments and key challenges; Context) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304775> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

long as they maintain their influence, Kabul will find it impossible to assert its authority over the whole country. It is unlikely that the age-old system of "quams" (regional groupings), based on linkages between families, clans, and tribes, will be replaced by Western-style democratic practices except in the very long term. The authority of central government is accepted only when accompanied by guarantees of non-interference in their regional affairs and by grants of money. The presence of non-state armed groups is also a fundamental driver behind the massive drug production and trafficking operations in Afghanistan, while inter-factional violence creates additional security problems. There appears to be reluctance on the part of foreign forces to become involved in the neutralisation of illegal militias and their leaders, and efforts at demilitarisation have invariably failed due to the ready availability of small arms. ISAF has neither the remit nor the numbers to tackle the warlords.' ²³

1.2.25 IHS Jane's provided the following information, dated 10 September 2013:

'Afghanistan's ethnic patchwork continues to prove distinct and fractious. In the power vacuum that followed the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the four major ethnic groups (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras) returned swiftly to their default state of predatory localised power play. This has resulted in the creation of a number of competing fiefdoms, ranged exclusively along ethnic lines, which pay lip-service to the central government but in effect remain free to act in their own self-interest. Any semblance of social stability is experienced on a highly localised basis only.' ²⁴

See also [Western region](#) and [Northern region](#) for further information about warlords. See also [Nature of violence](#).

[Return to contents](#)

Violence

Trends in 2013/2014

1.2.26 In a May 2014 report the International Crisis Group noted:

'The overall trend is one of escalating violence and insurgent attacks. Ongoing withdrawals of international soldiers have generally coincided with a deterioration of Kabul's reach in outlying districts. The insurgents have failed to capture major towns and cities, and some areas have experienced more peace and stability in the absence of international troops. Yet, the increasing confidence of the insurgents, as evidenced by their ability to assemble bigger formations for assaults, reduces the chances for meaningful national-level peace talks in 2014-2015... For the first time, the insurgents inflicted almost as many casualties on Afghan security forces in 2013 as they suffered on themselves, and several accounts of battles in remote districts suggested the sides were nearly matched in strength. There are concerns that the balance could tip in favour of the

²³ IHS Jane's (subscription only) Executive Summary, dated 10 February 2014 (Risk pointers) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304775> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

²⁴ IHS Jane's (subscription only) Security, dated 10 September 2013 (Social stability) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304897> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

insurgency, particularly in some rural locations, as foreign troops continue leaving.’²⁵

1.2.27 In its 2014 mid-year report, UNAMA reported:

‘In the first half of 2014, the armed conflict in Afghanistan took a dangerous new turn for civilians. For the first time since 2009, when UNAMA began systematically documenting civilian casualties in Afghanistan, more civilians were found to have been killed and injured in ground engagements and crossfire between Anti-Government Elements and Afghan national security forces than any other tactic. In previous years, the majority of civilians were killed and injured by improvised explosive devices. Between 1 January and 30 June 2014, UNAMA documented 4,853 civilian casualties, (1,564 civilian deaths and 3,289 injured) recording a 17 per cent increase in civilian deaths, and a 28 per cent increase in civilians injured for a 24 per cent overall increase in civilian casualties compared to the first six months of 2013.’²⁶

See also [Casualties](#).

1.2.28 A UN report of June 2014 stated:

‘Between 1 March and 31 May [2014], the United Nations recorded 5,864 security-related incidents relevant to the work, mobility and safety of civilian actors in Afghanistan, particularly those events that affect the delivery of mandated activities and programmes. That represented an increase of 22 per cent over the same period in 2013, an increase of 45 per cent over 2012 and a decrease of 6 per cent over 2011, the most violent year since the fall of the Taliban regime... The high number of security incidents is mainly attributed to the electoral period, given clearance operations by Afghan security forces and attempts by the Taliban to disrupt the electoral process. On 5 April, polling day, the United Nations recorded 476 security incidents nationwide, of which at least 271 were directly related to polling, compared with 488 recorded on the day of the 2010 parliamentary elections and 310 on the day of the 2009 presidential elections. The east was the site of 30 per cent of the incidents on 5 April while the south reported unprecedentedly low levels of violence. Tactics differed from previous elections, as there were fewer incidents of indirect fire and no successful suicide attacks.’²⁷

1.2.29 A UN report of March 2014 stated:

‘...the reporting period [6 December 2013 to 7 March 2014] saw unprecedented numbers of security incidents. This was at least partly the consequence of abnormally mild weather conditions, which meant that the operations of all parties were less hampered than normal. From 16 November 2013 to 15

²⁵ International Crisis Group (ICG) <http://www.crisisgroup.org/> Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, dated 12 May 2014 (Executive Summary) <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf> Date accessed: 28 July 2014

²⁶ UNAMA; Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 1), dated July 2014 <http://unama.unmissions.org/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=rsfPjCgNuz&dl> Date accessed: 25 July 2014

²⁷ UN General Assembly; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (paragraph 19) [A/68/910–S/2014/420], dated 18 June 2014 (available at ecoi.net) http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1403693685_n1442913.pdf Date accessed: 4 July 2014

February 2014, 4,649 security incidents were recorded, representing a 24 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2012/13.’²⁸

1.2.30 The UNAMA report of February 2014 gave the following disclaimer: ‘UNAMA does not claim that statistics presented in this report are complete; UNAMA may be under-reporting civilian casualties given limitations associated within the operating environment.’²⁹ The same report stated: ‘Armed conflict in Afghanistan took an unrelenting toll on Afghan civilians in 2013. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 8,615 civilian casualties (2,959 civilian deaths and 5,656 injured) in 2013, marking a seven percent increase in deaths, 17 percent increase in injured, and a 14 percent increase in total civilian casualties compared to 2012.

‘Escalating deaths and injuries to civilians in 2013 reverses the decline recorded in 2012 and is consistent with record high numbers of civilian casualties documented in 2011. Since 2009, the armed conflict in Afghanistan has claimed the lives of 14,064 Afghan civilians.’³⁰

See also [Casualties](#).

1.2.31 The report further stated:

‘The new trend in 2013 of increased civilian casualties from ground engagements, including the alarming increase in women and children casualties, reflected the changing dynamics of the conflict over the year. The closure of international military bases and reduction in ISAF air and ground operations, particularly ISAF ground operations partnered with Afghan national security forces, gave Anti-Government Elements in some areas greater mobility and capability to attack Afghan forces which were more active and more exposed to attacks than in previous years. Civilians, in particular women and children, were often caught in the cross fire. In addition, security gaps and struggles between armed groups and powerbrokers for influence over territory and political actors also gave rise to increased security incidents and reduced protection for civilians. The fifth and final transfer of security responsibility from international military forces to Afghan security forces began in June 2013 and left security gaps in some areas that Afghan forces had not yet filled. As a result, certain areas were vulnerable to attack by Anti-Government Elements which often led to civilian casualties.’³¹

²⁸ United Nations General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General (paragraph 17), dated 7 March 2014, covering 6 December 2013 to 6 March 2014, accessed via [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net) http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1394798373_n1425215unga-afg.pdf Date accessed: 26 March 2014

²⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (Methodology, p x) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 4 March 2014

³⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 1); dated February 2014 http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 4 March 2014

³¹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 13); dated February 2014 http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 4 March 2014

See [Drawdown of international troops](#) and [Transition to Afghan National Security Forces \(ANSF\)](#) for further information about these subjects. See [Casualties](#) and [Women and children](#) for the impact of the war on these groups. See [Ground engagements](#) for further information on this topic.

1.2.32 The UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines of August 2013 reported that:

‘The security situation in Afghanistan remains unpredictable, with civilians continuing to bear the brunt of the conflict. The Center for Strategic and International Studies has noted that, “There are few prospects of anything approaching local security in much of Afghanistan until long after 2014 – barring some ‘peace’ arrangement that gives insurgents de facto control over high threat areas.”³²

1.2.33 IHS Jane’s provided the following information, dated 10 September 2013: ‘There is a threat of terrorist or criminal violence, kidnappings, and ambushes. There have been numerous attacks against the international aid community, coalition forces, and local civilians. The violence has in large part been linked to Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces and troops loyal to renegade warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar...’³³

See also [The Taliban, Al-Qaeda/Bin Laden and Hikmatyar faction \(HIG\)](#) for further information about these groups

[Return to contents](#)

Casualties

1.2.34 Between 1 January and 30 June 2014:

‘UNAMA documented 4,853 civilian casualties, (1,564 civilian deaths and 3,289 injured) recording a 17 per cent increase in civilian deaths, and a 28 per cent increase in civilians injured for a 24 per cent overall increase in civilian casualties compared to the first six months of 2013... The sharp increase in civilian deaths and injuries in 2014 resulted from escalating ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Afghan national security forces particularly in civilian-populated areas. In the first half of 2014, increasing numbers of Afghan civilians were killed and injured in ground combat. For example, civilian deaths from mortars, rockets and grenades more than doubled from the same six-month period in 2013.’³⁴

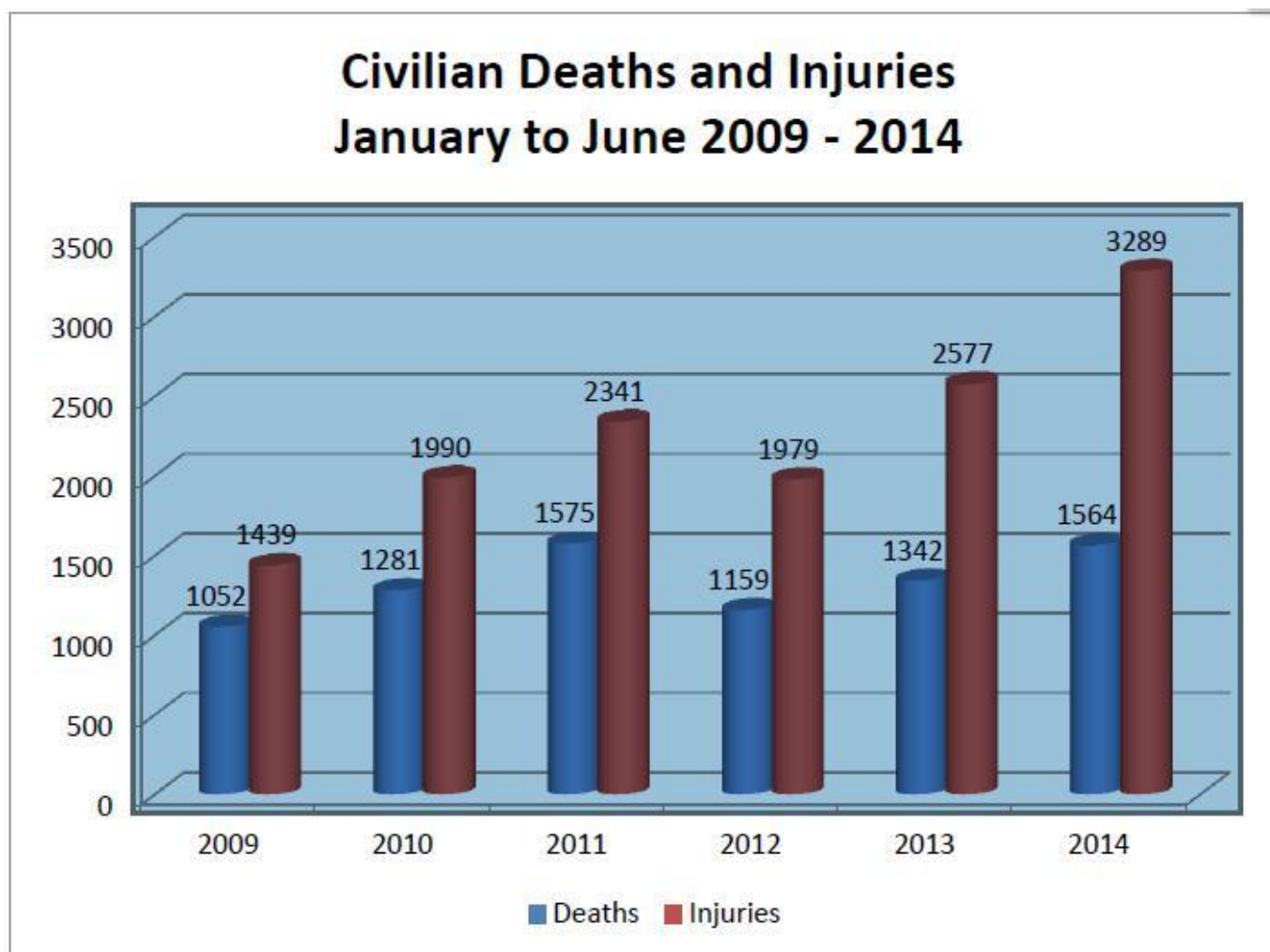
See also [Nature of violence](#) and [Trends in 2013/14](#).

³² UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home> Eligibility Guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, dated 6 August 2013 II. B. The Security Situation in Afghanistan: Impact of the Conflict on Civilians (p 13) http://www.unhcr.se/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFdocuments/Legal/Eligibility_guidelines/UNHCR_eligibility_guidelines_Afghanistan_August_2013.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

³³ IHS Jane’s (subscription-only website) Afghanistan; Security, dated 10 September 2013 (Major threats) <https://janes.ih.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304897&Pubabbr=ev=SAS> Date accessed: 11 March 2014

³⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive summary, p 1); dated July 2014 http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1404997194_unama-mid-year.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

1.2.35 The UNAMA mid-year 2014 report ³⁵ provided the following graph indicating numbers of civilian deaths and injuries, 2009 to mid-2014:



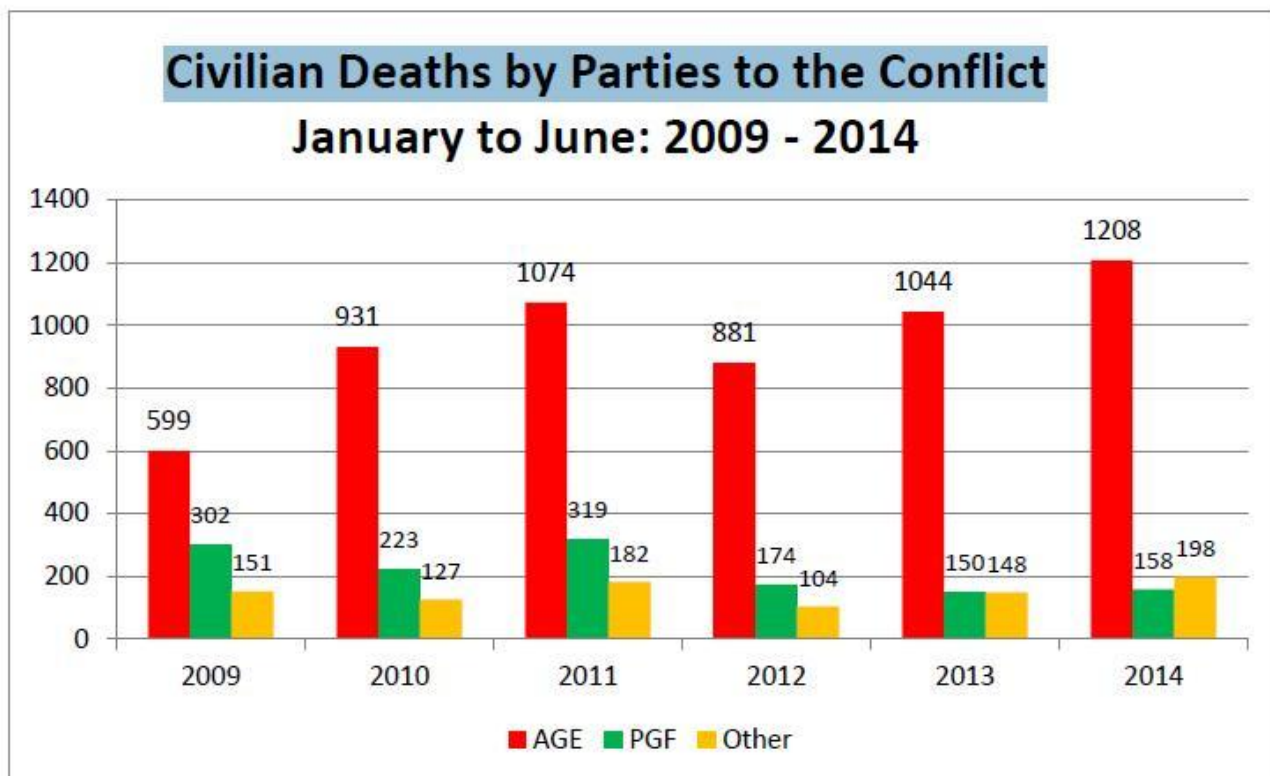
1.2.36 A UN Human Rights Council report of January 2014 stated:

‘In the first 11 months of 2013, civilian deaths and injuries from conflict-related violence increased by 10 per cent compared to the same period in 2012. The rise in civilian casualties reverses the downward trend recorded in 2012, and reflects a return to the high numbers of civilian deaths and injuries recorded in 2011, the highest figures recorded by UNAMA/OHCHR. May 2013 was the deadliest month of the conflict with the highest number of civilian deaths, while August was the second. Between 1 January and 30 November 2013, UNAMA/OHCHR documented 7,899 civilian casualties (2,730 civilians killed and 5,169 injured).’ ³⁶

³⁵ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (p 7); dated July 2014
http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1404997194_unama-mid-year.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

³⁶ UN Human Rights Council <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx> Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and on the achievements of technical assistance in the field of human rights in 2013 (paragraph 10), dated 10 January 2014, A/HRC/25/41 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52e109fa4.html> Date accessed: 26 March 2014

1.2.37 The UNAMA mid-year 2014 report provided the following graph indicating civilian deaths by party to the conflict, 2009 to mid-2014 ³⁷:



(AGE: Anti-Government Elements; PGF: Pro-Government Forces)

1.2.38 The UNAMA 2013 annual report stated: 'In 2013, Anti-Government Elements caused 74 percent of all civilian casualties, deliberately targeting civilians across the country and carrying out attacks without regard for civilian life. UNAMA attributed 6,374 civilian casualties (2,311 civilian deaths and 4,063 injured) to Anti-Government Elements, an increase of four percent compared to 2012.' ³⁸

1.2.39 The UNAMA 2013 annual report stated: 'Pro-Government Forces caused 11 percent of all civilian casualties or 956 civilian casualties (341 deaths and 615 injured), a 59 percent increase compared to 2012. UNAMA attributed 57 percent of all civilian casualties caused by Pro-Government Forces to Afghan national security forces, 27 percent to international military forces and 16 percent to joint operations.

'UNAMA observed that the overall increase in civilian deaths and injuries by Pro-Government Forces resulted from rising civilian casualties in ground operations led by Afghan national security forces. Three-hundred and seventy-five (375)

³⁷ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 2), dated July 2014 <http://unama.unmissions.org/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=rsfPjCqNuz&dl> Date accessed: 25 July 2014

³⁸ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive summary, p 3); dated February 2014 http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 4 March 2014

civilian casualties (99 civilian deaths and 276 injured) were attributed to these forces during ground operations, a 129 per cent increase from 2012.’³⁹

See also [Ground engagements](#) for further information about this subject.

- 1.2.40 The following source provides an overview of the security situation in Kabul (the second half of the document is in English):

ACCORD, update on general security situation,
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/276708/392874_en.html

See also [Ground engagements](#), [Drawdown of international forces](#) and [Transition to the ANSF](#) for further information on these subjects, [Nature of violence](#) for further information about casualties, and [Southern and eastern regions](#) for information about the security situation there.

[Return to contents](#)

Women and children

- 1.2.41 In its 2014 mid-year report, UNAMA stated: ‘Overall, conflict-related violence had a particularly harmful impact on women and children in the first half of 2014. UNAMA recorded 1,071 children civilian casualties (295 children killed and 776 injured) up 34 per cent compared to the first six months of 2013. One hundred and forty eight (148) women killed and 292 injured (440 women civilian casualties), up 24 per cent from 2013.’⁴⁰

- 1.2.42 The same report added:

‘Ground engagements caused increasing harm to women and children in 2014, killing and injuring more women and children than any other tactic. Ground engagements accounted for the majority of women casualties (256 casualties, comprising 64 deaths and 192 injuries) - an increase of 61 per cent which accounted for 58 per cent of all civilian women casualties in the first six months of 2014. Ground engagements also caused the majority of child injuries (520 casualties including 112 deaths and 408 injuries), a 110 per cent increase from the first six months of 2013, and comprised 49 per cent of children civilian casualties in 2014. Most of the incidents documented involved women and children caught in crossfire or stray munitions impacting their homes.’⁴¹

See [Ground engagements](#) for further information on this subject.

³⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive summary, p 7); dated February 2014
http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf
Date accessed: 4 March 2014

⁴⁰ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 3), dated July 2014 <http://unama.unmissions.org/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=rsfPjCgNuz&dl> Date accessed: 25 July 2014

⁴¹ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (p 29), dated July 2014 <http://unama.unmissions.org/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=rsfPjCgNuz&dl> Date accessed: 25 July 2014

1.2.43 However, in the suicide bombing of a market in Orgun district of Paktika province on 15 July 2014 which killed 89 people, it was also women and children who made up the majority of the victims.⁴²

See [Suicide and complex attacks](#) for further information on this topic.

1.2.44 The UNAMA 2013 annual report stated: ‘Increased ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces with civilians caught in the crossfire was a new trend with ground engagements causing 27 percent of all civilian deaths and injuries in 2013.

‘UNAMA observed that 2013 was the worst year for Afghan women, girls and boys since 2009 with the highest recorded number of women and children’s deaths and injuries. Conflict-related violence caused 746 women casualties (235 women killed and 511 injured), up 36 percent from 2012. Child casualties increased by 34 percent compared to 2013 to 1,756 with 561 children killed and 1,195 injured.

‘In line with the new trend of increased civilian casualties from ground engagements, 39 percent of all women and children casualties were from ground engagements which caused the most women and child casualties in 2013. While ground engagements injured the most women and children in 2013, IEDs remained the biggest killer of women and children.’⁴³

See also [Trends in 2013/2014](#) and [Ground engagements](#) for further information about these subjects.

1.2.45 The United Nations report of December 2013 stated:

‘Afghan children continued to suffer the impact of the armed conflict. Between 1 August and 31 October, UNAMA documented 444 incidents of children being killed and maimed by conflict-related violence — 138 deaths and 306 injuries. This reflects a 6 per cent reduction in deaths and a 23 per cent rise in injuries. Artillery and rocket shelling, together with crossfire shootings during ground engagements, killed 42 children and injured 145, a 67 per cent increase over the same period in 2012. Unexploded ordnance and landmine detonations resulted in another 13 child deaths and 27 injuries, on par with the same period in 2012. Most child casualties (62 per cent) were attributed to armed opposition groups and 14 per cent to pro-Government forces, with the remainder not being attributable. UNAMA also documented 23 attacks against educational facilities, including firing by anti-Government elements on a school in Maiwand (Kandahar Province) on 26 October, which killed an 8-year-old boy.’⁴⁴

See also [Targeted killings](#) for further information about attacks on schools, teachers and pupils.

⁴² Bangladesh Daily Star <http://www.thedailystar.net/> Bomb kills 89 in Afghan market, dated 16 July 2014 <http://www.thedailystar.net/newsarchive/bomb-kills-89-in-afghan-market-33568> Date accessed: 28 July 2014

⁴³ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive summary, p 2); dated February 2014 http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 4 March 2014

⁴⁴ United Nations <http://www.un.org/> General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General; dated 6 December 2013, covering 6 September to 6 December 2013 (Section III. Human Rights, paragraph 25) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/SC_report_6_Dec_13.pdf Date accessed: 3 March 2014

Nature of violence

1.2.46 A UN report of June 2014 stated:

‘Armed clashes accounted for 45 per cent of security incidents between 1 March and 31 May [2014] and improvised explosive devices for 29 per cent. In seeking to exert influence through fear and intimidation, targeted killings continued at a high level. Between 1 March and 31 May, 229 assassinations and failed assassination attempts were recorded, which represents an increase of 32 per cent over the same period in 2013. There was also a major spike in suicide attacks in the run-up to the first day of polling, with 12 incidents, including five in Kabul, recorded between 20 March and 3 April. In total, there were 32 suicide attacks between 1 March and 31 May—up from 25 in the same period in 2013. High-profile incidents in the period included a complex assault on a luxury hotel where families were celebrating Nawruz (the Afghan New Year) on 20 March, in which 10 civilians died, and the attack on the Indian consulate in the western city of Herat in the early hours of 24 May, where the rapid actions of security personnel helped prevent fatalities. The targeted killing of foreigners, by a variety of perpetrators, was a prominent feature of the period. On 11 March, a Swedish journalist was shot dead in the diplomatic area of the capital by parties unknown; on 4 April in Khost, a police officer shot two journalists, one of whom, a German photographer, fatally; and, on 24 April, three foreign citizens were killed when a police officer opened fire at a hospital in the capital.’⁴⁵

See also [Improvised explosive devices](#), [Suicide and complex attacks](#) and [Targeted killings](#) for further information on these subjects.

1.2.47 UNAMA stated the following in its mid-year report 2014:

‘UNAMA attributed four per cent of civilian casualties to explosive remnants of war and the remaining one per cent to cross-border shelling from Pakistan into Afghanistan. Compared with the first six months of 2009, when UNAMA began to monitor civilian casualties, the number of civilians killed by Anti-Government Elements doubled in 2014 (from 599 to 1,208), while the number of civilians killed by Pro-Government forces has been cut by half (from 302 to 158), almost entirely due to reduced civilian casualties from aerial operations of international military forces.’⁴⁶

See also [Casualties](#).

1.2.48 The U.S. Department of State 2013 report on terrorism stated that in 2013:

‘insurgents conducted a significant number of large vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attacks, targeting Coalition Forces (CF) bases, military convoys, and Afghan government buildings, mostly in southern and eastern Afghanistan, including Kabul. Insurgents across Afghanistan used a variety of

⁴⁵ UN General Assembly: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (paragraph 20) [A/68/910–S/2014/420], dated 18 June 2014 (available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1403693685_n1442913.pdf)) http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1403693685_n1442913.pdf Date accessed: 4 July 2014

⁴⁶ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 1), dated July 2014 <http://unama.unmissions.org/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=rsfPjCgNuz&dl> Date accessed: 25 July 2014

tactics to target Afghan security personnel and CF in major cities and rural areas, seeking to expand their territorial influence and further disrupt civil governance. In major cities, attacks were often well-coordinated and complex, with the intention of garnering media attention; in rural areas, they targeted the ANSF. Insurgents carried out several targeted assassinations of provincial Afghan leaders. As in previous years, a greater number of attacks occurred during the summer months. Helmand, Kandahar, Ghazni, and Wardak represented the most dangerous provinces for Afghan security personnel and CF.⁴⁷

1.2.49 The United Nations report of 6 December 2013 stated:

‘In the first 10 months of the year [2013], incidents were on average 13.2 per cent higher than in 2012, but 16 per cent lower than 2011. There were 89 suicide attacks in the first 10 months of the year [2013] — the same as 2012 — with 45 of them in Kandahar, Helmand, Paktika and Kabul Provinces. High-profile complex attacks included the assault on the United States consulate in Herat on 13 September, in which at least eight people died, and the explosion on 15 October at a provincial mosque during an Eid al-Adha commemoration service, killing the Governor of Logar Province and three others. On 18 October, in the capital’s first suicide attack since July, an international military convoy was targeted on the outskirts of Kabul outside a commercial compound housing United Nations personnel. Two civilians were killed in addition to the attacker. On 16 November a blast near facilities being prepared for the consultative loya jirga killed 8 civilians and injured 23 others. Particularly notable was the continued increase in the scale of explosive devices, including the discovery on 14 October of the largest potential truck bomb yet found in Afghanistan, carrying 27 tons of explosives and 68 anti-tank mines... The United Nations, its implementing partners and other humanitarian entities experienced a variety of direct and collateral incidents, including threats and hostile surveillance against facilities.’⁴⁸

1.2.50 According to the August 2013 UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines: ‘With the ongoing security transition, the nature of the conflict has changed as AGEs have changed the focus of their attacks from the IMF to Afghan targets. AGE [anti-government elements] attacks have shown a significant increase in targeted killings of local civilian leaders and a general campaign of intimidation aimed at controlling communities in rural areas.’⁴⁹

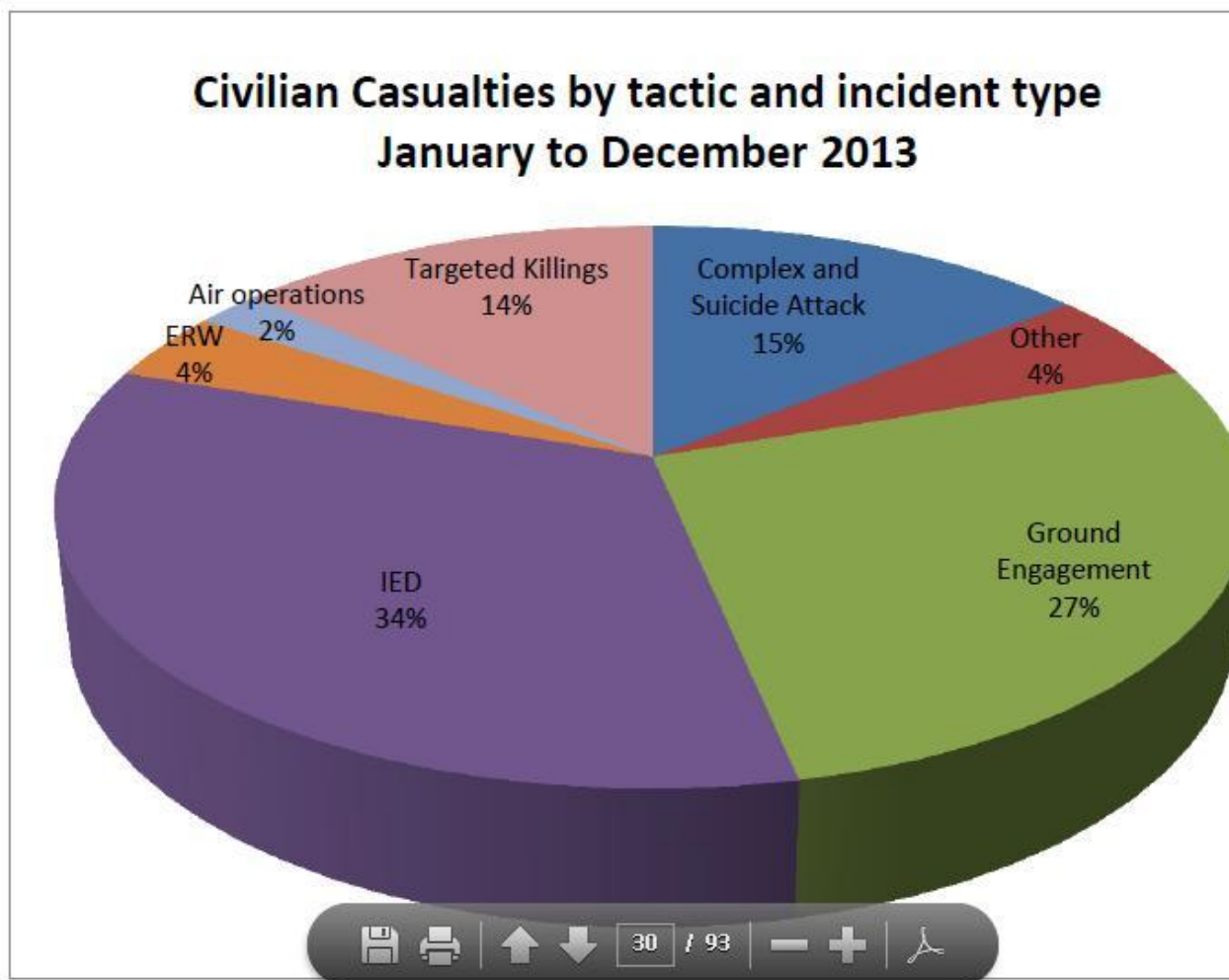
See also [Trends in 2013/14](#) and [Targeted killings](#) for further information on these subjects.

⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State <http://www.state.gov/> Country Reports on Terrorism 2013, Chapter 2. Country Reports: South and Central Asia Overview, dated April 2014 (Afghanistan) <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224824.htm> Date accessed: 28 July 2014

⁴⁸ United Nations <http://www.un.org/> General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General; dated 6 December 2013, covering 6 September to 6 December 2013 (Section B. Security, paragraph 17) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/SC_report_6_Dec_13.pdf Date accessed: 3 March 2014

⁴⁹ UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/> Eligibility Guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, 6 August 2013 II. B. The Security Situation in Afghanistan: Impact of the Conflict on Civilians (p 13) http://www.unhcr.se/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFdocuments/Legal/Eligibility_guidelines/UNHCR_eligibility_guidelines_Afghanistan_August_2013.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

1.2.51 UNAMA⁵⁰ produced the pie chart below setting out the proportion of casualties by tactic and incident in 2013.

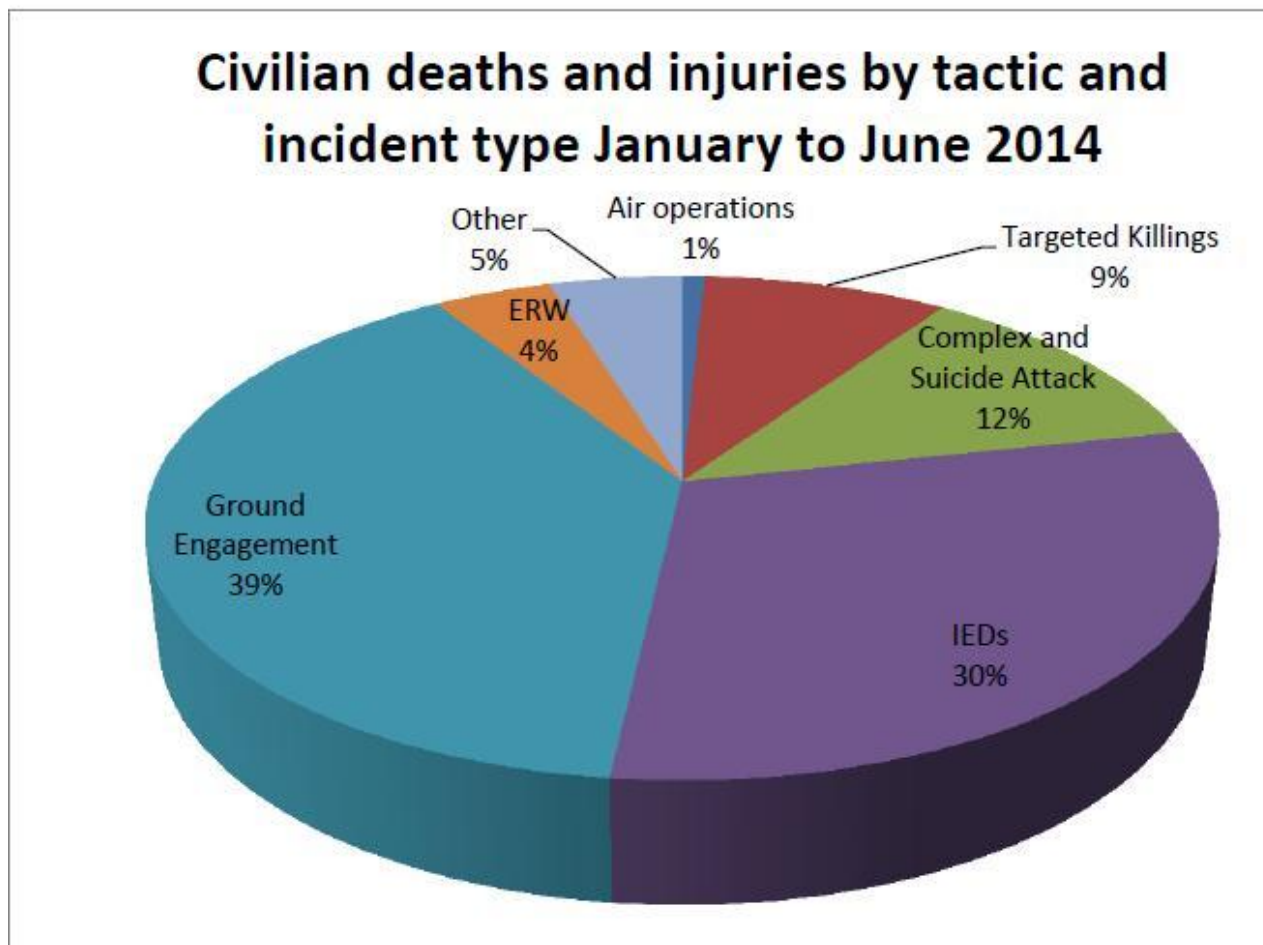


(ERW: explosive remnants of war; IED: improvised explosive devices.)

[Return to contents](#)

⁵⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (Executive Summary, p 10) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf
Date accessed: 4 March 2014

1.2.52 UNAMA also produced the following pie chart showing civilian deaths and injuries by tactic and incident type for the first six months of 2014.⁵¹



1.2.53 The UK House of Commons research report on Afghanistan of March 2014 stated that: 'In a report on allegations of gross human rights violations published in November 2013 the International Criminal Court found that "war crimes and crimes against humanity were and continue to be committed in Afghanistan" by both pro- and anti-government forces.'⁵²

⁵¹ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 5), dated July 2014 http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1404997194_unama-mid-year.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

⁵² UK Parliament Website <http://www.parliament.uk/> Prospects for Afghanistan as ISAF withdrawal approaches (9. Human rights abuses, 9.1 Getting away with it), dated 19 March 2014 <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/RP14-18/prospects-for-afghanistan-as-isaf-withdrawal-approaches> Date accessed: 28 July 2014

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs)

1.2.54 In its mid-year 2014 report, UNAMA noted:

‘Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used by Anti-Government Elements – the second highest cause of civilian casualties – also killed and injured Afghan civilians at unprecedented levels. Between 1 January and 30 June 2014, UNAMA documented 1,463 civilian casualties (463 civilian deaths and 1,000 injured) a seven per cent increase from the same period in 2013 and the highest recorded number of civilian deaths and injuries from IEDs since 2009. Improvised explosive devices continued to be placed indiscriminately in areas populated or frequented by civilians and the use of illegal pressure-plate IEDs increased in violation of international humanitarian law. UNAMA documented 205 incidents of Anti-Government Element activating remote-controlled improvised explosive devices (RC-IEDs) in public areas, with devastating consequences for civilians. Between 1 January and 30 June 2014, UNAMA recorded 637 civilian casualties (150 civilians killed and 487 injured) from RC-IED attacks, a 13 per cent increase from the same period in 2013. Remote-controlled IEDs accounted for 44 per cent of all civilian casualties from IEDs and 13 per cent of total civilian casualties for the first six months of 2014. The majority of civilian casualties from RC-IED attacks appeared to have resulted from attacks directed at Afghan security forces, mostly Afghan National Police. Between 1 January and 30 June 2014, UNAMA documented 308 civilian casualties (161 civilian deaths and 147 injured) from illegal pressure-plate IEDs (PP-IEDs), a 33 per cent increase from the same period in 2013, reversing a decline in the use of these IEDs observed in 2013. Pressure-plate IEDs accounted for 21 per cent of civilian casualties from IEDs, and six per cent of civilian casualties from all tactics.’⁵³

See also [Casualties](#) and [Nature of violence](#).

1.2.55 The UNAMA 2013 annual report stated:

‘Indiscriminate and unlawful use of IEDs by Anti-Government Elements, the only party to the conflict that uses IED, increased and was the leading cause of civilian deaths and injuries in 2013, accounting for 34 percent of all civilian casualties. UNAMA documented 2,890 civilian casualties (962 civilian deaths and 1,928 injured) from IEDs, a 14 percent increase from 2012`. Since 2009, IEDs in Afghanistan have killed or injured 12,504 civilians (4,515 civilian deaths and 7,989 civilians injured) in 3,716 separate IED attacks.

‘UNAMA notes with concern the dramatic rise in civilian casualties caused by radio-controlled IEDs (RC-IEDs), documenting 356 separate RC-IED attacks. These devices caused 1,149 civilian casualties (257 civilians killed and 892 injured), an 84 percent increase from 2012.

‘Civilian casualties from pressure-plate or victim-activated IEDs (PP-IEDs) declined by 39 percent from 2012 causing 557 civilian casualties (245 civilian deaths and 312 injured). While the decrease is noted, the human cost of PP-IED attacks in 2013 remained high. PP-IEDs were detonated in public areas used by

⁵³ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 3), dated July 2014 http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1404997194_unama-mid-year.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

civilians such as roads, markets, Government offices, bazaars, in and around schools, and bus stations. UNAMA reiterates that PP-IEDs as victim-activated devices - which are triggered by any person including children stepping on them or any vehicle driving over them such as civilian minibuses - are indiscriminate reinforcing its call on Anti-Government Elements to stop using them...'⁵⁴

[Return to contents](#)

Ground engagement between parties to the conflict

1.2.56 In July 2014, the UN reported that, '... ground combat among the warring parties surpassed improvised explosive devices (IEDs) as the leading cause of conflict-related death and injury to Afghan civilians in the first six months of 2014...

'This "disturbing upward spiral" has meant the number of children and other vulnerable Afghans killed and wounded since the beginning of the year rose dramatically and "is proving to be devastating", according to the sobering new survey released in Kabul by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)... Attacks which fail to distinguish between a military and civilian objective and attacks that deliberately target civilians are serious violations of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

'The 2014 Mid-Year Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, prepared in coordination with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), notes that while civilian casualties caused by IEDs also increased to unprecedented levels over the same period in 2013, deaths and injuries caused by mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire in ground engagements jumped dramatically as the frequency and intensity of these incidents increased in 2014, particularly in areas with concentrated civilian populations.

"The nature of the conflict in Afghanistan is changing in 2014 with an escalation of ground engagements in civilian-populated areas," said the UN Special Representative for the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, Ján Kubiš.'⁵⁵

See also [Trends in 2013/14](#).

1.2.57 In its mid-year 2014 report UNAMA stated:

'UNAMA documented 1,901 civilian casualties (474 civilian deaths and 1,427 injured) from ground engagements alone, up 89 per cent from 2013. Ground combat was the leading cause of civilian casualties in the first half of 2014, accounting for 39 per cent of all civilian deaths and injuries. Of the 1,901 civilian casualties from ground engagements, UNAMA attributed 52 per cent (270 civilian deaths and 718 injured for 988 civilian casualties) to Anti-Government Elements and 14 percent (74 civilian deaths and 200 injured for 274 civilian

⁵⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 3-5), dated February 2014 http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf
Date accessed: 4 March 2014

⁵⁵ UN News Service; Afghanistan: Ground combat taking 'devastating' civilian toll, says UN, reporting sharp rise in casualties, 9 July 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53bfd8bc4.html> Date accessed: 30 July 2014

casualties) to Pro-Government Forces. UNAMA could not attribute civilian casualties to either party in 32 per cent of ground engagements that caused civilian casualties (127 civilian deaths and 472 injured for 599 civilian casualties). The remaining civilian casualties from ground engagements were attributed to cross-border shelling. The intensification of ground fighting in civilian-populated areas took an unprecedented toll on women and children. Child casualties from ground engagements more than doubled, with 520 children civilian casualties (112 children killed and 408 injured) up 110 per cent from 2013. Ground engagements caused 256 women civilian casualties (64 women killed and 192 injured), up 61 per cent from 2013. More than half of all civilian casualties from ground engagements resulted from indirect fire, mostly mortars and grenades impacting homes, agricultural fields and playgrounds where women and children were commonly found with the remaining casualties from civilians caught in crossfire.’⁵⁶

See also [Casualties](#) and [Women and children](#) for further information.

1.2.58 The UNAMA 2013 annual report stated:

‘Throughout 2013, UNAMA observed a correlation between rising civilian deaths and injuries from ground engagements particularly attacks by Anti-Government Elements against Afghan security forces in civilian-populated areas and areas where security responsibilities transitioned. The closure of international military bases and reduction in ISAF air and ground operations, particularly ISAF ground operations partnered with Afghan security forces, gave Anti-Government Elements in some areas greater mobility and capability to attack Afghan security forces, the latter more active and more exposed to attacks than in previous years....

‘The fifth and final transfer of security responsibility from international security forces to Afghan security forces began in June 2013 and left security gaps in some areas which were not yet filled by Afghan security forces leaving some areas vulnerable to attack by Anti-Government Elements. For example, in Nangarhar province, civilian casualties from ground engagements tripled in the second half of the year, following the final transition of the most insecure, contested districts in the province. Between 1 July and 31 December 2013 (last six months of 2013), UNAMA documented 140 civilian casualties (25 civilian deaths and 115 injured) in Nangarhar province, a 150 percent increase from 2012.’⁵⁷

1.2.59 The UNAMA 2013 annual report stated:

‘UNAMA documented 2,327 civilian casualties (534 civilian deaths and 1,793 injured) from 962 incidents of ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces particularly Afghan national security forces, a 43 percent increase from 2012. Ground engagements were the second

⁵⁶ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 3), dated July 2014 http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1404997194_unama-mid-year.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

⁵⁷ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (II. Ground Engagement between Parties to the Conflict: Civilians Caught in the Crossfire, p39); dated February 2014 http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 4 March 2014

leading cause of civilian casualties countrywide producing 27 percent of all civilian deaths and injuries, and accounted for the majority - 39 percent - of all women and children casualties in 2013...

'...Thirty-eight (38) percent of civilian casualties from ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces—877 civilian casualties (159 civilian deaths and 718 injured) -could not be directly attributed to either party, an increase of 76 percent compared to 2012. This “fog of war” dynamic reflects the changed nature of the conflict in Afghanistan in 2013 which was increasingly being waged in civilian communities and populated areas with civilians caught in the cross fire.’⁵⁸

See also [Casualties](#) for further information on this subject.

Suicide and complex attacks

1.2.60 UNAMA reported that:

'In the first six months of 2014, suicide and complex attacks caused 583 civilian casualties which killed 156 civilians and injured 427, a seven per cent decrease in civilian casualties from such attacks compared to the first six months of 2013. Suicide and complex attacks were the third leading cause of civilian deaths and injuries in the first half of 2014, after ground engagements and IEDs.’⁵⁹

See also [Nature of violence](#).

1.2.61 The UNAMA 2013 annual report stated:

'Suicide and complex attacks resulted in 1,236 civilian casualties (255 killed and 981 injured) from 73 incidents in 2013. While the number of attacks remained similar to 2012, an 18 percent decrease in civilian casualties from these attacks was noted. Suicide and complex attacks accounted for 15 percent of all civilian casualties in 2013... UNAMA notes particular concern with complex attacks against civilian compounds... Complex attacks against military targets continued to result in disproportionate harm to civilian communities... Anti-Government Elements continued to use different types of suicide attacks targeting civilians in public places including crowded markets, locations where tribal elders gathered and civilian Government offices...'⁶⁰

See also [Casualties](#) for further statistics and [Non-state armed groups](#) for further information about these groups

⁵⁸ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (p 5-6)
http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf
Date accessed: 4 March 2014

⁵⁹ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 4), dated July 2014 http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1404997194_unama-mid-year.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

⁶⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p.4 and I. Anti-Government Elements and protection of Civilians, p 23-24); dated February 2014
http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf
Date accessed: 4 March 2014

1.2.62 The Congressional Research Service report of January 2014 stated: 'Some insurgents have used bombs hidden in turbans, which had, until October 2011, generally not been searched out of respect for Afghan religious traditions. Such a bomb killed former President Rabbani on September 20, 2011, as noted above. A suicide bomber who wounded intelligence chief Asadullah Khalid in December 2012 might have had explosives surgically sewn into his body.'⁶¹

Targeted killings

1.2.63 In its mid-year report for 2014, UNAMA reported that 'Targeted killings accounted for nine per cent of all civilian casualties. Between 1 January and 30 June 2014, UNAMA documented 428 civilian casualties (263 civilian deaths and 165 injured) from targeted and wilful killings (or attempts to kill), a 10 per cent decrease from the same period in 2013. These included killings of tribal elders, civilian Government officials, mullahs and civilian justice officials.'⁶²

1.2.64 In its 2013 annual report UNAMA stated:

'UNAMA documented 1,076 civilian casualties (743 civilians killed and 333 injured) from 605 incidents of targeted killings. Anti-Government Elements increasingly targeted and killed civilian Government officials and civilians they perceived to support the Government including community and religious leaders, judicial authorities, tribal elders, election workers, off-duty police officers, and persons supporting the peace process. Threats and targeted attacks by Anti-Government Elements against mullahs (religious leaders) they accused of supporting the Government rose as attacks against mullahs and mosques tripled in 2013. UNAMA documented 25 incidents of attacks against election workers and election facilities by Anti-Government Elements during 2013, resulting in 16 civilian casualties (four civilian deaths and 12 injured).'

See also [Casualties](#) for further information on this topic.

[Return to contents](#)

Mines and their clearance

1.2.65 UNAMA reported in its mid-year 2014 report that: 'In the first six months of 2014, Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) increasingly killed and injured Afghan civilians, particularly children. Between 1 January and 30 June 2014, UNAMA verified 97 separate incidents of UXO [unexploded ordnance] detonation resulting in 206 civilian casualties (68 civilian deaths and 138 injured) from ERW,

⁶¹ United States Congressional Research Service, accessed via Refworld; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy; Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs; dated January 17, 2014 (p 17) <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=52f216ab4&skip=0&query=SECURITY&coi=AFG> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

⁶² UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p 4), dated July 2014 http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1404997194_unama-mid-year.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

⁶³ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (Executive Summary, p.4); dated February 2014 http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 4 March 2014

up 14 per cent from 2013. Of the 206 civilian casualties, 156 – 76 per cent – were children.’⁶⁴

1.2.66 The UN reported in March 2014 that: ‘Throughout 2013, the number of incidents involving mines and explosive remnants of war increased, with 455 casualties, including 129 deaths, recorded, compared with 367 casualties and 91 deaths in 2012.’⁶⁵

1.2.67 A United Nations report of December 2013 stated:

‘In the mine-action sector, supported by the United Nations, about 300 minefields were cleared in 100 communities, with an additional 7 districts declared mine free. It is estimated that 4,536 minefields remain, affecting 1,628 communities across 33 provinces. Accidents involving mines and explosive remnants of war, including in areas recently vacated by international military forces, have increased compared with 2012, with 344 casualties, including 99 deaths, recorded between 1 January and 31 October. The United Nations has worked with ISAF to help ensure that premises being closed or transferred are cleared of mines and unexploded ordnance.’⁶⁶

See also [Casualties](#) for further information on this subject.

Security by region

1.2.68 The following UN map⁶⁷ charts the provinces of Afghanistan:

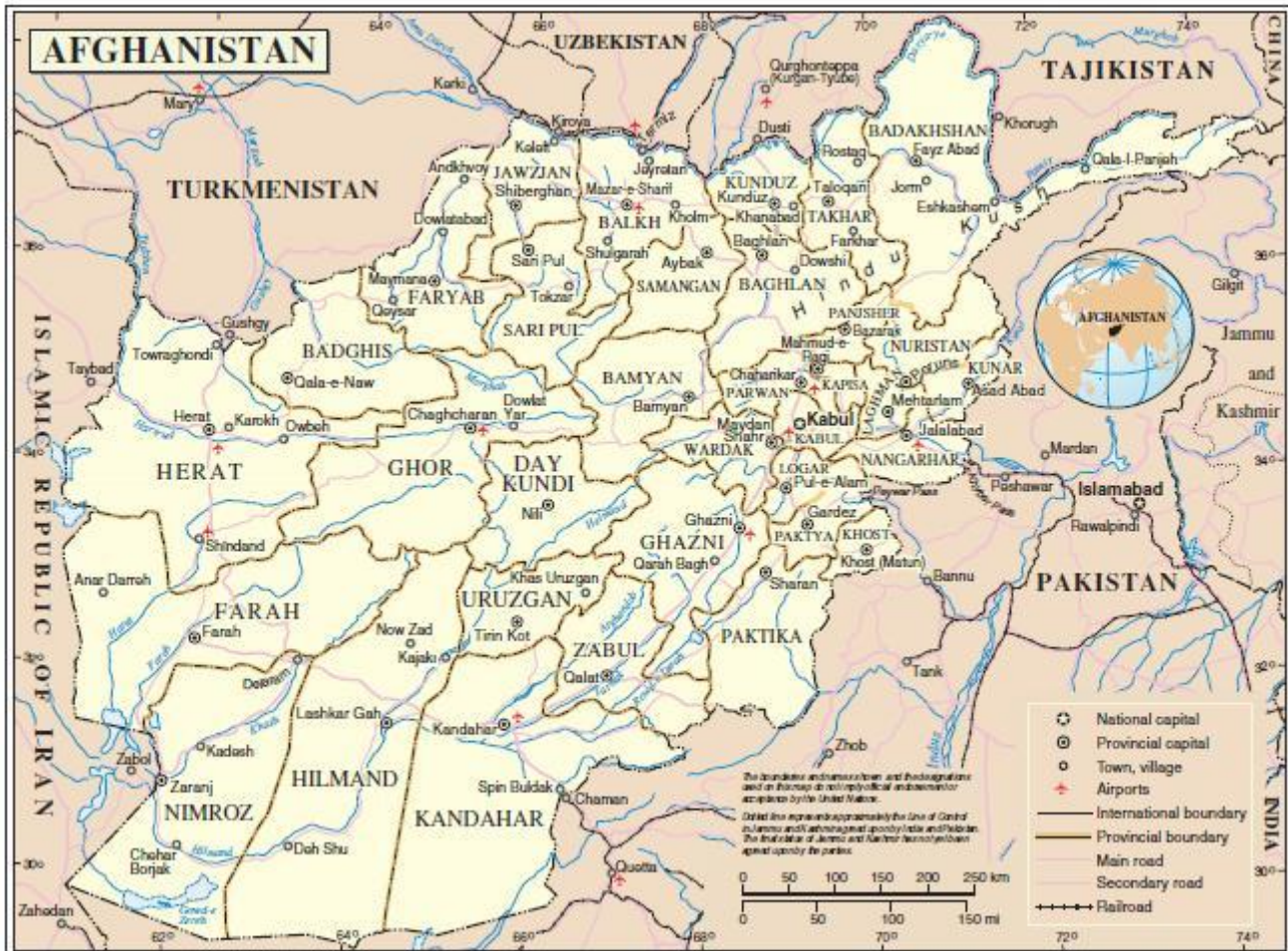
⁶⁴ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (IV. Human Rights Protection in Conflict Areas p.56), dated July 2014

http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1404997194_unama-mid-year.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

⁶⁵ United Nations General Assembly; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General (paragraph 18), dated 7 March 2014, covering 6 December 2013 to 6 March 2014 http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1394798373_n1425215unga-afg.pdf Date accessed: 28 July 2014

⁶⁶ United Nations <http://www.un.org/>; General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General; dated 6 December 2013 covering 6 September to 6 December 2013 (Section B. Security, paragraph 19) http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/SC_report_6_Dec_13.pdf Date accessed: 3 March 2014

⁶⁷ United Nations Cartographic Section <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm> General Maps; Afghanistan, dated June 2011, <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/afghanis.pdf> Date accessed: 10 June 2014



Map No. 3658 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS
June 2011

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

1.2.69 Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade stated the following in March 2014: ‘There are many areas of the country contested by insurgent forces and no part of the country can be considered totally free from conflict-related violence. The situation remains fluid and any categorical assessment on the security in a particular area could be rendered quickly inaccurate.

‘Although this list is not exhaustive, contested areas are mainly in the south (including in parts of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul) and east of the country (including in parts of Ghazni, Paktika, Khost, Paktia, Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan). Insurgents are also present in areas of western, central and northern provinces.’⁶⁸

See also [Southern and eastern regions](#).

[Return to contents](#)

1.2.70 The UN Secretary General’s report of March 2014 stated:

‘The security situation in Afghanistan remained volatile. The United Nations recorded 20,093 security incidents in Afghanistan in 2013, making the year second only to 2011 in terms of the level of violence seen since the fall of the

⁶⁸ Australian Government; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade <http://www.dfat.gov.au/> DFAT Country Report; Afghanistan (p 5-6); dated 26 March 2014 <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/pdf/dfat-cir-afghanistan.pdf> Date accessed: 10 June 2014

Taliban regime. Of those incidents, 70 per cent were reported in the east, the south-east and in particular, the south. Kandahar Province was the site of 13 per cent of all incidents occurring in 2013. Tactically, armed clashes and improvised explosive devices represented 75 per cent of total incidents in 2013, with armed clashes up 51 per cent compared with 2012...

'Throughout 2013, provinces in the east and south faced intensified attacks from an array of groups, including Tehrik-e-Taliban, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, in addition to the Afghan Taliban. In northern Afghanistan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan continued to operate in remote and mountainous districts and to present a serious challenge to peace, security and stability.'⁶⁹

See also [Southern and eastern regions](#)

1.2.71 The US Department of Defense report of April 2014 stated:

'Violence remains highly concentrated. From October 1, 2013 through March 13, 2014, 80 percent of nationwide EIAs [enemy initiated attacks] occurred where only 39 percent of the population lives. Fifty percent of nationwide EIAs occurred where approximately 8 percent of the population lives. As seen in Figure 4, the 10 most violent districts account for approximately 3 percent of the population and 29 percent of the violence nationwide.'⁷⁰

1.2.72 The same report⁷¹ listed the ten most violent districts in Afghanistan:

⁶⁹ United Nations <http://www.un.org/>; General Assembly Security Council; Report of the Secretary General (para 14), dated 7 March 2014 <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf> Date accessed: 10 June 2014

⁷⁰ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Report on progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan (1.5 Reporting period security overview, p 11), dated April 2014, covering 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2014 http://www.defense.gov/pubs/April_1230_Report_Final.pdf Date accessed: 12 June 2014

⁷¹ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Report on progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan (1.5 Reporting period security overview, p 11), dated April 2014, covering 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2014 http://www.defense.gov/pubs/April_1230_Report_Final.pdf Date accessed: 12 June

Top 10 Districts (01 Oct 2013 to 13 Mar 2014)					
	Top 10 Districts in EIA	Province	RC	% of Total Population	% of National EIA in Date Range
1	Sangin	Helmand	RC-SW	0.2%	6%
2	Nahr-e Saraj	Helmand	RC-SW	0.4%	5%
3	Nad 'Ali	Helmand	RC-SW	0.3%	4%
4	Darah-ye Pech	Kunar	RC-E	0.2%	2%
5	Shindand	Herat	RC-W	0.7%	2%
6	Maiwand	Kandahar	RC-S	0.2%	2%
7	Marawarah	Kunar	RC-E	0.1%	2%
8	Alingar	Laghman	RC-E	0.4%	2%
9	Musa Qal'ah	Helmand	RC-SW	0.2%	2%
10	Panjwa'l	Kandahar	RC-S	0.3%	2%
01 Oct 2013 to 13 Mar 2014			Total:	3.1%	29%



(EIA refers to enemy-initiated attacks)

1.2.73 In its August 2013 Eligibility Guidelines, UNHCR reported that:

‘the conflict, which had previously been concentrated in the south and east, has come to affect most parts of the country, including most notably the north, but also provinces that had previously been considered as the most stable in the country, such as Panjsher province. Similarly, while AGEs continue to carry out high-profile attacks in Kabul, the violence is not limited to Kabul or more generally to urban centres; the Afghanistan Analysts Network notes that “much,

and often extremely violent, insurgent activity is going on in the rural areas with relatively little coverage.”⁷²

1.2.74 In a December 2013 report published by the Afghan Analysts Network, Thomas Ruttig noted:

‘According to the UN, civilian casualties have increased by ten per cent (to 2,730 dead and 5,169 injured) in the first eleven months of 2013 compared to last year. Most are results of Taleban attacks. Moreover, the Taleban now seem to attack in larger groups more often. They have increasingly attempted to take over district centres, mainly in peripheral areas, and test the power of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) that now operate on their own in most of those areas... According to official Afghan sources, only five of the 416 district centres are under permanent Taleban control, but in many others government control barely reaches beyond the immediate centres. In the key Maiwand district in southern Afghanistan, for example (which is larger than Luxemburg), it ends two kilometres outside its central town, as the Wall Street Journal reported on 31 October. The situation is similar in other key districts, for example in Chahrdara in Kunduz province, from where the Taleban had been driven out almost completely in 2010. Since the additional US ‘surge’ forces left the area (the last German soldiers withdrew from Kunduz in October 2013), the Taleban are back in control almost everywhere.’⁷³

1.2.75 An International Crisis Group report of May 2014 provided four case studies on Faryab in the north west, Kunar in the north east, Paktia in the east and Kandahar in the south.⁷⁴

[Return to contents](#)

Central region and Kabul

1.2.76 A UN report of March 2014 stated: ‘The tactical use of suicide bombing by the armed opposition continued, with 107 such incidents occurring in Afghanistan in 2013, of which 18 were in Kabul, compared with 101 in 2012, of which 7 were in Kabul.’⁷⁵ The same report added, ‘The 17 January coordinated attack on a Kabul restaurant... was the deadliest attack on foreign civilians since 2001:13 international and 8 Afghan civilians were killed. The Taliban took responsibility

⁷² UNHCR http://www.unhcr.org.uk/Eligibility_Guidelines_for_assessing_the_international_protection_needs_of_asylum-seekers_from_Afghanistan, 6 August 2013 II. B. The Security Situation in Afghanistan: Impact of the Conflict on Civilians (p 13)

http://www.unhcr.se/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFdocuments/Legal/Eligibility_guidelines/UNHCR_eligibility_guidelines_Afghanistan_August_2013.pdf Date accessed: 29 July 2014

⁷³ Afghan Analysts Network <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/> Some Things Got Better – How Much Got Good? A review of 12 years of international intervention in Afghanistan, by Thomas Ruttig, dated 30 December 2013 <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/some-things-got-better-how-much-got-good-a-short-review-of-12-years-of-international-intervention-in-afghanistan/> Date accessed: 29 July 2014

⁷⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG) <http://www.crisisgroup.org/> Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition (Executive Summary), dated 12 May 2014, Executive Summary <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf> Date accessed: 29 July 2014

⁷⁵ United Nations General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General (paragraph 14), dated 7 March 2014, covering 1 April to 30 September 2013, accessed via ecoi.net http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1394798373_n1425215unga-afg.pdf Date accessed: 26 March 2014

for the attack. Thirty-five suicide attacks were recorded between 16 November 2013 and 15 February 2014, compared with 17 during the same period in 2012/13. Ten of these took place in the capital, compared with five during the same period in the previous year.’⁷⁶

See also [Suicide and complex attacks](#).

1.2.77 The US Department of Defense report of November 2013 stated, ‘Groups like the Haqqani Network (HQN) remain potent forces with the ability to conduct HPAs [high-profile attacks], directed at both Afghan and ISAF targets, particularly in Kabul.... The insurgency conducted 10 HPAs in Kabul this reporting period [1 April to 30 September 2013] and assassinated a number of influential GIRoA [Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan] officials.’⁷⁷

See also [The Taliban and Haqqani faction](#) for further information on these groups.

1.2.78 The US Department of Defense report of July 2013 stated, ‘Kabul is one of the least violent areas of the country, with some of the best ANSF units providing security. Improved capability and cooperation between Afghan security elements continues to suppress insurgent activity within Kabul Province; however, the few successful suicide attacks that occur in the capital will continue to draw a disproportionate amount of international media attention.’⁷⁸

1.2.79 In March 2014 ACCORD provided a [Timeline of attacks in Kabul since 2013](#).⁷⁹

[Return to contents](#)

Northern region

1.2.80 A UN report of March 2014 stated: ‘In northern Afghanistan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan continued to operate in remote and mountainous districts and to present a serious challenge to peace, security and stability.’⁸⁰

1.2.81 The US Department of Defense report of July 2013, covering October 2012 to March 2013 stated:

⁷⁶ United Nations General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General (paragraph 17), dated 7 March 2014, covering 1 April to 30 September 2013, accessed via ecoi.net

http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1394798373_n1425215unga-afg.pdf Date accessed: 26 March 2014

⁷⁷ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan (1.5 The Insurgency, p14 and 1.6 Reporting Period Security Overview, p 17), dated November 2013; covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2013 http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf Date accessed: 24 March 2014

⁷⁸ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan (Regional Command – Capital, p 28), dated July 2013, covering 1 October 2012 to 31 March 2013 http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf Date accessed: 10 March 2014

⁷⁹ ACCORD - Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation: ecoi.net- Themendossier zu Afghanistan: Allgemeine Sicherheitslage in Afghanistan & Chronologie für Kabul, 23 May 2014 (available at ecoi.net) http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/276708/392874_en.html Date accessed: 23 May 2014

⁸⁰ United Nations General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General (paragraph 14), dated 7 March 2014, covering 1 April to 30 September, accessed via ecoi.net http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1394798373_n1425215unga-afg.pdf Date accessed: 26 March 2014

‘The overall security situation in the [Northern] RC [Regional Command] improved, as insurgent activity was generally isolated to areas outside of population centers. Insurgents continued to focus on HPAs [high-profile attacks], assassinations of GIRoA [Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan] officials, and IED attacks... As insurgent influence and capabilities remain relatively low in RC-N [Regional Command – North], ISAF forces have withdrawn, and ANSF forces have taken over, to a greater extent than in much of the rest of the country. Following retrograde and realignment of PRTs [Provincial Reconstruction Teams], coalition forces no longer have a permanent presence in either Faryab or Badakshan Provinces. However, in both Provinces increased insurgent activity following ISAF departure required ISAF-assisted ANA [Afghan National Army] responses.’⁸¹

1.2.82 IHS Jane’s provided the following information, dated 10 September 2013:

‘Northern provinces have become the scene of rivalry between two former United Front (UF, also known as Northern Alliance) factions, Jamiat-i-Islami and Jombesh-i-Milli. Their leading figures, respectively the Tajik Atta Mohammad and the Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum, had been members of the Karzai government and hold the recognised military rank of general. Neither Dostum nor Mohammad has demonstrated a genuine desire to seek peaceful resolution of their power struggle and ongoing violence indicates that northern regions will remain outside Kabul’s control for the foreseeable future.’⁸²

See sections on [Hikmatyar faction \(HIG\)](#) and [Warlords and fiefdoms](#) for further information about these subjects and [Conflict-related displacement](#) for information about displacement in the northern region.

[Return to contents](#)

Western region (including southwest)

1.2.83 The US Department of Defense report of July 2013 stated: ‘Six of the ten most violent districts in the country were located in RC-SW [Regional Command – South West]. Nahr-e Saraj, where less than 0.5 percent of the Afghan population resides, is the most violent district in Afghanistan, generating a significant portion of nationwide EIAs [enemy-initiated attacks].’⁸³

1.2.84 The US Department of Defense report of July 2013 stated:

‘The majority of the insurgent activity in RC-W [Regional Command – West] continues to be located along Highway 1 in both the northern (Badghis Province) and southern (Farah Province) parts of the RC [Regional Command], and likely represents a mixture of insurgent and criminal activity... Much of the insurgent activity in the southern part of RC-W was spillover from the more violent districts

⁸¹ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan, dated July 2013, covering 1 October 2012 to 31 March 2013 (Regional Command – North, p 27) http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf Date accessed: 10 March 2014

⁸² IHS Jane’s (subscription only); Security, dated 10 September 2013 (Regional chieftains and factional conflict) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304897> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

⁸³ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan, dated July 2013, covering 1 October 2012 to 31 March 2013 (Regional Command – South West, p 25) http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf Date accessed: 10 March 2014

in RC-SW [Regional Command – South West]... Although Ghor Province has experienced limited kinetic activity, insurgents continued to exploit the minimal presence of ISAF and ANSF in the province to maintain safe haven and ancillary facilitation routes... Although the ANSF proved capable of maintaining security in district centers, insurgents continued to influence Pashtun pockets in northern Badghis Province, southern Herat Province, and throughout Farah Province, with limited ANSF presence in rural areas.’⁸⁴

1.2.85 IHS Jane’s provided the following information, dated July 2013:

‘Ismail Khan has emerged as the country’s most powerful post-Taliban regional power broker. He exercises near complete control over the provinces of Herat, Farah, Badghis and to a lesser extent over Ghor and Nimroz. Although showing no signs of waning, his control over these regions has been shaken by the fact that insurgents have been able to spread their campaign to Ghor and Nimroz. His autonomy is a product not only of his military power but also of his financial resources. Khan accrues substantial customs revenue due to his control of the borders with Iran and Turkmenistan, across which there is a booming trade. Little of this money is transferred to Kabul. Karzai nominated Khan as minister for energy and water in his new administration but his appointment was rejected by the parliament.’⁸⁵

See section on [Warlords and fiefdoms](#) for further information on this subject and [Conflict-related displacement](#) for information on displacement in the western region

[Return to contents](#)

Southern and eastern regions (including northeast)

1.2.86 In its mid-year report for 2014, UNAMA reported: ‘Consistent with 2013, Kandahar and Helmand provinces –by far– remained the provinces where civilians were most affected by IEDs, followed by Khost, Nangarhar and Ghazni provinces.’ The report further stated, ‘UNAMA documented increased civilian casualties from ground engagements in every region throughout Afghanistan. In the southern, south-eastern and northern regions, for example, civilian casualties from ground engagements more than doubled in each region and they more than tripled in the north-east region.’⁸⁶

1.2.87 A UN report of June 2014 stated:

‘Incidents in the south, south-east and east of the country accounted for 3,917 of the total number of incidents during the period [1 March to 31 May 2014]. Particularly notable has been the increase in incidents in the east, where several

⁸⁴ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan, dated July 2013, covering 1 October 2012 to 31 March 2013 (Regional Command – West, p 26) http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf Date accessed: 10 March 2014

⁸⁵ IHS Jane’s (subscription only) Security, dated 10 September 2013 (Regional chieftains and factional conflict) <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304897> Date accessed: 13 February 2014

⁸⁶ UNAMA <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan Mid-year report 2014; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, dated July 2014 (I. Anti-Government Elements and Protection of Civilians, p. 11 and II. Ground Engagements between Parties to the Conflict: Civilians Caught in Crossfire, p 29) <http://unama.unmissions.org/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=qPxRmrXko+&dl> Date accessed: 29 July 2014

Al-Qaida affiliates, including Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, regularly carry out attacks on Afghan security forces in parallel to the efforts of the Taliban and armed wings of Hezb-e Islami. On 8 May, the Taliban announced in a statement that its 2014 spring operation, “Khaibar”, would target senior government officials, members of parliament, security officials, attorneys and judges that prosecute “mujahideen”, as well as “gatherings of foreign invading forces, their diplomatic centres and convoys”. The announced launch date, 12 May, saw a complex assault on the Department of Justice in Jalalabad in which eight civilians were killed. On 20 May, in the north-eastern province of Badakhshan, around 300 insurgents captured the Yamgandistrict administrative centre. The Government regained control of the centre on 23 May. The attack was perceived to have been a show of strength at the start of the fighting season, with local power struggles over access to resources fuelling a complex, fluid conflict.’⁸⁷

1.2.88 A UN report of March 2014 stated that of all the security incidents in 2013, ‘70 per cent were reported in the east, the south-east and, in particular, the south. Kandahar Province was the site of 13 per cent of all incidents occurring in 2013... Throughout 2013, provinces in the east and south faced intensified attacks from an array of groups, including Tehrik-e-Taliban, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, in addition to the Afghan Taliban.’⁸⁸

1.2.89 The UN provided the following information on 26 June 2014:

‘Since 21 June [2014], ongoing clashes between the Taliban and Afghanistan National Security Forces have resulted in deaths and injuries in the province’s Sangin, Musa Qala, Naw Zad and Kajaki districts - with the majority of fighting concentrated in Sangin, said UNAMA in a press release... The UN Mission has documented at least 30 civilian deaths and 35 injuries in Sangin alone, in addition to civilian casualties in other districts of Helmand province.

‘Health authorities, victims and witnesses attributed the civilian deaths and injuries to the use of mortars that impacted homes, civilians caught in crossfire and improvised explosive devices... The UN Mission is particularly concerned about the launching of mortars and grenades into populated areas which has resulted in civilian casualties, and calls on the parties to take all necessary measures to reduce harm to civilians from the use of these weapons.’⁸⁹

See also [Ground engagements](#) and [IEDs](#) for further information on these subjects.

1.2.90 The US Department of Defense report of July 2013 provided the following information about the Southern region:

⁸⁷ UN General Assembly: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (p 6) [A/68/910–S/2014/420], dated 18 June 2014 (available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net))

http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1403693685_n1442913.pdf Date accessed: 4 July 2014

⁸⁸ United Nations General Assembly Security Council; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General (paragraph 14), dated 7 March 2014, covering 6 December 2013 to 6 March 2014; accessed via [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net)

http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1394798373_n1425215unga-afg.pdf Date accessed: 26 March 2014

⁸⁹ UN News Service; Amid clashes between Afghan forces, Taliban, UN mission urges civilian protection in Helmand province, dated 26 June 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ad65a94.html> Date accessed: 30 July 2014

‘Much of the fighting in RC-S [Regional Command – South] took place in just three districts – Zharay, Panjwa’i, and Maiwand. These are some of the most contested districts in the country, constituting a significant proportion of attacks nationwide... The Taliban demonstrated a limited ability to affect large provincial population centers. EIAs [enemy-initiated attacks] in Kandahar City, Tarin Kowt, and Qalat decreased by 30 percent in comparison to the same period last year and generated 43 percent fewer civilian casualties. Kandahar City alone experienced a 50 percent decrease in EIAs when compared to the same period last year. Despite these trends, high profile attacks (HPAs) remain a persistent threat...

‘Insurgent efforts remained focused on Zharay, Panjwa’i, and Maiwand districts in an effort to re-establish facilitation lines into Kandahar City, reclaim safe havens lost during the 2012 fighting season, and counter recurring ANSF-ISAF operations. These three districts are home to less than one percent of the total Afghan population, but accounted for nearly eight percent of nationwide EIAs and more than seven percent of nationwide direct fire (DF) events during the reporting period. Insurgents will likely continue efforts to gain access to Kandahar City and its surrounding districts over the fighting season... Security improvements are most notable in central Panjwa’i district, where an anti-Taliban movement began in February 2013...

‘Taliban leadership increased operations within Uruzgan Province during the reporting period. The ANSF have been persistently challenged in rural districts in Uruzgan, and in some cases, have consolidated to more defensible positions following coalition security-lead handover. Zabul Province remains an insurgent facilitation zone; the majority of insurgent activity within Zabul is designed to maintain ANSF and ISAF focus on key transit routes. Until recently, most districts in Zabul Province lacked a governor, resulting in a lag in governance throughout the province.’⁹⁰

[Return to contents](#)

1.2.91 The US Department of Defense report of July 2013 provided the following information about the Eastern region:

‘Al Qaeda and other international terrorist organizations continue to exploit ungoverned spaces in the extreme northeastern portions of the country, but ISAF and ANSF pressure prevented significant expansion of these safe havens. Insurgents attempted to maintain their influence in Logar and Wardak Provinces along the primary approaches to Kabul from the south. ISAF and ANSF operations prevented insurgent expansion in the region, decreasing its use as a staging area for attacks on Kabul. Some districts bordering Highway 1, which were transitioned as part of tranche four, will likely continue to be challenged by insurgent attempts to sever the main line of communication to Kabul from the south; of particular concern due to the high insurgent presence there are several districts in Ghazni Province.’⁹¹

⁹⁰ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan, dated July 2013 (Regional Command – South, p 24-25), covering 1 October 2012 to 31 March 2013 http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf Date accessed: 10 March 2014

⁹¹ US Department of Defense <http://www.defense.gov/> Progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan, July 2013, covering 1 October 2012 to 31 March 2013 (Regional Command – East, p 23) http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf Date accessed: 29 July 2014

- 1.2.92 The United Nations report of the Secretary-General of December 2013 stated, ‘...there was a clear pattern of anti-Government elements seeking to assert control in the border areas of Nuristan, Kunar and Nangarhar Provinces.’⁹²
- 1.2.93 The UNAMA 2013 annual report stated, ‘In 2013, UNAMA documented 37 civilian casualties (nine civilian deaths and 28 injured) in 130 incidents of cross-border shelling in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces, a 51 percent decrease compared to 2012. Cross-border shelling caused damage to homes, mosques and livestock and continued to generate widespread anger in the local communities where it occurred.’⁹³
- 1.2.94 IHS Jane’s provided the following information of September 2013 regarding the southeastern area of the country: ‘The southeastern border area with Pakistan is particularly dangerous. Instability in this region has been further fuelled by tensions in the Afghan-Pakistan relationship, and sporadic US missile strikes on Pakistani territory.’⁹⁴
- 1.2.95 The UNAMA report of February 2014 stated that numbers of civilian deaths and injuries caused by IEDs from 2009 to 2013 were significantly higher in southern and south eastern regions than in other parts of the country: ‘Kandahar and Helmand provinces – by far – remained the provinces where civilians were most impacted by IEDs, followed by Khost, Ghazni and Nangarhar provinces.’⁹⁵

See also [Al Qaeda/Bin Laden](#), [Hikmatyar faction \(HIG\)](#), [Haqqani faction](#), and [Pakistani groups](#) for further information about these groups, [Targeted killings](#) for information about targeted killings in the southern and eastern regions and [Security by region](#) and [Conflict-related displacement](#) for information about displacement in southern and eastern regions. See [IEDs](#) and [Ground engagements](#) for further information about these subjects.

[Return to contents](#)

Conflict-related displacement

- 1.2.96 The UNAMA report of February 2014 stated: ‘Conflict-related violence and insecurity continued to cause high levels of internal displacement in Afghanistan. The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Taskforce recorded 124,354 civilians displaced due to the armed conflict in Afghanistan in 2013. This represents a 25 percent increase over 2012. At 31 December 2013, the total number of IDPs in

⁹² United Nations <http://www.un.org/> General Assembly; The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General; dated 6 December 2013, covering 6 September to 6 December 2013 (paragraph 13)

http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/SC_report_6_Dec_13.pdf Date accessed: 29 July 2014

⁹³ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/>; Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (Executive Summary, p 12)

http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf Date accessed: 4 March 2014

⁹⁴ IHS Jane’s (subscription only) Security, dated 10 September 2013 (Major threats)

<https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1304897>

Date accessed: 13 February 2014

⁹⁵ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (p 17)

http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf

Date accessed: 4 March 2014

Afghanistan was 631,286 individuals, more than half of whom have been displaced in the past three years.’⁹⁶

1.2.97 The same UNAMA report added:

‘The changing nature of the conflict in Afghanistan had a direct impact on patterns of displacement. Increased ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces created sudden and often large movements of thousands of persons, predominantly from rural areas towards urban centres. The majority of IDPs sought safety in their own district, or neighbouring districts in the same province. In 2013 the most commonly cited reasons for displacement by IDPs were armed conflict and hostilities, general deterioration of security, and intimidation and threats by Anti-Government Elements.

‘UNHCR recorded a geographical shift towards a higher displacement of civilians in the southern region in 2013. For example, in May 2013, 27,000 persons were displaced due to a military operation in northern Helmand province. As a result of this and similar incidents, Helmand province accounted for almost half of all recorded displacement in 2013. Over the past three years, the southern region has experienced a growing increase in displacement and currently hosts the highest number of IDPs in Afghanistan.

‘The western, eastern and northern regions continued to record high numbers of IDPs. In the eastern region, IDPs were consistently displaced to Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. Throughout the eastern region, IDPs cited harassment and intimidation by Anti-Government Elements as the primary reason for displacement. IDPs in the east tended to move in smaller groups rather than large-scale movements ordinarily associated with armed conflict (and witnessed, for example, in Helmand province). In the northern region, Faryab province accounted for the highest regional numbers of IDPs, consistent with a 47 percent increase in civilian casualties from ground engagements in the province.’ The year 2013 has seen a continuation of existing trends in secondary displacement and displacement of returned refugees. One large-scale instance of repeated secondary displacement took place in Helmand province between May and October 2013, when many families who were displaced to Sangin district as a result of ground engagements, were subsequently displaced to Lashkergah following renewed fighting. Some IDPs attempted to return to their area of origin, but due to conflict and insecurity were unable to settle, and became displaced again.’⁹⁷

See also [Southern and eastern regions](#), [Northern region](#) and [Western region](#) for further information about these regions.

[Return to contents](#)

⁹⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (p 12)
http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf
Date accessed: 4 March 2014

⁹⁷ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan <http://unama.unmissions.org/> Afghanistan; Annual Report 2013; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; dated February 2014 (p 70-71)
http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf
Date accessed: 5 March 2014

Humanitarian situation

- 1.2.98 The US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013, published in February 2014, stated:

‘Limited humanitarian access caused delays in identification, assessment, and timely assistance to IDPs, leading to estimates that the number of IDPs was significantly larger than official government figures. IDPs continued to lack access to basic protection, including personal and physical security and shelter. IDPs in urban areas reportedly faced discrimination, inadequate sanitation and other basic services, and lived in constant risk of eviction from illegally occupied displacement sites, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center. Women in IDP camps reported high levels of domestic violence. There were limited opportunities to earn a livelihood during displacement, which led to secondary displacement, making tracking of vulnerable persons difficult. IDPs usually had access to local social services, but some areas were distant from schools and other services.’⁹⁸

- 1.2.99 The UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines, dated 6 August 2013, stated:

‘IDPs are among the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan; many are beyond the reach of humanitarian organizations. Urban IDPs are more vulnerable than the non-displaced urban poor, as they are particularly affected by unemployment, limited access to adequate housing, limited access to water and sanitation, and food insecurity... Since 2002, more than 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan, representing about 25 per cent of the Afghan population. More than 40 per cent of returnees have been unable to reintegrate into their home communities, resulting in significant secondary displacement, mostly to urban areas. In total, up to 60 per cent of returnees are experiencing difficulties in rebuilding their lives in Afghanistan. Estimates suggest that a quarter of urban IDPs are returning refugees ending up in secondary displacement. Obstacles to return for both IDPs and returning refugees include on-going insecurity in their home areas; loss of livelihoods; lack of access to health care and education; and challenges in reclaiming land and property.’⁹⁹

- 1.2.100 The US State Department Country Report, published in February 2014, stated:

‘Resettlement of returnees remained difficult. The UNHCR, in conjunction with the governments of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, developed a strategy aimed at preserving refugee status for those remaining in neighboring countries while assisting with the reintegration of returnees through targeted assistance, including educational, health, and employment assistance. Returnees ostensibly had equal access to health, education, and other services, although some areas with large populations of returning refugees had limited means of transportation

⁹⁸ US State Department <http://www.state.gov/> Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013; Afghanistan, published 27 February 2014 (Section 2.d) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper> Date accessed: 7 March 2014

⁹⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home> UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, dated 6 August 2013 (p 27-28) http://www.unhcr.se/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFdocuments/Legal/Eligibility_guidelines/UNHCR_eligibility_guidelines_Afghanistan_August_2013.pdf Date accessed: 7 March 2014

or lacked roads leading to larger, more established villages and urban centers, which made access to such services and economic opportunities difficult.’¹⁰⁰

1.2.101 The World Bank’s Research Study on IDPs in urban settings in Afghanistan, dated May 2011, stated: ‘The main jobs available to IDPs are low earning jobs on a daily/casual arrangement. ... Taking IDPs’ reported average wages at face value, a daily laborer’s wage could only support above-poverty living for two individuals, against an average household size for IDPs of about nine members and a dependency ratio of two children per adult.’¹⁰¹

1.2.102 Further information about IDPs is available at the following sources:

The World Bank

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2011/05/16257782/afghanistan-research-study-idps-urban-settings>

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/afghanistan-new-policy-lifeline-more-half-million-internally-displaced-2014-02-10>

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre <http://www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/afghanistan/2014/as-humanitarian-space-shrinks-idp-policy-must-be-implemented>

Forced Migration Review <http://www.fmreview.org/afghanistan/hennion>

[Return to contents](#)

Kabul

1.2.103 The World Bank’s Research Study on IDPs in urban settings in Afghanistan reported:

‘The main jobs available to IDPs are low earning jobs on a daily/casual arrangement. In Kabul, 92 percent of the IDP workforce is casual daily labor while the majority of male poor [non-IDP] household heads are self-employed. Taking IDPs’ reported average wages at face value, a daily laborer’s wage could only support above-poverty living for two individuals, against an average household size for IDPs of about nine members and a dependency ratio of two children per adult.’¹⁰²

1.2.104 The World Bank report stated:

¹⁰⁰ US State Department <http://www.state.gov/> Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013; Afghanistan, published 27 February 2014 (Section 2.d) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>
Date accessed: 7 March 2014

¹⁰¹ The World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/>
Research Study on IDPs in urban settings – Afghanistan, dated May 2011 (p 7)
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2011/05/16257782/afghanistan-research-study-idps-urban-settings>
Date accessed: 7 March 2014

¹⁰² The World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/>
Research Study on IDPs in urban settings – Afghanistan, dated May 2011 (p 7)
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2011/05/16257782/afghanistan-research-study-idps-urban-settings>
Date accessed: 7 March 2014

‘In the past 10 years, Kabul experienced a near two-fold increase of its population, from 1.78 million inhabitants in 1999 to 2.9 million in 2009. The population increase was partly driven by rural-urban economic migration and partly by in-migration of IDPs and returnees - former refugees who were unable or unwilling to return to their place of origin. The influx of migrants to Kabul contributed to its economic growth after years of conflict when the capital was under-populated and economic activity limited. However, this increase in the population added to the existing challenges of urban development and increased the number of informal and illegal settlement sites. In Kabul, around 70 percent of the population is living in ‘informal’ settlements. UNHCR identified 30 illegal occupation sites that are home to migrants, refugee returnees and IDPs living in poor conditions in tents, shacks or derelict buildings with constant threat of eviction.’¹⁰³

The same report added that 92 per cent of the IDPs in Kabul live in temporary accommodation, and one third of these live in tents.¹⁰⁴

1.2.105 Further information about the humanitarian situation can be found here:

[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](#)

[IRIN News Afghanistan Country page](#)

[Relief Web Afghanistan country page](#)

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

[UNHCR Afghanistan country page](#)

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

[UN OCHA Humanitarian response - Afghanistan](#)

[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre - Afghanistan](#)

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has issued a useful map documenting the displacement numbers in Afghanistan between June 2013 and April 2014: [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(DMC\), Peak displacement numbers in Afghanistan – Reported from June 2013-April 2014, April 2014](#)

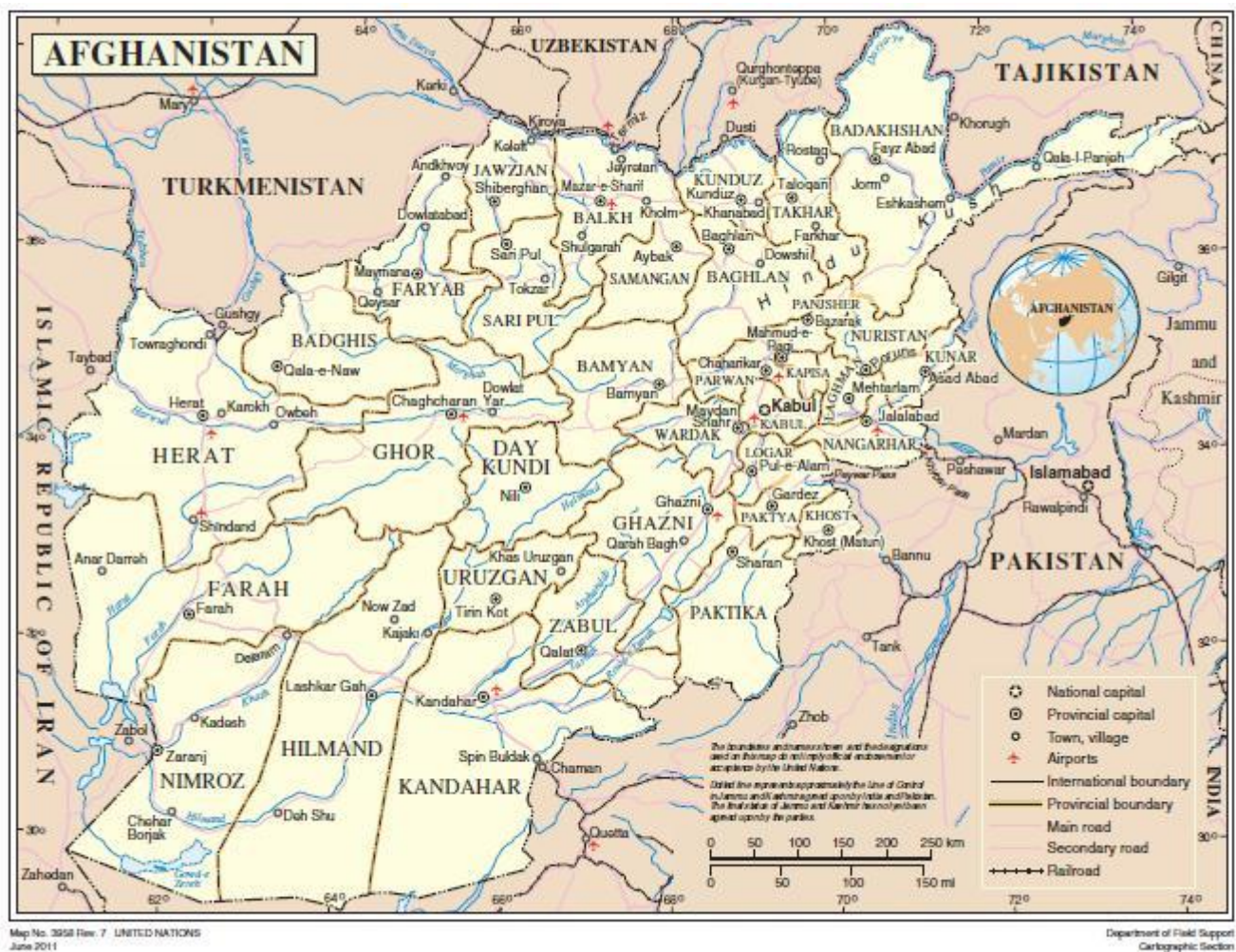
[Return to contents](#)

¹⁰³ The World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/>
Research Study on IDPs in urban settings – Afghanistan, dated May 2011 (p 11)
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2011/05/16257782/afghanistan-research-study-idps-urban-settings>
Date accessed: 29 July 2014

¹⁰⁴ The World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/>
Research Study on IDPs in urban settings – Afghanistan, dated May 2011 (p 32)
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2011/05/16257782/afghanistan-research-study-idps-urban-settings>
Date accessed: 29 July 2014

Annex A: Map of Afghanistan

1.2.106 The following is a map of Afghanistan, dated June 2011, from UN Cartographic Section:¹⁰⁵



To access maps on the humanitarian and security situation in Afghanistan please consult [Reliefweb, Afghanistan country page](#), which is updated regularly.

[Return to contents](#)

¹⁰⁵ UN Cartographic Section <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm> Afghanistan, dated June 2011 <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/afghanis.pdf> Date accessed: 23 May 2014

Annex B: Background information

Economy

CIA World Factbook; Economy, regularly updated
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

The Heritage Foundation, 2014 Index of Economic Freedom: Afghanistan, 14 January 2014
<http://www.heritage.org/index/country/afghanistan>

Trading Economics, Afghanistan – Economic Indicators, Undated
<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/afghanistan/indicators>

World Bank; Afghanistan
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan>

Geography

CIA World Factbook; Geography, regularly updated
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit; The A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance 2013, Eleventh edition, April 2013 (see Provincial Profiles, p. 117 on, for population size, main town, and geographical size of each province)
http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/A%20to%20Z%202013%20Final_web%20version.pdf

Reliefweb; Afghanistan country page
<http://reliefweb.int/country/afg>

World Food Programme; Provincial Profiles, undated (full information on geography, demography, the economy, development, education, health and a map for each province)
<http://www.foodsecurityatlas.org/afg/country/provincial-Profile>

History

CIA World Factbook; regularly updated (the Introduction provides a summary of Afghan history)
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

BBC; Afghanistan profile, regularly updated (the Timeline provides an overview of Afghan history) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12024253>

Congressional Research Service; Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and US Policy, dated July 2014 (covers period from early history to the present day)
<http://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

[Return to contents](#)

Political affiliation

US State Department ; Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013; Afghanistan; published 27 February 2014

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

Freedom House; Freedom in the World 2014; Afghanistan; published 19 May 2014

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/afghanistan>

UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for assessing the international protections needs of asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, dated 6 August 2013 (includes profiles of those groups which may be at risk)

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/51ffdca34.html>

[Return to contents](#)

Annex C: Caselaw

AK (Article 15(c)) Afghanistan CG [2012] UKUT 00163(IAC) (18 May 2012)

The Upper Tribunal of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber came to the following conclusions:

Law

1. The legal principles governing Article 15(c) of the Refugee Qualification Directive as set out in HM and others, AMM and others, and MK remained correct.
2. Decision-makers should consider the issues of refugee eligibility, subsidiary (humanitarian) protection eligibility and Article 3 ECHR in that order.
3. One relevant factor when deciding how much weight to attach to a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights will be the extent to which it had comprehensive COI before it. However, even when there is a recent ECtHR judgement based on comprehensive COI, the Tribunal is not bound to reach the same findings.

Country conditions

4. This decision replaces GS (Article 15(c): indiscriminate violence). However, the country guidance given in AA (unattended children) remains unaffected by this decision, insofar as it relates to children.
5. The level of indiscriminate violence in the country taken as a whole is 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; neither is the level of indiscriminate violence, even in the provinces worst affected by the violence (which may be taken to include Ghazni, but not to include Kabul), at such a level.
6. When assessing whether Kabul city would be a viable internal relocation alternative, it is necessary to consider, both in assessing 'safety' and 'reasonableness,' not only the level of violence in that city but also the difficulties experienced by the city's poor and internally displaced persons. However, these considerations will not in general make return to Kabul unsafe or unreasonable.
7. Nevertheless, while 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.

[Return to contents](#)