



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Afghanistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 21 & Friday 22 July 2016

Information on the security situation for civilians between July 2015 & July 2016

In February 2016 the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* reporting on 2015 states that:

“In 2015, the conflict in Afghanistan continued to cause extreme harm to the civilian population, with the highest number of total civilian casualties recorded by UNAMA since 2009(United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (February 2016) *Annual Report 2015, Protection Of Civilians In Armed Conflict*).

A report issued by *Freedom House* in 2016 reviewing events of 2015 points out that:

“The number of civilian casualties in the civil conflict continued to rise in 2015” (Freedom House (2016) *Freedom in the World 2016, Afghanistan*).

The *United States Department of State* issued a report in April 2016 commenting on events of the preceding year including stating:

“According to UNAMA civilian casualties rose by 1 percent through June, compared with the same period in 2014, primarily due to an increased number of casualties from suicide and complex attacks, as well as targeted killings” (United States Department of State (13 April 2016) *2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Afghanistan*).

This report also states:

“Continuing internal conflict resulted in civilian deaths, abductions, prisoner abuse, property damage, displacement of residents, and other abuses. The security situation remained a problem due to insurgent attacks. Civilians, particularly women and children, continued to bear the brunt of intensified armed conflict, according to UNAMA. Conflict-related civilian deaths decreased 6 percent between January and June compared with the same period in 2014, while the number of civilians injured rose 4 percent” (ibid).

A paper issued by the *UNHCR* in April 2016 states:

“The security situation in Afghanistan remains unpredictable, with civilians continuing to bear the brunt of the conflict.⁵⁰ Following the completion of the withdrawal of the international military forces in 2014, 2015 saw an intensification of the conflict, particularly in the second half of the year, together with a marked deterioration of the security situation across the country compared to 2014...” (UNHCR (19 April 2016) *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, p.14).

A report issued in April 2016 by the *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction* points out that:

“The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General assessed that the conflict grew in intensity and scope in 2015, resulting in high casualties and displacement among Afghan civilians, while the ANDSF faced significant challenges in effectively countering threats from insurgent groups across the country...The UN recorded 22,634 security incidents in 2015—a 3% increase compared to 2014—and the second-highest count since 2001...” (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (30 April 2016) *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*).

In April 2016 the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* states:

“UNAMA documented 1,943 civilian casualties (600 deaths and 1,343 injured) in the period between 1 January and 31 March 2016. These figures mark an overall increase in civilian casualties of two per cent compared to the same period in 2015 with a 13 per cent decrease in deaths but an 11 per cent increase in injuries” (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (17 April 2016) *UN chief in Afghanistan: Do more now to protect civilians - UNAMA releases civilian casualty data for the first quarter of 2016*, p.95).

In May 2016 the *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* states in a report that:

“Following a significant increase in conflict displacement and civilian casualties in 2015 and in 2016...” (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (15 May 2016) *Humanitarian Bulletin Afghanistan, issue 51, 01 – 30 April 2016*, p.6).

IRIN News in May 2016 notes that:

“About 1,000 Afghans have fled their homes due to fighting each day since the beginning of the year, and aid workers can't reach many of them, the UN says” (*IRIN News* (16 May 2016) *1,000 Afghans flee fighting every day*).

This article also states that:

“Government security forces backed by their international allies are struggling to fend off the Taliban and other groups, while growing numbers of civilians are trapped in the middle” (ibid).

In May 2016 *IRIN News* notes:

“Data from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan shows the growing impact on civilians. At least 11,002 civilians were killed or injured last year: a four percent increase over the previous year, and a shocking 21 percent jump from 2013” (*IRIN News* (31 May 2016) *Afghanistan's failed promises to help people displaced by war*).

A report issued in May 2016 by *Amnesty International* states:

“The level of civilian casualties is at a record high, with the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) reporting that 2015 was the most dangerous year on record for civilians since 2009 when it started collecting such statistics” (Amnesty International (31 May 2016) *Afghanistan: “My children will die this winter” Afghanistan's broken promise to the displaced*, p.12).

A report issued in June 2016 by the *United Nations Security Council* notes that:

The security situation was characterized by continued and intense armed clashes, which were at their highest number recorded since 2001 and had a corresponding negative impact on civilians, with rising casualties and displacement rates” (United Nations Security Council (10 June 2016) *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, p.1).

This document also states that:

“The security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated, with Taliban operations at an unprecedented high rate since the beginning of 2016. Armed clashes increased by 14 per cent in the first four months of the year compared with the same period in 2015 and were higher for each month compared with previous years. In April 2016, the highest number of armed clashes was reported since June 2014, a period that coincided with the presidential elections” (ibid, p.4).

Reuters in June 2016 states:

“Afghanistan faces the risk of a new spiral in violence following a series of attacks on civilians in the last few months...The assessment by Nicholas Haysom, the U.N. Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, painted a mixed picture of the security situation some 18 months after international forces ended their main combat operations. While the bomb attacks that killed at least 22 people in Kabul and the northern province of Badakhshan on Monday underlined how dangerous Afghanistan remains...Haysom said he was deeply concerned about violence against civilians, with attacks continuing during Ramadan, Islam's holy month” (Reuters (22 June 2016) *Afghanistan risks 'new spiral in violence', U.N. official says*).

In July 2016 *Human Rights Watch* states that:

“North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member countries should endorse concrete measures to improve the protection of civilians in the conflict in Afghanistan, Human Rights Watch said today in a letter to government leaders. The NATO Summit in Warsaw, Poland on July 8 and 9, 2016, will discuss military and other support for the Afghan government as the Taliban and Afghan government forces claim an ever-increasing number of civilian lives” (Human Rights Watch (6 July 2016) *Afghanistan: NATO Should Strengthen Civilian Protection*).

A report issued in July 2016 by the *Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission* states:

“Armed conflicts in Afghanistan intensified and expanded in 1394 far more than previous years. Most areas in the country became insecure, which directly or indirectly affected the lives of the majority of residents. During this period, heavy casualties have been inflicted on civilians, and based on the findings by the AIHRC it makes the highest number of civilian casualties recorded in 1394...Civilian casualties increased 17.8 percent in 1394 compared to the previous year” (Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (16 July 2016) *Release of the Report on the Protection of Civilians – 1394*).

In July 2016 the *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office* notes that:

“Civilian casualties related to the insurgency marginally increased in comparison with previous years” (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (21 July 2016) *Afghanistan - Human Rights Priority Country update report: January to June 2016*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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