



EASO Country of Origin Information Report

Afghanistan

Security Situation

January 2015



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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012)⁽¹⁾. The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced. To the extent possible and unless otherwise stated, all information presented, except for undisputed or obvious facts, has been cross-checked.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

Refugee, risk and similar terminology are used as a generic terminology and not as legally defined in the EU Asylum Acquis and the Geneva Convention.

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The target audience are asylum caseworkers, COI researchers, policymakers, and decision-making authorities.

The drafting of this report was finalised in November 2014. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the introduction.

⁽¹⁾ The EASO methodology is largely based on the Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI), 2008, and can be downloaded from the EASO website: <http://www.easo.eu>.

Glossary and Abbreviations

AAN	Afghan Analysts Network
ACSO	Afghanistan Central Statistics Office
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AGCHO	Afghan Geodesy and Cartography Head Office
AGEs	Anti-Government Elements. These are armed opposition fighters, or insurgents, who are fighting against the Afghan government and its international allies. Examples of such groups of fighters are the Taliban, Haqqani network and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. ⁽²⁾
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AIMS	Afghanistan Information Management System
ANAP	Afghan National Auxiliary Police
ANSF⁽³⁾	Afghan National Security Forces: The Afghan government's official armed forces, composed of: ANA (Afghan National Army): The internationally trained Afghan army (2002); ANAF (Afghan National Airforce) ANP (Afghan National Police): Afghanistan's police force, with the following subdivisions: AACP (Afghan Anti-Crime Police) ALP (Afghan Local Police) is a security initiative under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, funded by the US ⁽⁴⁾ . ANBP (Afghan National Border Police) ANCOP (Afghan National Civil Order Police) AUP (Afghan Uniformed Police) CNPA (Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan) NDS (National Directorate of Security): The intelligence service of the Afghan government.
APPF	Afghanistan Public Protection Force
APPRO	Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organisation
Arbaki	A locally organised security structure: a tribal or community army.
AXO	Abandoned explosive ordnances. This refers to explosive ordnance that has not been used during an armed conflict, that has been left behind or dumped by a party to an armed conflict, and which is no longer under the latter's control.

⁽²⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 November 2014, p.75.

⁽³⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 75.

⁽⁴⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 46.

	Abandoned explosive ordnance may or may not have been primed, fused, armed or otherwise prepared for use (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Protocol V) ⁽⁵⁾ .
Buzkashi	is an ancient game that is still played in Afghanistan. Horsemen play a sort of polo with a goat's carcass: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UB3eA8B4ql).
CAO	Central Asia Online
CDF	Community Defence Forces
CMFC	Civil-Military Fusion Centre
CIP	Critical Infrastructure Program: predecessor of the Afghan Local Police (ALP)
Civilian	UNAMA refers to international law for a definition of 'civilians': persons who are not combatants or otherwise taking part in the conflict (not members of military/ paramilitary forces or fighters of organised armed groups of a party to a conflict or those who are not part of a mass uprising) ⁽⁶⁾ .
COMISAF	The Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.
Complex attack	A deliberate and coordinated attack that includes a suicide device (i.e. BBIED, VBIED), more than one attacker and more than one type of device (i.e. BBIED + mortars). All three elements must be used for an attack to be considered complex. ⁽⁷⁾
CPAU	Cooperation for Peace and Unity
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War: These are unexploded ordnances (UXOs) and abandoned explosive ordnances (AXOs) . ⁽⁸⁾
Escalation of Force	Incidents, or "force protection" incidents, involve the use of lethal or non-lethal force by military personnel when civilians ignore, do not understand, or do not see warnings from military personnel in approaching or overtaking military convoys, or in circumstances where civilians do not follow instructions at military checkpoints. ⁽⁹⁾
Ground engagements	include kinetic ground operations, stand-off attacks, crossfire and armed clashes between parties to the conflict. Ground engagements include attacks or operations in which small arms, heavy weapons and/or area weapons systems, i.e. mortars and rockets are fired ⁽¹⁰⁾ .
Haqqani network	An armed insurgent movement under the leadership of Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin. The headquarters and base are in North Waziristan (Pakistan) and South-East Afghanistan, in areas of the Pashtun tribe of the Zadran.
HIA (Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan)	An armed insurgent movement under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, with strongholds in the East, North-East, South-East and Centre of Afghanistan.
HRW	Human Rights Watch

⁽⁵⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 76.

⁽⁶⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 74 and 76.

⁽⁷⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 19.

⁽⁸⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 66.

⁽⁹⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 45.

⁽¹⁰⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 77.

IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IED	<p>Improvised Explosive Device. This is usually a self-made bomb. It is used in asymmetric warfare. Variants are⁽¹¹⁾:</p> <p>BBIED (Body Borne Improvised Explosive Device), or suicide bomb, is usually a self-made explosive device worn on the body of the attacker. It is commonly held in a vest, but also, for example, concealed in a turban.</p> <p>MIED (Magnetic Improvised Explosive Device) is an IED with a magnet, allowing it to be attached quickly and easily to objects such as a vehicle.</p> <p>PPIED (Pressure-Plate IED) is an IED that is detonated when the victim steps on a pressure-plate.</p> <p>RCIED (Radio or Remote-Controlled Improvised Explosive Device) is an IED that can be detonated by remote control. Users can aim at a specific target passing the location of the IED and detonate from a distance.</p> <p>VBIED (Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device), or car bomb, is usually a self-made explosive device placed in a car that is driven towards a target or parked at the target location.</p> <p>VOIED (Victim-operated IED) detonates when a person or vehicle triggers the initiator or switch, such as a pressure plate or pressure-release mechanism, trip wire or another device, resulting in an explosion.</p>
IMF	International military forces
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: An armed insurgent movement with many fighters who fled government repression in Uzbekistan.
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force: An international military coalition based on the NATO alliance. It supports the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in its efforts to secure and stabilise the country (http://www.isaf.nato.int/).
ISW	Institute for the Study of War
IWPR	Institute for War & Peace Reporting
Jihad	This a term derived from an Arabic root meaning “to struggle” or “to strive”. It has different meanings but in this report refers to “armed struggle of Islamic insurgents against the Afghan government and their (inter-)national allies”.
Khaibar	Taliban spring offensive.
KIA	Kabul International Airport
LDI	Local Defense Initiative
LeI	Lashkar-e Islami: A militant sectarian group formed in 2004 under Mufti Shakir in Khyber Agency in Pakistan ⁽¹²⁾ .

⁽¹¹⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 77.

⁽¹²⁾ Stanford University, ‘Lashkar-e-Islam’, *Mapping Militant Organizations*, updated: 28 August 2012 (<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/445>), accessed 8 Januari 2015.

LeJ	Lashkar-e Jhangvi: A violent, anti-Shiite militant group in Pakistan, formed in 1995. It has carried out a number of attacks on minority groups in Pakistan with the aim of establishing Pakistan as an orthodox Deobandi state ⁽¹³⁾ .
LeT	Lashkar-e Taiba: A Sunni militant group, which follows the Ahle-Hadith interpretation of Islam. LeT was formed in 1990 and initially trained in the Kunar province of Afghanistan. It is now based near Lahore in Pakistan. LeT's declared goals include conducting jihad in the way of Allah, preaching the true religion and training of a new generation along true Islamic lines. It aligns its ideological goals with the interests of the Pakistani state. It seeks to liberate Kashmir and merge it with Pakistan using violent means. It aims to change the regional and geopolitical dynamic of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India by attacking civilian targets ⁽¹⁴⁾ .
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
Moi	Ministry of the Interior
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
Mujahideen	Islamic holy warriors. The term dates back to the 1980s, when Islamic fighting groups opposed the communist regime and the military forces of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSI	Open Society Institute
PC	Provincial Council
PPS	Presidential Protection Service
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
PSD	Protection Status Determination
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RRERS	Regional Rural Economic Regeneration Strategies
SAF	Small Arms Fire
Shura	Community council
Taliban	An armed Islamic insurgent movement in Afghanistan under the leadership of Mullah Omar and the Leadership Shura in the Pakistani city of Quetta. The movement originated in the Mujahideen era (1980s and 90s), took control of Kabul in 1996 and, by 2001, controlled most of the country.
Tora Bora Military Front	was formed in 2007 by the son of the legendary mujahideen commander Yunus Khalis. The group conducted attacks against Afghan and foreign forces in Nangarhar and has its stronghold in the district of Khogyani, and in the areas of Pachir Agam and Shinwar ⁽¹⁵⁾ .

⁽¹³⁾ Stanford University, 'Lashkar-e-Jhangvi', *Mapping Militant Organizations*, updated: 3 August 2012 (<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/215>), accessed 8 Januari 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Stanford University, 'Lashkar-e-Taiba', *Mapping Militant Organizations*, updated: 3 August 2012 (<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/79>), accessed 8 Januari 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁾ EASO, *Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment*, July 2012 (<http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/BZ3012564ENC.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 24.

TTP (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan)	This is the largest militant group in Pakistan. The organisation was founded on 13 December 2007, in a meeting of tribal elders and 40 senior militants throughout Pakistan. Baitullah Mehsud was appointed the commander of TTP. TTP had pledged allegiance to Mullah Omar, the leader of Taliban in Afghanistan. The main goal behind TTP's establishment was to unite the various factions of the Pakistan Taliban in order to organise synchronised attacks on NATO/ISAF forces in Afghanistan. The group also carries out "defensive jihad" against Pakistani military forces conducting operations in FATA ⁽¹⁶⁾ .
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGASC	United Nations General Assembly Security Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USACAC	United States Army Combined Arms Center
Ushr	is an Islamic tax (normally 10%) on certain products, for example agricultural products.
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WFP	World Food Programme
Zakat	is a religious tax on assets and liquidity (2.5%). The practice of almsgiving or zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam

⁽¹⁶⁾ Stanford University, 'Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan', *Mapping Militant Organizations*, updated: 7 August 2012 (<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/105>), accessed 8 Januari 2015.

Introduction

This report is the third COI report on Afghanistan published by EASO. In 2012, EASO published the following reports: COI Report Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies: Recruitment; COI Report Afghanistan, Insurgent Strategies: Intimidation and targeted violence against Afghans.⁽¹⁷⁾

This report was drafted by Country of Origin Information (COI) specialists from the COI units and asylum offices listed as co-authors under the Acknowledgements section, together with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), according to its mandate.

The report aims to provide information on the security situation in Afghanistan, which is relevant for international protection status determination (PSD; refugee status and subsidiary protection). The terms of Reference can be found in Annex 2.

Methodology

• Defining the terms of reference⁽¹⁸⁾

In 2014, through its work with Member States (MS), EASO identified the need among MS for detailed security updates supporting decision- and policy-makers in the assessment of the need for refugee protection and subsidiary protection, especially taking into account article 15(c) of the Recast Qualification Directive (QD). This, together with article 2(f) QD, defines a number of key elements such as: a “real risk of serious harm”; an “internal or international armed conflict”; “indiscriminate violence”; the term “civilian”; and a “serious and individual threat to life or person”.

Based on various sources consulted by EASO⁽¹⁹⁾, these key elements can be broken down into topics and/or indicators. Examples include: parties to the conflict; intensity level of the violence; nature of the violence; regional spreading of the violence; targets of the violence; risk of collateral damage; use of arms and tactics; possibility to reach areas – security of transport (roads and airports); and indirect effects of the violence/conflict.

Based upon a study of all the mentioned sources, a list of elements and indicators was drafted, which served as a basis for the terms of reference (see Annex 2). In order to make a well-informed assessment of the fear of persecution or risk of serious harm, information is needed on these security-related elements and indicators on a regional, provincial or even district level in the country of origin.

In August 2014, a request for input for the terms of reference was sent to members of the EASO COI Specialist Network on Afghanistan and UNHCR. On 17-18 September 2014, during a preparatory meeting, the terms of reference were finalised by the co-authors taking all the inputs into account.

• Collecting information

The present report presents information collected between September and November 2014. After this, some additional research was done in the review phase on selected topics only. A limited number of specialised paper-based and electronic sources were consulted within the time frame and the scope of the research. Regarding media reports on security incidents mentioned for illustration under the regional description of the security situation, there was a reference period from 1 January until 30 September 2014.

Furthermore, a number of contact persons were interviewed. For security reasons, not all contacts were named; the choice had to be made between not interviewing them at all and referring to them as “anonymous sources”. Considering the value of the information provided, the latter approach was preferred.

In particular, one source was used as a standard for quantitative data on security incidents. A western security official, who cannot be named, provided a dataset on security incidents on a level of detail, per district, not available via any

⁽¹⁷⁾ Both reports are available via EASO’s website: (<http://easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation/>).

⁽¹⁸⁾ See annex 2.

⁽¹⁹⁾ The elements, topics and indicators were identified by various sources that have a different position in the legal hierarchy and provide different levels of detail: The Recast Qualification Directive (Recitals and articles); Case law from the Court of Justice of the EU in Luxembourg; National State Practice (National legislation; National case law; National policy and first instance decision practice); Case law from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg; Opinions of experts, academics and specialised organisations.

public source. The source has been assessed as highly reliable and as using a detailed and appropriate methodology for the collection of data on security incidents in conflict zones. The number and type of security incidents is an important indicator in the terms of reference of this report (see Annex 2) and is potentially very useful for the assessment of the situation in the different provinces and districts of Afghanistan. The information provided by the source is in line with trends or information provided by other (public) sources. For these reasons, the choice was made to use this anonymous source. However, the statistics provided by the source should not be used as conclusive for the assessment of the protection needs, but can be taken as indicative of security trends when read together with other indicators and information in this report.

- **Quality control**

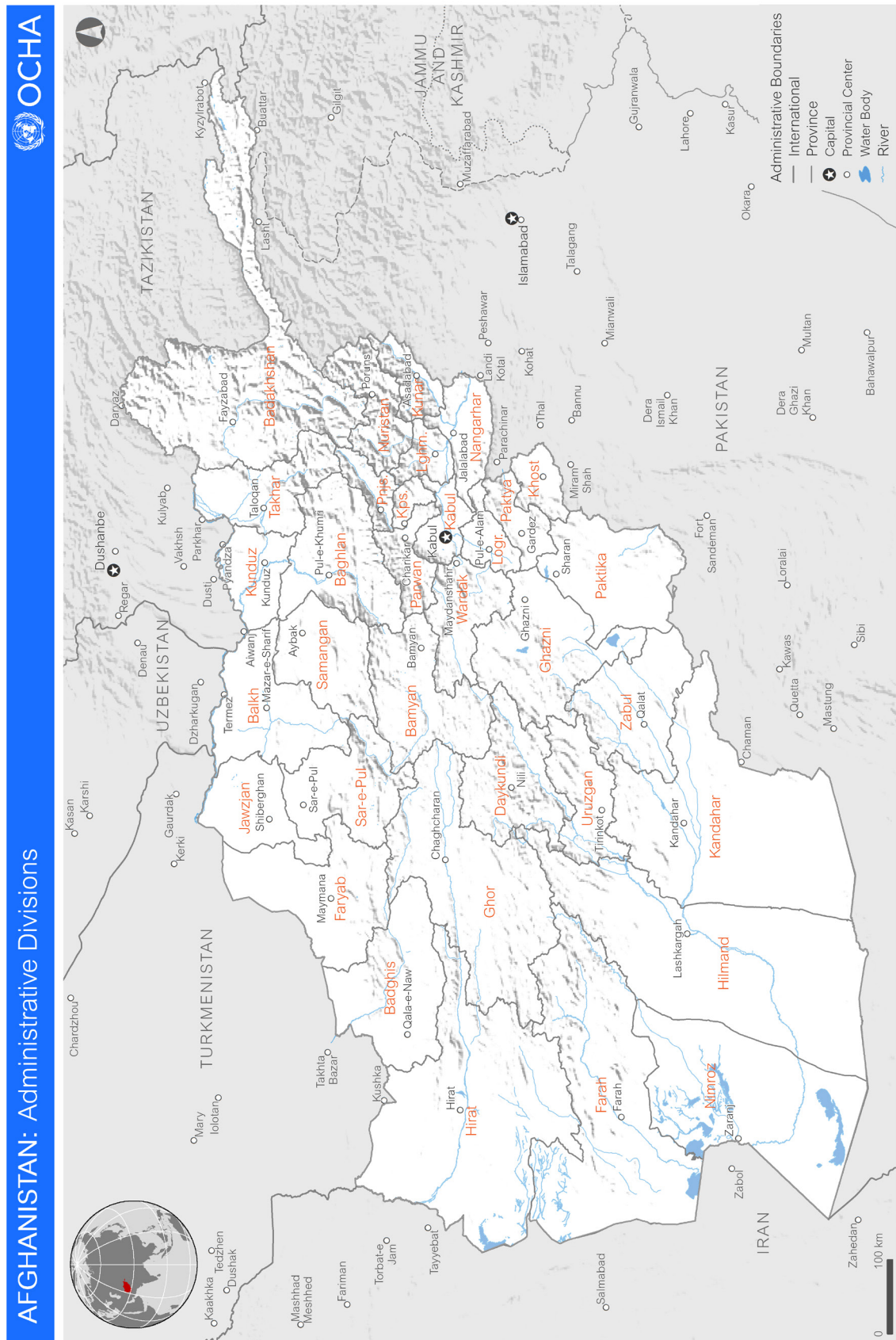
In order to ensure that the co-authors respected the EASO COI Report Methodology, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the Acknowledgements section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report.

Structure and use of this report

This report provides information on elements and indicators that may help assessing the need for protection. It is not meant to be read as a whole. In the first part a general description is given on the security situation in Afghanistan and regional differences are highlighted. These are then explained in greater detail in the second part, holding a regional description of geographic subdivisions (Kabul city and 34 provinces).

Both parts, the general and regional description, provide information from various sources on the relevant elements and indicators. Information on an indicator as such should never be taken as conclusive but as indicative for protection assessment and is to be read together with all other indicators and information on the region (or province, district).

Map of Afghanistan



1. General description of the security situation in Afghanistan

The security situation will be described in this report using the following administrative divisions:

- Centre: Kabul; Kapisa; Panjshir; Parwan; Wardak; Logar;
- Central Highlands: Bamyan; Daykundi;
- South: Nimroz; Helmand; Kandahar; Uruzgan; Zabul;
- South-East: Ghazni; Paktika; Paktya; Khost;
- East: Nangarhar; Laghman; Kunar; Nuristan;
- North-East: Baghlan; Kunduz; Takhar; Badakhshan;
- North: Faryab; Jawzjan; Sar-e Pul; Balkh; Samangan;
- West: Herat; Badghis; Ghor; Farah.

The general security situation in Afghanistan is mainly determined by the following four factors: The main factor is the conflict between the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), supported by the International Military Forces (IMF), and Anti-Government Elements (AGEs), or insurgents. This conflict is often described as an “insurgency”. The other factors are: criminality, warlordism and tribal tensions. These factors are often inter-linked and hard to distinguish.⁽²⁰⁾

Several sources consider the situation in Afghanistan to be a non-international armed conflict.⁽²¹⁾ On 12 November 2014, the World Security Risk Index from the website Global Intake gave Afghanistan the second highest score (48), after Syria (59). Other conflict areas with high scores include: South Sudan (46); Iraq (45); Central African Republic (44); Somalia (41); Ukraine (38).⁽²²⁾

1.1. Overview of recent conflicts in Afghanistan

The so-called *Saur* Revolution on 27 April 1978 brought the Afghan communists to power.⁽²³⁾ In 1979, the government of the former Soviet Union (SU) invaded Afghanistan to support the communist Afghan government. The invasion was followed by a decade of armed conflict between the Afghan government, supported by Soviet troops, and armed opposition groups, often referred to as the “mujahideen”. These groups were divided into several different factions, but they all participated in a nation-wide armed uprising that lasted until the government finally collapsed in 1992, following the Soviet troops’ withdrawal in 1989.⁽²⁴⁾

After this collapse, a period generally referred to as “the Civil War” saw different mujahideen groups who had formed new alliances and fronts fight for control of Afghanistan. War between the competing mujahideen factions and militias was characterised by severe human rights breaches.⁽²⁵⁾ This led to the emergence in 1994 of a group called

⁽²⁰⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/789–S/2014/163*, 7 March 2014 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/163), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 13; Ruttig, T., *Warlords, Religious Leaders, Insurgents: Three external publications*, AAN, 7 October 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/other-publications/warlords-jihadi-leaders-insurgents-three-external-publications/>), accessed 28 October 2014; Dorronsoro, G., ‘Afghanistan: The impossible transition’, *The Carnegie Papers*, Carnegie Endowment, June 2011 (http://carnegieendowment.org/files/impossible_transition.pdf), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 10, 12 and 15; Giustozzi, A., *Koran, Kalashnikov and laptop. The Neo – Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan*, Hurst Publishers, 2007, p. 55-62.

⁽²¹⁾ Gross, R., ‘Chief Legal Advisor for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and legal advisor for US forces in Afghanistan in 2009 and 2010’, *The use of force in armed conflicts – Expert meeting report*, ICRC, 15 November 2013 (<https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/publication/p4171.htm>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 85; Geiß, R. and Siegrist, M., ‘Has the armed conflict in Afghanistan affected the rules on the conduct of hostilities?’, *International Review of the Red Cross, Humanitarian debate: Law, policy, action, Conflict in Afghanistan II, Volume 93, Number 881*, March 2011 (<https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/international-review/review-881-afghanistan/index.jsp>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 13-16; UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 70; UNHCR, *Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Afghanistan*, 6 August 2013 (<http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/51ffdc34.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 10.

⁽²²⁾ Global Intake, *World Security Risk* (http://www.globalintake.com/world_risk_map.php), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽²³⁾ Barfield, T., *A Cultural and Political History*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 195-225.

⁽²⁴⁾ Barfield, T., *A Cultural and Political History*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 227-233, 238-239; Ipsos/ICRC, *Our world. Views from the field. Summary report: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and the Philippines. Opinion Survey*, June 2009 (http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/our_world_-_views_from_countries_-_summary_report_-_part_2_bkmrk.pdf), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 10; Oxfam International, *The Cost of War, Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*, November 2009 (http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/afghanistan-the-cost-of-war_14.pdf), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 7-9.

⁽²⁵⁾ Barfield, T., *A Cultural and Political History*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 253.

the Taliban, who brought stability in areas under their control, which won them support from the population.⁽²⁶⁾ They gradually gained more control and conquered Kabul in 1996. By 2001, the Taliban controlled most of the Afghan territory. But by the end of the year, as a consequence of the 11 September attacks in the US, they were ousted by a US-led military operation. The US gave its support to the mujahideen front opposing the Taliban, at that time known as “Northern Alliance”.⁽²⁷⁾

On 22 December 2001, based on the so-called Bonn Agreement, an Afghan interim government was formed, led by Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun, who also won the first presidential elections in October 2004.⁽²⁸⁾ By then, the Taliban had reorganised and engaged in an insurgency against the Karzai government which was supported by an international coalition of armed forces. The insurgents initially infiltrated pockets in South and East Afghanistan. They extended their reach gradually to more areas and started to control territory.⁽²⁹⁾ Other insurgent groups operated with, or alongside, the Taliban, including: Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan (HIA) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Haqqani network, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).⁽³⁰⁾ This insurgency was characterised by mainly asymmetric warfare: insurgents used roadside and suicide bombs and complex⁽³¹⁾ attacks, intimidation of civilians and targeted killings to destabilise the country. This was countered by searches, clearance operations and bombings by the ANSF and the IMF.⁽³²⁾ The security situation rapidly deteriorated from 2006, leading to more direct and open armed confrontations.⁽³³⁾

Figure 1 shows the stages of infiltration of the insurgents in Afghan territory. Giustozzi indicates on the map in which years insurgents gained ground in the different provinces. The number 1 indicates where they were able to operate in 2002, the number 2 in 2003 and so on.

⁽²⁶⁾ Zaeef, A. S., *My Life with the Taliban*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010, p. 10; ICG, *The Insurgency in Afghanistan’ Heartland*, 17 June 2011 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/207-the-insurgency-in-afghanistans-heartland.aspx>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 3-4; Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahim, N., *Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011*, AREU, January 2012 (<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1203E-Drivers%20of%20Conflict%20IP%202012.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 22.

⁽²⁷⁾ Barfield, T., *A Cultural and Political History*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 248-254 and 258-262; Ipsos/ICRC, *Our world. Views from the field. Summary report: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and the Philippines. Opinion Survey*, June 2009 (http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/our_world_-_views_from_countries_-_summary_report_-_part_2_bkmrk.pdf), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 10; Oxfam International, *The Cost of War, Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*, November 2009 (http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/afghanistan-the-cost-of-war_14.pdf), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 9-12.

⁽²⁸⁾ Oxfam International, *The Cost of War, Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*, November 2009 (http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/afghanistan-the-cost-of-war_14.pdf), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 13.

⁽²⁹⁾ CS Monitor, *Taliban appears to be regrouped and well-funded*, 8 May 2003 (<http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0508/p01s02-wosc.html>), accessed 8 December 2014; Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahim, N., *Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011*, AREU, January 2012 (<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1203E-Drivers%20of%20Conflict%20IP%202012.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 44; Roggio, B., *Taliban contest or control large areas of Afghanistan*, LWJ, 2 December 2009 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/12/taliban_contest_or_c.php), accessed 8 December 2014; International NY Times, *Taliban Making Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 26 July 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/world/asia/taliban-making-military-gains-in-afghanistan.html?_r=0), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽³⁰⁾ ICG, *The Insurgency in Afghanistan’ Heartland*, 17 June 2011 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/207-the-insurgency-in-afghanistans-heartland.aspx>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 14-15; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014, p. 6.

⁽³¹⁾ See glossary.

⁽³²⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahim, N., *Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011*, AREU, January 2012 (<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1203E-Drivers%20of%20Conflict%20IP%202012.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014; UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽³³⁾ Ipsos/ICRC, *Our world. Views from the field. Summary report: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and the Philippines. Opinion Survey*, June 2009 (http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/our_world_-_views_from_countries_-_summary_report_-_part_2_bkmrk.pdf), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 10; EASO, *Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment*, July 2012 (<http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/BZ3012564ENC.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 16-17, 24; Geiß, R. and Siegrist, M., ‘Has the armed conflict in Afghanistan affected the rules on the conduct of hostilities?’, *International Review of the Red Cross, Humanitarian debate: Law, policy, action, Conflict in Afghanistan II, Volume 93, Number 881*, March 2011 (<https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/international-review/review-881-afghanistan/index.jsp>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 17-21; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/789-S/2014/163*, 7 March 2014 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/163), accessed 28 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014.

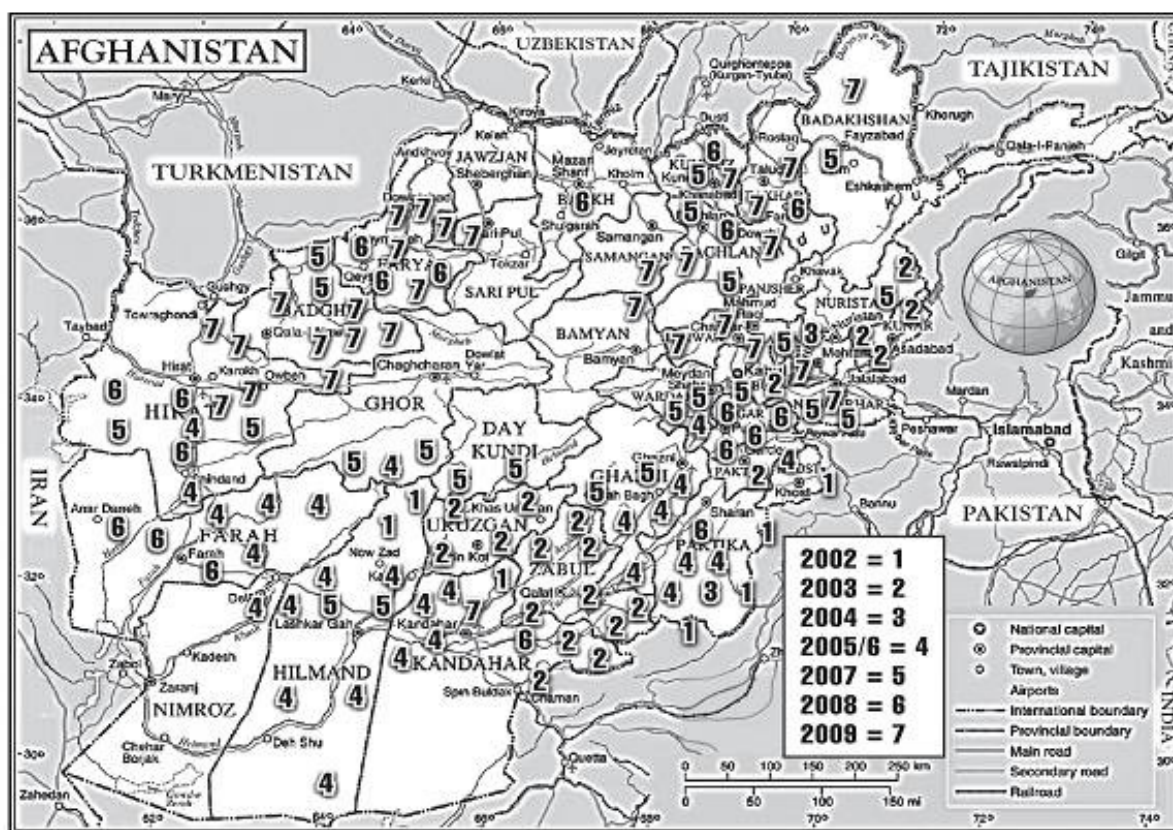


Figure 1: Expansion of the insurgency (Giustozzi, 2010)⁽³⁴⁾

1.2. Actors in the conflict

1.2.1. Pro-Government Forces (PGF)⁽³⁵⁾

The Pro-Government Forces (PGF) consist of: the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF); Pro-Government Militias (PGM); and the International Military Forces (IMF).

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

The ANSF consist of: the Afghan National Army (ANA); the Afghan National Police (ANP); and the National Directorate of Security (NDS).

Afghan National Army (ANA)

The ANA reports to the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and is part of the armed forces of Afghanistan. According to the UN, the ANA numbered about 180,000 personnel in mid-2014.⁽³⁶⁾ The ANA is seen as one of the strongest institutions in Afghanistan, although there are many challenges, particularly how it will cope after the withdrawal of IMF support.

⁽³⁴⁾ Reproduced, by permission, from: Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahimi, N., *Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011*, January 2012 (<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1203E-Drivers%20of%20Conflict%20IP%202012.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 44.

⁽³⁵⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 79.

⁽³⁶⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014; SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the US Congress*, 30 October 2014 (<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-10-30qr.pdf>), accessed 9 December 2014, p. 92 and 99.

Other difficulties include its high casualty and desertion rates, the need for better equipment and the lack of a strong air force. The Afghan National Air Force (ANAF) is still developing: It comprises 7,000 staff, some transport airplanes and helicopters and a few attack helicopters.⁽³⁷⁾

Afghan National Police (ANP)

The ANP is the police force under the Ministry of Interior (Moi). According to the UN, the ANP had 147,077 personnel in mid-2014. It has several specialised divisions: Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP – more than 110,000 personnel); the Afghan National Border Police (ANBP); the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP); the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA).⁽³⁸⁾

In August 2010, the Afghan Local Police (ALP) was created as a security initiative led by the Moi and funded by the US government. The ALP functions under the supervision of the district AUP. ALP members are selected by village elders or local power brokers to protect their communities against Taliban attack, guard facilities and conduct local counterinsurgency missions.⁽³⁹⁾

As of 15 August 2014, it included 28,780 personnel in 150 districts in 29 provinces (not present in Bamyan, Khost, Nimroz, Panjshir or Samangan).⁽⁴⁰⁾ In the first years after it was set up, considerable criticism was levelled at the organisation because of misbehaviour and human rights violations⁽⁴¹⁾. While allegations of human rights violations and impunity involving ALP members continued to be reported, for example in Kunduz in the first half of 2014⁽⁴²⁾, according to the UN, a majority of communities reported an improved security situation due to this initiative.⁽⁴³⁾

Pro-Government Militias (PGM)

A specific local security structure has existed in Afghan society for hundreds of years: the *arbaki*, community or tribal armies.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Different paramilitary initiatives have been developed and formalised to support the Afghan government and assist the formal armed forces of Afghanistan. At various points in time, local militias and armed groups were thus given an official role in the security apparatus of the government. Examples include: Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP); Community Defence Forces (CDF); and the Local Defense Initiative (LDI). These have all ceased to exist but the Afghan Local Police (ALP – see section on ANP) now operates within this security structure.⁽⁴⁵⁾

⁽³⁷⁾ SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the US Congress*, 30 October 2014 (<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-10-30qr.pdf>), accessed 9 December 2014, p. 99-100, 102-104; Giustozzi, A. and Quentin, P., *The Afghan National Army: Sustainability Challenges beyond Financial Aspects*, AREU, February 2014 (<http://www.areu.org.af/EditionDetails.aspx?EditionId=748&ParentId=7&ContentId=7&Lang=en-US>), accessed 5 November 2014; Osman, B., *Can the Taliban outwrestle the government? An assessment of the insurgency's military capability*, AAN, 25 March 2014 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/can-the-taliban-outwrestle-the-government-an-assessment-of-the-insurgencys-military-capability/>), accessed 5 November 2014; NY Times, *War Deaths Top 13,000 in Afghan Security Forces*, 3 March 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/world/asia/afghan-cabinet-releases-data-on-deaths-of-security-personnel.html?_r=1), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽³⁸⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014; ISAF, *Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)*, 26 October 2010 (http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/1667-10_ANSF_LR_en2.pdf), accessed 7 November 2014; SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the US Congress*, 30 October 2014 (<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-10-30qr.pdf>), accessed 9 December 2014, p. 99-100; 106.

⁽³⁹⁾ SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the US Congress*, 30 October 2014 (<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-10-30qr.pdf>), accessed 9 December 2014, p. 98.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014, p. 7.

⁽⁴¹⁾ HRW, *Just Don't Call It a Militia*, September 2011 (<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0911webwcover.pdf>), accessed 6 November 2014, p. 58-75; Saum-Manning, L., *VSO/ALP: Comparing Past and Current Challenges to Afghan Local Defense*, RAND, December 2012 (http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/2012/RAND_WR936.pdf), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁴²⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 46.

⁽⁴³⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014, p. 8; UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 46.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Seraj, A., *Opinion: The Arbaki can secure Afghanistan better than the US*, Al Jazeera, last updated: 5 November 2014 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/11/arbaki-can-secure-afghanistan-b-201411310478518533.html>), accessed 9 December 2014; HRW, *Just Don't Call It a Militia*, September 2011 (<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0911webwcover.pdf>), accessed 6 November 2014, p. 13-14.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ HRW, *Just Don't Call It a Militia*, September 2011 (<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0911webwcover.pdf>), accessed 6 November 2014.

From the beginning of the insurgency, the government and IMF have also relied on militias that are not part of any formal government entity, for example for searches, night raids or executions. This happened during the Andar uprising⁽⁴⁶⁾ against the Taliban. Another example was at Kunduz, where human rights violations by such militias were repeatedly reported.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Mid 2014, UNAMA reported an increase in attacks and abuses of civilians by Pro-government armed groups and a total absence of accountability for their actions⁽⁴⁸⁾.

International Military Forces (IMF)

UNAMA reported:

“International Military Forces include all foreign soldiers forming part of ISAF and US Forces Afghanistan (including Operation Enduring Freedom) who are under the Commander of ISAF (COMISAF), who is also Commander of the US Forces in Afghanistan. The term also encompasses Special Operations Forces and other foreign intelligence and security forces.”⁽⁴⁹⁾

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

ISAF was deployed under a peace enforcement mandate pursuant to Chapter VII of the UN Charter and the authority of the UN Security Council. Since August 2003, it has operated under NATO command. UN Security Council Resolution 2120 (2013) reaffirmed previous resolutions on ISAF and extended its mandate until 31 December 2014.⁽⁵⁰⁾ As of 6 October 2014, ISAF's total strength was 34,512 troops, from 48 contributing nations.⁽⁵¹⁾

ISAF outlines its mission as:

“In support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, ISAF conducts operations in Afghanistan to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.”

In addition to providing security, ISAF established Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that supported reconstruction and development in Afghanistan, and helped the Afghan authorities with good governance, rule of law and promotion of human rights. Recently, most PRTs have been closed because the ISAF bases attached to them were closed.⁽⁵²⁾

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Habib, E., *The Morphing of the Andar Uprising: transition to Afghan Local Police*, AAN, 2 April 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-morphing-of-the-andar-uprising-transition-to-afghan-local-police/>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Al Jazeera America, *Exclusive: A US-backed militia runs amok in Afghanistan*, 23 July 2014 (<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/23/exclusive-a-killinginandar.html>), accessed 10 November 2014; VOA, *In Afghan North, US-Backed Militias Spur Local Backlash*, 23 November 2011 (<http://www.voanews.com/content/in-afghan-north-us-backed-militias-spur-local-backlash-134469113/148688.html>), accessed 10 November 2014; Hewad, G., *Legal, illegal: Militia recruitment and (failed) disarmament in Kunduz*, AAN, 10 November 2012 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/legal-illegal-militia-recruitment-and-failed-disarmament-in-kunduz/>), accessed 10 November 2014; Bleuer, C. and Ali, O., *Security in Kunduz Worsening Further: The case of Khanabad*, AAN, 28 October 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/security-in-kunduz-worsening-further-the-case-of-khanabad/>), accessed 10 November 2014; IRIN, *AFGHANISTAN: Fears over child recruitment, abuse by pro-government militias*, 20 January 2011 (<http://www.irinnews.org/report/91676/afghanistan-fears-over-child-recruitment-abuse-by-pro-government-militias>), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 54 and 58.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 78.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 78.

⁽⁵¹⁾ ISAF, *International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Key Facts and Figures*, 6 October 2014 (<http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/media/PDFs/21041006isaf%20placemat-final.pdf>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁵²⁾ ISAF, *About ISAF – Mission*, (<http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html>), accessed 5 November 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 19; Wall Street Journal, *U.S. Winds Down Afghanistan Aid Program*, 10 October 2012 (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10000872396390443749204578048430936135770>), accessed 8 December 2012; UK Government, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, *Afghanistan: Closure of the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team*, 20 March 2014, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/afghanistan-closure-of-the-helmand-provincial-reconstruction-team>), accessed 8 December 2014.

Operation Enduring Freedom

Operation Enduring Freedom began on 7 October 2001, with air strikes on Taliban and Al Qaeda targets, executed by the US and its allies.⁽⁵³⁾ Since November 2008, the Commander of ISAF has served as Commander of US Forces Afghanistan, although the chains of command remain separate.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Transition

NATO describes the security transition process in Afghanistan as follows:

“Inteqal – the Dari and Pashtu word for transition – is the process by which the lead responsibility for security in Afghanistan is gradually being transitioned from the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The aim is for Afghan forces to have full responsibility for security across the country by the end of 2014. This target was set at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon and confirmed by Allied leaders at the Chicago Summit in May 2012. While ISAF will complete its mission by end 2014, support for the further development of the ANSF will continue under a new, smaller non-combat NATO-led mission (“Resolute Support”).”⁽⁵⁵⁾

On 1 February 2012, the US Defence Secretary declared the intention to end the combat mission in Afghanistan in 2013, transitioning primarily to a training role.⁽⁵⁶⁾ From 2012, countries started withdrawing troops from combat missions in Afghanistan. France, for example, withdrew 2,500 troops.⁽⁵⁷⁾ On 18 June 2013, ANSF formally took over combat operations.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Canada formally ended its military mission in Afghanistan in March 2014. In October 2014, the UK did the same.⁽⁵⁹⁾

The ISAF mandate will expire at the end of 2014.⁽⁶⁰⁾ The US intends to have its troops withdrawn by the end of 2016. On 30 September 2014, the Afghan government signed a Bilateral Security Agreement with the US government. In the framework of this agreement, at the beginning of 2015, only about 10,000 US troops would remain in Afghanistan, down from a peak of about 100,000.⁽⁶¹⁾

1.2.2. Anti-Government Elements (AGEs)

UNAMA defines “Anti-Government Elements” (also referred to as insurgents) as:⁽⁶²⁾

“all individuals and armed groups involved in armed conflict with or armed opposition against the Government of Afghanistan and/or international military forces. They include those who identify as ‘Taliban’ as well as individuals and non-State organised armed groups taking a direct part in hostilities and assuming a variety of labels including the Haqqani Network, Hezb-e-Islami, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union, Lashkari Tayyiba, Jaysh Muhammed, and other militia and armed groups pursuing political, ideological or economic objectives including armed criminal groups directly engaged in hostile acts on behalf [of] a party to the conflict.”

⁽⁵³⁾ CNN, *Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts*, last updated: 27 October 2014 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/>), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 78.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ NATO, *Inteqal: Transition to Afghan lead*, last updated: 13 October 2014 (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_87183.htm), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ CNN, *Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts*, last updated: 27 October 2014 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/>), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ CNN, *France pulls last troops from combat roles in Afghanistan*, 20 December 2012 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/15/world/asia/afghanistan-france-troops/>), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ CNN, *Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts*, last updated: 27 October 2014 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/>), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Government of Canada, *Canadian Armed Forces completes military mission in Afghanistan*, News Release, 12 March 2014 (<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=index&ctr.page=1&nid=824179>), accessed 10 November 2014; CNN, *UK formally ends combat mission in Afghanistan*, 26 October 2014 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/26/world/asia/afghanistan-uk-combat-end/index.html>), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910–S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁶¹⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910–S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014; RFE/RL, *Explainer: Key Points In U.S.-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement*, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/explainer-bsa-afghan-us-security-agreement-bsa/26613884.html>), accessed 9 December 2014.

⁽⁶²⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 75.

The range of insurgent groups and splinter groups has widened. Besides the main insurgent forces (Taliban, Haqqani network, HIA, IMU), several smaller groups have reappeared that are often even more radicalised than the Taliban. Examples of such splinter groups are: Feday-e Mahaz (suicide brigade); Mullah Dadullah Front; and Jihadi Shura of Mujahidin for Unity and Understanding.⁽⁶³⁾

Most of the groups mentioned in this chapter have a history or roots in prior phases of Afghanistan's recent conflict history, even dating back to the first mujahideen period in the 1970s. However, more details about their respective backgrounds do not fall within the scope of this report.

Taliban

The Taliban are insurgent groups that acknowledge the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar and the Taliban Leadership Council in Quetta, Pakistan. The Taliban leadership ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001 and regrouped after it was ousted from power. The different groups have varying operational autonomy, but there is a governing system under the Leadership Council with several regional and local layers. They have a Military Council and a command structure with, at the lowest level, front commanders overseeing a group of fighters. The governing structure and military command is defined in the Taliban's Lahya or Code of Conduct.⁽⁶⁴⁾

On 8 May 2014, the Taliban leadership announced that its spring offensive, called "Khaibar", would be launched on 12 May and would target "senior government officials, members of parliament, security officials, attorneys and judges that prosecute mujahideen, and gatherings of foreign invading forces, their diplomatic centres and convoys".⁽⁶⁵⁾

As described by Münch and Ruttig, the Taliban's core heartland is located in the south and their influence is strongest in the regions of the south-east and east, where they can count on support from affiliated networks. In terms of the Taliban's territorial control, there are only a limited number of districts under their full control, with most district administrative centres remaining under government control. However, outside these centres, there are varying degrees of Taliban control. They have exerted uninterrupted control over large swathes of territory, reaching from southern Herat and eastern Farah, through parts of Ghor (Pasaband), northern Helmand (Baghran and other districts), Uruzgan and northern Kandahar to the western half of Zabul (Dehchopan, Khak-e Afghan) and southern Ghazni.⁽⁶⁶⁾

Haqqani network

The Haqqani network is an insurgent network in the south-east of Afghanistan, with its origins in the 1970s mujahideen groups. Its leader, Jalaluddin Haqqani, has attacked Afghan government officials since 1971. It is believed he fled to Pakistan in late 2001, where currently the network has its most important base in North Waziristan. Due to his age, he handed over the practical leadership to his son, Serajuddin Haqqani. Although the network has maintained an autonomous position, structure and its own modus operandi, it is considered part of the Taliban. It is known for various high-profile attacks on targets in Kabul city.⁽⁶⁷⁾

Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan

Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan (HIA) is an insurgent group led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The group has the withdrawal of foreign troops as a goal, has conducted high-profile attacks in the capital, but has been more open to negotiation with the Afghan government than the Taliban. The latter criticise HIA for this and on occasions there has been fighting

⁽⁶³⁾ RFE/RL, *Taliban Splinter Groups Add To Election Fears In Afghanistan*, 13 March 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-election-taliban-assassination/25296037.html>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ EASO, *Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment*, July 2012 (<http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/BZ3012564ENC.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 18-20.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, *Statement of Leadership Council of Islamic Emirate regarding the commencement of the annual spring operation named 'Khaibar'*, 8 May 2014 (<http://shahamat-english.com/index.php/paighamoonaa/44468-statement-of-leadership-council-of-islamic-emirate-regarding-the-commencement-of-the-annual-spring-operation-named-%E2%80%98khaibar%E2%80%99>), accessed 9 December 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910–S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., 'Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency', *Orient*, 55 (2014) III, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, (http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/fachpublikationen/Muench_Ruttig_2014_Situatio_of_the_AFG_INS.pdf), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Jamestown Foundation, 'The Haqqani Network and Cross-Border Terrorism in Afghanistan', *Terrorism Monitor Volume 6 – Issue 6*, 24 March 2008 ([http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4804&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=167&no_cache=1#.VIXOv22E5Ck](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4804&tx_ttnews[backPid]=167&no_cache=1#.VIXOv22E5Ck)), accessed 8 December 2014; Ruttig, T., *Talking Haqqani*, AAN, 1 July 2010 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/talking-haqqani/>), accessed 4 November 2014; Washington Times, *Haqqani Network, Pakistan terror group, grows into worst enemy for U.S.*, 5 June 2014 (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/jun/5/haqqani-network-pakistan-terror-group-grows-into-w/?page=all>), accessed 4 November 2014.

between both insurgent groups in different areas. On other occasions they have cooperated. HIA's strongholds are located in the east and south-east of Afghanistan, in the areas surrounding Kabul, in Baghlan and Kunduz. The group's major field commander is Kashmir Khan, who is active in eastern Afghanistan.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is an insurgent network with many fighters who fled government suppression in Uzbekistan. It has links with the Taliban and with insurgent groups in Pakistan. It is active in areas of Faryab, Takhar, Balkh and Kunduz and also operates in East Afghanistan where it is affiliated with Al Qaeda. It conducts attacks on ANSF.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Al Qaeda and affiliated groups

In the east of Afghanistan, Al Qaeda is present and its affiliated groups carry out attacks on ANSF. Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), and Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) are groups⁽⁷⁰⁾ mainly operating from Pakistan.⁽⁷¹⁾

1.3. Recent security trends and armed confrontations

According to Ruttig and Münch, the withdrawal of foreign troops has had an impact on the areas that they used to secure. In those areas, which are now left to the ANSF, insurgents increasingly take control of territory, and attack administrative centres and security installations.⁽⁷²⁾ The International Crisis Group (ICG) described how the transition initiated a new phase in the war, characterised by fighting between the ANSF and insurgent groups. The latter have failed to capture major towns and cities and some areas are even more secure due to the withdrawal of IMF. However, the overall trend is one of decreasing government control outside the larger towns and cities, escalating violence and more insurgent attacks.⁽⁷³⁾

Ruttig and Münch reported that since 2013, insurgents have made increasing territorial gains and cut off major highways, especially in the north. They sometimes symbolically capture abandoned ISAF bases, such as Kejran, Daykundi in October 2013 and ANSF bases, such as Omna district, Paktika, in late May 2014 and Ghaziabad, Kunar, in February 2014. The insurgents launch major assaults around the country on administrative centres and security checkpoints. The aim is to capture territory and hold it, such as at Yamgan, Badakhshan, and Qaisar and Ghormach districts of Faryab. They operate in fronts of several hundred fighters. So far, the ANSF has repelled most attacks and regained control over district administrative centres and security installations, but the UN Secretary General reported that ANSF have not been able to curtail insurgents' presence and freedom of movement, especially in remote districts. However, the expansion of the ALP and local uprisings have pushed them back from other areas, for example in Ghazni province.⁽⁷⁴⁾

UNAMA confirmed that the closure of ISAF bases and transfer of responsibilities to the ANSF caused changing dynamics in the conflict. In the second half of 2013 and the first half of 2014, AGEs challenged the ANSF by conducting

⁽⁶⁸⁾ EASO, *Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment*, July 2012 (<http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/BZ3012564ENC.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 24; Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., 'Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency', *Orient*, 55 (2014) III, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, (http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/fachpublikationen/Muench_Ruttig_2014_Situatio_of_the_AFG_INS.pdf), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ EASO, *Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment*, July 2012 (<http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/BZ3012564ENC.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 24; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910–S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ See Glossary.

⁽⁷¹⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910–S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; EASO, *Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment*, July 2012 (<http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/BZ3012564ENC.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 24.

⁽⁷²⁾ Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., 'Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency', *Orient*, 55 (2014) III, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, (http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/fachpublikationen/Muench_Ruttig_2014_Situatio_of_the_AFG_INS.pdf), accessed 7 November 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014, p. 6.

⁽⁷³⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf>), accessed 10 November 2014, p. I, 11-13, 19-21, 27-28, 36-37.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., 'Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency', *Orient*, 55 (2014) III, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, (http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/fachpublikationen/Muench_Ruttig_2014_Situatio_of_the_AFG_INS.pdf), accessed 7 November 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

attacks in larger groups of fighters and more civilians were caught in crossfire and ground engagements. However, in some areas, ANSF succeeded in holding the territory after the closure of an ISAF base, which resulted in fewer civilian casualties in those respective areas⁽⁷⁵⁾.

Between 1 March and 15 August 2014, the UN recorded a total of 11,320 security incidents relevant to the work, mobility and safety of civilians in Afghanistan. This was an increase compared to 2012 and 2013, but the number was still lower than in 2011.⁽⁷⁶⁾

1.3.1. Armed clashes

According to the UN Secretary General, nearly half of the recorded security incidents between March and 15 August 2014 were armed clashes. The insurgents increasingly launched large-scale assaults on district centres and checkpoints, with several hundred fighters, using Small Arms Fire (SAF), rockets, mortars and grenades. They intend more and more not only to capture but also to hold terrain. An example of this was the capture of the Yamgan administrative district centre in Badakhshan in the early days of the Taliban's 2014 spring offensive, which was intended to show fighting strength.⁽⁷⁷⁾

1.3.2. Improvised Explosive Devices

Between 1 March and 15 August 2014, approximately 30 percent of security incidents featured Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). During this period, 68 suicide bombings were executed (SVBIED⁽⁷⁸⁾ or BBIED⁽⁷⁹⁾).⁽⁸⁰⁾

AGEs increasingly used pressure-plate IEDs, or PPIEDs, which are activated by the victim. Another type widely used is the remote-controlled IED (RCIED), which is mostly used to target ANSF, but causes a lot of collateral damage.⁽⁸¹⁾

1.3.3. Complex attacks

In order to target high-profile targets, insurgents rely on a strategy referred to as complex attacks: deliberate and coordinated attacks that include a suicide device (i.e. BBIED, VBIED⁽⁸²⁾), more than one attacker and more than one type of device (i.e. BBIED + mortars). All three elements must be used for an attack to be considered complex.⁽⁸³⁾ Examples of this include: the assault on 20 March 2014 on a luxury hotel where people were celebrating Nowrouz (Persian New Year); the assault on 12 May 2014 on the Department of Justice in Jalalabad.⁽⁸⁴⁾

⁽⁷⁵⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 8-9.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014; UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 1-3.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Suicide Vehicle Borne IED.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Body Borne IED.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 4-5.

⁽⁸²⁾ Vehicle Borne IED.

⁽⁸³⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 45.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014.

1.3.4. Targeted killings

Another strategy widely used by insurgents is targeted killings. Between 1 June and 15 August 2014, the UN recorded 470 assassinations and failed attempts, an increase compared to 2013. Insurgents rely on this strategy to exert influence through fear and intimidation.⁽⁸⁵⁾

1.3.5. Counter-narcotics operations

The UN reported counter-narcotic operations in 2014, in which nine police personnel were wounded by 15 August.⁽⁸⁶⁾

1.4. State ability to secure law and order

1.4.1. Justice

Seven authorities are involved in the criminal justice sector: the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Office, the Supreme Court, the MoI, the NDS, the MoD and the High Office of Oversight.⁽⁸⁷⁾ The formal court system, as established in the Constitution, consists of a Supreme Court, High Court of Appeal, Provincial Courts, lower Primary Courts and some specialised courts such as the Juvenile and Family Courts and Counter-Narcotics Courts. However, these courts are not operational in all provinces and all courts lack capacity.⁽⁸⁸⁾

The judiciary is relatively strong in the larger urban centres, where the government is in control, but very weak or inexistent in rural areas, where local elders and shuras⁽⁸⁹⁾ settle both criminal and civil cases. In some areas the Taliban have enforced a parallel judicial system based on strict interpretation of sharia. Both unofficial systems provide no guarantees for Rule of Law and basic rights of defence. Often, women are victims of these traditional judicial systems and harsh punishments are executed, such as mutilation. The Taliban target official courts and kill judges, court officials, prosecutors.⁽⁹⁰⁾

USDOS reported for 2013 that *“the judiciary continued to be underfunded, understaffed, inadequately trained, ineffective, and subject to threats, bias, political influence, and pervasive corruption.”* Impartiality of the judiciary is impossible due to bribery and pressure from different parties. Courts use a mixture of law systems (codified; sharia; local custom) without uniformity and even in Supreme Court, judges appeared to have limited knowledge of civilian jurisprudence.⁽⁹¹⁾

1.4.2. Security Forces

The US Department Of State (USDOS) reported for 2013 that the *“civilian authorities generally maintained control over the security forces, although there were instances in which security forces acted independently and sometimes*

⁽⁸⁵⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910–S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ USDOS, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Afghanistan*, n.d. (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dld=220386>), accessed 12 November 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 49–52.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ Tahmindjis, P., *The Rule of Law, Democracy and the Legal Profession in the Afghan Context: Challenges and Opportunities*, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), January 2014 (<http://www.ibanet.org/Article/Detail.aspx?ArticleUid=85ac71e3-e13e-43bd-8c97-48ac526a8d23>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ A shura is a community council.

⁽⁹⁰⁾ Tahmindjis, P., *The Rule of Law, Democracy and the Legal Profession in the Afghan Context: Challenges and Opportunities*, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), January 2014 (<http://www.ibanet.org/Article/Detail.aspx?ArticleUid=85ac71e3-e13e-43bd-8c97-48ac526a8d23>), accessed 12 November 2014; USDOS, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Afghanistan*, n.d. (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dld=220386>), accessed 12 November 2014; RFE/RL, *Militants Storm Afghan Court, Killing Prosecutors, Officials*, 28 October 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/militants-storm-afghan-court-killing-prosecutors-officials/26659589.html>), accessed 11 November 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 46–48.

⁽⁹¹⁾ USDOS, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Afghanistan*, n.d. (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dld=220386>), accessed 12 November 2014.

committed human rights abuses.” Extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and abuse of detainees and other human rights abuses by security forces were reported. Efforts have been made to train security forces. Nevertheless, ANP personnel appeared to be largely unaware of their responsibilities and defendants’ rights.⁽⁹²⁾

1.4.3. State Protection

According to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Afghan authorities are, in general, unable to provide protection against violence, with the only possible exception being the city of Kabul, but only to some extent.⁽⁹³⁾ Taliban and other armed actors continue to kill, abduct and injure civilians and security personnel.⁽⁹⁴⁾

For 2013, USDOS reported widespread disregard for the Rule of Law and impunity for human rights abusers. Abuses by officials were not prosecuted.⁽⁹⁵⁾

1.4.4. Detention

Detention conditions are very bad. A lack of resources, limited numbers of defence attorneys, unskilled legal practitioners and corruption were factors contributing to a disregard of legal provisions that protect the detainee. The maximum period of detention by the court without indictment is 30 days. Many detainees, however, were held beyond 30 days, even without being informed of what they are accused of.⁽⁹⁶⁾

1.5. Impact of the violence

The UN Secretary General reported considerable casualties among security forces, civilians and insurgents for the period between 1 June and 15 August 2014.⁽⁹⁷⁾

1.5.1. ANSF

In 2013 and 2014, ANSF suffered the highest numbers of casualties since the insurgency started. For the first time in the conflict, insurgents have been able to inflict nearly as many ANSF casualties as they suffered themselves. According to data provided by the Afghan government, more than 13,000 ANSF have been killed in the conflict, most of them after 2010.⁽⁹⁸⁾

1.5.2. Civilian population⁽⁹⁹⁾

In the first half of 2014, UNAMA documented 4,853 civilian casualties (1,564 killed and 3,289 injured), a 24% increase compared to the same period in 2013.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ From January to September 2014, UNOCHA reported 7,965 civilians killed or injured in the conflict.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

⁽⁹²⁾ USDOS, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Afghanistan*, n.d. (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=220386>), accessed 12 November 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 49-52.

⁽⁹³⁾ Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 26.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ USDOS, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Afghanistan*, n.d. (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=220386>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁾ USDOS, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Afghanistan*, n.d. (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=220386>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁾ USDOS, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 Afghanistan*, n.d. (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=220386>), accessed 12 November 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 49-52.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan’s Insurgency after the Transition*, 12 May 2014 ([http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf)), accessed 10 November 2014; NY Times, *War Deaths Top 13,000 in Afghan Security Forces*, 3 March 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/world/asia/afghan-cabinet-releases-data-on-deaths-of-security-personnel.html?_r=1), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹⁾ For a definition of civilian, see glossary.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 1-3, 35.

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 1.

In Figure 2, an overview by UNAMA is shown of civilian deaths and injuries for the first six months of the past six years.⁽¹⁰²⁾

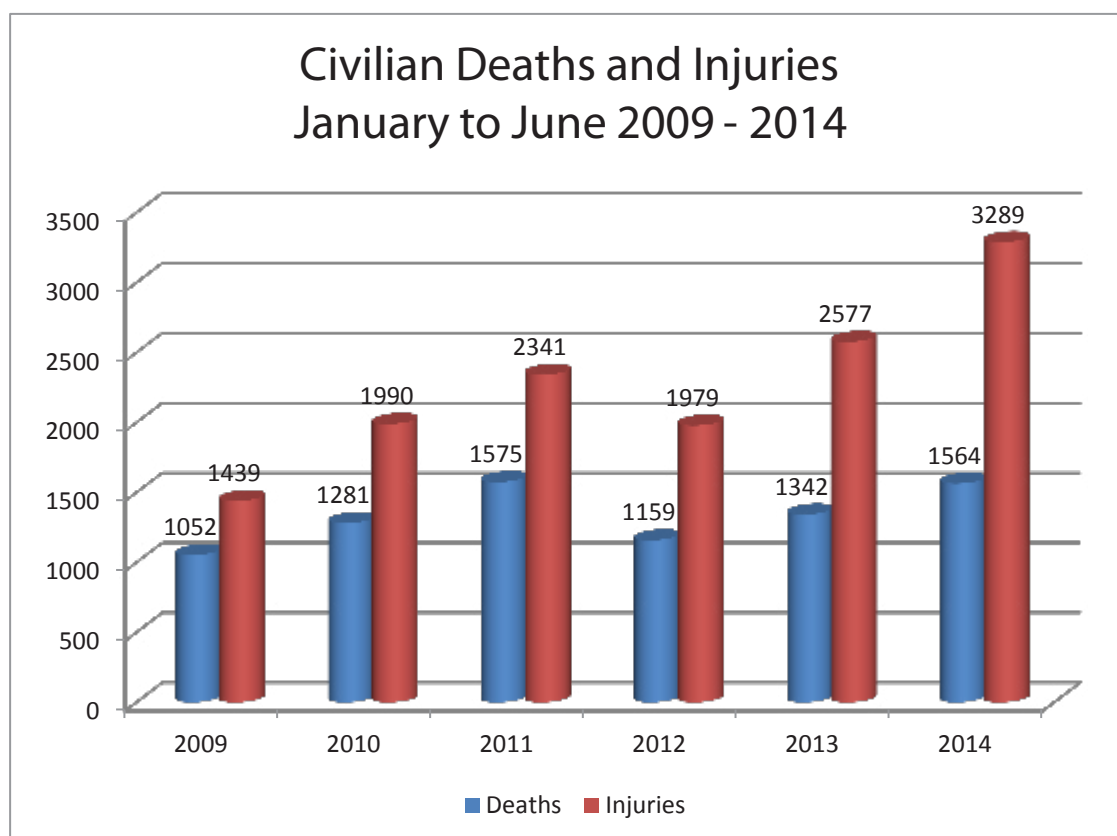


Figure 2: Civilian casualties (UNAMA)

For the first time since UNAMA started recording civilian casualties in 2009, more civilians were killed and injured in ground engagements, including rockets, mortars and grenades and crossfire, than any other type of violence. The regions where ground engagements and crossfire led to the most civilian casualties are the South, South-East and East. In previous years, the majority of civilian victims were due to IEDs. The vast majority of civilian casualties is attributed to AGEs.⁽¹⁰³⁾

According to UNAMA, IEDs are still frequently detonated in public places, such as markets, populated areas, or places frequented by civilians. This tactic, which includes suicide and complex attacks, is the second highest cause of civilian casualties in the conflict. Insurgents placed, for example, PPIEDs on footpaths and roads that killed and injured civilians on foot, riding bicycles, in buses, taxis or in private cars. IEDs caused most civilian victims in the south and south-east. Other tactics making victims among civilians include: targeted killings (tribal elders, civilian government officials, mullahs and civilian justice officials); air attacks; escalation of force incidents⁽¹⁰⁴⁾; and abductions.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

In the first half of 2014, UNAMA reported 30 civilian casualties resulting from abuses and operations by, or fighting between Pro-Government armed groups.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

The Afghan conflict causes a steady increase in civilian casualties from Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs): unexploded ordnances (UXOs) and abandoned explosive ordnances (AXOs).⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

⁽¹⁰²⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 8.

⁽¹⁰³⁾ See Figures 3 and 4: UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 1-3, 14, 35.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ See glossary.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 4-5, 11, 13, 21.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 7.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 66.

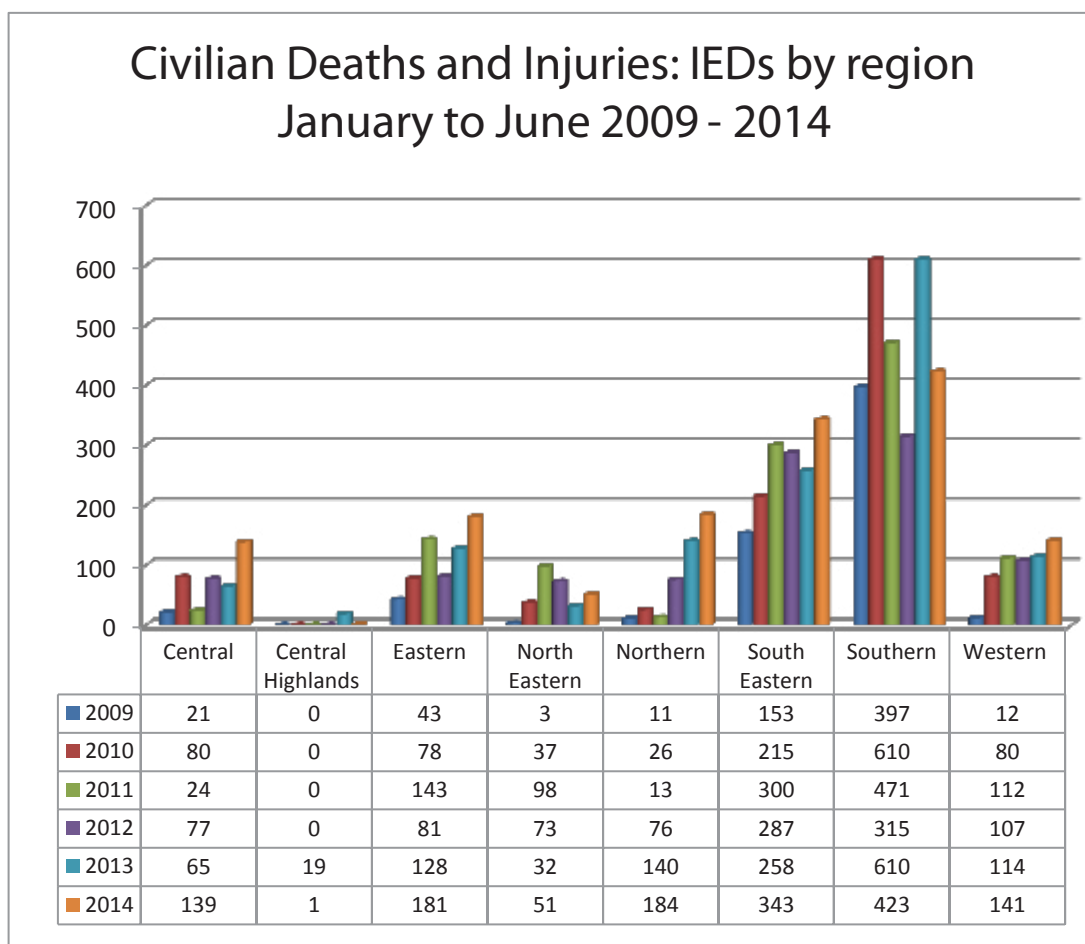


Figure 3: Civilian casualties due to IEDs (UNAMA)

Children

In the first six months of 2014, UNAMA recorded 1,071 child casualties (295 killed and 776 injured), of which 520 (112 killed and 408 injured) were from ground engagements. This is more than double the number for 2013.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ In November 2014, UNOCHA reported that 22% of civilian victims (until 30 September 2014) were children.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

Between 1 June and 15 August 2014, the UN reported 158 children killed in security incidents and another 322 injured. These casualties were mainly caused by ground engagements and the majority of these 480 casualties fell in the east (111). Some cases of underage recruitment and child abduction were also reported.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

The UN reported children's vulnerability to unexploded ordnances, explosive remnants of war and landmines. These long-lasting effects of the violence killed and injured more than 60 children between 1 February and 30 April 2014 alone.⁽¹¹¹⁾

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 4.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 1.

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽¹¹¹⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910–S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

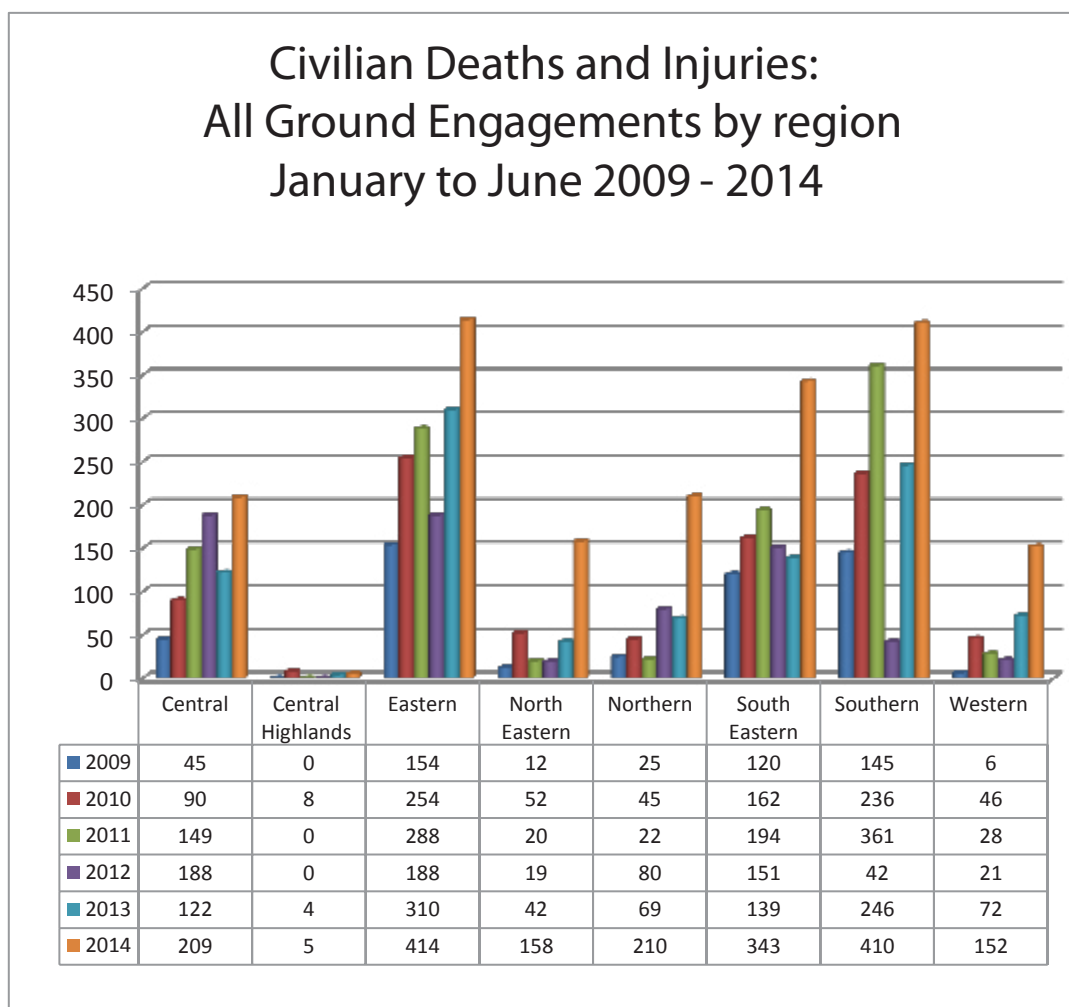


Figure 4: Civilian casualties due to ground engagements (UNAMA)

Health facilities

Between 1 January and 15 August 2014, the UN reported 117 security incidents involving health personnel or facilities, including the killing, injuring and abduction of aid workers.⁽¹¹²⁾

UNOCHA reported that due to the intensification of the conflict, the ability of the population to reach health facilities has decreased. The causes are: checkpoints, military action and lack of public transport.⁽¹¹³⁾

Foreigners

Insurgents continued to target different foreign targets or foreign civilians, staff members of the UN and other organisations. Examples of this were: the assault on the Indian Consulate in the city of Herat on 24 May 2014; intimidation and abduction of UN staff; targeted killings or attempts on foreign journalists.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

⁽¹¹²⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽¹¹³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 8.

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

Refugees, returnees and IDPs

More than 30 years of conflict in Afghanistan caused a protracted refugee crisis in which at least 10 million Afghans fled.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ Since 2002, 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned. In 2013, 39,600 refugees returned, a 60 percent decrease compared to 2012 (98,500). Since 2007, there were 200,000 to 300,000 Afghans deported from Iran and Pakistan per year, by far the most from Iran.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ As at January 2014, there were still more than 2.5 million Afghan refugees in the world, most of them staying in Pakistan and Iran.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ During the first ten months of 2014, a total of 15,248 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. This is 58% less than in the same period in 2013. UNHCR believes this decrease should be attributed to the extension of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until 31 December 2015 in Pakistan, uncertainty and concerns about security during the transitional period.⁽¹¹⁸⁾

As of the end of October 2014, UNHCR reported that 766,545 Afghans were internally displaced. The most important causes of displacement were: “armed conflict between AGEs and ANSF; harassment and intimidation by AGEs”. Other causes were also mentioned: “military operations conducted by ANSF; general insecurity; inter-tribal disputes; armed conflict between different groups of AGEs and cross-border rocket shelling”.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ In November 2014 alone, UNOCHA reported 105,800 new displacements in Afghanistan due to the conflict, but estimated that the actual number of displacements was likely to be much higher.⁽¹²⁰⁾

Many IDPs and returnees end up in urban areas, for example in Jalalabad or Kabul, where they often find themselves in protracted displacement.⁽¹²¹⁾

1.5.3. Political process

On 5 April 2014, the first round of presidential elections was held. In March and April, the Taliban publicly declared its intention to disrupt the political process. It conducted complex attacks in Kabul and Laghman on the provincial offices of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) at the end of March, followed by an attack on the IEC headquarters in Kabul. Civilians were victims of these assaults. The Taliban also threatened election workers and candidates. On polling day, 476 security incidents were recorded by the UN, of which at least 271 were directly related to the political process.⁽¹²²⁾

On 14 June 2014, the second-round run-off in the presidential election was held between Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. According to the UN Secretary General, the insurgents did not cause significant disruption of the process. Still, on the day of the election, 530 security incidents were recorded by the UN, of which at least 237 were directly related to the political process. ANSF held security operations during this second phase of the elections.⁽¹²³⁾

Between 1 January and 30 June, UNAMA documented 674 civilian casualties - 173 civilian deaths and 501 injured - from attacks directly targeting the electoral process.⁽¹²⁴⁾

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ IRIN, *In-depth: From pillar to post - the plight of Afghans abroad*, 27 February 2012 (<http://www.irinnews.org/indepthmain.aspx?indepthid=95&reportid=94960>), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ UNHCR, *2013 Global Report – Afghanistan*, n.d. (<http://www.unhcr.org/539809fa6.html>), accessed 15 November 2014; UNHCR, *The 2014 Afghanistan Refugee and Returnee Overview*, 29 October 2014 (<http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/2014-afghanistan-refugee-and-returnee-overview>), accessed 13 November 2014, p. 5; IRIN, *Afghanistan: Mass deportation from Iran may cause crisis, official warns*, 17 February 2008 (<http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=76790>), accessed 8 December 2014; UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, December 2013 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/52d7b3e84.html>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4; UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, September 2014 (http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/VolRep_Border%20Monitoring_Monthly_Update_Sep_2014.pdf), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 5.

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ UNHCR, *2014 UNHCR country operations profile – Afghanistan – statistical snapshot*, January 2014 (<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486eb6.html#>), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469cafe4.html>), accessed 9 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Monthly IDP Update*, October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/topic,50ffbce526e,50ffbce5274,5469cb2b4,0,UNHCR,AFG.html>), accessed 9 December 2014.

⁽¹²⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 9.

⁽¹²¹⁾ IRIN, *Asia's first IDP policy - from theory to practice*, 20 October 2014 (<http://www.irinnews.org/report/100737/asia-s-first-idp-policy-from-theory-to-practice>), accessed 12 November 2014; UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Kabul Informal Settlements (KIS) (as of 5 November 2014)*, 6 November 2014 (<http://reliefweb.int/map/afghanistan/afghanistan-kabul-informal-settlements-kis-5-november-2014>), accessed 14 November 2014; Refugee Studies Centre, “Afghanistan’s displaced people: 2014 and beyond plus mini-feature on statelessness”, *Forced Migration Review*, Issue 46, May 2014 (<http://www.fmreview.org/en/afghanistan.pdf>), accessed 14 November 2014; UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 10.

⁽¹²²⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910–S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽¹²³⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540–S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁴⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20Edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 7.

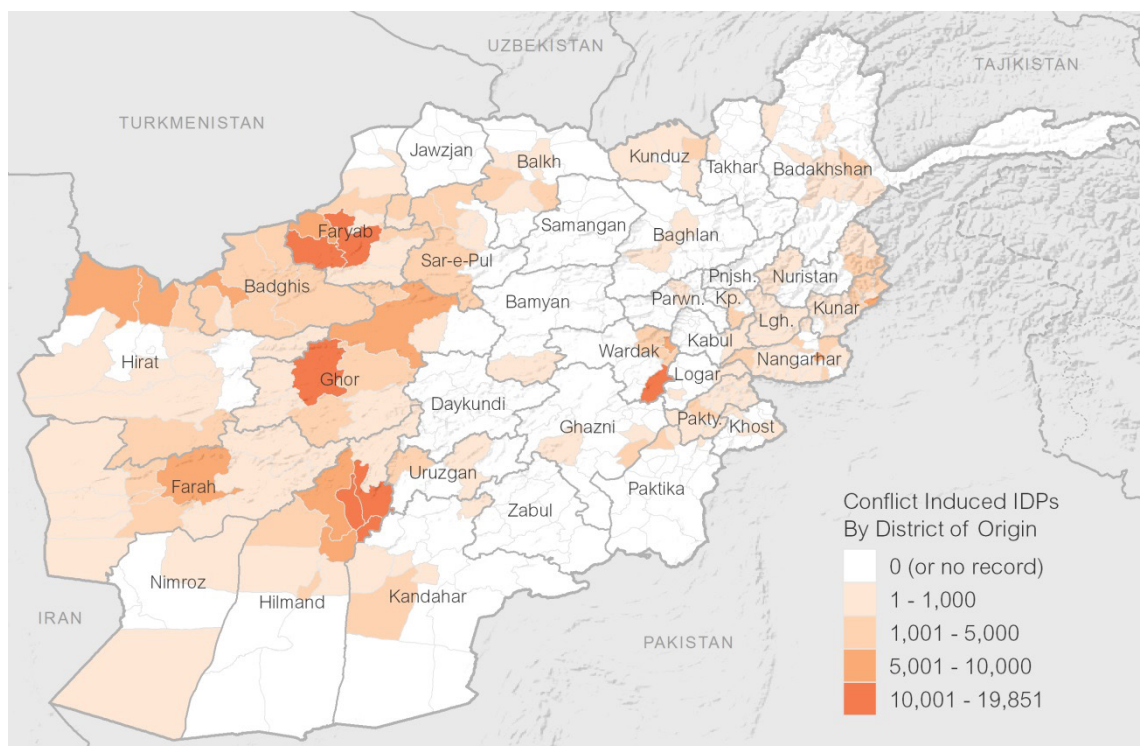


Figure 5: IDPs (UNOCHA)⁽¹²⁵⁾

1.6. Geographical overview of the security situation

1.6.1. Regional differences

The UN reported that between 1 March and 15 August 2014, two thirds of all security incidents took place in the south, south-east and east of Afghanistan. In this reference period, large-scale insurgents' assaults were made with the intent to capture and hold district centres or checkpoints in the south (Helmand), the west (Faryab and Ghor), the centre (Logar), the east (Nangarhar and Nuristan), and the north-east (Kunduz).⁽¹²⁶⁾ According to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, insurgents focused on these regions because IMF had retreated from them. They also targeted the ring road in the north.⁽¹²⁷⁾

In UNOCHA's humanitarian risk overview for 2015, a risk profile is made for each Afghan province:

"The Afghanistan humanitarian risk profile is a planning tool to help predict changes in existing risk based on possible escalations in severity. It does so by analysing existing risks in relation to events in the past. The risk analysis approach assumes the most likely scenario, and uses recent data to provide a provincial view of risks caused by conflict incidents, civilian casualties, disease outbreaks, drought, conflict displacement and restrictions in humanitarian access. It can help inform preparedness actions and enhance response capacities in a context that is complex and dynamic. It draws attention to regions that may be more susceptible to a decline in the humanitarian situation."⁽¹²⁸⁾

⁽¹²⁵⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 32; Data sources: AGCHO, UNHCR - Individual IDPs displaced from 1 September 2011 to 31 August 2014. Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

⁽¹²⁶⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/68/910-S/2014/420*, 18 June 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/420), accessed 29 October 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/69/540-S/2014/656*, 9 September 2014 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/656), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁷⁾ Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 28.

⁽¹²⁸⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 28.

The following provinces received the highest relative risk indicators for conflict incidents (the number indicates how many times more risk than the average for all provinces): Kunar (5⁽¹²⁹⁾); Helmand, Kandahar and Nangarhar (3); Paktika, Laghman, Khost and Ghazni (2). The lowest were: Kabul, Samangan and Panshvir (-10); Bamyan (-9) and Balkh (-8). The following provinces received the highest relative risk indicators for civilian casualties: Kunar (4); Helmand and Paktika (3); Nuristan, Faryab, Zabol, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Wardak, Farah, Laghman, Khost, Uruzgan and Logar (2). The lowest for civilian casualties were: Bamyan (-9); Samangan and Takhar (-5); Kabul, Daykundi and Balkh (-3).⁽¹³⁰⁾

UNOCHA indicated for the following areas sharp increases in conflict in 2014: Kunar and Nangarhar; in the north-west corridor from Herat up to Faryab; and in Helmand (Sangin and Musa Qala districts); Ghor; Logar; and Nuristan provinces.⁽¹³¹⁾

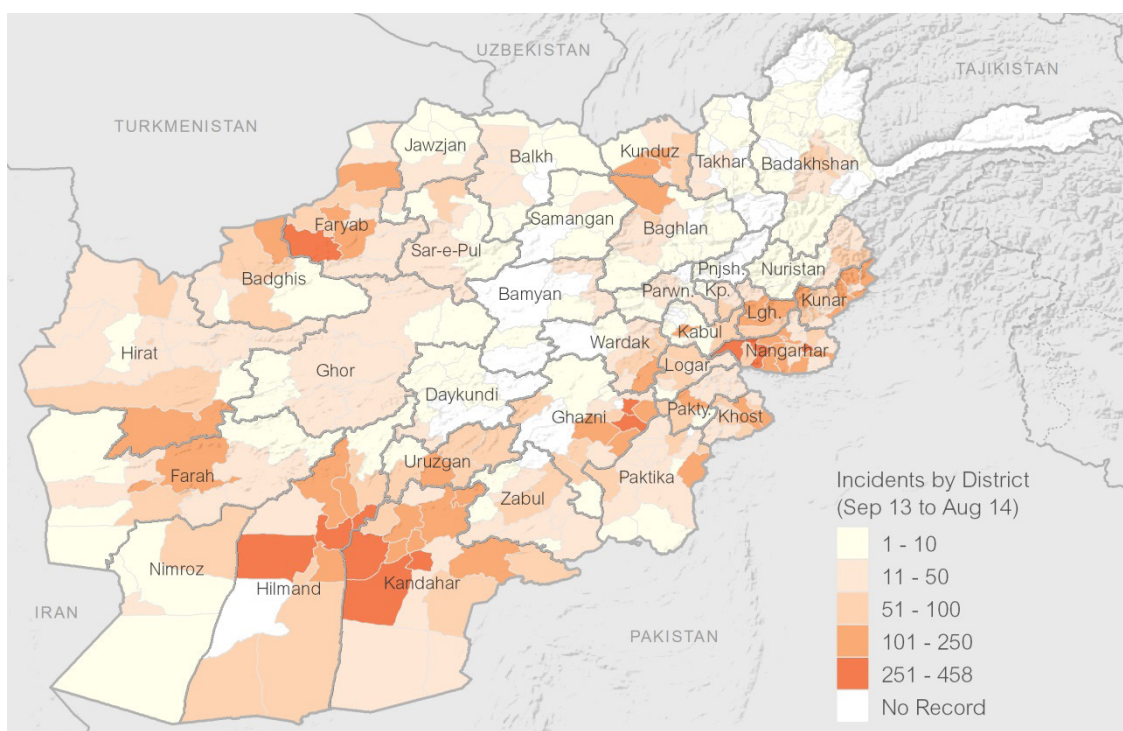


Figure 6: Conflict Incidents per district (UNOCHA)⁽¹³²⁾

⁽¹²⁹⁾ Meaning 5 times higher than the average.

⁽¹³⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 42.

⁽¹³¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 3.

⁽¹³²⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 40. Notes: Incident types include: abductions, air strikes, armed clashes, assassinations or attempted assassinations, IED detonated or discovered, mine/UXO incident, stand-off attacks, or suicide attacks. Data sources: Various from 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014. Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

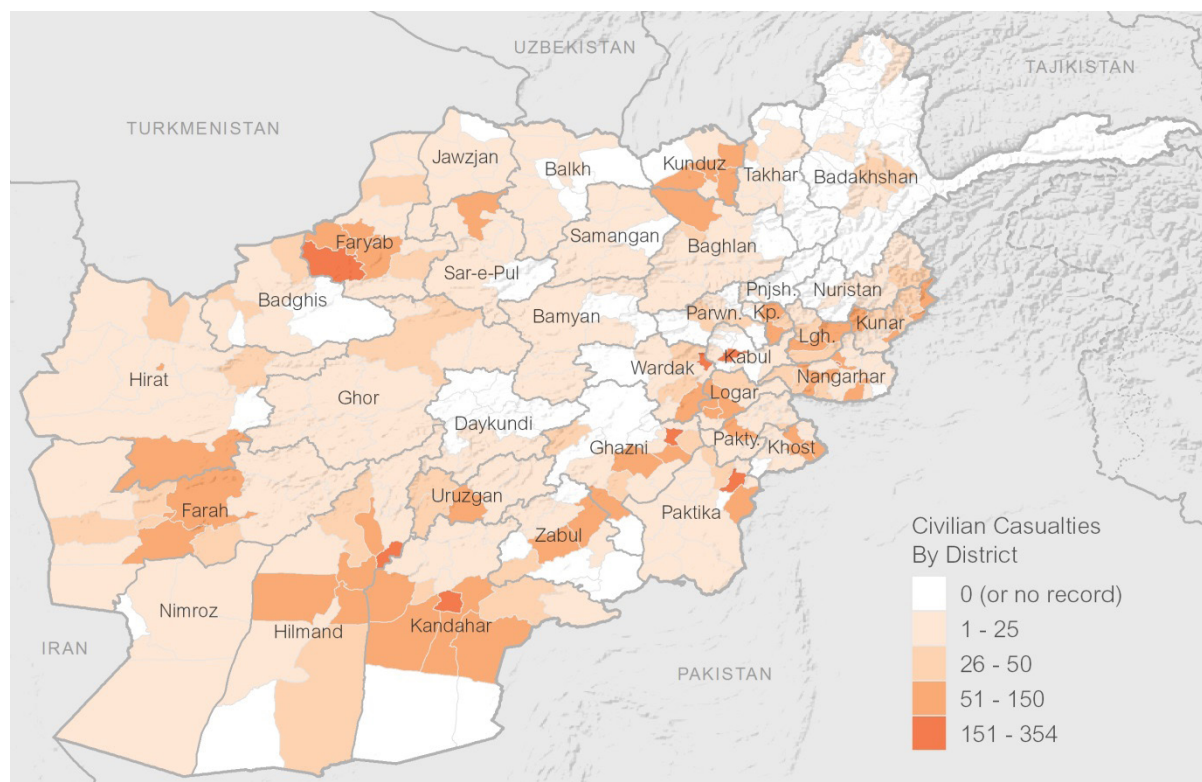


Figure 7: Civilian casualties from September 2013 to August 2014: UNOCHA⁽¹³³⁾

Information obtained from a Western security official reported a total of 18,443 security incidents in Afghanistan from 1 January until 31 October 2014. See figure 8 for a regional overview of the security incidents.⁽¹³⁴⁾

In figure 9, an overview is given per province of how the number of violent incidents relates to the number of inhabitants, which can be used as one indicator in the assessment of the “real risk” of civilians suffering harm due to violent incidents. However, this is only one possible indicator among others. The risk for an individual in a province is very complex to estimate and depends on other elements, such as detailed information on the nature and target of the violent incidents, the locations where they take place, the extent of civilian casualties, etc. Further information on the violent incidents taken into account in this quantitative calculation and more information on relevant indicators can be found in each provincial part of this report under “Regional description of the security situation”. The population estimates come from the ACSO (ACSO: 2012-13).⁽¹³⁵⁾

⁽¹³³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4. Notes: 1) Casualty figures from 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, 9,604 civilians were killed or injured compared to 8,619 in the same period in 2012/13 (United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan). 2) A civilian casualty is defined as a civilian killed or injured resulting directly or indirectly from conflict related violence. 3) Some records could not be matched to a district boundary. 4) Data source: UNAMA Human Rights Unit. PoC reports can be found here: <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=13941&language=en-US>. Data sources: AGCHO, UNAMA. Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

⁽¹³⁴⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹³⁵⁾ Based on UNOCHA basic map of Afghanistan; Sources: ACSO, *Settled Population of Kunar province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013*, (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Kunarha%281%29.pdf>), accessed 3 November 2014; Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

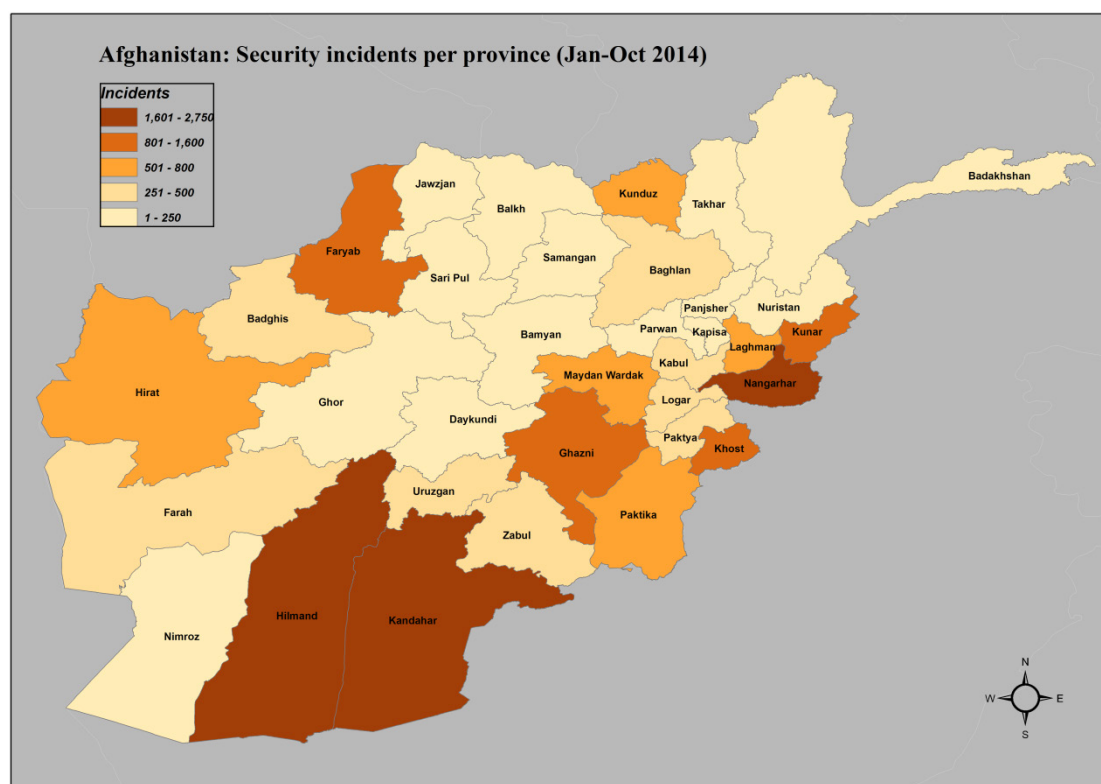


Figure 8: Afghanistan: security incidents per province⁽¹³⁶⁾

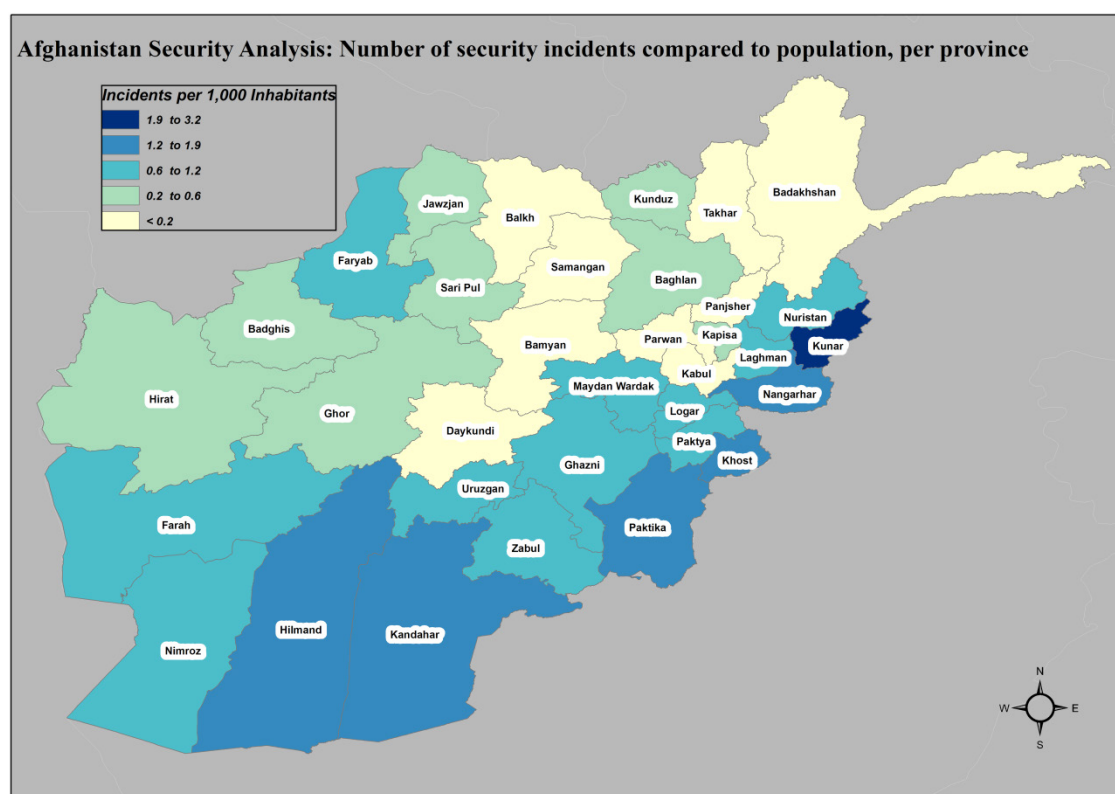


Figure 9: Security incidents compared to population⁽¹³⁷⁾

⁽¹³⁶⁾ Map created by EASO: data on incidents provided by Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹³⁷⁾ Map created by EASO: Sources: 1. Population: ACSO, *Settled Population of Kunar province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013*, (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Kunarha%281%29.pdf>), accessed 3 November 2014; 2. Incidents: Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

The UK Travel Advice for Afghanistan (as of 12 December, 2014) mentions the following points regarding the security situation in four main regions. In the north, there are attacks and ongoing military operations. The situation in the East is extremely volatile with almost daily suicide and roadside bomb attacks, shootings and rocket attacks. The region close to the Pakistani border is described as “extremely dangerous” with high numbers of AGEs operating freely. There are regular, large military operations in the East and numerous daily attacks on ANSF and IMF. Also, daily IED, suicide, rocket and direct fire attacks result in casualties among the local population. In the south, the situation is unpredictable and extremely volatile. Military operations are frequent and recently there has been an increase in shootings, roadside and suicide bombings that have targeted civilians and the military. Special reference is made to attacks on the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat road. In the west, roadside bombs, suicide attacks, rocket attacks and criminal kidnappings are reported.⁽¹³⁸⁾

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in September 2014 that the level of violence in the north of Afghanistan was relatively low compared to the South and East which were the most volatile regions. According to the Ministry, Faryab was the most unstable province in the north. The situation in the west was marked by a significant change in the attitude of insurgents in the province of Herat. They conducted attacks on the capital of Herat, which was not seen recently. In the centre, there was an increase in incidents, even in provinces that were more stable before. Daykundi, Pansjir and Bamyan were said to be the quietest provinces, although not without incident.⁽¹³⁹⁾

1.6.2. Urban/rural divide

Afghanistan’s history is characterised by a structural urban-rural divide. Urban centres have been hubs for administration, capitalist methods, (illegal) taxation, education and reforms. These developments contributed to the antagonisation of the rural population.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

Sources reported for the first quarter of 2014 that ANSF maintained control of larger urban areas, not only in regions where insurgents are not strong, but also where large insurgent forces engage in heavy fighting, such as at Kandahar, Lashkar Gah and Jalalabad. However, insurgents seem to be making gains in rural areas and increasingly control main transport and access routes.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

Regarding the roads, the UK Travel Advice for Afghanistan states:

“Road travel is highly dangerous. Insurgents have set up false vehicle checkpoints from which violent attacks have been launched. In addition to the threat from terrorism and kidnapping, there is also a continuing criminal threat from car-jacking and robbery.”⁽¹⁴²⁾

⁽¹³⁸⁾ UK Government, *Afghanistan Travel Advice*, updated: 31 October 2014 (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/afghanistan/print>), accessed 12 December 2014.

⁽¹³⁹⁾ Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 28, 32.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahimi, N., *Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011*, AREU, January 2012 (<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1203E-Drivers%20of%20Conflict%20IP%202012.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 7-8.

⁽¹⁴¹⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan’s Insurgency after the Transition*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf>), accessed 10 November 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 28.

⁽¹⁴²⁾ UK Government, *Afghanistan Travel Advice*, updated: 31 October 2014 (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/afghanistan/print>), accessed 11 November 2014.

2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan

2.1. Centre

2.1.1. Kabul city

Description of the city

The city of Kabul is a separate district in the province of Kabul, alongside 14 other districts. In this report, Kabul city is highlighted because of its prominent position as Afghanistan's capital. Because of its high concentration of government buildings, international organisations, diplomatic compounds and international and national security forces, the city has a different security outlook than most of Afghanistan's other districts and provinces.⁽¹⁴³⁾

Kabul is by far the biggest city in Afghanistan and certainly the fastest growing. Massive returnee-populations, IDPs and economic migrants have spurred rapid growth in Kabul. Current estimates for inhabitants vary from between 3 and 7 million.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

The city of Kabul is subdivided into 17 districts, often referred to as districts 1 to 17, or police districts 1 to 17 (PD1-PD17).⁽¹⁴⁵⁾

Kabul is an ethnically diverse city, with communities of almost all ethnicities present in the country. Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Baluch, Sikhs and Hindus all reside there⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ with no group clearly dominating. As people tend to move to areas where they already have family or into particular districts as part of a larger group with the same ethnicity, different neighbourhoods have become associated with different ethnic groups.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
3	1	7	38	9	6	11	3	22	1	57	21	11	2	8	24	22	246

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the district of Kabul counted 246 reported security incidents (see table).⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

⁽¹⁴³⁾ Giustozzi, A., *Afghanistan: Human Rights and Security situation*, Landinfo, 9 September 2011 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/1745/1/1745_1.pdf), accessed 7 November 2014; Foschini, F., *Striking at Kabul, in 2013: the attack on the traffic police HQ*, AAN, 21 January 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.net/index.asp?id=3218>), accessed 14 October 2014; Lifos, *Rapport från utredningsresa till Afghanistan den 5 – 8 oktober 2013*, Migrationsverket, 28 November 2013 (<http://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentAttachmentId=40440>), accessed 7 November 2014; Ruttig, T., *Some things got better – how much got good? A review of 12 years of international intervention in Afghanistan*, AAN, 30 December 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/some-things-got-better-how-much-got-good-a-short-review-of-12-years-of-international-intervention-in-afghanistan/>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S. and Martin, E., *Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul*, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute, June 2012 (<http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8444.pdf>), accessed 14 October 2014, p. 5; APPRO, *Migration and Urban Development in Kabul: Classification or Accommodation?*, October 2012 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/migration-and-urban-development-in-kabul/>), accessed 14 October 2014, p. 6-8.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ ACSO, *Population of Kabul city by district and sex 2012- 2013.*, n.d. (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Population%20of%20Kabul%20City%20by%20District%20and%20Sex.pdf>), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kabul Province Background Profile*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/kabul-province-background-profile>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ APPRO, *Migration and Urban Development in Kabul: Classification or Accommodation?*, October 2012 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/migration-and-urban-development-in-kabul/>), accessed 14 October 2014, p. 8.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

According to figures collected by UNOCHA, 250 violent incidents occurred from September 2013 to August 2014⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ – an increase of more than 51 incidents in one year.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ During the summer, a spike in attacks caused some concern and eventually led to controversy over the position of Kabul police chief Zahir.⁽¹⁵¹⁾

High-profile and often complex attacks have targeted Afghan and international offices.⁽¹⁵²⁾ Additionally, high-profile locations were targeted with suicide bombs and IEDs. In 2014, AGEs carried out such attacks in Kabul against ISAF Camp Eggers, in January, and private security contractors engaged by ISAF in February. Also attacked was the IEC headquarters in March, the MoI in April and the electoral campaigning team of Abdullah Abdullah and High Peace Council member Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai's convoy in June. The military compounds of Kabul International Airport (KIA) and a compound of the counter narcotics brigade near the airport were attacked in July, an ISAF convoy in August, a member of parliament in September and another ISAF convoy in September.⁽¹⁵³⁾

Other specific targets of suicide and complex attacks include the Lebanese restaurant Taverna du Liban in January, a suicide attack in front of an Ismaili (Shia) cultural centre in February, an attack on the Serena Hotel in March and a Christian NGO guesthouse in March.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ These attacks deliberately targeted mostly foreign civilians. In another case a Swedish-British journalist was murdered in the streets of Kabul and three American doctors were killed.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Although it is unclear who carried out these killings, and the exact motive, these cases spurred the belief among analysts that, in 2014, foreign civilians were a specific new target for the AGEs in Kabul.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ The attack on the Ismaili cultural centre, which killed one guard, is an exception in a conflict that does not, so far, feature the sectarianism associated with the violence in Syria, Iraq or neighbouring Pakistan.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾

⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 5.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, October 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 27.

⁽¹⁵¹⁾ Khaama Press, *Kabul Police chief gen. Zahir Zahir suspended*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/kabul-police-chief-gen-zahir-zahir-suspended-6367>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *MOI reverses decision to suspend Kabul police chief gen. Zahir*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/moi-reverses-decision-to-suspend-kabul-police-chief-gen-zahir-8282>), accessed 14 October 2014; BBC, *Kabul suicide blast: police killed at interior ministry*, 2 April 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26853527>), accessed 14 October 2014; Tolonews, *Insurgent summer offensive raise concerns*, 16 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15622-insurgent-summer-offensives-raise-concerns>), accessed 14 October 2014; Tolonews, *Spate of attacks heighten Kabul security concerns*, 29 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15758-spate-of-attacks-heighten-kabul-security-concerns>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁵²⁾ RFE/RL, *Taliban Storm UN Office in Kabul*, 24 May 2013 (http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/248765/359100_en.html), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁵³⁾ Tolonews, *Bomb blast in Kabul near Nato Base, Embassies*, 5 January 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13336-bomb-blast-in-kabul-near-nato-base-embassies>), accessed 14 October 2014; RFE/RL, *Car bomb in Kabul kills 2 contractors*, 10 February 2014 (http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/269191/384079_en.html), accessed 14 October 2014; Roggio, B., *Taliban continue to launch suicide assaults in Kabul*, LWJ, 29 March 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/launch_continue_to_launch_suicide_assaults_in_kabul), accessed 14 October 2014; BBC, *Kabul suicide blast: police killed at interior ministry*, 2 April 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26853527>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Suicide attack target Abdullahs convoy in Kabul city*, 6 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-attack-target-abdullahs-convoy-in-kabul-city-6189>), accessed 14 October 2014; BBC, *Afghan unrest: Taliban attack on Kabul airport over*, 17 July 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28339526>), accessed 14 October 2014; BBC, *Afghan suicide attack targets top adviser*, 21 June 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27953438>), accessed 14 October 2014; BBC, *'Foreigners' killed Kabul airport suicide attack*, 22 July 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28415447>), accessed 14 October 2014; AFP, *4 civilians killed in Kabul suicide attack on NATO convoy*, 10 August 2014 (<http://www.afp.com/en/node/2713541>), accessed 14 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Legislator wounded in Kabul Blast*, 14 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/14/legislator-wounded-kabul-blast>), accessed 15 October 2014; Khaama Press, *4 NATO service members killed in Kabul suicide attack*, 16 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/4-nato-service-members-killed-in-kabul-suicide-attack-8658>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *Kabul Suicide attack death toll rises 21 people*, 17 January 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-heard-in-capital-kabul-987>), accessed 14 October 2014; RFE/RL, *Suicide bomber targets shi'ite cultural center in Kabul*, 20 February 2014 (http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/270195/385266_en.html), accessed 14 October 2014; The Guardian, *Four foreigners among nine gunned down in Taliban attack on Kabul Hotel*, 21 March 2014 (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/21/four-foreigners-nine-gunned-down-in-taliban-attack-on-kabul-hotel?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter), accessed 14 October 2014; Roggio, B., *Taliban continue to launch suicide assaults in Kabul*, LWJ, 29 March 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/launch_continue_to_launch_suicide_assaults_in_kabul), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Tolonews, *Swedish journalist shot dead in Kabul*, 11 March 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14150-swedish-journalist-shot-dead-in-kabul>), accessed 14 October 2014; BBC, *Three Americans killed in Kabul hospital attack*, 24 April 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27138240>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ New York Times, *Deadly attack at Kabul restaurant hints at changing climate for foreigners*, 18 January 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/world/asia/afghanistan-restaurant-attack.html?_r=1), accessed 15 October 2014; Aikins, M., *Last Tango in Kabul. Blood and Chaos in a Desperate City*, Rolling Stone, 18 August 2014 (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/last-tango-in-kabul-20140818>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ Al Jazeera, *Complicating sectarianism in Afghanistan. Analysts question comments about impending sectarian violence in Afghanistan following Ashoura Day attacks*, 7 December 2011, (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2011/12/201112715945849305.html>), accessed 15 October 2014.

Several times during the summer months, AGEs specifically targeted ANSF vehicles with VBIEDs, BBIEDs, RCIEDs and MIEDs, often causing collateral damage to civilians.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

Kabul regularly came under rocket attacks during 2014. The targets of these attacks were high-profile sites, mostly government property and, in one case, the Iranian Embassy. These attacks caused almost no civilian casualties. Also notable are the repeated rocket attacks on the mainly military installations at KIA.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

Victims

As seen from the incidents already outlined, the violence in Kabul city targets mostly government officials. The prime target is security personnel and their vehicles. Although many of these attacks happen without consideration for collateral damage to civilians, according to analyst Fabrizio Foschini the choice of targets appears to indicate that AGEs are somehow looking for legitimacy for their actions.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ As such, it appears that civilians do not seem to be a target of the AGEs.

The exact number of civilian casualties in the city is unknown. The only figures publicly available are those provided by UNOCHA, but they only cover the entire province of Kabul. From September 2013 to August 2014, 108 civilians were killed and 275 injured in the province. Another five were killed and nine injured by mines or unexploded ordnances.⁽¹⁶¹⁾

On a UNOCHA map showing the level of civilian casualties by district from 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, Kabul city is ranked highest, with from 151 to 234 civilian casualties (killed and injured respectively).⁽¹⁶²⁾

Although Kabul district has a high number of victims compared to most other districts in the province, and the country as a whole, according to UNOCHA the risk to a civilian in Kabul province is relatively low. This is because Kabul has a very high population; UNOCHA estimates there are about 4 million inhabitants in Kabul province, more than double the second most populated province, Herat, and almost triple that of the third province, Nangarhar.⁽¹⁶³⁾

Displacement

In the UNHCR Monthly Updates on Conflict Induced Displacement, Kabul is not mentioned as a province of origin for conflict induced IDPs, only as province of arrival of certain IDP movements from other provinces.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ Mentioned here are those incidents where the press reported civilian casualties. Many more happened killing or injuring exclusively ANSF personnel. Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 killed, 21 injured in Kabul suicide attack*, 12 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/12/2-killed-21-injured-kabul-suicide-attack>), accessed 14 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 killed, 22 injured in Kabul suicide bombing*, 26 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/26/4-killed-22-injured-kabul-suicide-bombing>), accessed 14 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *1 killed, 6 injured in Kabul blast*, 5 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/05/1-killed-6-injured-kabul-blast>), accessed 14 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *8 Air force personnel dead in Kabul suicide blast*, 2 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/02/8-air-force-personnel-dead-kabul-suicide-blast>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Explosion in capital Kabul leaves 6 people injured*, 9 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-in-capital-leaves-6-people-injured-8399>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Explosion in capital Kabul injures civilians and security personnel*, 24 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-in-capital-kabul-injures-civilians-and-security-personnel-8493>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Security officer and his 3 children martyred in Kabul explosion*, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/security-officer-and-his-3-children-martyred-in-kabul-explosion-6723>), accessed 15 October 2014; Khaama Press, *7 killed, 13 others injured in Kabul suicide attack*, 29 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/back-to-back-explosions-heard-in-capital-kabul-6764>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ Roggio, B., *Taliban continue to launch suicide assaults in Kabul*, LWJ, 29 March 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/launch_continue_to_.php), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Two rockets land in international Kabul airport*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/two-rockets-land-in-international-kabul-airport-8063>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Rockets land near Kabul airport*, 24 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/rockets-land-near-kabul-airport-6261>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Three rockets land near Kabul airport*, 3 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/three-rockets-land-near-kabul-airport-8254>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Explosion in capital Kabul injures 5 people*, 14 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-in-capital-kabul-injures-5-people-6400>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Rocket lands in Kabul airport, no casualties reported*, 16 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-rocks-capital-kabul-no-casualties-reported-8321>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Rockets land near military academy in capital Kabul*, 22 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/rockets-land-near-military-academy-in-capital-kabul-6459>), accessed 14 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Rocket lands near Iranian embassy in capital Kabul*, 6 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/rocket-land-near-iranian-embassy-in-capital-kabul-6518>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ Foschini, F., *Striking at Kabul, in 2013: the attack on the traffic police HQ*, AAN, 21 January 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.net/index.asp?id=3218>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁶¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽¹⁶²⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽¹⁶³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014, (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 42.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January - August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014.

Actors in the conflict

Under the government's ANSF, active groups in the city are mainly ANA, ANP and NDS. After a fact-finding mission to Kabul at the end of 2013, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) concluded that the Afghan government, the ANA and ANP still have relative control over Kabul city:

“The city is characterised by a high presence of national and international security forces and a clear example of the governments striving for solid control over the cities.”⁽¹⁶⁵⁾

A Swedish fact-finding mission concluded that all provincial capitals, except Parun in Nuristan, were under government control.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Analyst Borhan Osman states that *“the insurgency does not [yet] look to be showing any signs of winning”*.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾

In Kabul, certain analysts refer to a Kabul Attack Network involved in many of the high-profile attacks. This is a network of combatants from the Haqqani Network, HIA, Taliban, Al Qaeda and LeT and is led by the Taliban shadow governor for Kabul Dawood and Haqqani commander Taj Mir Jawad.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾

Criminality is another source of insecurity in Kabul. Analyst Fabrizio Foschini notices a steady growth in criminal violence. Particularly, kidnapping of wealthy Afghans has reached an alarming level. Yet Foschini describes the crime level as comparatively low for a city of this size with such economic and social problems.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ In May 2014, the Minister of Interior Mohammad Omar Daudzai warned he would reshuffle the top positions in the city's police force if it failed to combat crime.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ In September 2014, NDS announced the arrest of a most-wanted criminal who, it said, controlled several kidnapping networks and coordinated armed robberies and murders in and around the city.⁽¹⁷¹⁾

2.1.2. Kabul Province

Description of the province

Kabul Province is made up of 15 districts with the district of Kabul city at the centre: Bagrami, Chaharasyab, Dehsabz, Estalef, Farza, Guidara, Kabul, Kalakan, Khak-e-Jabbar, Mirbachakot, Musayi, Paghman, Qarabagh, Shakardara, Surobi.⁽¹⁷²⁾ The security situation in Kabul city is discussed in the previous chapter.

Kabul province is located in the Central Region and is bordered by the provinces of Parwan to the north-west, Kapisa to the north-east, Laghman in the east, Nangarhar in the south-east, Logar in the south, and Wardak in the south-west. More than half of the province is mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while more than one third of the area is made up of flat land.⁽¹⁷³⁾ Much of the land is very fertile rangeland and is largely rainfed. North of Kabul city lies the Shomali plain which stretches for 70 kilometres from the outskirts of the city to the Salang pass. This plain lies in parts of the districts Kalakan, Qarabagh, Mir Bacha Kot and some of the provinces of Parwan and Kapisa. Important cities in the Shomali plain are Charikar and Jabal us Saraj. It is a fertile plain where traditionally much agriculture and horticulture was carried out. This plain was known as the storehouse for Kabul. It was densely populated, with in 1996 an estimated population of 643,000. This area particularly suffered a from fighting between the Taliban and Northern Alliance in the 1990s, when much of its population was forcibly displaced and its housing and agricultural infrastructure destroyed. The inhabitants of the Shomali plain are mainly Tajik and, to a lesser extent, Uzbek, Hazara and Pashtun.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾

⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 16 October 2014, p. 6.

⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Lifos, *Rapport från utredningsresa till Afghanistan den 5 – 8 oktober 2013*, Migrationsverket, 28 November 2013 (<http://lifos.migrationsverket.se/dokument?documentAttachmentId=40440>), accessed 16 October 2014, p. 10.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ Osman, B., *Can the Taliban outwrestle the government? An assessment of the insurgency's military capability*, AAN, 25 March 2014 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/can-the-taliban-outwrestle-the-government-an-assessment-of-the-insurgencys-military-capability>), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ Civil-Military Fusion Centre, *The Kabul Attack Network*, July 2011 (https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/CFC%20Afghanistan%20-%20Public%20RFI%20Responses/CFC_Afghanistan_RFI_Kabul_Attack_Network-Jul2011.pdf), accessed 14 October 2014. Roggio, B., *Taliban continue to launch suicide assaults in Kabul*, LWJ, 29 March 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/launch_continue_to_l.php), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Foschini, F., *Striking at Kabul, in 2013: the attack on the traffic police HQ*, AAN, 21 January 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.net/index.asp?id=3218>), accessed 14 October 2014.

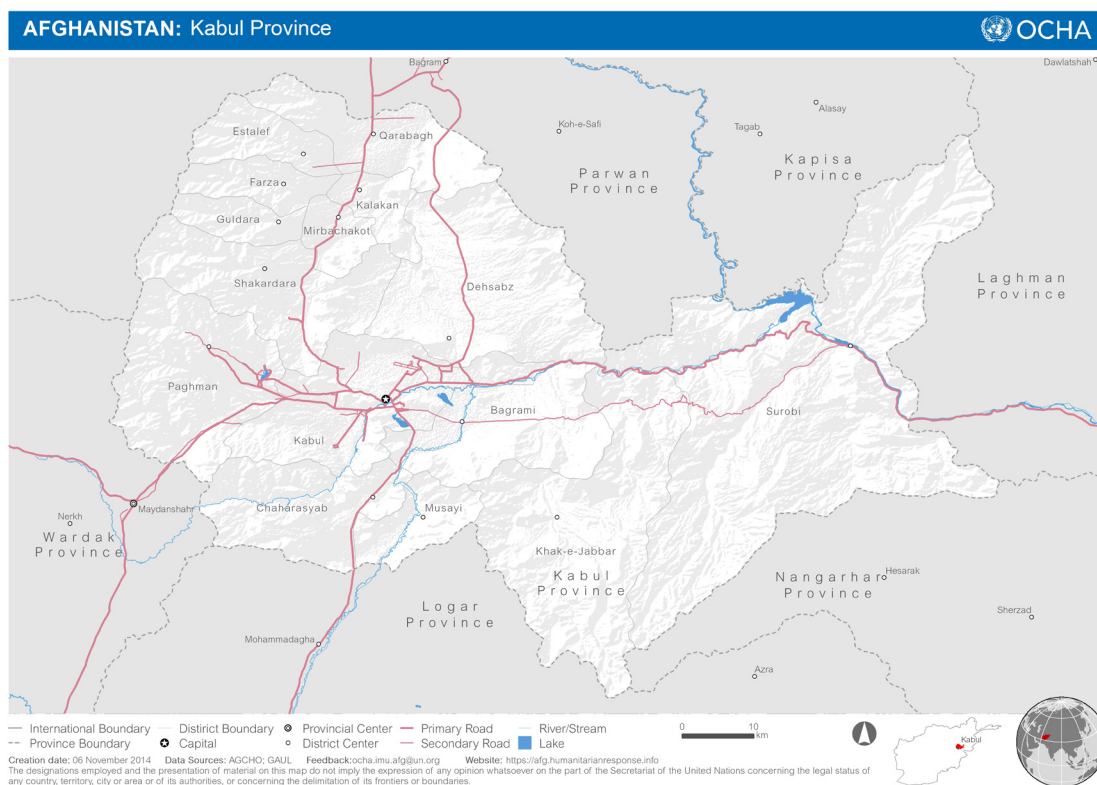
⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Daudzai warns Kabul police over robberies*, 6 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/06/daudzai-warns-kabul-police-over-robberies>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷¹⁾ Tolonews, *Most wanted criminal arrested in Kabul*, 15 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16381-most-wanted-criminal-arrested-in-kabul>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷²⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽¹⁷³⁾ WFP, *Provincial Profile. Kabul*, n.d. (<http://www.foodsecurityatlas.org/afg/country/provincial-Profile/Kabul>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ OSI, *Casting Shadows: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity: 1978-2001*, 2005 (<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/46725c962.html>), accessed 17 October 2014, p. 127.



Major ethnic groups in Kabul province are Tajik, Pashtun and Hazara. According to UNHCR district profiles dating from 2002, Pashtuns dominate the southern and eastern districts of Surobi, Paghman, Chaharasyab, Bagrami, Deh Sabz, Khak-e Jabbar and Musayi, and Tajik dominate the northern districts of Istalif, Kalakan, Mir Bacha Kot, Shakardara and Qarabagh. In other districts, no ethnic group is clearly dominant.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Kabul	3	1	7	38	9	6	11	3	22	1	57	21	11	2	8	24	22	246
Surobi	2	1	42	4	1		2				5	2		1		9	3	72
Musayi			4	4			2				10	3				1		24
Paghman			2	5			2		1		5	3				2		20
Dih Sabz				2			4				5	2					1	14
Qarabagh			2	1	2		1		1		3	2				1		13
Chahar Asyab	1		2	2			3				2							10
Khaki Jabbar	1	1	1	1			2				1	1				1		9
Shakardara			2	1			1	1								1		6
Istalif											1							1
Guldara				1														1
Mir Bacha Kot				1														1

⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ UNHCR, *Kabul District Profiles*, 2002 (<http://www.aims.org.af/ssroots.aspx?seckey=373>), accessed 8 December 2014.

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Kalakan			1															1
Farza																		0

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Kabul counted 418 reported security incidents. The most volatile district was, apart from Kabul city (see previous chapter), Surobi with 72 incidents, the majority of which were armed clashes (see table).⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ UNHCR classifies Kabul as a relatively secure province.⁽¹⁷⁷⁾

Surobi is a large district in the east of the province and borders other unstable areas such as Tagab in Kapisa, Qarghayi in Laghman and Hesarak in Nangarhar. These areas are reported as being increasingly controlled by the armed opposition.⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ This has a negative impact on the security situation in Surobi.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ The district is considered an insurgent stronghold in the province. Uzbini valley is considered especially “volatile”.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) reports sporadic confrontations between ANSF and insurgents leading mainly to arrests and the seizure of weapons or explosives in Surobi.⁽¹⁸¹⁾ In February 2014, presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah’s convoy came under fire in the road from Jalalabad.⁽¹⁸²⁾ Two days later, insurgents undertook a complex attack on the district police headquarters in Surobi.⁽¹⁸³⁾ On election day, 5 April 2014, insurgents attacked a polling station but were repelled by ANSF.⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ In April, 33 civilians were abducted by insurgents for supporting the government and only released a month later as a result of tribal elders’ mediation. Government officials had been tortured according to Pajhwok Afghan News reporting.⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ In May, a bomb exploded near a police vehicle, killing three policemen.⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ In September 2014, six insurgents died when the IED they were assembling exploded.⁽¹⁸⁷⁾

Other incidents from Kabul province, outside Kabul city, have been rarely reported in Afghan media: in May 2014 a roadside bomb targeted the vehicle of the Deputy Minister of Information and Culture in the district of Istalif, wounding two bodyguards, and in August 2014 an IED killed four ANA soldiers in Musayi.⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ On several occasions, ANSF discovered weapon caches in the province, as in Khak-e Jabbar in February 2014 and in September 2014 in the district of Shakardara.⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ In August 2014, men in police uniforms robbed and raped several women in Paghman,

⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/542147984.html>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women’s Security in Transition*, June 2013 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/afghanistan-monitoring-womens-security-in-transition-cycle-2-october-2013/>), accessed 17 October 2014, p.19; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Hesarak on the verge of falling to rebels*, 12 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/07/12/hesarak-verge-falling-rebels>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kabul province some parts experiencing insecurity: Residents*, 2 December 2013 (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/kabul-province-some-parts-experiencing-insecurity-residents>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁸¹⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 17 October 2014, p. 8.

⁽¹⁸²⁾ RFE/RL, *Taliban Claims Attack On Afghan Presidential Candidate Abdullah*, 19 February 2014 (http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/270035/385047_en.html), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁸³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Burqa clad suicide bombers killed in Sarobi*, 21 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/21/burqa-clad-suicide-bombers-killed-sarobi>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Sarobi polling centres yet to open*, 5 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/05/sarobi-polling-centres-yet-open>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban release 33 kidnapped civilians*, 19 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/19/taliban-release-33-kidnapped-civilians>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 policemen killed in Sarobi blast*, 26 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/26/3-policemen-killed-sarobi-blast>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ Khaama Press, *6 militants blown up by own explosives in Kabul province*, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/6-militants-blown-up-by-own-explosives-in-kabul-province-6724>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Deputy minister escapes unhurt blast*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/12/deputy-minister-escapes-unhurt-blast>), accessed 17 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 ANA soldiers killed in bomb blast*, 4 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/04/4-ana-soldiers-killed-bomb-blast>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Khaama Press, *Afghan intelligence foil rocket attack on capital Kabul*, 18 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/afghan-intelligence-foil-rocket-attack-on-capital-kabul-3450>), accessed 17 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Weapons, rockets and explosives seized in Kabul province*, 8 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/weapons-rockets-and-explosives-seized-in-kabul-province-8610>), accessed 17 October 2014.

leading to the death of at least one victim.⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ This case, known as the “Paghman rape case”, had a very big impact on national and international media. The alleged perpetrators were quickly arrested and put on trial. Some of the convicted men were executed in early October 2014 in the prison of Pul-e Charki.⁽¹⁹¹⁾

Victims

Civilian casualties increased by 91% in 2013 compared to 2012 – 380 civilian casualties (75 killed) as opposed to 198 casualties (74 killed) in 2012. The increase is due to the higher numbers of civilians injured. In the first six months of 2014, civilian casualties decreased by 21%. While fewer civilians have been victims, the number of fatalities has increased: in total, 226 civilian casualties, including 75 killed, were recorded.⁽¹⁹²⁾

On a map by UNOCHA based on UNAMA figures showing the level of civilian casualties by district from 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, most districts in Kabul province are in the lower categories, from 0 to 25 casualties (killed and injured), though Kabul city is not included.⁽¹⁹³⁾

Surobi is included in the first cycle of a monitoring study by the Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organisation (APPRO) on the impact of the security transition for women. The district of Surobi is described as rural and its inhabitants as very conservative. Not many women work outside their home and those who do said their security situation deteriorated after the IMF left the district. Other respondents, such as elders and women who did not work outside their home, said the security situation had improved. Many viewed the presence of the IMF as intimidating. Women felt more comfortable leaving their homes. More girls were attending school because there was less potential for armed clashes and surprise attacks by AGEs.⁽¹⁹⁴⁾

Paghman was also included in the APPRO study. Inhabitants of this district said in February 2014 that security had improved over time and a sense of order was being established.⁽¹⁹⁵⁾

Displacement

In January, February and March 2014, UNHCR noted that IDPs were coming from neighboring provinces to settle in Kabul province. In January, it reported that the district of Surobi and Kabul city were places of destination. In May 2014, UNHCR said IDPs from unspecified districts in Kabul were fleeing for Nangarhar.⁽¹⁹⁶⁾

Actors in the conflict

Next to the regular ANSF components, the security deterioration in the southeastern rural belt led to the creation of the ALP. According to the US Department of Defense, ALP is active in Paghman, Surobi, Musayi, Chahar Asayab, Kabul and Deh Sabz.⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ According to a source in Kabul, staffing levels of 475 men were reduced to 350 deployed in three districts – Surobi (150 men), Musayi and Paghman (100 men each).⁽¹⁹⁸⁾

Insurgents active in the province include Taliban, Haqqani Network and HIA.⁽¹⁹⁹⁾

⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ RFE/RL, *Is rape case a Turning Point for Afghanistan?*, 8 September 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-rape-case-turning-point/26572932.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽¹⁹¹⁾ HRW, *Afghanistan: Delay executions in Rape Case*, 7 October 2014 (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/07/afghanistan-delay-executions-rape-case>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽¹⁹²⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁹³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014, (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition*, June 2013 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/afghanistan-monitoring-womens-security-in-transition-cycle-2-october-2013/>), accessed 17 October 2014, p.19-21; APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 2 – October 2013*, November 2013 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/afghanistan-monitoring-womens-security-in-transition-cycle-2-october-2013-2/>), accessed 17 October 2014, p.14.

⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 3*, May 2014 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/women-in-transition-cycle-3-findings/>), accessed 20 October 2014, p.49.

⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January - May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

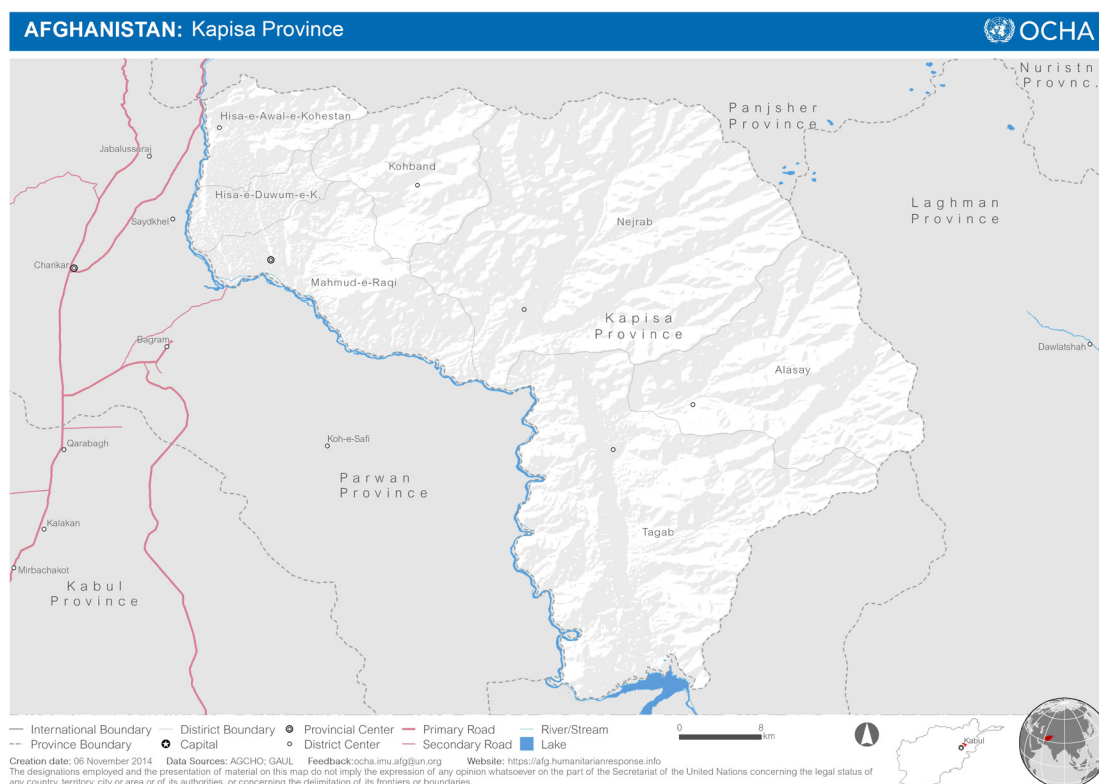
⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ United States Department of Defence, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, November 2013 (http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., ‘Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency’, *Orient*, 55 (2014) III, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2014 (http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publications/swp-research-paper-detail/article/between_negotiations_and_ongoing_resistance.html), accessed 7 November 2014, p. 25-41.

2.1.3. Kapisa

Description of the province



Kapisa Province consists of the districts Alasay, Hisa-e-Awal-e-Kohestan, Hisa-e-Duwum-e-Kohestan, Kohband, Mahmud-e-Raqi, Nejrab, Tagab. ⁽²⁰⁰⁾

According to the ACSO, the population of this province is 419,800⁽²⁰¹⁾, which comprises diverse ethnic groups (mainly Tajiks, also Pashtuns, Pashais, Hazaras, Nuristanis and Kuchis or nomads whose numbers vary in different seasons)⁽²⁰²⁾. This province holds a strategic position because it is located directly north of Kabul. The province has a road leading to the north of the country which is considered as vital, as well as a road leading to the east, to Jalalabad in Nangarhar province. Due to its strategic positioning, insurgents in Kapisa represent a direct threat to the Kabul government⁽²⁰³⁾.

Impact of the violence

The province is relatively stable if compared to the rest of the country⁽²⁰⁴⁾. Despite threats and skirmishes, the 5 April 2014 ballot took place without serious violence or casualties⁽²⁰⁵⁾. However, the province has remained the site of violent incidents since the beginning of the year.⁽²⁰⁶⁾

⁽²⁰⁰⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽²⁰¹⁾ ACSO, *Settled Population of Kapisa province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013* (http://www.mrrd-ru-watsip.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Kapisa1.pdf?bcsi_scan_96404f7f6439614d=1&bcsi_scan_1fe59ba8c561fa18=1), accessed 11 December 2014.

⁽²⁰²⁾ Tolonews, *Provincial Profile – Kapisa*, 2014 (<http://elections2014.tolonews.com/kapisa>), accessed 11 December 2014; MRRD, *Kapisa Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/240/Kapisa%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 11 December 2014.

⁽²⁰³⁾ New York Times, *Taliban Making Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 26 July 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/world/asia/taliban-making-military-gains-in-afghanistan.html?_r=0), accessed 22 October 2014; Libération, *Les talibans me tuent un jour, j'en suis persuadé*, 15 December 2013 (http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2013/12/15/les-talibans-me-tuent-un-jour-j-en-suis-persuade_966734), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²⁰⁴⁾ RFE/RL, *Warlords, Not Taliban, Making Life Hard for Voters in Quite Afghan Northeast*, 3 April 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/taliban-afghanistan-election-intimidation/25320214.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²⁰⁵⁾ Tolonews, *Security Forces Praised for Peaceful Election Day*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/election-2014/14455-security-forces-praised-for-peaceful-election-day>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Alasai residents initiate anti-Taliban uprising*, 23 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/23/alasai-residents-initiate-anti-taliban-uprising>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban accused of torching civilian houses*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/08/taliban-accused-torching-civilian-houses>), accessed 21 October 2014; Bakhtar News Agency, *Taliban Control Valley of Alasay District of Kapisa Province*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security/item/13107-taliban-control-valley-of-alasay-district-of-kapisa-province.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Stand-off attack	Total
Tagab	3		48	2				6	1	2	8	70
Nejrab	1		23	2	5			2	1	1	4	39
Alasay	1	1	14	1	2	1						20
Mahmud-e-Raqi				2		1	2	1	1		2	9
Hisa-e-Awal-e-Kohestan		1	1			1		1				4
Hisa-e-Duwum-e-Kohestan			1					2				3
KohBand			1					1	1			3

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Kapisa counted 148 reported security incidents (see table)⁽²⁰⁷⁾. Most incidents involved insurgents and security forces, often in the context of security operations led by security forces. The Tagab district, south of the province, seems to have the greatest number of incidents. Several clashes occurred in this district, leading to casualties among the combatants and the local population⁽²⁰⁸⁾. For instance, on 12 August 2014, a clash led to the death of seven insurgents. A district resident also testified of civilian victims⁽²⁰⁹⁾. Alasay, east of Kapisa, is also stricken by violence. Its valley, Sakken, has been under the influence of insurgents for the last 12 years, as acknowledged by the chief of the provincial police⁽²¹⁰⁾. On 18 February 2014, six soldiers were killed in this district, following the explosion of a roadside bomb⁽²¹¹⁾. The Alasay district is also known for the uprising of residents against the Taliban in July 2014. According to local police, a dozen young residents from Sakin Dara and from other district localities took up arms to fight against insurgents⁽²¹²⁾.

Victims

Security forces, in particular ALP agents⁽²¹³⁾, are most specifically targeted. In the Tagab district, security forces are under daily fire from the Taliban⁽²¹⁴⁾. Thus, for example, on 17 August 2014, insurgents attacked the local police force while others set fire to the residences of four officers in Takarkeh, in Tagab⁽²¹⁵⁾. Similarly, in the Alasay district, police outposts are frequently targeted by insurgents.⁽²¹⁶⁾

⁽²⁰⁷⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽²⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Tagab residents urge truce until harvest*, 25 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/25/tagab-residents-urge-truce-until-harvest>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²⁰⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 rebels killed in Maidan, Kapisa clashes*, 12 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/12/15-rebels-killed-maidan-kapisa-clashes>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *9 rebels killed, 16 wounded in clashes*, 13 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/13/9-rebels-killed-16-wounded-clashes>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²¹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban accused of torching civilian houses*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/08/taliban-accused-torching-civilian-houses>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²¹¹⁾ Tolonews, *Six Afghan Soldiers Killed in Kapisa Blast*, 18 February 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13899-six-afghan-soldiers-killed-in-kapisa-blast>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²¹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Alasay residents initiate anti-Taliban uprising*, 23 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/23/alasay-residents-initiate-anti-taliban-uprising>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *8 ALP killed in Ghazni, Kapisa clashes*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/11/8-alp-killed-ghazni-kapisa-clashes>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²¹⁴⁾ New York Times, *Taliban Making Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 26 July 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/world/asia/taliban-making-military-gains-in-afghanistan.html?_r=0), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 insurgents killed, 11 injured dead in Tagab*, 17 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/17/4-insurgents-killed-11-injured-dead-tagab>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²¹⁶⁾ Bakhtar News Agency, *Taliban Control Valley of Alasay District of Kapisa Province*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security/item/13107-taliban-control-valley-of-alasay-district-of-kapisa-province.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

Besides security forces, all those accused of working with authorities can be targeted⁽²¹⁷⁾. In particular, residents who worked for French troops (translators, security guards, cooks, handymen) when they were stationed in the province, embodied, according to insurgents:

“the worst traitors, as despicable as the “unfaithful”, the foreign soldiers (...). They have become the main targets, in a similar way as the Afghan government employees”.⁽²¹⁸⁾

When civilians are not directly targeted, they can be indirect victims of fighting⁽²¹⁹⁾ which may affect their living conditions. In Tertarkehl, insurgents often attack security forces from the resident's orchards, which destroys one of their main sources of revenue. On 25 August 2014, Tagab residents called for a truce in order to be able to harvest.⁽²²⁰⁾

Displacement

In August 2014, UNHCR noted that 120 families, or 720 people, had been displaced from various villages near the centre of the northern district of Nejrab. These displacements were caused by military operations and harassment by insurgents. Deprived of resources as a result of displacement, these families were put in a very precarious situation. Several families of the Tagab district were also forced to flee and find refuge in the neighbouring province of Parwan, west of Kapisa⁽²²¹⁾. In July 2014, in the Alasay district, 200 families of the Sakeen Valley were forced to flee, particularly to the neighbouring province of Laghman, east of Kapisa. The locals' houses were torched after they were accused by Pakistani Taliban of cooperating with the government.⁽²²²⁾

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban are among the insurgent groups in Kapisa⁽²²³⁾. While their presence is said to be less significant than in the rest of the country⁽²²⁴⁾, it tends to demonstrate that they have the capacity to control key territories around Kabul, beyond their traditional southern strongholds⁽²²⁵⁾. They are particularly present in the Tagab and Alasay districts⁽²²⁶⁾. In July 2014, the New York Times reported that they controlled the entire Tagab district with the exception of the district centre⁽²²⁷⁾. Following 12 days of clashes with security forces, on 6 July 2014, they were able to take control of another location, the Askin valley, in the key district of Alasay. They are said to be capable of threatening other districts from this stronghold⁽²²⁸⁾.

Besides local Taliban, sources note the presence of the Pakistani Taliban, in particular in the Alasay district⁽²²⁹⁾. They also report the presence of “foreign rebels” whose affiliation is not specified. According to a resident's testimony, these foreigners resemble “Chechen nationals” and do not speak Afghan languages. They are accused of killing or threatening civilians and targeting in particular those whom they suspect work for the authorities. Authorities have

⁽²¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Alasai residents initiate anti-Taliban uprising*, 23 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/23/alasai-residents-initiate-anti-taliban-uprising>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²¹⁸⁾ Libération, *Les talibans me tueront un jour, j'en suis persuadé*, 15 December 2013 (http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2013/12/15/les-talibans-me-tueront-un-jour-j-en-suis-persuade_966734), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 rebels killed in Maidan, Kapisa clashes*, 12 August (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/12/15-rebels-killed-maidan-kapisa-clashes>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Tagab residents urge truce until harvest*, 25 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/25/tagab-residents-urge-truce-until-harvest>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²²¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Alasai residents initiate anti-Taliban uprising*, 23 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/23/alasai-residents-initiate-anti-taliban-uprising>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban accused of torching civilian houses*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/08/taliban-accused-torching-civilian-houses>), accessed 21 October 2014; Bakhtar News Agency, *Taliban Control Valley of Alasay District of Kapisa Province*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security/item/13107-taliban-control-valley-of-alasay-district-of-kapisa-province.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²²³⁾ Khaama Press, *Huge cache of Taliban ammunition, explosives seized in Kapisa*, 16 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/huge-cache-of-taliban-ammunition-explosives-seized-in-kapisa-3440>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²²⁴⁾ RFE/RL, *Warlords, Not Taliban, Making Life Hard for Voters in Quite Afghan Northeast*, 3 April 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/taliban-afghanistan-election-intimidation/25320214.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²²⁵⁾ New York Times, *Taliban Making Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 26 July 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/world/asia/taliban-making-military-gains-in-afghanistan.html?_r=0), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Tagab militants bar girls from school*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/24/tagab-militants-bar-girls-school>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²²⁷⁾ New York Times, *Taliban Making Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 26 July 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/world/asia/taliban-making-military-gains-in-afghanistan.html?_r=0), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²²⁸⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Control Valley of Alasay District of Kapisa*, 6 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15502-taliban-control-valley-of-alasay-district-of-kapisa>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban accused of torching civilian houses*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/08/taliban-accused-torching-civilian-houses>), accessed 21 October 2014.

acknowledged their presence and their influence in Tagab and Alasay⁽²³⁰⁾. In addition to the Taliban, Al Qaeda, the Haqqani Network and HIA were also present in Kapisa, at least until 2013. These groups controlled large portions of the province⁽²³¹⁾. But sources consulted do not indicate whether they were present during 2014. Besides insurgents, “warlords” are found in the province. These warlords are partly responsible for the insecurity prevailing in the province⁽²³²⁾. The names of Gul Nazim and Zabet Wakil, two long-lasting rivals, are particularly noted. Locals feel there is no difference between these warlords and the Taliban⁽²³³⁾.

The operations conducted by the insurgents in Kapisa are diverse: direct clashes⁽²³⁴⁾ and firearms attacks against police convoys⁽²³⁵⁾, use of IED such as one on 17 or 18 February 2014 which killed six soldiers and destroyed their vehicle in the Alasay district⁽²³⁶⁾. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack but roadside bombs have been the insurgents’ weapons of choice⁽²³⁷⁾. The torching of houses is another method of retaliation, as illustrated by the aforementioned incident in Alasay district in July 2014.⁽²³⁸⁾ It was mentioned that incidents happened in public spaces, such as IEDs are placed on roads⁽²³⁹⁾.

2.1.4. Panjshir

Description of the province

Panjshir province is located in the central zone of Afghanistan and surrounded by Nuristan in the east, Kapisa in the south, Parwan in the west, Baghlan in the north-west, Takhar to the north and Badakhshan in the north-east. Nearly the entire province is mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while only about 4.4% of the area is made up of flat land.⁽²⁴⁰⁾ Panjshir was part of Parwan prior to 2004.

Panjshir province consists of the following districts: Bazarak, Dara/ Ab Shar, Khenj (Hes-e-Awal), Onaba (Anawa), Paryan, Rukha, Shutul.⁽²⁴¹⁾ The capital Bazarak has seven districts and 98% of its inhabitants are believed to be Tajiks while some Sunni Hazaras live in Dara and Paryan districts. A very small population of Kuchi is also reported.⁽²⁴²⁾

Panjshir is a largely ethnically homogenous province, whose historical role against the Taliban has rendered AGE infiltration difficult. There have been some isolated incidents and IED attacks have been recorded occasionally, the latest against the provincial governor’s office in May 2013 and against the well-guarded gate to the province in May 2014.⁽²⁴³⁾

⁽²³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Foreign rebels threaten Kapisa residents*, 15 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/15/foreign-rebels-threaten-kapisa-residents>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²³¹⁾ See for example: Tolonews, *Kapisa Districts Beset by Terrorist Groups*, 24 August 2013 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/11656-kapisa-districts-beset-by-terrorist-groups>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Warlords’ rivalry forces many to flee Kapisa*, 13 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/13/warlords%E2%80%99rivalry-forces-many-flee-kapisa>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²³³⁾ RFE/RL, *Warlords, Not Taliban, Making Life Hard for Voters in Quite Afghan Northeast*, 3 April 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/taliban-afghanistan-election-intimidation/25320214.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²³⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *9 rebels killed, 16 wounded in clashes*, 13 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/13/9-rebels-killed-16-wounded-clashes>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²³⁵⁾ Pajhwok, *Students among 5 killed in fresh violence*, 20 July 2014 (<http://www.Pajhwok Afghan News.com/en/2014/07/20/students-among-5-killed-fresh-violence>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽²³⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *IED attack kills six Afghan army soldiers*, 18 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/ied-attack-kills-six-afghan-army-soldiers-in-kapisa-2805>), accessed 20 October 2014; Tolonews, *Six Afghan Soldiers Killed in Kapisa Blast*, 18 February 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13899-six-afghan-soldiers-killed-in-kapisa-blast>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²³⁷⁾ RFE/RL, *Soldiers Killed in Afghan Roadside Bombing*, 18 February 2014 (http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/269863/384863_en.html), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽²³⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Alasai residents initiate anti-Taliban uprising*, 23 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/23/alsai-residents-initiate-anti-taliban-uprising>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban accused of torching civilian houses*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/08/taliban-accused-torching-civilian-houses>), accessed 21 October 2014; Bakhtar News Agency, *Taliban Control Valley of Alasay District of Kapisa Province*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security/item/13107-taliban-control-valley-of-alsay-district-of-kapisa-province.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

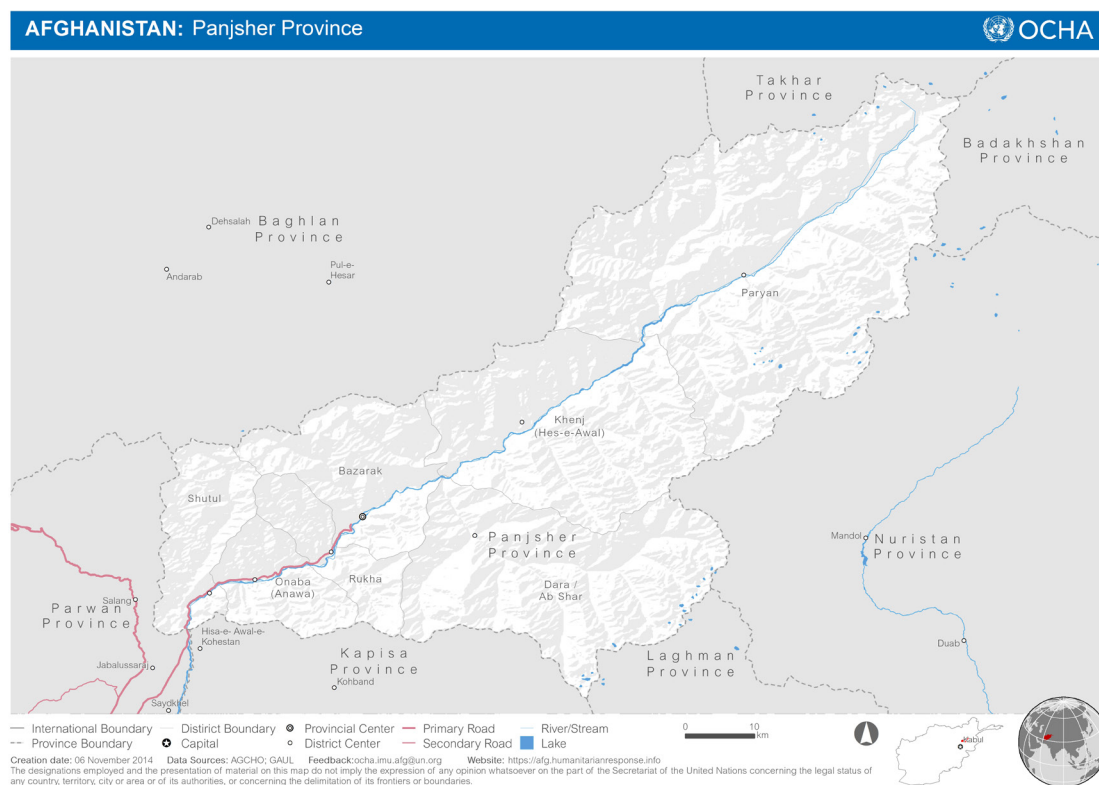
⁽²³⁹⁾ Khaama Press, *IED attack kills six Afghan army soldiers*, 18 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/ied-attack-kills-six-afghan-army-soldiers-in-kapisa-2805>), accessed 20 October 2014; Tolonews, *Six Afghan Soldiers Killed in Kapisa Blast*, 18 February 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13899-six-afghan-soldiers-killed-in-kapisa-blast>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽²⁴⁰⁾ MRRD, *Panjshir Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/248/Panjshir%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽²⁴¹⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽²⁴²⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous; MRRD, *Panjshir Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/248/Panjshir%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽²⁴³⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.



Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

Panjshir is considered the most secure province in the central region and, according to the New York Times, foreigners feel safe enough to make day trips from Kabul to picnic and hike.⁽²⁴⁴⁾ Panjshir witnessed five incidents of armed conflict from 2009.⁽²⁴⁵⁾ According to UNOCHA, the conflict-related risk in the province is more than six times lower than elsewhere in Afghanistan and the possibility of escalation almost three times lower.⁽²⁴⁶⁾ The province is considered relatively safe by UNHCR.⁽²⁴⁷⁾

From January to September 2014, Panjshir witnessed only one major incident. In May, two cars full of explosives tried to enter the province but were spotted at the entrance of the narrow valley, on the border with Jabal Saraj district of Parwan. The suicide bombers managed to detonate their explosives and caused many casualties. Thirteen to 15 people were killed, among them four policemen, and 20 were wounded.⁽²⁴⁸⁾

Displacement

According to UNOCHA, the province has seen 270 IDPs from September 2011 to August 2014 and none in the last year (2013-2014).⁽²⁴⁹⁾ The relative risk on displacement is more than ten times lower than elsewhere in Afghanistan.⁽²⁵⁰⁾

⁽²⁴⁴⁾ New York Times, *Recalling Past Threats, Afghans in Tranquil Valley Work To Keep it That Way*, 14 January 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/14/world/asia/afghan-panjshir-Valley.html?_r=1), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽²⁴⁵⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽²⁴⁶⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.42.

⁽²⁴⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147984,0.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽²⁴⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 killed, 20 wounded in Panjshir suicide attack*, 1 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/01/15-killed-20-wounded-panjshir-suicide-attack>), accessed 14 November 2014; Tolonews, *Haqqani network behind Panjshir suicide attack: Governor*, 2 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14739-haqqani-network-behind-panjshir-suicide-attack-governor>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽²⁴⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014, (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.36.

⁽²⁵⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014, (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.42.

Actors in the conflict

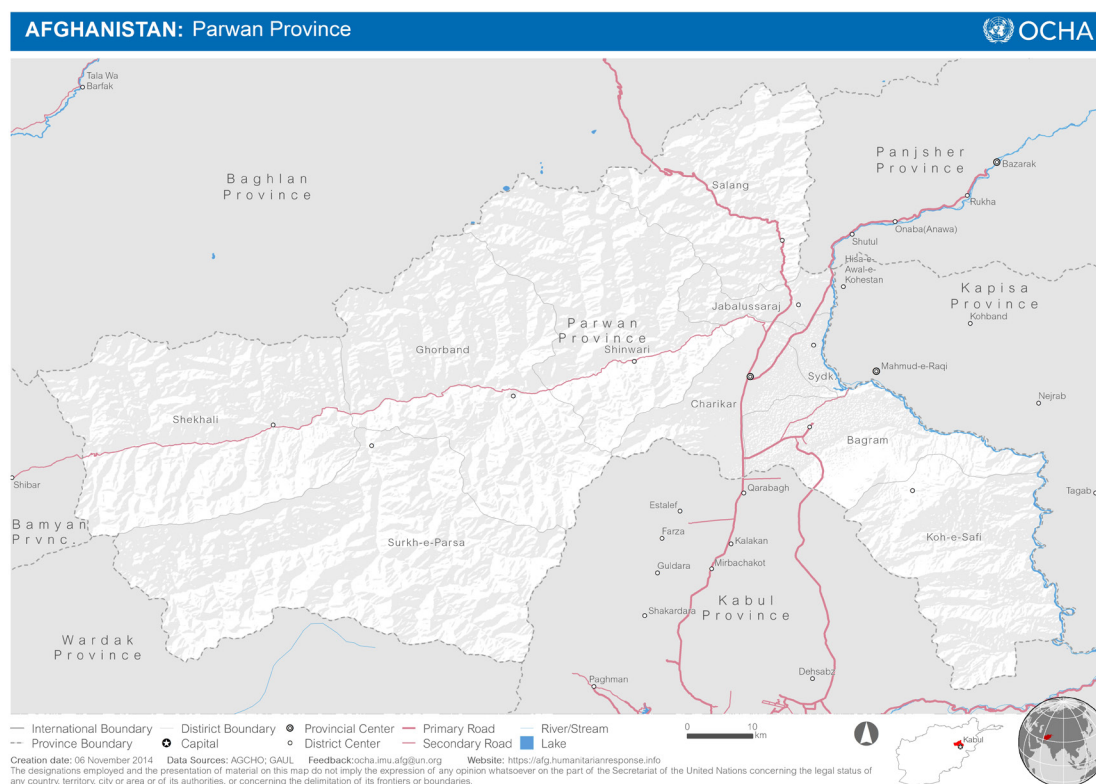
Panjshir is historically linked to the Jamiat and Jamiat's Shura-i Nazar, Ahmed Shah Masoud's resistance movement. These links date back to both the Jihad during Soviet presence and the Taliban in 1996-2001. The political space in Panjshir is therefore dominated by the Jamiat-i Islami party and former Shura-i Nazar networks. Shura-i Nazar, the military branch of Jamiat, was founded by the late Ahmad Shah Massoud. According to a source in Kabul, HIA previously had followers in the valley, but under Massoud's leadership, HIA followers were persecuted, leaving Jamiat uncontested dominance in the province ever since. Panjshir has no ALP programme.⁽²⁵¹⁾

Because of its geographical isolation and ethnic homogeneity, insurgents have not maintained a hold in this province. The May attack at the entrance gate was claimed by the Taliban, though the provincial governor attributed the attack to the Haqqani Network.⁽²⁵²⁾

2.1.5. Parwan

Description of the province

Parwan province is located north of Kabul and surrounded by Bamyan, Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan, Laghman, Kapisa, Kabul and Wardak provinces. More than two-thirds of the province is mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while about one quarter of the area is flat land.⁽²⁵³⁾ Parwan Province is made up of the following districts: Bagram, Charikar, Ghorband, Jabalussaraj, Koh-e-Safi, Salang, Shekhali, Shinwari, Surkh-e-Parsa, Sydk.⁽²⁵⁴⁾



Dari and Pashtu are the main languages spoken in the province; however Dari speakers outnumber Pashtu speakers by a ratio of 5 to 2.⁽²⁵⁵⁾ Ethnic Tajiks have a presence in every district in Parwan and are the majority in Salang.

⁽²⁵¹⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽²⁵²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 killed, 20 wounded in Panjshir suicide attack*, 1 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/01/15-killed-20-wounded-panjshir-suicide-attack>); Tolonews, *Haqqani network behind Panjshir suicide attack: Governor*, 2 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14739-haqqani-network-behind-panjshir-suicide-attack-governor>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽²⁵³⁾ MRRD, *Parwan Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/249/Parwan%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽²⁵⁴⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽²⁵⁵⁾ MRRD, *Parwan Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/249/Parwan%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

Shinwari has a Pashtun majority and Ghorband a significant Pashtun population.⁽²⁵⁶⁾ Surkh Parsa is inhabited by Sunni Hazara, who are, according to analyst Thomas Ruttig, traditionally at odds with the Shia Hazara in Bamyan and therefore supportive of HIA.⁽²⁵⁷⁾ Parwan province also has a population of Kuchis or nomads whose numbers vary in different seasons.⁽²⁵⁸⁾

Through the province runs Highway 1 connecting Kabul with Pul-e Khumri and other northern provincial capitals. From the Chaharikar, the principal access road to Bamyan, the Ghandak Highway runs over the Shibar pass and through the Ghorband Valley.⁽²⁵⁹⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Ghorband	1	4	20						4		1			8		38
Bagram			3	2		1		3	7	2	1			11	1	31
Chaharikar			1	5		1	1		6	1	4					19
Shinwari			5	1	1				2	2	1			2		14
Kohi Safi		1	2	1				1	1					4		10
Jabalus Saraj				1			1		1		2	1	1	2		9
Sayd Khel			1						3	1						5
Shekh Ali	1		4													5
Surkhi Parsa	1							1								2
Salang			1													1

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Parwan counted 134 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Ghorband and Bagram (see table).⁽²⁶⁰⁾

The province is considered relatively safe by UNHCR.⁽²⁶¹⁾ According to UNOCHA figures, Parwan does not see a lot of incidents or casualties. From September 2013 to August 2014, 35 were killed in the conflict and 94 injured.⁽²⁶²⁾ Most incidents occurred in Ghorband, Shinwari, Bagram and Kohi Safi.⁽²⁶³⁾ Only Ghorband, Bagram and Chaharikar saw a number of casualties that exceeded 25 in one year.⁽²⁶⁴⁾ According to a study by the APPRO, the security is deteriorating particularly in the districts of Ghorband, Shinwari and Kohi Safi. The provincial centre Chaharikar

⁽²⁵⁶⁾ Ruttig, T., *Ghorband – A valley once friendly*, AAN, 19 July 2011 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/ghorband-a-valley-once-friendly/>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽²⁵⁷⁾ Ruttig, T., *Ghorband – A valley once friendly*, AAN, 19 July 2011 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/ghorband-a-valley-once-friendly/>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽²⁵⁸⁾ MRRD, *Parwan Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/249/Parwan%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽²⁵⁹⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 27 October 2014, p. 19.

⁽²⁶⁰⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽²⁶¹⁾ UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147984,0.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽²⁶²⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽²⁶³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 5.

⁽²⁶⁴⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4.

remains, according to this study, stable.⁽²⁶⁵⁾ From January to September 2014, only one noteworthy incident happened in Chaharikar: an MIED attached to the ALP vehicle exploded in the centre of Chaharikar town in April 2014, injuring 18 civilians in the bazar.⁽²⁶⁶⁾

In the large Ghorband valley, which stretches over the districts Shinwar, Ghorband (Siyagerd) and Shekh Ali, insurgents, according to Landinfo, regularly target people, vehicles and checkpoints with direct attacks and IEDs. Mainly ANSF are targeted, but also civilians suffer from these attacks. According to a Landinfo source, civilians travelling this road can be stopped at illegal checkpoints and questioned.⁽²⁶⁷⁾ Insurgents hide in the side valleys of the Ghorband valley and conduct their attacks from the surrounding mountains. In this way, they try to block the access to Bamyan. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) condemned these tactics in October 2013 and said in certain circumstances patients were not able to leave Bamyan for healthcare and food and materials could not be delivered to the province.⁽²⁶⁸⁾ According to an article from December 2013, certain food items became 20% more expensive in Bamyan because of insecurity and illegal checkpoints on the road through Ghorband.⁽²⁶⁹⁾

Occasionally, the ANSF conducts clearing operations into the side valleys of the large Ghorband valley. In January 2014, an aerial bombardment by IMF in support of an ANA clearing operation in the Wazghar valley in the district of Ghorband (Siyagerd) killed, according to initial reporting, 14 civilians. Several were women and children.⁽²⁷⁰⁾ Later, several sources cited by the New York Times lowered this figure.⁽²⁷¹⁾ In August, another aerial bombardment in Ghorband killed three ALP officers when they were mistakenly targeted by IMF.⁽²⁷²⁾ The attack in June on a senior politician travelling the road through Ghorband killed a young girl standing nearby.⁽²⁷³⁾ On election day in June, a battle erupted in Shinwar district between ANSF and a group of insurgents trying to disrupt the vote.⁽²⁷⁴⁾

The road leading north connecting Kabul with northern provinces saw far less violence. Sporadic attacks do take place, such as the attack on a NATO fuel supply convoy in May in Jabalus Saraj.⁽²⁷⁵⁾ In the same district a suicide attack on the border between Parwan and Panjshir provinces in May claimed the lives of several civilians (see chapter on Panjshir).⁽²⁷⁶⁾

A bomb attached to the vehicle of a private company wounded six female employees in Bagram district in May.⁽²⁷⁷⁾ In July, a suicide bomber riding a bike targeted US military and an ANA foot patrol distributing stationery to

⁽²⁶⁵⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 3*, May 2014 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/women-in-transition-cycle-3-findings/>), accessed 31 October 2014, p.53.

⁽²⁶⁶⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 27 October 2014, p.18.

⁽²⁶⁷⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 27 October 2014, p.19.

⁽²⁶⁸⁾ AIHRC, *Bamyan Regional Office Press Release in relation to insecurity and closure of Bamyan – Kabul Highway in Ghorband Valley*, 22 October 2013 (<http://www.aihrc.org.af/en/press-release/1796/bamian-kabul-highway.html>), accessed 25 October 2013.

⁽²⁶⁹⁾ Druzin, H., *On the last 'safe' road to Bamiyan, threats, bribes and worse*, Stars and Stripes, 8 December 2013 (<http://www.stripes.com/news/on-the-last-safe-road-to-bamiyan-threats-bribes-and-worse-1.256269>), accessed 12 November 2013.

⁽²⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ISAF regrets civilian casualties in Parwan operation*, 16 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/16/isaf-regrets-civilians-casualties-parwan-operation>), accessed 27 October 2014; Khaama Press, *US airstrike killed at least 14 civilians in Parwan: Afghan MP*, 17 January 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/us-airstrike-killed-at-least-14-civilians-in-parwan-afghan-mp-2707>), accessed 27 October 2014; New York Times, *US-Afghan tensions rise as airstrike kills more civilians*, 16 January 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/16/world/asia/us-afghan-tensions-increase-as-airstrike-kills-more-civilians.html?_r=0), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁷¹⁾ New York Times, *Government dossier accusing US in carnage amplifies doubts about Karzai*, 25 January 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/26/world/asia/government-dossier-accusing-us-in-carnage-amplifies-doubts-about-karzai.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁷²⁾ Khaama Press, *NATO airstrike leaves 3 policemen dead in Parwan province*, 16 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/nato-airstrike-leaves-3-policemen-dead-in-parwan-province-8441>), accessed 27 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *NATO airstrike in Parwan kills 3 ALP personnel*, 16 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/16/nato-airstrike-parwan-kills-3-alp-personnel>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁷³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Influential MP survives bomb attack in Parwan*, 8 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/08/influential-mp-survives-bomb-attack-parwan>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Election day violence kills 6, wounds 17*, 14 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/14/election-day-violence-kills-6-wounds-17>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁷⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 NATO supply vehicles torched in Parwan*, 26 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/26/4-nato-supply-vehicles-torched-parwan>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁷⁶⁾ RFE/RL, *Suicide bomber attack reported in north Afghanistan*, 1 May 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/suicide-bomber-attack-reported-in-north-afghanistan/25369633.html>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Suicide bomber held, 6 women injured*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/21/suicide-bomber-held-6-women-injured>), accessed 27 October 2014.

schoolchildren in Bagram district. Four American soldiers and at least ten schoolchildren died and as many children were wounded.⁽²⁷⁸⁾ According to another source, the targets were Czech soldiers visiting a clinic. Later, a fifth soldier died and the number of people killed in the attack rose to 16.⁽²⁷⁹⁾

Victims

From the abovementioned incidents, civilians occasionally seem to be haphazard victims of engagements between ANSF and their international allies and insurgents. The heaviest fighting seems to be concentrated in the Ghorband valley. The relative risk for civilian casualties in the province is, according to UNOCHA, at least twice as low as in the rest of Afghanistan.⁽²⁸⁰⁾ The number of civilian casualties from September 2013 to August 2014 is highest in the districts of Ghorband, Chaharikar and Bagram.⁽²⁸¹⁾

Insurgents are said to operate with freedom of movement in the Ghorband valley allowing them to harass and threaten the local population.⁽²⁸²⁾

Displacement

UNOCHA considers the relative risk of conflict-related displacement in Parwan at least ten times lower than in other parts of Afghanistan.⁽²⁸³⁾ According to their figures, Parwan had only 93 IDPs in the period of September 2011 to August 2014, and none in the last year (2013-2014).⁽²⁸⁴⁾ Yet, UNHCR notes 750 individuals fleeing Parwan, Kapisa and Nuristan to Chaharikar and Bagram districts in January 2014. According to UNHCR, most displacement in Parwan happens within the province borders.⁽²⁸⁵⁾ In February some families – about 250 individuals – fled conflict and military operations in Ghorband to Kabul.⁽²⁸⁶⁾ In April 2014, 14 families – about 100 individuals – were displaced from Shinwari to Chaharikar, due to armed conflict, high presence of AGEs and forced recruitment.⁽²⁸⁷⁾ From December 2013 to July 2014, more than 1,000 people fled different districts of Kapisa and Laghman to Chaharikar, Bagram and Jabalus Saraj in Parwan.⁽²⁸⁸⁾

Actors in the conflict

Besides the ANSF, Parwan has ALP in the districts of Ghorband and Kohi Safi.⁽²⁸⁹⁾ Landinfo notes that the insurgent groups active in the province include the Taliban, HIA, IMU and Al Qaeda.⁽²⁹⁰⁾ Qari Nazar Gul, the Taliban's deputy shadow governor for Parwan province and a member of the senior Taliban commission who is active in the Ghorband valley, is said to have strong ties with the Haqqani network.⁽²⁹¹⁾ Thomas Ruttig reports that Pashtuns in Ghorband have traditionally been pro HIA, but the Taliban has been able to absorb some of its structures during their regime.

⁽²⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 NATO troops, 11 students among 17 killed*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/08/4-nato-troops-11-students-among-17-killed>), accessed 27 October 2014; Khaama Press, *UN mission condemns deadly suicide attack in Parwan province*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/un-mission-condemns-deadly-suicide-attack-in-parwan-province-6371>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁷⁹⁾ RFE/RL, *Suicide bomber kills 12 Afghans, four NATO soldiers*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-insurgent-attack-nato/25449046.html>), accessed 27 October 2014; RFE/RL, *Fifth Czech soldiers dies after blast in Afghanistan*, 14 July 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/fifth-soldier-czech-republic-death-terror-afghanistan/25456349.html>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁸⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 42.

⁽²⁸¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽²⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ISAF regrets civilian casualties in Parwan operation*, 16 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/16/isaf-regrets-civilians-casualties-parwan-operation>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁸³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 42.

⁽²⁸⁴⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽²⁸⁵⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,52fdc684,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽²⁸⁶⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, February 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,53296caa,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽²⁸⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, April 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,5385882b4,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽²⁸⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽²⁸⁹⁾ US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in*, April 2014 (http://www.defense.gov/pubs/April_1230_Report_Final.pdf), accessed 12 November 2014, p. 55.

⁽²⁹⁰⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 27 October 2014, p. 20.

⁽²⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ISAF regrets civilian casualties in Parwan operation*, 16 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/16/isaf-regrets-civilians-casualties-parwan-operation>), accessed 27 October 2014.

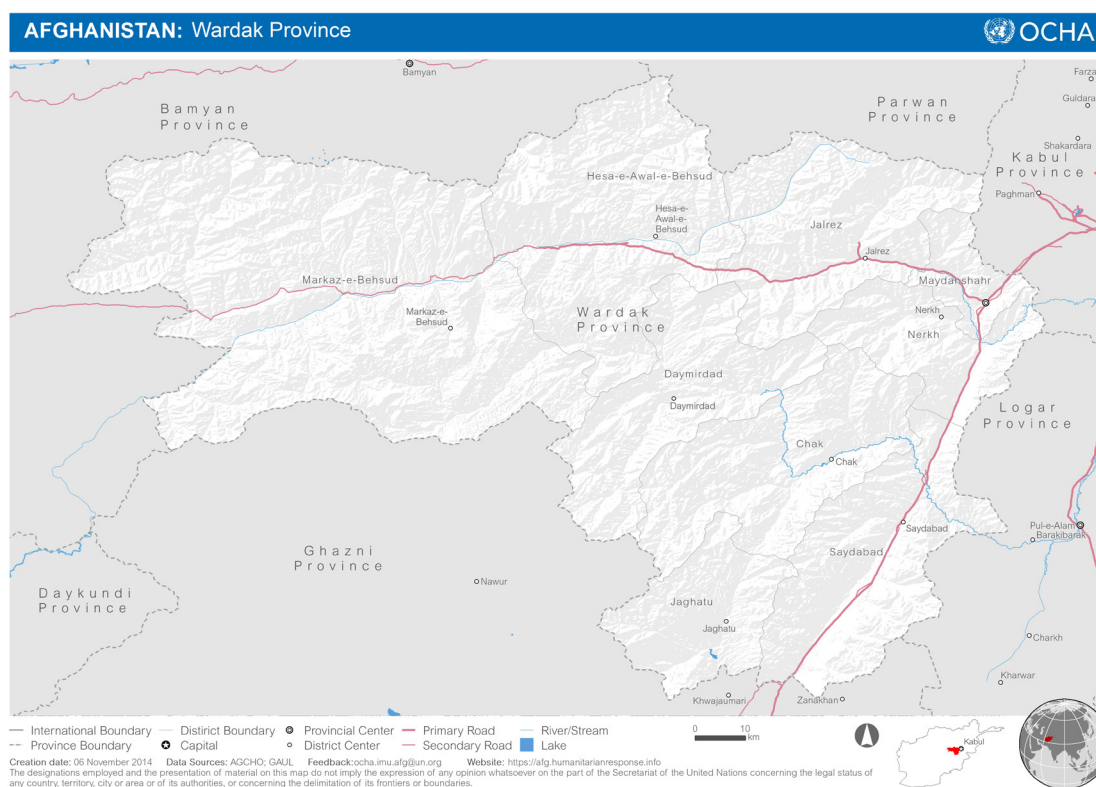
Local Taliban networks have been reactivated and a provincial shadow administration has been set up. Shadow district governors have been appointed for Shinwari, Ghorband and Kohi Safi. The provincial shadow governor in 2011 was a Tajik from Jabalus Saraj.⁽²⁹²⁾

In a bid to curb the spreading of illegal arms in the provinces, authorities started a disarmament campaign in August 2014. A resident of the province, cited in Pajhwok Afghan News, said that the number of armed individuals increased after the second round of the presidential elections.⁽²⁹³⁾ In March 2014, APPRO researchers noted that most men in Parwan possessed arms and that the security situation was deteriorating due to rising criminality.⁽²⁹⁴⁾

2.1.6. Wardak

Description of the province

Wardak province, also known as Maydan Wardak, shares borders with Parwan and Bamiyan to the north, Kabul and Logar in the east, and Ghazni to the south and west. More than four-fifths of the province is mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while a little more than one-tenth of the area is made up of flat land. The province of Wardak is divided into nine districts: Chak, Daymirdad, Hesa-e-Awal-e-Behsud, Jaghatu, Jalrez, Markaz-e-Behsud, Maydانشahr, Nerkh, Saydabad.⁽²⁹⁵⁾ The capital is the town of Maydan Shahr, which is located almost 35 kilometres west of Kabul city.⁽²⁹⁶⁾



With its strategic proximity to Kabul, Wardak has experienced high levels of civilian casualties due to the conflict and exposure to mines and ERWs. The province has high levels of security incidents.⁽²⁹⁷⁾

⁽²⁹²⁾ Rutting, T., *Ghorband – A valley once friendly*, AAN, 19 July 2011 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/ghorband-a-valley-once-friendly/>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽²⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Campaign to disarm illegal gunmen launched*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/11/campaign-disarm-illegal-gunmen-launched>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽²⁹⁴⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 3*, May 2014 (<http://apro.org.af/preview/women-in-transition-cycle-3-findings/>), accessed 31 October 2014, p.53.

⁽²⁹⁵⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽²⁹⁶⁾ MRRD, *Wardak Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/254/Wardak%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Back Ground Profile of Maidan Wardak*, n.d., (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-maidan-wardak>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽²⁹⁷⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.20.

The major ethnic groups living in Wardak Province are Pashtuns, followed by Tajiks and Hazaras. Wardak province also has a population of Kuchis or nomads whose numbers vary in different seasons.⁽²⁹⁸⁾ During spring, Kuchi migrations often cause violent clashes in the predominantly Hazara Bihsud districts.⁽²⁹⁹⁾

The main Kabul-Kandahar highway intersects the province through the districts of Maydan Shahr, Nirkh and Seyedabad. A provincial road runs west from Maydan Shahr to Bamyan through Jalrez and the districts of Hisa-i Awali Bihsud and Markazi Bihsud.⁽³⁰⁰⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District ⁽³⁰¹⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Seyedabad	6	13	115	18	4		2	20	11	1	2	6	1	199
Chaki Wardak		10	34	5	3			4		2		11		69
Nirkh	1	10	29	4	5		3	7		2		2		63
Maydan Shahr	1	4	19	11	1		6	10	4			6		62
Jalrez		2	22	5	2		3	7	2	1	1	3		48
Jaghathu		3	15			1		1		1		11		32
Daymirdad	1		19	2								4		26
Hisa-i Awali Bihsud	1		1											2

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between 1 January and 31 October 2014 the province of Wardak counted 501 reported security incidents. The most volatile district was Seyedabad with 199 incidents (see table).⁽³⁰²⁾

According to a source in Kabul, the majority of security incidents - IEDs and stand-off attacks against ANSF checkpoints and convoys as well as IMF-contracted supply convoys - are centred on Highway I (Maidan Shahr, Nirkh and Seyedabad district) and to a lesser extent on Highway II (Jalrez district) while the peripheral districts of Chack, Jaghatu and Daymirdad offer safe havens for the insurgency. Recent ANSF efforts to regain control over Chack district remain incomplete.⁽³⁰³⁾ According to anonymous sources quoted by Landinfo, Chakh houses the provincial headquarters of the insurgents.⁽³⁰⁴⁾

The road to Kandahar is often the location for attacks on military and supply convoys. According to Landinfo sources, almost half of the insurgent activity is concentrated on this highway.⁽³⁰⁵⁾ The districts of Seyedabad and Nirkh, particularly, experience a lot of violence on the main road. According to Tolonews, this stretch of road sees 570 fuel

⁽²⁹⁸⁾ MRRD, *Wardak Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/254/Wardak%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽²⁹⁹⁾ Landinfo, *The conflict between Hazaras and Kuchis in the Beshud Districts of Wardak Province*, 6 June 2011 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2057/1/2057_1.pdf), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽³⁰⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *Wardak Province District Atlas*, 14 April 2014 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/Wardak.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽³⁰¹⁾ No incidents were found for Markazi Bihsud.

⁽³⁰²⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽³⁰³⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽³⁰⁴⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 21 October 2014, p. 11.

⁽³⁰⁵⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 21 October 2014, p. 11.

transports every day, of which on average three are attacked daily.⁽³⁰⁶⁾ Because of the many incidents, the road is often closed.⁽³⁰⁷⁾ New security checkpoints have been erected along the highway after hundreds of truck drivers went on strike demanding more security last autumn.⁽³⁰⁸⁾

In the UNOCHA map on conflict incidents by district from 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, the distinction in level of violence between eastern and western districts is clearly visible.⁽³⁰⁹⁾ On a map by UNOCHA showing the level of civilian casualties by district from 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, the picture is similar. Maidan Shahr had more than 151 civilian casualties, Seyedabad between 51 and 150, Chakh and Jalrez between 26 and 50 and Nirkh, Jaghatu, Daymirdad and Hisa-i Awali Behsud between 1 and 25.⁽³¹⁰⁾ Except for Maydan Shahr, the eastern districts saw a small increase in incidents, while the western districts saw a small decrease.⁽³¹¹⁾

The US Department of States lists Seyedabad in 2013 as one of the ten most violent districts of Afghanistan.⁽³¹²⁾ According to a 2010 report, the government controls only the district centre.⁽³¹³⁾ In the district of Seyedabad the Tangi valley joins the main road, coming from Logar. This valley is said to be a major infiltration route for insurgents coming from Pakistan.⁽³¹⁴⁾

Provincial authorities reported numerous operations, violent incidents and clashes with insurgents in the districts of Nirkh and Seyedabad in every month of the year. From April, in the run-up to the elections, clashes occurred weekly, with Seyedabad bearing the brunt. Several of these clashes involved civilian casualties.⁽³¹⁵⁾

On several occasions, insurgents kidnapped and killed high-profile government workers and security personnel on the main road in Seyedabad district.⁽³¹⁶⁾

According to Landinfo, insurgents sporadically attack the provincial capital Maydan Shahr.⁽³¹⁷⁾ A nightly ground engagement between ANA and insurgents happened in June in the provincial capital, leaving three soldiers dead.⁽³¹⁸⁾

⁽³⁰⁶⁾ Tolonews, *72 insurgents and 11 PPF officers killed in highway clash*, 19 August 2013 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/11611-72-insurgents-11-ppf-officers-killed-in-highway-clash>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽³⁰⁷⁾ Osman, B., *The road to Ghazni, Bombs, Battles and Blockades*, AAN, 13 July 2013 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-road-to-ghazni-bombs-battles-and-blockades>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽³⁰⁸⁾ Tolonews, *ANP officers kidnapped on Kabul Kandahar Highway*, 17 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14569-anp-officers-kidnapped-on-kabul-kandahar-highway>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽³⁰⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 5.

⁽³¹⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽³¹¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 27.

⁽³¹²⁾ United States Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, November 2013 (http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽³¹³⁾ Altai Consulting, *Afghan media in 2010. Priority District Report. Saydabad (Wardak)*, 13 October 2014 (<http://www.altaiconsulting.com/docs/media/2010/16.%20Wardak%20-%20Saydabad.pdf>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽³¹⁴⁾ CPAU, *Conflict analysis: Chak and Sayedabad districts, Wardak province*, April 2009 (http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/Docs/Other/Wardak_CPAU09.pdf), accessed 20 October 2014; Roggio, B., *Taliban tour 'liberated' base in eastern Afghanistan*, LWJ, 16 April 2011 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/09/taliban_tour_liberat.php), accessed 20 October 2014; New York Times, *Afghans killed after allies target Taliban*, 13 January 2013 (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/world/asia/afghan-civilians-killed-in-blast-after-commando-raid.html?_r=0), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽³¹⁵⁾ Mentioned here are those incidents where the press reported civilian casualties. Many more incidents were reported, mainly violent clashes: Pajhwok Afghan News, *6 killed, 12 injured in Maidan Wardak clashes*, 13 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/13/6-killed-12-injured-maidan-wardak-clashes>), accessed 20 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Police, civilians among 5 killed*, 20 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/20/police-civilians-among-5-killed>), accessed 20 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilians among 9 rebels killed in clashes*, 22 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/22/civilians-among-9-rebels-killed-clashes>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽³¹⁶⁾ New York Times, *Taliban say they killed 7 Afghan police officers*, 16 April 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/17/world/asia/taliban-say-they-killed-7-afghan-policemen.html?_r=2), accessed 21 October 2014; Tolonews, *ANP officers kidnapped on Kabul-Kandahar highway*, 17 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14569-anp-officers-kidnapped-on-kabul-kandahar-highway>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilians among 9 rebels killed in clashes*, 22 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/22/civilians-among-9-rebels-killed-clashes>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kidnapped Ghazni Hajj director found dead*, 6 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/06/kidnapped-ghazni-hajj-director-found-dead>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³¹⁷⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 21 October 2014, p. 11.

⁽³¹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *8 rebels, 3 ANA troops killed in clashes*, 3 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/03/8-rebels-3-ana-troops-killed-clashes>), accessed 21 October 2014.

Examples of incidents with significant impact on civilians from the other districts include: an IED that killed two children in Jalrez in January 2014⁽³¹⁹⁾; stray mortars and rockets that killed several civilians on several occasions in Seyedabad, Jalrez and Jaghatu⁽³²⁰⁾. In June, Taliban insurgents publicly executed a man over a personal dispute in Daymirdad, openly displaying their freedom to operate and intimidate the local population.⁽³²¹⁾

ANSF held several cleaning operations in the run-up to the elections on 5 April 2014. However, political analyst Martine van Bijlert described Wardak as one of the “*provinces with precarious situations and known for serious and widespread irregularities in the past*”, but where not a single polling site was declared at risk while elsewhere in the country, hundreds of polling sites were closed.⁽³²²⁾

Both Behsud districts of Wardak rarely see any insurgent activity. Their main issue is the recurring clash between Kuchi nomads and Hazara inhabitants of these districts. One report in the media in 2014 traced a clash in July back to this conflict.⁽³²³⁾ In this reporting period, five government workers were kidnapped in June and there were reports of clashes between ANSF and insurgents in July.⁽³²⁴⁾

Displacement

According to UNOCHA, close to 16,000 people were displaced in Wardak between September 2011 and August 2014 due to conflict.⁽³²⁵⁾ UNHCR stated that Wardak is severely affected by displacement with most displacement taking place within the province. It noted the displacement of hundreds of families from different districts to the provincial capital in January and May 2014. The main reason for displacement is reported as general insecurity, intensified armed conflict and military operations. In June 2014, UNHCR reported 1,900 people fleeing armed conflict between AGE groups in Nirkh. They fled their village to another location within the same district. In August, UNHCR reported hundreds more fled for the same reason and also because of AGE harassment. In September 2014, UNHCR reported more than 5,000 individuals fleeing insurgency, counter-insurgency activities, infighting between AGEs and harassment by special forces during night raids to Kabul and Maydan Shahr.⁽³²⁶⁾

Actors in the conflict

The province experienced a series of local security initiatives and ALP staffing levels were reduced from 1,650 in seven districts to 975 in five districts, according to a source in Kabul, due to budgetary considerations. The ALP, like earlier initiatives, was plagued by ethnic and political problems, inadequate vetting procedures and accountability. As a result, 258 ALP were dismissed in March 2012. According to the same source, there seems to be an improvement since, but issues of corruption and criminality among the ALP still need a lot of effort to eradicate.⁽³²⁷⁾ According to US Department of Defense, ALP is active in the districts of Seyedabad, Chakh, Nirkh, Jalrez and Maidan Shahr.⁽³²⁸⁾

⁽³¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 children died in mine blast*, 20 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/20/2-children-died-mine-blast>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽³²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Girl among 21 killed in Wardak and Helmand*, 17 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/17/girl-among-21-killed-wardak-helmand>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Latest bout of violence leaves 5 dead*, 19 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/19/latest-bout-violence-leaves-5-dead>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³²¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Insurgents execute 28 year old in Wardak*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/07/insurgents-execute-28-year-old-wardak>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³²²⁾ Martine van Bijlert, *Elections 2014 2: The polling centres that were taken off the list*, AAN, 4 April 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/election-2014-2-the-polling-centres-that-were-taken-off-the-list/>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 killed, 3 wounded in Maidan Wardak clash*, 12 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/12/5-killed-3-wounded-maidan-wardak-clash>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 NSP workers kidnapped in Maidan Wardak*, 1 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/01/5-nsp-workers-kidnapped-maidan-wardak>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 insurgents eliminated in Wardak*, 22 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/22/15-insurgents-eliminated-wardak>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³²⁵⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽³²⁶⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January - September 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽³²⁷⁾ HRW, “*Just Don’t Call It a Militia*” *Impunity, Militias, and the “Afghan Local Police”*, 12 September 2011 (<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e6dd8dd2.html>), accessed 21 October 2014; Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽³²⁸⁾ US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in*, April 2014 (http://www.defense.gov/pubs/April_1230_Report_Final.pdf), accessed 21 October 2014, p. 55.

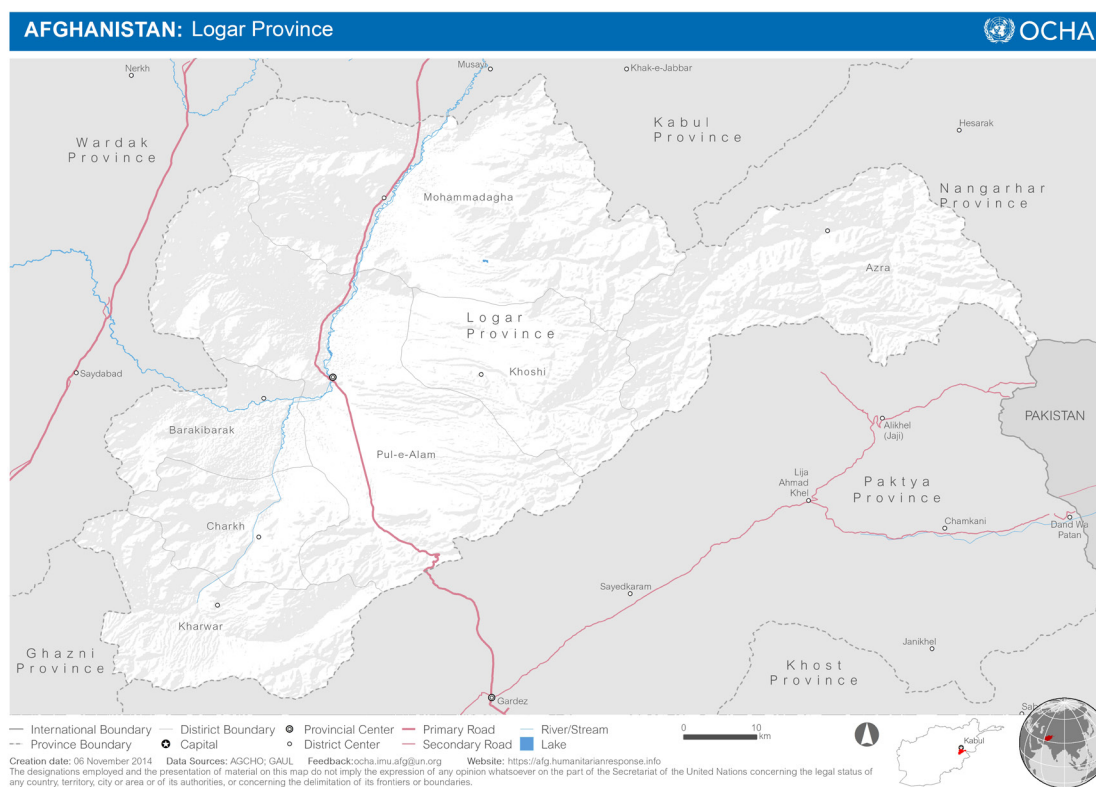
According to Landinfo, rebels consist of local and regional Taliban groups, HIA and international groups of fighters.⁽³²⁹⁾ Also in 2014, there were occasional reports of Pakistani fighters coming out of this province.⁽³³⁰⁾

Since 2010, Taliban and HIA networks are fighting for the control of Nirkh district. Despite ANSF support, HIA, though said by a Kabul source to be more locally embedded than Taliban, has failed to curb Taliban control.⁽³³¹⁾ Violence escalated after foreign military forces pulled out of this province and the district gained notoriety when grave human rights abuses by American Special Forces and their Afghan aides surfaced in 2013.⁽³³²⁾ According to an article from June 2014, HIA has left the district.⁽³³³⁾

2.1.7. Logar

Description of the province

Logar province is located to the south of Kabul and is surrounded by Nangarhar, Paktya, Kabul, Wardak and Ghazni provinces. More than one-third of the province is mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while more than half of the area is made up of flat land. About two-thirds of villages and 60 % of the population speak Pashtu and one-third of villages and 40 % of the population speak Dari. Logar province also has a population of Kuchis or nomads whose numbers vary in different seasons. The province is divided into seven districts: Azra, Barakibarak, Charkh, Kharwar, Khoshi, Mohammadagha, Pul-e-Alam.⁽³³⁴⁾ The provincial capital is Pul-e Alam.⁽³³⁵⁾ The road connecting Kabul with Gardez in Paktya runs through this province.



⁽³²⁹⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 21 October 2014, p. 10.

⁽³³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilians among 20 killed in new bout of violence*, 26 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/26/civilians-among-20-killed-new-bout-violence>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 insurgents eliminated in Wardak*, 22 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/22/15-insurgents-eliminated-wardak>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Security men among 40 dead in new violence*, 10 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/10/security-men-among-40-dead-new-violence>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³³¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban, HIA fighting over territory in Maidan Wardak*, 29 July 2010 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2010/07/29/taliban-hia-fighting-over-territory-maidan-wardak>), accessed 21 October 2014; Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽³³²⁾ Aikins, M., *The A Team Killings*, Rolling Stone, 6 November 2013 (<http://www.rollingstone.com/feature/a-team-killings-afghanistan-special-forces>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Wardak police chief escapes unhurt attack*, 26 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/26/wardak-police-chief-escapes-unhurt-attack>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽³³⁴⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽³³⁵⁾ MRRD, *Logar Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/243/Logar%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Pul-e Alam	2	12	30	32	2	1	12	1	27	6	2	1	8	1	137
Baraki Barak	2	2	37	9	1		3		12	4			6	1	77
Muhammad Agha	1	9	18	8	9	1	3		13	6			2		70
Charkh		5	16	3					1				4	1	30
Azra			15						1				4		20
Kharwar		2	7	4									1		14
Khushi	1	2			1				2	1	1		3		11

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Logar counted 359 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Pul-e Alam; Baraki Barak and Mohammad Agha (see table).⁽³³⁶⁾ UNOCHA noted in 2014 a “sharp increase in the conflict”.⁽³³⁷⁾ The province is considered insecure by UNHCR.⁽³³⁸⁾

The US Department of States lists Pul-e Alam in 2013 as one of the ten most violent districts of Afghanistan.⁽³³⁹⁾ In February 2014, two women and two children were killed in one IED incident. In May and June 2014, a total of ten civilians were killed in three IED incidents.⁽³⁴⁰⁾ An explosion near the ALP compound killed two civilians and three ALP members at the end of August. A few days later, two more ALP members were killed in an attack on the same spot.⁽³⁴¹⁾ In September, insurgents stormed a police checkpoint just outside the provincial capital and then ambushed the reinforcements, sparking a fierce gun battle.⁽³⁴²⁾ On several occasions, explosives prematurely went off in the city, killing mostly the insurgents assembling or placing them.⁽³⁴³⁾

Of the other districts, Baraki Barak and Mohammad Agha were hardest hit by violence. In January 2014, an explosion on a crowded marketplace in Baraki Barak killed six civilians, including two women and a child, and wounded 18 civilians.⁽³⁴⁴⁾ In February 2014, hundreds of Baraki Barak district residents took up arms against the Taliban. The leader of the uprising accused the rebels of killing innocent people, kidnapping them and forcibly entering civilian houses. He said residents decided to rise up because they could no longer tolerate the atrocities.⁽³⁴⁵⁾ UNHCR

⁽³³⁶⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽³³⁷⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 3.

⁽³³⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147984,0.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽³³⁹⁾ United States Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, November 2013 (http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴⁰⁾ Khaama Press, *3 civilians die in Logar roadside bombing*, 10 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/3-civilians-die-in-logar-roadside-bombing-8051>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilian among 5 killed in separate security incidents*, 5 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/05/civilian-among-5-killed-separate-security-incidents>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilian among 9 killed in Logar offensive*, 10 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/10/civilians-among-9-killed-logar-offensive>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴¹⁾ Khaama Press, *Policemen and civilians among 5 killed in Logar explosion*, 23 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/policemen-and-civilians-among-5-killed-in-logar-explosion-8541>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Latest drone strike leaves 7 rebels dead*, 2 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/02/latest-drone-strike-leaves-7-rebels-dead>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Police officers among 14 dead in Logar battle*, 18 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/18/police-officers-among-14-dead-logar-battle>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *14 killed when car bomb goes off inside Logar home*, 2 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/02/14-killed-car-bomb-goes-inside-logar-house>), accessed 22 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Suicide attack organizers blown up by own explosives in Logar*, 4 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-attack-organizers-blown-up-by-own-explosives-in-logar-8005>), accessed 22 October 2014; Khaama Press, *6 suicide bombers blown up by own explosives in Logar*, 23 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/6-suicide-bombers-blown-up-by-own-explosives-in-logar-8359>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *Explosion in Logar leaves 6 civilians dead, 18 injured*, 2 January 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-in-logar-leaves-6-civilians-dead-18-injured-2658>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Frustrated residents stage anti-Taliban uprising*, 10 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/10/frustrated-residents-stage-anti-taliban-uprising>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Logar residents seek support against Taliban*, 12 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/12/logar-residents-seek-support-against-taliban>), accessed 22 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Nearly 300 Logar residents rise against Taliban militants*, 11 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/nearly-300-logar-residents-rise-against-taliban-militants-3425>), accessed 22 October 2014.

mentioned a three-day lasting military operation by ANSF in Baraki Barak in early July, which reportedly caused civilian casualties.⁽³⁴⁶⁾ In August and September, ANSF conducted a clearing operation in Baraki Barak, with ISAF air support.⁽³⁴⁷⁾ In response, dozens of insurgents carried out attacks against check posts in the district.⁽³⁴⁸⁾ Also in September two women were killed when a mortar hit their home.⁽³⁴⁹⁾

From Mohammad Agha, several targeted incidents were reported in the media: a mullah and teacher in the local madrassa was killed in February 2014.⁽³⁵⁰⁾ Also in February, Afghan and ISAF forces entered a radio station that presumably sent around messages of the Haqqani Network.⁽³⁵¹⁾ In April 2014, an influential ex-Jihadi commander and member of the High Peace Council and election observer in the camp of Sayyaf was shot dead in his home.⁽³⁵²⁾ In June, several de-miners were killed by the Taliban.⁽³⁵³⁾ In August, the district chief of Mohammad Agha was shot dead in his house.⁽³⁵⁴⁾ In the following days, the district attorney was injured in a murder attempt and a plot to kill the provincial intelligence chief was thwarted in the same district.⁽³⁵⁵⁾ A suicide attack on the district headquarters in August left two ALP members dead and an ANA soldier wounded.⁽³⁵⁶⁾ In September a heavy offensive involving ground forces and ISAF airstrikes was carried out in the district, described at that time by Pajhwok Afghan News as “in the grip of insecurity for several months”.⁽³⁵⁷⁾

An ISAF airstrike in March 2014 killed five Afghan soldiers and wounded many more in Charkh district.⁽³⁵⁸⁾ At the end of that month, a suicide bomb prematurely exploded and killed one policeman and wounded two in a failed attempt to enter a mosque.⁽³⁵⁹⁾ One day later, another failed suicide attack killed six Taliban and their commander in the same district.⁽³⁶⁰⁾ A day after that, insurgents launched an attack on the Afghanistan Public Protection Force (APPF) in the district, leading to a 14-hour battle with APPF troops.⁽³⁶¹⁾ In May insurgents stormed a checkpoint and

⁽³⁴⁶⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴⁷⁾ Tolonews, *Ten Taliban insurgents killed in Logar offensive*, 3 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15807-ten-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-logar-offensive>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *22 rebels eliminated in Paktika and Logar clashes*, 4 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/04/22-rebels-eliminated-paktika-logar-clashes>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *17 militants eliminated in clashes*, 6 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/06/17-militants-eliminated-clashes>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁴⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Women among 29 perish in violence*, 7 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/07/women-among-29-perish-violence>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Prayer leader gunned down in Logar*, 22 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/22/prayer-leader-gunned-down-logar>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *US-Afghan Forces ransack radio office in Logar*, 1 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/01/us-afghan-forces-ransack-radio-office-logar>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵²⁾ Khaama Press, *Afghan High Peace Council member shot dead in Logar*, 21 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/afghan-high-peace-council-member-shot-dead-in-logar-3607>), accessed 22 October 2014; RFE/RL, *Former Afghan commander turned election observer shot dead*, 22 April 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/former-afghan-commander-turned-election-observer-shot-dead/25357949.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Gunmen kill 8 de-miners in Logar*, 10 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/10/gunmen-kill-8-de-miners-logar>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Mohammad Agha district mayor gunned down*, 1 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/01/mohammad-gha-district-mayor-gunned-down>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Logar attorney shot and injured*, 6 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/06/logar-attorney-shot-injured>), accessed 22 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Plot to assassinate Logar intelligence chief thwarted*, 8 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/plot-to-assassinate-logar-intelligence-chief-thwarted-6532>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 ALP officials killed in Logar suicide attack*, 18 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/18/2-alp-officials-killed-logar-suicide-attack>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *16 fighters eliminated in Logar offensive*, 9 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/09/16-fighters-eliminated-logar-offensive>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Logar: 5 Afghan soldiers killed in NATO blitz*, 6 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/06/logar-5-afghan-soldiers-killed-nato-bltz>), accessed 22 October 2014; Khaama Press, *NATO airstrike kill or injure 13 Afghan soldiers in Logar province*, 6 March 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/nato-airstrike-kill-or-injure-13-afghan-soldiers-in-logar-province-4004>), accessed 22 October 2014; New York Times, *U.S. Airstrike kills 5 Afghan soldiers*, 6 March 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/07/world/asia/united-states-airstrike-kills-afghan-soldiers.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C%7B%22%22%3A%22RI%3A18%22%7D&_r=1), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁵⁹⁾ Khaama Press, *Suicide attack in Logar leaves 4 policemen killed or injured*, 31 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-attack-in-logar-leaves-4-policemen-killed-or-injured-3510>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *9 insurgents eliminated in Logar and Helmand*, 1 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/01/9-insurgents-eliminated-logar-helmand>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁶¹⁾ Tolonews, *10 insurgents killed in Logar*, 3 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14435-10-insurgents-killed-in-logar>), accessed 22 October 2014.

an attack in June on an ANSF-convoys killed a high-ranking commander and wounded several civilians.⁽³⁶²⁾ Only a few days after the large-scale attack on Azra district (see below), hundreds of fighters attacked the district headquarters and several checkpoints in Charkh district.⁽³⁶³⁾

Azra district, bordering Nangarhar, Herat and Paktya districts, was several times cut off from the outside world by the Taliban during 2013.⁽³⁶⁴⁾ In 2014, the district saw renewed bouts of violence, for example when hundreds of insurgents tried to overrun several police checkpoints in August.⁽³⁶⁵⁾ According to an article in Tolonews, insurgents use the district as a smuggling route for drugs.⁽³⁶⁶⁾

In July, a provincial police commander declared that the police conducted more than 500 operations in the preceding four months. He also declared the number of policemen killed in action decreased significantly compared to a year ago.⁽³⁶⁷⁾

Victims

According to a source in Kabul, civilians continue to be affected by the conflict in the Logar province. In January to June of 2014, this source documented 166 civilian casualties (63 killed and 103 injured) – a 62% increase over the same period in 2013. This source said the increase was mainly due to more IEDs, explaining that ten IEDs caused 67 civilian casualties.⁽³⁶⁸⁾ UNOCHA documented 336 civilian casualties (131 killed and 205 injured) from September 2013 to August 2014.⁽³⁶⁹⁾

Several of the aforementioned incidents, such as the explosion in a crowded marketplace in Baraki Barak, the targeted killing of provincial governor in a mosque on a religious day, the failed attempt to target a mosque in Charkh in March, the explosion in a polling station in Mohammad Agha in April, the civilian vehicles struck by an IED in Pul-e Alam in May and June and the bomb planted in front of a home in July, reveal an insurgent strategy in the Logar province that has little regard for civilian casualties.

According to a source in Kabul, central districts of the province are more affected.⁽³⁷⁰⁾ A map by UNOCHA, indicating the level of civilian casualties from September 2013 to August 2014, gives the same picture: the central districts of Pul-e Alam, Baraki Barak and Charkh all have a high level of between 51 and 150 civilians killed or injured in 12 months. Mohammad Agha had between 26 and 50 civilian casualties, the other districts under 26.⁽³⁷¹⁾ UNOCHA calculated the relative risk and states that the risk on civilian casualties in Logar is at least twice as high as on average outside the province. The overall conflict related risk profile for civilians is, according to UNOCHA, 1.3 times bigger, yet the risk on escalation is 1.0 times smaller.⁽³⁷²⁾

It is not just AGEs that are responsible for violence against civilians. PGF in several instances targeted civilians too. In January 2014, ALP severely maltreated a 12-year-old boy, minutes after an ALP vehicle was targeted by an IED.⁽³⁷³⁾

⁽³⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Helmand and Logar violence claims 22 lives*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/21/helmand-logar-violence-claims-22-lives>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Clashes leave 4 security personnel 26 rebels dead*, 9 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/09/clashes-leave-4-security-personnel-26-rebels-dead>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁶³⁾ RFE/RL, *Hundreds of Taliban involved in battle south of Kabul*, 19 August 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-taliban-logar-offensive-charkh/26539555.html>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 rebels dead, 7 security men injured*, 19 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/19/2-rebels-dead-7-security-men-injured>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Azra road stays closed as food supplies dry*, 3 November 2013 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/10/03/azra-road-stays-closed-food-supplies-dry>), accessed 22 October 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-induced internal displacement: Monthly Update*, December 2013 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,52d3a2634,0.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Coordinated Taliban attack on Azra repulsed*, 17 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/17/coordinated-taliban-attack-azra-repulsed>), accessed 22 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Over 700 Taliban militants attack check posts in Logar province*, 17 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/over-700-taliban-militants-attack-check-posts-in-logar-province-8454>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁶⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban attack ANSF outpost in Logar province*, 20 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16036-taliban-attack-ansf-outposts-in-logar-province>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Casualties among Logar police down*, 9 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/09/casualties-among-logar-police-down>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁶⁸⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽³⁶⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽³⁷⁰⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽³⁷¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽³⁷²⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 42.

⁽³⁷³⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2014*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20Edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 22 October 2014, p. 49.

In April 2014, police shot a religious school teacher in his home in Pul-e Alam, suspecting him to have ties with the Taliban.⁽³⁷⁴⁾ In August 2014, a joint clearing operation of ANSF and ISAF commandos allegedly killed 16 civilians and a drone strike killed several road workers.⁽³⁷⁵⁾

According to a source in Kabul, insecurity in the Logar province also restricts freedom of movement and access to education, in particular for girls.⁽³⁷⁶⁾

Displacement

According to figures provided by UNOCHA, Logar has seen 1,382 IDPs from September 2011 to August 2014.⁽³⁷⁷⁾ In May, UNHCR reported 1,000 people fleeing, general insecurity, armed conflict and military operations from different districts to the provincial capital.⁽³⁷⁸⁾ In September 2014, UNHCR noted more than 1,300 individuals fleeing insurgency and counter-insurgency activities from Khoshi, Charkh, Mohammad Agha and Pul-e Alam to the town of Pul-e Alam and Kabul city.⁽³⁷⁹⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to a source in Kabul, the province Logar constitutes an “insurgents’ highway” from Pakistan to Kabul through an ungarded border of 18 kilometres in Azra district, resulting in a higher-than-average ratio of foreign fighters.⁽³⁸⁰⁾ The large-scale attack on Azra checkpoints in August 2014 included, according to a police source cited in Pajhwok Afghan News, Arab, Pakistani, Chechen and Uzbek fighters.⁽³⁸¹⁾ In Logar there is a big support base for HIA and even Taliban forces loyal to Haqqani and Mullah Omar.⁽³⁸²⁾ According to an article by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Taliban control of the province is so complete that even public servants turn to the Taliban courts, believing they are swifter and more honest than state judiciary.⁽³⁸³⁾

IMF regularly target insurgents in Logar by using air force. For example, in July 2014 it used a drone against a large group of insurgents in the outskirts of Pul-e Alam and in August 2014 in Baraki Barak and Pul-e Alam.⁽³⁸⁴⁾

Next to regular ANSF components, ALP have been allocated to Pul-e Alam (200 men), Mohammad Agha (200 men), Baraki Barak (150 men) and Azra (300 men). According to a source in Kabul, a majority of the ALP in Pul-e Alam and Baraki Barak was recruited among the Shia, Dari speaking minority, creating tensions with the Sunni Pashtun majority.⁽³⁸⁵⁾

⁽³⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Logar police gun down high school teacher*, 21 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/21/logar-police-gun-down-high-schoolteacher>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁷⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *16 civilians claimed killed in Logar night raid*, 4 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/04/16-civilians-claimed-killed-logar-night-raid>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Logar drone strike kills 3 labourers*, 22 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/22/logar-drone-strike-kills-3-labourers>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁷⁶⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽³⁷⁷⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.36.

⁽³⁷⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,537220114,0.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁷⁹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, September 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/Last_Draft_Monthly_update__Septmber_2014_635499984491131329.pdf), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽³⁸⁰⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽³⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Coordinated Taliban attack on Azra repulsed*, 17 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/17/coordinated-taliban-attack-azra-repulsed>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁸²⁾ ISW, *Regional Command East. Logar*, n.d. (<https://www.understandingwar.org/region/regional-command-east#Logar>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁸³⁾ IWPR, *Taleban justice dominant in Logar province*, 2 August 2013 (<http://iwpr.net/report-news/taleban-justice-dominant-logar-province>), accessed 22 October 2014.

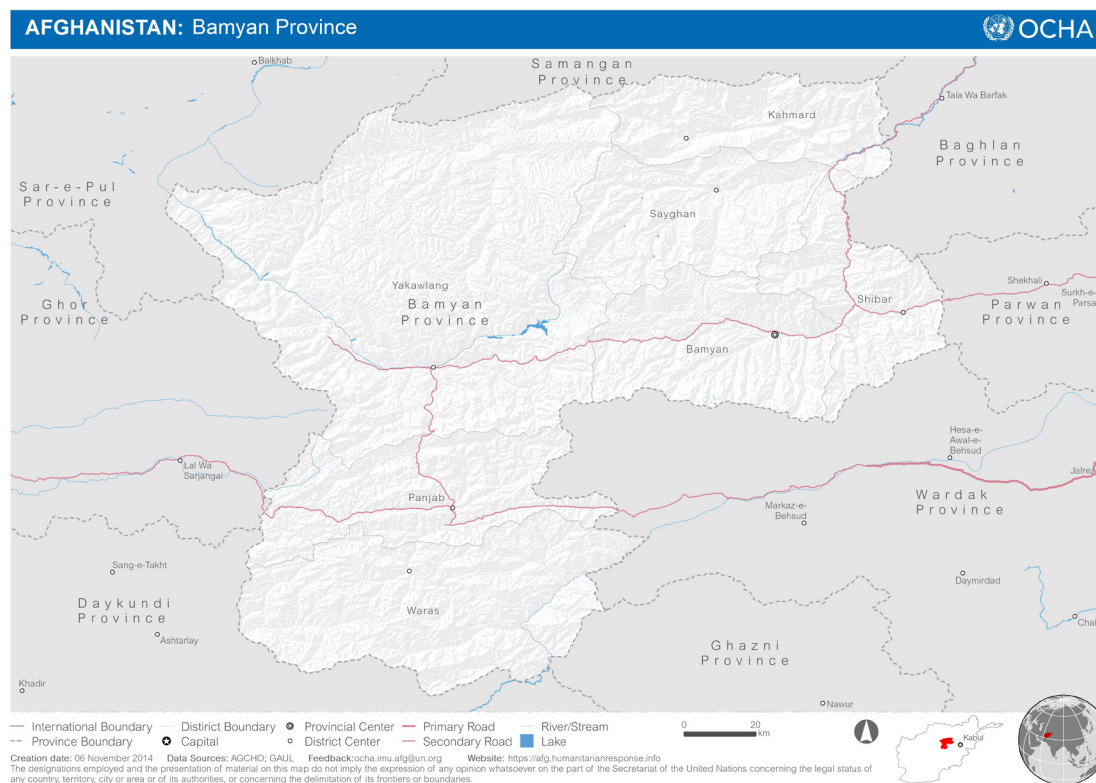
⁽³⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 fighters eliminated in drone strike*, 19 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/19/15-fighters-eliminated-drone-strike>), accessed 22 October 2014; Tolonews, *Ten Taliban insurgents killed in Logar offensive*, 3 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15807-ten-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-logar-offensive>), accessed 22 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Logar drone strike kills 3 labourers*, 22 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/22/logar-drone-strike-kills-3-labourers>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽³⁸⁵⁾ US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in*, April 2014 (http://www.defense.gov/pubs/April_1230_Report_Final.pdf), accessed 22 October 2014, p. 55; Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

2.2. Central Highlands

2.2.1. Bamyan

Description of the Province



Bamyan province, one of Afghanistan's central provinces, is located to the south of the Hindu Kosh and north of the Baba Mountains. The province itself has seven districts, including the provincial capital Bamyan city Bamyan, Kahmard, Panjab, Saygan, Shibar, Waras, Yakawlang.⁽³⁸⁶⁾

Bamyan is predominantly inhabited by Shia Hazara and minorities of Tajiks and Pashtun living on the northeastern parts and Bamyan city.⁽³⁸⁷⁾ Additionally, 90 percent of the inhabitants of Bamyan belong to the Shia sect.⁽³⁸⁸⁾ According to the ACSO, the population in the Province of Bamyan is at 432,700.⁽³⁸⁹⁾

Bamyan is mountain-locked and used to be reachable from Kabul through a long but safe route passing through the Ghorband valley north-west of the capital. However, in mid-2010 the presence of insurgent groups was reported. Following this, not many foreigners travel on it and even locals do so with unease – though they do not have much of an option. There is, nonetheless, one other major access route from the capital, over the Hajigak Pass through Wardak province, which also has a history of security problems. As of December 2012, according to AAN, there is a flight connection between Kabul and Bamyan, with flights three times a week. Before that, one could only fly when registered with the UN or one of the NGO airlines.⁽³⁹⁰⁾

⁽³⁸⁶⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽³⁸⁷⁾ USIP, *Peace and Security Jirga in Bamyan Province Afghanistan*, 24 August 2013 (<http://www.buildingpeace.org/print/3601>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽³⁸⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Bamyan Province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-bamyan-province>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽³⁸⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics*, 1 April 2013 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽³⁹⁰⁾ AAN, *A Giant Arch, a Secret Garden, a Dragon and Myriads of Mud-Coloured Frogs: Our summer travel tips for Bamyan Province*, 4 July 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/traveling-bamyan/>), accessed 3 November 2014.

Impact of the violence

Bamyan is among the peaceful provinces in central Afghanistan where insurgent groups do not operate in any of its districts.⁽³⁹¹⁾ Bamyan enjoys bolstered security. However, the province occasionally faces security challenges from the side of the province of Baghlan in the districts of Kuhmard, Sayghan, and Shaibar, despite tight security. Additionally, it faces security problems from its neighbouring Maidan Wardak, Sar-e Pul and Parwan provinces.⁽³⁹²⁾ Bamyan province witnessed very little insurgent presence after the fall of the Taliban regime.⁽³⁹³⁾ Therefore, it was the province where security transition started in 2011.⁽³⁹⁴⁾

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽³⁹⁵⁾	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Others	Total
Bamyan		2	1		1		1	3	1	5	1	15
Kahmard	1	5		1		1		3	1	2		14
Shaibar		2	1		1	1			1			6
Yakawlang			1				2					3
Waras							1					1
Panjab		1										1

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Bamyan counted 40 reported security incidents; the most volatile district was Bamyan (see table).⁽³⁹⁶⁾

Officials of Bamyan stated that unidentified gunmen killed a 17-year-old girl in the Pahto area of the Waras district in January 2014.⁽³⁹⁷⁾ In June 2014, an unmanned aircraft crashed in the Shaibar district after hitting the mountains, according to eyewitness. It is assumed that the aircraft belonged to foreign forces, who have not commented on the incident. It is the first time that an unmanned aircraft has crashed in Bamyan province. Such incidents normally occur in the south.⁽³⁹⁸⁾ In August 2014 the vehicle of a female police officer hit a roadside mine in the province of Bamyan. No casualties were reported.⁽³⁹⁹⁾

According to an official, hopes were high that with the surrender of 20 insurgents in May 2014, polling sites that previously faced threats would become secure in the central province of Bamyan. The head of the peace committee, Mohammad Sadiq Ali Yar, lauded the group for joining the peace process and shunning violence. During the April 5 elections, voting at three polling sites in Ashpishta and Khamard districts in Bamyan and Tala and Barfak districts in Baghlan was not possible due to insurgent attacks.⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ In the Shaibar district of Bamyan, hundreds of residents complained of the presence of illegal gunmen in the areas, fearing they might not be able to vote in the April 2014

⁽³⁹¹⁾ Khaama Press, *Drone crash in central Bamyan province*, 25 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/drone-crash-in-central-bamyan-province-6274>), accessed 10 October; Ariana News, *Bamyan Explosion Targets Women Police Vehicle*, 16 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/bamyan-explosion-targets-women-police-vehicle/>), accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Bamyan seen most peaceful, secure province in country*, 27 August 2013 (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/bamyan-seen-most-peaceful-secure-province-country>), accessed 10 October 2014; United States Institute for War, Peace and Security, *Jirga in Bamyan Province Afghanistan*, 24 August 2013 (<http://www.buildingpeace.org/print/3601>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽³⁹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Bamyan seen most peaceful, secure province in country*, 27 August 2013 (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/bamyan-seen-most-peaceful-secure-province-country>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽³⁹³⁾ Ariana News, *Bamyan Explosion Targets Women Police Vehicle*, 16 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/bamyan-explosion-targets-women-police-vehicle/>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽³⁹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *50 policemen trained on election security*, 9 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/09/50-policemen-trained-election-security>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽³⁹⁵⁾ No incidents reported for the district of Sayghan.

⁽³⁹⁶⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽³⁹⁷⁾ 'Hasht-e-Subh Daily', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 14 January 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37611&language=en-US>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽³⁹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Unmanned aircraft crashes in Bamyan*, 25 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/25/unmanned-aircraft-crashes-bamyan>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽³⁹⁹⁾ Ariana News, *Bamyan Explosion Targets Women Police Vehicle*, 16 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/bamyan-explosion-targets-women-police-vehicle/>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Militants' surrender to bolster poll security*, 25 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/25/militants-surrender-bolster-poll-security>), accessed 3 November 2014.

elections. However, officials rejected the complaint as being exaggerated, insisting that no significant armed groups operated in the district. In February 2014, the authorities said there was no threat to provincial and presidential elections there.⁽⁴⁰¹⁾ In January 2014, 20 insurgents joined the government in Bamyan, based on the NDS's efforts.⁽⁴⁰²⁾

Displacement

According to the latest updates of UNHCR, no IDPs originating from the province of Bamyan have been profiled.⁽⁴⁰³⁾

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban are trying hard to gain ground in Afghanistan, according to a spokesperson of the MoD, but have failed in Bamyan. They recently stormed one district in Bamyan, the Kahmard district, but were resisted. Their goal was to use the ground for setting up training camps or to benefit from it as leverage in any political talks.⁽⁴⁰⁴⁾

According to the Bamyani police, the Taliban's recruitment chief for the central Bamyan province, Muhammad Baqar Shujai, was arrested in September 2014. He was responsible for recruiting fighters into Taliban ranks in the province.⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾

Pajhwok Afghan News reported that within the past two months, about 30 people, especially young people in Bamyan, joined the insurgents in the neighbouring provinces. Pajhwok added that as unemployment reached its highest level and the prolonged electoral crisis had disabled the economy, young people had been forced to join the insurgents' ranks to provide for their families.⁽⁴⁰⁶⁾

2.2.2. Daikundi (Dai Kundi)

Description of the Province

Daikundi consists of the following districts: Ashtarlay, Gizab, Kajran, Khadir, Kiti, Miramor, Nili, Sang-e-Takht, Shahrestan.⁽⁴⁰⁷⁾

Regarding the establishment of the province of Daikundi, sources differ. According to Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi was once a district of Uruzgan province and was given the status of a separate province in 2003.⁽⁴⁰⁸⁾ However, according to the Dutch embassy in Kabul, Daikundi originated from the province of Uruzgan in March of 2004. Additionally, it was stated that the exact borders of the districts and the province are not clear.⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾ Moreover, the district of Gizab is disputed. According to AAN, Gizab is formally still part of Daikundi province, despite the fact that in 2006 it was temporarily placed under the authority of the province of Uruzgan, a decision that still stands, even though at that time there was no government presence there.⁽⁴¹⁰⁾

The mountainous province Daikundi is 460 kilometres west of Kabul. It has some plain areas too and is surrounded by Uruzgan province to its south-west, Bamyan province to the east, Ghor province to the north, Ghazni province to

⁽⁴⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Residents air security concerns ahead of polls*, 5 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/05/residents-air-security-concerns-ahead-polls>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁰²⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 30 January 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37661&language=en-US>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁰³⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May - October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁰⁴⁾ Tolo TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 15 September 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38318&language=en-US>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban recruitment chief for Bamyan held*, 17 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/17/taliban-recruitment-chief-bamyan-held>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Unemployment forces youth to join insurgents', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 17 September 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38332&language=en-US>), accessed 3 November 2014.

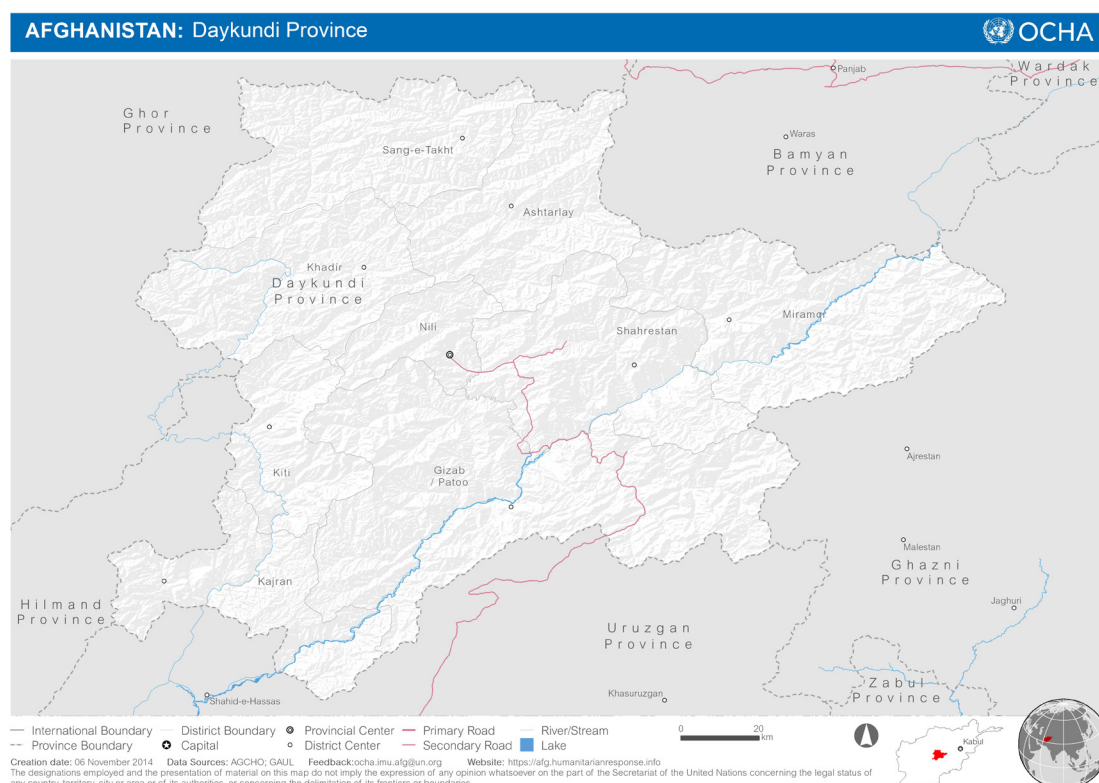
⁽⁴⁰⁷⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁴⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Mineral resources of Daikundi province*, 1 February 2014 (<http://mines.pajhwok.com/news/mineral-resources-daikundi-province#sthash.6yGgeuxL.dpuf>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾ The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Kabul, *Context Analysis / URUZGAN Province*, August 2006 (<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-27925-237-b2.pdf>), accessed 2 December 2014.

⁽⁴¹⁰⁾ AAN, *Trouble in Gizab: the fight everyone chose to ignore*, 31 October 2011 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/trouble-in-gizab-the-fight-everyone-chose-to-ignore/>), accessed 2 December 2014.

the south and Helmand province to the north-west. The province has hot and cold seasons. Due to heavy snowfall in the winter, the roads remain blocked for months, cutting off communication with rest of the country.⁽⁴¹¹⁾ Mainly Hazara live in Daikundi.⁽⁴¹²⁾ According to the ACSO, the population in the Province of Daikundi is 410,800.⁽⁴¹³⁾



The mountainous landscape of Daikundi makes it difficult to access, making it relatively safe.⁽⁴¹⁴⁾ In 2013 Daikundi was, among other provinces, one of the most important opium cultivation provinces in the country.⁽⁴¹⁵⁾

Impact of the Violence

Daikundi is among the more peaceful provinces of Afghanistan. However, the province is neighbouring the volatile southern Helmand province where insurgents occasionally carry out activities.⁽⁴¹⁶⁾

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Daikundi counted 59 reported security incidents. According to the data the most volatile district was Khijran (see table).⁽⁴¹⁷⁾

⁽⁴¹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Daikundi province background profile*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/daikundi-province-background-profile>), accessed 29 November 2014.

⁽⁴¹²⁾ Die Zeit, *Bei den Hazara von Daikundi*, 5 January 2014 (<http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2013-12/fs-daikundi-hazara-hochland-berge-afghanistan--2>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴¹³⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽⁴¹⁴⁾ Die Zeit, *Bei den Hazara von Daikundi*, 5 January 2014 (<http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2013-12/fs-daikundi-hazara-hochland-berge-afghanistan--2>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴¹⁵⁾ UNGASC, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁴¹⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *Heavy clashes reported in Daikundi province of Afghanistan*, 18 February 2013 (<http://www.khaama.com/heavy-clashes-reported-in-daikundi-province-of-afghanistan-2206>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁴¹⁷⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽⁴¹⁸⁾	Abduction	Armed Clash	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Mine/UXO incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Total
Khijran	6	17				1	4	5	1	3	1	1	39
Khedir		2			1		1		1				5
Ashtarly		2	1		1								4
Shahristan		2				1	1						4
Nieli				1			1					1	3
Kitti		2											2
Miramor						1							1
Sang Takh		1											1

In April 2014, ANP confiscated 26 IEDs along with nine rockets during military operations in several provinces, including Daikundi.⁽⁴¹⁹⁾ In separate operations, ANP discovered and seized 46 IEDs. These operations were conducted in Daikundi and several other provinces.⁽⁴²⁰⁾ ANP discovered and seized 13 IEDs during operations conducted in several provinces such as Kabul, Nangarhar, Daikundi, Balkh, Uruzgan, Khost and Helmand.⁽⁴²¹⁾

In May 2014, the armed opposition abducted two civilians, a restaurant owner and a former soldier of the local police forces in Gizab district. The abductees are not connected to the government, according to the district governor. A security official in the province stated that efforts were underway to have them released by the insurgents.⁽⁴²²⁾

In August 2014, the Khijran district crime branch chief, 2nd Lt. Kamal, was killed in a bomb explosion in Sauf Wa Karez in Daikundi. Two of his colleagues were wounded in the attack and one civilian casualty was reported. A Daikundi parliamentarian held security organs responsible for not paying attention to the situation in the district.⁽⁴²³⁾

Displacement

According to the latest updates from UNHCR, no IDPs originating from the province of Daikundi have been profiled.⁽⁴²⁴⁾

Actors in the conflict

At the end of June 2014, 15 ALP personnel had been killed mysteriously in the district of Gizab. According to a local elder, the policemen were taken by a former official to a Taliban-controlled area on the pretext that an insurgent group was willing to join the peace process. Once the policemen reached the area they were attacked by the Taliban. Sources reported different casualty figures: a local elder stated that 10 security personnel were killed and three others had managed to flee. However, a worker at the Gizab District Hospital reported that they had received the bodies of 15 ALP men. A police commander, the governor's nephew, was identified as one of the dead. This was later confirmed by the governor Amanullah Timuri.⁽⁴²⁵⁾

⁽⁴¹⁸⁾ No data available for the district of Gizab.

⁽⁴¹⁹⁾ Khaama Press, *94 Taliban militants killed in Afghan counter-terrorism operations*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/94-taliban-militants-killed-in-afghan-counter-terrorism-operations-2969>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴²⁰⁾ Khaama Press, *5 Taliban militants killed, 18 others detained in Afghan operations*, 11 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/5-taliban-militants-killed-18-others-detained-in-afghan-operations-3426>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴²¹⁾ Khaama Press, *37 Taliban militants killed, 5 others injured in Afghan operations*, 30 January 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/37-taliban-militants-killed-5-others-injured-in-afghan-operations-3374>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴²²⁾ Bakhtar News, *Two Civilians Abducted By Insurgents*, 31 May 2014 (<http://bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security/item/12566-two-civilians-abducted-by-insurgents.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *District crime branch chief killed in explosion*, 8 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/08/district-crime-branch-chief-killed-explosion>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴²⁴⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May - October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽⁴²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 police mysteriously killed in Uruzgan*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/28/15-police-mysteriously-killed-uruzgan>), accessed 3 November 2014.

2.3. South

2.3.1. Kandahar

Description of the Province

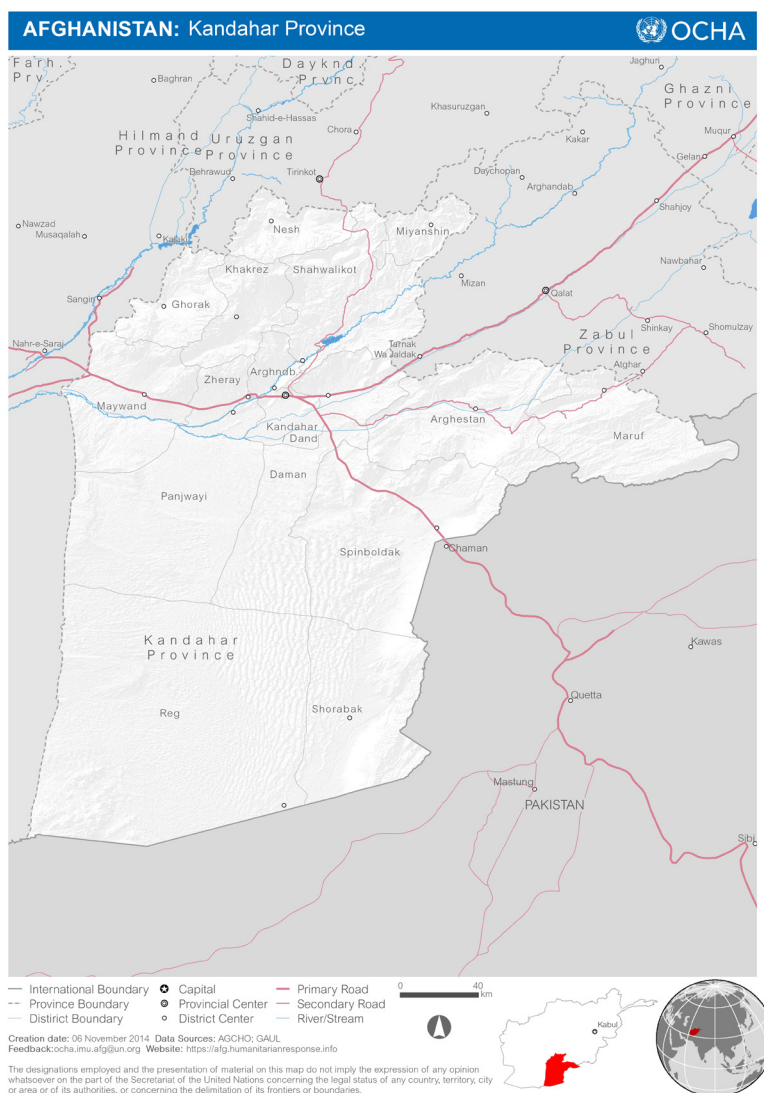
The southern province of Kandahar consists of extensive flat deserts and mountainous areas. Kandahar neighbours the following provinces: Uruzgan in the north, Zabul in the east, and Helmand to its west. The province shares a border in the south with Baluchistan in Pakistan. The provincial capital is Kandahar city.⁽⁴²⁶⁾ The province Kandahar consists of the following districts: Arghistan, Arghandab, Daman, Ghorak, Kandahar/Dand, Khakrez, Maruf, Maywand, Miyanshin, Nesh, Panjwayi, Reg, Shahwalikot, Shorabak, Spinboldak, Zheray.⁽⁴²⁷⁾

The province of Kandahar is known as a commercial hub of the country.⁽⁴²⁸⁾

Kandahar province borders Pakistan and insurgents are known to travel with ease across the fluid border.⁽⁴²⁹⁾

According to the ACSO, the population in the province of Kandahar is at 1,175,800.⁽⁴³⁰⁾

The Kabul-Kandahar highway is one of the most important highways in Afghanistan. Thousands of Afghans commute daily to more than 10 provinces for personal and commercial purposes. However, in recent years it has also become a hotbed of insurgent violence and organised crime.⁽⁴³¹⁾ In 2013 the province of Kandahar was, among other provinces, one of the most important opium cultivation provinces in the country.⁽⁴³²⁾



⁽⁴²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Kandahar Province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-kandahar-province-0>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴²⁷⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁴²⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Kandahar Province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-kandahar-province-0>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴²⁹⁾ Tolonews, *Kandahar Suicide Bombers Killed by Security Forces*, 12 March 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14158-suicide-bombers-killed-in-clash-with-kandahar-security-forces>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴³⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽⁴³¹⁾ Tolonews, *ANP Officers Kidnapped on Kabul-Kandahar Highway*, 17 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14569-anp-officers-kidnapped-on-kabul-kandahar-highway>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴³²⁾ UNGASC, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf>), accessed 10 October 2014.

Impact of the Violence

Kandahar is among the volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan where AGEs are actively operating and frequently carry out insurgency activities.⁽⁴³³⁾ In 2013 the province of Kandahar was the site of 13% of all incidents occurring in 2013.⁽⁴³⁴⁾

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽⁴³⁵⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Mine/UXO incident	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Maiwand		12	194	34	2		27			50	92	2		2	2	1	5	423
Kandahar	1		16	65	34	14	15	4	1	45	114	1	1	4	1	2	8	326
Shawalikot	3	5	92	3	1	1	13			23	43					3		187
Panjwai			16	9	2	1	70			17	67			1				183
Arghestan	2		103		1		2	1		11	31					4	1	156
Zherai		1	52	10	1		11			17	41	1		3	1		6	144
Khakriz		3	61	2	1		1			22	39							129
Mianshin	1	3	82							13	18							117
Arghandab			26	2	6		8	1		17	38							98
Maroof			48		3					14	12				1	9		87
Ghorak	2		49	1			1			16	17	1						87
Spin Boldak	1		11	1	5		3			21	19		1	1		2	4	69
Dand		2	1	8	4		2			11	14		1			1	1	45
Daman	1	2	2	6			2			6	16		1	2	1	2	1	42
Shorabak			24							7	2					5		38

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Kandahar counted 2,131 reported security incidents. The most volatile district was Maiwand (see table).⁽⁴³⁶⁾

In 2014, several security operations were conducted nationwide by the ANSF including the province of Kandahar. During each operation, insurgents were arrested, killed and wounded. Additionally weapons were seized and mines defused.⁽⁴³⁷⁾

In January 2014, four Afghan soccer players were killed and at least another three injured in a rocket attack in the district of Maiwand. According to local officials, the rocket landed in a football stadium while the athletes were training.⁽⁴³⁸⁾ In an attack involving multiple suicide bombers on a base in the district of Zarai, at least one NATO soldier was killed, according to Afghan officials. All attackers died when they detonated their bombs or were killed

⁽⁴³³⁾ Khaama Press, *Suicide attack in Kandahar leaves district police chief dead*, 8 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-attack-in-kandahar-leaves-district-police-chief-dead-6648>), accessed 20 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Suicide attack foiled on Kandahar government compound*, 16 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-attack-foiled-on-kandahar-government-compound-6409>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁴³⁴⁾ UNGASC, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁴³⁵⁾ No incidents reported for the district of Nesh.

⁽⁴³⁶⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁴³⁷⁾ Tolonews, *41 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16192-41-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 8 October 2014; Tolonews, *239 Insurgents Killed in Nangarhar and Kandahar*, 7 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15874-239-insurgents-killed-in-nangarhar-and-kandahar>), accessed 4 November 2014; Tolonews, *51 Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15909-51-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁴³⁸⁾ RFE/RL, *Afghan Rocket Attack Kills Soccer Players*, 18 January 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-rocket-attack-soccer/25234361.html>), accessed 5 November 2014.

by NATO soldiers. Differing information emerged about the attack, the spokesman for the Kandahar governor stated that nine suicide bombers and attackers were killed. However, a spokesman for the NATO claimed that the attack involved a suicide car bombing, suicide vests and small-arms fire.⁽⁴³⁹⁾

In March 2014, three suicide bombers attempted to attack the office of the NDS department of Kandahar in Kandahar city. In a clash between the attackers and the security guard, the three suicide bombers were killed, and one NDS security guard and a female employee of the department were injured, according to the Deputy Security Head of Kandahar Police. He added that Pakistani documents were found to be carried by the insurgents. No one claimed responsibility for the attack.⁽⁴⁴⁰⁾ In the district of Maiwand a roadside bomb struck a civilian vehicle, and injured four civilians. In a separate incident in Chawk-e Shahidan area of Kandahar city, three suicide bombers launched an attack on the residents of families of NDS staff.⁽⁴⁴¹⁾ A suicide attacker was gunned down by the police before he could detonate his explosives near the Indian Consulate in the province of Kandahar. The attacker was killed in Kandahar city before reaching his intended target and detonating the suicide vest. This attack came just a day after three suicide bombers were killed in a fierce gun battle with police and intelligence officials in Kandahar city.⁽⁴⁴²⁾ Also in March 2014, at a Jahenda Bala-Nawroz flag-hoisting ceremony a RCIED detonated killing two police officers and wounding another eight. The Deputy Governor and the head of Kandahar governor's office Parwiz Najib were among the wounded. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.⁽⁴⁴³⁾

In April 2014, at least 14 people were killed when a civilian vehicle hit a roadside bomb on the outskirts of the district of Maywand.⁽⁴⁴⁴⁾ In the same month, four police officers were killed in an attack in the district of Ghorak. According to the governor's office, only one officer was killed while the other three went missing, possibly taken hostage. Taliban insurgents were accused by the office of the governor of being responsible but the group did not claim the responsibility.⁽⁴⁴⁵⁾

In May 2014, a suicide bomber attempted to attack the NDS in Kandahar city. However, the bomber fled after being detected by the NDS security guards and detonated his explosives in a civilian home. No casualties were reported, since the explosion only damaged the house.⁽⁴⁴⁶⁾ Also in May 2014, a suicide attack in the district of Daman in Kandahar claimed the lives of five civilians, injured 36 and wounded three ANA soldiers. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.⁽⁴⁴⁷⁾

In June 2014, the vehicle of a father and his three sons struck a roadside mine in the district of Spin Boldak. The father and two sons were killed, while the third son was injured.⁽⁴⁴⁸⁾ Also in June 2014, during a clash between insurgents and police at the police headquarters in Kandahar city, at least seven suicide bombers and an ANP officer were killed. Another two police officers were injured during the incident. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. However, they stated that seven suicide bombers were involved in the assault and that a greater number of Afghan security forces were killed.⁽⁴⁴⁹⁾

⁽⁴³⁹⁾ RFE/RL, *Attack Reported in Coalition Base in Kandahar Province*, 20 January 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-attack-nato-kandahar/25235741.html>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁰⁾ Tolonews, *Kandahar Suicide Bombers Killed by Security Forces*, 12 March 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14158-suicide-bombers-killed-in-clash-with-kandahar-security-forces>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴¹⁾ Shamshad TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 13 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=37763>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Suicide attack on Indian Consulate foiled in Kandahar*, 13 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/13/suicide-attack-indian-consulate-foiled-kandahar>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴³⁾ Tolonews, *Kandahar Blast Kills 2 Police Officers and Wounds 8*, 21 March 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14280-kandahar-blast-kills-2-police-officers-and-wounds-8>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁴⁾ RFE/RL, *Roadside Bomb Kills At Least 14 in Southern Afghanistan*, 7 April 2014, (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-roadside-bomb-kandahar/25324549.html>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁵⁾ RFE/RL, *Four Afghan Police Reported Killed in Checkpoint Attack*, 23 April 2014 (<http://gandhara.RFE/RL.org/content/four-afghan-police-reported-killed-in-checkpoint-attack/25360614.html>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Insurgent Attack on NDS Fails in Kandahar*, 18 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14905-insurgent-targets-nds-in-kandahar-fails>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁷⁾ Tolonews, *Suicide Attack in Kandahar Kills 5*, 11 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14831-suicide-attack-in-kandahar-kills-5>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁸⁾ Tolonews, *3 Civilians Killed in Kandahar Roadside Mine Blast*, 16 June 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15271-3-civilians-killed-in-kandahar-roadside-mine-blast>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁹⁾ Tolonews, *Seven Suicide Bombers, One ANP Killed in Kandahar*, 15 June 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15256-seven-suicide-bombers-one-anp-killed-in-kandahar>), accessed 4 November 2014.

In July 2014, at least five women and three men were killed, and two children injured, when the vehicle of the family struck a roadside mine in the district of Panjwai. No one claimed responsibility for the blast.⁽⁴⁵⁰⁾ Also in July 2014, at least six suicide bombers, one ANBP and a child were killed after suicide bombers started clashing with police near the guesthouse of the police chief of Kandahar in the district of Spin Boldak. Three ANBP were injured in the clash. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. The district of Spin Boldak borders Pakistan and is known to be insecure and a frequently target for insurgents.⁽⁴⁵¹⁾ An insurgent attack on the offices of the governor and the police chief of Kandahar ended with casualties on both sides. According to a local official, three police officers, one civilian and all 18 attackers were killed in an ensuing gun battle. Additionally, four police officers and 10 civilians were injured. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.⁽⁴⁵²⁾

In September 2014, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives inside a police headquarters in the district of Arghistan. The district police chief and two of his bodyguards were killed during the attack and six other policemen were injured. The Taliban claimed responsibility.⁽⁴⁵³⁾

Displacement

In May 2014, UNHCR recorded 84 families, or 746 people, who were displaced from different districts of Kandahar and Helmand provinces to the district of Maywand due to conflicts between ANSF and AGEs as well as the presence of land mines in their place of origin.⁽⁴⁵⁴⁾ According to UNHCR, in July 2014, there were 77 families, or 635 individuals, from the province of Helmand who fled to Kandahar city and the districts of Arghandab, Panjwayee and Zhiray.⁽⁴⁵⁵⁾ In August 2014, UNHCR reported that 234 families, or 1,922 individuals, were forced to flee to Kandahar city. In one case families were forced to leave because of an ANSF-led military operation in the district of Zhiray.⁽⁴⁵⁶⁾ However, in September 2014, no IDPs were recorded by UNHCR.⁽⁴⁵⁷⁾

According to an UNHCR update in October 2014, 106 families, or 797 people, were displaced from several districts in Helmand, including Sangin, Kajaki and Marja, to the districts of Panjwayee, Arghandab and the centre of Kandahar city in the province of Kandahar. The displacement was caused by an upcoming military operation⁽⁴⁵⁸⁾.

Actors in the conflict

Kandahar was the first city that was captured by the Taliban in 1994 and place of residence of the leader, Mullah Omar⁽⁴⁵⁹⁾. It was the birthplace of the Taliban's insurgency⁽⁴⁶⁰⁾ and is the focus of the Taliban's efforts because regaining control over Kandahar city has been one of its most important goals since 2001⁽⁴⁶¹⁾.

According to local officials, the Taliban's insurgency is preventing Kandahar from fulfilling its potential as a tourist destination. However, the government is working to return the city to its former glory as a popular hub for businessmen and travellers.⁽⁴⁶²⁾ According to a local source, over two or three days, as many as 600 Taliban passed through the checkpoints located in the province of Kandahar towards the outlying district of Zheri dressed as grape farmers and carrying guns and ammunition under the shipments of grapes.⁽⁴⁶³⁾ Recently, battles against the Taliban in Kandahar

⁽⁴⁵⁰⁾ Tolonews, *Eight Civilians Killed in Kandahar Roadside Mine Blast*, 12 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15572-eight-civilians-killed-in-kandahar-roadside-mine-blast>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁵¹⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan Police Kills Suicide Bombers in Kandahar*, 27 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15733-afghan-police-kills-suicide-bombers-in-kandahar>), 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁵²⁾ RFE/RL, *Attack on Kandahar's Governor, Police Chief Leaves 22 Dead*, 9 July 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-kandahar-attack/25450574.html>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁵³⁾ RFE/RL, *Suicide Bomb Kills District Police Chief, Two Others in Southern Afghanistan*, 8 September 2014 (<http://gandhara.RFE/RL.org/content/afghanistan-kandahar-bombing/26572046.html>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁵⁴⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/537220114.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁵⁵⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁵⁶⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁵⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, September 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469d5fa4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁵⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469cb2b4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁵⁹⁾ Barfield, T., *Afghanistan – A cultural and political history*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, p. 258-260.

⁽⁴⁶⁰⁾ Reuters, *Kandahar, cradle of Afghan insurgency, torn by tribal rivalry ahead of vote*, 28 March 2014 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/28/us-afghanistan-election-idUSBREA2ROBK20140328>), accessed 8 January 2015.

⁽⁴⁶¹⁾ ISW, *The Taliban's campaign for Kandahar*, December 2009 (<http://www.understandingwar.org/report/talibans-campaign-kandahar>), accessed 8 January 2015.

⁽⁴⁶²⁾ CAO, *Taliban insurgency hurts Kandahar tourism*, 7 October 2014 (http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/pakistan/main/2014/10/07/feature-01) 20 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁶³⁾ The Guardian, *Taliban sneak back into Kandahar, dressed as grape farmers*, 14 September 2014 (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/14/taliban-back-in-kandahar-400-people-die-august-fighting>), accessed 17 November 2014.

have been more intense than previously reported. Local elders and security officials stated that, according to an estimate, about 400 people died when Taliban infiltrators fought Afghan troops in the district of Zheri for a dozen days in August 2014.⁽⁴⁶⁴⁾

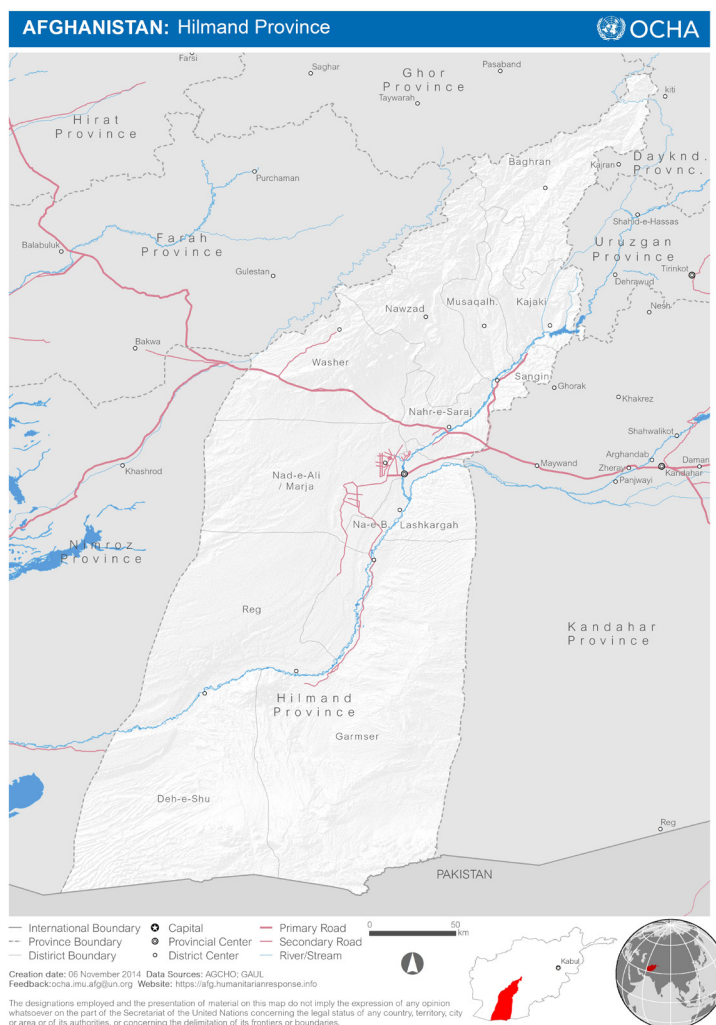
2.3.2. Helmand

Description of the Province

Helmand is Afghanistan's largest province with about 60,000 square kilometres.⁽⁴⁶⁵⁾ Helmand shares a border in the east with the southern province of Kandahar, and in the north with Uruzgan, while the provinces Daikundi and Ghor, Farah and Nimroz are located to the west. The province also shares a 162-kilometre border with Pakistan in the east.⁽⁴⁶⁶⁾

Helmand province consists of the following districts: Baghran, Deh-e-Shu, Garmser, Kajaki, Lashkargah, Musaqualh, Nad-e-Ali/Marja, Nahr-e-Saraj, Nawa-e-Barakzai, Nawzad, Reg, Sangin, Washer.⁽⁴⁶⁷⁾ The provincial capital of Helmand is Lashkargah.⁽⁴⁶⁸⁾ According to the ACSO, the population in the province of Helmand is at 894,200.⁽⁴⁶⁹⁾ The northern parts of Helmand province consist of the high mountains of the Hindu Kush and a vast wasteland in the south known as the Desert of Death.⁽⁴⁷⁰⁾

Helmand is mild in the winter while it becomes hot in the summer. According to an informal survey, the population of Helmand province is 1.5 million.⁽⁴⁷¹⁾ Virtually all its population lives along the Helmand River.⁽⁴⁷²⁾ The Kabul-Herat highway runs through the province of Helmand.⁽⁴⁷³⁾



⁽⁴⁶⁴⁾ The Guardian, *Taliban sneak back into Kandahar, dressed as grape farmers*, 14 September 2014 (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/14/taliban-back-in-kandahar-300-people-die-august-fighting>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁶⁵⁾ Reuters, *FACTBOX-Facts about Afghanistan's Helmand province*, 18 July 2009 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/07/18/idUSSP506492>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁶⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Recognition of southern Helmand province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/recognition-southern-helmand-province>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁶⁷⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁴⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Recognition of southern Helmand province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/recognition-southern-helmand-province>), accessed 29 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Helmand's Administrative Units*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/helmand%E2%80%99s-administrative-units>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁶⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁷⁰⁾ Reuters, *FACTBOX-Facts about Afghanistan's Helmand province*, 18 July 2009 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/07/18/idUSSP506492>), accessed 03 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁷¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Recognition of southern Helmand province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/recognition-southern-helmand-province>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁷²⁾ Reuters, *FACTBOX-Facts about Afghanistan's Helmand province*, 18 July 2009 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/07/18/idUSSP506492>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁷³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Recognition of southern Helmand province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/recognition-southern-helmand-province>), accessed 29 October 2014.

According to the governor of Helmand province, domestic and foreign flights to and from Helmand will start soon after the largest NATO military base, Shorab Airfield, is transferred to Afghan control. He said this will boost the local economy. Constructed to international standards, Shorab Airfield can be used for passenger, military and cargo flights.⁽⁴⁷⁴⁾

In 2013 Helmand was, among other provinces, one of the most important opium cultivation provinces in the country.⁽⁴⁷⁵⁾

Impact of the Violence

Helmand is among the volatile provinces in Afghanistan's south, where Taliban insurgents are actively operating in a number of its districts and frequently carry out insurgency attacks.⁽⁴⁷⁶⁾ The security situation in the province has been fragile for years. In recent months the security threats – particularly in the district of Sangin – have reached a new peak. Hundreds of civilians and military personnel have died or been wounded. Many residents have been displaced because of the violence.⁽⁴⁷⁷⁾ According to local officials in Helmand, the district is also exposed to attacks by illegally armed groups, which causes scattered clashes for the security forces as the battle continues with Taliban insurgents.⁽⁴⁷⁸⁾ Local officials in Helmand called on the central government to provide more weapons and send reinforcements to the district of Sangin to prevent the insurgents' advance.⁽⁴⁷⁹⁾ Any security fears in strategically located Sangin could potentially disrupt security in other western provinces in addition to Helmand. The district has been the target of insurgent attacks several times this year. Because of these attacks hundreds of families were displaced.⁽⁴⁸⁰⁾ In July 2014, the MoI increased the strength of ALP in volatile Sangin and Musa Qala districts to ward off terror threats.⁽⁴⁸¹⁾

Besides the district of Sangin and Musa Qala, fighters have conducted attacks in the districts of Nava Barikzai, Nad Ali and Marja. In September 2014, insurgents wanted to overrun the district of Musa Qala but security forces had been able to repulse them.⁽⁴⁸²⁾

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Sangin	1	2	234	2	6	1	1		74	35			2	9		367
Greshk (Nahr-i Saraj)		6	159	8	5	2	5		66	72		3	2	1	5	335
Marja		1	94	9	3	2	2		30	27			2	3	1	174
Musa Qala	1	2	73	2			1		27	44		1		1		152
Lashkar Gah	2		25	5	15	2	7		28	51		2		1	6	144
Nad Ali		3	51	6	2	1	1		16	41		1		1	3	126

⁽⁴⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Afghans set to take control of NATO base*, 27 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/27/afghans-set-take-control-nato-base>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁷⁵⁾ UNGASC, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁷⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *Another massive Taliban attack repelled in Helmand province*, 2 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/another-massive-taliban-attack-repelled-in-helmand-province-8561>), accessed 10 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Suicide bomber shot dead in Helmand province*, 14 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-bomber-shot-dead-in-helmand-province-6694>), 10 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁷⁷⁾ Tolonews, *Battle Rages on in Sangin*, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16579-battle-rages-on-in-sangin-district>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁷⁸⁾ Tolonews, *Helmand Conflict Results in Heavy Losses*, 29 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16155-helmand-conflict-results-in-heavy-losses?tmpl=component&print=1&layout=default>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁷⁹⁾ Tolo TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 31 August 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38285&language=en-US>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁰⁾ Tolonews, *Clashes intensify in Helmand's Sangin district*, 22 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16471-clashes-intensify-in-helmands-sangin-district?tmpl=component&print=1&layout=default>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Sangin, Musa Qala get additional ALP force*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/07/sangin-musa-kala-get-additional-alp-force>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Reinforcements dispatched to Musa Qala*, 8 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/08/reinforcements-dispatched-musa-qala>), accessed 4 November 2014.

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Nawzad	1	2	47	4	3				33	20		1		1		112
Kajaki		2	32			1		1	13	21	1					71
Nava Barikzai		1	24	2	6	1		1	6	21					1	63
Garamsir		6	12	9	1		5		11	17		1		1		63
Disho			34	3	1		3		6	14		2				63
Washir			3	2					6	1						12
Baghran			1						1							2

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Helmand counted 1,684 reported security incidents; the most volatile district was Sangin (see table).⁽⁴⁸³⁾

Several security operations led by the ANSF were conducted in the province to remove insurgents. During these security operations many insurgents were killed, wounded or detained and arms and ammunitions were seized.⁽⁴⁸⁴⁾

In January 2014, during a clash with the police in the district of Marja, eight insurgents were killed. Additionally, one local police officer was killed and two others were injured. Eight motorbikes, three Kalashnikov assault rifles and three machine guns were seized by the police.⁽⁴⁸⁵⁾ In February 2014, four civilians were killed when the Taliban fired a mortar, initially targeting a ANCOP checkpoint, in the district of Nawzad.⁽⁴⁸⁶⁾ In an overnight attack in the district of Marja, five fighters were killed and four others wounded. Additionally, two policemen were wounded, and an assault rifle was seized. In a separate incident, in the district of Greshk, two policemen were killed in a Taliban attack on their checkpoint.⁽⁴⁸⁷⁾

In March 2014, a policewoman was shot in the district of Greshk.⁽⁴⁸⁸⁾ Two ANBP and five armed rebels were killed in a clash in the area of Sra Qala in the district of Khanshin. The incident took place when the insurgents stormed police

⁽⁴⁸³⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁴⁾ Tolonews, *35 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Afghan Operations*, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16442-35-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-operations>), accessed 20 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *18 militants eliminated in operations: MoI*, 12 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/12/18-militants-eliminated-operations-moi>), accessed 4 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *81 rebels, 7 security men dead in Helmand clashes*, 3 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/03/81-rebels-7-security-men-dead-helmand-clashes>), accessed 4 November 2014; Tolonews, *41 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16192-41-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *29 militants dead in security operations*, 29 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/29/29-militants-dead-security-operations>), accessed 4 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *18 rebels killed in south, centre*, 28 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/28/18-rebels-killed-south-centre>), accessed 4 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 soldiers, 12 rebels killed in operations*, 15 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/15/4-soldiers-12-rebels-killed-operations>), accessed 20 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Scores of rebels killed in clearing operations*, 5 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/05/scores-rebels-killed-clearing-operations>), accessed 20 November 2014; 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 30 July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38200&language=en-US>), accessed 20 November 2014; 'BBC Pashto', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 27 July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38199&language=en-US>), accessed 20 November 2014; UNAMA, *Press Statement: UNAMA urges protection of civilians in ongoing military operations in Helmand*, 26 June 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12254&ctl=Details&mid=15756&Itemid=38094&language=en-US>), accessed 20 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *29 rebels eliminated in security operations*, 13 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/13/29-rebels-eliminated-security-operations>), accessed 20 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *38 rebels eliminated in search operations: MoI*, 16 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/16/38-rebels-eliminated-search-operations-moi>), accessed 20 November 2014; Shamshad TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 21 April 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37912&language=en-US>), accessed 20 November 2014; Shamshad TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 16 January 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37619&language=en-US>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *8 rebels, policeman killed in Helmand clash*, 31 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/31/8-rebels-policeman-killed-helmand-clash>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Women among 4 killed by Taliban-fired mortar*, 22 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/22/women-among-4-killed-taliban-fired-mortar>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 policemen among 9 killed in clashes*, 13 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/13/2-policemen-among-9-killed-clashes>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Policewoman shot dead in Greshk*, 25 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/25/policewoman-shot-dead-greshk>), accessed 20 November 2014.

patrol vehicles. Additionally, two more police personnel were injured and a number of weapons and ammunition and a vehicle were seized.⁽⁴⁸⁹⁾ When a civilian vehicle struck a roadside bomb in the district of Musa Qala at least seven civilians were killed and eight others were injured. No one has claimed responsibility.⁽⁴⁹⁰⁾

In May 2014, a rocket attack in the district of Nad Ali killed three children.⁽⁴⁹¹⁾ In a separate incident four civilians, including two children, were injured in a bomb blast.⁽⁴⁹²⁾ In June 2014, during overnight clashes with the police, six Taliban including their senior commander were killed. Additionally, a policeman was wounded during the incident. In a separate blast, four civilian were killed in roadside bomb blast and two others were shot by the Taliban for having links with police in the district of Kajaki.⁽⁴⁹³⁾ According to official sources, 800 Taliban fighters have launched an offensive in the province of Helmand. Their aim was to reclaim territory that was recently transferred to the control of Afghan government forces by departing U.S. troops. At least 100 insurgents, 21 Afghan soldiers and 40 civilians were killed in five days of fighting. About 2,000 families have fled fighting in the districts of Sangin, Nawzad, Kajaki, and Musa Qala.⁽⁴⁹⁴⁾ In July 2014, according to a local source, a bomb hidden inside a motorcycle killed four civilians and wounded four in the district of Marja.⁽⁴⁹⁵⁾

In September 2014, during a clash with security forces in the Nawzad district, 18 insurgents, including four commanders, were killed.⁽⁴⁹⁶⁾ Twelve rebels were killed and as many wounded during clashes with security forces in the southern province of Helmand.⁽⁴⁹⁷⁾ In August 2014, security forces pushed back hundreds of insurgents after they had launched coordinated attacks on security points in the districts of Khanshin and Garamsir. A large number of insurgents were killed and wounded during the clashes that involved up to 300 fighters.⁽⁴⁹⁸⁾

In two months the battle in the district of Sangin has claimed the lives of more than 900 people - Taliban, civilians and security forces. About 1,100 others were injured. The Governor of Helmand stated that the casualties were unprecedented compared to the past 10 years, along with the families that were displaced. He says more than 400 Taliban insurgents, 270 security forces and 230 civilians have been killed in the Sangin clashes, and about 500 Taliban, 200 security forces and more than 400 civilians have been wounded.⁽⁴⁹⁹⁾

Displacement

In 2013, according to the United Nations, Helmand was one of the provinces that recorded the highest levels of displacement, reflecting increased ground engagements.⁽⁵⁰⁰⁾

According to the UNHCR, in May 2014, 219 families, or 1,731 individuals, were displaced from the districts of Musa Qala, Disho and Greshk (Nahr-i Siraj) to Lashkargah city. The main reason for displacement of these families was the OQAB military operation that was recently launched in the province.⁽⁵⁰¹⁾ An UNHCR update in August 2014 revealed

⁽⁴⁸⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Police among 7 killed in Helmand clash*, 25 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/25/police-among-7-killed-helmand-clash>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁰⁾ Tolonews, *7 Civilians Killed in Helmand Blast*, 9 March 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14125-7-civilians-killed-in-helmand-blast>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹¹⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 19 May 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37973&language=en-US>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Rebel leader killed; 4 civilians injured*, 10 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/10/rebel-leader-killed-4-civilians-injured>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilians among 20 killed in new bout of violence*, 26 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/26/civilians-among-20-killed-new-bout-violence>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁴⁾ RFE/RL, *Taliban Launches Helmand Offensive; More Than 160 Killed*, 25 June 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-soldiers-battle-taliban-assault-in-south/25434547.html>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁵⁾ RFE/RL, *Afghanistan Attacks Kill At Least 13*, 26 July 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan/25471488.html>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Girl among 21 killed in Wardak*, Helmand, 17 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/17/girl-among-21-killed-wardak-helmand>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *17 militants eliminated in clashes*, 6 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/06/17-militants-eliminated-clashes>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Hundreds of militants pushed back in Helmand*, 30 August 2014, (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/30/hundreds-militants-pushed-back-helmand>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁹⁾ Tolonews, *Helmand Conflict Results in Heavy Losses*, 29 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16155-helmand-conflict-results-in-heavy-losses?tmpl=component&print=1&layout=default>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁰⁰⁾ UNGASC, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁰¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/537220114.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

that the conflict between AGE and ANSF – which had lasted for the previous three months and had recently ceased – displaced 228 families to the district of Gresh and 159 families to the city of Lashkargah. Additionally 318 families, or 2,390 individuals, were displaced in August.⁽⁵⁰²⁾

According to the latest UNHCR update in October 2014, military operations continued to be expected in the province of Helmand, causing more than 100 families to flee – in the reporting period – to the province of Kandahar.⁽⁵⁰³⁾

Actors in the conflict

Taliban insurgents are operating in a number of its districts and frequently carry out attacks.⁽⁵⁰⁴⁾ Particularly, Nad Ali is one of the districts in Helmand where the Taliban have a strong presence and use it as a base to launch attacks elsewhere in the province.⁽⁵⁰⁵⁾

In September 2014, the ANSF prevented a large-scale Taliban attack in the southern Helmand province of Afghanistan. According to a local media office, the offensive by Taliban insurgents was launched in Musa Qala district and numerous Taliban insurgents were killed or injured following clashes with the Afghan security forces.⁽⁵⁰⁶⁾ According to official sources, the Taliban have regained control of the majority of the Sangin district, where insurgents and security forces already had clashed in August.⁽⁵⁰⁷⁾ The MoD maintained that the situation was under control and that the ANSF were continuingly preventing the insurgents' advance. The MoI stressed that the Taliban were not capable of occupying the Sangin district, which is their presumed objective. Also, the exact numbers of casualties were not released.⁽⁵⁰⁸⁾ At the end of August, security forces resisted a massive overnight attack conducted by Taliban insurgents on the headquarters of Musa Qala district. According to a local official, up to 85 insurgents were killed. However, no exact figures were given for those killed and injured.⁽⁵⁰⁹⁾

In July 2014, 14 rebels were killed and eight others wounded in a clash when the group stormed checkpoints in the area of Sitan and Vansi in Marja district. One policeman was killed and another was injured. Additionally, a number of weapons and ammunitions were also seized from the insurgents.⁽⁵¹⁰⁾ In a clash with NDS forces in the provincial capital of Helmand, a Taliban leader, Mullah Jamaluddin, and six other insurgents were killed. Six other insurgents were arrested with IEDs. No details were provided about the casualties of the Afghan forces during the clash.⁽⁵¹¹⁾

⁽⁵⁰²⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014; see also: UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁰³⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469cb2b4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽⁵⁰⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *Another massive Taliban attack repelled in Helmand province*, 2 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/another-massive-taliban-attack-repelled-in-helmand-province-8561>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁰⁵⁾ Yahoo News, *Insurgent attacks kill 10 across Afghanistan*, 15 October 2014 (<http://news.yahoo.com/taliban-kills-afghan-official-countrys-south-052802845.html>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁰⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *Another massive Taliban attack repelled in Helmand province*, 2 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/another-massive-taliban-attack-repelled-in-helmand-province-8561>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁰⁷⁾ Tolonews, *Sangin District Falling in Taliban Hands*, 25 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16515-sangin-district-falling-in-taliban-hands>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁰⁸⁾ Tolonews, *Battle Rages on in Sangin*, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16579-battle-rages-on-in-sangin-district>), accessed 3 November 2014; see also: Pajhwok Afghan News, *Sangin police posts retaken from Taliban*, 15 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/15/sangin-police-posts-retaken-taliban>), accessed 4 November 2014; and Pajhwok Afghan News, *Sangin on the verge of falling to Taliban*, 14 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/14/sangin-verge-falling-taliban>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁰⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Massive attack on Musa Qala HQ repulsed*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/01/massive-attack-musa-qala-hq-repulsed>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁵¹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *14 fighters eliminated in Helmand clash*, 17 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/17/14-fighters-eliminated-helmand-clash>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁵¹¹⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Leader Killed in Helmand*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15509-taliban-leader-killed-in-helmand>), accessed 20 November 2014.

2.3.3. Nimroz

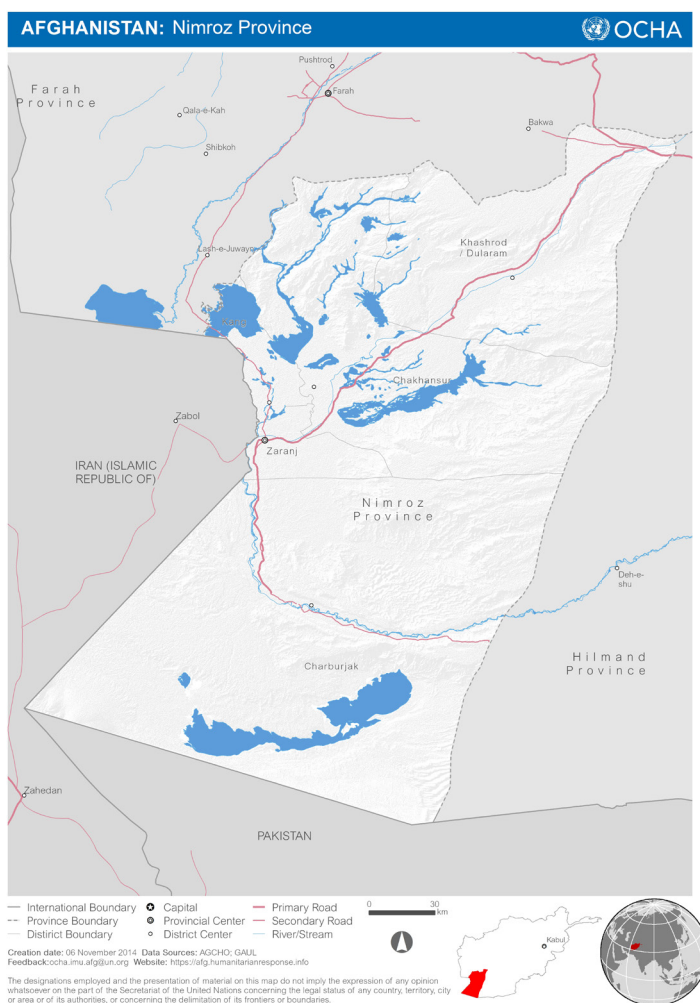
Description of the Province

The province of Nimroz is located in the south and shares a border with the Islamic Republic of Iran to the west, and Pakistan to the south. The province of Helmand is located to its east and Farah to its north.⁽⁵¹²⁾ The province consists of the following districts: Chakhansur, Charburjak, Kang, Khashrod/ Dularam, Zaranj, including the provincial capital Zaranj.⁽⁵¹³⁾

Estimates of the population of the province of Nimroz are between 149,000 and 159,300.⁽⁵¹⁴⁾ The population is considered relatively low but is increasing due to returnees from Iran and migration from other less stable provinces.⁽⁵¹⁵⁾

The demography of the province is dominated by 61% Baloch, 27% Pashtun and the remaining from the Tajik ethnicity. Additionally, there are nomads in the province.⁽⁵¹⁶⁾ The province is a desert area, with significant water shortages for much of the year.⁽⁵¹⁷⁾

In 2013, Nimroz was, among other provinces, one of the most important opium cultivation provinces in the country.⁽⁵¹⁸⁾



Impact of the violence

Nimroz is among the relatively volatile provinces in Afghanistan where AGEs are active in a number of its districts.⁽⁵¹⁹⁾ The province is more stable than its neighbouring provinces, although there are tensions due to opium poppy eradication in some districts.⁽⁵²⁰⁾ The security situation has been deteriorating particularly in the district of Chakhansur, with recent examples of threats to agencies promoting the role of women in development and

⁽⁵¹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background profile of Nimroz*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-nimroz>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵¹³⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁵¹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background profile of Nimroz*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-nimroz>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵¹⁵⁾ Relief International, *DFID GTF Project CN-367Nimroz Province, Afghanistan, Final Evaluation*, March 2013 (<http://www.ri.org/files/uploads/RI%20DFID%20GTF%20367%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>), 21 October 2014.

⁽⁵¹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background profile of Nimroz*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-nimroz>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵¹⁷⁾ RI, *DFID GTF Project CN-367Nimroz Province, Afghanistan, Final Evaluation*, March 2013 (<http://www.ri.org/files/uploads/RI%20DFID%20GTF%20367%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>) 21 October 2014; UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽⁵¹⁸⁾ UNGASC, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵¹⁹⁾ Khaama Press, *Car bombing plot on Nimroz military installations foiled*, 21 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/car-bombing-plot-on-nimroz-military-installations-foiled-8692>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁵²⁰⁾ RI, *DFID GTF Project CN-367Nimroz Province, Afghanistan, Final Evaluation*, March 2013 (<http://www.ri.org/files/uploads/RI%20DFID%20GTF%20367%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>) 21 October 2014.

governance. Additionally, people are suspicious of Iran and believe that it is disrupting development, particularly when it comes to the diversion of water from the Helmund river into Nimroz which would reduce the availability for residents in Iran.⁽⁵²¹⁾

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Khashrod			24	8	1	1	2				13	10	1	2	1	3	1	67
Zaranj	1		2	2	8						3	4	2	8	1			31
Chaharburjak			6		1	1		1	1		5	8	1					8
Kang			1				1				1			4				7
Chakhansor			1	1							1	1		2				6

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Nimroz counted 119 reported security incidents. The most volatile district was Khashrod (see table).⁽⁵²²⁾

In 2014, several security operations were conducted nationwide by the ANSF, namely ANA, ANP and the NDS including the province of Nimroz. During each operation, insurgents were arrested, killed and wounded. Additionally weapons were seized and mines defused.⁽⁵²³⁾

In January 2014, a group of suicide bombers targeted the district of Chahar Burjak. One of the attackers detonated his explosive device, while three others were killed by the police. One attacker managed to escape. The intended target was the NDS office of the district. However, no one in the office was hurt.⁽⁵²⁴⁾ During a clash between Afghan soldiers and the Taliban, a mortar shell fell on a civilian house in the area of Pusht-i Hasan in the district of Khashrod, killing three children. A woman and two girls were wounded in the incident.⁽⁵²⁵⁾

According to the MoD, in February 2014, three army soldiers were killed in the district of Dilaram during a roadside blast.⁽⁵²⁶⁾ In a separate incident two soldiers were killed in a roadside bombing.⁽⁵²⁷⁾ Seven ANA soldiers were also killed in a roadside bombing in Dilaram.⁽⁵²⁸⁾ In March 2014, three ANA service members were killed during roadside bomb attacks during their operations in the provinces of Nimroz and Paktia. A large amount of arms and explosives was also seized.⁽⁵²⁹⁾

In May 2014, during a search operation, five armed insurgents were detained with explosives. According to a police source, the insurgents had a sanctuary in the district of Chahar Borjak from where they staged attacks on government installations. Another source added that the area had been cleared of fighters after a two-day cleanup offensive.

⁽⁵²¹⁾ RI, *DFID GTF Project CN-367Nimroz Province, Afghanistan, Final Evaluation*, March 2013 (<http://www.ri.org/files/uploads/RI%20DFID%20GTF%20367%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>), 21 October 2014.

⁽⁵²²⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁵²³⁾ Tolonews, *86 Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 4 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15827-86-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 6 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *38 rebels eliminated in search operations: Mol*, 16 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/16/38-rebels-eliminated-search-operations-moi>), accessed 6 November 2014; Tolonews, *47 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Afghan Raids*, 13 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14848-47-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-raids>), accessed 6 November 2014; Tolonews, *16 Insurgents Killed, 15 Injured in Operations*, 7 January 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13368-16-insurgents-killed-15-injured-in-operations>), accessed 6 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 policemen, 16 rebels killed in clashes*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/08/2-policemen-16-rebels-killed-clashes>), accessed 6 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilians among 20 killed in fresh violence*, 31 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/31/civilians-among-20-killed-fresh-violence>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵²⁴⁾ 1TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 22 January 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37640&language=en-US>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 Nimroz children killed by mortar shell*, 27 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/27/3-nimroz-children-killed-mortar-shell>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 soldiers, policeman killed in blasts*, 20 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/20/5-soldiers-policeman-killed-blasts>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵²⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *NATO soldier among 5 killed in attacks*, 11 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/11/nato-soldier-among-5-killed-attacks>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵²⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *7 Afghan soldiers killed in Nimroz blast*, 9 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/09/7-afghan-soldiers-killed-nimroz-blast>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *10 rebels killed, 3 ANA soldiers lost to blasts*, 5 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/05/10-rebels-killed-3-ana-soldiers-lost-blasts>), accessed 6 November 2014.

Three vehicles, eight motorbikes, a machinegun, 129 remote-controlled mines and four Pakistani identity cards, were also recovered. No casualties were suffered by the security forces.⁽⁵³⁰⁾ In a bomb blast, an official of the NDS was killed and a policeman injured.⁽⁵³¹⁾

In June 2014, in a clash between two rebel groups in the Bakwa desert some 15 kilometres from Dilaram city, six insurgents were killed and 12 wounded. According to an official, the incident occurred when a group of insurgents was barred by another rebel group from entering the district of Bakwa from Helmand.⁽⁵³²⁾

In July 2014, unidentified gunmen killed a religious scholar on his way home in the district of Khashrud.⁽⁵³³⁾ In a bomb explosion near a taxi in the district of Chahar Burjak, three civilians including a woman and a child were killed and three others injured. An official source accused insurgents of planting the bomb to target the security forces.⁽⁵³⁴⁾ Several insurgents were killed in a counterinsurgency operation in the district of Dilaram. During the operation heavy machine gun, a rocket launcher, a Kalashnikov rifle and three cars from the insurgents were seized by the security forces.⁽⁵³⁵⁾

In August 2014, in the district of Khashrod, at least six people from one family, including three children, were wounded in a mortar attack. The mortar was fired by the ANA and hit a house in the Shash Aba locality, resulting in the civilian casualties. According to a local resident, the Taliban and security forces were trading fire and one of the mortars hit the residential compound.⁽⁵³⁶⁾

In September 2014, a clearing operation against insurgents that lasted three days ended with the clearance of 10 villages in the province. According to a police source, the rebels left the area without resistance and police seized an arms cache in the area. However, upon return, 300 displaced families claimed that the ALP had looted their houses during the operation. Some local residents claimed that the Taliban and ALP men were forcibly collecting Ushr (Islamic tax on agriculture produce one-tenth of the crop). In a separate incident a vehicle full of explosives was found and seized in the district of Del Aram.⁽⁵³⁷⁾ The Afghan security forces thwarted a coordinated attack on military installations. The rebel groups were trying to use a VBIED to launch the coordinated attack when two suspected insurgents were arrested. Additionally, a vehicle loaded with explosives was also seized by the national security forces.⁽⁵³⁸⁾

Displacement

According to the latest updates of UNHCR, no IDPs originating from the province of Nimroz have been profiled.⁽⁵³⁹⁾

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban were involved in major explosions, ambushes and roadside bombings in various districts of Nimroz province.⁽⁵⁴⁰⁾ At the end of June 2013, a senior Taliban leader was killed during an operation conducted by the ANP forces of Nimroz province. The Taliban leader, identified as Mullah Fatiullah, was appointed as district governor for

⁽⁵³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 rebels detained with explosives*, 22 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/22/5-rebels-detained-explosives>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵³¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 rebels killed, 6 detained*, 17 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/17/15-rebels-killed-6-detained>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *6 rebels killed; 3 suicide bombers detained*, 7 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/07/6-rebels-killed-3-suicide-bombers-detained>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 of a family, religious scholar gunned down*, 24 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/24/5-family-religious-scholar-gunned-down>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵³⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Nimroz bomb blast kills 3 civilians*, 20 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/20/nimroz-bomb-blast-kills-3-civilians>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵³⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *10 fighters killed in Badakhshan operation*, 11 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/11/10-fighters-killed-badakhshan-operation>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *6 of a family wounded in mortar attack*, 26 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/26/6-family-wounded-mortar-attack>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ALP loots houses in garb of operation*, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/20/alp-loots-houses-garb-operation>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵³⁸⁾ Khaama Press, *Car bombing plot on Nimroz military installations foiled*, 21 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/car-bombing-plot-on-nimroz-military-installations-foiled-8692>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁵³⁹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May – October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴⁰⁾ Khaama Press, *3 senior Taliban leaders arrested in Nuristan and Nimroz provinces*, 6 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/3-senior-taliban-leaders-arrested-in-kunar-and-nimroz-provinces-8268>), accessed 12 November 2014.

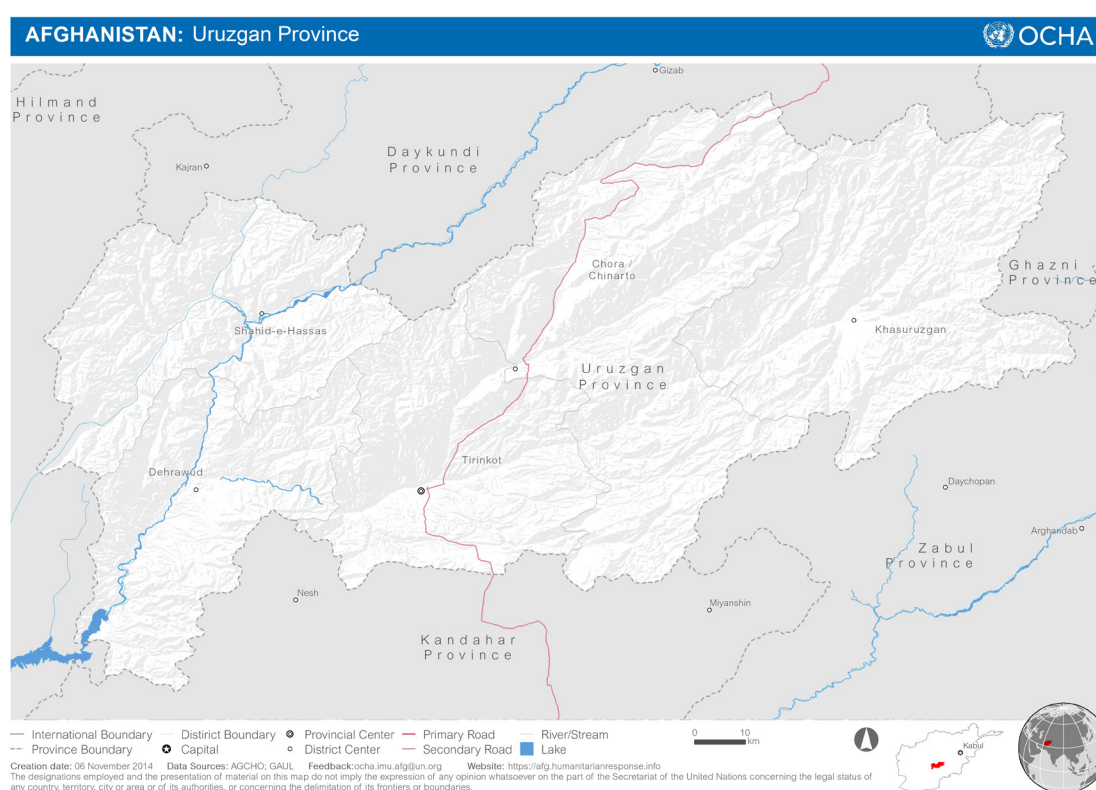
Khashrod. Another Taliban commander, Mullah Sher Ali, was killed during the same incident in the district of Khashrod in an ambush by the Afghan police forces.⁽⁵⁴¹⁾ In July 2014, two Taliban leaders, Mawlawi Abdul Rashid and Sofi Ali Shah, along with five other Taliban fighters, were arrested during military operations.⁽⁵⁴²⁾

In May 2014, five suicide bombers were killed in an attack on the NDS office in Nimroz in the district of Dilaram. After an explosive-laden vehicle detonated in front of the NDS compound, four suicide attackers tried to force their way into the office where they were shot by security forces. According to the governor, one intelligence operative was killed and a second one injured. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. However, they claimed that a large number of intelligence operatives were killed.⁽⁵⁴³⁾

In March 2014, the governor and police chief for Nimroz escaped an armed attack by the Taliban unharmed. The attack came as they were on their way from the Zaranj district to the Dilaram district.⁽⁵⁴⁴⁾

2.3.4. Uruzgan

Description of the Province



The province of Uruzgan, also called Rozgan or Uruzganis, is surrounded by the provinces of Daikundi in the north, Zabul and Kandahar in the south, Helmand in the south-west and Ghazni in the east.⁽⁵⁴⁵⁾ The province consists of the following districts: Chora, Dehrawud, Khasuruzgan, Shahid-e-Hassas, Tirinkot.⁽⁵⁴⁶⁾

⁽⁵⁴¹⁾ Khaama Press, *Taliban district chief killed in Nimroz province of Afghanistan*, 30 June 2013 (<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-district-chief-killed-in-nimroz-province-of-afghanistan-1613>), accessed 112 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴²⁾ Khaama Press, *3 senior Taliban leaders arrested in Nuristan and Nimroz provinces*, 6 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/3-senior-taliban-leaders-arrested-in-kunar-and-nimroz-provinces-8268>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 suicide bombers shot dead in Nimroz*, 5 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/05/5-suicide-bombers-shot-dead-nimroz>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Nimroz governor survives Taliban assault*, 28 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/28/nimroz-governor-survives-taliban-assault>), accessed 6 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 bombers killed in botched Nimroz attack*, 21 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/21/4-bombers-killed-botched-nimroz-attack>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Brief introduction of Uruzgan province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/brief-introduction-uruzgan-province>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴⁶⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

Uruzgan is one of the neglected provinces with regards to education, health facilities and infrastructure.⁽⁵⁴⁷⁾ Currently there are about 243 schools operational in Uruzgan, with 70 percent of them undergoing a process of reconstruction. According to officials, there are 78,000 pupils and 1,800 teachers in these schools. Some 47 schools in the province are closed for the remainder of the academic year for various reasons, including insecurity and lack of buildings. These schools were situated in remote areas and teachers refuse to commute to them because of security fears.⁽⁵⁴⁸⁾

About 72 percent of the province is mountainous while 21 percent is plain. According to the 2011 census, the population of the province reaches up to 382,000. The major tribe in the province is Pashtun, but Hazara also live there.⁽⁵⁴⁹⁾

In 2013 Uruzgan was, among other provinces, one of the most important opium cultivation provinces in the country.⁽⁵⁵⁰⁾

Impact of the Violence

Uruzgan is among the relatively volatile provinces where AGEs are active in a number of its districts and frequently carry out insurgency activities.⁽⁵⁵¹⁾ According to the AIHRC, cases of human rights violations in the province have increased by 40 percent in the past year in comparison to the previous year.⁽⁵⁵²⁾

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Others	Stand-off attack	Total
Tarinkot			11	1	5	3	6	1	42	21	2			92
Dihrawood/Dihrawud		1	16		8	2			16	10				53
Khas Uruzgan	1		29		7		1		8	3		1		50
Charchino/Char Chino	1		19		4				15	5				44
Chora			12	1			2		5	3		1	1	25

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Uruzgan counted 264 reported security incidents; the most volatile district was Tarinkot (see table).⁽⁵⁵³⁾

In 2014, several security operations were conducted nationwide by the ANSF including the province of Uruzgan. During each operation, insurgents were arrested, killed and wounded. Weapons were also seized.⁽⁵⁵⁴⁾

⁽⁵⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Brief introduction of Uruzgan province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/brief-introduction-uruzgan-province>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *47 Uruzgan schools remain closed*, 10 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/10/47-uruzgan-schools-remain-closed>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁴⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Brief introduction of Uruzgan province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/brief-introduction-uruzgan-province>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁵⁰⁾ UNGASC, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁵¹⁾ Khaama Press, *Policemen among 13 injured in Uruzgan explosion*, 30 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/policemen-among-13-injured-in-uruzgan-explosion-6495>), accessed 21 October 2014; Khaama Press, *10 policemen killed in a suspected insider attack in Uruzgan*, 28 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/10-policemen-killed-in-a-suspected-insider-attack-in-uruzgan-6299>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁵²⁾ 'BBC Pashto', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 13 April 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&temID=37891&language=en-US>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁵³⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁵⁵⁴⁾ Tolonews, *17 Insurgents Killed in Afghan Forces Operations*, 28 January 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13637-17-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-forces-operations>), accessed 7 November 2014; Tolonews, *16 Insurgents Killed in Afghan Forces Raids*, 21 January 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13546-16-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-forces-raids>), accessed 7 November 2014; Tolonews, *47 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Afghan Raids*, 13 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14848-47-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-raids>), accessed 17 November 2014; Tolonews, *20 Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 21 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15658-20-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 7 November 2014; Tolonews, *41 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16192-41-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Nearly 100 killed in Nangarhar, Uruzgan clashes*, 25 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/25/nearly-100-killed-nangarhar-uruzgan-clashes>), accessed 7 November 2014.

In March 2014, an official source stated that armed men wearing ANA uniforms broke into a house, raped the female members of the family, killed a male member and injured another one.⁽⁵⁵⁵⁾ In February 2014, during the explosion of a landmine in the Lor Wadan area of Charchino district, two people were killed and one injured.⁽⁵⁵⁶⁾ In a suicide bombing in Tarinkot city at least 10 people were killed and 37 others were injured. All victims were civilians. According to the police, the explosives detonated before the suicide bomber could reach his target. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.⁽⁵⁵⁷⁾

In June 2014, an employee of the IEC was killed in a roadside bombing in the district of Khas Uruzgan. However, according to the governor of the province, security was put on high alert throughout the polling stations and insurgents did not create problems on election day. The democratic process was completed without any trouble. Also, most voters stated that they had less problems on this voting day compared to the elections of 5 April.⁽⁵⁵⁸⁾ Four policemen were killed by rebels during an attack on a security checkpoint in the district of Dihrawood. A policeman suspected of working with the rebels was missing and police began a hunt for him.⁽⁵⁵⁹⁾

In the context of 5 April elections, officials stated that tight security measures had been put in place around polling stations, resulting in an increase of security posts in areas where polling stations were located. This was also acknowledged by a tribal elder, who stated that the security in their area had improved, with most people interested in taking part in the election process.⁽⁵⁶⁰⁾

In August 2014, four drug smugglers were killed in a roadside bomb blast in the Jaghdar area of the district of Dihrawood. According to a police source, the smugglers were coming from a different district to meet with another smuggler in the Dihrawood area of the respective district.⁽⁵⁶¹⁾

Displacement

In May 2014, 46 families, or 492 individuals, were displaced from the district of Chinarto to Tarinkot city, due to conflicts between the ANSF and AGEs, according to UNHCR.⁽⁵⁶²⁾ According to an UNHCR update in July 2014, 78 families, or 948 individuals, were displaced from the district of Chora to Tarinkot city. The reasons for displacement were armed conflict between AGEs and ANSF and general insecurity.⁽⁵⁶³⁾

No IDPS were recorded by UNHCR in August and September 2014.⁽⁵⁶⁴⁾ According to the latest update from UNHCR, in October 2014, 85 families, or 722 individuals, were displaced from the districts of Gizar and Chorey to the provincial capital Trinkt city. The main reason was the armed conflict between AGE and ANSF.⁽⁵⁶⁵⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to a military source from Australia, there are pockets in the province of Uruzgan where the Taliban are trying to reassert themselves. However, according to the source, the governor and the chief of police in Uruzgan are doing a good job.⁽⁵⁶⁶⁾

⁽⁵⁵⁵⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 31 March 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&ItemID=37831&language=en-US>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁵⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 civilian killed in Paktika, Uruzgan*, 25 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/25/3-civilian-killed-paktika-uruzgan>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁵⁷⁾ Ariana News, *Uruzgan Bombing Leaves 10 Dead, 37 Injured*, 26 February 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/regional/uruzgan-bombing-leaves-10-dead-37-injured/>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Uruzgan people vote in peaceful environment*, 14 June 2014 (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/14/uruzgan-people-vote-peaceful-environment>), accessed 7 November 2014; Tolonews, *86 Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 4 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15827-86-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ANA soldiers among 14 killed in fresh bout of violence*, 30 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/30/ana-soldiers-among-14-killed-fresh-bout-violence>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Interview with Candidates - Security up in Uruzgan in run-up to vote*, 27 March 2014 (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/interview/security-uruzgan-run-vote>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁶¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 smugglers killed in Uruzgan blast*, 2 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/02/roadside-bombing-killed-4-smugglers>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁶²⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/537220114.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁶³⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁶⁴⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, September 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469d5fa4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽⁵⁶⁵⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469cb2b4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

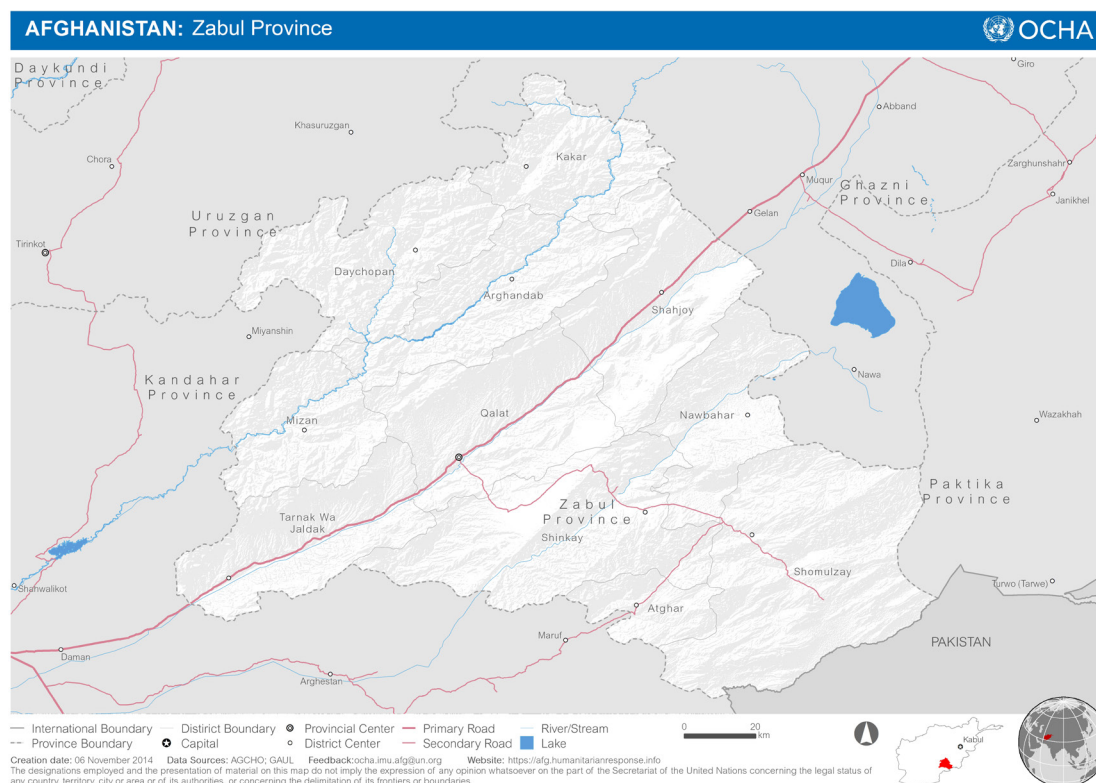
⁽⁵⁶⁶⁾ The Australian, *Uruzgan doing 'OK' after Diggers move on*, 29 September 2014 (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/defence/uruzgan-doing-ok-afternbspdiggers-move-on/story-e6frg8yo-1227073258892?nk=199e1b329b8e435db5f3655a8474ee17>) accessed 21 October 2014.

According to the administrative chief of the district of Khas Uruzgan, about 70 to 80 ALP personnel deserted their posts in the district, fled to Hazarajat and joined a warlord.⁽⁵⁶⁷⁾

In August 2014, six policemen were killed after their colleague shot them in what is considered an insider attack. The attack took place in the provincial capital Tarinkot. After the incident, the attacker, who is believed to be connected to the Taliban, took the weapons and fled in a police car.⁽⁵⁶⁸⁾

2.3.5. Zabul

Description of the Province



The province of Zabul, also known as Zabalistan, is the native region of the Pashtun tribe. The provincial capital is Qalat.⁽⁵⁶⁹⁾ The province is made up of the following districts: Afghar, Arghandab, Daychopan, Kakar, Mizan, Nawbahar, Qalat, Shahjoy, Shinkay, Shomulzay, Tarnak Wa Jaldak.⁽⁵⁷⁰⁾ According to estimates by UNOCHA, the population in the province of Zabul is at 294.100.⁽⁵⁷¹⁾ The main income source in the province is agriculture. The people of Zabul are primarily associated with livestock and agriculture such as wheat and barley. Additionally, melon, watermelon, grapes, figs, almond and raspberries are the most produced products in the province.⁽⁵⁷²⁾

⁽⁵⁶⁷⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 28 May 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=37997>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁶⁸⁾ RFE/RL, *Suspected Afghan Policeman Kills Six Colleagues*, 6 August 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-uruzgan-insider-attack-taliban/26516492.html>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁶⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background profile of Zabul*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-zabul>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁷⁰⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁵⁷¹⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽⁵⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background profile of Zabul*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-zabul>), accessed 23 October 2014.

Impact of the Violence

Zabul is among the relatively volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan where AGEs are actively operating in a number of its districts and frequently carry out insurgency activities.⁽⁵⁷³⁾

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽⁵⁷⁴⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Mine/UXO incident	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Qalat	1	1	27	2	1		4	22	7		14	1	1	3	84
Shah Joi/Shahjoy	2	3	34		5	1	3	12		1			3		64
Tarnak Wa Jald		1	11	4	2		2	8	3		1		1	1	34
Shamalzi/Shamulzayi			11				4	6	3				1		25
Arghandab			10				1	6							17
Shinkai/Shinkay			10		1		1	4						1	17
Naw Bahar	1	1	9		1			1					2		15
Mizan		1	8					1					1		11
Atghar			7						1				2		10
Dai Chopan/ Daychopan		1	2					1	1						5

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Zabul counted 282 reported security incidents; the most volatile district was Arghandab (see table).⁽⁵⁷⁵⁾

Several security operations led by ANSF were conducted in the province to clear areas from insurgents. During these security operations many insurgents were killed and wounded or detained. Arms and ammunitions were often seized.⁽⁵⁷⁶⁾

In March 2014, gunmen attacked the police headquarters in Zabul, in which a police official was reported killed and the Province Security Chief injured.⁽⁵⁷⁷⁾ In April 2014, during the election period, the violence increased. Officials from Zabul province said that three insurgents were killed when they attacked a polling station in Shahr-e Safa district.⁽⁵⁷⁸⁾ In a separate incident an explosion happened in the area of Naukhez on the outskirts of Qalat. This occurred when police were guarding a polling station for women. Two policemen were killed and four others, including an observer, were wounded.⁽⁵⁷⁹⁾

⁽⁵⁷³⁾ Khaama Press, *Attack foiled on police HQ in Zabul, suicide bomber shot dead*, 19 November 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/attack-foiled-on-police-hq-in-laghman-suicide-bomber-shot-dead-9024>), accessed 21 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Child among two killed following Taliban attack in Zabul*, 5 October 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/child-among-two-killed-following-taliban-attack-in-zabul-6795>), accessed 21 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Suicide attack target NATO troops convoy in Zabul province*, 30 March 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-attack-target-nato-troops-convoy-in-zabul-province-3501>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁷⁴⁾ No incidents reported for the districts of Kakar.

⁽⁵⁷⁵⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁵⁷⁶⁾ Tolonews, *35 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Afghan Operations*, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16442-35-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-operations>), accessed 19 November 2014; Tolonews, *19 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 8 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16286-19-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 19 November 2014; Tolonews, *15 Insurgents Killed in Zabul Operation*, 5 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16250-15-insurgents-killed-in-zabul-operation>), accessed 19 November 2014; Tolonews, *41 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16192-41-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 19 November 2014; Tolonews, *37 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 23 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16078-37-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 19 November 2014; Tolonews, *12 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Zabul Operation*, 22 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16070-12-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-zabul-operation>), accessed 19 November 2014; Tolonews, *Taliban Leader Killed in Zabul Operation*, 16 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15981-taliban-leader-killed-in-zabul-operation>), accessed 19 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 soldiers, 12 rebels killed in operations*, 15 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/15/4-soldiers-12-rebels-killed-operations>), accessed 19 November 2014; Tolonews, *Afghan Forces Launch Coordinated Assaults Nationwide*, 31 March 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14400-afghan-forces-launch-coordinated-assaults-around-the-country>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁷⁷⁾ Ariana News, *Armed group attacks Police Headquarters in Zabul*, 20 March 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/regional/armed-group-attacks-police-headquarters-in-zabul/>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Polls violence leaves 3 dead, 5 others hurt*, 5 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/05/polls-violence-leaves-3-dead-5-others-hurt>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *10 lives lost to Election Day violence*, 5 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/05/10-lives-lost-election-day-violence>), accessed 19 November 2014.

In May 2014, six ALP personnel were abducted by rebels on their way to the district of Naw Bahar, a local official said. Their corpses were recovered in the Lodinian village of Naw Bahar district. However, a Taliban spokesman said the policemen were killed during an offensive conducted by the government to rescue the detainees. The police deny that the officers were killed during a rescue operation.⁽⁵⁸⁰⁾

In June 2014, at least seven ANA soldiers were killed and five others wounded in a roadside bombing in southern Zabul province, an official said. The explosion hit an ANA convoy on the Kabul-Kandahar highway in the Gajoi locality of Shah Joi district.⁽⁵⁸¹⁾ In a separate incident, two policemen were killed and as many wounded in a suicide attack in Zabul, the provincial police chief said. The incident happened on the Zabul-Kandahar highway in Pul-e Sangi area on the outskirts of Qalat.⁽⁵⁸²⁾ In July 2014, four ALP members, including their commander, were killed in the district of Shahr-e Safa, an official said. The overnight incident took place at a security post in the Khanzo area of the district.⁽⁵⁸³⁾

In August 2014, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the central jail in the provincial capital of Zabul. Two prisoners and two policemen sustained injuries, while two other suicide bombers were killed by police.⁽⁵⁸⁴⁾ In a separate incident a local official said that three policemen were wounded when the pick-up truck they were travelling in struck a roadside bomb in the district of Naw Bahar. In a further incident an ISAF oil tanker was torched and a pick-up destroyed in a rebel assault in the Spin Ghabargai area of Qalat, the capital of Zabul.⁽⁵⁸⁵⁾

Displacement

According to the latest updates from UNHCR, no IDPs originating from the province of Zabul have been profiled.⁽⁵⁸⁶⁾

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban rebels are active in a number of districts and frequently carry out insurgency activities.⁽⁵⁸⁷⁾

In May 2014, Mullah Rahmani, the Taliban's operational commander for southern Afghanistan, was killed during a security operation in the province of Zabul. Mullah Rahmani was also responsible for sending suicide bombers to Kandahar and Kabul.⁽⁵⁸⁸⁾ In January 2014, the Taliban shadow deputy governor and an operational commander for Zabul, Qari Saifullah, was regarded as a global terrorist by the US. As an operational commander, Saifullah used Taliban fighters to organise terrorist activities against Afghan and coalition forces in Zabul province.⁽⁵⁸⁹⁾

⁽⁵⁸⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Commander among 10 ALP personnel killed*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/21/commander-among-10-alp-personnel-killed>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Roadside bombing kills 7 ANA soldiers*, 23 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/23/roadside-bombing-kills-7-ana-soldiers>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 policemen killed in Zabul suicide blast*, 18 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/18/2-policemen-killed-zabul-suicide-blast>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 ALP men killed in Zabul mysteriously*, 10 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/10/4-alp-men-killed-zabul-mysteriously>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸⁴⁾ 1TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 25 August 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38258&language=en-US>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *13 dead, several injured in fresh violence*, 16 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/16/13-dead-several-injured-fresh-violence>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸⁶⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May - October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸⁷⁾ Khaama Press, *Taliban kills 6 abducted policemen in Zabul province*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-kills-6-abducted-policemen-in-zabul-province-8129>), accessed 21 November 2014.

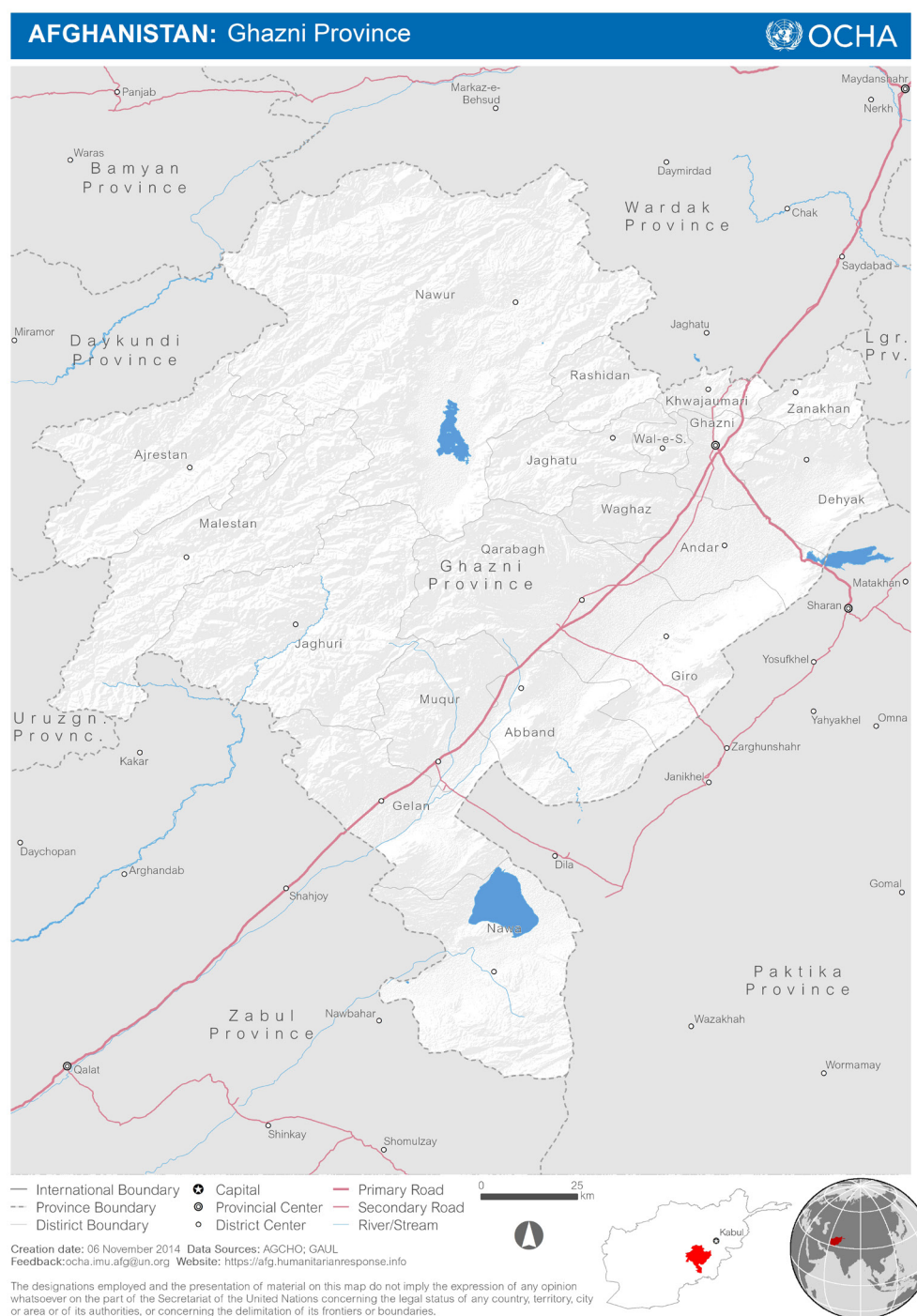
⁽⁵⁸⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban's Quetta Shura member killed in Zabul*, 13 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/13/taliban%E2%80%99s-quetta-shura-member-killed-zabul>), accessed 19 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Rebel leader designated as terrorist*, 7 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/07/rebel-leader-designated-terrorist>), accessed 19 November 2014.

2.4. South-East

2.4.1. Ghazni

Description of the Province



According to Pajhwok Afghan News, Ghazni is one of the most important and central provinces of Afghanistan. The ACSO considers Ghazni to be the province with second-highest population density.⁽⁵⁹⁰⁾ The province of Ghazni consists of 19 districts: Abbond, Ajrestan, Andar, Dehyak, Gelan, Ghazni, Giro, Jaghatu, Jaghuri, Khwajaumari, Malestan, Muqur,

⁽⁵⁹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Ghazni*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-ghazni>), accessed 10 October 2014.

Nawa, Nawur, Qarabagh, Rashidan, Waghaz, Walimuhammad-e-Shahid, Zanakhan.⁽⁵⁹¹⁾ The provincial capital is Ghazni city. The old city and the Bala-i Hesar (castle) in the provincial capital are symbols of history. Trade has improved in the city, since it is the centre of four routes to various destinations.⁽⁵⁹²⁾ Ghazni city is located 145 kilometres south of Kabul city on the Kabul-Kandahar highway. The provinces of (Maidan) Wardak and Bamyan are to the north, while the provinces of Paktia, Paktyka and Logar are to the east. The province of Zabul is in the south and west, while Uruzgan is bordering the province in the west. Ghazni is 32,797 square kilometres.⁽⁵⁹³⁾ According to estimates by the ACSO, the population of Ghazni is 1,188,600.⁽⁵⁹⁴⁾

Impact of the Violence

Ghazni is among the volatile provinces in southeastern Afghanistan where anti-government armed insurgent groups are actively operating in various districts and frequently carry out insurgency activities.⁽⁵⁹⁵⁾ The insurgents usually target government officials and employees who are travelling on the main Kabul-Kandahar-highway that links the capital Kabul with the eastern and southern provinces.⁽⁵⁹⁶⁾

On election day (5 April 2014) nearly 9,000 security personnel were deployed across the province to maintain security. Participation was said to be high and, according to the Governor of Ghazni, at some polling centres 80 percent of voters were women.⁽⁵⁹⁷⁾

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽⁵⁹⁸⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Mine/UXO incident	Narcotic Incident	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Ghazni		6	100	10	23	7	4			63	49	2			13	1	278
Andar	2	9	181		5				1	15	23				13	1	250
Qarabagh	2	3	130	1	8		1			9	20		1		10	1	186
Giro		7	68				1			4	3				1		84
Waghiz		1	70		1		1			5	3						81
Ajrestan	2	2	71		1										2	1	79
Deh Yak	1		38	1			7			15	8				4		74
Gelan		3	48	2	1		2			5	4				2	2	69
Khwaja Omari		1	27							4	3	3			2		40
Jaghatau		3	15			1				1		1			11		32
Muqur			13	1	2		1	1		4	4			1	1		28
Zankhan			26													1	27
Ab Band			13		2		2			1	4						22
Rashidan							1			1							3
Nawur			2														2

⁽⁵⁹¹⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁵⁹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Gazni Local Authorities*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/gazni-local-authorities>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Ghazni*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-ghazni>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁹⁴⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽⁵⁹⁵⁾ Khaama Press, *Pakistani militants among 40 killed in Ghazni clashes*, 14 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/pakistani-militants-among-40-killed-in-ghazni-clashes-8643>), accessed 10 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Militants kidnap Ghazni's Hajj and Religious Affairs chief*, 3 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/militants-kidnap-ghaznis-hajj-and-religious-affairs-chief-8578>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁹⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *Militants kidnap Ghazni's Hajj and Religious Affairs chief*, 3 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/militants-kidnap-ghaznis-hajj-and-religious-affairs-chief-8578>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁹⁷⁾ Tolonews, *Massive Turnout for Afghanistan's Historic Elections*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14454-massive-turnout-for-afghanistans-historic-elections?tmpl=component&print=1&layout=default>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁵⁹⁸⁾ No incidents reported for the district Malestan.

Districts ⁽⁵⁹⁸⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Mine/UXO incident	Narcotic Incident	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Jaghori							1										1
Nawa		1															1

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Ghazni counted 1,257 reported security incidents; the most volatile district was Ghazni (see table).⁽⁵⁹⁹⁾

Several security operations led by ANA, ANP and the NDS were conducted in the province to clear areas from insurgents. Additionally, weapons and explosive materials were seized during the operations.⁽⁶⁰⁰⁾ There are concerns about innocent civilians getting caught in the crossfire between the Taliban and security forces.⁽⁶⁰¹⁾

In the first month of 2014, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives-laden car near the vehicles of the security personnel in the Karo Sayee area of the district of Qarabagh, killing two soldiers of the ANA and two policemen. Additionally, 21 insurgents, including four regional Taliban commanders, were killed during airstrikes and clashes in the district of Andar.⁽⁶⁰²⁾ During gun battles with the Afghan security forces at least 15 Taliban insurgents, including key commanders Mawlawi Mohammad Nambi and Manan, were killed in the Jangul area of the district of Ab Band. Additionally, money, weapons and three motorbikes were seized. Local officials stated that there were no civilian or police casualties but the Taliban claimed that they killed six police personnel during the clash.⁽⁶⁰³⁾ In May 2014, in the district of Giro, a minibus hit a roadside bomb killing 12 civilians. No group claimed responsibility for the blast.⁽⁶⁰⁴⁾ The prosecutor for the district of Qarabagh was killed by an unidentified gunman on his way to the office. The incident took place after 91 Taliban prisoners were released from the Central Jail of Ghazni. No group has claimed responsibility for the assassination.⁽⁶⁰⁵⁾ In August 2014, seven Taliban, including two leaders, were killed and four others wounded in a NATO coalition airstrike in the district of Giro. There were no reports of civilian casualties in the strike.⁽⁶⁰⁶⁾

In June 2014, during a bomb blast, four people were killed, including the district police chief of Waghiz.⁽⁶⁰⁷⁾ In two separate incidents in the same month, abductions took place in the province of Ghazni. In one incident four students from Ghazni University were abducted on their way from Kabul to Ghazni by armed insurgents.⁽⁶⁰⁸⁾ Unknown gunmen kidnapped 32 members of Kandahar University and injured one of them. The incident took place in the area of Noh Baba where the faculty vehicle, travelling to Kabul city from Kandahar, was attacked. The Taliban did not claim responsibility for the kidnapping.⁽⁶⁰⁹⁾ According to local officials, in September 2014, intense fighting between

⁽⁵⁹⁹⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁰⁾ Peninsula, *47 Taliban militants killed during clearing operations*, 30 September 2014 (<http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/latest-news/302087/47-taliban-militants-killed-during-clearing-operations>), accessed 29 October 2014; Ariana News, *36 Taliban Killed, Wounded In Ghazni Operation*, 6 May 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/36-taliban-killed-wounded-in-ghazni-operation-2/>), accessed 13 November 2014; Tolonews, *42 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Ghazni Raids*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14459-42-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ghazni-raids>), accessed 13 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 dead in Ghazni explosion, gunbattle*, 4 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/5-dead-ghazni-explosion-gunbattle>), accessed 13 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Ghazni: 60 rebels killed in 20 days*, 26 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/26/ghazni-60-rebels-killed-20-days-0>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰¹⁾ Ariana News, *Taliban attacks in Ghazni on the rise*, 15 May 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/regional/taliban-attacks-in-ghazni-on-the-rise/>), accessed 13 November 2014; see also: 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 24 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=37802>), 14 November 2014; Tolonews, *IED Kills Two, Injures Nine in Ghazni*, 9 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14486-ied-kills-two-injures-nine-in-ghazni>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Security officials among 25 killed in Ghazni*, 29 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/29/security-officials-among-25-killed-ghazni>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰³⁾ Tolonews, *15 Taliban Killed in Ghazni Clash*, 5 January 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13342-15-taliban-killed-in-ghazni-clash>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁴⁾ Tolonews, *A Dozen Afghan Civilians Killed in Ghazni Blast*, 31 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15071-a-dozen-afghan-civilians-killed-in-ghazni-blast>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁵⁾ Ariana News, *Qarabagh Attorney Killed in Ghazni*, 20 May 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/qarabagh-attorney-killed-in-ghazni/>), accessed 13 November 2014; Ariana News, *Taliban attacks in Ghazni on the rise*, 15 May 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/regional/taliban-attacks-in-ghazni-on-the-rise/>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Seven Taliban Killed in Ghazni Airstrike*, 13 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15938-seven-taliban-killed-in-ghazni-airstrike>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁷⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 5 June 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=38016>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 22 June 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&ItemID=38072&language=en-US>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁹⁾ Tolonews, *Unknown Gunmen Kidnap Kandahar University Faculty in Ghazni*, 10 June 2014 (<http://elections2014.tolonews.com/unknown-gunmen-kidnap-kandahar-university-faculty-ghazni-0>), accessed 13 November 2014.

government forces and insurgents in the district of Ajrestan, which lasted four days, left nearly 20 dead. However, according to a Taliban spokesperson, the insurgents killed 40 police officers in the district of Ajrestan. Afghanistan's MoI said additional troops will be deployed to Ajrestan to prevent the district from falling to the insurgents.⁽⁶¹⁰⁾

Displacement

According to UNHCR, during April and May 2014, 237 families, or 1,908 individuals, were displaced from the district of Giro to the provincial centre of Ghazni. The main causes of displacement were general insecurity, intensified armed conflicts between AGEs and ANSF and military operations.⁽⁶¹¹⁾ For July 2014, UNHCR reported no IDPs originating from the province of Ghazni.⁽⁶¹²⁾ No IDPs were reported by UNHCR from August and September 2014.⁽⁶¹³⁾ According to the latest update in October 2014, 250 families, or 3,363 individuals, were displaced in late September to October from the villages of Kang Khai and Mahmoud Khail in the district of Ajrestan. The families were displaced to the villages of Bat Khil and Hazarak Khil within the respective district. The main cause for displacement was the armed conflict between AGE and ANSF. However, intimidation by AGE was also a major push factor.⁽⁶¹⁴⁾

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban are active in many parts of Ghazni, since it is an important gateway from the south-east to the capital, Kabul.⁽⁶¹⁵⁾

According to officials, in September 2014, Taliban fighters seized control of a strategic district in the Afghan province of Ghazni. The district of Ajrestan is a small town surrounded by about 100 villages in a predominantly rural area.⁽⁶¹⁶⁾ In several attacks the Taliban targeted numerous government buildings, including the provincial NDS office and the police headquarters for Ghazni and the Afghan Crisis Response Unit (CRU).⁽⁶¹⁷⁾

In June 2014, a local Taliban commander Mullah Qadir was killed in Ghazni, along with 14 other Taliban insurgents, in a counter-terrorism operation in Ghazni.⁽⁶¹⁸⁾ In May 2014, after a weeklong offensive, the Taliban planted bombs on most roads and highways that connected the district of Gelan with the rest of the province.⁽⁶¹⁹⁾

According to Ghazni security officials, more than 300 Arab and Pakistani insurgents, Haqqani network, Afghan Taliban and what officials believe to be ISIS are currently active in the district of Andar in Ghazni. The officials stressed that 13 Turkish female suicide attackers were also operating alongside the insurgent groups in Andar.⁽⁶²⁰⁾

⁽⁶¹⁰⁾ RFE/RL, *Taliban Fighters Storm Strategic District in Ghazni Province*, 26 September 2014 (<http://gandhara.RFE/RL.org/content/ghazni-taliban/26607320.html>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶¹¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/537220114.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁶¹²⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽⁶¹³⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, September 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469d5fa4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽⁶¹⁴⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469cb2b4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽⁶¹⁵⁾ BBC, *Taliban seize strategic Afghan district in Ghazni province*, 26 September 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29375436>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶¹⁶⁾ BBC, *Taliban seize strategic Afghan district in Ghazni province*, 26 September 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29375436>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶¹⁷⁾ RFE/RL, *Taliban Attack on Intelligence HQ in Afghanistan Kills Dozens*, 4 September 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-taliban-attack-intelligence-hq/26566127.html>), accessed 13 November 2014; Tolonews, *Death Toll in Ghazni Attack Increases to 20*, 7 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16276-death-toll-in-ghazni-attack-increases-to-20>), accessed 14 November 2014.

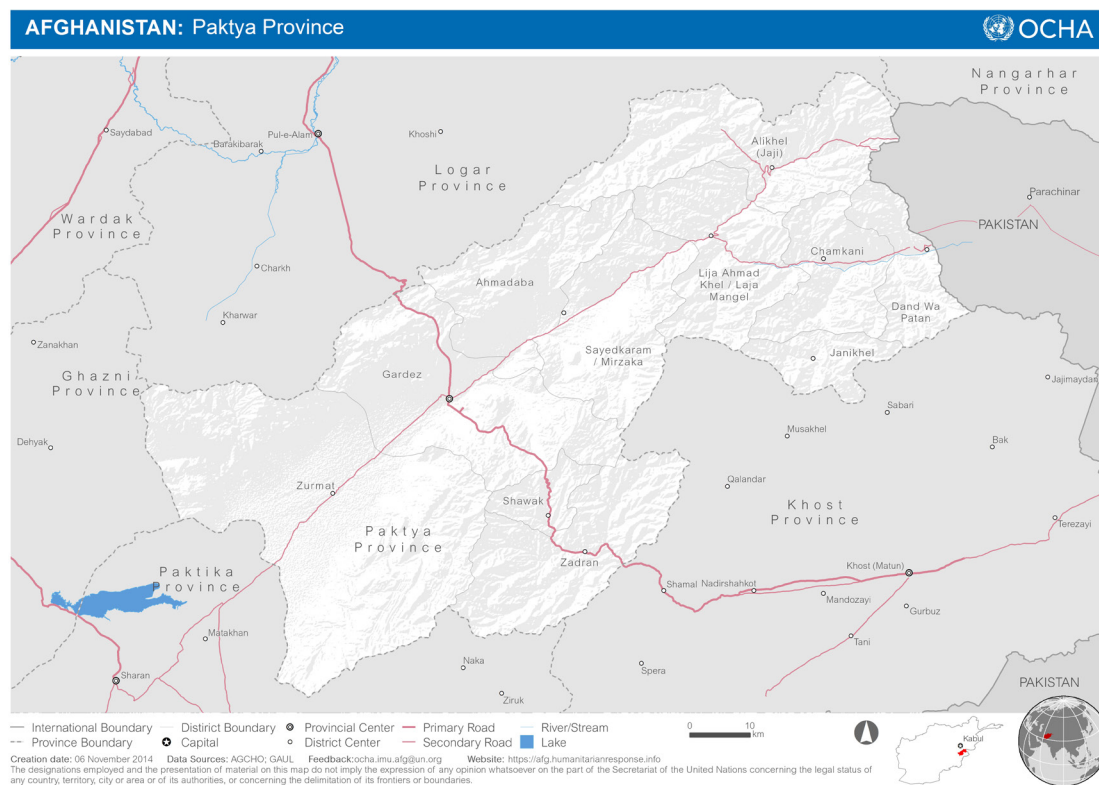
⁽⁶¹⁸⁾ Ariana News, *Local Taliban Commander Killed in Ghazni*, 10 June 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/local-taliban-commander-killed-in-ghazni/>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽⁶¹⁹⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 12 May 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=37959>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶²⁰⁾ Tolonews, *Signs of ISIS in Andar District of Ghazni*, 26 September 2014, (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16526-signs-of-isis-in-andar-district-of-ghazni>), accessed 13 November 2014.

2.4.2. Paktya Province

Description of the Province



The province of Paktya is one of the mountainous provinces in Afghanistan.⁽⁶²¹⁾ According to estimates by the ACSO, the population is 534.000.⁽⁶²²⁾ The province is 115 kilometres from the capital Kabul.⁽⁶²³⁾ The province consists of 14 districts, including the capital city Gardez⁽⁶²⁴⁾: Ahmadaba, Alikhel (Jaji), Chamkani, Dand Wa Patan, Gardez, Janikhel, Lija Ahmad Khel, Sayedkaram/Mirzaka, Shawak, Zadran, Zurmat.⁽⁶²⁵⁾

UNAMA facilitated local dialogue to mitigate inter-ethnic and inter-tribal tensions and to build confidence among communities. Gatherings were held in various provinces, including Paktya, with the participation of local government officials, traditional community leaders and civil society.⁽⁶²⁶⁾

Impact of the Violence

The province of Paktya is among the volatile provinces in Afghanistan, where anti-government armed insurgent groups, including the Taliban insurgents and insurgents from the Haqqani network, are operating in a number of its districts.⁽⁶²⁷⁾

⁽⁶²¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Paktya*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-paktia-province-0>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁶²²⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽⁶²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Paktia administrative units*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/paktia-administrative-unites>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁶²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Paktia administrative units*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/paktia-administrative-unites>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁶²⁵⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁶²⁶⁾ UNGASC, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/SG-report-Afghanistan-March2014.pdf>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁶²⁷⁾ Khaama Press, *Taliban attack district government compound in Paktya*, 13 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-attack-government-compound-in-paktia-province-8633>), accessed 10 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Senior Taliban leader killed in Paktya province*, 5 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/senior-taliban-leader-killed-in-paktia-province-8013>) 10 October 2014.

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Gardez		3	28	9	9			59	69	4	1	2	11	1	196
Zurmat		19	37	2	2	2		3	4			1	4	1	75
Ahmadabad	1	3	4	1	4			12	16				1		42
Sayed Karam	2	5	4	2	8	1		7	4	1					34
Janikhel			20		2	1		3	5						31
Dand Aw Patan			14	1			1	4	1				3		24
Alikhel (Jaji)		1	10					9		1			2		23
Ahmadkhel	2		9					2	1	1			1		16
Tsamkani			3	1	1			1	2				5		13
Shawak			4					2	2						8
Wuza Zadran			1	1					1				1		4

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Paktia counted 466 reported security incidents. The most volatile district was Gardez (see table).⁽⁶²⁸⁾

Several security operations led by the ANSF were conducted in the province to clear areas from insurgents. During these security operations many insurgents were killed and wounded and arms and ammunitions were often seized.⁽⁶²⁹⁾

In February 2014, according to a local source, a bomb attack in the province killed three civilians and wounded seven others.⁽⁶³⁰⁾ In March 2014, local officials reported that four campaign workers of a provincial council candidate died when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb in the provincial capital.⁽⁶³¹⁾ In April 2014, five ANA soldiers were killed during a firefight in Paktya. A local official stated that 500 insurgents were involved in the clash, but ANA forces were able to repulse the attack. In a separate incident local officials stated that about 50 insurgents were killed in a clash with Afghan security forces in the province.⁽⁶³²⁾ In June 2014, seven civilians were injured when a rocket, allegedly fired by the Taliban, hit a hospital in the district of Tsamkani.⁽⁶³³⁾

In July 2014, according to an official source, the security convoy of the president of the Islamic republic of Afghanistan was on its way toward Paktya province when the Taliban ambushed the convoy in the suburb of Gardez city. At least four Presidential Protection Service (PPS) guards were wounded. There are reports of some PPS servicemen being captured by the Taliban in the district of Zurmat. However, an Afghan National Army Major General rejected the Taliban ambush claims on President Karzai's security team. In a separate incident Afghan security officials stated

⁽⁶²⁸⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁶²⁹⁾ Tolonews, *79 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Afghan Forces Operations*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15408-79-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-forces-operations>), accessed 17 November 2014; Tolonews, *20 Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 21 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15658-20-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 17 November 2014; Tolonews, *86 Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 4 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15827-86-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 17 November 2014; Ariana News, *30 armed Taliban killed in a series of operations in Paktia*, 19 September 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/regional/30-armed-taliban-killed-in-a-series-of-operations-in-paktia/>), accessed 17 November 2014; Tolonews, *Taliban Attack Paktia's District Governor's Compound*, 13 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16352-taliban-attack-paktias-district-governors-compound>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *10 rebels killed, 3 ANA soldiers lost to blasts*, 5 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/05/10-rebels-killed-3-ana-soldiers-lost-blasts>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁶³⁰⁾ RFE/RL, *Soldiers Killed In Afghan Roadside Bombing*, 18 February 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-roadside-bomb-soldiers-killed/25267758.html>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁶³¹⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 31 March 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&ItemID=37831&language=en-US>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁶³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *8 Security men killed in Laghman, Paktia*, 29 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/29/8-security-men-killed-laghman-paktia>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁶³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *7 injured as rocket hits Paktia hospital*, 10 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/10/7-hurt-paktia-hospital-rocket-attack>), accessed 17 November 2014.

that a deadly attack was foiled by national army special forces in the capital of Paktya. A group of 20 terrorists was trying to conduct suicide and group attacks. According to a local official, 19 Taliban insurgents were killed and one was wounded. Heavy and light weapons were seized by Afghan forces.⁽⁶³⁴⁾

In August 2014, more than 16 Taliban insurgents attacked a military outpost in the district of Zurmat and began fighting with Afghan forces. Ten Taliban insurgents were killed, nine were wounded and three security personnel were injured in the clash.⁽⁶³⁵⁾ In September 2014, a district development council head was killed in a militant attack in southeastern Paktia province. The militants were in a car and fled after the attack. No one claimed responsibility for the assassination.⁽⁶³⁶⁾ In another incident the Taliban is reported to have hanged three individuals accused of robberies in the district of Gardez.⁽⁶³⁷⁾

Displacement

According to UNHCR in May 2014, 92 families, or 610 individuals, were displaced from different districts of Paktya, Nangarhar, Laghman and Khost provinces to Gardez city, the provincial centre of Paktya, from January to April 2014. The main reasons for displacement were insecurity as well as intimidation and harassment by AGEs.⁽⁶³⁸⁾ A UNHCR update in July 2014 reported 48 families, or 407 individuals, were displaced within Paktya province between March and June 2014. Out of these, 15 families, or 127 individuals, were displaced inside the district of Dand Aw Patan, while 33 families, or 280 individuals, were displaced from the district of Wuza Zadran to Gardez city, provincial centre of Paktya.⁽⁶³⁹⁾

No IDPS were reported by UNHCR from August to September 2014.⁽⁶⁴⁰⁾ According to the latest update from UNHCR in October 2014, small displacements were reported in several provinces, including Paktya.⁽⁶⁴¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban are, among other insurgents groups, actively operating in a number of districts.⁽⁶⁴²⁾ The Haqqanis maintain considerable support inside Pakistan's tribal areas. The Haqqanis provide men and material to support their terrorist campaign from there into the provinces of Khost, Paktika and Paktya onwards into the provinces adjacent to Kabul.⁽⁶⁴³⁾

In July 2014, Afghan and Pakistani Taliban insurgents attacked a border police outpost in Dand Aw Patan district. At least 38 Taliban insurgents and two border policemen were killed.⁽⁶⁴⁴⁾ In September 2014, more than 40 Taliban insurgents attacked the compound of the governor of Janikhel district and began battling with security forces, local officials said. The clash against the security forces killed three Taliban insurgents, including their leader, and wounded three Afghan security forces. The remaining Taliban insurgents fled the area.⁽⁶⁴⁵⁾

⁽⁶³⁴⁾ Tolonews, *Deadly Attack Foiled in Paktiya*, 16 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15618-deadly-attack-foiled-in-paktiya>), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶³⁵⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Insurgents Attack Afghan Force Outpost in Pakia*, 6 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15852-taliban-insurgents-attack-afghan-force-outpost-in-paktia>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁶³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *NATO airstrike in Khost leaves 4 dead*, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/30/nato-airstrike-khost-leaves-4-dead>), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶³⁷⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=38361>), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶³⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/537220114.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁶³⁹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁴⁰⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, September 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469d5fa4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽⁶⁴¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469cb2b4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽⁶⁴²⁾ Khaama Press, *Taliban attack district government compound in Paktia*, 13 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-attack-government-compound-in-paktia-province-8633>), accessed 10 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Senior Taliban leader killed in Paktia province*, 5 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/senior-taliban-leader-killed-in-paktia-province-8013>) 10 October 2014.

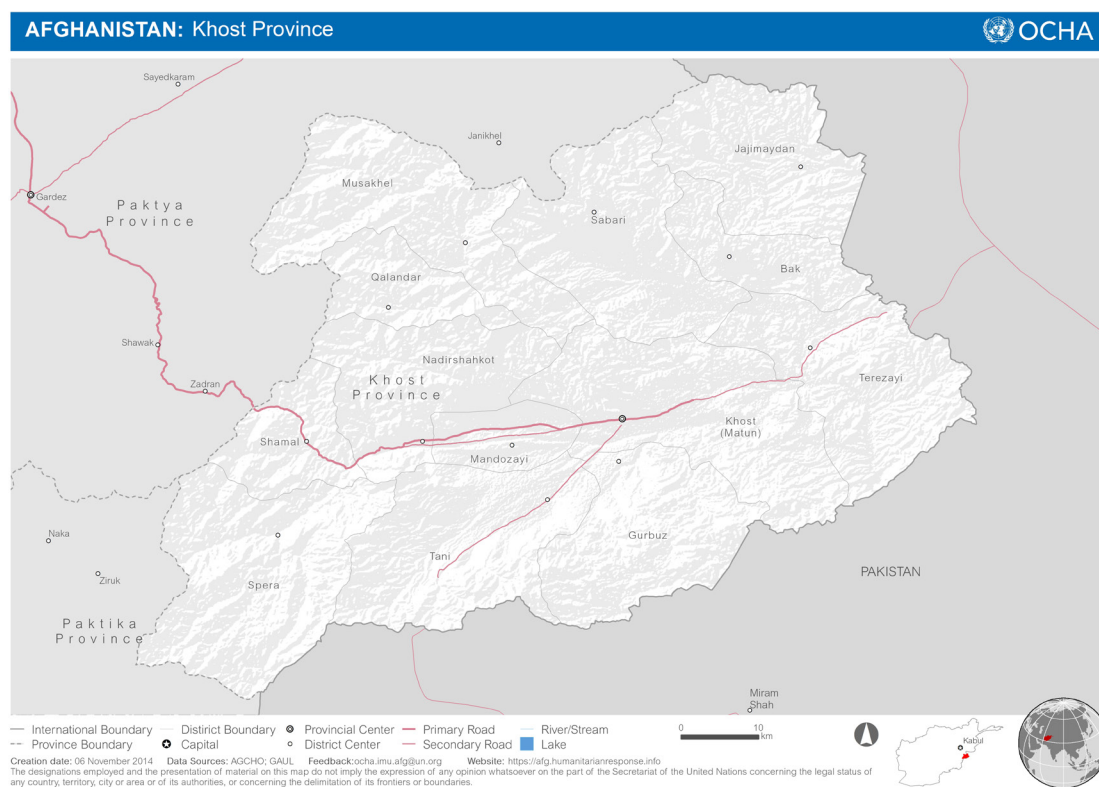
⁽⁶⁴³⁾ ISW, *The haqqani network*, March 2012 (http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani_StrategicThreatweb_29MAR_0.pdf), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁴⁴⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Insurgents, Border Police Killed in Paktia Clash*, 5 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15487-taliban-insurgents-border-police-killed-in-paktia-clash>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁴⁵⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Attack Paktia's District Governor's Compound*, 13 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16352-taliban-attack-paktias-district-governors-compound>), accessed 18 November 2014.

2.4.3. Khost Province

Description of the Province



The province of Khost is located in the south-east of Afghanistan and was formerly one of the biggest districts of Paktya province, and its current districts were sub-districts.⁽⁶⁴⁶⁾ The province is made up of the following districts: Bak, Gurbuz, Jajimaydan, Khost (Matun), Mandozayi, Musakhel, Nadirshahkot, Qalandar, Sabari, Shamal, Spera, Tani, Terezyai.⁽⁶⁴⁷⁾ Khost city is the capital of the province.⁽⁶⁴⁸⁾ The province is bordering Pakistan where suicide bombers and other insurgents, including the Haqqani network, are active.⁽⁶⁴⁹⁾ According to estimates by the ACSO, the population of Khost is 556,000.⁽⁶⁵⁰⁾

In January 2014, a private domestic airline formally started flights between Kabul and Khost city, anticipating that the service would help resolve travellers' problems.⁽⁶⁵¹⁾

⁽⁶⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Khost*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-khost-0/>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁴⁷⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁶⁴⁸⁾ LA Times, *Car bomb kills 8 in eastern Afghanistan*, 18 February 2011 (<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/feb/18/world/la-fgw-afghan-bombing-20110219>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁴⁹⁾ Yahoo News, *Insurgent attacks kill 10 across Afghanistan*, 15 October 2014 (<http://news.yahoo.com/taliban-kills-afghan-official-countrys-south-052802845.html>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁵⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽⁶⁵¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kabul-Khost flights formally begin*, 11 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/11/kabul-khost-flights-formally-begin>), accessed 14 November 2014.

Impact of the Violence

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Khost(Matun)	1		7	8	6		8		2	58	81		1	5	1	178
Tere Zayi		4	76	2	6		2			13	27	1	1	18		150
Sabari			26	6	8		6			21	53			19		139
Baak	1		9	1	2					20	42			2		77
Nader Shah Kot		1	15		1		1			14	27	1		3		63
Mandozai			3	2	3	1	4	1	1	6	28			1	1	51
Garbaz			3		1		2			3	33		1	2		45
Musa Khail			24	2	1		1			4	3			7	1	43
Tani				1	1			1	1	8	16					28
Jaji Maydan			7							2	2			7		18
Shamal			11	1						3	3					18
Spera		2	2		2		1			3	3					13
Qalandar			4							1	6	1				12

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Khost counted 835 reported security incidents. the most volatile district was Khost (Matun) (see table).⁽⁶⁵²⁾

Several security operations led by ANA, ANP and the NDS were conducted in the province to clear areas from insurgents. Additionally, weapons and explosive materials were seized during the operations.⁽⁶⁵³⁾

The anti-government armed insurgent groups frequently use IED as their weapon of choice to target Afghan and coalition security forces. However, in most cases civilians are affected by roadside bombings and IED attacks.⁽⁶⁵⁴⁾

In February 2014, unidentified gunmen killed a juvenile correction centre prosecutor in the area of Kandaw in Khost city.⁽⁶⁵⁵⁾ In a separate incident, a female suicide bomber was shot by the police before she could detonate her explosives.⁽⁶⁵⁶⁾ In March 2014, a vehicle full of explosives detonated near a checkpoint in Khost city. One civilian was killed and four police officers were injured.⁽⁶⁵⁷⁾ On April 4, 2014, two Western journalists were attacked a day before elections. An Afghan police officer shot dead German news photographer Anja Niedringhaus and seriously wounded her Canadian colleague Kathy Gannon. The journalists were working in the province of Khost, in a remote, small town on Afghanistan's border to Pakistan when the incident occurred.⁽⁶⁵⁸⁾ In April 2014, a family of four was

⁽⁶⁵²⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁶⁵³⁾ Journal of Turkish Weekly, *35 Taliban killed in Afghan military operations*, 8 September 2014 (<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/171558/35-taliban-killed-in-afghan-military-operations.html>), accessed 14 November 2014; Tolonews, *79 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Afghan Forces Operations*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15408-79-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-forces-operations>), accessed 14 November 2014; Khaama Press, *94 Taliban militants killed in Afghan counter-terrorism operations*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/94-taliban-militants-killed-in-afghan-counter-terrorism-operations-2969>), accessed 14 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilian killed in Khost operation*, 11 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/11/civilian-killed-khost-operation>), accessed 14 November 2014; see also: RFE/RL (Gandhara), *Suicide Bomber Kills Foreigners Near Kabul Airport*, 22 July 2014 (<http://gandhara.RFE/RL.org/content/article/25465900.html>), accessed 14 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *10 ANA officials killed: MoD*, 30 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/30/10-ana-officials-killed-mod>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁵⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *3 mine planters blown up by own explosives in Khost province*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/3-mine-planters-blown-up-by-own-explosives-in-khost-province-6297>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁵⁵⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 19 February 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=37717>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁵⁶⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 15 February 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&ItemID=37708&language=en-US>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁵⁷⁾ Shamshad TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 27 March 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&ItemID=37819&language=en-US>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁵⁸⁾ RFE/RL, *German, Canadian Journalists Gunned Down by Afghan Policeman*, 4 April 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-attack-journalists/25320866.html>), accessed 14 November 2014.

killed during an overnight NATO airstrike in the area of Mirkori in the district of Nader Shah Kot. According to an official source, the NATO helicopter pilot was on an exercise when he accidentally hit a house. However, according to another source, the incident took place elsewhere.⁽⁶⁵⁹⁾

In an attack on a security outpost in the district of Zazai Maidan in July 2014, at least 11 Taliban insurgents, four policemen and a civilian were killed. According to an official source, more security forces have been deployed to the area to support the police.⁽⁶⁶⁰⁾

Displacement

According to an update from UNHCR in July 2014, no IDPs have come from the province of Khost.⁽⁶⁶¹⁾ However, in April, four families, or 40 individuals, were displaced from different districts of Khost province to the provincial centre of Khost. The main reasons for displacement were general insecurity, harassment and intimidation by AGEs.⁽⁶⁶²⁾ According to UNHCR, no IDPs were reported originating from the province of Khost in July, August, September and October 2014.⁽⁶⁶³⁾

Actors in the conflict

Anti-government armed insurgents, including the Taliban and rebels of the Haqqani network, are active in a number of its districts.⁽⁶⁶⁴⁾

The majority of mixed-tribal support for the Haqqani network comes from a handful of districts in the southeastern province of Khost.⁽⁶⁶⁵⁾ For more than a generation, the secluded highlands of Khost and Paktia have been Haqqani territory.⁽⁶⁶⁶⁾ According to the Afghan intelligence service Anas Haqqani, a son of the Haqqani Network's founder, and Hafiz Rashid, a senior commander who coordinated suicide bombings, were captured during an operation in the province of Khost.⁽⁶⁶⁷⁾

2.4.4. Paktika Province

Description of the Province

The province of Paktika shares borders in the north and north-west with the province of Ghazni. In the south and south-east it shares a 360-kilometre border with Pakistan.⁽⁶⁶⁸⁾ The province of Paktika shares a border with Pakistan's restive and volatile tribal areas.⁽⁶⁶⁹⁾ Paktika is 210 kilometres from the capital Kabul.⁽⁶⁷⁰⁾ The province consists of 19 districts: Bermel, Dila, Gomal, Gyan, Janikhel, Matakan, Naka, Omna, Sarobi, Sarrawzah, Sharan, Turwo, Urgun, Wazakhah,

⁽⁶⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Mother killed with 2 children in Khost airstrike*, 15 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/15/2-children-woman-die-khost-airstrike>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁶⁰⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Attack Police Outpost in Khost*, 15 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15611-taliban-attack-police-outpost-in-khost>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁶¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469cc3e4.html>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁶²⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/537220114.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁶³⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July–October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁶⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *3 mine planters blown up by own explosives in Khost province*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/3-mine-planters-blown-up-by-own-explosives-in-khost-province-6297>), accessed 10 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Explosion kill 2 police officers in Khost province*, 26 January 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-kill-2-police-officers-in-khost-province-3350>), accessed 10 October 2014; Khaama Press, *3 mine planters blown up by own explosives in Khost province*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/3-mine-planters-blown-up-by-own-explosives-in-khost-province-6297>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁶⁵⁾ ISW, *The haqqani network*, October 2010 (http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani_Network_0.pdf), accessed 14 November 2014; ISW, *The haqqani network*, March 2012 (http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani_StrategicThreatweb_29MAR_0.pdf), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁶⁶⁾ New York Times, *Afghan Militant Group Faces Unusual Discontent*, 5 November 2013 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/06/world/asia/afghan-militant-group-faces-unusual-discontent.html?pagewanted=all>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁶⁷⁾ New York Times, *2 Haqqani Militant Leaders Are Captured*, Afghan Officials Say, 16 October 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/17/world/asia/haqqani-leaders-arrested-afghanistan-khost.html?_r=0), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Paktia*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-paktia-province-0>), accessed 10 October 2014.

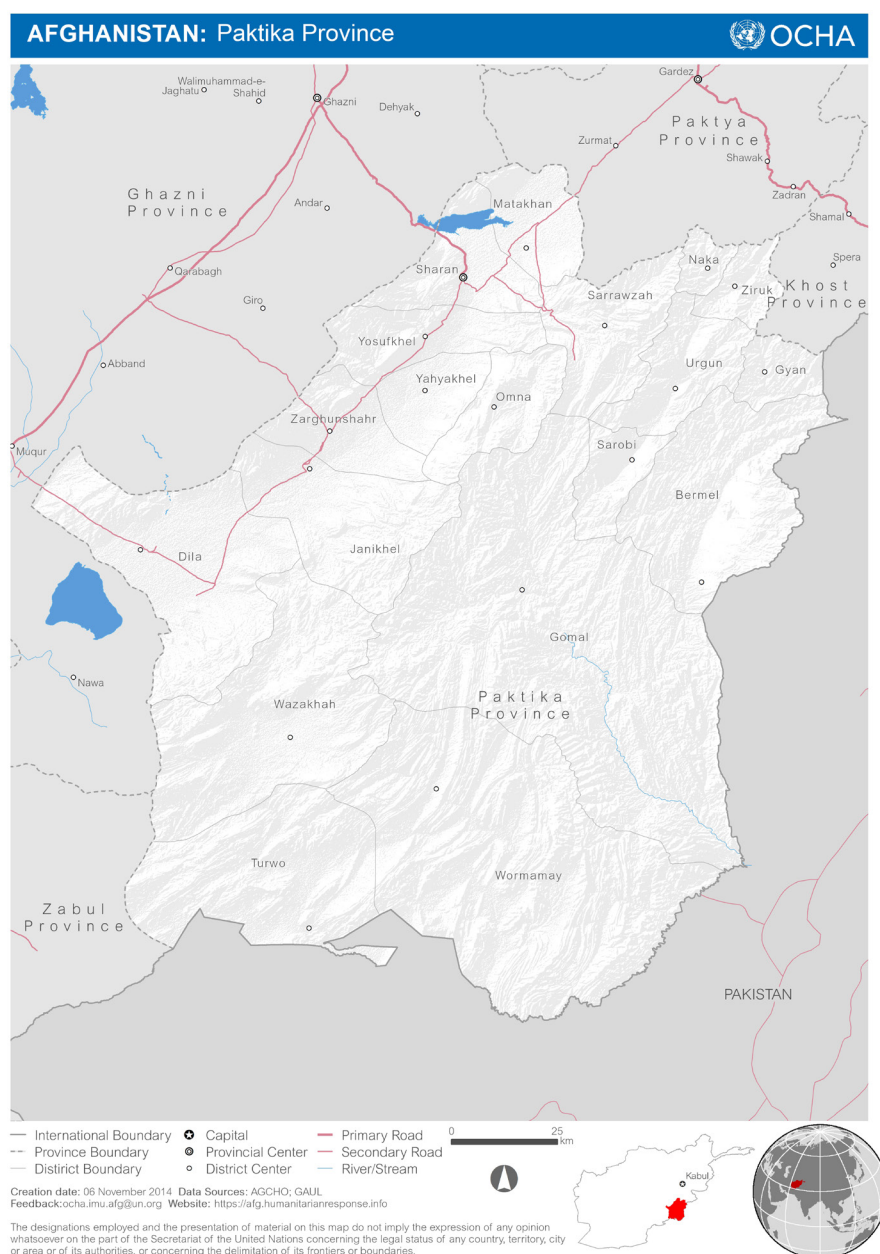
⁽⁶⁶⁹⁾ BBC, *Afghan market car bomb kills 42 in Paktika province*, 15 July 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28307857>), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background Profile of Paktia*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-paktia-province-0>), accessed 10 October 2014.

Wormamay, Yahyakhel, Yosufkhel, Zarghunshahr, Ziruk.⁽⁶⁷¹⁾ Sharana city is the provincial capital of the province.⁽⁶⁷²⁾

The district of Urgan is one of Paktika's safest areas, though members of the Haqqani insurgent network are thought to have a presence there.⁽⁶⁷³⁾

In September 2013, the provincial authorities stated that the province needed to complete multiple projects and develop its infrastructure. They said that, over the past few years, the province had been making progress after the completion of a few rehabilitation projects. Several schools and hospitals were built during the rehabilitation programme. As many as 20 hospitals were constructed while three more clinics were expected to be completed during the current fiscal year. At least 95 schools out of 344 were provided with new buildings while the construction of the remaining schools would be completed during 2013.⁽⁶⁷⁴⁾ According to estimates by the ACSO, the population of Paktika is 420,700.⁽⁶⁷⁵⁾



⁽⁶⁷¹⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁶⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Paktika administrative units*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/paktika-administrative-units>), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁷³⁾ BBC, *Afghan market car bomb kills 42 in Paktika province*, 15 July 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28307857>), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Paktika needs more projects to develop infrastructure: Residents*, 9 September 2013 (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/paktika-needs-more-projects-develop-infrastructure-residents>), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁷⁵⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

Paktika is among the volatile provinces in Afghanistan where anti-government armed insurgent groups are actively operating, including the Taliban and the Haqqani network.⁽⁶⁷⁶⁾ In February 2014, an additional force of 250 ALP personnel was deployed to three restive districts of southeastern province of Paktika, officials reported, in attempt to strengthen law and order ahead of the elections.⁽⁶⁷⁷⁾

Impact of the Violence

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Barmal		2	63		1		2		16	6		15		105
Sar Rawza		1	30	1			2		23	8			1	66
Dila		1	35				1		3	9		1		50
Urgon		1	11	1	1		6	1	8	10			4	43
Gayan		1	39						2			1		43
Yousufkhel			14		1	1	1		4	15		1		37
Sharana			5						7	18	2	2	1	35
Ziruk		1	26						3	2		2		34
Mata Khan			16	1	2		1		8	4		1		33
Janikhel			20		2		1		3	5				31
Zarghun Shahr	1	2	16		1		1		6	4				31
Waza Khwa		2	13	2			1		5	4		1		28
Omna		1	17						3	1				22
Gomal Shkin			13	1		1			4			3		22
Yahyakhel			6		2				7	4				19
Surobi			7				2		1	2				14
Worr Mamay			3	1			1		1	1				7
Turwo					1				1			2		4
Nika		1												1

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Paktika had 625 reported security incidents. The most volatile district was Barmal (see table).⁽⁶⁷⁸⁾

Several security operations led by the ANSF were conducted in the province to clear areas from insurgents. During these security operations arms and ammunitions were seized.⁽⁶⁷⁹⁾

⁽⁶⁷⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *Afghan commandos kill over 30 militants including Pakistanis in Paktika*, 19 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/afghan-commandos-kill-over-30-militants-including-pakistanis-in-paktika-6721>), accessed 18 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Pakistani rebel among 5 killed in Paktika province*, 27 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/pakistani-rebel-among-5-killed-in-paktika-province-3616>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ALP being deployed to more Paktika districts*, 26 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/26/alp-being-deployed-more-paktika-districts>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁷⁸⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁶⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Pakistanis among dozens killed in Paktika airstrike*, 19 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/19/pakistanis-among-dozens-killed-paktika-airstrike>), accessed 11 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *22 insurgents eliminated in Kunar clash*, 18 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/18/22-insurgents-eliminated-kunar-clash>), accessed 11 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Drone strike on border kills 7 militants*, 14 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/14/drone-strike-border-kills-7-militants>), accessed 11 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *18 militants eliminated in operations: Mol*, 12 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/12/18-militants-eliminated-operations-mol>), accessed 11 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *22 rebels eliminated in Paktika, Logar clashes*, 4 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/04/22-rebels-eliminated-paktika-logar-clashes>), accessed 11 November 2014; Tolonews, *41 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16192-41-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 11 November 2014; Tolonews, *37 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 23 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16078-37-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 11 November 2014; Tolonews, *47 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Afghan Raids*, 13 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14848-47-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-afghan-raids>), accessed 14 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *31 rebels killed in Paktika offensive*, 17 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/17/31-rebels-killed-paktika-offensive>), accessed 14 November 2014.

In April 2014, Afghan forces, supported by Western air power, killed at least 60 insurgents during a battle in southeastern Afghanistan near the border with Pakistan. Afghan Defense Ministry officials say at least five Afghan soldiers were killed, one Afghan soldier was abducted and six others were injured during the attacks.⁽⁶⁸⁰⁾ In May 2014, Afghan security forces seized an explosives-laden car in the district of Sar Rawza of southeastern Paktika province. Two people were detained in connection with explosives smuggling.⁽⁶⁸¹⁾ In July 2014, security institutions reported that special security measures were taken on the eve of Eid al-Fitr, which foiled many coordinated suicide attacks planned by armed insurgents. In Paktika, an alleged suicide bomber attempted to attack the centre of the province in a similar manner to an attack in the district of Urgon.⁽⁶⁸²⁾ In August 2014, the ANBP detained 27 Pakistani citizens, most of them armed with AK47 assault rifles and handguns, in Paktika. The group was travelling in a four-vehicle convoy, including a military vehicle.⁽⁶⁸³⁾ A military source reported in September 2014 that more than 30 insurgents were killed in a ground and air offensive in Paktika province. However, the Taliban claimed that the victims were civilians.⁽⁶⁸⁴⁾

Displacement

According to the latest updates from UNHCR, no IDPs originating from the province of Paktika have been profiled.⁽⁶⁸⁵⁾

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban and other insurgent groups are active in a number of districts in the province of Paktika.⁽⁶⁸⁶⁾

In July 2014, the Taliban denied responsibility for a car bombing on July 15 at a crowded market in the district of Urgon in Paktika which was thought to have killed 89 people. However, officials later lowered the death toll to 42.⁽⁶⁸⁷⁾ In May 2014, at least 27 insurgents, including two notorious Taliban commanders, were killed and another injured in an airstrike and clashes in the province of Paktika.⁽⁶⁸⁸⁾

In April 2014, a clash erupted between Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban. According to intelligence services, a number of Pakistani Taliban had crossed the border into Paktika to stage attacks on elections day.⁽⁶⁸⁹⁾ In a separate incident in April, 42 Taliban insurgents were killed when they stormed a military base. The Afghan forces were able to repulse the attack and killed 24 of the attackers on the spot. NATO forces were called to provide the Afghan forces with aerial support. NATO aircraft responded and killed 18 of the attackers. Four members of ANA and three from ANP were also injured in the clash.⁽⁶⁹⁰⁾

The Haqqanis maintain considerable support inside Pakistan's tribal areas. From there the Haqqanis transfer men and material to resource their terrorist campaign in Afghanistan's southeastern provinces of Khost, Paktika and Paktia onwards to the provinces surrounding Kabul.⁽⁶⁹¹⁾ The Pakistan-based Haqqani network is active in the area of Urgon, a border district with Pakistan's Waziristan region.⁽⁶⁹²⁾

⁽⁶⁸⁰⁾ RFE/RL, *Sixty Militants Killed In Battle With Afghan Troops Near Pakistan Border*, 30 April 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/sixty-militants-killed-in-battle-with-afghan-troops-near-pakistan-border/25367728.html>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Explosives-laden car seized in Paktika*, 2 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/02/explosives-laden-car-seized-paktika>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁸²⁾ Tolonews, *Public's Faith in ANSF War Potential Increases*, 31 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15775-publics-faith-in-ansf-war-potential-increases>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁸³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *27 Pakistanis detained in Paktika*, 28 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/28/27-pakistanis-detained-paktika>), accessed 11 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Pakistanis among dozens killed in Paktika airstrike*, 19 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/19/pakistanis-among-dozens-killed-paktika-airstrike>), accessed 11 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁸⁵⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May–October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁸⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *Afghan commandos kill over 30 militants including Pakistanis in Paktika*, 19 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/afghan-commandos-kill-over-30-militants-including-pakistanis-in-paktika-6721>), accessed 18 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Pakistani rebel among 5 killed in Paktika province*, 27 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/pakistani-rebel-among-5-killed-in-paktika-province-3616>), accessed 10 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁸⁷⁾ RFE/RL, *Taliban Denies Involvement In Paktika Bombing That Killed 89*, 16 July 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/paktika-taliban-bombing-denial/25458721.html>), accessed 14 November 2014; RFE/RL, *Afghan Officials Lower Death Toll From July 15 Market Blast*, 16 July 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-death-toll-revision-paktika-market-explosion/25458880.html>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁸⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Commanders among 27 rebels killed in Paktika*, 31 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/31/commanders-among-27-rebels-killed-paktika>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁸⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Clash erupts between Pakistani, Afghan Taliban*, 4 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/04/clash-erupts-between-pakistani-afghan-taliban>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁹⁰⁾ Ariana News, *42 Taliban militants killed in Paktika attack*, 29 April 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/42-taliban-militants-killed-in-paktika-attack/>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁹¹⁾ ISW, *The haqqani network*, March 2012 (http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani_StrategicThreatweb_29MAR_0.pdf), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁹²⁾ BBC, *Afghan market car bomb kills 42 in Paktika province*, 15 July 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28307857>), accessed 18 November 2014.

2.5. East

2.5.1. Laghman

Description of the province

Laghman province (capital Mehtarlam) consists of five districts (Alingar, Alishang, Dawlatshah, Mehtarlam/ Bad Pash, Qarghayi⁽⁶⁹³⁾) and is predominantly mountainous or semi-mountainous. The province is connected with Kabul and Nangarhar via a main road crossing the district of Qarghayi. According to the ACSO, 424,000 people live in the province.⁽⁶⁹⁴⁾ The main ethnic groups are Pashtuns, Tajiks and Gujjars. About 58% of the population speaks Pashtu while others communicate in Dari.⁽⁶⁹⁵⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Total
Mehtarlam		5	82	3	5	1	2	2		38	26	6			9	179
Alingar	2	8	80	2	10				1	15	7	4			6	135
Alishang	2	1	61		4					15	7	6			4	100
Qarghayi		1	21	1	1		3		1	20	9	2	1	1	9	70
Dawlatshah	1		25		1			1		7	1	1			3	40

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Laghman counted 524 reported security incidents. The most volatile district were Mehtarlam; Alingar and Alishang (see table)⁽⁶⁹⁶⁾. According to UNAMA, cited by UNOCHA⁽⁶⁹⁷⁾, between 1 September 2013 and 30 September 2014, there were between 51 and 150 victims in Mehtarlam and Alingar districts, between 26 and 50 victims in Alishang and Qarghayi districts and Dawlatshah district recorded between one and 25 victims. Civilians are the indirect victims of insurgent attacks against Afghan forces. For example, in August 2014, the explosion of a roadside bomb in Alishang district killed one woman and injured two others⁽⁶⁹⁸⁾ while a rocket attack killed two women and two children in Qarghayi district in June 2014⁽⁶⁹⁹⁾. Magnetic bombs placed under a target vehicle also led to civilian casualties. A fuel tanker that exploded in Qarghayi district in June 2014 killed two women and severely burned four people⁽⁷⁰⁰⁾ while a police car exploded in the city of Mehtarlam in May 2014, killing 18 civilians.⁽⁷⁰¹⁾

⁽⁶⁹³⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁶⁹⁴⁾ ACSO, *Settled Population of Laghman province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013*, (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Laghman%281%29.pdf>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁹⁵⁾ MRRD, *Laghman Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/242/Laghman%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁹⁶⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁶⁹⁷⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽⁶⁹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 policemen, civilian killed in various incidents*, 19 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/19/5-policemen-civilian-killed-various-incidents>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁶⁹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Faryab, Laghman violence claims 7 lives*, 14 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/14/faryab-laghman-violence-claims-7-lives>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 women dead in Laghman fuel tanker blast*, 18 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/18/2-women-dead-laghman-fuel-tanker-blast>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Women among 18 injured in Laghman blast*, 2 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/02/women-among-18-injured-laghman-blast>), accessed 23 October 2014.

In some instances, civilians are targeted deliberately by insurgents, especially in Alingar district. Targets there included civilian homes (August 2014⁽⁷⁰²⁾), or health centres where women and children await care and humanitarian aid (July 2014⁽⁷⁰³⁾). Insurgents attacked a passenger van in July 2014⁽⁷⁰⁴⁾ and people using sports grounds in January 2014⁽⁷⁰⁵⁾. Insurgents also use programmed remote-controlled blasts in public places such as bazars, as was the case in the city of Mehtarlam in July 2014⁽⁷⁰⁶⁾.

Displacement

Mainly due to harassment and intimidation by AGEs, dozens of families left Alingar, Alishang and others districts to reach Mehtarlam in the first half of 2014⁽⁷⁰⁷⁾ and the city of Kabul and Gardez, in Paktia Province, in January and June 2014⁽⁷⁰⁸⁾.

Actors in the conflict

According to the International Crisis Group, in 2011, HIA predominates in the province and there are an estimated 23 small Taliban groups⁽⁷⁰⁹⁾. The Haqqani network, equally active in 2012, was plotting attacks in Laghman province and neighbouring Kabul, while providing assistance to veterans of the IMU and Al Qaeda arriving from Nangarhar and moving north⁽⁷¹⁰⁾.

Insurgents carried out numerous attacks against representatives of law enforcement in September 2014⁽⁷¹¹⁾ and in the spring and summer of 2014 in the district of Alingar⁽⁷¹²⁾, bordering the province of Nuristan. Here, people rebelled



⁽⁷⁰²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *A rebel commander killed in Alingar*, 2 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/02/rebel-commander-killed-alingar>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 killed in attack on Laghman health clinic*, 22 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/22/3-killed-attack-laghman-health-clinic>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Local police among 6 killed in Laghman*, 22 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/22/local-police-among-6-killed-laghman>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰⁵⁾ RFE/RL, *Five shot dead on Afghan sporting Ground*, 24 January 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-attack-sports-field-laghman/25240806.html>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Laghman bombing leaves 1 dead, 14 injured*, 18 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/18/laghman-bombing-leaves-1-dead-14-injured>); Ariana News, *2 killed and 14 injured in mine blast in Laghman*, 18 July 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/regional/16-killed-in-mine-blast-in-laghman/>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January - October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,52fdcf684,0.html>), accessed 22 October 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,537220114,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁰⁹⁾ ICG, 'The Insurgency in Afghanistan's Heartland', *Asia Report n°207*, 27 June 2011 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/207%20The%20Insurgency%20in%20Afghanistans%20Heartland.pdf>), accessed 22 October 2014, p. 14.

⁽⁷¹⁰⁾ Dressler, J., *The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat*, ISW, March 2012 (https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani_StrategicThreatweb_29MAR_0.pdf), accessed 22 October 2014, p. 31.

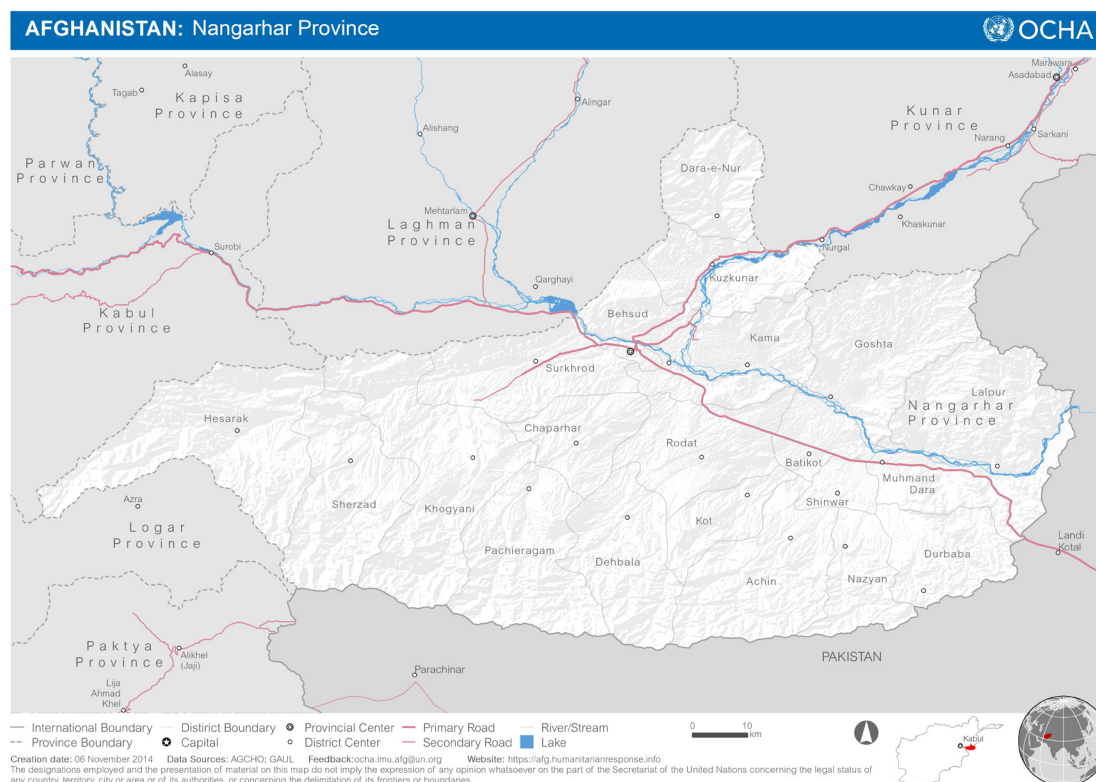
⁽⁷¹¹⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan policemen killed in Taliban attack in Laghman*, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16440-afghan-policemen-killed-in-taliban-attack-in-laghman>), accessed 27 October 2014. Tolonews, *Five Local police killed in Laghman*, 10 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16309-five-local-police-killed-in-laghman>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷¹²⁾ Tolonews, *3 police killed in Taliban attack in Laghman*, 29 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14700-3-police-killed-in-taliban-attack-in-laghman>), accessed 27 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *22 dead in Laghman fighting*, 12 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/12/22-dead-laghman-fighting>), accessed 27 October 2014.

against insurgents and helped the Afghan forces in one of their operations⁽⁷¹³⁾. Insurgents often use subterfuge, sometimes wearing a burqa for concealment⁽⁷¹⁴⁾. In addition, aerial bombing⁽⁷¹⁵⁾ and drones are used to target Taliban groups and their leaders, such as Zahid group⁽⁷¹⁶⁾ or a Zarqawi commander⁽⁷¹⁷⁾ in the Alingar district in September 2014. In neighbouring Qarghayi, Qahraman was named as an insurgent commander of a group planting roadside bombs.⁽⁷¹⁸⁾

2.5.2. Nangarhar

Description of the province



The Nangarhar province (capital Jalalabad) consists of 22 districts (Achin, Batkot, Behsud, Chaparhar, Dara-e-Nur, Dehbala, Durbaba, Goshta, Hesarak, Jalalabad, Kama, Khogyani, Kot, Kuzkunar, Lalpur, Muhmand Dara, Nazyan, Pachieragam, Rodat, Shinwar, Surkhrod, Sherzad⁽⁷¹⁹⁾) and is mainly mountainous or semi-mountainous⁽⁷²⁰⁾. Of the 1,436,000⁽⁷²¹⁾ inhabitants, 90% are Pashtuns while the remaining population is divided between Pachay, Tajiks, Gujjars and Kuchis.⁽⁷²²⁾

⁽⁷¹³⁾ Tolonews, *Two Afghan soldiers and seven Taliban killed in Laghman*, 16 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14557-two-afghan-soldiers-and-seven-taliban-killed-in-laghman>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Commander among 10 ALP personnel killed*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/21/commander-among-10-alp-personnel-killed>), accessed 23 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 killed in attack on Laghman health clinic*, 22 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/22/3-killed-attack-laghman-health-clinic>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *9 including civilian killed in ISAF strikes*, 17 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/17/9-including-civilian-killed-isaf-strikes>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Soldiers among 13 killed in raids blasts*, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/30/soldiers-among-13-killed-raids-blasts>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁷⁾ Khaama Press, *Notorious Taliban leader killed in NATO drone strike in Laghman*, 26 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/notorious-taliban-leader-killed-in-nato-drone-strike-in-laghman-6753>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 rebels blown up by own bomb in Laghman*, 19 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/19/4-rebels-blown-own-bomb-laghman>), accessed 23 October 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁹⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁷²⁰⁾ MRRD, *Nangarhar Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/244/Nangarhar%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁷²¹⁾ ACSO, *Settled Population of Nangarhar province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013*, (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Nangarhar%281%29.pdf>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁷²²⁾ MRRD, *Nangarhar Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/244/Nangarhar%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 20 October 2014, p. 3.

Impact of the violence

Since 2012, the security situation has deteriorated with an increase in attacks against ANSF on the main Bati Kot highway while the trunk road Torkham-Jalalabad has also become a target⁽⁷²³⁾. According to the Long War Journal (LWJ), “Nangarhar is a strategic province for both the Taliban and the Coalition. The province borders the Pakistani tribal agency of Khyber, and hosts the main supply route from Pakistan.”⁽⁷²⁴⁾ Given the presence of insurgents, some American drones are used to eliminate the Taliban⁽⁷²⁵⁾. The insecurity is also related to the competition between the provincial elite and the former governor Gul Aga Shirzai for the control of local resources⁽⁷²⁶⁾. In order to strengthen their presence, the insurgents take advantage of these rivalries, tribal conflicts, land disputes as well as the resistance against the eradication of opium cultivation, which has increased by 400 % between 2012 and 2013⁽⁷²⁷⁾. The increased presence of the Taliban affects the day-to-day lives of civilians, who, for fear of reprisals, avoid inviting singers and musicians to weddings⁽⁷²⁸⁾. Kidnapping and ransom demands - between USD300,000 and 1.5 million - have multiplied between March 2013 and January 2014. In one case, four children were kidnapped and killed. As a consequence parents fear leaving children at school.⁽⁷²⁹⁾ According to UNAMA, Nangarhar ranks fourth in terms of provinces where civilian victims are the most numerous⁽⁷³⁰⁾.

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Khogyani	7	14	141	17	21	1			2		17	35	1	4	1	9	1	271
Bati Kot	7	6	155	10	7	1	5	1			28	34	2	1	2	1		260
Chaparhar	3	3	127	24	13	1	1				32	27	4	3		5		243
Hesarak	1	5	215	2	2								5			12	1	243
Shinwar	2		118	11	10		2		1		38	33	2	2	3	3	4	229
Pachiera-gam	10	2	122	12	6		1		1		22	9	2			1	1	189
Jalalabad			3	37	3	1	5	1	4		40	57	10	3	2	4	3	173
Behsud	3		2	18	1	6	9	1		2	46	42	3	4	3	17	4	161
Dehbala	8	1	122	4	4						8	7	1			1		156
Achin	1	3	89	4	6	1	2				17	9	4			6		142
Surkhrod	4		32	6	7	3	8				20	30	1	2	2	1		116
Muhmand Dara		1	83	6			3		1		9	5	1			2	2	113
Sherzad	3	4	70		4						3	4	1	1	1	3		94
Rodat	3	1	25	7	3		1		2		20	9	5	1		1		78
Goshta	1	1	49	1							2	3	2			4		63
Kot	1	2	18	2		1	1		1		11	10	3					50
Lalpur	1		21	6	1						6	2	1			5		43

⁽⁷²³⁾ Mansfield, D., *From Bad They Made It Worse, The concentration of opium poppy in areas of conflict in the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar*, AREU, May 2014 (<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/NRM%20CS6%20ver%202%20%282%29.pdf>), accessed 20 October 2014, p. 12.

⁽⁷²⁴⁾ Roggio, B., *Taliban claim suicide assault on Jalalabad police HQ*, LWJ, 20 March 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/taliban_claim_suicid_1.php), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Key Taliban figures killed in drone strike*, 6 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/06/key-taliban-figures-killed-drone-strike>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷²⁶⁾ Mansfield, D., *From Bad They Made It Worse, The concentration of opium poppy in areas of conflict in the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar*, AREU, May 2014 (<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/NRM%20CS6%20ver%202%20%282%29.pdf>), accessed 20 October 2014, p. 12.

⁽⁷²⁷⁾ Jackson, A., *Politics and Governance in Afghanistan: the Case of Nangarhar Province*, AREU, May 2014 (<http://areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/Politics%20and%20Governance%20in%20Afghanistan%20the%20Case%20of%20Nangarhar%20Province.pdf>), accessed 20 October 2014, p. 27.

⁽⁷²⁸⁾ IWPR, ‘Afghan singers fall silent’, *ARR Issue 481*, 24 March 2014 (<http://iwpr.net/report-news/afghan-singers-fall-silent>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Sharp rise in kidnappings worries Nangarharis*, 21 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/21/sharp-rise-kidnappings-worries-nangarharis>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷³⁰⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2014*, July 2014 (http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=m_XyrUQDKZg%3D&), accessed 22 October 2014, p. 23.

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Nazyan		5	17	2							6	8	1					39
Kuzkunar		1	6	4		1	2				5	10		1	1			31
Kama			3	1				1	1		5	14		1				26
Durbaba	2	1	12	2	1						2							20
Dara-e Nur			2			1	1				2	4						10

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Nangarhar counted 2,750 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Khogyani, Bati Kot, Charparhar and Hesarak and Shinwar with more than 200 incidents (see table)⁽⁷³¹⁾. According to UNAMA, cited by UNOCHA, none of the districts is spared from violence and the districts of Khogyani, Chaparhar, Behsud and Achin are where the numbers of civilian victims are the highest - between 51 and 150 from 1 September 2013 to 30 September 2014⁽⁷³²⁾.

In January 2014, the bombing of a bazar in the capital killed a child and wounded eight others⁽⁷³³⁾. In March 2014, an explosive-laden mini-truck exploded at dawn near a police station paving the way for six armed men to access the compound⁽⁷³⁴⁾. At least one civilian died after a magnetic bomb planted under the car of Nazyan's district governor exploded and killed him and his bodyguard. Several passersby were also wounded⁽⁷³⁵⁾. In May 2014, a roadside bomb targeting a police car killed four civilians⁽⁷³⁶⁾. Government buildings and police stations in the province's capital, Jalalabad, located in the district of Behsud, have been subject to violent, repeated and simultaneous attacks which also affect civilians. In July 2014, the explosion of a bomb in a motorbike killed a police officer and seriously wounded a child⁽⁷³⁷⁾.

In addition to being collateral victims, civilians are also directly targeted. In January 2014, two bombs exploded as a wedding party was passing through Achin district⁽⁷³⁸⁾. Other examples include a roadside bomb explosion on a Saturday afternoon close to a Jalalabad school in February 2014⁽⁷³⁹⁾, the explosion of a roadside bomb on an ambulance in Behsud's district in July 2014⁽⁷⁴⁰⁾, and three students killed at Khogyani in the same month⁽⁷⁴¹⁾.

UNAMA, cited by UNOCHA, states that between 26 and 50 victims were recorded in the districts of Batikot, Pachieragam, Sherzad et Hesarak between 1 September 2013 and 30 September 2014⁽⁷⁴²⁾. Between 29 July and 1 August 2014⁽⁷⁴³⁾, several police stations were attacked simultaneously in Hesarak district by hundreds of Taliban

⁽⁷³¹⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁷³²⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽⁷³³⁾ Tolonews, *8 Year-Old Girl Killed, 8 Others Injured in Nangarhar Blast*, 8 January 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13764-8-year-old-girl-killed-8-others-injured-in-nangarhar-blast>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷³⁴⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Launch Deadly Attack on Nangarhar Police Station*, 20 March 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14266-taliban-launch-deadly-attack-on-nangarhar-police-station>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷³⁵⁾ AFP, *Magnetic bomb kills Afghan district governor: official*, 8 March 2014 (<http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/magnetic-bomb-kills-afghan-district-governor-official>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷³⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Four Killed in Attack in Nangarhar*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14840-breaking-attack-on-the-directorate-of-justices-office-in-jalalabad-city>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷³⁷⁾ Tolonews, *A Civilian and Police Killed in Nangarhar Blast*, 12 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15569-a-civilian-and-police-killed-in-nangarhar-blast>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷³⁸⁾ Tolonews, *Two civilians killed eight injured in Nangarhar's twin blasts*, 26 January 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13606-two-civilians-killed-eight-injured-in-nangarhars-twin-blasts>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷³⁹⁾ Khaama press, *Explosion in Jalalabad city leaves 10 civilians killed or injured*, 8 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-in-jalalabad-city-leaves-10-civilians-killed-or-injured-3408>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁴⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Ambulance damaged by roadside bomb*, 15 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/15/ambulance-damaged-roadside-bomb>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Students among 5 killed in fresh violence*, 20 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/20/students-among-5-killed-fresh-violence>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁴²⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽⁷⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *78 rebels suffered casualties in Hesarak attacks*, 1 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/01/78-rebels-suffered-casualties-hesarak-attacks>), accessed 20 October 2014.

fighters because “[Hesarak district’s] proximity to such important strategic locations [bordering districts] has raised concerns about the heightened violence spilling over into areas that are traditionally more stable”⁽⁷⁴⁴⁾. This attack killed several civilians⁽⁷⁴⁵⁾.

In the remaining districts, the prevalence of incidents ranged between one and 25 and affected both law enforcement staff and civilians. For instance, in June 2014 a mortar bomb hit a family home located in the district of Muhmand Dara⁽⁷⁴⁶⁾. The school of Camp Kabuli, located in Rodat district, was subject to a rocket attack in May 2014⁽⁷⁴⁷⁾. In the latest UNOCHA report⁽⁷⁴⁸⁾ no information was given on the number of victims in the district of Durbaba. This district, however, suffered a large-scale attack on 28 September in retaliation for the deaths of more than 100 insurgents killed by the Afghan army⁽⁷⁴⁹⁾.

Displacement

In January 2014, UNHCR counted more than 500 internally displaced persons in this province⁽⁷⁵⁰⁾. In the following months, several hundred sought refuge in Jalalabad or in neighbouring provinces “due to harassment and intimidation by AGEs as well as conflict between AGEs and ANSF”⁽⁷⁵¹⁾. In August 2014, 220 families were displaced from Khogyani, Chapahar, Surkhrod and the Nazyan districts of Nangarhar and Marawara, Shigal wa Sheltan and Dangam districts of Kunar to Surkhrod, Behsud, Kuzkunar and Jalalabad city⁽⁷⁵²⁾.

Actors in the conflict

In 2012, the Haqqani network was predominantly present in the districts of Hesarak, Sherzad, Charpahar and Jalalabad city⁽⁷⁵³⁾. The porous nature of Afghanistan’s southern border with the Pakistani Kurram Tribal Agency enabled the family-based Haqqani network in Nangarhar to use this province to facilitate the infiltration and move IMU fighters towards Kabul and northern Afghanistan⁽⁷⁵⁴⁾. The Taliban, as well as groups affiliated with Hezb-e Islami and the Pakistani Taliban, are also present in the district of Khogyani⁽⁷⁵⁵⁾. During the surrender of a group of seven Taliban fighters, their chief, Naqibullah, confirmed being paid 15,000 Pakistani Rupees in monthly salary by the Pakistani intelligence service⁽⁷⁵⁶⁾. A large number of Pakistan Taliban have been identified among the victims of the Afghan Army in the province of Nangarhar⁽⁷⁵⁷⁾ and the Lashkar-e Islam⁽⁷⁵⁸⁾ banned in Pakistan is still active in this province⁽⁷⁵⁹⁾.

⁽⁷⁴⁴⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Attack Hesarak District in Nangarhar*, 2 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15794-taliban-attack-heasark-district-in-nangarhar>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁴⁵⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Insurgents Attack Afghan Forces Outposts in Nangarhar*, 29 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15752-taliban-insurgents-attack-afghan-forces-outposts-in-nangarhar>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Mortar-shell causes civilian casualties*, 20 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/20/mortar-shell-causes-civilian-casualties>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁴⁷⁾ Tolonews, *School girl killed in Nangarhar*, 14 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14870-school-girl-killed-in-nangarhar>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁴⁸⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014.

⁽⁷⁴⁹⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Attack Nangarhar’s Dur Baba District*, 28 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16548-taliban-attack-nangarhars-dur-baba-district>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁵⁰⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, February 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,53296caa4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁵¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, April 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,5385882b4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁵²⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁵³⁾ Dressler, J., *The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat*, ISW, March 2012 (https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani_StrategicThreatweb_29MAR_0.pdf), accessed 20 October 2014, p. 30.

⁽⁷⁵⁴⁾ Dressler, J., *The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat*, ISW, March 2012 (https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani_StrategicThreatweb_29MAR_0.pdf), accessed 20 October 2014, p. 30.

⁽⁷⁵⁵⁾ Mansfield, D., *From Bad They Made It Worse, The concentration of opium poppy in areas of conflict in the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar*, AREU, May 2014, (<http://areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/NRM%20CS6%20ver%202%20%282%29.pdf>), accessed 20 October 2014, p. 13.

⁽⁷⁵⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Militant group shuns insurgency in Nangarhar*, 11 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/11/militant-group-shuns-insurgency-nangarhar>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Nearly 100 killed in Nangarhar, Uruzgan clashes*, 25 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/25/nearly-100-killed-nangarhar-uruzgan-clashes>), accessed 21 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *6 Pakistanis among 23 rebels killed*, 6 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/02/6-pakistanis-among-23-rebels-killed>), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁵⁸⁾ See Glossary.

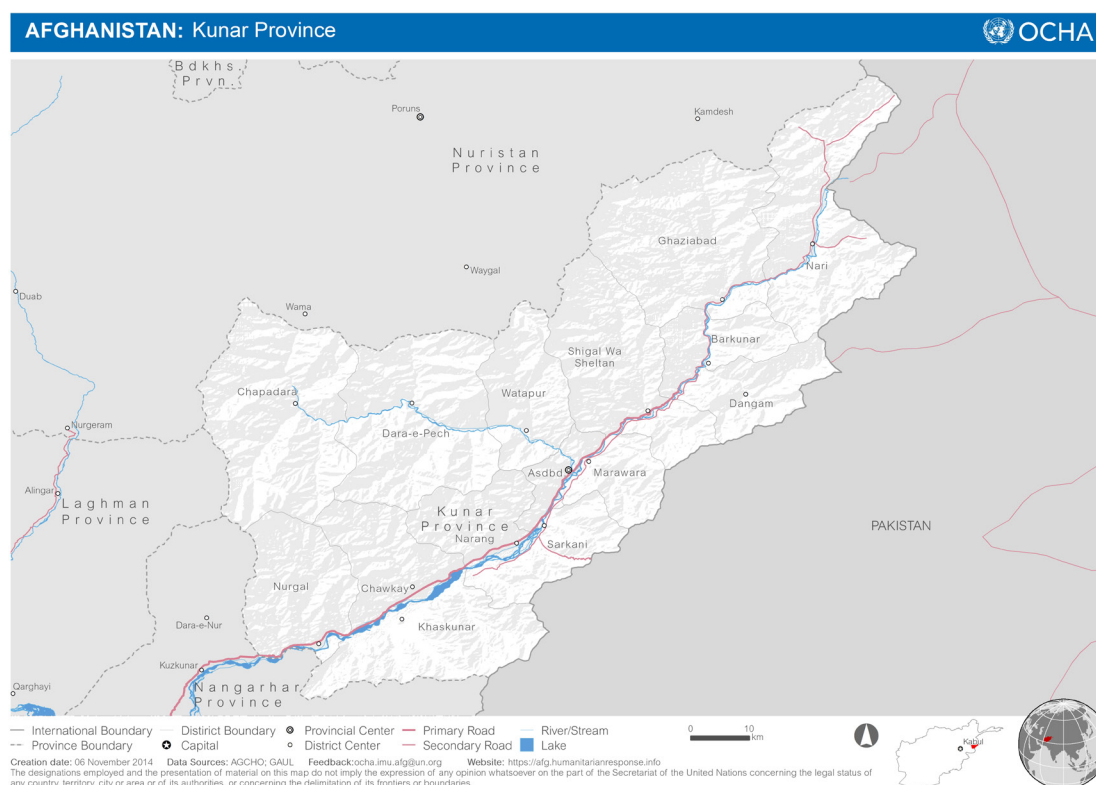
⁽⁷⁵⁹⁾ Roggio, B., *US drone strikes target Lashkar-e-Islam fighters in eastern Afghanistan*, LWJ, 14 May 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/us_drone_strikes_tar_2.php), accessed 21 October 2014.

According to the LWJ, the Peshawar Regional Military Shura (one of the Taliban's four military councils) sponsors attacks in the province of Nangarhar and the Tora Bora Military Front⁽⁷⁶⁰⁾ led by Anwarul Haq Mujahid also operates in this region⁽⁷⁶¹⁾. Since February 2010, Qari Rahmat is the Taliban chief of Achin district and leads 300 men⁽⁷⁶²⁾.

2.5.3. Kunar

Description of the province

Kunar province is composed of 15 districts: Asadabad, Barkunar, Chapadara, Chawkay, Dangam, Dara-e-Pech, Ghaziabad, Khaskunar, Marawara, Narang, Nari, Nurgal, Sarkani, Shigal wa Sheltan, Watapur.⁽⁷⁶³⁾ Its capital, Asadabad, is cut by the main road that links Jalalabad (Nangarhar administrative centre) to the Nuristan province and Pakistan. According to the ACSO, the population is 424,000⁽⁷⁶⁴⁾ and mostly Pashtun⁽⁷⁶⁵⁾. It has a 170 kilometre border with the Pakistani tribal areas.⁽⁷⁶⁶⁾



Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

In 2013, Kunar was the fifth most violent province with an average of three to four insurgents' attacks per day. The Chapadara district saw a 70% increase in attacks in 2013⁽⁷⁶⁷⁾.

⁽⁷⁶⁰⁾ See Glossary.

⁽⁷⁶¹⁾ Roggio, B., *Taliban claim suicide assault on Jalalabad police HQ*, LWJ, 20 March 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/taliban_claim_suicid_1.php), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁶²⁾ Roggio, B., *US adds Taliban hawala, owner, and commander to terrorist list*, LWJ, 14 August 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/us_adds_taliban_hawa.php), accessed 21 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁶³⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁷⁶⁴⁾ ACSO, *Settled Population of Kunar province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013*, (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Kunarha%281%29.pdf>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁶⁵⁾ MRRD, *Kunar Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/152/Khas%20Kunar%20Summary%20Finalized.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽⁷⁶⁶⁾ Roggio, B., *Quetta airbase attacks carried out by Pakistani Taliban*, IMU, LWJ, 17 August 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/quetta_airbase_attac.php), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁶⁷⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, Report N°256*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.aspx>), accessed 3 November 2014, p. 19.

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Mine/UXO incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Dangam	4	5	50	1	2				2		1			146		211
Sarkani	3	9	101	6	5			1	10	15	2			21		173
Marawara	2	10	88		1				7	10	1			33		152
Nari	13	8	75	1	9	1			4	1	3		1	2		118
Ghaziabad	1	10	71	2	4				9	4	3					104
Shigal wa Sheltan	2	3	31			3			6	2	2			53		102
Chapadara			70	2					14	4	2					92
Nurgal			51		1		1		7	7	1					68
Chawkay	3	1	57						2	2	1					66
Asadabad	1	1	35	1					3	3	2		1	13	1	61
Watapur	3	4	37		3				8					2		57
Dara-e Pech		1	39		1		1		10	2	1			1		56
Narang			29						3	4						36
Bar Kunar	2	3	18						1	1	4			4		33
Khaskunar	1	1	8	2	1				5	7				4		29

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Kunar counted 1,358 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Dangam, Sarkani, Marawara, Nari and Shigal wa Sheltang with more than 100 incidents (see table)⁽⁷⁶⁸⁾. According to UNAMA, cited by UNOCHA, there were between 51 and 150 civilian casualties in Chapadara, Sarkani, Dangam and Nari districts from September 2013 until August 2014⁽⁷⁶⁹⁾.

The Taliban attacked security posts with several hundred men in the Nari district, and, in particular, in the Ghaziabad district⁽⁷⁷⁰⁾. They also launched simultaneous attacks in several districts between February and September 2014⁽⁷⁷¹⁾, surprise attacks against military convoys (Chapadara district) in September 2014⁽⁷⁷²⁾ and army patrols (Sarkani district) in February 2014⁽⁷⁷³⁾. The Afghan security forces retaliated with large-scale operations, often assisted by civilians. This was the case in the Nari district in August 2014⁽⁷⁷⁴⁾. Children are the indirect victims of insurgents' unexploded

⁽⁷⁶⁸⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁷⁶⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽⁷⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Militants launch group attacks on security posts*, 15 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/15/militants-launch-group-attacks-security-posts>), accessed 4 November 2014; Tolonews, *20 Afghan Soldiers Killed in Kunar Attack*, 23 February 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13953-20-afghan-soldiers-killed-in-taliban-attack-in-kunar>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁷¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Soldiers among 18 killed in Kunar clashes*, 13 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/13/soldiers-among-18-killed-kunar-clashes>), accessed 4 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Rebels launch attacks in 8 Kunar towns*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/12/rebels-launch-attacks-8-kunar-towns>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 insurgents killed in attack on police post*, 2 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/09/2-insurgents-killed-attack-police-post>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁷³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *9 Insurgents Killed in Kunar Clashes*, 15 February 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13856-9-insurgents-killed-in-kunar-clashes>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Residents help repel Narai attack: Jalala*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/11/residents-help-repel-narai-attack-jalala>), accessed 4 November 2014.

mortars with which they play as occurred in August 2014 and in June 2014 in Shigal wa Sheltan district⁽⁷⁷⁵⁾. Other similar incidents include roadside bombs in June 2014 in Dangam district⁽⁷⁷⁶⁾, rocket launches in Abadabad district in June 2014 and Marawara district in May 2014⁽⁷⁷⁷⁾ and mines in Marawara district in January 2014⁽⁷⁷⁸⁾.

But insurgents also specifically target civilians. For example, 12 elders, close to the government, were held hostage in the Marawara district⁽⁷⁷⁹⁾ where several civilian houses were also set on fire in September 2014, and repeated threats caused the departure of 154 families⁽⁷⁸⁰⁾. People suspected of spying for the government were arbitrarily executed in March 2014 in Sarkani district⁽⁷⁸¹⁾ and in September 2014 in Nari district. Insurgents also carried out suicide attacks in public spaces such as banks in Asadabad district in January 2014⁽⁷⁸²⁾. Civilians were also casualties of coalition airstrikes⁽⁷⁸³⁾ and Pakistani army missiles⁽⁷⁸⁴⁾ in July and September 2014. On 31 May 2014, after six days of firing, it was estimated that 862 missiles were launched from Pakistan to the Shigal Wa Sheltang and Dangam districts⁽⁷⁸⁵⁾. Pakistan argued that these launches targeted insurgents who attacked their national territory from these Afghan districts⁽⁷⁸⁶⁾.

Displacement

Between January and May 2014, dozens of families left the Marawara, Nari and Watapur districts to go to the regional capital⁽⁷⁸⁷⁾. The IDPs number increased considerably in June with 410 families (2,302 people) displaced from Dangam, Shigal and Marawara districts⁽⁷⁸⁸⁾. In July 2014, Kunar was third on the list of provinces with the most IDPs for the first six months of 2014⁽⁷⁸⁹⁾. The causes for displacement were generalised violence, insurgents' harassment⁽⁷⁹⁰⁾ and the launch of Pakistani rockets⁽⁷⁹¹⁾.

⁽⁷⁷⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kunar explosion leaves 2 dead*, 18 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/18/kunar-explosion-leaves-2-dead>), accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kunar explosion leaves 2 children dead*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/28/kunar-explosion-leaves-2-children-dead>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁷⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 civilians killed, 2 hurt in Kunar blast*, 26 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/26/2-civilians-killed-2-hurt-kunar-blast>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 boys killed in Kunar militants attack*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/21/2-boys-killed-kunar-militants-attack>), accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *1 child killed, 5 hurt in Kunar mortar attack*, 17 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/17/1-child-killed-5-hurt-kunar-mortar-attack>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *1 civilian killed, 2 injured in Kunar blast*, 17 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/17/1-civilian-killed-2-injured-kunar-blast>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban torch Kunar ALP personnel's houses*, 10 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/10/taliban-torch-kunar-arp-personnel%E2%80%99s-houses>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁰⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Burn Down Civilian Homes in Kunar*, 17 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16399-taliban-burn-down-civilian-homes-in-kunar>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban kill students on spying charges*, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/20/taliban-kill-students-spying-charges>), accessed 4 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Rebels kill 2 civilians in Kunar on spy charge*, 11 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/11/rebels-kill-2-civilians-kunar-spy-charge>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸²⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Attack Kunar and Khost Provinces*, 25 March 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14327-taliban-attack-kunar-and-khost-provinces>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Coalition airstrike kills 11 civilians in Kunar*, 10 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/10/coalition-airstrike-kills-11-civilians-kunar>), accessed 4 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *12 dead in US drone strike, explosion*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/01/12-dead-us-drone-strike-explosion>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁴⁾ Tolonews, *Missile Attack Destroys Civilian House in Kunar*, 23 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16481-missile-attack-destroyed-civilian-house-in-kunar>), accessed 4 November 2014; Tolonews, *Two Civilians Killed in Pakistani Shelling in Kunar*, 8 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16287-two-civilians-killed-in-pakistani-shelling-in-kunar>), accessed 4 November 2014; Tolonews, *Teenager Injured by Pakistan Shelling on Kunar*, 27 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15734-teenager-injured-by-pakistan-shelling-on-kunar>), accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Rebel-fired rocket kills 2 children in Kunar*, 17 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/17/rebel-fired-rocket-kills-2-children-kunar>), accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 girls injured in Pakistani shelling into Kunar*, 1 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/01/4-girls-injured-pakistani-shelling-kunar>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Pakistani troops fire 862 rockets into Kunar*, 31 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/31/pakistani-troops-fire-862-rockets-kunar>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁶⁾ Foschini, F., *Footsloggers, Turncoats and Enforcers: The fight along the eastern border*, AAN, 18 August 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/footsloggers-turncoats-and-enforcers-the-fight-along-the-eastern-border/>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January – May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, June 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,53d601d24,0.html>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁹⁰⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, June 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,53d601d24,0.html>), accessed 4 November 2014.

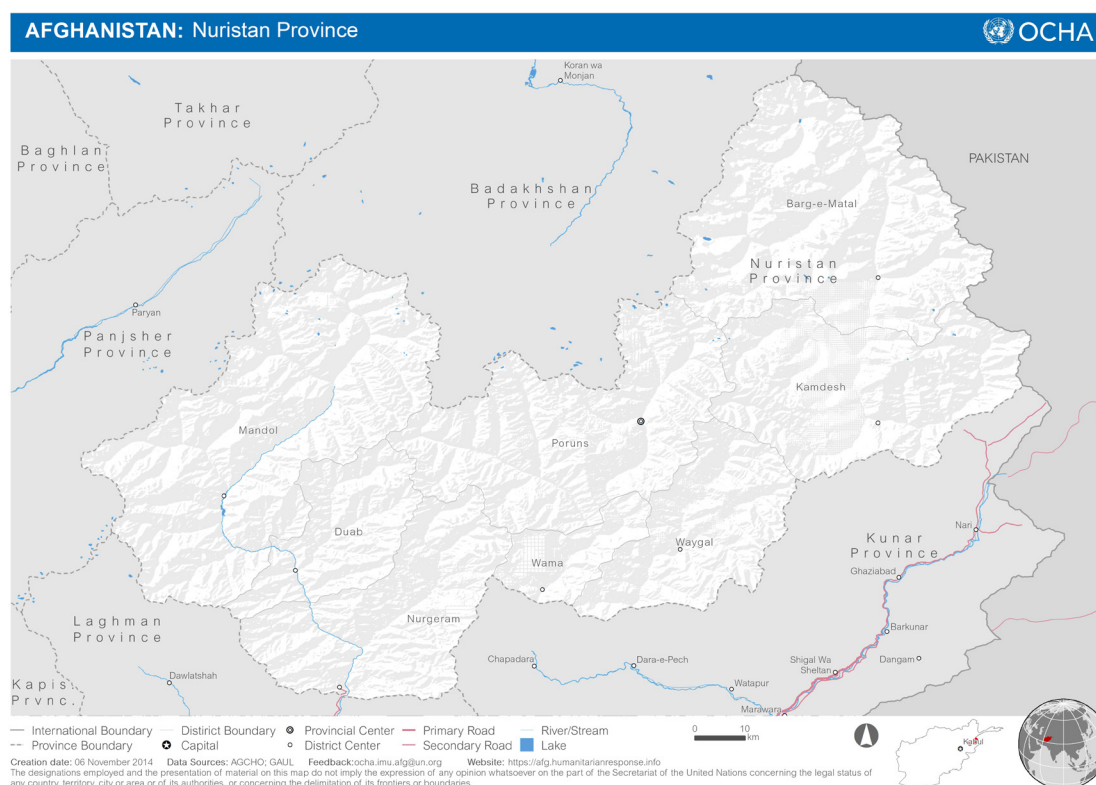
⁽⁷⁹¹⁾ Tolonews, *Pakistan Intensifies Shelling On Afghan Villages*, 28 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15029-pakistan-intensifies-shelling-on-afghan-villages>), accessed 4 November 2014.

Actors in the conflict

The activity of several insurgent groups is concentrated within this province due to its 170-kilometre border with the Pakistani tribal zones: the Pakistani Taliban, in the person of Qari Zia Rahman⁽⁷⁹²⁾, Harakat-ul-Mujahideen and Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan⁽⁷⁹³⁾ conduct operations. At the same time, Laskar-e Taiba and Al Qaeda operate training camps in this province⁽⁷⁹⁴⁾. The Afghan Taliban's shadow governor, Noor Qasim Sabari, was killed in an airstrike in April 2014 in Kunar. Insurgents' presence has been reported in 11 out of the 15 Kunar districts⁽⁷⁹⁵⁾. In Ghaziabad district, two Taliban chiefs were killed by the ANA: Din Mohammad and Hakimullah⁽⁷⁹⁶⁾. Moreover, Al Qaeda's leader, in the Kunar and Nuristan provinces, is Farouq al Qahtani who works with Al Qaeda's allies in the province⁽⁷⁹⁷⁾.

2.5.4. Nuristan

Description of the province



This eastern province borders Pakistan. In 2010-2011, it had a completely rural population of 140,900 people. Its population is ethnically composed of 99% Nuristanis who can be divided into several subgroups: Kats, Kunish, Pashayi, Wama and Paroni⁽⁷⁹⁸⁾. The province Nuristan is made up of the following districts: Barg-e-Matal, Duab, Kamdesh, Mandol, Nurgeram, Poruns, Wama, Waygal.⁽⁷⁹⁹⁾ The mountainous topography of the province makes it difficult to

⁽⁷⁹²⁾ Roggio, B., *Quetta airbase attacks carried out by Pakistani Taliban*, IMU, LWJ, 17 August 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/quetta_airbase_attac.php), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁹³⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition*, Report N°256, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.aspx>), accessed 3 November 2014, p. 23.

⁽⁷⁹⁴⁾ Roggio, B., *Harakat-ul-Mujahideen 'operates terrorist training camps in eastern Afghanistan'*, LWJ, 8 August 2014 (<http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/harakat-ul-mujahidee.php>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁹⁵⁾ Roggio, B., *Taliban's shadow governor for Kunar reported killed in US airstrike*, LWJ, 10 April 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/04/talibans_shadow_gove_1.php), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban Insurgents Killed In Kunar Clash*, 18 September 2014 (<http://www.tolnews.com/en/afghanistan/16417-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-kunar-clash>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁹⁷⁾ Joscelyn, T., *Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan: An enduring threat*, LWJ, 20 May 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/al_qaeda_in_afghanis.php), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁹⁸⁾ MRRD, *Nuristan provincial profile*, n.d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/246/Nuristan%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁹⁹⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

access. Its access proves even impossible in winter⁽⁸⁰⁰⁾. This is perhaps the most isolated and most neglected province of the country⁽⁸⁰¹⁾. Despite international aid, Nuristan has not experienced sufficient development, mainly due to the insecurity in the province⁽⁸⁰²⁾.

Impact of the violence

The province is volatile and highly insecure. Armed opposition groups operate openly in several of its districts⁽⁸⁰³⁾. Several Afghan officials have recognised the insecurity prevailing in the province, as was the case of the Mol⁽⁸⁰⁴⁾. According to another Afghan official, 70% of Nuristan is considered under the control of the Taliban who, with such expansion, were able to cut off the provincial capital from the rest of the province. The same official indicates that he fears a “humanitarian disaster” in the province if nothing is done by the central government⁽⁸⁰⁵⁾. Another high official, Izzatullah Halim, provincial director of the IEC, also recognises that most of the districts in the province are plagued by security problems linked to the presence of insurgents⁽⁸⁰⁶⁾. For the people of Nuristan, insecurity lies in the security forces’ weakness, poor management of local authorities and intervention of intelligence agencies from neighbouring countries⁽⁸⁰⁷⁾.

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽⁸⁰⁸⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	IED Detonated	Intimidation	Stand-off attack	Total
Kamdesh	1	12	45		2	2		2	64
Duab	1	1	6		1		3	1	13
Waygal			1		1	6	1		9
Barg-e-Matal			7				1		8
Nurgeram			3	1		1	2		7
Poruns						1			1
Mandol			1						1

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Nuristan counted 103 reported security incidents (see table)⁽⁸⁰⁹⁾.

Incidents that occurred in the province cannot be reported exhaustively. Only the most important, in terms of magnitude, will be mentioned. Violence taking place in the province results from organised attacks by insurgents as well as security operations launched by security forces. For instance, on the night of 10 July 2014, the Taliban attacked a police post in the eastern district of Barg-e Matal. According to the head of the district, five Taliban were killed. Three soldiers, two civilians and one policeman were injured. According to the Taliban, two security forces were

⁽⁸⁰⁰⁾ MRRD, *Nuristan provincial profile*, n.d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/246/Nuristan%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁰¹⁾ The Economist, *Feuding in Afghanistan, A little Hundred Years’ War*, 22 May 2014 (<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2014/05/feuding-afghanistan>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁰²⁾ Ariana News, *Pakistan military disguised as Taliban attacks locals in Nuristan*, 16 May 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/regional/pakistan-military-disguised-as-taliban-attack-locals-in-nuristan/>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁰³⁾ Khaama Press, *Lashkar-e-Taiba setting up terrorist camps in Nuristan*, 5 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/lashkar-e-taiba-setting-up-terrorist-camps-in-nuristan-province-6185>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁰⁴⁾ Ariana News, *70% of Nuristan under Taliban’s control*, 25 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/70-of-nuristan-under-taliban-control/>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁰⁵⁾ Ariana News, *70% of Nuristan under Taliban’s control*, 25 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/70-of-nuristan-under-taliban-control/>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Nuristan residents seek security ahead of runoff*, 27 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/27/nuristan-residents-seek-security-ahead-runoff>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁰⁷⁾ Ariana News, *70% of Nuristan under Taliban’s control*, 25 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/70-of-nuristan-under-taliban-control/>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁰⁸⁾ No incidents reported for Wama district.

⁽⁸⁰⁹⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

killed⁽⁸¹⁰⁾. On 31 July 2014, dozens of Afghan and Pakistani Taliban fighters launched coordinated attacks on several security checkpoints in the same district⁽⁸¹¹⁾. August 2014 was a particularly violent month. Several operations were conducted during this month. Fierce fighting took place between security forces and armed opposition activists on 19⁽⁸¹²⁾ or 20 August 2014⁽⁸¹³⁾. Just before this date, scores of insurgents launched attacks on security checkpoints in the district of Duab⁽⁸¹⁴⁾. Anonymous sources⁽⁸¹⁵⁾, but also the governor of the province, Hafiz Abdul Qayoum, argue that the western district of Duab eventually fell to the Taliban after three days of fighting against security forces. The governor of the province said he sought, in vain, for help from the central authorities. According to an official source, the three-day battle resulted in the death of three security forces and eight Taliban fighters. The number of potential civilian casualties is not clear⁽⁸¹⁶⁾. Following a military operation⁽⁸¹⁷⁾, on 28 August 2014, the ANA declared it had regained control of the district. Clashes between the ANA and the insurgents left several people dead, including 28 insurgents. Among the latter were two Taliban commanders, Mullah Agha Muhammad and Naimatullah⁽⁸¹⁸⁾.

Victims

Between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014, most casualties occurred in the central and eastern districts of the province. The number of civilian casualties ranged between one and 25 in these districts, according to UNAMA, cited by UNOCHA. One district, Kamdesh, had a higher number of civilian casualties - between 26 and 50⁽⁸¹⁹⁾.

Regarding targets, sources consulted refer to mostly attacks against the police. The Taliban's attack on a police post, in the district of Barg-e Matal, on the night of 10 July 2014, is one such example⁽⁸²⁰⁾. Sources do not provide specific examples of insurgent actions targeting civilians. Also, sources do not identify privileged places of action.

Displacement

No precise data is available regarding forced displacements. In August 2014, UNHCR cited unverified information on the forced displacement of 1,000 people in several northeastern provinces, including Nuristan⁽⁸²¹⁾.

Actors in the conflict

Several armed opposition groups are present in the province of Nuristan, primarily the Taliban⁽⁸²²⁾ and the Haqqani Network. Both groups are said to control several districts of the province⁽⁸²³⁾. Tribal leaders in the province warn of the risk of Taliban expansion to other northern provinces⁽⁸²⁴⁾. Another group whose presence is noted is the HIA. The presence of Al Qaeda is also mentioned⁽⁸²⁵⁾. According to US intelligence, Al Qaeda began to resettle in

⁽⁸¹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *22 rebels killed in Kunar, Nuristan clashes*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/11/22-rebels-killed-kunar-nuristan-clashes>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹¹⁾ Khaama Press, *19 Taliban militants, 4 policemen killed in Nuristan clashes*, 1 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/19-taliban-militants-4-policemen-killed-in-nuristan-clashes-6507>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹²⁾ Khaama Press, *Heavy clashes reported in eastern Nuristan province*, 20 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/heavy-clashes-reported-in-eastern-nuristan-province-8467>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Heavy fighting cuts off Doab district*, 20 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/20/heavy-fighting-cuts-doab-district>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *Heavy clashes reported in eastern Nuristan province*, 20 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/heavy-clashes-reported-in-eastern-nuristan-province-8467>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Heavy fighting cuts off Doab district*, 20 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/20/heavy-fighting-cuts-doab-district>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Du Ab District of Nuristan Fall into Taliban Hand*, 20 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16037-du-ab-district-of-nuristan-falls-into-taliban-hands>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Afghan Army launches operation in Nuristan*, 27 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/27/afghan-army-launches-operation-nuristan>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Doab district retaken from militants*, 28 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/28/doab-district-retaken-militants>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽⁸²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *22 rebels killed in Kunar, Nuristan clashes*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/11/22-rebels-killed-kunar-nuristan-clashes>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸²¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽⁸²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Doab district retaken from militants*, 28 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/28/doab-district-retaken-militants>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸²³⁾ LWJ, *Taliban control 3 districts in Aghan provinces of Wardak and Kunduz*, 22 October 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/10/taliban_control_3_di.php), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁸²⁴⁾ Ariana News, *Nuristan security Fragile: Local residents claim*, 9 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/regional/nuristan-security-fragile-local-residents-claim/>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸²⁵⁾ LWJ, *Senior al Qaeda leader reported killed in US airstrike in eastern Afghanistan*, 19 October 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/10/senior_al_qaeda_lead_12.php), accessed 6 November 2014.

the northeastern provinces of Afghanistan, in Nuristan in particular. The movement coordinates its operations and activities with its allies, the Pakistan-based Taliban and the Haqqani Network. In addition to the Afghan Taliban, the province contains Pakistani Taliban. The new leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Maulana Fazlullah, is said to have established a sanctuary in the province⁽⁸²⁶⁾. LeT is also mentioned: according to government authorities, more than 100 LeT activists have been deployed in the province in order to establish training camps in the district of Kamdesh. Their presence has been reported by local officials and the population following the hanging of 11 Taliban insurgents. According to the Nuristan governor Hafiz Abdul Qayyum and a senior security official, the Taliban fighters were hanged by masked men from LeT. The latter wanted to punish the Taliban for not being able to disrupt or interrupt the electoral process. According to the governor, LeT joined the district Kamdesh in order to force the Taliban to initiate more radical actions against the government. However, in the opinion of a senior Kabul official, these hangings were conducted by Pakistani soldiers who entered Afghanistan for a rehearsal of brutal acts to be applied during their activities in Kashmir, a long-disputed region between Pakistan and India where LeT is rife. According to the local population, these masked men did not speak Dari or Pashtu and only used gestures to communicate⁽⁸²⁷⁾.

Actions and strategies of insurgents in Nuristan mostly take the form of attacks against security forces, including the police⁽⁸²⁸⁾. However, no precise information could be gathered on the weapons used during these attacks. The insurgents also used a campaign of threats and intimidation aimed at discouraging the province's residents from voting. The first round of elections on 5 April 2014 occurred with irregularities in the districts of Kamdesh and Barg-e Matal as well as in other districts because of insurgents' threats. According to the testimonies of several local residents, women were particularly threatened⁽⁸²⁹⁾.

⁽⁸²⁶⁾ The Daily Beast, *As Obama Draws Down, Al Qaeda Grows in Afghanistan*, 29 May 2014 (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/05/29/as-obama-draws-down-Al-Qaeda-grows-in-afghanistan.html>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽⁸²⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Videos shows masked gunmen hang Taliban men*, 7 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/07/video-shows-masked-gunmen-hang-taliban-men>), accessed 7 November 2014; RFE/RL, *Militants Hang Taliban Commanders in Eastern Afghanistan*, 6 June 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/militants-hang-taliban-commanders-in-eastern-afghanistan/25412707.html>), accessed 6 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Lashkar-e-Taiba setting up terrorist camps in Nuristan*, 5 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/lashkar-e-taiba-setting-up-terrorist-camps-in-nuristan-province-6185>), accessed 6 November 2014; Tolonews, *Mysterious Militants Kill Taliban Commanders*, 5 June 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15133-mysterious-militants-kill-taliban-commanders>), accessed 7 November 2014.

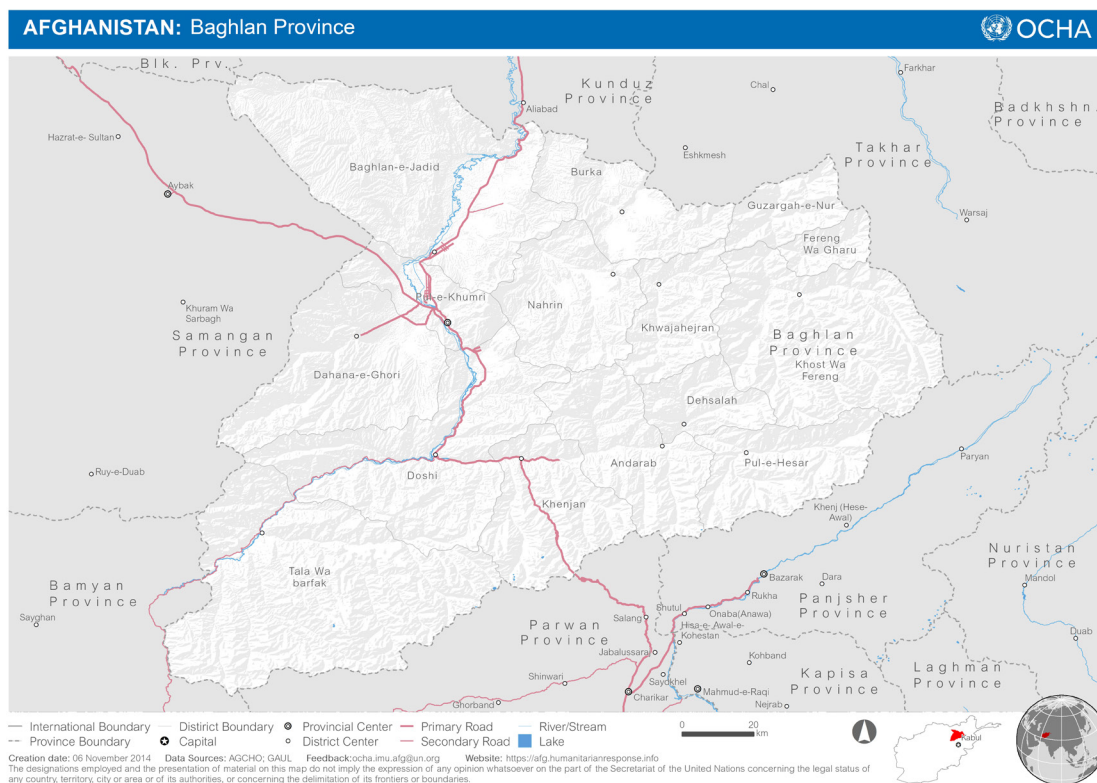
⁽⁸²⁸⁾ Bakhtar News, *Eight Taliban Militants Killed in East of the Country*, 26 September 2014 (<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security/item/14254-eight-taliban-militants-killed-in-east-of-the-country.html>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁸²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Nuristan residents seek security ahead of runoff*, 27 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/27/nuristan-residents-seek-security-ahead-runoff>), accessed 7 November 2014.

2.6. North-East

2.6.1. Baghlan

Description of the province



According to the ACSO, the population of this province of North Afghanistan is 863,700⁽⁸³⁰⁾, which comprises diverse ethnic groups (mainly Tajiks, also Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Turkmens and Ismailis)⁽⁸³¹⁾. The province of Baghlan is made up of the following districts: Andarab, Baghlan-e-Jadid, Burka, Dahana-e-Ghori, Dehsalah, Doshi, Fereng Wa Garu, Guzargah-e-Nur, Khenjan, Khost Wa Fereng, Khwajahejran, Nahrin, Pul-e-Hasar, Pul-e-Khumri, Tala Wa barfak.⁽⁸³²⁾ Its principal income is derived from agriculture (wheat and rice)⁽⁸³³⁾.

Impact of the violence

In the province, responsibility for security was transferred to the Afghan security forces in June 2013⁽⁸³⁴⁾. The situation is now considered precarious by the AAN⁽⁸³⁵⁾. In 2013, the province was affected by a lot of violence which led the AAN to consider the possibility that Baghlan might become an insurgent stronghold⁽⁸³⁶⁾. In 2014, the number of violent acts attributed to armed opposition activists increased, though the proportion is not specified⁽⁸³⁷⁾.

⁽⁸³⁰⁾ ACSO, *Settled Population of Baghlan province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013*, (http://www.mrrd-ru-watsip.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Baghlan1.pdf?bcsi_scan_76859af71b923077=0&bcsi_scan_filename=Baghlan1.pdf), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁸³¹⁾ AAN, *Baghlan on the Brink: ANSF weaknesses and Taleban resilience*, 31 May 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/baghlan-on-the-brink-ansf-weaknesses-and-taleban-resilience/>), accessed 11 December 2014.

⁽⁸³²⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁸³³⁾ Goodhand, J. and Hakimi, A., *Counterinsurgency, local militias, and statebuilding in Afghanistan*, USIP, January 2014 (<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW90-Counterinsurgency-Local-Militias-and-Statebuilding-in-Afghanistan.pdf>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸³⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *Baghlan security responsibilities transferred to Afghan forces*, 15 June 2013 (<http://www.khaama.com/baghlan-security-responsibilities-transferred-to-afghan-forces-1571>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸³⁵⁾ Van Bijlert, M., *Election 2014 (2): The polling centres that were taken off the list*, AAN, 4 April 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/election-2014-2-the-polling-centres-that-were-taken-off-the-list/>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸³⁶⁾ AAN, *Baghlan on the Brink: ANSF weaknesses and Taleban resilience*, 31 May 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/baghlan-on-the-brink-ansf-weaknesses-and-taleban-resilience/>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸³⁷⁾ Afghanistan Times, *Lawmaker survives rebels attack in Baghlan*, 14 October 2014 (http://www.afghanistantimes.af/news_details.php?id=9068&cid=1), accessed 14 October 2014.

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽⁸³⁸⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Mine/UXO Incident	Narcotic Incident	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Baghlan-e-Jadid	1		36	8	6	1	5	6	34	33	2					132
Pul-e-Khumri			22	12	1	1	4	4	28	17	2		2	3		96
Doshi		1	16	3			4		4	5	2	1		4	1	41
Dahana-e- Ghorī	1		5	1	2		1		5	1						16
Nahrin			5	2					1	5	1		1	1		16
Burka		1	7	1	1			1	2	1						14
Baharak	1		2		1			1	3	3	1			1		13
Khenjan			5	1	1		1		1				1	1		11
Dehsalah			4											2		6
Andarab			2				2									4
Khost Wa Fereng			2													2
Pul-e-Hesar			1											1		2
Guzargah-e-Nur			2													2

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Baghlan counted 355 reported security incidents (see table)⁽⁸³⁹⁾.

Most incidents have involved insurgents against security forces, in particular within the context of several security operations conducted by the authorities since the beginning of the year. These operations led to the death or arrest of many insurgents. Hence, in March 2014, in order to secure the first round of presidential elections planned in April 2014, security forces launched a military operation aimed at neutralising the insurgents⁽⁸⁴⁰⁾. At the beginning of June 2014, another offensive was conducted by the police and the army in the Baghlan-e Markazi⁽⁸⁴¹⁾ district. This offensive led to the death of 15 Taliban fighters⁽⁸⁴²⁾. In August 2014, the Brishna Operation 1 led to the defeat of several armed opposition groups. Some of its members fled to Kunduz, a neighbouring province in the north of Baghlan⁽⁸⁴³⁾. These security operations forced many insurgents in the province to surrender and join the peace process initiated by authorities, as was the case of 96 fighters who laid down their arms on 14 July 2014⁽⁸⁴⁴⁾. Besides fighting that directly opposed insurgents and security forces, several attacks occurred, such as the explosion of a roadside bomb in the Burka district, which led to the death of six civilians on 20 September 2014⁽⁸⁴⁵⁾. Another bomb exploded in the Baghlan-e Markazi district on 15 September 2014, killing a policeman and injuring many, including civilians⁽⁸⁴⁶⁾.

⁽⁸³⁸⁾ No incidents reported for Fereng Wa Gharu and Khwajahejran districts.

⁽⁸³⁹⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁸⁴⁰⁾ Afghanistan Express Daily Newspaper, *Afghan Forces Launch Massive Military Operation in Baghlan*, 1 March 2014 (<http://theafghanistanexpress.com/afghan-forces-launch-massive-military-operation-in-baghlan/>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁴¹⁾ The other name of Baghlan-e Jadid: Afghan Bios, 'Baghlan-e-Markazi District Baghlan Province Jadid', *Afghan Biographies*, n.d. (http://www.afghan-bios.info/index.php?option=com_afghanbios&id=283&task=view&total=2984&start=435&Itemid=2), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 Taliban killed as Baghlan offensive continues*, 4 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/04/15-taliban-killed-baghlan-offensive-continues>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁴³⁾ Ariana News, *Armed oppositions defeated in Brishna 1 operation in Baghlan*, 28 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/armed-oppositions-defeated-in-brishna-1-operation-in-baghlan/>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁴⁴⁾ Tolonews, *96 Insurgents Join Baghlan Peace Process*, 15 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15608-96-insurgents-join-baghlan-peace-process>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁴⁵⁾ 1TV, 'Headlines', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 20 September 2014, (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38339&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁴⁶⁾ Tolonews, *One Police Killed, Eight Including civilians Injured in Baghlan East*, 15 September 2014 (www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16379-one-police-killed-eight-including-civilians-injured-in-baghlan-blast), accessed 8 October 2014.

The operations led by the insurgents in Baghlan are diverse: firearms attacks⁽⁸⁴⁷⁾, mines laid on roads, setting petrol trucks on fire⁽⁸⁴⁸⁾, hand-grenade attacks⁽⁸⁴⁹⁾ or bombs blasts⁽⁸⁵⁰⁾. Acts of intimidation are also mentioned, such as letters sent by groups linked to the Taliban, at night, to the population, in order to discourage people to participate in the presidential election⁽⁸⁵¹⁾. If the Taliban continue to conduct these “classical” guerilla operations, their strategy in Baghlan has evolved. Currently, it does not concentrate a great number of combatants in a single district to avoid airstrikes and raids. Instead, the strategy favours the presence of small groups responsible for targeting local authorities and for gaining influence in the local social structures. This new strategy could explain why the presence of a high number of fighters does not necessarily lead to a high number of attacks. The Taliban seeks to gain the support of populations, with, for instance, its declared struggle against corruption corroding the local government⁽⁸⁵²⁾.

Attacks occur mainly in public spaces. Hence, bombs can be placed in a kiosk⁽⁸⁵³⁾ or close to mosques⁽⁸⁵⁴⁾, as in the Barka district where a bomb exploded near a mosque on 20 September 2014 and killed six civilians.

Victims

Between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014, most districts count civilian victim figures at between one and 25, according to UNAMA, referred to by UNOCHA. Two districts have a higher number of civilian victims: Pul-e Khumri (between 26 and 50) and Baghlan-e Jadid (between 51 and 150)⁽⁸⁵⁵⁾.

Security forces and public installations (for instance the logistical storerooms) are among the main targets. Soldiers from the ANA⁽⁸⁵⁶⁾ and policemen were kidnapped or killed by the Taliban⁽⁸⁵⁷⁾. Officials, such as members of provincial council, can also be targeted⁽⁸⁵⁸⁾. Civilians are also targets, including women and children⁽⁸⁵⁹⁾. They can be targeted directly or they can become collateral victims of “blind” attacks⁽⁸⁶⁰⁾.

Displacement

No data could be found on the population displacements in the province for the current year.

⁽⁸⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Policemen among 5 killed in clashes*, 29 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/29/policemen-among-5-killed-clashes>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁴⁸⁾ 1TV, ‘Headlines’, *Today’s Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 20 September 2014, (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38339&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014; Tolonews, *Taliban Shadow District Governor Arrested in Baghlan*, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16569-taliban-shadow-district-governor-arrested-in-baghlan>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁴⁹⁾ ‘Pajhwok Afghan News’, *Today’s Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 24 July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38199&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵⁰⁾ Ariana News, *Explosion in Baghlan, Casualties Feared*, 15 September 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/explosion-in-baghlan-causalities-feared/>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *One killed, nine injured in Baghlan Blast*, 15 September 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38318&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵¹⁾ 1TV, ‘Headlines’, *Today’s Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 4 March 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37740&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Group arrested with night letters in Baghlan*, 3 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/03/group-arrested-night-letters-baghlan>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵²⁾ AAN, *Baghlan on the Brink: ANSF weaknesses and Taleban resilience*, 31 May 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/baghlan-on-the-brink-ansf-weaknesses-and-taleban-resilience/>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *One killed, nine injured in Baghlan Blast*, 15 September 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38318&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵⁴⁾ 1TV, ‘Headlines’, *Today’s Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38339&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Policemen among 5 killed in clashes*, 29 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/29/policemen-among-5-killed-clashes>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵⁵⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014, p. 4.

⁽⁸⁵⁶⁾ ‘Pajhwok Afghan News’, *Today’s Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 5 March 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37743&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *25 militants join peace process in Baghlan*, 3 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/03/25-militants-join-peace-process-baghlan>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban’s district chief detained in Baghlan*, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/30/taliban%E2%80%99s-district-chief-detained-baghlan>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Policemen among 5 killed in clashes*, 29 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/29/policemen-among-5-killed-clashes>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Baghlan PC member survives militant attack*, 3 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/03/baghlan-pc-member-survives-militant-attack>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁵⁹⁾ ‘Pajhwok Afghan News’, *Today’s Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 24 July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38199&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014.

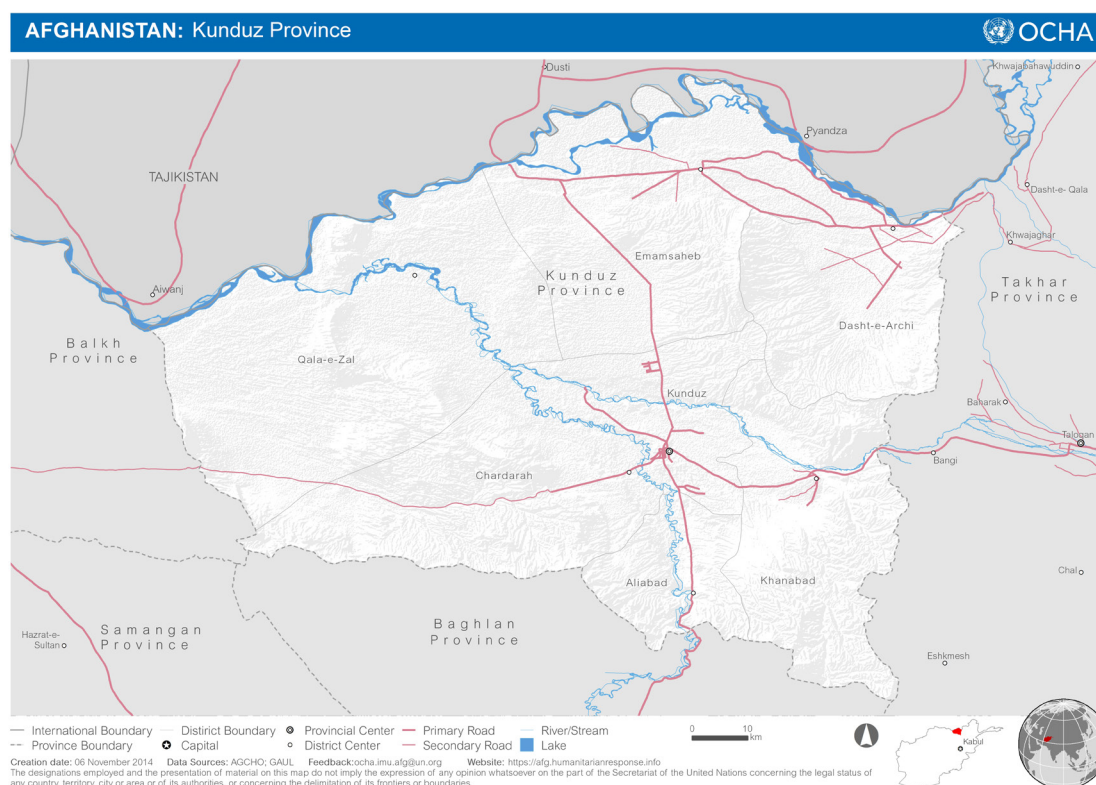
⁽⁸⁶⁰⁾ 1TV, ‘Headlines’, *Today’s Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 20 September 2014, (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38339&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *One killed, nine injured in Baghlan Blast*, 15 September 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=38318&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014.

Actors in the conflict

Several armed groups, particularly the Taliban, can be found in Baghlan⁽⁸⁶¹⁾. The Haqqani Network⁽⁸⁶²⁾ is also present, along with HIA⁽⁸⁶³⁾. Also in the province is the IMU linked to Al Qaeda⁽⁸⁶⁴⁾. Pajhwok Afghan News mentions the presence of men under the command of the Islamic State who were arrested in May 2014 during a security operation conducted in the Dahana-i Ghor district⁽⁸⁶⁵⁾. Finally, “illegal armed men” are present and constitute a real source of insecurity in the province. According to Afghan authorities, more than 600 of them are believed to operate in the Bano area, in the Dehsalah, Pul-e Hesar, Nahrin and Baghlan-e Markazi districts⁽⁸⁶⁶⁾. Some of them are said to benefit from the support of high-level officials⁽⁸⁶⁷⁾.

2.6.2. Kunduz

Description of the province



⁽⁸⁶¹⁾ AAN, *Baghlan on the Brink: ANSF weaknesses and Taleban resilience*, 31 May 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/baghlan-on-the-brink-ansf-weaknesses-and-taleban-resilience/>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban's district chief detained in Baghlan*, 30 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/30/taliban%E2%80%99s-district-chief-detained-baghlan>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁶²⁾ Roggio, B., *US posts rewards for 5 Haqqani Network leaders*, LWJ, 21 August 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/us_posts_rewards_for.php#ixzz3FewcW13Z), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁶³⁾ AAN, *Baghlan on the Brink: ANSF weaknesses and Taleban resilience*, 31 May 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/baghlan-on-the-brink-ansf-weaknesses-and-taleban-resilience/>), accessed 8 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *HIA commander killed in Baghlan clash*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/01/hia-commander-killed-baghlan-clash>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁶⁴⁾ Megahan, P., *ISAF launches multiple raids against IMU as fighting season heat up*, LWJ, 8 May 2013 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/05/isaf_launches_multip.php#ixzz3FequSRpI), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ISI-linked group busted in Baghlan*, 14 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/14/isi-linked-group-busted-baghlan>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁶⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Illegal gunmen pose threat to Baghlan security*, 18 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/18/illegal-gunmen-pose-threat-baghlan-security>), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁶⁷⁾ 'Cheragh Daily', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 29 January 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12329&ctl=Details&mid=15870&Itemid=37656&language=en-US>), accessed 8 October 2014.

This province in the north of the country is bordering Tajikistan. It consists of the following districts: Aliabad, Chardarah, Dasht-e-Archi, Emamsaheb, Khanabad, Kunduz, Qala-e-Zal.⁽⁸⁶⁸⁾ According to the ACSO, the population of Kunduz is 953,800⁽⁸⁶⁹⁾.

With all the country's main ethnic groups represented in Kunduz, the province is often considered as a "small Afghanistan", with a population comprising of Pashtuns (34%), Uzbeks (27%), Tajiks (20%) and Turkmens (9.4%).

This mix has often led to inter-ethnic tensions over control of Kunduz which is crossed by the strategic trade route north to Tajikistan⁽⁸⁷⁰⁾.

Impact of the violence

The presence of numerous groups of insurgents and illegally armed men in a province that is so ethnically diverse can explain the chronic instability that prevails in Kunduz. Apart from this chronic instability, the security environment has deteriorated significantly. Without specifying the number of incidents and victims, the AAN has recently suggested that in the north of the country the situation has worsened the most in Kunduz⁽⁸⁷¹⁾. The provincial authorities acknowledge the increase of insecurity⁽⁸⁷²⁾, which they link to the lack of security forces as well as the absence of military air support⁽⁸⁷³⁾.

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Mine/UXO incident	Narcotic Incident	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Kunduz	4	3	71	14	13	3	3	2	48	30	4	1		6	3	205
Chardarah		8	91	2	5		2	2	11	7	1			6		135
Khanabad	3	2	41	1	2	3		1	12	3	3				1	72
Dasht-e-Archi		4	49	3		2		1	5	4	1			2		71
Emamsaheb	1		41		4				10	4	2		1	2		65
Aliabad			9						2	1				3		15
Qala-e-Zal			4							2						6

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Kunduz counted 569 reported security incidents (see table)⁽⁸⁷⁴⁾.

Beyond the figures, the districts that are faced with dire security conditions are Dasht-e Archi, Emamsaheb, Aliabad and Chahardarah. According to a parliamentarian from Kunduz, the district of Khanabad is in a particularly critical situation. In the latter half of August 2014, this district was close to collapse and chaos. A journalist from Kunduz evokes a "frightening" situation with no public protection at all⁽⁸⁷⁵⁾.

Taking into account the number of incidents that took place in Kunduz since the beginning of the year, it is not possible to report all incidents in an exhaustive manner. Only some that are particularly significant in scope will be

⁽⁸⁶⁸⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁸⁶⁹⁾ ACSO, *Estimated Population 2012-2013* (http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/country-info/e-afghan-ag-maps-1/demography-and-culture-maps/Map_Population_2012-2013.pdf), accessed 11 December 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁰⁾ AFP, *Wounded flood trauma centre as Taliban attack City*, 24 August 2014 (<http://www.afp.com/en/news/wounded-flood-trauma-centre-taliban-attack-afghan-city>), accessed 11 December 2014.

⁽⁸⁷¹⁾ AAN, *Security in Kunduz Worsening Further: The case of Khanabad*, 28 October 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/security-in-kunduz-worsening-further-the-case-of-khanabad/>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁷²⁾ Tolonews, *Armed Opposition Groups Making Gains in Kunduz*, 15 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15978--armed-opposition-groups-making-gains-in-kunduz>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁷³⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Operations the Bloodiest in Three Months*, 23 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16080-taliban-operations-the-bloodiest-in-three-months>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁴⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁵⁾ AAN, *Security in Kunduz Worsening Further: The case of Khanabad*, 28 October 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/security-in-kunduz-worsening-further-the-case-of-khanabad/>), accessed 28 October 2014.

mentioned hereafter in chronological order. The most important incidents occurred in the context of numerous military securitisation operations conducted in Kunduz by the authorities. The province has become the focal point of intense fighting between armed opposition fighters and security forces⁽⁸⁷⁶⁾. On 29 and 30 May 2014, the authorities launched a securitisation operation in the Dasht-e Archi district, aimed at removing insurgents, resulting in the death of at least eight Taliban fighters. This district had become a Taliban stronghold in recent years⁽⁸⁷⁷⁾. Between 20 May and 8 June, another widespread military operation was conducted in this district as a security measure ahead of the second round of presidential elections scheduled on 14 June 2014. Seventy insurgents were killed or injured⁽⁸⁷⁸⁾. The incidents were often followed by a Taliban offensive. Such a large-scale offensive was launched by a released detainee, Mawlawi Salam. Attacks started during the Eid at the end of July 2014 and continued with a steady stream of insurgent advancements that were accompanied by the continuous arrival of insurgents in particular in the district of Chahardarah. In August 2014, the security forces finally managed to regain control over several locations in Chahardarah and in the Gor Tapa area. According to official sources 80 Taliban insurgents were killed⁽⁸⁷⁹⁾.

August 2014 was particularly deadly: on 11 August, 16 armed opposition insurgents were killed and six others wounded in a military operation conducted in the province⁽⁸⁸⁰⁾. Another report mentions how 20 civilians, including women and children, as well as 27 rebels, were killed after 48 hours of fighting. According to the police, insurgent groups slipped into the villages around the provincial capital, notably in Kinam and Hazrat Sultan, to collect zakat and ushr⁽⁸⁸¹⁾, and killed 20 people who had refused to pay. The Taliban insisted that the victims were killed by government forces⁽⁸⁸²⁾. On 23 August 2014, more than 100 Taliban were killed during a military operation in the Chahardarah district⁽⁸⁸³⁾. At the end of August, confrontations were still taking place in the province, in particular in the Khanabad district, where many inhabitants were forced to flee to neighbouring provinces⁽⁸⁸⁴⁾ as a result of fighting between the Taliban and government forces⁽⁸⁸⁵⁾.

Different types of weapons and methods are being used by insurgents in Kunduz. Attacks are carried out with fire weapons⁽⁸⁸⁶⁾ and heavy artillery (heavy machine guns, RPG⁽⁸⁸⁷⁾ grenades, 82 mm rockets)⁽⁸⁸⁸⁾. Home-made bombs targeting vehicles are used. One such bomb exploded on 6 April 2014 a truck carrying ballot boxes drove between the Khanabad district and the city of Kunduz. Three people were killed in the incident⁽⁸⁸⁹⁾. Another home-made bomb killed 14 people in the Khanabad district on 31 March 2014⁽⁸⁹⁰⁾. Suicide attacks are also used, such as on 15 February 2014, when a driver detonated an explosive close to a police vehicle in the Khanabad district, killing one civilian and wounding eight others, according to the authorities⁽⁸⁹¹⁾.

⁽⁸⁷⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Kunduz Battle Against Taliban Led by Released Taliban*, 21 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16061-kunduz-battle-against-taliban-led-by-released-taliban>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁷⁾ Tolonews, *8 Insurgents Killed, 18 Injured in Kunduz Operation*, 30 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15057-8-insurgents-killed-18-injured-in-kunduz-operation>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁸⁾ Tolonews, *Dasht-e Archi District of Kunduz Cleared of Insurgents: Officials*, 8 June 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15165-dasht-e-archi-district-of-kunduz-cleared-of-insurgents-officials>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁹⁾ Tolonews, *Kunduz Battle Against Taliban Led by Released Taliban*, 21 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16061-kunduz-battle-against-taliban-led-by-released-taliban>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁸⁰⁾ RFE/RL, *Afghan Taliban Reportedly Kill 20 Civilians Over 'War Tax'*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-taliban-reportedly-kill-20-civilians-over-war-tax/26524855.html>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁸¹⁾ Zakat is a religious tax on assets and liquidity (2.5%). The practice of almsgiving or zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam; Ushr is an Islamic tax (normally 10%) on certain products, for example agricultural products.

⁽⁸⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *44 residents, Taliban dead in Kunduz clashes*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/11/44-residents-taliban-dead-kunduz-clashes>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁸³⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Operations the Bloodiest in Three Months*, 23 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16080-taliban-operations-the-bloodiest-in-three-months>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁸⁴⁾ AFP, Le Figaro, *Afghanistan: un QG de renseignement attaqué*, 30 August 2014 (<http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2014/08/30/97001-20140830FILWWW00018-afghanistan-un-qg-de-renseignement-attaque.php>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁸⁵⁾ AAN, *Security in Kunduz Worsening Further: The case of Khanabad*, 28 October 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/security-in-kunduz-worsening-further-the-case-of-khanabad/>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁸⁶⁾ RFE/RL, *Afghan Taliban Reportedly Kill 20 Civilians Over 'War Tax'*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-taliban-reportedly-kill-20-civilians-over-war-tax/26524855.html>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁸⁷⁾ Rocket Propelled Grenade.

⁽⁸⁸⁸⁾ Le Figaro (AFP), *Afghanistan: un QG de renseignement attaqué*, 30 August 2014 (<http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2014/08/30/97001-20140830FILWWW00018-afghanistan-un-qg-de-renseignement-attaque.php>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁸⁹⁾ Le Figaro (AFP), *Afghanistan: des bulletins de vote détruits*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2014/04/06/97001-20140406FILWWW00059-afghanistan-des-bulletins-de-vote-detruits.php>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kunduz roadside bombing claim 15 lives*, 25 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/25/kunduz-suicide-bombing-causes-casualties>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁹¹⁾ Tolonews, *1 Civilian Killed, 8 Injured in Kunduz Suicide Attack*, 15 February 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13859-1-civilian-killed-8-injured-in-kunduz-suicide-attack>), accessed 28 October 2014.

The Taliban has returned to the “defensive” method of placing improvised explosive devices along roads, while organising wide-scale attacks mobilising more than 100 fighters. The type of strategy, which was no longer favoured after 2010, has reappeared in Kunduz⁽⁸⁹²⁾. Besides military activism, the Taliban has initiated a strategy aimed at reinforcing their presence in the everyday life of inhabitants of Kunduz, with the establishment of a parallel administration: the Taliban collects a 10% tax from farmers and businessmen, arbitrates on disputes and runs local schools. The population considers its administration to be more efficient than the official public administration⁽⁸⁹³⁾. But illegal armed groups resort to extortion, collection of illegal taxes, robbery and threats of kidnapping or death. They also use IEDs, ambushes and carried out targeted killings⁽⁸⁹⁴⁾.

Incidents usually take place in public places. A good example is the suicide attack that was conducted during a *buzkashi*⁽⁸⁹⁵⁾ competition⁽⁸⁹⁶⁾.

Victims

In Kunduz, the police, and in particular the ALP, are a target, of suicide attacks for instance⁽⁸⁹⁷⁾. Judges are also targeted⁽⁸⁹⁸⁾. The actions of the Taliban regularly result in civilian casualties as well. According to the authorities, in August 2014 the Taliban killed 20 civilians who refused to pay “war tax” and wounded 10 others⁽⁸⁹⁹⁾. Civilians can also be collateral victims of suicide attacks⁽⁹⁰⁰⁾, such as the attack targeting the former jihadi commander Mir Alam Khan, whereby five spectators of a *buzkashi* competition were killed on 25 March 2014⁽⁹⁰¹⁾. Those targeted by illegal armed groups include farmers, businessmen and merchants. They are primarily victims of extortion⁽⁹⁰²⁾.

Displacement

Clashes between insurgents and security forces have forced many inhabitants to flee the province⁽⁹⁰³⁾. In August 2014, UNHCR reported the forced displacement of 680 families. Every day, families from different districts arrive in the city of Kunduz, among other destinations⁽⁹⁰⁴⁾.

Actors in the conflict

Numerous groups of insurgents are present in Kunduz, especially the Taliban. “Kunduz is a strategic province and has always been the focus of the Taliban operations in the north,” according to the provincial governor Ghulam Sakhi Baghlani⁽⁹⁰⁵⁾. The authorities admit that the Taliban control two out of seven districts in the province: Dasht-e Archi

⁽⁸⁹²⁾ Le Monde, *Afghanistan: les trois défis d’Ashraf Ghani*, 29 September 2014 (http://www.lemonde.fr/asia-pacifique/article/2014/09/29/afghanistan-les-trois-defis-d-ashraf-ghani_4496580_3216.html), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁹³⁾ Reuters, *In Afghan north, Taliban gains ground and courts local support*, 21 October 2014 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/21/us-afghanistan-taliban-insight-idUSKCN0IA20A20141021>), accessed 28 October 2014; LWJ, *Taliban control 3 districts in Afghan provinces of Wardak and Kunduz*, 22 October 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/10/taliban_control_3_di.php), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁹⁴⁾ AAN, *Security in Kunduz Worsening Further: The case of Khanabad*, 28 October 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/security-in-kunduz-worsening-further-the-case-of-khanabad/>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁹⁵⁾ Buzkashi is an ancient game that is still played in Afghanistan. Horsemen play a sort of polo with a goat’s carcass: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UB3eA8B4qI).

⁽⁸⁹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 dead, 20 injured in Kunduz suicide attack*, 25 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/25/kunduz-suicide-bombing-causes-casualties>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁹⁷⁾ Tolonews, *1 Civilian Killed, 8 Injured in Kunduz Suicide Attack*, 15 February 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13859-1-civilian-killed-8-injured-in-kunduz-suicide-attack>), accessed 28 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *44 residents, Taliban dead in Kunduz clashes*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/11/44-residents-taliban-dead-kunduz-clashes>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁹⁸⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan Midyear report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/UNAMA%20Protection%20of%20Civilians%20MYR%202014_9%20July%202014.pdf?bcsi_scan_76859af71b923077=1&bcsi_scan_1fe59ba8c561fa18=0&bcsi_scan_filename=UNAMA%20Protection%20of%20Civilians%20MYR%202014_9%20July%202014.pdf), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁸⁹⁹⁾ RFE/RL, *Afghan Taliban Reportedly Kill 20 Civilians Over ‘War Tax’*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-taliban-reportedly-kill-20-civilians-over-war-tax/26524855.html>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁰⁰⁾ Tolonews, *1 Civilian Killed, 8 Injured in Kunduz Suicide Attack*, 15 February 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13859-1-civilian-killed-8-injured-in-kunduz-suicide-attack>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 dead, 20 injured in Kunduz suicide attack*, 25 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/25/kunduz-suicide-bombing-causes-casualties>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁰²⁾ AAN, *Security in Kunduz Worsening Further: The case of Khanabad*, 28 October 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/security-in-kunduz-worsening-further-the-case-of-khanabad/>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁰³⁾ Tolonews, *Armed Opposition Groups Making Gains in Kunduz*, 15 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15978--armed-opposition-groups-making-gains-in-kunduz>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁰⁴⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update, August 2014* (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 22 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁰⁵⁾ AFP, *Wounded flood trauma centre as Taliban attack City*, 24 August 2014 (<http://www.afp.com/en/news/wounded-flood-trauma-centre-taliban-attack-afghan-city>), accessed 11 December 2014.

in the east of the province and Chardarah in the south-east⁽⁹⁰⁶⁾. The influence of the Taliban is also growing in the rest of the province. This trend can be explained by a weak state presence and by the population's mistrust of local authorities, who are perceived as corrupt⁽⁹⁰⁷⁾. According to a senior tribal elder, the Taliban is well armed and the security forces no longer pursue its members in certain districts⁽⁹⁰⁸⁾.

In addition to Afghan Taliban, the presence of foreign Taliban has been reported⁽⁹⁰⁹⁾. Other insurgent groups have been mentioned, such as the Haqqani Network⁽⁹¹⁰⁾. The presence of the IMU and of Al Qaeda has been signalled in the district of Chardarah. However, sources consulted could not specify whether these two groups still operate in the province at the time of writing⁽⁹¹¹⁾.

Apart from insurgents, the province holds numerous *arbaki*. They are accused of extorting civilians. In Khanabad, where some 1,500 illegal armed men are present, these groups constitute a real menace to the security and livelihood of the district's population. Although they fight against the insurgents, they are not under the formal control of government forces. They are linked to powerful figures in the province, in particular former commanders of the mujahedeen. Despite the abuse and extortion they are accused of, they enjoy some impunity because the authorities consider them useful in the fight against insurgents⁽⁹¹²⁾.

2.6.3. Takhar

Description of the province

The province of Takhar (capital Taloqan) is composed of 17 districts: Baharak, Bangi, Chahab, Chal, Darqad, Dasht-e-Qala, Eshkashem, Farkhar, Hazarsumuch, Khwajabahawuddin, Khwajaghar, Kalafgan, Namakab, Rostaq, Taloqan, Warsaj, Yangi Qala, and has a largely mountainous or semi-mountainous landscape⁽⁹¹³⁾.

According to the ACSO, the population is 933,700⁽⁹¹⁴⁾ and is divided between two main ethnic groups: Uzbeks (44%) and Tadjiks (42%)⁽⁹¹⁵⁾. Some Pashtun tribes and Hazaras⁽⁹¹⁶⁾ are also present.

⁽⁹⁰⁶⁾ LWJ, *Taliban control 3 districts in Afghan provinces of Wardak and Kunduz*, 22 October 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/10/taliban_control_3_di.php), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁰⁷⁾ Reuters, *In Afghan north, Taliban gains ground and courts local support*, 21 October 2014 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/21/us-afghanistan-taliban-insight-idUSKCN0IA20A20141021>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁰⁸⁾ Reuters, *In Afghan North, Taliban gains ground and courts local support*, 21 October 2014 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/21/us-afghanistan-taliban-insight-idUSKCN0IA20A20141021>), accessed 11 December 2014.

⁽⁹⁰⁹⁾ 'Pajhwok Afghan News', *Today's Afghan news headlines*, UNAMA, 28 May 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=37997>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁹¹⁰⁾ LWJ, *Afghan, US forces target Haqqani-linked Taliban leader in Parwan*, 17 January 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/01/afghan_us_forces_tar_1.php), accessed 29 October 2014; LWJ, *US posts rewards for 5 Haqqani Network Leader*, 21 August 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/us_posts_rewards_for.php), accessed 8 October 2014.

⁽⁹¹¹⁾ LWJ, *Taliban control 3 districts in Afghan provinces of Wardak and Kunduz*, 22 October 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/10/taliban_control_3_di.php), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁹¹²⁾ AAN, *Security in Kunduz Worsening Further: The case of Khanabad*, 28 October 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/security-in-kunduz-worsening-further-the-case-of-khanabad/>), accessed 28 October 2014.

⁽⁹¹³⁾ MRRD, *Takhar Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/252/Takhar%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹¹⁴⁾ ACSO, *Settled Population of Takhar province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013* (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Takhar%282%29.pdf>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹¹⁵⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Reuter, C., *The Insurgents of the Afghan North*, AAN, November 2011 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/AAN-2011-Northern-Insurgents.pdf>), accessed 15 October 2014, p. 45.

⁽⁹¹⁶⁾ MRRD, *Takhar Provincial Profile*, s. d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/252/Takhar%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 15 October 2014.

AFGHANISTAN: Takhar Province



— International Boundary ● Capital — Primary Road
 - - Province Boundary ● Provincial Center — Secondary Road
 — District Boundary ● District Center — River/Stream

Creation date: 06 November 2014 Data Sources: AGCHO; GAUL
 Feedback: ocha.imu.afg@un.org Website: <https://afg.humanitarianresponse.info>

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽⁹¹⁷⁾	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Total
Taloqan		5	1			1	1	1	6	2	1	1		19
Khwajaghar		8	1		1			2	2				1	15
Bangi		3	1					2	5				1	12
Darqad		6	1			1							1	9
Khwajabahawuddin		2	2					1	1				1	7
Rostaq		2	1			1			2					6
Dasht-e Qala								1	3					4
Eshkashem				1				1	2					4
Farkhar		2							1					3
Baharak	1	2		1			1	3	3	1			1	2
Kalafgan											2			2
Chahab			1							1				2
Yangi Qala						1								1

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Takhar counted 86 reported security incidents; the most volatile district was Taloqan (see table)⁽⁹¹⁸⁾. The namesake district capital was subject to repeated attacks during the first semester of 2014⁽⁹¹⁹⁾ and this trend continued in the second semester. In July 2014, a VBIED targeting a policeman in the central marketplace killed nine people and injured 24 others⁽⁹²⁰⁾ and the following month dozens of Taliban fighters conducted an attack on a police post⁽⁹²¹⁾.

Victims

According to UNAMA, cited by UNOCHA, the district of Khwajaghar, bordering the province of Kunduz, has one of the highest numbers of civilian victims for the period from September 2013 until August 2014, with between 51 and 150. In nine other districts - Khawajabahawuddin, Rostaq, Hazarsumuch, Baharak, Taloqan, Bangi, Chal, Namakab and Eshkashem - there were between 11 and 25 victims⁽⁹²²⁾. Civilians are also affected by the suicide attacks in public spaces. For example, in September 2014, six people were wounded and one killed in an IED blast targeting a police vehicle on a market in the district of Baharak⁽⁹²³⁾. In May 2014, an explosion in the district of Khawajabahawuddin caused one death and injured 11⁽⁹²⁴⁾. In January 2014, civilians were victims of summary executions by the Taliban, which seemed to be linked to the profession in Chah Ab district⁽⁹²⁵⁾ or to suspicions of espionage⁽⁹²⁶⁾.

⁽⁹¹⁷⁾ No incidents reported for Hazarsumuch, Chal, Namakab and Warsaj districts.

⁽⁹¹⁸⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁹¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Rebel commander among 4 detained*, 26 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/26/rebel-commander-among-4-detained>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *9 dead, dozens wounded in Takhar bombing*, 24 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/24/9-dead-dozens-wounded-takhar-bombing>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹²¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *9 dead as insurgents storm ALP posts in Takhar*, 24 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/24/9-dead-insurgents-storm-alp-posts-takhar>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹²²⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014, p. 4

⁽⁹²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *1 dead, 6 injured in Takhar blast*, 28 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/28/1-dead-6-injured-takhar-blast>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *1 killed, 11 wounded in Takhar blast*, 17 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/17/1-killed-11-wounded-takhar-blast>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 athletes, woman shot dead in Takhar*, 27 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/27/2-athletes-woman-shot-dead-takhar>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Pre-poll security operation launched*, 12 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/12/pre-poll-security-operation-launched>), accessed 15 October 2014.

The safety of women is a big concern. In September 2014, the provincial women's department stated that *"Murder, rape and domestic violence against women is said to be on the rise in Takhar province"*, and the same month one female student was stabbed to death⁽⁹²⁷⁾. In May 2014, a girls' school was targeted by a VBIED that killed three girls⁽⁹²⁸⁾ and two more women were killed by a grenade in Farkhar⁽⁹²⁹⁾. In February 2014, two others were found dead in the districts of Baharak and Yangi Qala⁽⁹³⁰⁾. In January 2014, the number of women killed in Takhar was 11⁽⁹³¹⁾. In the same month, a woman was killed in an attack on her vehicle in Taloqan⁽⁹³²⁾.

Displacement

In the UNHCR Monthly Updates on Conflict Induced Displacement, Takhar is never mentioned as a province of origin for conflict-induced IDPs, only as province of arrival of certain IDP movements from other provinces.⁽⁹³³⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to the AAN, insurgents infiltrated in 2010 first in the southern and the central part of the province and then they came more *"from Kunduz and settled in the woods at the triangle between Darqad, Yangi Qala and Khwajabawauddin districts"*⁽⁹³⁴⁾. Despite the fact that the Taliban leader of the Eshkashem district, Sardar Mohammad, surrendered to the government in January 2014⁽⁹³⁵⁾, attacks targeting government forces⁽⁹³⁶⁾ and counter-insurgency operations by the latter⁽⁹³⁷⁾, prove that the Haqqani network, the Taliban⁽⁹³⁸⁾ and IMU⁽⁹³⁹⁾ are still well established in the province. In June 2014, two Afghans suspected of belonging to IMU were arrested⁽⁹⁴⁰⁾. In May 2014, a sweep operation in the districts of Eshkashem, Chahab, Rostaq, Yangi Qala and Khawajabahawuddin led to the arrest of 21 insurgents, including four Taliban leaders: Maulvi Halim, Qari Islamuddin, Abdul Fattah and Maulvi Nasruddin⁽⁹⁴¹⁾. In March 2014, the Taliban leader in the district of Chahab, Mohammad Fazel, aka Sangaryar,⁽⁹⁴²⁾ was arrested. IMU⁽⁹⁴³⁾ are still well established in the province. In June 2014, two Afghans suspected of belonging to IMU were arrested⁽⁹⁴⁴⁾. In May 2014, a sweep operation in the districts of Eshkashem, Chahab, Rostaq, Yangi Qala and

⁽⁹²⁷⁾ Tolonews, *Unknown Gunmen Kill Newlywed Groom, Rob Bride's Jewels*, 12 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16341-unknown-gunmen-kill-newlywed-groom-rob-brides-jewels>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹²⁸⁾ UNAMA, *Press release*, 26 May 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=12329&mid=15870&ItemID=37993>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Rebels launch attacks in 8 Kunar towns*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/12/rebels-launch-attacks-8-kunar-towns>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 women gunned down in Shiberghan, Takhar*, 23 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/23/3-women-gunned-down-shiberghan-takhar>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹³¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 athletes, woman shot dead in Takhar*, 27 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/27/2-athletes-woman-shot-dead-takhar>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kidnapped family rescued; woman killed*, 15 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/15/kidnapped-family-rescued-woman-killed>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹³³⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January-August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽⁹³⁴⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Reuter, C., *The Insurgents of the Afghan North*, AAN, November 2011 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/AAN-2011-Northern-Insurgents.pdf>), accessed 15 October 2014, p. 45.

⁽⁹³⁵⁾ Khaama Press, *Nine Taliban militants join peace process in Takhar and Badakhshan*, 7 January 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/nine-taliban-militants-join-peace-process-in-takhar-and-badakhshan-3265>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *23 rebels killed, police officer wounded*, 21 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/21/23-rebels-killed-police-officer-wounded>), accessed 15 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 rebels killed, 2 abducted individuals freed*, 3 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/03/3-rebels-killed-2-abducted-individuals-freed>), accessed 15 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Policemen, militants suffer casualties*, 3 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/03/policemen-militants-suffer-casualties>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹³⁷⁾ Tolonews, *41 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 1 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16192-41-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 15 October 2014; Tolonews, *Insurgents Arrested in Afghan Operations*, 13 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14522-13-insurgents-arrested-in-afghan-operations>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹³⁸⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Reuter, C., *The Insurgents of the Afghan North*, AAN, November 2011 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/AAN-2011-Northern-Insurgents.pdf>), p. 37; Roggio, B., *2014 US posts rewards for 5 Haqqani Network leaders*, LWJ, 21 August 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/us_posts_rewards_for.php#ixzz3GCKzDfwg), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹³⁹⁾ Zenn, J., *'The IMU Expansion in Afghanistan's Takhar Province: Jumping Off Point to Central Asia?'*, *Eurasia Daily Monitor Vol. 10 Issue: 7, 9*, Jamestown Foundation, 26 April 2013 ([http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=40802&no_cache=1#VDUvmlPIbig](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40802&no_cache=1#VDUvmlPIbig)), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁴⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *7 civilians among 14 killed in clashes*, 11 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/11/7-civilians-among-14-killed-clashes>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *13 rebels eliminated, 21 detained*, 5 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/05/13-rebels-eliminated-21-detained>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban-designated district chief held*, 30 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/30/taliban-designated-district-chief-held>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁴³⁾ Zenn, J., *'The IMU Expansion in Afghanistan's Takhar Province: Jumping Off Point to Central Asia?'*, *Eurasia Daily Monitor Vol. 10 Issue: 7, 9*, Jamestown Foundation, 26 April 2013 ([http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=40802&no_cache=1#VDUvmlPIbig](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40802&no_cache=1#VDUvmlPIbig)), accessed 15 October 2014.

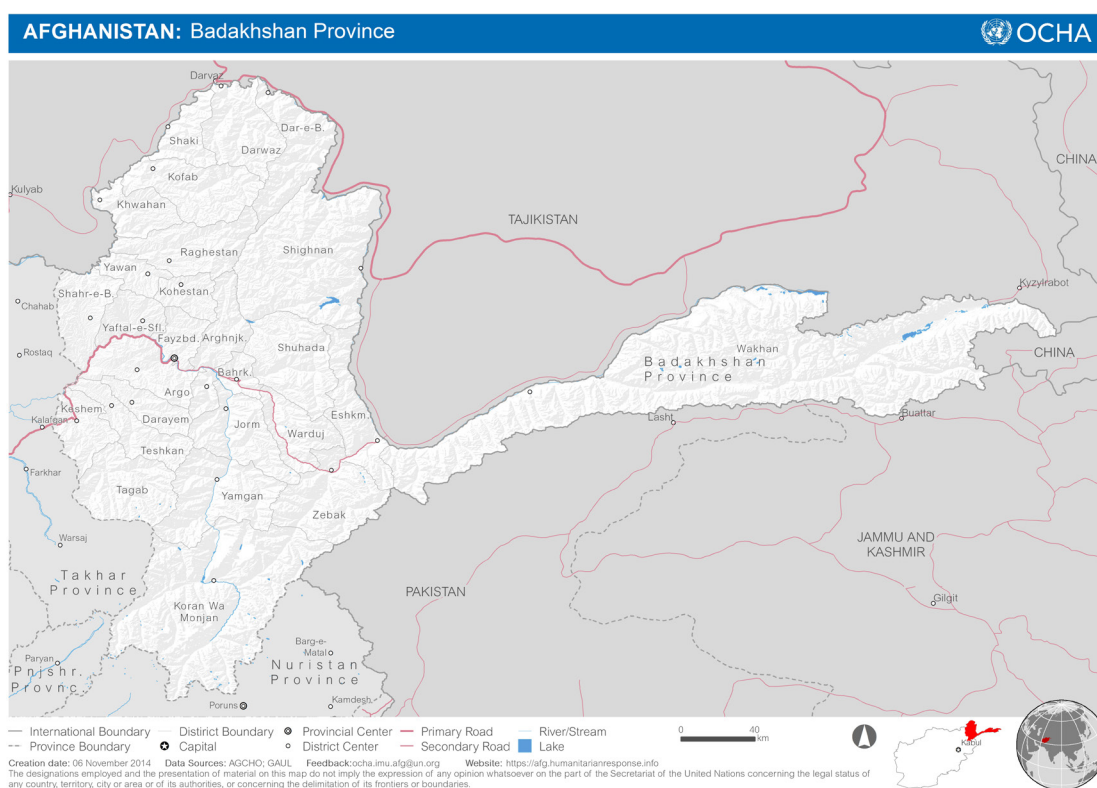
⁽⁹⁴⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *7 civilians among 14 killed in clashes*, 11 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/11/7-civilians-among-14-killed-clashes>), accessed 15 October 2014.

Khawajabahawuddin led to the arrest of 21 insurgents, including four Taliban leaders: Maulvi Halim, Qari Islamuddin, Abdul Fattah and Maulvi Nasruddin⁽⁹⁴⁵⁾. In March 2014, the Taliban leader in the district of Chahab, Mohammad Fazel, aka Sangaryar⁽⁹⁴⁶⁾, was arrested.

2.6.4. Badakhshan

Description of the province

Although underdeveloped, this province in the north of the country occupies a strategically important position, bordering Tajikistan to the north, China in the most eastern part and Pakistan in the south. Its population is about 904,000, composed of 77% Tajik, some Uzbeks and Ismaili. Of these, 96% of the inhabitants live in rural areas. The province is made up of the following districts: Arghanjkhwa, Argo, Baharak, Dar-e-Balla, Darwaz, Darayem, Eshkmesh, Jorm, Fayzabad, Keshem, Khwahan, Kofab, Kohestan, Koran WA Monjan, Raghestan, Shahr-e-Buzorg, Shaki, Shighnan, Shuhada, Tagab, Teshkan, Wakhan, Warduj, Yaftal-e-Sufla, Yawan, Yamgan, Zebak.⁽⁹⁴⁷⁾ The province is mountainous and isolated. It is considered to be an important region for poppy culture and a transit zone for drug trafficking⁽⁹⁴⁸⁾.



⁽⁹⁴⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *13 rebels eliminated, 21 detained*, 5 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/05/13-rebels-eliminated-21-detained>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban-designated district chief held*, 30 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/30/taliban-designated-district-chief-held>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽⁹⁴⁷⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>), accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁹⁴⁸⁾ AREU, *A Little Bit Poppy-free and a Little Bit Eradicated: Opium poppy cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2011-2012*, May 2013 (http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1305E%20Opium%20in%20Balkh%20and%20Badakhshan%20Case%20Study%20May%202013.pdf?bcsi_scan_1fe59ba8c561fa18=0&bcsi_scan_filename=1305E%20Opium%20in%20Balkh%20and%20Badakhshan%20Case%20Study%20May%202013.pdf), accessed 26 August 2014; MRRD, *Badakhshan provincial profile*, n.d. (<http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/219/Badakhshan%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 6 November 2014.

Impact of the violence

Although Badakhshan is traditionally considered as peaceful⁽⁹⁴⁹⁾, the situation is deteriorating⁽⁹⁵⁰⁾ and the province is becoming more vulnerable and unstable⁽⁹⁵¹⁾. An escalation of the violence has been noted⁽⁹⁵²⁾ due to a growing number of recent insurgent activities⁽⁹⁵³⁾. A decline in the security situation⁽⁹⁵⁴⁾ typically follows the retreat of the ISAF troops⁽⁹⁵⁵⁾. While insurgent activity is a central factor of insecurity, other elements must be considered also, such as local political rivalries and control of the drugs trade⁽⁹⁵⁶⁾.

Violent incidents

Districts ⁽⁹⁵⁷⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Stand-off attack	Total
Jorm		2	27	2		1	1		1		4	1	2		2	43
Warduj			11	2							3		2	1	2	21
Fayzabad			4		2				1			6	2			15
Baharak	1		2		1				1		3	3	1		1	13
Yamgan (Girwan)			10								1				1	12
Argo		1	5			1		1					2			10
Tagab			48		2										2	6
Koran Wa Monjan			4													4
Yaftal-e-Sufila			2								1	1				4
Arghanjkhwa			3													3
Kohestan B	2														1	3
Raghestan					1					2						3
Darwaz-e-Balla			2													2
Darayem			1													1
Khash			1													1
Khwahan				1												1
Kofab				1												1
Shuhada												1				1

⁽⁹⁴⁹⁾ AAN, *Election 2014 (3): Snapshots from the provinces before the vote*, 5 April 2014 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/election-2014-3-snapshots-from-the-provinces-before-the-vote>), accessed 26 August 2014; Central Asia Radio, 'Tajik Region to Get Riot Cops it Can Live With', *Global Voices Central Asia*, IWRP, 14 February 2014 (<http://iwrp.net/report-news/tajik-region-get-riot-cops-it-can-live>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁰⁾ AAN, *Between Co-Operation and Insulation – Afghanistan's Relations with the Central Asian Republics*, June 2014 (https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/20140608-Bleuer_Kazemi-Central_Asia.pdf), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁵¹⁾ LWJ, *Taliban overrun district center in northern Afghan province*, 23 May 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/taliban_overrun_dist.php), accessed 26 August 2014; Afghanistan Express Daily Newspaper, *The Taliban's Assault on Yamagan of Badakhshan*, 21 May 2014 (<http://theafghanistanexpress.com/the-talibans-assault-on-yamagan-of-badakhshan/>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁵²⁾ GlobalPost, *In remote Afghan district, the roots of insurgency are local*, 6 May 2013 (<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/afghanistan/130506/afghanistan-badakhshan-taliban-insurgency-government-faizabad-nato>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁵³⁾ Afghanistan Times, *Taliban designated commander killed in Badakhshan*, 17 April 2014 (http://www.afghanistantimes.af/news_details.php?id=6637), accessed 26 August 2014; BBC, *Afghanistan militants kill 18 police in Badakhshan*, 20 September 2013 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24177870>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁴⁾ Tolonews., *Afghan Forces Retake Key Badakhshan District from Taliban*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14975-afghan-forces-retake-key-badakhshan-district-from-taliban>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁵⁾ OSAR, *Afghanistan: mise à jour – les conditions de sécurité actuelles*, 30 September 2013 (http://www.fluechtlingshilfe.ch/pays-d-origine/arabia/afghanistan/afghanistan-les-conditions-de-securite-actuelles/at_download/file), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁶⁾ LWJ, *Jihadists create 'no-go zones' in northern Afghanistan*, 17 February 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/02/jihadists_create_no-go_zones_i.php#ixzz3BPzRz2d), accessed 26 August 2014; UN, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security – Report of the Secretary-General*, 13 June 2013 (http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/350), accessed 26 August 2014; AAN, *Local Afghan Power Structures and the International Military Intervention – A review of developments in Badakhshan and Kunduz provinces*, March 2013 (http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/20131110_PMunch_Kunduz-final.pdf), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁷⁾ No incidents reported for Darwaz, Eshkmesh, Keshem, Shahr-e Buzorg, Shaki, Shighnan, Wakhan and Zebak districts.

Districts ⁽⁹⁵⁷⁾	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Stand-off attack	Total
Teshkan							1									1
Yawan			1													1

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Badakhshan counted 156 reported security incidents (see table)⁽⁹⁵⁸⁾. The incidents cannot be documented in an exhaustive way because they are so numerous. Only few incidents will be mentioned because of their magnitude.

The Taliban, already active in the province in 2013⁽⁹⁵⁹⁾, continued to lead their operations in 2014. In remote provinces that are not secure, the ANSF has proved vulnerable. This was demonstrated by Taliban attacks conducted in May 2014⁽⁹⁶⁰⁾. On 19 or 20 May 2014, in the framework of the Taliban Spring offensive (called “Khaibar”), and their promise to circumvent the democratic political process in the context of the retreat of international troops, hundreds of Taliban fighters stormed the district of Yamgan. Depending on the source, between 27 and 40 officials were taken hostage. The Taliban confirmed it killed 16 police officers in fierce battles against ANSF⁽⁹⁶¹⁾. On 23 May 2014, the government launched a clearance operation in the same district, resulting in eight police officers and 11 insurgents being killed⁽⁹⁶²⁾.

The month of July 2014 was particularly violent. During the night of 4 July, police forces killed six Taliban members in a clash. This battle followed a Taliban attack on a police checkpoint in Jorm⁽⁹⁶³⁾. On 23 July 2014, five Taliban fighters and three policemen were killed in another clash. According to the authorities, the Taliban intended to organise a big invasion, which was thwarted by the ANSF⁽⁹⁶⁴⁾.

Victims

Likely targets for insurgent attacks are policemen, as exemplified by recent violent incidents outlined already, together with government officials⁽⁹⁶⁵⁾, sources say. In cases where civilian casualties fell, the sources provide no concrete examples in which they were the target. Finally, the sources do not specify the exact locations of the incidents.

Between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014, most civilian victims were recorded in the central and northern districts of the province: Yamgan, Baharak, Argo, Fayzabad, Shaki and Darwaz-e-Balla had civilian casualties ranging between one and 25 (according to UNAMA, referred to by UNOCHA). Jorm and Warduj (centre) had between 26 and 50⁽⁹⁶⁶⁾.

⁽⁹⁵⁸⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁹⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan Forces Retake Key Badakhshan District from Taliban*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14975-afghan-forces-retake-key-badakhshan-district-from-taliban>), accessed 26 August 2014; GlobalPost, *In remote Afghan district, the roots of insurgency are local*, 6 May 2013 (<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/afghanistan/130506/afghanistan-badakhshan-taliban-insurgency-government-faizabad-nato>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁰⁾ Afghanistan Express Daily Newspaper, *The Taliban's Assault on Yamgan of Badakhshan*, 21 May 2014 (<http://theafghanistanexpress.com/the-talibans-assault-on-yamgan-of-badakhshan/>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁶¹⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan Forces Retake Key Badakhshan District from Taliban*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14975-afghan-forces-retake-key-badakhshan-district-from-taliban>), accessed 26 August 2014; LWJ, *Taliban overrun district center in northern Afghan province*, 23 May 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/taliban_overrun_dist.php), accessed 26 August 2014; International Business Times, *Taliban Kidnaps 27 Afghan Police Officers From Badakhshan Province Following Violence That Killed 16 People*, 22 May 2014 (<http://www.ibtimes.com/taliban-kidnaps-27-afghan-police-officers-badakhshan-province-following-violence-killed-16-1588359>), accessed 26 August 2014; New York Times, *22 Afghan Police Officers Are Killed in Attacks by Taliban*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/22/world/asia/taliban-attacks-afghan-police-officers-dead.html>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁶²⁾ Mol, *A special clearance operation in Yamgan District of Badakhshan Province is under way to be cleared from Taliban presence*, 24 May 2014 (<http://moi.gov.af/en/news/33118>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁶³⁾ Xinhua, *Afghan battle leaves 6 Taliban dead in Badakhshan*, 5 July 2014 (http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2014-07/05/c_133462301.htm), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁴⁾ Ariana News, *5 armed Taliban killed in Badakhshan*, 23 July 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/5-armed-taliban-killed-in-badakhshan/>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁵⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan Forces Retake Key Badakhshan District from Taliban*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14975-afghan-forces-retake-key-badakhshan-district-from-taliban>), accessed 26 August 2014; LWJ, *Taliban overrun district center in northern Afghan province*, 23 May 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/taliban_overrun_dist.php), accessed 26 August 2014; International Business Times, *Taliban Kidnaps 27 Afghan Police Officers From Badakhshan Province Following Violence That Killed 16 People*, 22 May 2014 (<http://www.ibtimes.com/taliban-kidnaps-27-afghan-police-officers-badakhshan-province-following-violence-killed-16-1588359>), accessed 26 August 2014; New York Times, *22 Afghan Police Officers Are Killed in Attacks by Taliban*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/22/world/asia/taliban-attacks-afghan-police-officers-dead.html>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁶⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 1 December 2014, p. 4.

Displacement

UNHCR mentioned the displacement of 55 families, or 356 individuals, from the districts of Warduj and Jorm to Baharak. These forced displacements happened between June and September 2014, due to the armed conflict between the insurgents and the security forces⁽⁹⁶⁷⁾.

Actors in the conflict

Being a remote province, Badakhshan is a perfect hideout for insurgents⁽⁹⁶⁸⁾. Several armed anti-government forces are present and have influence in the province⁽⁹⁶⁹⁾.

Although relatively less active than in the rest of the country, the Taliban are present in Badakhshan⁽⁹⁷⁰⁾. In the beginning of 2014, the districts of Jorm⁽⁹⁷¹⁾ and Yamgan⁽⁹⁷²⁾ experienced problems because of this Taliban presence. In Jorm, they were able to establish hideouts in remote areas such as Khostak⁽⁹⁷³⁾. In May 2014, they took control of the district of Yamgan, which was retaken by the government in a counter-attack shortly afterwards⁽⁹⁷⁴⁾.

Other insurgent groups in the province include the Haqqani network⁽⁹⁷⁵⁾ and IMU, both strategic allies of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Most of the sources mention the presence of IMU in Badakhshan⁽⁹⁷⁶⁾. However, one source, a researcher in the field of the AAN, states that there is no evidence of this⁽⁹⁷⁷⁾. In the north of Afghanistan, IMU is said to be integrated into the Taliban's shadow government.⁽⁹⁷⁸⁾

Finally, the presence of the Turkistan Islamic Party was reported in Badakhshan⁽⁹⁷⁹⁾.

⁽⁹⁶⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Afghanistan – Monthly IDP update for September 2014* (<http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5469cb2b4.pdf>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁸⁾ BBC, *Afghanistan militants kill 18 police in Badakhshan*, 20 September 2013 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24177870>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁹⁾ AAN, *Election 2014 (3): Snapshots from the provinces before the vote*, 5 April 2014 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/election-2014-3-snapshots-from-the-provinces-before-the-vote>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷⁰⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan Forces Retake Key Badakhshan District from Taliban*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14975-afghan-forces-retake-key-badakhshan-district-from-taliban>), accessed 26 August 2014; Mol, *A special clearance operation in Yamgan District of Badakhshan Province is under way to be cleared from Taliban presence*, 24 May 2014 (<http://moi.gov.af/en/news/33118>), accessed 26 August 2014; Roggio, B., *Taliban overrun district center in northern Afghan province*, LWJ, 23 May 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/taliban_overrun_dist.php), accessed 26 August 2014; Roggio, B., *US adds 3 senior Haqqani Network leaders to terrorism list*, LWJ, 5 February 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/us_adds_3_senior_haq.php#ixzz3BPbiSM8s), accessed 26 August 2014; BBC, *Taliban hand over bodies of 16 Afghan soldiers*, 6 March 2013 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21689929>), accessed 26 August 2014; Münch, P., *Local Afghan Power Structures and the International Military Intervention*, AAN, March 2013 (http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/20131110_PMunch_Kunduz-final.pdf), accessed 26 August 2014, p. 61.

⁽⁹⁷¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *6 militants eliminated in Badakhshan clash*, 27 January 2014 (<http://beta.sada-e-azadi.net/index.php/en/afghanistan/north/10009-6-militants-eliminated-in-badakhshan-clash>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *6 militants eliminated in Badakhshan clash*, 27 January 2014 (<http://beta.sada-e-azadi.net/index.php/en/afghanistan/north/10009-6-militants-eliminated-in-badakhshan-clash>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷³⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan Forces Retake Key Badakhshan District from Taliban*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14975-afghan-forces-retake-key-badakhshan-district-from-taliban>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷⁴⁾ Mol, *A special clearance operation in Yamgan District of Badakhshan Province is under way to be cleared from Taliban presence*, 24 May 2014 (<http://moi.gov.af/en/news/33118>), accessed 26 August 2014; Tolonews, *Insecurity in Badakhshan Could Prevent Voting*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14949-insecurity-in-badakhshan-could-prevent-voting>), accessed 26 August 2014; Khaama Press, *District falls to Taliban control in Badakhshan province*, 20 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/district-falls-to-taliban-control-in-badakhshan-province-6122>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷⁵⁾ LWJ, *US adds 3 senior Haqqani Network leaders to terrorism list*, 5 February 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/us_adds_3_senior_haq.php#ixzz3BPbiSM8s), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan Forces Retake Key Badakhshan District from Taliban*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14975-afghan-forces-retake-key-badakhshan-district-from-taliban>), accessed 26 August 2014; Mol, *A special clearance operation in Yamgan District of Badakhshan Province is under way to be cleared from Taliban presence*, 24 May 2014 (<http://moi.gov.af/en/news/33118>), accessed 26 August 2014; LWJ, *Taliban overrun district center in northern Afghan province*, 23 May 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/taliban_overrun_dist.php), accessed 26 August 2014; LWJ, *US adds 3 senior Haqqani Network leaders to terrorism list*, 5 February 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/us_adds_3_senior_haq.php#ixzz3BPbiSM8s), accessed 26 August 2014; BBC, *Afghanistan militants kill 18 police in Badakhshan*, 20 September 2013 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24177870>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷⁷⁾ AAN, *Between Co-Operation and Insulation – Afghanistan's Relations with the Central Asian Republics*, June 2014 (https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/20140608-Bleuer_Kazemi-Central_Asia.pdf), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷⁸⁾ Tolonews, *Afghan Forces Retake Key Badakhshan District from Taliban*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14975-afghan-forces-retake-key-badakhshan-district-from-taliban>), accessed 26 August 2014; Mol, *A special clearance operation in Yamgan District of Badakhshan Province is under way to be cleared from Taliban presence*, 24 May 2014 (<http://moi.gov.af/en/news/33118>), accessed 26 August 2014; LWJ, *Taliban overrun district center in northern Afghan province*, 23 May 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/taliban_overrun_dist.php), accessed 26 August 2014; LWJ, *US adds 3 senior Haqqani Network leaders to terrorism list*, 5 February 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/us_adds_3_senior_haq.php#ixzz3BPbiSM8s), accessed 26 August 2014; BBC, *Afghanistan militants kill 18 police in Badakhshan*, 20 September 2013 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24177870>), accessed 26 August 2014.

⁽⁹⁷⁹⁾ LWJ, *Jihadists create 'no-go zones' in northern Afghanistan*, 17 February 2014 (http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2014/02/jihadists_create_no-go_zones_i.php#ixzz3BPaz2d), accessed 26 August 2014.

The actions and strategies of the insurgents in Badakhshan are mostly attacks targeting the ANSF, mainly the police⁽⁹⁸⁰⁾. No information is available on the weapons used. In January 2013, armed opposition groups, especially the Taliban, used adolescents and youth to strengthen their footholds in the province⁽⁹⁸¹⁾.

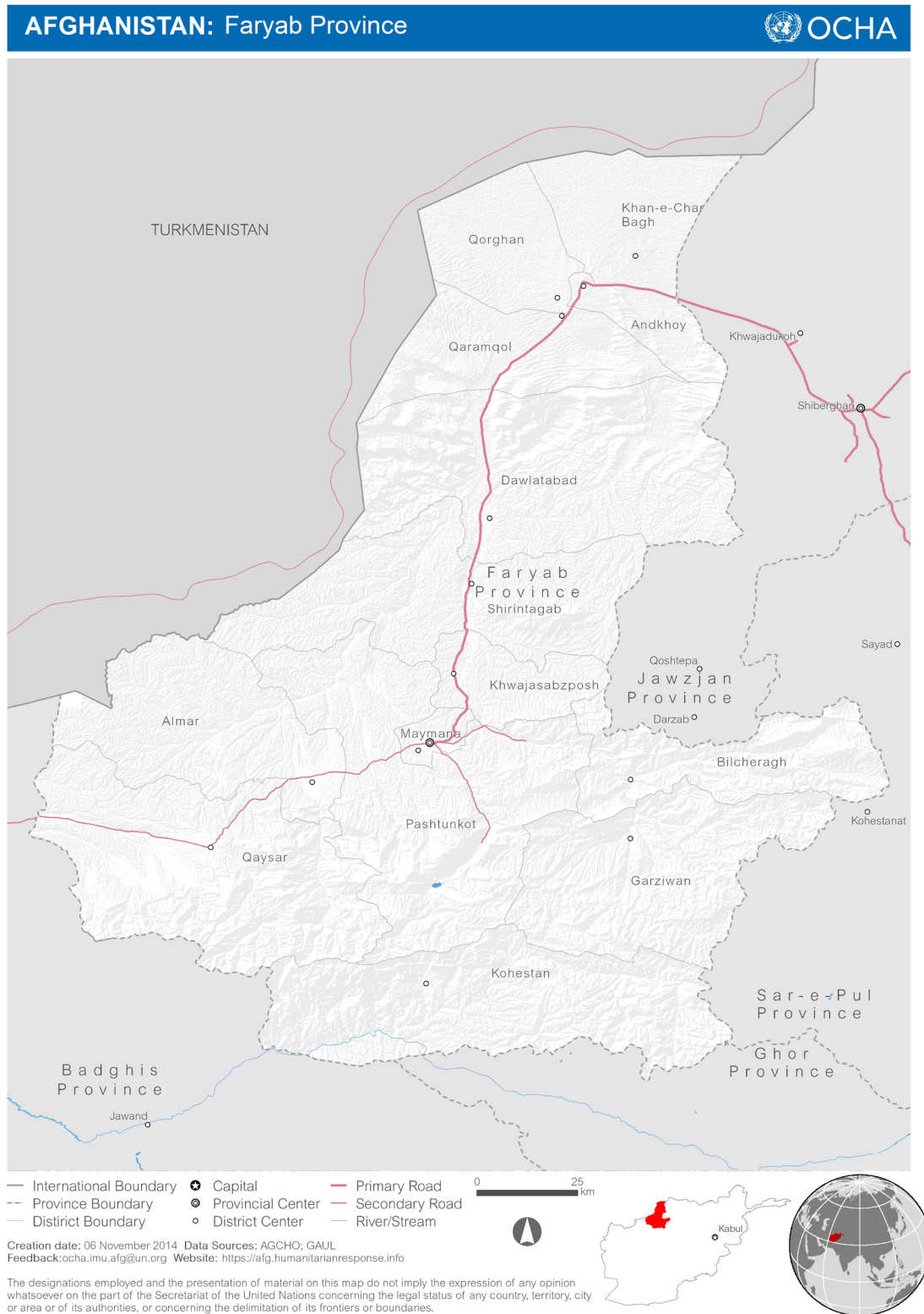
⁽⁹⁸⁰⁾ Bakhtar News, *Eight Taliban Militants Killed in East of the Country*, 26 September 2014 (<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security/item/14254-eight-taliban-militants-killed-in-east-of-the-country.html>), accessed 7 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁸¹⁾ AAN, *Between Co-Operation and Insulation – Afghanistan's Relations with the Central Asian Republics*, June 2014 (https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/20140608-Bleuer_Kazemi-Central_Asia.pdf), (accessed 26 August 2014).

2.7. North

2.7.1. Faryab

Description of the province



Faryab is situated in the western end of the northern region of Afghanistan, bordering Turkmenistan to the west and north, Jawzjan and Sar-e Pul to the east, Ghor to the south and Badghis in the south-west. The provincial capital

is Maymana. The province is comprised of the following districts: Almar, Andkhoy, Bilcheragh, Dawlatabad, Garziwan, Khan-e-Char Bagh, Khwajasabzposh, Kohestan, Maymana, Pashtunkot, Qaramqol, Qaysar, Qorghon, Shirintagab.⁽⁹⁸²⁾ The terrain of the province ranges from the Hindu Kush mountains of southern Faryab to the desert flatlands of northern Faryab. The ring road passes through the majority of district centres of Faryab, connecting Maymana to other cities of the northern region such as Mazar-e Sharif. Construction on the connection with Herat through Badghis has stalled over the past year, according to a source in Kabul, due to security issues and financial issues with the contractor.⁽⁹⁸³⁾

According to UNAMA figures cited in a Norwegian report, Faryab is the only Afghan province with an ethnic Uzbek majority and holds therefore a symbolic national significance for this Afghan minority. Tajiks are the second largest group, Pashtuns come third and Turkmens fourth, while there is a minor Hazara presence.⁽⁹⁸⁴⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	Demonstration	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Qaysar	7	195		8			1	2		16	12	3			3		247
Pashtun Kot	2	94		5	1	1		2		5	7	1					118
Dawlatabad	3	54		3				1		12	8	6			1		88
Shirin Tagab		52	1	4				1	1	12	13	3			1		88
Almar	4	54	1	6				1		11	1	1			1		80
Khwaja Sabz Posh	2	39		7	1					5	8	2		1	3		68
Maymana		1	6	1	1		1		1	8	13	8		3	3	1	55
Gurziwan		32	1	4			2			5	4						48
Kohistan		21		3			1			3	1						29
Bilchiragh		17	1	3				1		2	1						25
Qaramqol		9		1						3	1						14
Khani Chahar Bagh	2	6		3							2						13
Andkhoy		6									1	1	1				9
Qorghon		1			1						2						4

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Faryab counted 882 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Qaysar and Pashtun Kot (see table).⁽⁹⁸⁵⁾

Graeme Smith from ICG described the situation as deteriorating rapidly after the withdrawal of IMF. The Taliban reportedly deliberately choose the “hard approach” for Faryab.⁽⁹⁸⁶⁾ The province is considered the Taliban’s gateway to the north.⁽⁹⁸⁷⁾

⁽⁹⁸²⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽⁹⁸³⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽⁹⁸⁴⁾ Bauck P., a.o., *An Assessment of Conflict and Actors in Faryab Province to Establish a Basis for Increased Norwegian Civilian Involvement*, Chr. Michelsen Institute, July 2007 (<http://www.cmi.no/pdf/?file=/afghanistan/doc/Faryab%20Risk%20Assessment%20CMI%20report%2002.07.pdf>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁸⁵⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽⁹⁸⁶⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan’s Insurgency after the Transition*, Asia Report n° 256, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf>), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 10-11.

⁽⁹⁸⁷⁾ Ali, O., *Moving East in the North: transitioned Faryab and the Taleban*, AAN, 17 May 2014 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/moving-east-in-the-north-transitioned-faryab-and-the-taleban/>), accessed 17 November 2014.

According to UNOCHA “repeated conflict in Faryab [Almar, Ghormach, Gurziwan, Kohistan Pashtunkot, Qaysar districts] has resulted in displacements, increased protection needs and intensified vulnerabilities.”⁽⁹⁸⁸⁾ After Nangarhar, Faryab has “the highest increase in risk across all conflict indicators compared to the previous year”.⁽⁹⁸⁹⁾ According to a source in Kabul, the current security situation may indicate that the province has passed the “tipping point” into a vicious cycle of insecurity, consistent attacks on security forces, inaccessibility of government actors and eventual inaccessibility of non-government development actors, increased frustrations of local communities, feeding into further insecurity.⁽⁹⁹⁰⁾

According to UNOCHA, almost all of Faryab’s central districts witnessed a level of incidents that was higher than 50 in the year from September 2013 to August 2014. The district of Qaysar was in the highest category with more than 251 incidents. This makes Qaysar the only district in the whole northern, central and western region to reach that level. In terms of civilian casualties, Qaysar stands out with more than 151 for the same period. UNOCHA mentions the district as one of the most dramatic in terms of conflict.⁽⁹⁹¹⁾ Neighbouring districts of Almar and Pashtun Kot and Dawlatabad in the north of the province are also deteriorating with high levels of incidents and civilian casualties, comparable to the ones in areas such as Kandahar and Helmand. Violence in the Qaysar is related to violence in Badghis’ Ghormach. This district is often considered a part of Faryab.⁽⁹⁹²⁾ An ANA general, quoted by Tolonews, said in August 2014 that Ghormach and Qaysar were “under a severe and active Taliban insurgency”.⁽⁹⁹³⁾

According to a source in Kabul, there has been a massive infiltration of insurgents into the province in recent years, including into the provincial capital Maymana. There are constant assaults on ANSF positions including various checkpoints in the province. Detonation and IED discoveries are commonplace.⁽⁹⁹⁴⁾ These explosions target ANSF and civilians.

Here are the most significant incidents in terms of civilian casualties. In March 2014, two pressure cookers filled with explosives were detonated near a shop in the district of Khwaja Sabzposh, killing two and wounding eight people.⁽⁹⁹⁵⁾ Later that month, a VBIED exploded in the middle of the provincial capital on market day, killing 15 to 18 people and wounding many more.⁽⁹⁹⁶⁾ Another vehicle carrying 150 kg of explosives, bound to explode at the same moment in the same town, was stopped by the intelligence service.⁽⁹⁹⁷⁾

In May 2014, a bomb went off in a liquefied gas shop in Pashtun Kot, killing one woman and injuring 16 civilians, including children.⁽⁹⁹⁸⁾ Another bomb explosion in the Maymana city centre in June killed at least three civilians and injured nearly a dozen and in Dawlatabad a bomb hidden in a handcart in front of some shops killed another three and wounded six civilians.⁽⁹⁹⁹⁾ In Maymana, an explosives-laden bicycle killed one person and injured dozens of civilians in the city centre in September.⁽¹⁰⁰⁰⁾

⁽⁹⁸⁸⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 20.

⁽⁹⁸⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 28.

⁽⁹⁹⁰⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽⁹⁹¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.4-5.

⁽⁹⁹²⁾ Ali, O., *Moving East in the North: transitioned Faryab and the Taleban*, AAN, 17 May 2014 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/moving-east-in-the-north-transitioned-faryab-and-the-taleban/>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹³⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban strive to sabotage security in Faryab*, 31 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16187-taliban-strive-to-sabotage-security-in-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹⁴⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽⁹⁹⁵⁾ Khaama Press, *Coordinated blasts kill or injure 10 in Faryab province*, 5 March 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/coordinated-blasts-kill-or-injure-10-in-faryab-province-1234>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *Suicide attack in Faryab leaves 15 people dead, 30 others injured*, 18 March 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/suicide-attack-in-faryab-leaves-15-people-dead-30-others-injured-2891>), accessed 17 November 2014; BBC, *Afghan suicide bombing at market leaves many dead*, 18 March 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26624641>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *17 killed, 48 injured in Faryab suicide attack*, 18 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/18/17-killed-48-injured-faryab-suicide-attack>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹⁷⁾ Khaama Press, *Afghan intelligence foils deadly suicide attack in Faryab province*, 18 March 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/afghan-intelligence-foils-deadly-suicide-attack-in-faryab-province-2894>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Woman killed, 15 injured in Pashtoon Kot blast*, 21 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/21/woman-killed-16-injured-pashtoon-kot-blast>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 dead, 11 injured blast rocks Faryab capital*, 4 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/04/3-dead-11-injured-blast-rocks-faryab-capital>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Child among 3 killed in Faryab blast*, 25 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/25/child-among-3-killed-faryab-blast>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁰⁾ Khaama Press, *Explosion reported in Faryab and Kandahar provinces*, 25 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/explosion-reported-in-faryab-and-kandahar-provinces-8721>), accessed 17 November 2014; Tolonews, *Four killed, 18 wounded in Faryab attacks*, 25 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16513-four-killed-18-wounded-in-faryab-attacks>), accessed 17 November 2014.

According to a source in Kabul, intimidation and abduction of selective targets, especially NGO staff, aid workers, government officials and ANSF personnel continued unabated. The collection of illegal taxes by insurgents and harassment or even abduction and/or killing of defaulters is occasionally reported in scattered locations. There is targeted killing of influential figures, such as jihadi commanders, politicians, top ANSF officials and tribal elders.⁽¹⁰⁰¹⁾ These targeted killings are not only carried out by insurgents – competing warlords affiliated with pro-government movements Junbesh and Jamiat also regularly target each other.⁽¹⁰⁰²⁾

Occasionally, civilians, including women and children, are victims of stray rockets and mortars in homes. In one in Qaysar, even the ambulance transporting the wounded from such an incident came under fire in April 2014.⁽¹⁰⁰³⁾ In a similar incident in Dawlatabad, the rickshaw transporting the wounded civilians of a stray rocket attack to the hospital hit an IED, tripling the number of civilian victims.⁽¹⁰⁰⁴⁾

In April 2014, insurgents and ANSF fought intensely for the control of the Shak bazaar and neighbouring villages in Qaysar. That area has repeatedly come under attack from large groups of insurgents, this time including fighters brought in from neighbouring Sar-i Pul, Badghis, Ghor and even Pakistan. Each time, insurgents were repulsed in what was described as a “fierce battle”.⁽¹⁰⁰⁵⁾ The fighting in April left at least four civilians dead and many more wounded, as thousands of people were displaced because of the violence.⁽¹⁰⁰⁶⁾ The fighting continued in other villages all through April.⁽¹⁰⁰⁷⁾

In July 2014, insurgents launched a new offensive on the village, with more than 100 fighters. There were many casualties on both sides, including civilians.⁽¹⁰⁰⁸⁾ Some reports even claimed a group of more than 300 fighters involved in a July attack, which lasted for several days.⁽¹⁰⁰⁹⁾ Some 2,000 residents are said to have fled the area because of the violence.⁽¹⁰¹⁰⁾ In August 2014, heavy fighting in the districts of Qaysar, Almar and Ghormach in Badghis continued and the roads in and to these districts were closed for several days when about 1,000 insurgents encircled several police checkposts.⁽¹⁰¹¹⁾

The province saw many election-related violent incidents. After a car full of explosives said to target an electoral campaign was defused, a roadside bomb killed some campaigners in Almar district in the beginning of March.⁽¹⁰¹²⁾

⁽¹⁰⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban kill ALP commander along with friends*, 7 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/07/taliban-kill-alp-commander-along-friends>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Faryab violence claims 8 lives*, 19 February 2014, (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/19/faryab-violence-claims-8-lives>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kidnapped intelligence official found dead*, 4 Mei 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/04/kidnapped-intelligence-official-found-dead>), accessed 17 November 2014. Khaama Press, *Tribal elders among 8 killed in Taliban attack in Faryab*, 5 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/tribal-elders-among-8-killed-in-taliban-attack-in-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014; Khaama Press, *District intelligence chief killed in Taliban ambush*, 9 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/district-intelligence-chief-killed-in-taliban-ambush-in-faryab-8405>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *District officials among 6 killed in Faryab and Laghman*, 14 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/14/2-district-officials-among-6-killed-faryab-laghman>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Tribal elders found dead in Faryab*, 11 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/11/tribal-elders-found-dead-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014; Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁰²⁾ Ali, O., *Moving East in the North: transitioned Faryab and the Taliban*, AAN, 17 May 2014 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/moving-east-in-the-north-transitioned-faryab-and-the-taliban/>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Woman, children injured by rocket strike*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/06/woman-children-injured-rocket-strike>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁴⁾ Tolonews, *Six civilians killed in Faryab*, 12 June 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15221-six-civilians-killed-in-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban capture Shakh bazaar area in Faryab*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/06/taliban-capture-shakh-bazaar-area-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *30 rebels killed in Qaisar offensive*, 21 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/21/30-rebels-killed-qaisar-offensive>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 killed, 20 injured when forces regain Shakh bazaar control*, 22 April 2014, (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/22/4-killed-20-injured-forces-regain-shakh-bazaar-control>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *57 insurgents eliminated in Faryab offensive*, 30 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/30/57-insurgents-eliminated-faryab-offensive>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilian among 11 dead in Faryab and Jawzjan*, 1 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/01/civilian-among-11-dead-faryab-jawzjan>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *8 militants, one civilian killed in Qaisar clashes*, 19 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/19/8-militants-one-civilian-killed-qaisar-clashes>), accessed 17 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Heavy clashes continue in Northern Faryab Province*, 21 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/heavy-clashes-continue-in-northern-faryab-province-2174>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁹⁾ RFE/RL, *Violence kills at least 60 across Afghanistan*, 21 July 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-taliban-fighting-dozens-dead/25464877.html>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰¹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilians among 25 killed in Faryab claches*, 21 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/21/civilians-among-25-killed-faryab-clashes>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰¹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Faryab governor warns for insecurity*, 18 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/18/faryab-governor-warns-insecurity>), accessed 17 November 2014; Tolonews, *Hundreds of insurgents attack district of Fayrab*, 24 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16092-hundreds-of-insurgents-attack-districts-of-fayrab>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *75 Rebels killed in Faryab offensive*, 25 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/25/75-rebels-killed-faryab-offensive>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰¹²⁾ Khaama Press, *Deadly car bombing foiled in Faryab province*, 22 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/deadly-car-bombing-foiled-in-faryab-province-3457>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Another campaigner Abdullah killed*, 1 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/01/another-campaigner-abdullah-killed>), accessed 17 November 2014.

Later that month, three campaigners were pulled out of their car and killed in the spot again in Almar.⁽¹⁰¹³⁾ On election day in April 2014, several attacks occurred and, according to the provincial governor, at least 21 insurgents were killed in the ensuing clashes.⁽¹⁰¹⁴⁾ On voting day in June 2014, armed clashes erupted in several polling stations around Faryab, including in the provincial capital.⁽¹⁰¹⁵⁾

Victims

UNAMA gave several examples of IED incidents causing a lot in civilian casualties, both targeted and randomly, in 2013.⁽¹⁰¹⁶⁾ In September 2014, a child was killed and three others injured by a landmine when they were herding their cattle in Almar district.⁽¹⁰¹⁷⁾ In terms of civilian casualties caused by ground engagements between the fighting parties, Faryab was second only to Helmand for the first six months of 2014, according to UNAMA.⁽¹⁰¹⁸⁾

As is clear from the aforementioned examples, explosions in marketplaces and other public places repeatedly hit civilian targets, and often women and children.

Displacement

The number of IDPs in and from Faryab is growing exponentially. According to UNOCHA, Faryab saw more than 31,000 IDPs from September 2011 to August 2014, of which more than 18,500 IDPs were in the last year.⁽¹⁰¹⁹⁾ The relative risk of conflict-induced displacement in Faryab is the highest of all provinces, more than six times higher than anywhere else in Afghanistan.⁽¹⁰²⁰⁾ According to UNHCR, IDPs in Faryab are mostly displaced within their province, but also to neighbouring provinces in the region.⁽¹⁰²¹⁾ This pattern also appears from UNOCHA maps, indicating that Qaysar and neighbouring districts are both generating and hosting very high numbers of IDPs. Qaysar and Pashtun Kot are in the highest category of districts of origin for IDPs, with more than 10,000 IDPs each in the last three years. Almar generated between 5,000 and 10,000 IDPs and Shirin Tagab and Bilchiragh each between 1,000 and 5,000.⁽¹⁰²²⁾

Actors in the conflict

Insurgents in Faryab include the Taliban and IMU.⁽¹⁰²³⁾ The Taliban is reportedly actively recruiting among the Uzbek community.⁽¹⁰²⁴⁾ Regularly, insurgents are believed to include foreign nationals, such as Pakistanis, Uzbeks, Chechens, Tajiks and Arabs.⁽¹⁰²⁵⁾ In May 2014, reports of a Taliban splinter group opposing the Taliban and linked to the Haqqani Network surfaced in Qaysar.⁽¹⁰²⁶⁾

⁽¹⁰¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 election workers Abdullah killed*, 12 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/12/3-election-workers-abdullah-killed-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰¹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *21 insurgents eliminated in Faryab*, 5 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/05/21-insurgents-eliminated-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Above 100 killed in election day violence*, 14 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/14/above-100-killed-election-day-violence>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰¹⁶⁾ UNAMA, *Annual report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 8 February 2014 (http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-E-ING.pdf), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 16-21.

⁽¹⁰¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *1 child killed, 3 injured in Faryab blast*, 18 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/18/1-child-killed-3-injured-faryab-blast>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰¹⁸⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan Midyear Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2014*, July 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 35.

⁽¹⁰¹⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 34.

⁽¹⁰²⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 42.

⁽¹⁰²¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,52fdcf684,0.html>), accessed 18 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰²²⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.10-32.

⁽¹⁰²³⁾ BBC, *Afghan suicide bombing at market leaves many dead*, 18 March 2014 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26624641>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰²⁴⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, Asia Report n° 256*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf>), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 14.

⁽¹⁰²⁵⁾ Khaama Press, *Pakistani militants among 200 killed or injured in Farah operations*, 25 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/pakistani-militants-among-200-killed-injured-in-farah-operations-6147>), accessed 17 November 2014; Tolonews, *Hundreds of insurgents attack district of Faryab*, 24 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16092-hundreds-of-insurgents-attack-districts-of-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *75 rebels killed in Faryab offensive*, 28 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/25/75-rebels-killed-faryab-offensive>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *New Taliban group emerges in Faryab*, 19 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/19/new-taliban-group-emerges-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014.

According to a source in Kabul, the Junbesh-e Melli party, led by ethnic Uzbek General Dostum, established its dominance within the province and retained a strong grip on politics. There exists a strong rivalry with Jamiat-e Islami. The province has long been the ground for factional conflict, in the latest years fuelled by the re-mobilisation of former commanders in the ALP and its predecessor the CIP.⁽¹⁰²⁷⁾

Armed pro-government militias are a major source of insecurity in Faryab. Some 300 ALP are active in Qaysar district and, according to a source in Kabul, recruitment of 200 ALP in Pashtun Kot and Almar is occurring. UNAMA quoted community members and district authorities that labelled a portion of the ALP force in Qaysar as a private militia beyond control of the ANP. Qaysar is the district with the highest number of human rights violations attributed to ALP outside of Kunduz. These violations include torture, ill-treatment, systematic extortion, arbitrary detention, threats, intimidation, harassment and the blocking of civilian access to government institutions.⁽¹⁰²⁸⁾

Besides ALP, some 382 disbanded CIP members are, according to a source in Kabul, still operational in Bilchiragh and Dawlatabad districts.⁽¹⁰²⁹⁾ According to a report by ICG, some of these men joined the ALP, others became “freelance warlords”.⁽¹⁰³⁰⁾ Almost all cases of abuse by pro-government armed groups, UNAMA recorded in 2013, came from two provinces: Kunduz and Faryab.⁽¹⁰³¹⁾ In April 2014, an attack on two villages in Pashtun Kot by a PGM killed five civilians and displaced 150 families.⁽¹⁰³²⁾ Local residents also accused the warlord and his men of sexual abuse.⁽¹⁰³³⁾ Because of the ties these militias have with political parties such as Junbesh or Jamiat, they enjoy a degree of impunity.⁽¹⁰³⁴⁾

ICG placed the increased competition among militias in the context of the elections stating: “control of a village usually meant ownership of its votes, which have a market value in a corrupt voting system”.⁽¹⁰³⁵⁾ In August 2014, the provincial governor warned that the number of illegally armed men in Faryab was “dramatically increasing”. Because of continued attacks, especially in Qaysar district, local people were purchasing arms to defend themselves. Reportedly, many locals were fighting alongside the ANSF, as they maintained the security of bazaars and local areas when the ANSF were at their checkpoints.⁽¹⁰³⁶⁾

Regular ANSF were also accused of misbehaviour by UNAMA. During an operation in Almar district in October 2013, UNAMA reported deliberate destruction of civilian residences and looting by ANA soldiers.⁽¹⁰³⁷⁾

⁽¹⁰²⁷⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰²⁸⁾ UNAMA, *Annual report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 8 February 2014 (http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-E-iNG.pdf), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 53.

⁽¹⁰²⁹⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰³⁰⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, Asia Report n° 256*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf>), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 11.

⁽¹⁰³¹⁾ UNAMA, *Annual report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 8 February 2014 (http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-E-iNG.pdf), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 57.

⁽¹⁰³²⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2014*, July 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 54.

⁽¹⁰³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Faryab women protest against warlord*, 23 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/23/faryab-women-protest-against-warlord>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰³⁴⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, Asia Report n° 256*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf>), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 11; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilian murder sparks protest in Faryab*, 1 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/01/civilian-murder-sparks-protest-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014.

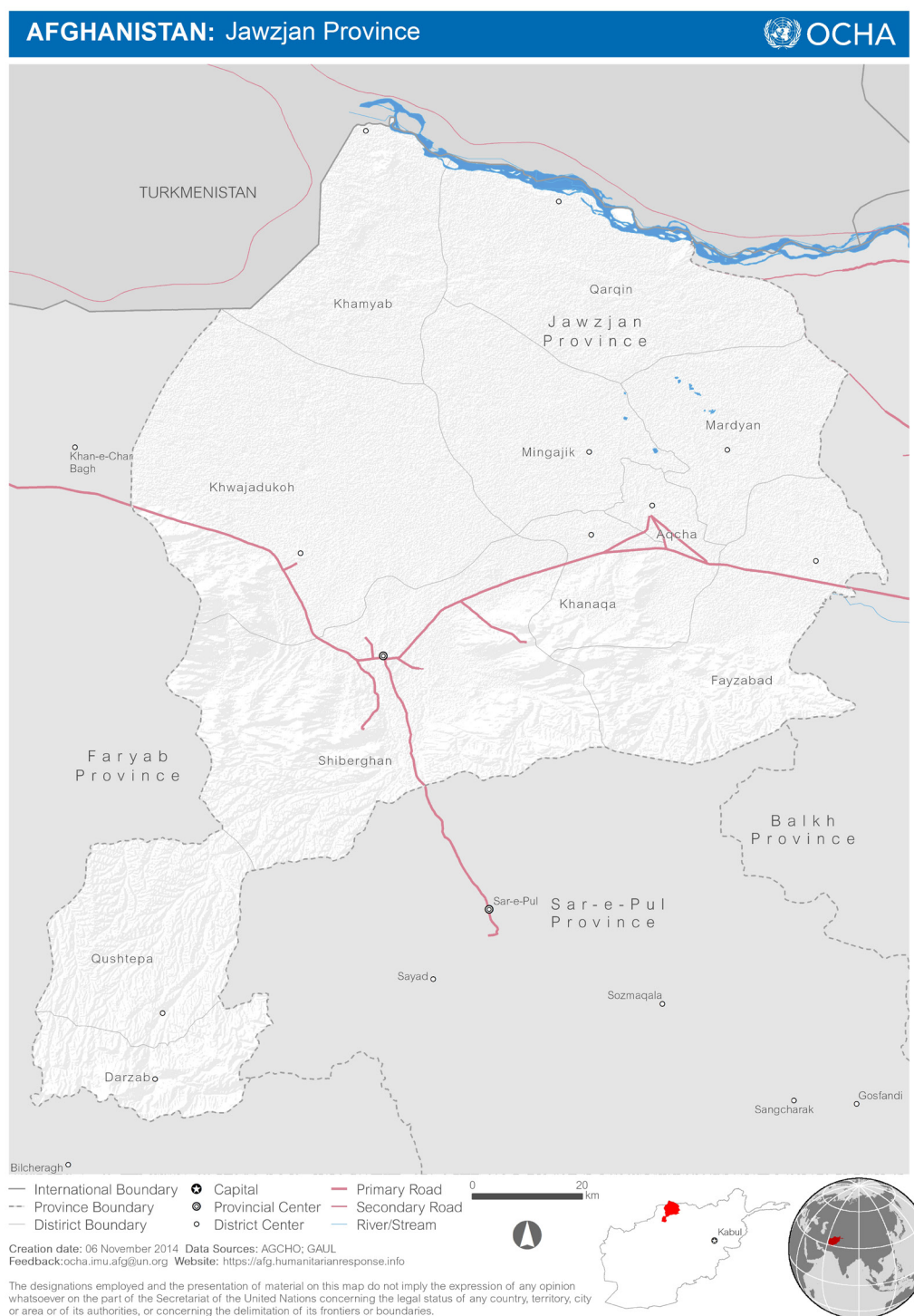
⁽¹⁰³⁵⁾ ICG, *Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, Asia Report n° 256*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.pdf>), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 15.

⁽¹⁰³⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Number of illegally armed men in the rise in Faryab*, 28 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16105-number-of-illegally-armed-men-on-the-rise-in-faryab>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰³⁷⁾ UNAMA, *Annual report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 8 February 2014 (http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-E-iNG.pdf), accessed 17 November 2014, p. 44.

2.7.2. Jawzjan

Description of the province



Jawzjan is situated in the northern part of Afghanistan, bordering Turkmenistan in the north, Balkh in the east, Sar-e Pul in the south and Faryab in the west. It is divided into 11 districts (Aqcha, Darzab, Fayzabad, Khamyab, Khanaqa, Khwajadukoh, Mardyan, Mingajik, Qarqin, Qushtepa, Shiberghan)⁽¹⁰³⁸⁾ and its capital Shiberghan lies on the ring road from Mazar-e Sharif to Herat. A secondary road connects Sar-e Pul with the ringroad also in Shiberghan. More than one quarter of the province is mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while more than two-thirds of the

⁽¹⁰³⁸⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

area is made up of flat land. The major ethnic groups living in Jawzjan province are Uzbek and Turkmen followed by Tajik, Pashtun and Arab. Uzbek is spoken by the largest proportion of the population. Turkmen is next.⁽¹⁰³⁹⁾ Turkmen dominate the population in the northern and eastern districts, notably Khamab, Qarqin, Mingajik, Mardyan and Aqcha. Uzbeks comprise the largest ethnic group in Darzab, Qush Tepa and Fayzabad.⁽¹⁰⁴⁰⁾

There are gas fields near Shiberghan. Insurgents occasionally try to disrupt the pipelines running to Mazar-e Sharif. In January and May 2014, they attacked ANSF protecting these pipelines.⁽¹⁰⁴¹⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Stand-off attack	Total
Qush Tepa	2	25	1	1	1			5	4	2	1	42
Shiberghan	4	22		2		1		3	2	2	2	38
Aqcha		5	1	3				4	4	2		19
Darzab		9		1				2	4	1		17
Fayzabad		2		1				2	2			7
Mardyan		2		2				2	1			7
Mingajik	1	4		1							1	7
Qarqin		1						4	2			7
Kham Ab		1		1				3	1			6
Khaniqa		3					1	1				5
KhwaJa Du Koh		2				1						3

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Jawzjan counted 158 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Qush Tepa, and the large district around the provincial capital Shiberghan (see table).⁽¹⁰⁴²⁾

The province is considered relatively safe by UNHCR.⁽¹⁰⁴³⁾ According to Landinfo, insurgent activities in Jawzjan province are concentrated in the districts of Qush Tepa and Darzab.⁽¹⁰⁴⁴⁾ According to a source in Kabul, the security situation in Jawzjan is relatively stable, with the exception of the southern Darzab and Qush Tepa districts. Since 2009, insurgents have been more active in these two southern, more mountainous districts, creating many civilian casualties (mostly through the use of IEDs and targeted killing), with a corresponding rise in operations by the ANSF and the International Military.⁽¹⁰⁴⁵⁾

UNAMA figures for September 2013 to August 2014 quoted by UNOCHA draw a more mixed picture. The number of conflict-related incidents in Jawzjan is below ten in every district, except for Qush Tepa, Shiberghan and Fayzabad districts which see between 10 and 50 incidents in a whole year. The number of casualties across the whole province

⁽¹⁰³⁹⁾ MRRD, *Jawzjan Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/238/Jawzjan%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁰⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 dead in attack on Jawzjan check post*, 6 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/06/2-dead-attack-jawzjan-check-post>), accessed 5 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *7 dead in Ghor and Jawzjan clashes*, 17 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/17/7-dead-ghor-jawzjan-clashes>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴²⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴³⁾ UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147984,0.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁴⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 5 November 2014, p. 23-24.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁵⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

is low - between 0 and 25.⁽¹⁰⁴⁶⁾ Qush Tapa and Darzab, together with some northern and central districts, witnessed a slight increase in incidents.⁽¹⁰⁴⁷⁾ Overall conflict-related risk in Jawzjan is almost 2.5 times lower than in the rest of the country. The risk of escalation is almost twice as low.⁽¹⁰⁴⁸⁾ On average, the province records a little more than three security incidents per week. A total of 118 incidents were recorded for the first 37 weeks of 2014 - from January to mid-September.⁽¹⁰⁴⁹⁾

Most incidents in Qush Tapa are insurgent attacks on ALP positions on the main road between Shiberghan and Qush Tapa. In a clash in February 2014, a local Taliban commander was killed and in April and May more insurgents were killed when they stormed a police checkpoint.⁽¹⁰⁵⁰⁾ Later in May 2014, several ALP were killed and others abducted when insurgents attacked their checkpoint.⁽¹⁰⁵¹⁾ On election day in June 2014, insurgents fired several rockets into Qush Tapa town but only wounded themselves when one rocket exploded prematurely.⁽¹⁰⁵²⁾ In August 2014, two similar incidents of prematurely exploding IEDs killed and wounded several insurgents in Qush Tapa and Darzab.⁽¹⁰⁵³⁾ In September 2014, a large-scale attack on a military convoy in Qush Tapa caused many casualties on both sides.⁽¹⁰⁵⁴⁾ Two insurgent attacks on an ALP position in September 2014 in Qush Tapa resulted in many casualties on both sides. One civilian was wounded and goods were also damaged.⁽¹⁰⁵⁵⁾

Despite the relatively small number of security incidents in Darzab, compared to Qush Tapa district, it remains an insurgent hot spot in the province, according to a source in Kabul.⁽¹⁰⁵⁶⁾ For example, in April two ALP were killed when their vehicle struck a roadside bomb.⁽¹⁰⁵⁷⁾

According to a source in Kabul, most AGE-related incidents in Shiberghan occurred in the outlying villages of the district and were mostly armed and or AGE attacks on ANSF checkpoints or movements.⁽¹⁰⁵⁸⁾ In the district of Shiberghan, a popular uprising against the Taliban resulted in an open clash in January 2014 between the local population and ANSF against the insurgents with casualties on both sides.⁽¹⁰⁵⁹⁾ Earlier, an insurgent and a civilian were killed in an attack on a checkpoint protecting a gas pipeline in the same district.⁽¹⁰⁶⁰⁾ In July 2014, a police officer was targeted in a drive-by shooting outside Shiberghan.⁽¹⁰⁶¹⁾ In September 2014, insurgents abducted Pakistani engineers from a private construction company in the Dasht-e Laila desert outside Shiberghan and killed their driver.⁽¹⁰⁶²⁾

⁽¹⁰⁴⁶⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 4-5.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁷⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 27.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁸⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 31.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁹⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 polling sites secured, rebel leader killed*, 24 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/24/3-polling-sites-secured-rebel-leader-killed>), accessed 5 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Blast claims lives of 2 ALP officials*, 29 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/29/blast-claims-lives-2-alp-officials>), accessed 5 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilian among 11 dead in Faryab and Jawzjan*, 1 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/01/civilian-among-11-dead-faryab-jawzjan>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁵¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Fresh wave of violence claims 17 lives*, 12 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/12/fresh-wave-violence-claims-17-lives>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁵²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *10 killed in Kunduz and Jawzjan on election day*, 15 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/15/10-killed-kunduz-jawzjan-election-day>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁵³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Commander among 5 rebels killed in Jawzjan*, 31 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/31/commander-among-5-rebels-killed-jawzjan>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ANA soldier among 11 killed in Jawzjan clash*, 2 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/02/ana-soldier-among-11-killed-jawzjan-clash>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *8 militants killed in Jawzjan and Badakhshan*, 13 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/13/8-militants-killed-jawzjan-badakhshan>), accessed 5 November 2014; Khaama Press, *5 policemen martyred in Taliban attack in Jawzjan province*, 29 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/5-policemen-martyred-in-taliban-attack-in-jawzjan-province-6770>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁶⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Balst claims lives of 2 ALP officials*, 29 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/29/blast-claims-lives-2-alp-officials>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁸⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 killed in separate Jawzjan incidents*, 15 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/15/5-killed-separate-jawzjan-incidents>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 dead in attack on Jawzjan check post*, 6 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/06/2-dead-attack-jawzjan-check-post>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Police officer, border policeman's wife gunned down*, 3 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/03/police-officer-border-policeman%E2%80%99s-wife-gunned-down>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶²⁾ Khaama Press, *Kidnappers kill driver of abducted Pakistani engineer in Jawzjan*, 13 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/kidnappers-kill-driver-of-abducted-pakistani-engineer-in-jawzjan-8635>), accessed 5 November 2014.

Violent incidents only became sporadic in the second half of the year across the central districts. In May 2014, insurgents killed an NDS officer in a roadside bomb in Aqcha.⁽¹⁰⁶³⁾ In August 2014, two IEDs in Aqcha killed one civilian and wounded ANSF personnel and civilians.⁽¹⁰⁶⁴⁾ In September 2014 four civilians were injured in a gun attack on a militiaman in Aqcha district and later that month a tribal elder was reportedly killed leading a public uprising against the Taliban.⁽¹⁰⁶⁵⁾

In August 2014, the Taliban launched an attack on a public uprising in Mardyan whose members after several hours had to retreat because of a lack of ammunition.⁽¹⁰⁶⁶⁾ In the same month more than 100 insurgents stormed the district centre of Mingajik but were repelled. There were casualties on both sides but no civilians were injured.⁽¹⁰⁶⁷⁾ In September 2014, a bomb attack killed and wounded several security personnel.⁽¹⁰⁶⁸⁾

AGE groups responsible in Khwaja Du Koh, Khamab and Qarqin districts are based in Faryab and operate in the districts as they move towards the Dasht-e Laili desert area. The majority of the incidents recorded occurred along the Shibirghan-Andkhoy road.⁽¹⁰⁶⁹⁾ In February 2014, insurgents stormed a police checkpoint in Khwaja Du Koh and killed two policemen and, in May 2014, more policemen were killed and injured by gunfire in Khwaja Du Koh and by a roadside bomb in Khamab district.⁽¹⁰⁷⁰⁾

Victims

UNOCHA's number of civilian casualties for Jawzjan are low compared to other provinces. With 28 dead and 38 wounded from September 2013-August 2014, Jawzjan is at the bottom of the list.⁽¹⁰⁷¹⁾ As abovementioned incidents show, the main targets for insurgents seem to be ANSF-related. In districts where a so-called popular uprising is taking place, the line between civilian and combatant targets is blurred.

Darzab and Qush Tepa are populated predominantly by Uzbeks, although some Pashtuns, Arabs and Tajiks live there too. According to a source in Kabul, perceptions of political marginalisation, leading to lack of development, unemployment and poverty have provided a foothold for the AGEs in these areas. AGEs are increasing in number, strength, and control. Reportedly, AGEs carry out insurgent activities in almost all villages of Qush Tepa and Darzab districts except the district centres. Harassment of the local population in AGE-controlled areas is increasing. According to a source in Kabul, such harassment includes extortion, targeted killings, illegal taxation, intimidation, forced recruitment/child recruitment as well as Taliban use of the civilian houses, schools/madrassa (religious schools) and residential areas as human shields to launch attacks against ANSF. In order to avoid airstrikes, Taliban uses mobile units rather than permanent bases⁽¹⁰⁷²⁾ and hide in people's houses during raids. Additionally, a parallel court is active in almost all villages under control of AGEs. These parallel courts solve cases of marriage, rape, and murder.⁽¹⁰⁷³⁾ In the absence of a reliable state judicial system, people turn voluntarily to these parallel courts with their criminal cases.⁽¹⁰⁷⁴⁾

⁽¹⁰⁶³⁾ Khaama Press, *Senior intelligence official killed in Jawzjan province*, 29 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/senior-intelligence-official-killed-in-jawzjan-province-6166>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Shepherd killed, 4 hurt in Jawzjan blasts*, 20 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/20/shepherd-killed-4-hurt-jawzjan-blasts>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ALP officials among 4 killed in violence*, 4 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/04/alp-officials-among-4-killed-violence>), accessed 5 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Taliban assassinate tribal elder in Jawzjan province*, 19 September 2014, <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-assassinate-tribal-elder-in-jawzjan-province-6717>, accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *Attack on anti-Taliban uprising forces leaves 2 dead in Jawzjan*, 26 August 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/attack-on-anti-taliban-uprising-forces-leaves-2-dead-in-jawzjan-8500>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 dead, 5 injured in Jawzjan gunbattle*, 22 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/22/4-dead-5-injured-jawzjan-gunbattle>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *18 militants eliminated in operations, MOI*, 12 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/12/18-militants-eliminated-operations-moi>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁹⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Baghlan, Jawzjan clashes claim 5 lives*, 23 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/23/baghlan-jawzjan-clashes-claim-5-lives>), accessed 5 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 policemen killed in Jawzjan explosion*, 13 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/13/3-policemen-killed-jawzjan-explosion>), accessed 5 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Jawzjan police officer gunned down*, 23 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/23/jawzjan-police-officer-gunned-down>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁷¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽¹⁰⁷²⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 31 July 2013 (<http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-mid-year-report-2013-protection-civilians-armed-conflict>), accessed 5 November 2014, p. 28; Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁷³⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁴⁾ UNAMA, *Midyear report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, 31 July 2013 (<http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-mid-year-report-2013-protection-civilians-armed-conflict>), accessed 5 November 2014, p. 22.

Displacement

With little under 5,000 IDPs from September 2011 to August 2014, of which almost 3,000 were in the last year, conflict-related displacement seems to be a recent phenomenon in Jawzjan.⁽¹⁰⁷⁵⁾ Not many of these seem to originate from Jawzjan. In January 2014, UNHCR noted about 100 families fled insecurity and harassment in Faryab, Sar-e Pul and Ghor to Shiberghan.⁽¹⁰⁷⁶⁾

Actors in the conflict

Insurgents mainly seem to consist of Taliban fighters. Unlike neighbouring Faryab, where IMU is broadly recruiting among Turkic speakers, ethnic Turkmen in Jawzjan eager to fight are recruited by the Taliban. According to a source of RFE/RL's Qishloq Ovozi Blog, more than 90% of Taliban in Aqcha, Shiberghan and Andkhoy districts are ethnic Turkmen.⁽¹⁰⁷⁷⁾ In southern Darzab and Qush Tepa, the Taliban seem to be drawing more from frustrated Uzbek.⁽¹⁰⁷⁸⁾ A small group of AGE is operating in Faizabad, Aqcha, Khaniqa, Mardyan and Mingajik districts, although it is also reported that groups of AGE from the neighbouring districts of Chimtal and Chahar Bolak of Balkh province also operate in in Aqcha - Khaniqa - Mardyan – Mingajik and Fayzabad districts.⁽¹⁰⁷⁹⁾

The political situation in Jawzjan is significantly linked to Junbesh-e Melli and its leader, General Abdul Rashid Dostum. After years of single-party domination by Junbesh in the province, however, other political parties, namely Jamiat and Hezb-e Islami, have succeeded in establishing bases in the province.⁽¹⁰⁸⁰⁾

According to a source in Kabul, the MoI had approved a unit of 600 ALPs for Qush Tepa and Darzab Districts. As of September 2013, a total of 398 ALPs were reported to serve in the districts of Qush Tepa and Darzab. According to the Chief of Police, there are about 204 ALPs serving in Qush Tepa district while 194 are serving in Darzab district, though these numbers tend to fluctuate over time.⁽¹⁰⁸¹⁾ In the northern districts, several former Jihadi warlords have rearmed their followers and created *arbaki*. In Qarqin, a group of 150 armed people has managed to keep the Taliban out of the district, and in Kokal Dash, Fayzabad district, 70 to 80 *arbaki* chased the Taliban from their area and set up a string of fortified checkpoints.⁽¹⁰⁸²⁾

2.7.3. Balkh

Description of the province

Balkh is situated in the northern part of Afghanistan, bordering Uzbekistan in the north, Tajikistan in the north-east, Kunduz in the east, Samangan in the south-east, Sar-e Pul in the south-west and Jawzjan in the west. The capital of the province, Mazar-e Sharif, is one of the biggest commercial and financial centres of Afghanistan. Nearly half of the province is mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while half of the area is made up of flat land. The province is divided into 15 districts: Balkh, Charbulak, Charkent, Chemtal, Dawlatabad, Dehdadi, Kaldar, Keshendeh, Khulm, Marmul, Mazar-e Sharif, Nahr-e-Shahi, Sholgareh, Shortepa, Zari.⁽¹⁰⁸³⁾ The major ethnic groups living in Balkh province are Tajiks and Pashtuns followed by Uzbek, Hazaras, Turkmen, Arab and Baluch.⁽¹⁰⁸⁴⁾

⁽¹⁰⁷⁵⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁶⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,52fdcf684,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,537220114,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁷⁾ RFE/RL, *More warnings south of the Afghan-Turkmen Border*, Qishloq Ovozi Blog, 17 August 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/quishloq-ovozi-afghanistan-turkmen-turmoil/26530471.html>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁸⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁹⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

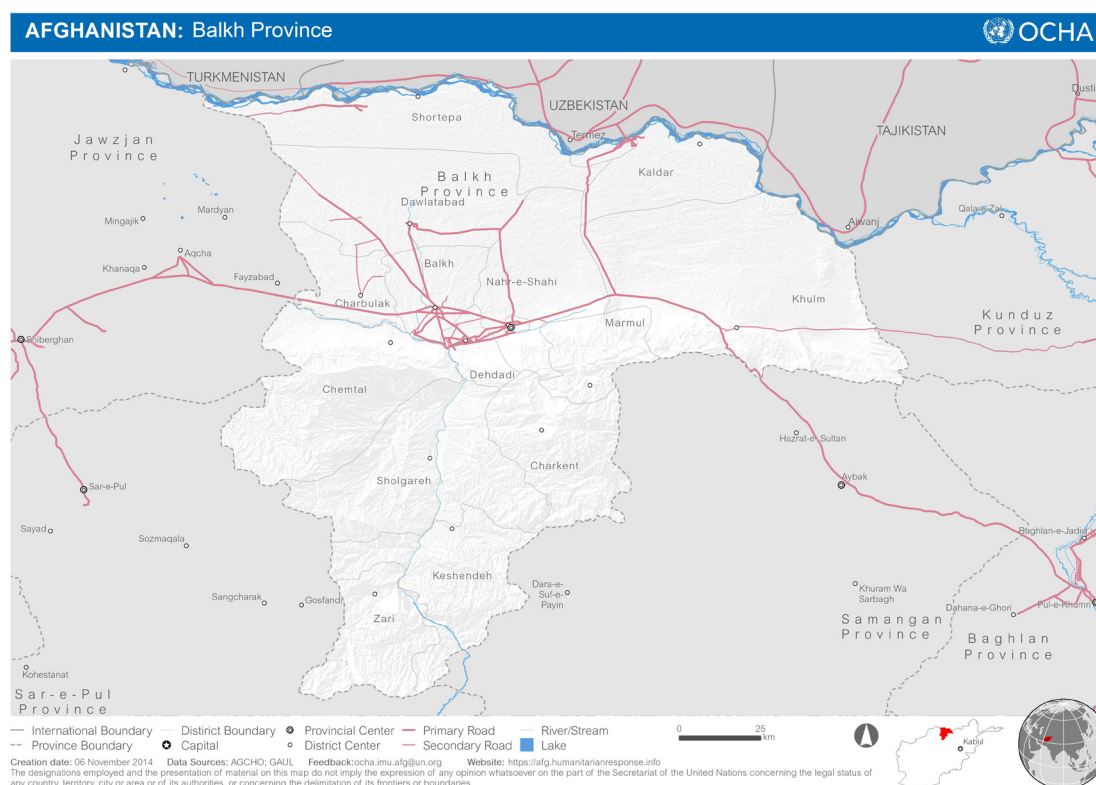
⁽¹⁰⁸⁰⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁸¹⁾ Information obtained during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul conducted in October 2014 with an international organisation active in the province, that for security reasons wished to remain anonymous.

⁽¹⁰⁸²⁾ RFE/RL, *Last line of defense against the Taliban – Qarqeen*, Qishloq Ovozi Blog, 15 March 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/quishloq-ovozi-qarqeen-militia-taliban/25298208.html>), accessed 5 November 2014; RFE/RL, *More warnings south of the Afghan-Turkmen Border*, Qishloq Ovozi Blog, 17 August 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/quishloq-ovozi-afghanistan-turkmen-turmoil/26530471.html>), accessed 5 November 2014; RFE/RL, *Turkmenistans new Afghanistan border policy*, Qishloq Ovozi Blog, 10 October 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan-afghanistan-border-policy/26631200.html>), accessed 5 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁸³⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁴⁾ MRRD, *Balkh Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/229/Balkh%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.



Mazar-e Sharif is the unofficial capital of northern Afghanistan. As it has been relatively isolated from the conflict in the last decade, its political and economic weight is big and getting bigger.⁽¹⁰⁸⁵⁾ The city lies on an important east-west connection between Herat and Kabul and Kunduz in the east. On the border with Uzbekistan lies the vital economic dry port of Hairatan.⁽¹⁰⁸⁶⁾ This economic gateway to and from Afghanistan is also very strategic for the international military presence in Afghanistan, for both supplying and withdrawing the international forces.⁽¹⁰⁸⁷⁾ Balkh has a tradition of high educational standards and has a comparatively high literacy rate, including for women. It is home to several universities including Balkh University, the second-largest in Afghanistan.⁽¹⁰⁸⁸⁾ According to a source of Landinfo, Mazar-e Sharif is one of the safest cities of Afghanistan, much more so than Kabul.⁽¹⁰⁸⁹⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Chimtal	1	19	4	2		2			6	16	4					54
Mazari Sharif		1	2	1		3		6	10	8	3	2			1	37
Chahar Bolak		6		1	1		1	1	5	8	1					24

⁽¹⁰⁸⁵⁾ Giustozzi, A., *The Resilient Oligopoly: A Political-Economy of Northern Afghanistan 2001 and Onward*, AREU, December 2012 (<http://www.areas.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1213E%20Resilient%20Oligopoly%20IP%20Dec%202013.pdf>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁶⁾ CMFC, *The rise of Afghan rails*, 18 November 2010 (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/64964784/The-Rise-of-the-Afghan-Rails>), accessed 3 November 2014; Fishstein, P., *Balkh's economy in transition*, AREU, August 2013 (<http://www.areas.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1306%20IP%20Balkh%20Economy%20Aug%202013.pdf>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁷⁾ CMFC, *The logistical challenges confronting the Afghan drawdown*, June 2013 (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/147863987/CFC-Thematic-Report-The-Logistical-Challenges-Confronting-the-Afghanistan-Drawdown-11-June-13>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁸⁾ MOHE, *Balkh University*, 15 January 2015 (<http://www.mohe.gov.af/?lang=en&p=gov&nid=35>), accessed 15 January 2015; MRRD, *Balkh Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/229/Balkh%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁹⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 3 November 2014, p. 21.

District	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Sholgara		9	1	5					1	4	1					21
Balkh		1	1	1					5	10	1	1				20
Zari		4		1			1	1		4	5					16
Nahri Shahi		1				1		2	1	2	2		1	2		12
Dawlatabad		1								4				2		7
Kishindih	1	2		1				1			1					6
Shortepa				1					1	1	2					5
Dihdadi			1	1			1									3
Kaldar			1						1	1						3
Khulm		1						1								2
Chahar Kint							1				1					2
Marmul																0

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Balkh counted 212 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Chimtal; Mazar-e Sharif; and Chahar Bolak (see table).⁽¹⁰⁹⁰⁾

According to UNOCHA figures, most districts saw a very low incident rate (0-10 incidents) in the year prior to September 2014. The western districts of Dawlatabad, Chahar Bolak, Chimtal, Balkh and Sholgara have a slightly higher incident rate of 11 to 50. As for civilian casualties, all districts have a figure of zero to 25.⁽¹⁰⁹¹⁾

The province is considered relatively safe by UNHCR⁽¹⁰⁹²⁾ and is mainly in government hands. The western districts of Chimtal and Chahar Bolak are deemed relatively insecure and were, along with Balkh District, the centres of poppy cultivation.⁽¹⁰⁹³⁾ The area is also known for producing cannabis, which is another major factor of instability.⁽¹⁰⁹⁴⁾ Together with Sholgar and Zari, this western part of Balkh is a mountainous area known as the Alborz-mountain range.⁽¹⁰⁹⁵⁾ Most insecurity incidents are reported from this area.

In January 2014, insurgents kidnapped a teenage boy, killed him and set his body on fire, according to UNAMA, because he was the nephew of an influential local commander.⁽¹⁰⁹⁶⁾ A retaliatory operation by the ANSF led to the killing and capturing of several insurgents in Sholgar district.⁽¹⁰⁹⁷⁾ Also in January 2014, ANA Special Forces conducted an operation over several days in the district of Zari, leading to the death of the Taliban shadow governor of the district.⁽¹⁰⁹⁸⁾ In July 2014, another operation in Sholgar, Kashنده and Zari districts led to the death of two insurgents and the arrest of 12 more, including three shadow district governors.⁽¹⁰⁹⁹⁾ An assault by dozens of insurgents on

⁽¹⁰⁹⁰⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.4-5.

⁽¹⁰⁹²⁾ UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147984,0.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹³⁾ Fishstein, P., *Evolving terrain: Opium Poppy Cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2013*, AREU, February 2014 (<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/Poppy%20Cultivation%20in%20Balkh%20Badakhshan%20Case%20Study.pdf>), accessed 3 November 2014, p. 8.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁴⁾ AREU, *A Little Bit Poppy-free and a Little Bit Eradicated: Opium poppy cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2011-2012*, May 2013 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/51f8d0a24.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *All Balkh polling stations be secured*, 24 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/24/all-balkh-polling-stations-be-secured>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁶⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2014*, July 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 3 November 2014, p. 18.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Man shot dead, burnt after being kidnapped*, 25 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/25/man-shot-dead-burnt-after-being-kidnapped>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban military commander killed in Balkh*, 5 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/05/taliban-military-commander-killed-balkh>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Senior militants among 12 held in Balkh*, 13 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/13/senior-militants-among-12-held-balkh>), accessed 3 November 2014.

police checkpoints in Chimtal and Chahar Bolak left four to seven police officers dead.⁽¹¹⁰⁰⁾ In early September, ANSF conducted a large-scale clearing operation for several days in the Alborz mountains of Chimtal district and killed dozens of insurgents.⁽¹¹⁰¹⁾

Sporadically explosives went off in the city of Mazar-e Sharif. The target was not always clear. Two explosions in the vicinity of the Hazrat Ali in June and July 2014 killed at least two civilians and wounded many more.⁽¹¹⁰²⁾ In September 2014 two bombs exploded; one killed two NDS workers called to investigate a suspiciously abandoned bicycle and another injured four, including a child and a woman.⁽¹¹⁰³⁾

Occasionally an incident happened on the road to and from Mazar-e Sharif. In June 2014, the governor of Paktya's convoy was attacked by men in police uniforms just outside Mazar.⁽¹¹⁰⁴⁾ In July 2014, a roadside bomb on the highway between Mazar and Shiberghan targeting an ANA vehicle killed one child and injured two other civilians.⁽¹¹⁰⁵⁾ A month later, in separate incidents, two boys were shot on the same highway by unknown gunmen and a leading female politician was also shot at outside Mazar-e Sharif.⁽¹¹⁰⁶⁾

The districts of Balkh and Dawlatabad are included in the APPRO study on women's security in transition. In Balkh, the security situation for women was reported in February 2014 to be worsening, because of the deteriorating economic situation, growing criminality and presence of *arbaki*. This was mainly the case in rural areas; in urban areas the situation improved. Unlike Balkh, in Dawlatabad the security situation got better in the same reporting period.⁽¹¹⁰⁷⁾

Victims

The number of civilian deaths from the conflict is low overall, according to UNOCHA. With 35 civilians killed and 80 wounded in one year, the relative risk on civilian casualties is four times lower than in the rest of the country.⁽¹¹⁰⁸⁾ Yet, as described previously, on three occasions explosives went off in the city of Mazar without a clear target identified in press articles. It is therefore unclear whether these attacks were aimed at creating the perception of a vulnerable city or at terrorising the population.

On more than one occasion in this reporting period, journalists were targeted and killed.⁽¹¹⁰⁹⁾

Displacement

Balkh saw almost 13,000 IDPs from September 2011 to August 2014, of which 4,590 were in the last year.⁽¹¹¹⁰⁾ Balkh is considered "severely affected by displacement" by UNHCR.⁽¹¹¹¹⁾ Many of the IDPs in Balkh in 2014 actually came

⁽¹¹⁰⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *7 police among 11 killed in Balkh gunbattle*, 27 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/27/7-police-among-11-killed-balkh-gunbattle>), accessed 3 November 2014; Khaama Press, *4 policemen martyred in militant attack in Balkh province*, 27 June 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/4-policemen-martyred-in-militants-attack-in-balkh-province-6291>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *60 rebels killed or wounded in Balkh offensive*, 5 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/05/60-rebels-killed-wounded-balkh-offensive>), accessed 3 November 2014; Khaama Press, *48 militants killed in Balkh operation*, 5 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/48-taliban-militants-killed-in-balkh-operation-6637>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *16 wounded in Mazar-i Sharif blast*, 16 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/16/16-wounded-mazar-i-sharif-blast>), accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 killed, 9 injured in Mazar blast*, 3 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/03/2-killed-9-injured-mazar-blast>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰³⁾ Tolonews, *Blast in Mazar kills 2 NDS personnel*, 1 September 2014, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16196-blast-in-mazar-kills-2-nds-personnel>, accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 civilians injured in Mazar-i Sharif blast*, 24 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/24/4-civilians-injured-mazar-i-sharif-blast>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰⁴⁾ RFE/RL, *Afghan governor attacked; Taliban rocket kills, injures children*, 20 June 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-governor-attacked-taliban-rocket-kills-injures-children-/25429362.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Latest bout of violence leaves 5 dead*, 19 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/19/latest-bout-violence-leaves-5-dead>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 Boys gunned down, athlete stabbed to death*, 18 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/18/2-boys-gunned-down-athlete-stabbed-death>), accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Female PC runner survives gun attack*, 25 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/25/female-pc-runner-survives-gun-attack>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰⁷⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 3*, May 2014 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/women-in-transition-cycle-3-findings/>), accessed 3 November 2014, p. 18-24.

⁽¹¹⁰⁸⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽¹¹⁰⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Journalist injured and beaten unconscious in Balkh*, 11 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/11/journalist-injured-beaten-unconscious-balkh>), accessed 3 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Journalist shot dead in northern Balkh province*, 13 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/journalist-shot-dead-in-northern-balkh-province-6306>), accessed 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Female journalist stabbed to death in Balkh*, 17 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/17/female-journalist-stabbed-death-balkh>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹¹⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽¹¹¹¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, February 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,53296caa4,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

from Faryab and also some from Chimalt.⁽¹¹¹²⁾ In the last four years the IDPs originating from Balkh mainly came from two districts: Chimalt and Chahar Kint.⁽¹¹¹³⁾ In February 2014, dozens of families from Sholgara fleeing insecurity and conflict between different groups in the local population moved to Mazar-e Sharif.⁽¹¹¹⁴⁾

Actors in the conflict

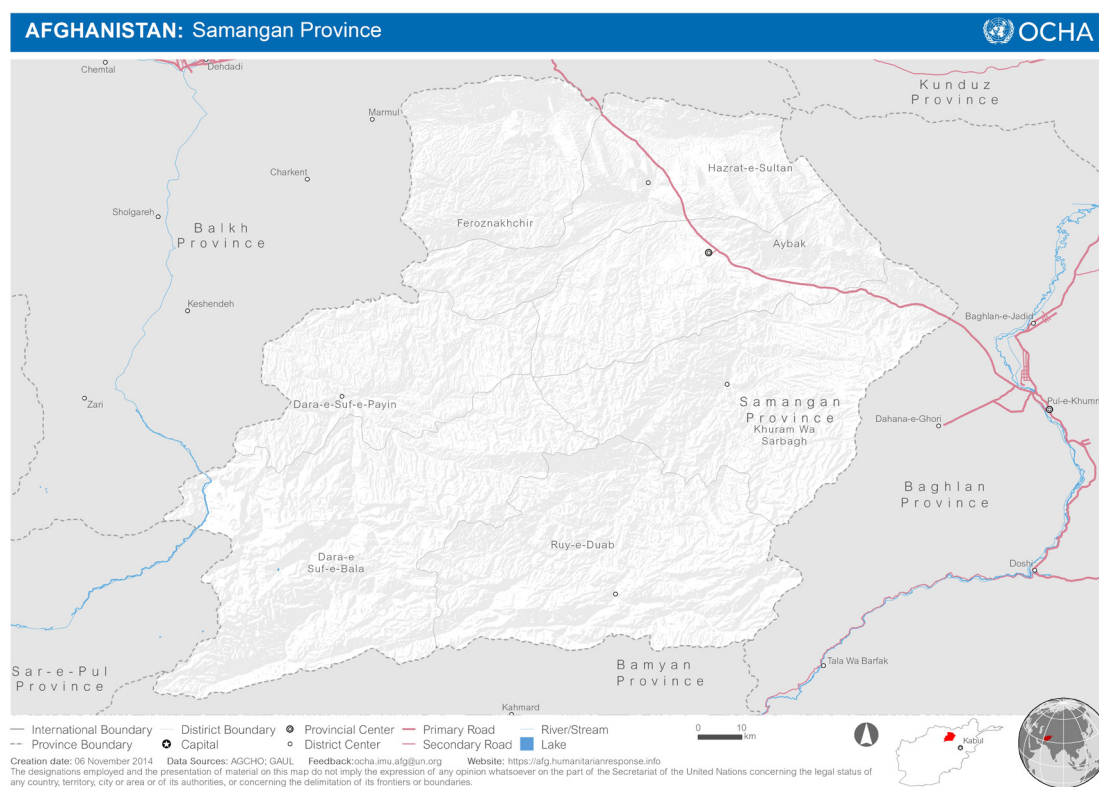
According to a study by APPRO, ANA and ANP are generally considered capable, hardworking and respectful to women. Since the security transition from IMF to ANSF, the outskirts of urban centres and the more remote districts did not receive as adequate personnel and equipment as before. Some concerns are also voiced over the *arbaki* being a source of unrest in some unspecified districts.⁽¹¹¹⁵⁾

ALP is deployed in the Alborz districts of Chimalt, Chahar Bolak and Sholgara.⁽¹¹¹⁶⁾

Insurgents include Taliban, but also IMU and Al Qaeda. According to Landinfo, these groups cooperate with each other.⁽¹¹¹⁷⁾

2.7.4. Samangan

Description of the province



⁽¹¹¹²⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,52fdcf684,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, April 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,5385882b4,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, June 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,53d601d24,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽¹¹¹³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 32.

⁽¹¹¹⁴⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, February 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,53296caa4,0.html>), accessed 12 November 2014.

⁽¹¹¹⁵⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 3*, May 2014 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/women-in-transition-cycle-3-findings/>), accessed 3 November 2014, p. 18.

⁽¹¹¹⁶⁾ US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in*, April 2014 (http://www.defense.gov/pubs/April_1230_Report_Final.pdf), accessed 12 November 2014, p. 55.

⁽¹¹¹⁷⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 3 November 2014, p. 21.

Samangan is located in northern Afghanistan and shares provincial borders with Balkh, Sar-e Pul, Kunduz, Baghlan and Bamiyan. The province is divided into seven districts (Aybak, Dara-e-Suf-e-Bala, Dara-e-Suf-e-Payin, Feroznakhchir, Hazrat-e-Sultan, Khuram Wa Sarbagh, Ruy-e-Duab⁽¹¹¹⁸⁾) and the provincial capital is Aybak. The major ethnic groups living in Samangan province are Uzbek and Tajiks followed by Pashtuns, Hazaras, Arabs and Tatars.⁽¹¹¹⁹⁾

Through the northwestern corner of the province, the road connecting Mazar-e Sharif with Pul-e Khumri and Kabul crosses the provincial capital Aybak.⁽¹¹²⁰⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Others	Total
Aybak		3	1	1		1	3	1	1	11
Hazrati Sultan		3					2	3		8
Dara-I-Sufi Payin	1					1	3	2		7
Feroz Nakhchir		1	1							2
Ruyi Du Ab					1		1			2
Khuram Wa Sarbagh							1			1
Dara-I-Sufi Balla										0

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Samangan counted 31 reported security incidents. Violent incidents happened sporadically throughout the province. Most of these rare incidents happened in the provincial capital Aybak (see table).⁽¹¹²¹⁾

Landinfo describes the province of Samangan as one of the quietest in terms of security incidents and conflict-related violence.⁽¹¹²²⁾ This is confirmed by UNOCHA figures. The number of incidents and casualties is, over the whole province, in the lowest category. With 16 dead and 12 injured, only Bamiyan and Nimroz had less casualties from September 2013 to August 2014.⁽¹¹²³⁾

Occasionally, the media mention operations in the province without providing more details on the location or impact.⁽¹¹²⁴⁾

Victims

As appears from abovementioned incidents, the rare insurgent attacks in Samangan reported in the press were clearly aimed at government targets. The district of Aybak is included in a study by the APPRO on the effect of the security transition on women's security. During a visit in February 2014, researchers concluded that women could travel freely to every district in the province without safety fears and general satisfaction with the ANSF was good.⁽¹¹²⁵⁾

⁽¹¹¹⁸⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽¹¹¹⁹⁾ MRRD, *Samangan Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/250/Samangan%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽¹¹²⁰⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Samangan Province - Reference Map*, 30 March 2014 (<https://afg.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/afg.humanitarianresponse.info/files/Samangan.pdf>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽¹¹²¹⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹¹²²⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 4 November 2014, p. 20.

⁽¹¹²³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 15, 36 and 42.

⁽¹¹²⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *40 Taliban militants killed or injured*, 21 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/40-taliban-militants-killed-or-injured-afghan-operations-3604>), accessed 4 November 2014; RFE/RL, *Afghan police say 23 militants killed in latest raids*, 31 May 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/25405543.html>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽¹¹²⁵⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 3*, May 2014 (<http://appro.org.af/preview/women-in-transition-cycle-3-findings/>), accessed 4 November 2014, p. 57.

Displacement

According to UNOCHA, Samangan had no IDPs in the last three years.⁽¹¹²⁶⁾ Samangan is not mentioned as province of origin or displacement in UNHCR's monthly updates on displacement from January to September 2014.⁽¹¹²⁷⁾

Actors in the conflict

The small groups of Taliban in Samangan mainly operate within the provincial capital of Aymak and occasionally launch attacks. For example, in April 2014 a roadside bomb targeted a police vehicle, wounding seven or eight policemen on the road through Huzrat Sultan district.⁽¹¹²⁸⁾ An exceptionally deadly incident, described by UNAMA as the most serious election-related attack claimed by the Taliban, occurred in Aybak in June 2014. An RCIED targeted a minibus carrying IEC staff and female voting centre researchers, their children and male relatives. It killed 11 people, including four women and a small child and injured four others.⁽¹¹²⁹⁾

2.7.5. Sar-e Pul

Description of the province

Sar-e Pul borders Ghor and Bamyan provinces to the south, Faryab, Jawzjan and Balkh to the west and north and Samangan to the east. It is a mountainous province, especially in its southern part. The province consists of the following districts: Balkhab, Gosfandi, Kohestanat, Sancharak, Sar-e-Pul, Sayad, Sozmaqala.⁽¹¹³⁰⁾ The provincial capital is the town of Sar-e Pul.⁽¹¹³¹⁾

The major ethnic groups living in Sar-e Pul province are Uzbek, Pashtun, Hazara, followed by Arab and Tajik; the major tribe is Uzbek in all districts.⁽¹¹³²⁾

Sar-e Pul is among the richest provinces when it comes to natural resources. The province has vast reserves of petroleum, copper and other natural resources.⁽¹¹³³⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Total
Sar-i Pul	7	44	1	4	2	1	15	5	1	80
Kohistanat	3	19	2	2			5	1	1	33
Sozma Qala		13	1	1			3	3		21
Sangcharak	2	5	1					2	1	11
Sayyad		3		2			2	1		8
Balkhab	2									2
Gosfandi		1							1	2

⁽¹¹²⁶⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014, (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36, 42.

⁽¹¹²⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, January - August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,,0.html>), accessed 16 October 2014.

⁽¹¹²⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ALP officials among 19 killed in clashes*, 1 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/01/alp-officials-among-19-killed-clashes>), accessed 4 November 2014; Tolonews, *8 policemen injured in Samangan*, 1 April 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14412-8-policemen-injured-in-samangan>), accessed 4 November 2014.

⁽¹¹²⁹⁾ UNAMA, *Midyear report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 4 November 2014, p.53-54.

⁽¹¹³⁰⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽¹¹³¹⁾ MRRD, *Sar-i-Pul Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/251/Sar-i-Pul%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽¹¹³²⁾ MRRD, *Sar-i-Pul Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/251/Sar-i-Pul%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽¹¹³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Sar-i-Pul Province Background Profile*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-sar-i-pul-province>), accessed 8 December 2014.



According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Sar-e Pul counted 157 reported security incidents. The most violent district was Sar-e Pul (see table).⁽¹¹³⁴⁾

According to UNOCHA, the number of incidents from September 2013 to August 2014 was between one and 10 for the districts of Sayyad, Balkhab, Sangcharak and Gosfandi. Sozme Qala and Kohistanat witnessed between 11 and

⁽¹¹³⁴⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

50 incidents and Sar-e Pul between 51 and 100. The number of civilian casualties was, over the whole province, between zero and 25, except for Sar-e Pul, where it was more than 25.⁽¹¹³⁵⁾ The province is considered relatively safe by UNHCR.⁽¹¹³⁶⁾

In June 2014, an armed clash erupted near the provincial capital between a group of Taliban and former Taliban who joined the APRP and the ALP programmes. Eight insurgents were killed and another 15 wounded. The Taliban reportedly fled the area when ANA arrived to support the ALP.⁽¹¹³⁷⁾

There has been some election-related violence in Sar-e Pul. According to an article in Pajhwok Afghan News, insurgents stepped up their activities and the situation was deemed “troublesome” in the districts of Kohistanat, Gosfandi, Sangcharak and the provincial capital.⁽¹¹³⁸⁾ In February 2014, a tribal elder campaigning for Dr. Abdullah was shot dead in Kohistanat.⁽¹¹³⁹⁾ In April 2014, two provincial council candidates were targeted in a kidnap attempt. In Sancharak, one female Provincial Council candidate was able to escape after a fierce gun battle between ANSF and insurgents. On the road between Shiberghan and Sar-e Pul, another PC candidate was kidnapped along with eight or nine others. They were all killed two days later, some of them beheaded.⁽¹¹⁴⁰⁾ Following an attack on a polling station in Sancharak district on election day in April, several election workers were trapped inside the building.⁽¹¹⁴¹⁾ In total 32 polling stations, or 22% of the total in Sar-e Pul, remained closed.⁽¹¹⁴²⁾ According to Pajhwok Afghan News reporting, balloting was relatively peaceful on the June 2014 run-off election day.⁽¹¹⁴³⁾

In July 2014, insurgents infiltrated some villages in Sozme Qala but were confronted a day later by its residents and ALP. In the ensuing firefight, several insurgents were killed and wounded, but so were some civilians. Two women and two children were wounded in the crossfire.⁽¹¹⁴⁴⁾

Taliban presence and ANSF military operations against them seem to be concentrated in Kohistanat in the 2014 fighting season. In an attack on a police patrol in Kohistanat, two insurgents and a civilian were killed in May 2014.⁽¹¹⁴⁵⁾ Clearing operations by the ANSF were reported in June, August and September 2014, each time resulting in a firefight and resulting in the death of several insurgents.⁽¹¹⁴⁶⁾ In September, a clash also broke during an ANSF clearing operation in Sayyad with casualties on both sides. That operation came after reports of “escalating insurgent activity”, according to the provincial police chief, quoted by Tolonews.⁽¹¹⁴⁷⁾

⁽¹¹³⁵⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p.4-5.

⁽¹¹³⁶⁾ UNHCR, *Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147984,0.html>), accessed 3 November 2014.

⁽¹¹³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Sar-i Pul clash leaves 8 militants dead*, 19 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/19/sar-i-pul-clash-leaves-8-militants-dead>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹³⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Insecurity intensifies ahead of polls*, 4 November 2014 (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/2013/11/04/insecurity-intensifies-ahead-polls>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Another Abdullah campaigner gunned down*, 8 February 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/08/another-abdullah-campaigner-gunned-down>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁴⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kidnapped candidate among 9 killed*, 2 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/02/kidnapped-candidate-among-9-killed>), accessed 13 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Kidnapped Afghan candidate executed in northern Afghanistan*, 2 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/kidnapped-afghan-candidate-executed-in-northern-afghanistan-3527>), accessed 13 November 2014; RFE/RL, *Election Candidate among slain Afghan abductees*, 2 April 2014 (http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/273163/388848_en.html), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁴¹⁾ Khaama Press, *Several election workers trapped following militants attack in Sar-e Pul*, 5 April 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/several-election-workers-trapped-following-militants-attack-in-sar-e-pul-2961>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁴²⁾ Van Bijlert, M., *Elections 2014 2: The polling centres that were taken off the list*, AAN, 4 April 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/election-2014-2-the-polling-centres-that-were-taken-off-the-list/>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Sar-i Pul runoff ballot held in a peaceful way*, 14 June 2014 (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/14/sar-i-pul-runoff-ballot-held-peaceful-way>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁴⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 persons killed in Sar-i Pul clash*, 15 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/15/5-persons-killed-sar-i-pul-clash>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁴⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilians among 6 killed in Sar-i Pul*, 18 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/18/civilians-among-6-killed-sar-i-pul>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *28 insurgents killed, several injured in clashes*, 1 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/01/28-insurgents-killed-several-injured-clashes>), accessed 13 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *9 rebels killed, 16 wounded in clashes*, 13 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/13/9-rebels-killed-16-wounded-clashes>), accessed 13 November 2014; Tolonews, *Nine Taliban insurgents killed in ANSF operations*, 11 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16328-nine-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Clashes in Sar-i Pul claim 5 lives*, 20 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/20/clashes-sar-i-pul-claim-5-lives>), accessed 13 November 2014; Tolonews, *Policemen, insurgents killed in Sar-e Pul*, 21 September 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16452-policeman-insurgents-killed-in-sar-e-pul>), accessed 13 November 2014.

Displacement

According to UNOCHA, more than 5,000 IDPs were reported from September 2011 to August 2014, of which more than 2,200 were in the last year.⁽¹¹⁴⁸⁾ The majority of these IDPs originated from the western districts of Sayyad, Kohistanat and Sar-e Pul.⁽¹¹⁴⁹⁾ From July to December 2013, more than 100 families were displaced from Sar-e Pul and Faryab provinces to the town of Sar-e Pul.⁽¹¹⁵⁰⁾ In February 2014, UNHCR reported another group of IDPs coming from Kohistanat district to the provincial capital. They fled a deteriorated security situation, targeted persecution and AGE extortion, including illegal taxation and forced recruitment.⁽¹¹⁵¹⁾ In April 2014, about 460 IDPs were displaced from Kohistanat and Sancharak districts to the provincial capital due to “armed conflicts between AGEs and ANSF, military operations, and generalized violence.”⁽¹¹⁵²⁾ IDPs from Sar-e Pul were also identified in Jawzjan.⁽¹¹⁵³⁾

Actors in the conflict

In the abovementioned press articles, insurgents are always referred to as Taliban.⁽¹¹⁵⁴⁾ According to a report from 2010, instability in Sayyad is very much related to insurgent groups active in neighbouring Darzab and Qush Tepa in Jawzjan.⁽¹¹⁵⁵⁾

Next to regular ANSF, ALP are active in the western districts of Sar-e Pul, Kohistanat and Sayyad.⁽¹¹⁵⁶⁾ In April 2014, news about 15 ALP members joining the Taliban surfaced. They originated from villages in Kohistanat that were said to be firmly under Taliban control.⁽¹¹⁵⁷⁾

ALP has been accused by locals of intimidation and unlawful arrests, leading to the displacement of 50 families in 2013. One hundred more families were said to be on the verge of displacement because of ALP misconduct.⁽¹¹⁵⁸⁾ The AIHRC expressed its concern over growing incidents of killing, persecution and harassment by illegal armed men in Sar-e Pul, citing the killing of a family by an armed illegal commander.⁽¹¹⁵⁹⁾

⁽¹¹⁴⁸⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 36.

⁽¹¹⁴⁹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 32.

⁽¹¹⁵⁰⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, February 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,53296caa4,0.html>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵¹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, March 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,534d43544,0.html>), accessed 14 November 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, April 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,5385882b4,0.html>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵²⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵³⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,537220114,0.html>), accessed 14 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban commander detained in Sar-i-Pul*, 26 September 2013 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/26/taliban-commander-detained-sar-i-pul>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵⁵⁾ AREU, *Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories. Evidence from Sar-i-Pul*, May 2010, (<http://www.areu.org.af/UpdateDownloadHits.aspx?EditionId=449&Pdf=1026E-Afghanistan%20Livelihood%20Trajectories%20-%20Evidence%20from%20Saripul%20CS%202010.pdf>), accessed 13 November 2014, p. 9-11.

⁽¹¹⁵⁶⁾ US Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in*, April 2014 (http://www.defense.gov/pubs/April_1230_Report_Final.pdf), accessed 12 November 2014, p. 55.

⁽¹¹⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 ALP officials join Taliban in Sar-i Pul*, 22 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/22/15-alp-officials-join-taliban-sar-i-pul>), accessed 13 November 2014.

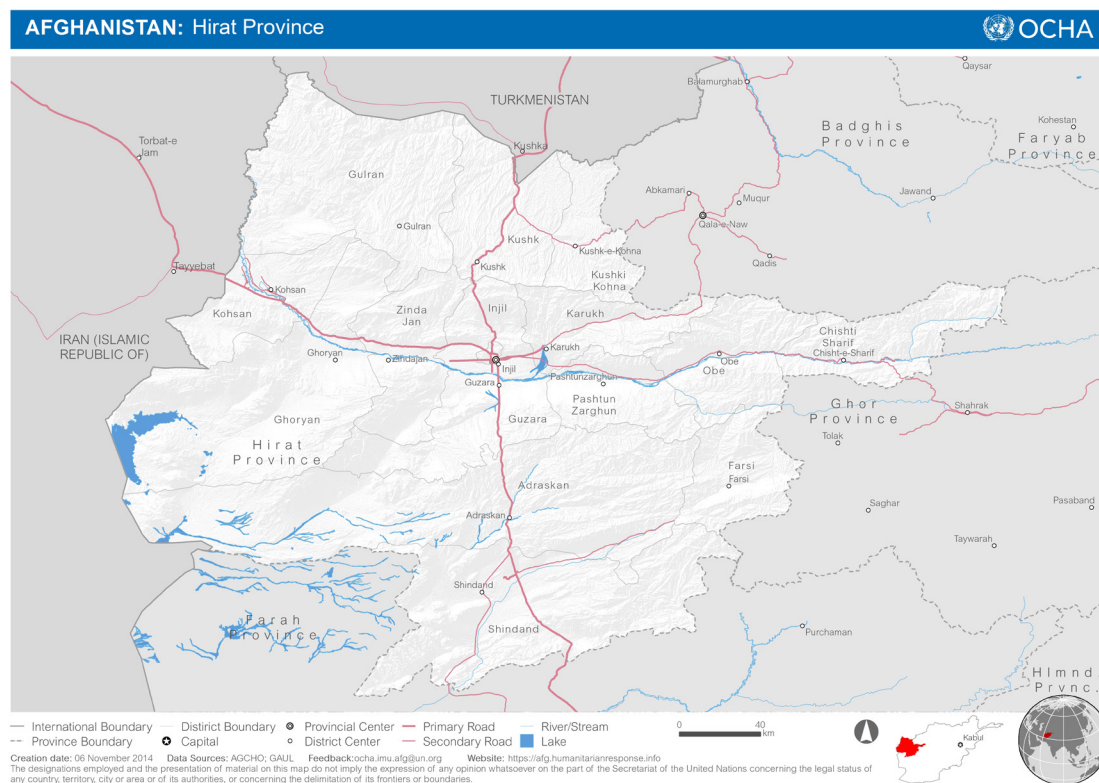
⁽¹¹⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ALP chided over families' displacement*, 28 October 2013 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/10/28/alp-chided-families%E2%80%99-displacement>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *AIHRC wants illegal armed groups disbanded*, 2 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/02/aihrc-wants-illegal-armed-groups%E2%80%99-disbanded>), accessed 13 November 2014.

2.8. West

2.8.1. Herat Province

Description of the province



Herat is one of the largest provinces of Afghanistan and is located in the west of the country. The province shares its borders with the provinces of Badghis and Turkmenistan in the north. The province of Farah is to the south, while Ghor is to the east and the Islamic republic of Iran to the west.⁽¹¹⁶⁰⁾ Herat has 16 districts: Adrasikan, Chist-e-Sharif, Farsi, Ghoryan, Gulran, Guzara, Herat, Injil, Karukh, Kohsan, Kushk, Kushk-e-Kohna, Obe, Pashtun Zarghun, Shindand, Zinda Jan.⁽¹¹⁶¹⁾ The provincial capital is Herat city.⁽¹¹⁶²⁾

According to estimates by UNOCHA, the population in the province is 1,816,100.⁽¹¹⁶³⁾ The province has 791 schools and 750,000 students of which half are girls. Herat has one public and 10 private universities, along with other higher-education institutions. The province also has 15 private schools. As many as 12,000 officials and 300 contracted teachers are employed in the Herati education sector.⁽¹¹⁶⁴⁾

At the end of 2011 the ANSF took over the main responsibility for the province of Herat and progressively the rest of the western region. The province of Herat remained relatively stable under the provincial government during the transitional period. After the handover to the Afghan forces no significant change was apparent.⁽¹¹⁶⁵⁾

⁽¹¹⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background profile of Herat Province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-herat-province-0>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁶¹⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶²⁾ New Strategic Security Initiative, 24 March 2010 (<http://newstrategicsecurityinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/P22-Afghan-Policy-Page-Province-Profile-Herat2.pdf>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁶³⁾ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan: Population Statistics* (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-population-statistics>), accessed 3 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Background profile of Herat Province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-herat-province-0>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁶⁵⁾ World Politics Review, *Afghanistan After America: Western Afghanistan's Vulnerable Security Oasis*, 15 January 2014 (<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/13499/afghanistan-after-america-western-afghanistan-s-vulnerable-security-oasis>), accessed 17 October 2014.

However, the assessment of the security situation in the province of Herat is a challenge, since the same source, within a period of six months, assessed the situation in the province differently. Initially, in May 2014, Herat was considered to be among the relatively peaceful provinces in western Afghanistan, though AGEs, including the Taliban, were active in a number of its districts and often carried out insurgency attacks.⁽¹¹⁶⁶⁾

However, in September 2014, Herat was considered to be among the relatively volatile provinces in western Afghanistan where anti-government armed insurgent groups operated in a number of its remote districts.⁽¹¹⁶⁷⁾ Then, in October 2014, Herat was again deemed to be among the relatively peaceful provinces in western Afghanistan. But AGEs have increased their activities in a number of its remote districts during recent years.⁽¹¹⁶⁸⁾

Impact of the Violence

Violent incidents

Districts	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Shindand	2	3	71	7	8		6			31	38	7		2	6		181
Herat			10	20	12	12	6		8	4	9	12	4	3	2	2	104
Kushk	4		29	1	1	1	2			13	9	4					64
Obe	1	3	35		4					5	10	1					59
Adraskan	5		7	2	2		2		1	13	17	1		1			51
Enjil	1		3	4	6	4	5	2		5	8	3			2	1	44
Guzara	6	1	8	2	4	1	2		2	3	7	3			3		42
Gulran	1		17	1	2					4	3	9					37
Pashtun Zarghon	3		7	2	2		1			6	6	2					29
Ghoryan	2		12	4	2	1				2	1	1	1		2		28
Kahsan/Kohsan			7	2	1		1	1	1	5	2	4	3				27
Chasht-e Sharif	2		8	1	2					8	3	1					25
Keshki Kuhna			13							6	5	1					25
Karukh			11							3	1	1			1		17
Zinda Jan	1		2	2						3	3	2					13
Farsi	1		4		2		1			1		1					10

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Herat counted 756 reported security incidents; the most volatile district was Shindand (see table).⁽¹¹⁶⁹⁾

In 2014, several security operations were conducted nationwide by the ANSF, namely ANA, ANP and the NDS including the province of Herat. During each operation, insurgents were arrested, killed and wounded. Additionally, weapons were seized and mines defused.⁽¹¹⁷⁰⁾

In March 2014, at least two policemen and as many election workers were killed and several others wounded when a motorcycle bomb exploded in the district of Rubat Sangi. The blast took place when a campaign rally for

⁽¹¹⁶⁶⁾ Khaama Press, *16 militants join peace process in Herat province*, 19 May 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/16-militants-join-peace-process-in-herat-province-8113>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁶⁷⁾ Khaama Press Taliban, *Release abducted policemen in Herat province*, 2 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-release-abducted-policemen-in-herat-province-8565>), accessed 17 October 2014.

⁽¹¹⁶⁸⁾ Khaama Press, *High-ranking Taliban leader killed in Herat province*, 16 October 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/high-ranking-taliban-leader-killed-in-herat-province-8824>), accessed 21 November 2014; Khaama Press, *Drone strike kills senior Taliban leader in Herat province*, 11 October 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/drone-strike-kills-senior-taliban-leader-in-herat-province-8783>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁶⁹⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷⁰⁾ Tolonews, *37 Taliban Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 23 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16078-37-taliban-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 11 November 2014; Tolonews, *20 Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations*, 21 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15658-20-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 17 November 2014.

presidential candidate Dr. Abdullah was underway near his campaign office.⁽¹¹⁷¹⁾ In April 2014, a remote-controlled bomb killed four policemen and wounded three others while they were travelling in a vehicle on the outskirts of Shindand district.⁽¹¹⁷²⁾ In May 2014, a public order police vehicle was hit by a remote-controlled mine on the Herat city highway, killing three public order police and wounding two others. According to a local source, the man with the remote control was arrested.⁽¹¹⁷³⁾ Nine family members were killed by a roadside bomb while travelling from the district of Shindand to Herat city. This occurred only a day after two separate roadside bombs killed at least seven Afghan soldiers and injured six others in Herat. No one claimed responsibility.⁽¹¹⁷⁴⁾

In July 2014, three suicide bombers attacked an Afghan army bus carrying soldiers in Herat province. The incident took place on the road toward Herat airport. Three soldiers were injured during the attack. No one claimed responsibility for the attack.⁽¹¹⁷⁵⁾ In August 2014, provincial authorities confirmed that unidentified gunmen killed a senior officer of the NDS. The incident occurred in Herat city when armed men opened fire. Another member of the NDS was wounded and the attackers escaped.⁽¹¹⁷⁶⁾

Displacement

In January 2014, 128 families, or 574 individuals, were displaced from the provinces of Faryab, Badghis and Ghor to Enjil district of Herat. The displacement was due to general insecurity, intimidation and harassment by AGEs, conflict between ANSF and AGEs and inter-tribal disputes.⁽¹¹⁷⁷⁾

In April 2014, UNHCR reported that 123 families, or 727 individuals, were displaced from various districts in the provinces of Farah, Herat and Badghis to Farah city, the provincial centre of Farah province. The displacement was caused by general insecurity, military operations, intimidation and threats by AGEs, as well as inter-tribal disputes.⁽¹¹⁷⁸⁾

According to an update from UNHCR in July 2014, 25 families, or 135 individuals, were displaced from different districts of Herat, and from the district of Nad Ali in Helmand to Herat city, between November 2013 and June 2014. The main reasons for displacement were the presence of AGEs, conflict between AGEs and ANSF, extortion and intimidation by AGEs and tribal disputes. Additionally, 89 families, or 552 individuals, were displaced from several districts of Herat and the district of Muqur in Badghis to the provincial district centre of Badghis, Qala-i Naw, in June and July 2014. No IDPs were reported by UNHCR in August, September or October 2014 originating from Herat.⁽¹¹⁷⁹⁾

Actors in the conflict

Unlike Afghanistan's southern and eastern provinces, the Taliban do not have a strong presence in Herat. However, the group is more active in the volatile district of Shindand and nearby areas, where it frequently launches bomb attacks.⁽¹¹⁸⁰⁾ In August 2014, Taliban insurgents killed five police officers and wounded another. One civilian was killed in the crossfire. The incident occurred when the Taliban attacked a Herat police training academy vehicle that

⁽¹¹⁷¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 killed in blast near Abdullah's campaign office*, 10 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/10/2-policemen-died-8-wounded-herat-blast>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *4 policemen dead in Herat explosion*, 7 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/07/4-policemen-dead-herat-explosion>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷³⁾ Tolonews, *15 Taliban Killed in Afghan Force Clash*, 6 May 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/14781-15-taliban-killed-in-afghan-force-clash>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷⁴⁾ RFE/RL, *Family Of Nine Killed By Roadside Bomb In Afghanistan*, 7 May 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/family-of-nine-killed-by-roadside-bomb-in-afghanistan/25376588.html>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷⁵⁾ Tolonews, *Suicide Bombers Target Afghan Army in Herat*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15513-suicide-bombers-target-afghan-army-in-herat>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷⁶⁾ Ariana News, *Senior NDS Officer Killed in Herat*, 17 August 2014 (<http://ariananews.af/latest-news/senior-nds-officer-killed-in-herat/>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷⁷⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, May 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/537220114.html>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷⁸⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, July 2014 (http://unhcr.af/UploadDocs/DocumentLibrary/July.2014_IDP_Report_635439485339293664.pdf), accessed 16 October 2014.

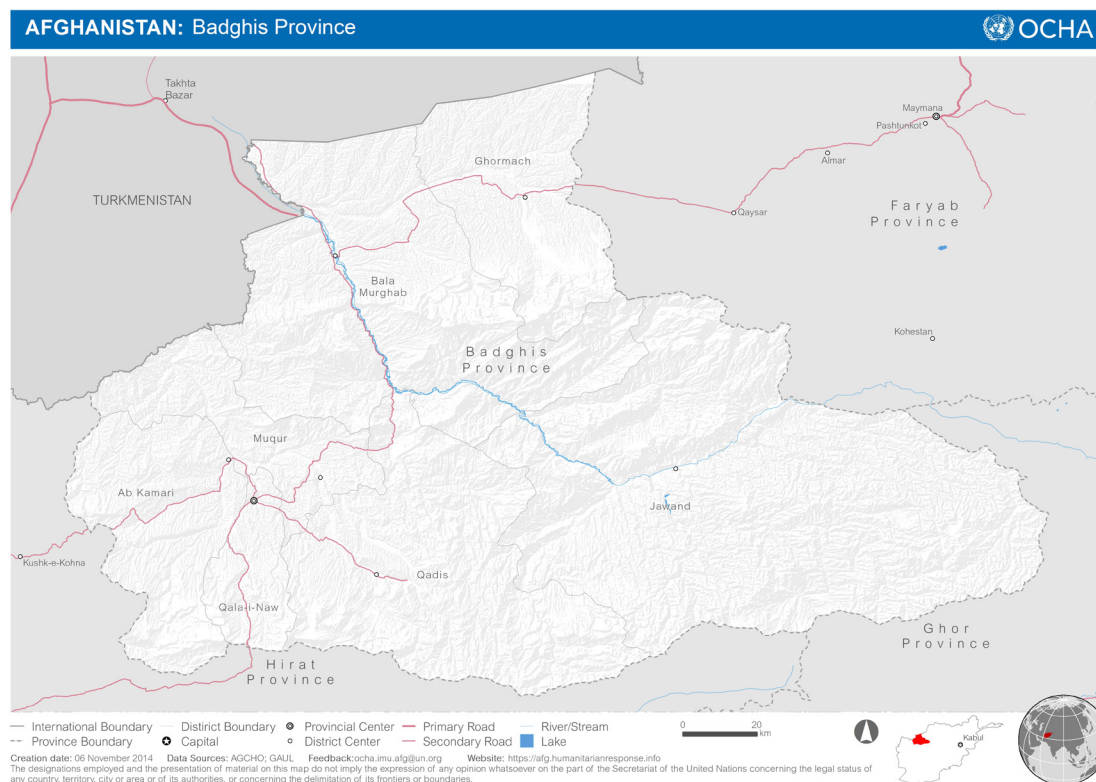
⁽¹¹⁷⁹⁾ UNHCR, *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,AFG,,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 27 October 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, October 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469cb2b4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014; UNHCR, *Conflict-induced Internal Displacement - Monthly Update*, September 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5469d5fa4.html>), accessed 4 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁸⁰⁾ RFE/RL, *Family Of Nine Killed By Roadside Bomb In Afghanistan*, 7 May 2014 (<http://www.rferl.org/content/family-of-nine-killed-by-roadside-bomb-in-afghanistan/25376588.html>), accessed 21 November 2014.

was travelling from the district of Zinda Jan to Herat city.⁽¹¹⁸¹⁾ In July 2014, the district police chief of Farsi district and four policemen were killed when the Taliban launched a rocket attack on his vehicle. The incident took place in the area of Qaleen Bafa. One other policeman was injured in the attack.⁽¹¹⁸²⁾

2.8.2. Badghis

Description of the province



Badghis province is located in northwestern Afghanistan and shares its borders with Herat, Ghor, and Faryab provinces as well as Turkmenistan. The province is mountainous and dominated by the Murghab River in the north and the Hari-Rud River in the south. It has pistachio and cedar forests and springs.⁽¹¹⁸³⁾ The province is made up of the following districts: Ab Kamari, Balamurghab, Ghormach, Jawand, Muqur, Qadis, Qala-e-Naw.⁽¹¹⁸⁴⁾ According to the ACSO, Badghis's population is 471,900, of which 64,100 live in the provincial capital Qala-i Naw.⁽¹¹⁸⁵⁾ The main ethnic groups are Tajik and Pashtun, followed by: Uzbek, Hazaras, Turkman, Arab, and Baluch. There are also Kuchi living in Balkh. The district of Bala Murghab is mostly Pashtun; the districts of Ab Kamari and Qala-i Naw mainly Tajik.⁽¹¹⁸⁶⁾

According to the public health department, there are 38 health facilities in the province, including an 80-bed hospital. However, a lack of medicine and doctors was reported. It was also reported that doctors, especially gynaecologists, were reluctant to work because of the security situation.⁽¹¹⁸⁷⁾

⁽¹¹⁸¹⁾ Tolonews, *Taliban Kills 5 Police Officers and Civilian*, 21 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/16052-taliban-kills-5-police-officers-and-civilian>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁸²⁾ Tolonews, *District Police Chief Killed in Herat*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15511-district-police-chief-killed-in-herat>), accessed 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁸³⁾ RRERS, *Provincial Profile for Badghis*, n.d. (<http://www.undp.org.af/publications/RRERS/Badghis%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Background profile of Badghis province', *Elections 2014* (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/background-profile-badghisprovince>), accessed 10 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁸⁴⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸⁵⁾ ACSO, *Settled Population of Badghis province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013*, (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Badghis%281%29.pdf>), accessed 10 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁸⁶⁾ ISW, *Regional Command West, Demographics and Terrain*, n.d. (<https://www.understandingwar.org/region/regional-command-west>), accessed 10 December 2014; USACAC, *Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Team Handbook*, February 2011 (<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/docs/11-16/11-16.pdf>), accessed 15 January 2015, p. 65; AIMS, *Badghis District Profiles*, 2002 (<http://www.aims.org.af/ssroots.aspx?seckey=363>), accessed 10 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁸⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Badghis residents without basic health facilities*, 22 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/22/badghis-residents-without-basic-health-facilities>), accessed 17 November 2014.

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Total
Ghormach		59	1	2				4	7	3			2	79
Bala Murghab	1	48		2				1					3	55
Qadis	2	33	1	1	1	1		9	3	1			1	53
Muqur	3	25	1	4				3	2			2	5	45
Ab Kamari	1	6					3	1		1				12
Jawand	2	4					1		1				1	9
Qala-i Naw	1	1						1	1	3	1			8

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Badghis counted 261 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Bala Murghab, Qadis and Muqur (see table).⁽¹¹⁸⁸⁾

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported a decrease in the number of security incidents in Badghis in the first quarter of 2014, compared to the same period in 2013, although the number remained high. Travelling in the areas bordering the province of Farah is said to be dangerous.⁽¹¹⁸⁹⁾

In January 2014, three MRRD officials carrying road workers' salaries were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen on their way from Qala-i Naw to Qadis.⁽¹¹⁹⁰⁾

In April 2014, one policeman was killed and two injured by a roadside bomb in the district of Qadis.⁽¹¹⁹¹⁾ On 3 May 2014, the Taliban fired three mortars at a meeting organised by an NGO in Muqur District Centre. They hit the centre, the NDS office and a private house. One civilian driver was killed and one five-year-old girl and two ANP were injured.⁽¹¹⁹²⁾ In June 2014, six border policemen were injured in a mortar attack in Bala Murghab.⁽¹¹⁹³⁾ In July 2014, two tribes clashed over ownership of land. Three people were killed and five injured.⁽¹¹⁹⁴⁾ In the district of Qadis, five policemen were killed in a roadside bomb.⁽¹¹⁹⁵⁾

In August 2014, ANSF held a three-day offensive in the districts of Ghormach and Qaisar. ANSF helicopter gunships were used. According to the provincial governor, 75 insurgents were killed. At least five policemen were killed and eight wounded. According to a Taliban spokesman, only 17 Taliban fighters were killed. One civilian was injured in the operation and 2,000 families were displaced.⁽¹¹⁹⁶⁾

⁽¹¹⁸⁸⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁸⁹⁾ Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 32.

⁽¹¹⁹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 MRRD workers kidnapped in Badghis*, 12 January 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/01/12/3-mrrd-workers-kidnapped-badghis>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Badghis blast leaves policeman dead*, 20 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/20/badghis-blast-leaves-policeman-dead>), accessed 17 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹²⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 36.

⁽¹¹⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 ANA soldiers killed, 12 police injured*, 5 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/05/3-ana-soldiers-killed-12-police-injured>), accessed 24 October 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Badghis tribal feud leaves 3 dead, 5 injured*, 10 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/10/badghis-tribal-feud-leaves-3-dead-5-injured>), accessed 30 October 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Children, police killed in rocket strike, blast*, 7 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/07/children-police-killed-rocket-strike-blast>), accessed 30 October 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *75 rebels killed in Faryab offensive*, 25 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/25/75-rebels-killed-faryab-offensive>), accessed 10 December 2014.

In September 2014, an NDS official was killed in a clash between insurgents and the security forces on the Herat-Badghis highway in the district of Karkh.⁽¹¹⁹⁷⁾ A tribal leader was shot dead in the district of Muqur by unidentified gunmen.⁽¹¹⁹⁸⁾ In November 2014, unidentified gunmen abducted six school teachers.⁽¹¹⁹⁹⁾

Displacement

UNHCR reported in August 2014 that 106 families (590 individuals) were displaced from Jawand, Moqur, Bala Murghab and Abkamari districts to Qala-i Naw city. The reasons for displacement were reported to be general insecurity, caused by AGE, armed conflict between AGE and ANSF, and inter-tribal conflicts. Majority of the families are living in rented houses, while some are in tents.⁽¹²⁰⁰⁾

Actors in the conflict

More than 20 insurgent groups are reported to be active in Badghis, including foreign fighters (Uzbeks, Pakistani). They appeared to be able to gather forces of about 1,000 fighters and also infiltrate neighbouring provinces. It was reported that the district of Bala Murghab became a safe haven for Taliban fighters.⁽¹²⁰¹⁾ The Taliban shadow governor for Badghis was said to be killed in an airstrike in Farah in September 2014.⁽¹²⁰²⁾

Pajhwok Afghan News reported that in an ASNF operation the following insurgent commanders were killed: Mullah Razzaq, Mullah Saifuddin, Mullah Mazullah, Nooruddin, Mullah Nasim, Mullah Shah Wali and Mullah Shah Gul. According to the Badghis governor, the insurgents in Ghormach and Qaisar were Pakistani, Uzbek, Chechen and Tajik fighters.

The Taliban shadow governor for Faryab, Qari Salahuddin, military in-charge Maulvi Amanullah and a local council head acknowledged that the Taliban were still in control of Chechakto, Chahar Shanba and Shakh Qaisar bazaars. The Taliban's governor for Badghis is Mullah Qamaruddin; their shadow district chief for Qaisar is Damullah Sarwar; general commanders for Qaisar and Pashtunkot districts are Maulvi Qayum Yak Aabi and Qari Mohammad Naeem.⁽¹²⁰³⁾

2.8.3. Farah

Description of the province

Farah is situated in the western part of Afghanistan and is bordered by Helmand, Nimroz, Herat, Ghor and Iran. Approximately half of the territory is semi-mountainous and the other half is flat.⁽¹²⁰⁴⁾ A main river, Farah River, runs through the province.⁽¹²⁰⁵⁾ Farah consists of the following districts: Anar Dara, Bakwa, Bala Buluk, Farah, Gulistan, Khaki Safed, Lash Wa Juwayn, Pur Chaman, Pushtrod, Qala Kah, Shib Koh.⁽¹²⁰⁶⁾

⁽¹¹⁹⁷⁾ Khamaa Press, *Taliban attack leaves 2 NDS officers dead in Badghis province*, 10 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-attack-leaves-2-nds-officers-dead-in-badghis-province-8621>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Intelligence agent killed in Badghis ambush*, 9 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/09/intelligence-agent-killed-badghis-ambush>), accessed 30 October 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Tribal elder gunned down in Maqur*, 8 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/08/tribal-elder-gunned-down-maqr>), accessed 30 October 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹⁹⁾ Khamaa Press, *Gunmen abduct 6 school teachers in Badghis province*, 19 November 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/gunmen-abduct-6-school-teachers-in-badghis-province-9029>), accessed 20 November 2014.

⁽¹²⁰⁰⁾ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Monthly IDP Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/publisher/UNHCR/AFG,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹²⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Faryab governor warns of insecurity*, 18 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/18/faryab-governor-warns-insecurity>), accessed 30 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *30 rebels killed in Qaisar offensive*, 21 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/21/30-rebels-killed-qaisar-offensive>), accessed 17 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *64 Pakistani rebels sneak into western zone*, 6 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/06/64-pakistani-rebels-sneak-western-zone>), accessed 17 November 2014; Tolonews, *Bala Murghab District in Badghis Province a Safe Haven for Taliban: District Governor*, 29 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/11380-bala-murghab-district-in-badghis-province-a-safe-haven-for-taliban-district-governor>), accessed 8 November 2014.

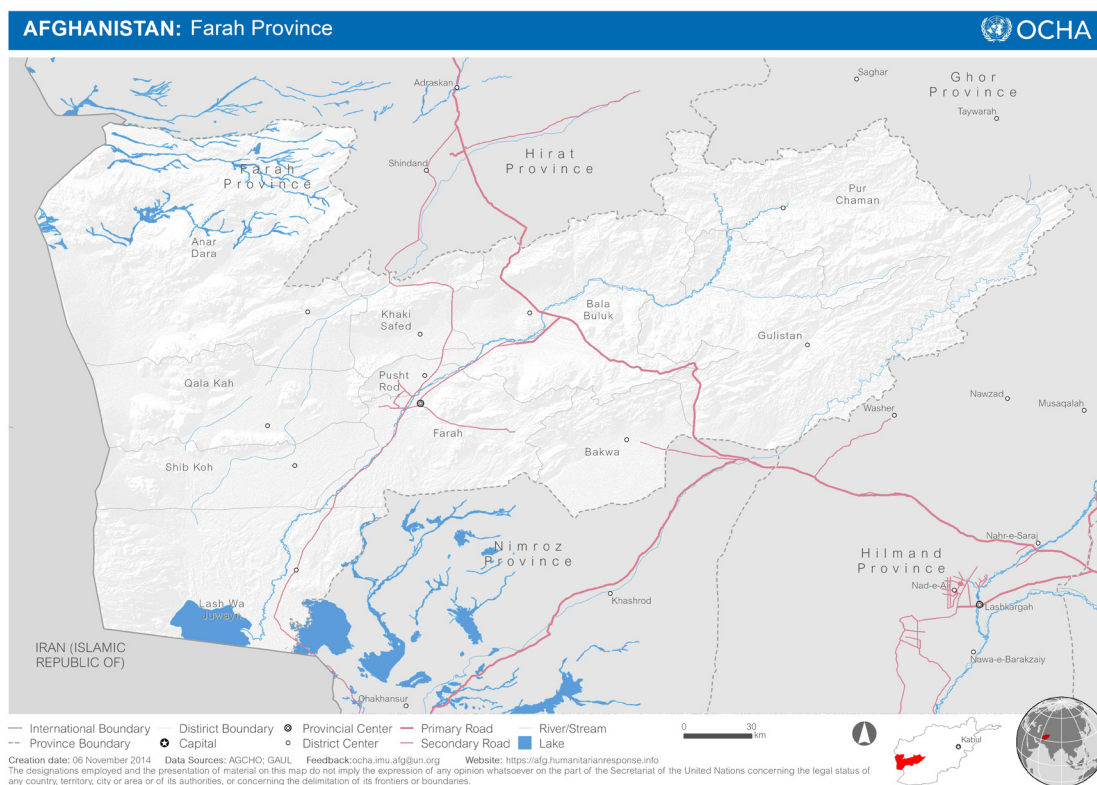
⁽¹²⁰²⁾ Khamaa Press, *Taliban shadow governors for Herat and Badghis killed in airstrike*, 22 September 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-shadow-governors-for-herat-and-badghis-killed-in-airstrike-8703>), accessed 8 November 2014.

⁽¹²⁰³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *75 rebels killed in Faryab offensive*, 25 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/25/75-rebels-killed-faryab-offensive>), accessed 10 December 2014.

⁽¹²⁰⁴⁾ MRRD, *Farah Provincial Profile*, n.d. (http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232:farah-provincial-profile&catid=57:provincial-profiles&Itemid=149), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽¹²⁰⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *A view of Farah River in western Farah province*, 26 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/photo/229973>), accessed 15 November 2014.

⁽¹²⁰⁶⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.



According to the ACSO, there are 482,400 people living in Farah, with 108,400 in the capital Farah city.⁽¹²⁰⁷⁾ The population consists of Pashtun, Baluchi and Dari speaking communities. There is also a Kuchi population in Farah, which consists of about 45,000 individuals in summer and up to 166,000 in winter.⁽¹²⁰⁸⁾

The economic activities in the province are agriculture, minerals, construction stones, opium, cotton, tobacco, honey, silk and handicraft. There is an overall literacy rate of 15% and a university in Farah city.⁽¹²⁰⁹⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Bala Buluk	5	1	63	4	3	2	2	1	17	19	1	3		5		126
Pusht Rod	5		39	4	5	1			19	27	3		1	8	1	113
Farah	3		16	7	7	3			19	17			3	2	1	78
Khaki Safed	2	3	12	3	1		1		7	3	1		1	2		36
Qala-i Kah	2		5		8		1		6	1	1		1	1		26
Gulistan			13		1				2							16
Bakwa		1	6	1	1				3	2						14

⁽¹²⁰⁷⁾ ACSO, *Settled Population of Farah province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013*, (<http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Farah%281%29.pdf>), accessed 10 December 2014.

⁽¹²⁰⁸⁾ MRRD, *Farah Provincial Profile*, n.d. (http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232:farah-provincial-profile&catid=57:provincial-profiles&Itemid=149), accessed 10 November 2014.

⁽¹²⁰⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *A view entrance to Farah University in western Farah province* [photo], 29 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/photo/233074>), accessed 10 November 2014; MRRD, *Farah Provincial Profile*, n.d. (http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232:farah-provincial-profile&catid=57:provincial-profiles&Itemid=149), accessed 10 November 2014.

District	Abduction	Air Strike	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Suicide attack	Total
Anar Dara	3		5	1	1				2							12
Pur Chaman	1		5		3						3					12
Lash Wa Juwayn	2		2		3				1							8
Shib Koh	1		1		1											3

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Farah counted 444 reported security incidents. The most volatile districts were Bala Buluk, Pusht Rod and Farah (see table).⁽¹²¹⁰⁾

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported for the first quarter of 2014 an increase in the number of security incidents in the province of Farah, compared to the same period in 2013. Travelling in the areas bordering the province of Badghis is said to be dangerous.⁽¹²¹¹⁾ Several security incidents are noted.

On 7 January 2014, 11 members of one family, including one woman, four girls and five boys, were injured by a mortar fired by ANA in response to a Taliban attack. It landed on the family's house in Se Joyee Village, Bala Buluk District.⁽¹²¹²⁾

UNAMA reported that on 1 March 2014, Taliban opened fire against an ANSF checkpoint in Pusht Rod, leading to a three-hour battle. Three civilians (woman, child and man) got killed and one child injured in the crossfire. Each side attributed the civilian casualties to the opposing party.⁽¹²¹³⁾

On 8 June 2014, a civilian vehicle struck a roadside PPIED in Khaki Safed district, killing four civilians, including a five-year-old child, and injuring five civilians, including four women and one man.⁽¹²¹⁴⁾ On 14 June 2014, election day, Farah was one of the three provinces in which most of the civilian casualties occurred due to election-related violence.⁽¹²¹⁵⁾ On 28 June 2014, a roadside bomb killed five civilians and injured five others in Bala Buluk when their van hit the device.⁽¹²¹⁶⁾

On 8 July 2014, insurgents attacked an ANA convoy on the Almar-Qaisar highway, torching a fuel tanker and killing a driver.⁽¹²¹⁷⁾ On 30 August 2014, according to UNAMA, the Taliban shot 16 labourers, killing 12 and injuring four in the Qala-i Kah district. The labourers were on their way to work when the Taliban stopped their vehicles and shot them all. According to the UN, the Taliban claimed responsibility on their website.⁽¹²¹⁸⁾ On 9 September 2014, an ANA rocket hit a family home, killing two people, including a child, and injured three others.⁽¹²¹⁹⁾ On 13 September 2014, two people were killed in a roadside bombing that targeted a police vehicle in Bala Buluk district.⁽¹²²⁰⁾

⁽¹²¹⁰⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹²¹¹⁾ Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 32.

⁽¹²¹²⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 37.

⁽¹²¹³⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 39.

⁽¹²¹⁴⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 18.

⁽¹²¹⁵⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014 (<http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/English%20edited%20light.pdf>), accessed 28 October 2014, p. 65.

⁽¹²¹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 dead, as many injured in Farah bombing*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/28/5-dead-many-injured-farah-bombing>), accessed 26 October 2014.

⁽¹²¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Fuel tankers torched in Faryab clash*, 8 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/08/fuel-tankers-torched-faryab-clash>), accessed 26 October 2014.

⁽¹²¹⁸⁾ UNAMA, *Press statement: UNAMA condemns deliberate killing of civilians in Farah province*, 1 September 2014 (<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12254&ctl=Details&mid=15756&ItemID=38297&language=en-US>), accessed 11 November 2014.

⁽¹²¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Body of a child is shown to media-men in western Farah province [photo]*, 9 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/photo/241921>), accessed 25 October 2014.

⁽¹²²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Farah police official killed in bombing*, 13 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/13/farah-police-official-killed-bombing>), accessed 23 October 2014.

Displacement

UNHCR reported that from May 2013 to March 2014, 227 families (1,427 individuals) were displaced from Bala Bolook, Pusht Rod and Juwain districts to Farah city. The main causes of displacement were reported to be a general deterioration of security situation, intimidation and harassment by AGE, who accused them of spying for the government.⁽¹²²¹⁾

In July 2014, Pajhwok Afghan News reported on IDPs in Qalah Char Barige locality.⁽¹²²²⁾

UNOCHA reported 9,319 conflict-induced IDPs for Farah from 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014.⁽¹²²³⁾

Actors in the conflict

The situation in Farah has developed in the last few years into a fierce fight between the government institutes and insurgent groups. For example, in 2012, Zmaray Farahi, a NDS chief, was ambushed and killed on a main road. The previous provincial chief of police, Abdul Samad-e Shamsuddin, has also been under attack.⁽¹²²⁴⁾ The provincial governor is Mohammad Omar Shirzad.⁽¹²²⁵⁾ The deputy provincial governor is Younes Rasouli.⁽¹²²⁶⁾ Brig. Gen. Mohammad Raziq Yaqubi is the provincial police chief.⁽¹²²⁷⁾

The Taliban has influence in some Pashtun pockets in the south of the province. Travelling in the areas bordering the province of Badghis is considered dangerous.⁽¹²²⁸⁾ The Taliban appears able to operate in the provincial capital, conducting complex or suicide attacks and executing people with motorised death squads. It also exploits the opium harvest in the province.⁽¹²²⁹⁾ The Taliban spokesperson for the province is Qari Yousaf Ahmadi.⁽¹²³⁰⁾ Abdul Wahid Garg is the Taliban shadow district governor of Kora Khozi.⁽¹²³¹⁾ Mullah Nani was a notorious Taliban commander in Farah but was killed in May 2014.⁽¹²³²⁾ Maulvi Abdul Raziq Rashid was the Taliban shadow district chief for Gulistan but was killed in a significant operation in May 2014.⁽¹²³³⁾ Some insurgents in Farah defected from insurgents' ranks and joined the PGF.⁽¹²³⁴⁾

⁽¹²²¹⁾ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Monthly IDP Update*, August 2014 (<http://www.refworld.org/publisher,UNHCR,,AFG,542147ec4,0.html>), accessed 13 November 2014.

⁽¹²²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *A displaced family is seen in Qalah Char Barige locality of western Farah province in an interview with Pajhwok Afghan News*, 5 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/photo/236679>), accessed 26 October 2014.

⁽¹²²³⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 34.

⁽¹²²⁴⁾ Foschini, F., *A War of Attrition in Farah Province*, AAN, 13 March 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/a-war-of-attrition-in-farah-province/>), accessed 20 October 2014.

⁽¹²²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Farah Governor Mohammad Omar Shirzad in an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News (PAN) reporter* [photo], 17 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/photo/242550>), accessed 15 November 2014.

⁽¹²²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Younes Rasouli, deputy Farah Governor, addresses a gathering* [photo], 14 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/photo/242165>), accessed 15 November 2014.

⁽¹²²⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Brig. Gen. Mohammad Raziq Yaqubi, Farah police chief, addresses a press conference*, 15 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/photo/235122>), accessed 24 October 2014.

⁽¹²²⁸⁾ Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan*, September 2014 (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bz/documenten-en-publicaties/ambtsberichten/2014/09/17/afghanistan.html>), accessed 14 November 2014, p. 32.

⁽¹²²⁹⁾ Foschini, F., *A War of Attrition in Farah Province*, AAN, 13 March 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/a-war-of-attrition-in-farah-province/>), accessed 20 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 Quetta Shura members killed in Herat ambush*, 15 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/15/5-quetta-shura-members-killed-herat-ambush>), accessed 29 October 2014.

⁽¹²³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *8 security personnel killed in new violence*, 28 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/28/8-security-personnel-killed-new-violence>), accessed 6 November 2014.

⁽¹²³¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Kidnapped public rep, headmaster found dead*, 4 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/04/kidnapped-public-rep-headmaster-found-dead>), accessed 25 October 2014.

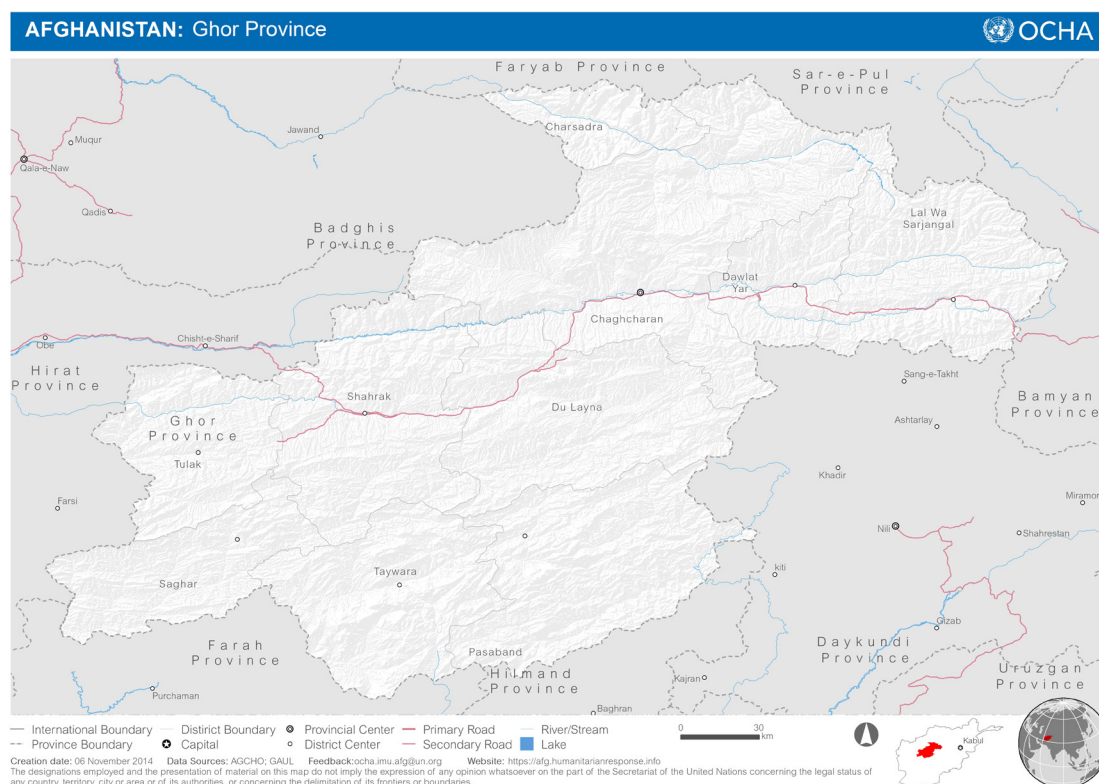
⁽¹²³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Commander among 4 rebels killed in Farah clash*, 30 May 2014, (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/30/commander-among-4-rebels-killed-farah-clash>), accessed 14 October 2014.

⁽¹²³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *41 Taliban eliminated in Farah ambush*, 11 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/11/41-taliban-eliminated-farah-ambush>), accessed 15 October 2014.

⁽¹²³⁴⁾ Foschini, F., *A War of Attrition in Farah Province*, AAN, 13 March 2013 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/a-war-of-attrition-in-farah-province/>), accessed 20 October 2014.

2.8.4. Ghor

Description of the province



Ghor province is located in western Afghanistan and shares borders with Herat, Badghis, Faryab, Sar-e Pul, Bamyan, Uruzgan, Helmand and Farah provinces. The province consists of 10 districts: Chaghcharan, Charsadra, Dawlatyar, Du Layna, Lal Wa Sarjangal, Pasaband, Saghar, Shahrak, Taywara, Tulak.⁽¹²³⁵⁾ The provincial capital is Chaghcharan, also known as Firozkoh.⁽¹²³⁶⁾

Obaid Ali (AAN) stated that “[t]he Taimani and Firuzkahi [tribes of the Chahar Aimaq] are considered the largest and most influential, but there are a great number of smaller groups, most of them of Tajik origin.” Contrary to Tajik traditions in other parts of the country, tribal adherence is, among Tajiks in Ghor, more important than ethnicity. According to Obaid Ali, most Tajik tribes in Ghor are at war with each other.⁽¹²³⁷⁾

The province is very mountainous and characterised by small isolated villages which are generally inaccessible during winter. A road connecting Herat in the west with Kabul in the east cuts through the province. The province is relatively isolated, located 480 kilometres from Kabul and 386 kilometres from Herat.⁽¹²³⁸⁾ This road is inaccessible for most traffic an important part of the year and is less frequented than the road through Kandahar. Ghor is considered one of the most underdeveloped provinces of Afghanistan.⁽¹²³⁹⁾ The province has a rural and tribal society and literacy is very low.⁽¹²⁴⁰⁾

⁽¹²³⁵⁾ Humanitarian Response, *AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries*, based on AGCHO, 25 September 2012 (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/afghanistan/dataset/afghanistan-admin-level-3-boundaries>) accessed 21 January 2015.

⁽¹²³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 civilians killed in Ghor explosion*, 17 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/17/3-civilian-killed-ghor-explosion>), accessed 31 October 2014; Tolonews, *51 insurgents killed in ANSF operations*, 11 August 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15909-51-insurgents-killed-in-ansf-operations>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²³⁷⁾ Ali, O., *“You must have a gun to stay alive”: Ghor, a province with three governments*, AAN, 4 August 2013, (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/you-must-have-a-gun-to-stay-alive-ghor-a-province-with-three-governments>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²³⁸⁾ MRRD, *Ghor Provincial Profile*, n.d. (<http://mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/235/Ghor%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽¹²³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Introduction of Ghowr Province*, n.d. (<http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/content/introduction-ghowr-province>), accessed 8 December 2014.

⁽¹²⁴⁰⁾ WFP, *Provincial Profile. Ghor*, n.d. (<http://www.foodsecurityatlas.org/afg/country/provincial-profile/Ghor>), accessed 31 October 2014.

Due to its proximity to areas producing large amounts of opium, Ghor is the main transit route for opium from north to south. Kakori village in Pasaband is said to house the biggest opium market of Ghor.⁽¹²⁴¹⁾ Seasonal labourers working in Helmands poppy field brought the expertise and Ghor's opium cultivation is quickly expanding.⁽¹²⁴²⁾

Impact of the violence

Violent incidents

District	Abduction	Armed Clash	Arrest	Assassination	Attempted Assassination	Cache	Confrontation Dispute	Crime	IED Detonated	IED Discovered	Intimidation	Mine/UXO incident	Narcotic Incident	Others	Stand-off attack	Total
Chaghcharan	4	13	3	2	1	1	2	2	7	5	3		1	1	1	46
Du Layna	1	11		1	1	2	3		18	4	1		1			43
Taywara	1	10		2					6	1		1			1	22
Pasaband		13		4							2					19
Charsada	2	10		3			1		1	1						18
Shahrak	5	4	1				1	1	3					1		16
Tulak		5			1				1		1					8
Dawlat Yar		3								1						4
Saghar		3							1							4
Lal wa Sarjanganl																0

According to information obtained from a Western security official, between January and 31 October 2014, the province of Ghor counted 180 reported security incidents (see table).⁽¹²⁴³⁾

Landinfo sources describe Ghor as a province with little government presence and a rising insurgent activity.⁽¹²⁴⁴⁾ The AIHRC in September 2013 blamed increasing casualties among civilians on illegal armed groups. Illegal armed commanders were said to be responsible for 61 percent of all civilian casualties, the Taliban 38 percent and security forces one percent.⁽¹²⁴⁵⁾ According to Obaid Ali, Ghor has become a very unstable province because there is an abundance of weapons and local tribal leaders or warlords rule small areas and want to protect their territory and tribal honour. The five largest illegal armed groups operate in provincial capital Chaghcharan and in the districts of Pasaband, Charsada and Du Layna. These districts are transit points for opium between Helmand and Faryab. They and other smaller groups rule their respective areas and are heavily intertwined with the government-appointed rulers. Some of these warlords are even members of the provincial High Peace Council.⁽¹²⁴⁶⁾ In 2014, rival commanders clashed causing casualties on both sides. This occurred in Du Layna district in July and in Sharak in September.⁽¹²⁴⁷⁾

The Taliban has gained influence in Ghor. In 2013, an estimated 3,000 Taliban fighters were in the province. Initially they were hiding there due to activities in neighbouring provinces but later started building local networks, exerting influence over the population and launching attacks. According to Obaid Ali, they now rule unchallenged in the

⁽¹²⁴¹⁾ Ali, O., "You must have a gun to stay alive": Ghor, a province with three governments, AAN, 4 August 2013 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/you-must-have-a-gun-to-stay-alive-ghor-a-province-with-three-governments>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁴²⁾ Ali, O., "As easy as growing potatoes": How formerly 'poppy-free' Ghor is at risk of becoming an important player in Afghanistan's opium business, AAN, 4 November 2013, (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/as-easy-as-growing-potatoes-how-formerly-poppy-free-ghor-is-at-risk-of-becoming-an-important-player-in-afghanistans-opium-business>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁴³⁾ Western security official, contacted during a Belgian (Cedoca) fact finding mission to Kabul in October 2014, information obtained in November 2014.

⁽¹²⁴⁴⁾ Landinfo, *Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering*, 9 January 2014 (http://www.landinfo.no/asset/2759/1/2759_1.pdf), accessed 31 October 2014, p. 15-17.

⁽¹²⁴⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *147 civilians killed in Ghor since March, official*, 12 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/09/12/147-civilians-killed-ghor-march-official>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁴⁶⁾ Ali, O., "You must have a gun to stay alive": Ghor, a province with three governments, AAN, 4 August 2013 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/you-must-have-a-gun-to-stay-alive-ghor-a-province-with-three-governments>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *5 killed as rival commanders clash*, 2 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/02/5-killed-rival-commanders-clash-ghor>), accessed 31 October 2014 Pajhwok Afghan News, *Rebels among 18 killed in fresh bout of violence*, 14 September 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/09/14/rebels-among-18-killed-fresh-bout-violence>), accessed 31 October 2014.

districts of Shahrak, Saghar, Charsada and Pasaband and parts of Chaghcharan.⁽¹²⁴⁸⁾ Their attacks mainly target government officials.⁽¹²⁴⁹⁾ Nevertheless, civilians are often targeted. In April 2014, NDS arrested two suicide bombers who confessed to planning an attack on a Chaghcharan high school.⁽¹²⁵⁰⁾ In May 2014, several civilians were killed by insurgents when they were traveling to Charsada district. One of the victims was an ANA soldier.⁽¹²⁵¹⁾ In June 2014, a roadside bomb blew up a van killing three civilians outside the provincial capital.⁽¹²⁵²⁾ Another roadside bomb killed nine civilians in the Taywara district in June 2014.⁽¹²⁵³⁾ In July 2014, three vehicles were stopped on the same highway and its travellers were all executed by the side of the road. The 14 to 16 victims, including three women and a child, were all Hazara.⁽¹²⁵⁴⁾ According to Tolonews the incident happened in the predominantly Haraza district of Lal Wa Sarjangan.⁽¹²⁵⁵⁾ That district was previously considered a peaceful exception in a volatile province.⁽¹²⁵⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News said the incident occurred in the Padgah area on the outskirts of the provincial capital.⁽¹²⁵⁷⁾ Although those responsible were believed to be Taliban commanders, a Taliban spokesperson denied involvement, condemned the incident and said they would punish the perpetrators.⁽¹²⁵⁸⁾

On several occasions, insurgents tried to interrupt the election process. In February 2014, authorities discovered a wide range of arms and explosives in Du Layna, said to be used in disrupting the election.⁽¹²⁵⁹⁾ On election day in April 2014, three civilians died in a clash with insurgents who wanted to close a polling station but met with resistance from the residents in the outskirts of Chaghcharan.⁽¹²⁶⁰⁾

Ghor is listed as one of these provinces where a sharp increase in the conflict occurred in 2014.⁽¹²⁶¹⁾ In a trend occurring on more than one occasion in more than one remote place in Afghanistan throughout the summer of 2014, large groups of Taliban fighters attacked whole districts or parts of them. More than 100 insurgents stormed the district centre of Du Layna in April 2014. Local residents and ANSF repulsed the attack.⁽¹²⁶²⁾ In June 2014, another attack by about 700 fighters happened in Pasaband district. Due to the fighting, about 100 families fled the area.⁽¹²⁶³⁾

⁽¹²⁴⁸⁾ Ali, O., “*You must have a gun to stay alive*”: Ghor, a province with three governments, AAN, 4 August 2013 (<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/you-must-have-a-gun-to-stay-alive-ghor-a-province-with-three-governments>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁴⁹⁾ Khaama Press, *Plot to kill Afghan parliament member in Ghor province foiled*, 17 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/plot-to-kill-afghan-parliament-member-in-ghor-province-foiled-3444>), accessed 31 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban kill three teachers in Ghor*, 9 March 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/03/09/taliban-kill-three-teachers-ghor>), accessed 31 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *District police chief and his bodyguards hurt in blast*, 11 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/11/district-police-chief-his-bodyguards-hurt-blast>), accessed 31 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Ghor NDS official died in roadside blast*, 15 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/15/ghor-nds-official-died-roadside-blast>), accessed 31 October 2014; Tolonews, *7 killed in Ghor roadside mine blast*, 11 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15559-7-police-killed-in-ghor-roadside-mine-blast>), accessed 31 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *PC candidate killed in Ghor*, 2 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/02/pc-candidate-killed-ghor>), accessed 31 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Deminers among 23 dead in new violence*, 7 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/07/deminers-among-23-dead-new-wave-violence>), accessed 31 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Insurgents capture 15 policemen in Ghor*, 10 August 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/08/10/insurgents-capture-15-policemen-ghor>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 suicide bombers held in Ghor*, 23 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/23/2-suicide-bombers-held-ghor>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *ANA soldiers among 6 shot dead by militants*, 24 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/24/ana-soldier-among-6-shot-dead-militants>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 civilians killed in Ghor explosion*, 17 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/17/3-civilian-killed-ghor-explosion>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Ghor explosion leaves 9 civilians dead*, 23 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/23/ghor-explosion-leaves-9-civilians-dead>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *Women and Children among 14 civilians executed by Taliban in Ghor*, 25 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/women-and-children-among-14-civilians-executed-by-taliban-in-ghor-6474>), accessed 31 October 2014; Tolonews, *15 civilians killed in Ghor*, 25 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15707-15-civilians-killed-in-ghor>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵⁵⁾ Tolonews, *Families of Taliban victims in Ghor search for answers*, 27 July 2014 (<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/15739-families-of-talibans-victims-in-ghor-search-for-answers>), accessed 31 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Protestors accuse foreign spies for massacre*, 26 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/26/protestors-accuse-foreign-spies-massacre>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵⁶⁾ Clark, K., *The sane heartland of Afghanistan: a visit to Ghors Lal Wa Sarjangan district*, AAN, 4 August 2014 (<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-sane-heartland-of-afghanistan-a-visit-to-ghors-lal-wa-sarjangan-district/>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Protestors accuse foreign spies for massacre*, 26 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/26/protestors-accuse-foreign-spies-massacre>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Protestors accuse foreign spies for massacre*, 26 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/26/protestors-accuse-foreign-spies-massacre>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁵⁹⁾ Khaama Press, *Coordinated attacks foiled in westerns Ghor province*, 26 February 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/coordinated-attacks-foiled-in-western-ghor-province-2834>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Civilians among 6 killed in Ghor clash*, 4 April 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/04/04/civilians-among-6-killed-ghor-clash>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁶¹⁾ UNOCHA, *2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan*, November 2014 (<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/humanitarian-needs-overview.pdf>), accessed 8 December 2014, p. 3.

⁽¹²⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *7 dead in Ghor and Jawzjan clashes*, 17 May 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/17/7-dead-ghor-jawzjan-clashes>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁶³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *15 militants eliminated in Ghor battle*, 17 June 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/06/17/15-militants-eliminated-ghor-battle>), accessed 31 October 2014.

Less than a month later, the district of Charsada was overrun by 200 to 300 Taliban fighters.⁽¹²⁶⁴⁾ A day later, ANSF, with the help of local residents, recaptured the district in what is described as “fierce clashes”.⁽¹²⁶⁵⁾ Insurgents retaliated one month later by capturing 15 ALP officers who ran out of ammunition after a two-day battle. They executed their commander in public.⁽¹²⁶⁶⁾ ANSF cleared a village in Pasaband again in a two-day battle in August after it was captured by Taliban coming from Helmand.⁽¹²⁶⁷⁾ A few days later insurgents recaptured the area in a battle that led to many casualties on both sides.⁽¹²⁶⁸⁾ A large number of local residents fled the violence to the district capital of Pasaband.⁽¹²⁶⁹⁾

Victims

According to UNAMA figures used by UNOCHA, civilian casualties for September 2013 to August 2014 ranged from between one and 25 in every district, except for Chaghcharan where 26 to 50 were recorded.⁽¹²⁷⁰⁾ The overall conflict-related risk for civilians in the province and the possibility for escalation is still lower than average.⁽¹²⁷¹⁾

Civilians suffer in many ways from the absence of a strong government, rival local commanders and thriving insurgents. As appears from abovementioned incidents, civilians are not only collateral damage but also the target of insurgent attacks. Citizens being harassed by warlords is a daily occurrence.⁽¹²⁷²⁾

One of the victims of feuding warlords and insurgents is the education sector. The provincial director of the AIHRC estimated that more than half of the schools are closed due to security fears. All schools, but especially those for girls, are empty most of the time in the insurgents-dominated districts of Pasaband, Shahrak, Charsada and parts of Chaghcharan.⁽¹²⁷³⁾ According to an assessment by Pajhwok Afghan News, the presence of Taliban insurgents and clashes between rival armed groups in Du Layna and Dawlatyar districts have led to the closure of all schools there.⁽¹²⁷⁴⁾ The civil society raised its concerns about the growing number of child soldiers in Ghor joining both warlords and insurgents. Lack of schools, economic deprivation, disputes and the predatory attitudes of commanders puts pressure on many families to allow their sons to fight. These children often don’t object as fighting gives them a better social and economic position.⁽¹²⁷⁵⁾

Displacement

According to UNOCHA figures, Ghor had more than 22,000 IDPs from September 2011 to August 2014, of which almost 6,000 were in the last year.⁽¹²⁷⁶⁾ For the first six months of 2014 there were 3,445 conflict IDPs.⁽¹²⁷⁷⁾ UNHCR labelled displacement in Ghor as “very high” and called Ghor “severely affected by displacement”.⁽¹²⁷⁸⁾ For almost all of the first seven months in 2014, conflict-induced displacement took place from different districts in Ghor to the

⁽¹²⁶⁴⁾ Khaama Press, *District falls to Taliban control in Ghor province*, 9 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/district-falls-to-taliban-control-in-ghor-province-6374>), accessed 31 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Chaharsada district recaptured to militants*, 10 July 2014 (<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/07/10/chaharsada-district-recaptured-militants>), accessed 31 October 2014; Khaama Press, *Ghor residents force Taliban militants out of fallen district*, 10 July 2014 (<http://www.khaama.com/ghor-residents-force-taliban-militants-out-of-fallen-district-8295>), accessed 31 October 2014.

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provincial capital, but also to neighbouring Jawzjan, Faryab and Herat. Districts of origin were most notably Shahrak, with between 10,000 and 20,000 conflict-induced IDPs originating there from September 2011 to August 2014, and Chaghcharan, with between 5,000 and 10,000 IDPs in the last four years. Chaghcharan also received the bulk with more than 10,000 IDPs. The only district unaffected by IDP movements was Lal Wa Sarjantal.⁽¹²⁷⁹⁾ Repeatedly, UNHCR mentioned IDPs from Badghis and Faryab to Ghor.⁽¹²⁸⁰⁾

Reasons for displacement were lack of security and armed conflict, inter-tribal conflict or conflict between illegal armed groups, intimidation, illegal taxation and forced recruitment by AGEs.⁽¹²⁸¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to a deputy provincial governor, quoted by Obaid Ali, there are 182 illegal armed groups in Ghor, with more than 6,500 fighters. The Taliban is believed to have about 3,000 to 3,500 combatants there.⁽¹²⁸²⁾ The Taliban responsible for the execution of 14 to 16 Hazara civilians in July 2014 were believed to have been released from prison. Police sources quoted by Tolonews said two insurgents had formed a group of 2,000 fighters since their release.⁽¹²⁸³⁾

According to Obaid Ali, ANSF lacks the manpower and is ill-equipped to control these two main actors. ANP is said to have only 1,400 men. Neighbouring provinces Herat and Faryab have 4,000 and 5,500 ANP respectively. The province also has a modest ALP programme, with some 200 men for Du Layna and Pasaband districts only.⁽¹²⁸⁴⁾ The total number of ANSF is said to be only 2,500.⁽¹²⁸⁵⁾ In this disadvantaged position, police are said to be more loyal to their tribes and often refuse to operate against their kinsmen.⁽¹²⁸⁶⁾ In August 2014, a government official was arrested for planting roadside bombs, proving once again the intricate entangled relation between government actors and violent actors in the province.⁽¹²⁸⁷⁾

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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The goal of this report is to provide security-related information relevant for international protection status determination (refugee status and subsidiary protection).

An important goal of this report is to provide details on a regional, provincial or even district level.

The reporting period for incidents and events illustrating the general trends of the conflict, is 1 January 2014 until 30 September 2014.

The content of the report should contain information on the following topics:

General description of the security situation

Introduction

Short history of the conflict(s)

Parties to the conflict

State's armed forces (army, police, intelligence...)

Components

Tasks/roles

Numbers in total

Casualties

Defecting (as indication of strength/weakness)

Armed groups (pro-government, opposition...)

Components

Level of organisation

Numbers in total

Casualties

Defecting (as indication of strength/weakness)

International military forces (transition)

Armed confrontations (trends)

As intro to regional chapter

E.g., fighting tactics, attacks, military operations, guerilla

Use of weapons

Both qualitative and quantitative

Geographical overview of the security situation

transition to next chapter; demonstrate clear geographical differences between level of violence

use of maps, e.g. UNOCHA; USAID; University of Texas; University of Columbia

urban/rural

Impact of violence on state ability to secure Law & Order

- Government institutions

- Court system

- Rural/urban divide

*Refugees and returnees****Detailed regional description of the security situation***

Description that goes into regional details, e.g. per province, district, cities...

Level of detail depending on province but some consistency needed.

By region/province, possibly with separate focus on some contested areas:

First distinction per region: (Cf. UNAMA)

- North

- North East

- West

- Central

- Central Highlands

- South

- South-East

Then per province

Try to define zones within province when describing levels of violence

Some provinces are safer, so need less detail. Other provinces need more detail.

Short description of the province

- Terrain (short); main roads

- Urban areas

- Population (including numbers); ethnicity (indicative, no real figures, qualitative)

- Map (UNOCHA) with districts, roads and neighbouring provinces

Quantitative data

- Number of incidents

- Number of victims (death and injured)

- Civilians

- Military staff/fighters

- Humanitarian organisations

- Number of population displacements

Direct impacts of violence

Overview of **major/significant incidents** in the province (chronology, not exhaustive and for very violent provinces it needs to be specified that no chronology is possible due to too many incidents)

Frequency of the incidents

Anti-government **elements active** in the region

Weapons and tactics used

Depending on occurrence of information, refer to chronology

Insofar as possible: info on type of weapons / tactics: targeted vs indiscriminate

Only effective use of violence, not potential, e.g. cache of weapons found

Examples may relate to:

Bombings

- Artillery and mortars
- Air raids
- Massive bombings

Explosives

- Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)
 - roadside bombs (VOIED, RCIED)
 - car and suicide bombs (VBIED, BBIED)
- Landmines

Shootings

- Direct confrontations/ground battles
- Snipers
- Death squads and executions

Guerilla attacks/asymmetric warfare/multiple and complex attacks

Surprise attacks/sweeps/raids

Siege

Terre brûlée

Intimidation and threats

Checkpoints/freedom of movement

Kidnappings

Limitations to participation in public life

Forced recruitment

Illegal taxation

Sexual violence as a war strategy

Lootings

Criminal activities related to the conflict (e.g. in case of breakdown of law and order)

Targets

If info available differentiates between, e.g.:

Civilian targets and population

Military targets

Government infrastructure

Humanitarian organisations

Affected areas

If info available differentiates between, e.g.:

Urban areas and dwellings

Crowded/public places

Markets, shops

Schools

Places of worship and recreation

Hospitals
Cultural property
Roads and transport systems
Roads
Airfields
Stations

Secondary impact of the violence (directly linked to violence; excluding e.g. natural disasters, corruption, cultural issues, etc.)

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