



# EASO Country of Origin Information Report

## Afghanistan Security Situation - Update

May 2018





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More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://europa.eu>).

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Reference is made to the [Disclaimer](#) regarding the responsibility of reviewers.

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## Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012) <sup>(1)</sup>. 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 users are asylum caseworkers, COI researchers, policymakers, and decision-making authorities.

The drafting of this report was finalised in April 2018. 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.

It must be noted that the review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EASO.

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<sup>(1)</sup> 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: [url](#).

## Glossary and Abbreviations

<b>AAN</b>	<b>Afghanistan Analysts Network</b>
<b>ACSO</b>	<b>Afghanistan Central Statistics Office</b>
<b>AFP</b>	<b>Agence France-Presse</b>
<b>AGEs</b>	<b>Anti-Government Elements</b> 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, the Haqqani network and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan <sup>(2)</sup>
<b>AIHRC</b>	<b>Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission</b>
<b>Amir-ul-Momineen</b>	Leader of the Faithful, the highest Islamic ruler who can claim legitimacy from the community of Muslims <sup>(3)</sup>
<b>ANSF <sup>(4)</sup></b>	<p><b>Afghan National Security Forces:</b> The Afghan government’s official armed forces, composed of:</p> <p><b>ANA (Afghan National Army):</b> The internationally trained Afghan army (2002);</p> <p><b>AAF (Afghan Airforce);</b></p> <p><b>ANP (Afghan National Police):</b> Afghanistan’s police force, with the following subdivisions:</p> <p><b>AUP (Afghan Uniformed Police),</b> including the community police, traffic police, and firefighters;</p> <p><b>AACP (Afghan Anti-Crime Police),</b> including a counter narcotics, a counter terrorism, and a criminal investigations department</p> <p><b>ANCOP (Afghan National Civil Order Police)</b> which provides crisis and anti-terror response capabilities in urban environments;</p> <p><b>ALP (Afghan Local Police):</b> Security initiatives under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, funded by the US <sup>(5)</sup>;</p> <p><b>ANBP (Afghan National Border Police),</b> which is planned to come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defense, and thus part of the ANA;</p> <p><b>NDS (National Directorate of Security):</b> The intelligence service of the Afghan government.</p>
<b>APPF</b>	<b>Afghanistan Public Protection Force</b>
<b>APPRO</b>	<b>Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organisation</b>
<b>Arbaki</b>	A community-based security system.
<b>AXO</b>	<b>Abandoned explosive ordnance</b> is an explosive ordnance that has not been used during an armed conflict, that has been left behind or

<sup>(2)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 75.

<sup>(3)</sup> Dawn, Analysis: Battle for ‘Ameer-ul-Momineen’, updated on: 6 December 2014 ([url](#)).

<sup>(4)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 75.

<sup>(5)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 46.

dumped by a party to an armed conflict, and which is no longer under the latter's control. Abandoned explosive ordnance may or may not have been primed, fused, armed or otherwise prepared for use (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Protocol V) <sup>(6)</sup>.

<b>Bacha Baazi</b>	Dancing boys: Young boys who dance and are often sexually abused. This practice is often associated with powerful men.
<b>Buzkashi</b>	An ancient game that is still played in Afghanistan. Horsemen play a sort of polo with a goat's carcass.
<b>CIP</b>	<b>Critical Infrastructure Program:</b> predecessor of the Afghan Local Police (ALP)
<b>Civilian</b>	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) <sup>(7)</sup> .
<b>COMISAF</b>	The Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.
<b>Complex attack</b>	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 <sup>(8)</sup> .
<b>CPAU</b>	<b>Cooperation for Peace and Unity</b>
<b>Daesh</b>	See Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)
<b>ERW</b>	<b>Explosive Remnants of War:</b> These are <b>unexploded ordnances (UXOs)</b> and <b>abandoned explosive ordnances (AXOs)</b> <sup>(9)</sup> .
<b>Escalation of Force</b>	refers to incidents, or 'force protection' incidents, involving 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 <sup>(10)</sup> .
<b>Ground engagements</b>	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 <sup>(11)</sup> .
<b>Haqqani network</b>	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.

<sup>(6)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 76.

<sup>(7)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), pp. 74, 76.

<sup>(8)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(9)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 66.

<sup>(10)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 45.

<sup>(11)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 77.

<b>HIG (Hezb-e Islami/ Gulbuddin Hekmatyar)</b>	Until 2016, an armed insurgent movement under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, with strongholds in the east, north-east, south-east and centre of Afghanistan. Since a peace deal was signed between the group and the Afghan government, the group started integration into Afghan politics.
<b>HRW</b>	<b>Human Rights Watch</b>
<b>IAG</b>	<b>Illegal armed groups</b>
<b>IDP</b>	<b>Internally Displaced Person:</b> persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border <sup>(12)</sup> .
<b>IEC</b>	<b>Independent Election Commission</b>
<b>IED</b>	<p><b>Improvised Explosive Device:</b> usually a self-made bomb. It is used in asymmetric warfare. Variants are <sup>(13)</sup>:</p> <p><b>BBIED (Body Borne Improvised Explosive Device),</b> 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><b>MIED (Magnetic Improvised Explosive Device)</b> is an IED with a magnet, allowing it to be attached quickly and easily to objects such as a vehicle.</p> <p><b>PPIED (Pressure-Plate IED)</b> is an IED that is detonated when the victim steps on a pressure-plate.</p> <p><b>RCIED (Radio or Remote-Controlled Improvised Explosive Device)</b> 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><b>VBIED (Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device),</b> 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><b>VOIED (Victim-operated IED)</b> 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>
<b>IMF</b>	<b>International military forces</b>
<b>IMU</b>	<b>Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan:</b> An armed insurgent movement operating in Afghanistan and other countries with many fighters originally from Uzbekistan.
<b>Indirect fire</b>	Indirect fire weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades are weapons systems which fire projectiles to a location without a direct

<sup>(12)</sup> UN, United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(13)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2014, July 2014 ([url](#)), p. 77.

line of visibility to the target. Mortars cannot be guided to hit a specific target and have a wide area of impact; when used in civilian-populated areas the risk of civilian casualties is very high <sup>(14)</sup>.

<b>IO</b>	<b>Information Operation:</b> the collection of tactical information about an adversary as well as the dissemination of propaganda in pursuit of a competitive advantage over an opponent.
<b>IS, ISKP</b>	<b>Islamic State</b> , also called ISIS, ISIL or <i>Daesh</i> . Islamic State in Afghanistan is referred to as Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP).
<b>ISAF</b>	<b>International Security Assistance Force:</b> An international military coalition based on the NATO alliance. Until 31 December 2014, it supported the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in its efforts to secure and stabilise the country. It was replaced by Resolute Support Mission.
<b>ISW</b>	<b>Institute for the Study of War</b>
<b>IWPR</b>	<b>Institute for War &amp; Peace Reporting</b>
<b>Jamiaat-e Islami</b>	Political party with support predominantly within the Tajik ethnic group in northern Afghanistan. During the Soviet war and the following civil war, Jamiat-e Islami was one of the most powerful of the mujahideen groups. Since 2001, it plays a central role in Afghan politics.
<b>Jihad</b>	This is 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’.
<b>Jihadi</b>	The insurgency against the communist regime and Soviet occupation was called a jihad and fighters or commanders from the period (1979-1989) are still today often referred to as jihadi (commanders).
<b>Junbesh-e Melli</b>	Political party with support predominantly within the Uzbek ethnic group in northern Afghanistan. The party and its leader, Abdul Rashid Dostum, play a central role in Afghan politics, specifically in northern and western Afghanistan.
<b>Jundullah</b>	Armed opposition group, split off from the IMU, recruiting mainly from the Uzbek community in the north of Afghanistan.
<b>KIA</b>	<b>Kabul International Airport</b>
<b>LDI</b>	<b>Local Defense Initiative</b>
<b>Lel</b>	<b>Lashkar-e Islami:</b> A Sunni militant sectarian group formed in 2004 under Mufti Shakir in Khyber Agency in Pakistan <sup>(15)</sup> . On

<sup>(14)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 63.

<sup>(15)</sup> Stanford University, Lashkar-e-Islam, updated on: 28 August 2012 ([url](#)).

12 March 2015, Lashkar-e-Islam announced that it was joining Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan <sup>(16)</sup>.

<b>LeJ</b>	<b>Lashkar-e Jhangvi:</b> A violent, anti-Shiite – itself being Sunnite – 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 <sup>(17)</sup> .
<b>LeT</b>	<b>Lashkar-e Taiba:</b> A Sunni militant group, formed in 1990 and initially trained in the Kunar Province of Afghanistan. It is now based near Lahore in Pakistan. LeT fights for the unification of the Kashmir region and its integration into Pakistani territory and also attacks civilian targets in Afghanistan <sup>(18)</sup> .
<b>Mawlawi</b>	An honorific title given to a scholar who completed Islamic studies in a madrassa.
<b>MoD</b>	<b>Ministry of Defence</b>
<b>MoHE</b>	<b>Ministry of Higher Education</b>
<b>Moi</b>	<b>Ministry of the Interior</b>
<b>MRRD</b>	<b>Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development</b>
<b>Mujahideen</b>	Islamic ‘holy warriors’. In the context of the conflict of Afghanistan, the term dates back to the 1980s, when it referred to Islamic fighting groups opposed to the communist regime and the military forces of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Its fighters have since been called mujahideen. Currently, the Taliban refer to their fighters as mujahideen.
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>NUG</b>	<b>National Unity Government,</b> installed following the 2014 presidential elections. The NUG is led by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.
<b>OSI</b>	<b>Open Society Institute</b>
<b>Pastunwali</b>	The idealised customary, social and legal codes of behaviours and conduct among Pashtuns; honour ( <i>nang</i> ) and shame, as well as hospitality ( <i>melmastiya</i> ) and dignity ( <i>ghairat</i> ) are core concepts.
<b>Paramilitary group</b>	A paramilitary is a semi-militarised force whose organisational structure, tactics, training, subculture, and (often) function are similar to those of a professional military, but which is not included as part of a state's formal military armed forces.
<b>PC</b>	<b>Provincial Council</b>
<b>PGF</b>	<b>Pro-Government Forces</b>
<b>PGM</b>	<b>Pro-Government Militia</b>

<sup>(16)</sup> Reuters, Pakistani splinter group rejoins Taliban amid fears of isolation, 12 March 2015 ([url](#)); Roggio, B., Pakistani jihadist groups, Lashkar-i-Islam merge into the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan, 12 March 2015 ([url](#)).

<sup>(17)</sup> Stanford University, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, updated on: 7 July 2015 ([url](#)).

<sup>(18)</sup> Stanford University, Lashkar-e-Taiba, updated on: 30 January 2016 ([url](#)).

<b>PRT</b>	<b>Provincial Reconstruction Team</b>
<b>PSD</b>	<b>Protection Status Determination</b>
<b>Resolute Support Mission</b>	As of 1 January 2015, the new NATO mission with a focus on training, advising and assisting ANSF, is the successor of ISAF. ( <a href="http://www.rs.nato.int/">http://www.rs.nato.int/</a> )
<b>RFE/RL</b>	<b>Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty</b>
<b>RPG</b>	<b>Rocket Propelled Grenade</b>
<b>SAF</b>	<b>Small Arms Fire</b>
<b>Salafism</b>	Branch of Sunni Islam whose modern-day adherents claim to emulate ‘the pious predecessors’ ( <i>al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ</i> ; often equated with the first three generations of Muslims) as closely and in as many spheres of life as possible.
<b>Shura</b>	Community council
<b>Taliban</b>	An armed Islamic insurgent movement in Afghanistan under the leadership of Haibatullah Akhunzada (following Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, leader of the Taliban from July 2015 to May 2016, who had succeeded Mullah Mohammed Omar, founder and long-time leader of the Taliban, deceased in April 2013, but whose death was only officially announced two years later in 2015) 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. The movement refers to itself as the ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’.
<b>Tora Bora Military Front</b>	was formed in 2007 by the son of the 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 <sup>(19)</sup> .
<b>TTP (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan)</b>	A militant group in Pakistan. The organisation was founded in 2007 and is an umbrella of mostly, but not all, Pakistani Taliban groups. Baitullah Mehsud was appointed the commander of TTP. TTP had pledged allegiance to Mullah Omar, at that time the leader of the 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 <sup>(20)</sup> .
<b>UAV</b>	<b>Unmanned Aerial Vehicle</b> (drone)
<b>UNAMA</b>	<b>United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Programme</b>
<b>UNGASC</b>	<b>United Nations General Assembly Security Council</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</b>

<sup>(19)</sup> EASO, Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment, July 2012, p. 24.

<sup>(20)</sup> Stanford University, ‘Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan’, last updated on: 6 August 2017 ([url](#)).

<b>UNOCHA</b>	<b>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</b>
<b>Uprising Force</b>	Militias that claim to be spontaneous community uprisings against insurgents in their area, but often are raised by local power brokers and supported by the NDS as part of the governments' People's Uprising Program
<b>Ushr</b>	An Islamic tax (normally 10 %) on certain products, for example agricultural products.
<b>USIP</b>	<b>United States Institute of Peace</b>
<b>WFP</b>	<b>World Food Programme</b>
<b>Zakat</b>	A religious duty in Islam comparable to almsgiving. As its rules are clearly laid down it is as well comparable to a tax on assets and liquidity (2.5 %). The practice of almsgiving or Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam.



## Introduction

This report is largely based on information provided by the Country of Origin Information (COI) department from the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum as referred to in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. It was completed with information added by the EASO COI sector.

The report aims to provide an update on the security situation in Afghanistan, which is relevant for international protection status determination (refugee status and subsidiary protection). The terms of reference of EASO COI Reports on Afghanistan Security Situation can be found in [Annex 2](#). It should be noted that the current update does not fully replace the December 2017 Afghanistan Security Situation report <sup>(21)</sup>, but instead focuses on those elements that are found to be time-sensitive, while still referring to the December 2017 report for more long-term, contextual information.

### Methodology

- Defining the terms of reference <sup>(22)</sup>

For the assessment of the need for refugee protection and subsidiary protection, especially taking into account Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive (QD), the following are key elements

- 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 <sup>(23)</sup>, 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.

Members of the EASO COI Specialist Network on Afghanistan and UNHCR gave input on the terms of reference that were finalised by the co-authors in September 2014 taking all the inputs into account. In March 2015, EASO held a practical cooperation meeting on Afghanistan in Brussels, in which the participating EU+ countries <sup>(24)</sup> gave feedback on the first EASO COI

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<sup>(21)</sup> EASO COI reports are available via EASO's website: [url](#).

<sup>(22)</sup> See annex 2.

<sup>(23)</sup> 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 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; See the following EASO publications: EASO, *Article 15(c) Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU) A judicial analysis*, December 2014 [url](#); The Implementation of Article 15(c) QD in EU Member States, July 2015 [url](#).

<sup>(24)</sup> EU+ countries are the EU Member States plus the associated countries Norway and Switzerland.

Report - Afghanistan Security Situation of January 2015. These Terms of Reference also were respected for subsequent EASO COI Reports on the Security Situation in Afghanistan.

The terms of reference were also discussed and confirmed during the EASO Pilot on Country Guidance Notes on Afghanistan (June 2016 – June 2018), for which this report is produced.

This update focuses particularly on time sensitive elements such as recent security-relevant developments, whereas for more long-term, contextual information on e.g. actors in the conflict and nature of the violence, reference is made to the EASO COI report Afghanistan Security Situation of December 2017 <sup>(25)</sup>.

- Collecting information / background on key data sets used

The information in this report was collected through desk research. This report presents information on a number of indicators, starting from 1 January 2017. The following paragraphs provide background information on the nature and scope of the data sets most used in this update.

This report presents data on civilian **casualties** provided by UNAMA in their reports on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Afghanistan. UNAMA uses a robust methodology to verify reported incidents by corroborating and cross checking incidents, conducting on-site investigations, and consulting a broad range of credible and reliable sources. For verification of each incident involving a civilian casualty, UNAMA requires at least three different and independent sources. Unverified incidents are not included in its reporting <sup>(26)</sup>. According to analysts, this stringent verification standard also means ‘there may be many more casualties than UNAMA is able to confirm’ <sup>(27)</sup>. The data on civilian casualties cover the period 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2017.

For each province, this report also presents the three leading causes of civilian casualties in 2017 as reported by UNAMA.

Contrary to previous reports, this report no longer contains the same comprehensive data set on **security incidents**, as it currently does not have access to the source. The report does, however, present data on certain security incidents per province from 1 January 2017 until 31 March 2018. These data however are deducted from open sources and relate primarily to those incidents linked to insurgents. Given the difference in scope, comparison with data from EASO’s previous COI reports Afghanistan Security Situation therefore is not possible.

The numbers of incidents presented in the provincial chapters are deducted from the Global Incident Map (n.d.): Global Incident Map displaying Terrorist Acts, Suspicious Activity, and General Terrorism News, [www.globalincidentmap.com](http://www.globalincidentmap.com), accessed 13 April 2018.

Relying on internet-based global news media reports, Global Incident Map collects security-related incidents connected to terrorism worldwide and provides a geo-referenced display of such incidents, broken down by types, on an online map. Any incident listed always comes with a reference to the source. As a rule, security-related incidents do not include criminal incidents, but incidents which Global Incident Map ascribes to or associates with insurgents, including bomb attacks (successful or attempted), targeted assassinations or assassination attempts, abductions, arson attacks, attacks with firearms, gunfights. Activities performed by state actors, such as arrests, captures, kills are also included. Double entries were removed manually.

<sup>(25)</sup> EASO COI reports are available via EASO’s website: ([url](#)).

<sup>(26)</sup> UNAMA’s full description of their methodology can be found at: UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2017, July 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 1-2.

<sup>(27)</sup> Bjelica, J. and Ruttig, T., UNAMA Mid-Year Report 2017: Number of civilian casualties still at “record level”, 18 July 2017 ([url](#)).

Verification of these numbers was done using ACLED (n.d.): ACLED Data, <http://www.acleddata.com/data/>, retrieved 13 April 2018. Data pertaining to security-related incidents in Afghanistan after 1 January 2017.

To assess the **geographic spread of the conflict**, reference is made to the Conflict Severity map produced by UNOCHA (see [1.3 Conflict Severity](#)) and to a study conducted by the BBC between 23 August and 21 November 2017. According to the BBC a ‘network of BBC reporters across Afghanistan spoke to more than 1,200 individual local sources, in every one of the country’s 399 districts, to build up a picture of all militant attacks over that period. These conversations happened either in person or by telephone and all information was checked with at least two and often as many as six other sources. In some cases BBC reporters went to local bus stations to find people travelling in from remote and inaccessible districts in order to double check the situation there’ <sup>(28)</sup>.

Further, a table is presented with UNOCHA data on numbers of **Internally Displaced Persons** (IDPs) by district of origin from 1 January 2017 to 26 March 2018, the latest available at the time of finalising the report. Both UNHCR and UNOCHA highlighted several caveats for these data. As these data are mostly collected in government controlled areas, the data exclude most of the displacement that takes place in the non-government controlled areas. Another caveat is that the reporting of IDP figures is voluntary. This means that if an NGO made an assessment which was never reported to UNOCHA, the figures will be not included. Because of the way most IDPs are identified – through the petition system – the numbers that OCHA presents are rather reflective of the number of IDPs that were displaced to mostly government controlled areas, submitted a petition about their displacement to the authorities, were screened by the authorities and then assessed by the humanitarian agencies as in need. Therefore, UNHCR considers these figures as not reflecting the overall IDP figures and UNOCHA stated that the number affected by conflict likely to be ‘considerably higher’ <sup>(29)</sup>.

In an effort to counter these caveats, these IDP data are complemented with anecdotal information on IDP-movements in or from the province and its reasons. This information comes from various but mainly humanitarian sources. Some of these numbers are unconfirmed by UNOCHA, and may therefore differ from data in the table presented in the chapter. In some cases, confirmation led to lower IDP numbers, in other confirmation was impossible because of inaccessibility of the area where IDPs supposedly sought shelter.

Where deemed relevant, information coming from parties in the conflict has been added. This includes information from NATO, US Department of State or US Department of Defense <sup>(30)</sup>.

- Quality control

In order to ensure that the 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 in assessing the need for protection. It is not meant to be read as a whole. In the first part, a [Short general description](#), an update is given on the number of civilian casualties and displacement in Afghanistan. Additionally, an updated version of the UNOCHA ‘Conflict Severity’ map is

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<sup>(28)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(29)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 8; UNHCR, e-mail 30 April 2018.

<sup>(30)</sup> <https://www.defense.gov/>

provided to highlight regional differences. These are then explained in greater detail in the second part, holding a [regional description](#) of geographic subdivisions (the 34 provinces).

The provincial parts also provide a short update of the situation as described in the December 2017 EASO COI report Afghanistan Security Situation and have the following structure:

A first subchapter describes briefly the different armed actors active in the province. These parts need to be read in conjunction with the ‘Background on the conflict and actors’ subchapters of the December 2017 EASO COI report Afghanistan Security Situation, where more details and background are provided.

A second subchapter describes the recent security trends and the impact on the civilian population. In the part on the security situation in general, information is provided on the indicators such as civilian casualties, leading causes of civilian casualties and security incidents. Both quantitative (numbers), as qualitative information (examples and description of trends), are provided. Focusing on the nature of the violence, frequency, targets, locations, and victims, descriptions of incidents within a timeframe from 1 September 2017 until 31 March 2018 are included. Where this is available, information on the further impact of the conflict on services and law and order is provided, which includes information of how the conflict hinders the delivery of services to civilians such as health care, vaccination, education and also information, where available, on parallel justice proceedings, the rule of law, and conduct by pro-government forces (not immediately related to the conflict). The timeframe for the description of these incidents is also 1 September 2017 – 31 March 2018. Finally, information is added about population displacements caused by the conflict.

Both the general and regional parts 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 the assessment of international protection needs and is to be read together with all other indicators and information on the region (or province, district).

### **Provinces and districts**

The provinces in this report are ranked alphabetically.

There are a number of provinces and districts for which boundaries or status are unclear. For example, it is unclear whether the district of Gizab belongs to Uruzgan or Daykundi <sup>(31)</sup>. Nor is it clear whether the district of Gormach belongs to Badghis or Fayab <sup>(32)</sup>. For more information, see EASO COI report Afghanistan Security Situation, December 2017 <sup>(33)</sup>.

In absence of an official list of districts, EASO chooses in principal to follow the administrative divisions of the provinces used by UNOCHA, as they produce very clear maps and use the same division systematically in all their publications <sup>(34)</sup>.

<sup>(31)</sup> Norway, Landinfo, Respons. Afghanistan: Gizab-distriktet, 11 December 2014 ([url](#)).

<sup>(32)</sup> Bjelica, J., How Neglect and Remoteness Bred Insurgency and a Poppy Boom: The story of Badghis, 22 February 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(33)</sup> EASO COI report Afghanistan Security Situation, December 2017 ([url](#)), p.19

<sup>(34)</sup> All their relevant maps can be found here:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/infographics>



# 1. Short update of the general description of the security situation in Afghanistan

## 1.1 Security related incidents

In August 2017, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General changed its assessment of Afghanistan, for the first time since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, from a country in a situation of ‘post-conflict’ to ‘a country undergoing a conflict that shows few signs of abating’<sup>(35)</sup>. Similarly, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (UNOCHA) stated in December 2017 that ‘what was once a low intensity conflict has now escalated into

a war’<sup>(36)</sup>. And following a series of high-profile attacks launched by anti-government elements in urban centres, the UN Secretary General, in February 2018, stated that the security situation was ‘highly unstable’<sup>(37)</sup>.

For 2017, the UN recorded a total of 23 744 security-related incidents in Afghanistan<sup>(38)</sup>; as compared to 23 712 for 2016<sup>(39)</sup>; and 22 634 for 2015<sup>(40)</sup>.

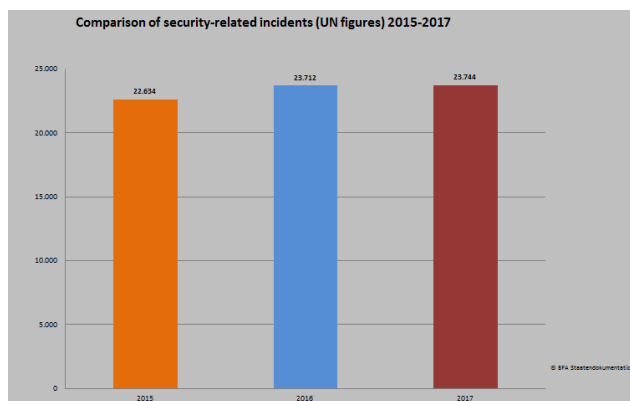


Figure 1 Comparison of security-related incidents 2015-2017, by BFA Staatendocumentation<sup>(1)</sup>

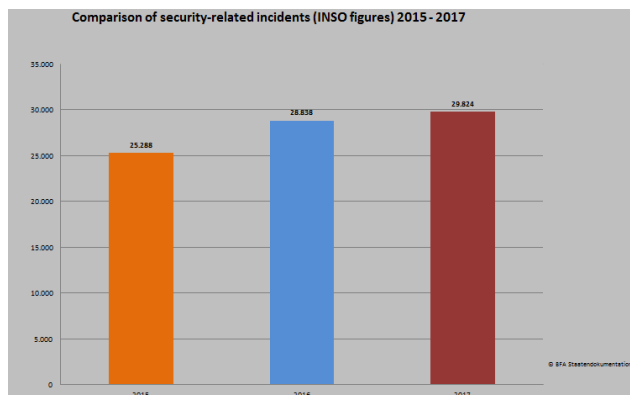


Figure 2 Comparison of security-related incidents 2015 – 2017, by BFA Staatendocumentation<sup>(1)</sup>

For 2017, the International NGO Safety Organisation INSO documented 29 824 security-related incidents. In an annual comparison (see Figure 2), INSO recorded a total of 28 838 security-related incident nationwide for 2016, and 25 288 for 2015. INSO considers the following incidents as security-related: threats, attacks, exposure to direct fire, abductions, incidents involving IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and others<sup>(41)</sup>.

<sup>(35)</sup> UNSG, Special report on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 10 August 2017 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(36)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, 1 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(37)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 2.

<sup>(38)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(39)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of March 3rd, 3 March 2017 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(40)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of March 7th 2016, 7 March 2016 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(41)</sup> INSO, Gross Incident Data, n.d. ([url](#)).

Figure 3 shows the comparison, by month, of security-related incidents for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 in Afghanistan <sup>(42)</sup>.

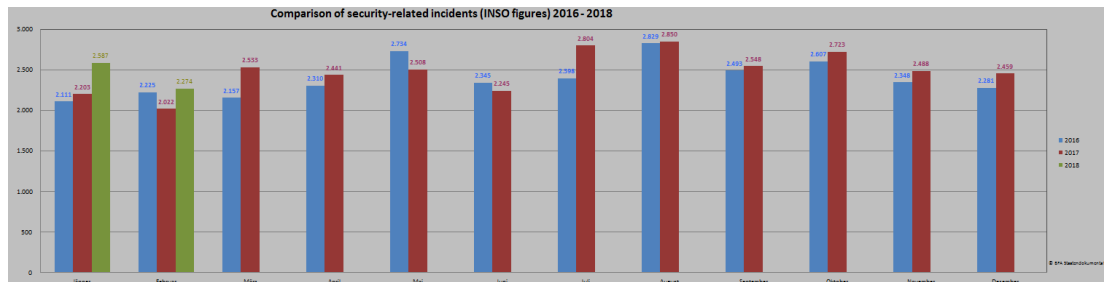


Figure 3 Comparison of security-related incidents 2016 – 2017, by BFA Staatendokumentation <sup>(43)</sup>

Compared with the same period in 2016-2017, the UN recorded a decline of 6 % in security-related incidents for the reporting period 15 December 2017 – 15 February 2018 <sup>(44)</sup>.

Figure 4 shows a comparison of security-related incidents recorded by the UN and INSO for 2015, 2016 and 2017:

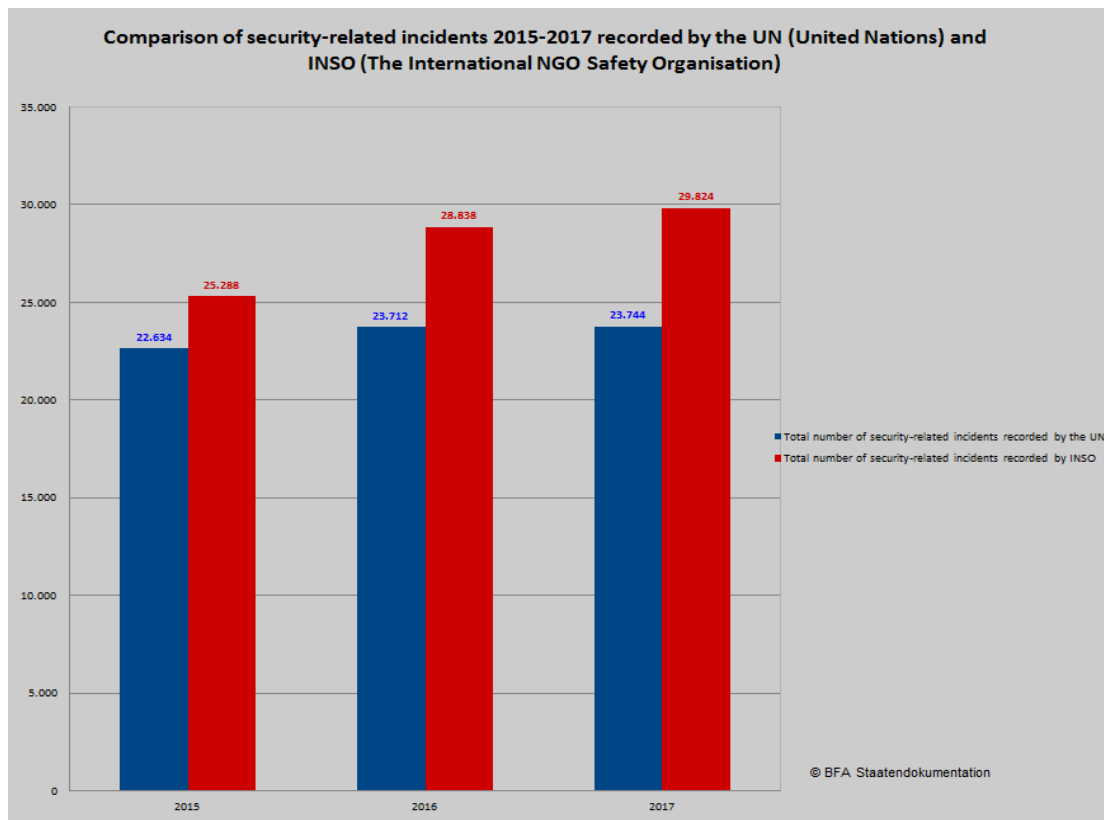


Figure 4 Comparison of security-related incidents 2015-2017 recorded by UN and INSO , by BFA Staatendokumentation <sup>(45)</sup>

<sup>(42)</sup> INSO, Gross Incident Data, n.d. ([url](#)).

<sup>(43)</sup> INSO, Gross Incident Data, n.d. ([url](#)).

<sup>(44)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(45)</sup> INSO, Gross Incident Data, n.d. ([url](#)); UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of March 7th 2016, 15 March 2016 ([url](#)), p. 4; UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its

In 2017, armed clashes continued to be the main cause (63 %) of all security-related incidents, ahead of IEDs and air strikes. For 2017, a total of 14 998 armed clashes were recorded (2016: 14 977 armed clashes) <sup>(46)</sup>.

Air strikes increased by 67 % compared with 2016, and targeted/deliberate killings an increase of 6 %. Moreover, the number of suicide attacks increased by 50 %; the eastern regions counted the highest number of all incidents, ahead of the southern regions. Both regions together were affected by 55 % of all security-related incidents <sup>(47)</sup>.

## 1.2 Civilian casualties

In 2017, UNAMA recorded 10 453 civilian casualties (3 438 deaths and 7 015 injured) – this marks a 9 % decrease compared to 2016 (11 434 civilian casualties, with 3 510 deaths and 7 924 injured). This was the first decline since 2012: compared with 2016, the number of civilian fatalities declined by 2 %, all while the number of injured persons fell by 11 %. UNAMA reported 28 291 deaths and 52 366 injured in total for the period 1 January 2009 – 31 December 2017. Anti-government groupings accounted for 65 % of all civilian casualties in 2017; the main reasons were IEDs, ahead of suicide attacks and complex attacks <sup>(48)</sup>.

In the first quarter of 2018, UNAMA documented 2 258 civilian casualties (763 deaths and 1 495 injured). These represent a similar level to that of the first quarter of 2017 (2 255) and 2016 (2 268) <sup>(49)</sup>.

For 2017, 6,768 civilian casualties (2 303 deaths and 4 465 injured) were attributed to anti-government groups, suggesting a 3 % decline compared to 7 003 civilian casualties (2 138 deaths and 4 865 injured) in the year before. This decline in the number of civilian casualties attributed to insurgent groups is due to a decline of civilian casualties by ground engagements, and IEDs. However, the number of civilian casualties from suicide attacks and complex attacks increased. The number of civilian and non-civilian casualties by targeted killings by anti-government elements is similar to that of 2016 <sup>(50)</sup>. In the first quarter of 2018, however, the number of civilian casualties caused by attacks deliberately targeting civilians more than doubled compared to the first quarter in 2017, reaching 751 casualties (236 dead and 515 injured) <sup>(51)</sup>.

The pro-government forces included ANSF, international troops, pro-government armed groups as well as unidentified pro-government forces. For 2017, 2 108 civilian casualties (745 deaths and 1 363 injured) were attributed to pro-government forces, which marks a 23 %

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implications for international peace and security, as of March 3rd, 3 March 2017 ([url](#)), p. 3; UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(46)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(47)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5.

According to UNAMA, the southern region of Afghanistan comprises Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabul provinces; the eastern region, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, and Nuristan provinces.

<sup>(48)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 1, 4.

<sup>(49)</sup> UNAMA, Quarterly Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 1 January to 31 March 2018, 12 April 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(50)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(51)</sup> UNAMA, Quarterly Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 1 January to 31 March 2018, 12 April 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1-3.



decline compared to 2016 (2 731 civilian casualties, 905 deaths and 1 826 injured) <sup>(52)</sup>. Altogether, pro-government forces accounted for 20 % of all civilian casualties. The main causes (53 %) were ground engagements between them and anti-government elements – resulting in 1 120 civilian casualties (274 deaths and 846 injured) - which marks a 37 % decline compared to 2016 <sup>(53)</sup>. Air strikes were recorded as the second cause of civilian casualties attributed to pro-government forces <sup>(54)</sup>, accounting for 6 % of all civilian casualties, a 7 % increase compared to 2016. The remaining 125 casualties (67 deaths and 58 injured) were caused by situations in which civilians were mistaken for anti-government elements. Search operations resulted in 123 civilian casualties (79 deaths and 44 injured), escalations of violence led to 52 civilian casualties (18 deaths and 34 injured), and threats and intimidations resulted in 17 injured civilians <sup>(55)</sup>.

In the first quarter of 2018, UNAMA attributed 67 % of all civilian casualties to the insurgents. The civilian casualties caused by pro-government forces decreased by 13 %, while they still accounted for 18 % of all civilian casualties during this period. 11 % were caused by fighting and were jointly attributed <sup>(56)</sup>.

UNAMA acknowledged the commitment and the positive steps taken by the Afghan government to reduce the number of civilian casualties in 2017 <sup>(57)</sup>.

Throughout 2017, a total of 3 484 civilian casualties (823 deaths and 2 661 injured) were documented in the context of 1 845 ground engagements, a 19 % decline compared to 2016 (4 300 civilian casualties, 1 072 deaths and 3 228 injured in 2 008 ground engagements). For the first time since 2012, the number of civilian casualties reported on account of armed clashes between pro-government and anti-government forces has declined <sup>(58)</sup>. This decline continued during the first quarter of 2018: a 15 % decline compared to the first quarter of 2017 <sup>(59)</sup>.

In 2017, explosive remnants of war resulted in 639 civilian casualties (164 deaths and 475 injured) – a 12 % decline compared to 2016. 2017 was the first year since 2009 in which a decline was recorded at all. The decline in the number of civilian casualties may be the result of less indirect fire through mortars, rockets and grenades in populated areas by pro-government forces <sup>(60)</sup>.

For specific information on the nature of the violence, its impact and the actors in the conflict, see EASO COI Report Afghanistan Security Situation of December 2017.

### 1.3 Conflict Severity

Included below is the conflict severity map, produced by UNOCHA. The conflict severity is characterised by three indicators: security incidents; civilian casualties; and conflict-induced displacement, which are representative for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017. The shading on the map is based on an average of the ranking of all districts on these indicators.

<sup>(52)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(53)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 20.

<sup>(54)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 43.

<sup>(55)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 43.

<sup>(56)</sup> UNAMA, Quarterly Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 1 January to 31 March 2018, 12 April 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

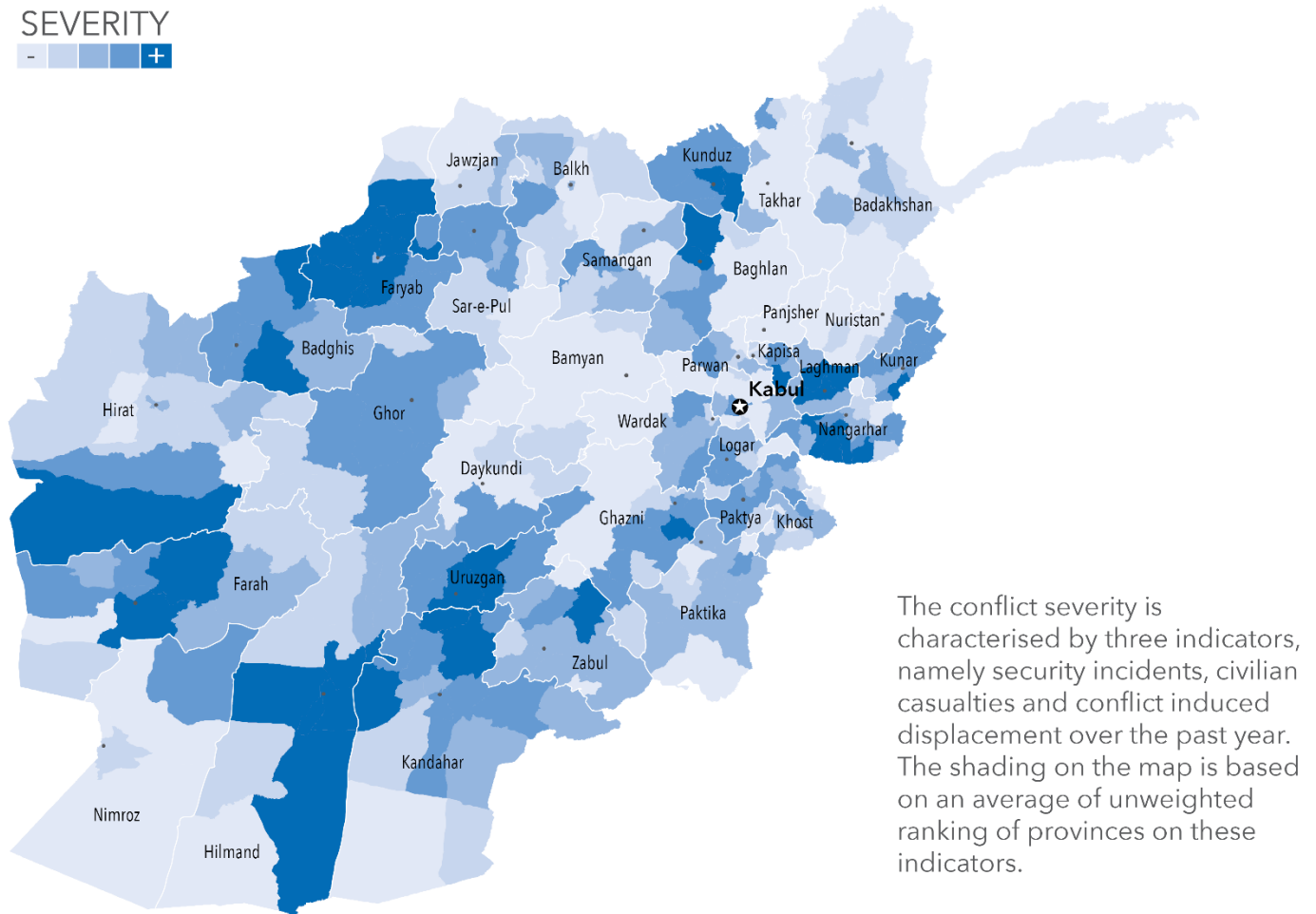
<sup>(57)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(58)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 20.

<sup>(59)</sup> UNAMA, Quarterly Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 1 January to 31 March 2018, 12 April 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(60)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 16.

## CONFLICT SEVERITY IN 2017



Map 2 Conflict Severity Map 2017, UNOCHA <sup>(61)</sup>

<sup>(61)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

## 2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan

### 2.1 Kabul

#### 2.1.1 Actors in the conflict

##### Insurgent groups in Kabul (City/Province)

Both the Taliban and IS carry out high-profile attacks in Kabul city<sup>(62)</sup>, and the Haqqani network is also said to commit attacks in Kabul city<sup>(63)</sup>.

In total in 2017, ISKP claimed responsibility for 14 suicide and complex attacks in Kabul city<sup>(64)</sup>. Analyst Thomas Ruttig stated that ‘it is increasingly difficult to assess the claims and to attribute responsibility’. He added that ‘there are indications that the diverse pro-IS groups are claiming attacks that have not been carried out by them’<sup>(65)</sup>. Specifically for Kabul, both Ruttig and UNAMA suggested that some attacks may be executed by ‘terror cells’ or ‘terrorists for hire’ inside the city, on behalf of several insurgent groups<sup>(66)</sup>. US officials are reported to fear overlap and convergence in enabling networks of both the Haqqani Network and the ISKP in Kabul<sup>(67)</sup>.

According to independent analyst Ruttig, there has been a ‘peak of attacks’ in January 2018, although the modus operandi of the Taliban have not changed<sup>(68)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘medium active and physical presence’ in Surobi, defined as being attacked at least three times a month, and ‘low’ activity/presence (district attacked at least once in three months) in the districts of Paghman, Farza, Qarabagh, Musayi, Khak-e Jabbar and Surobi<sup>(69)</sup>.

In the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018, ISKP-related incidents (acts of violence against civilians and skirmishes) were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in Kabul Province<sup>(70)</sup>.

<sup>(62)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3; RFE/RL, Suicide Car-Bomb Attack Kills At Least Three In Kabul, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Dawn, 27 Taliban, Haqqani Network suspects handed over to Afghanistan last year: FO, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(63)</sup> RFE/RL, Suicide Car-Bomb Attack Kills At Least Three In Kabul, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Hazaras Protest After an ISIS Attack Kills 10 in Kabul, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(64)</sup> UNAMA, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Attacks against Places of Worship, Religious Leaders and Worshippers, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 39.

<sup>(65)</sup> Ruttig, T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul (AAN), 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(66)</sup> UNAMA, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Attacks against Places of Worship, Religious Leaders and Worshippers, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 2; UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5; Ruttig, T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul (AAN), 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(67)</sup> New York Times (The), Pentagon and NATO Leaders, Visiting Kabul, Are Met by Insurgent Rocket Barrage, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(68)</sup> Ruttig, T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul (AAN), 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(69)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(70)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Kabul city**

The government is regularly conducting security operations in different parts of the capital <sup>(71)</sup>. A new security plan also provides for house searches <sup>(72)</sup>. In order to improve the security situation in Kabul City, at least 90 checkpoints were set up in central parts of the city under a new security plan called *Zarghun Belt* (the Green Belt), as announced in August 2017. The Afghan government declared a key area of the Afghan capital where important government institutions and foreign embassies along with some businesses are located as a 'Green Zone' <sup>(73)</sup>. Although Kabul never had a formal 'Green Zone', over the years the centre of the Afghan capital had increasingly become a militarised zone marked by armed checkpoints and blast walls <sup>(74)</sup>. Under the new plan, side roads connecting the suburbs of Kabul to the city centre will be closed off and security forces will increase their presence, identity checks as well as reconnaissance and intelligence activities <sup>(75)</sup>, all in a bid to control the movement of people inside the security zone. The network of security measures also includes an increase in the number of security forces and improvements to the infrastructure around key areas of the city <sup>(76)</sup>. Overall, the new security plan features 52 measures, most of which remain undisclosed <sup>(77)</sup>. The ANA will also take over at least some of the once 'porous' police checkpoints inside the city and is training specialised soldiers to stand guard. The goal is to establish an inner as well as an outer security ring and clear everything in between <sup>(78)</sup>.

### **2.1.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

In 2017, UNAMA documented the highest amount of civilian casualties in the country in Kabul province (including Kabul city), with 1 831 civilian victims (479 deaths and 1 352 injured). This represents an increase of 4 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from suicide or complex attacks in Kabul city, non-suicide IEDs, and deliberate and targeted killings <sup>(79)</sup>. UNHCR stated that an 'increasing use of magnetic IEDs has led to serious concern among the population in Kabul, particularly of high profile figures [who] feared being targeted. It has also contributed to the number of civilian casualties in Kabul' <sup>(80)</sup>.

In a map depicting 'conflict severity' in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places most of the districts of Kabul province in the lowest two categories. Only Paghman in the west and Surobi in the east of the province are in the middle category <sup>(81)</sup>. UNOCHA considered Kabul as a province where persons exhibiting high protection concerns are located, defined as 'new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host

<sup>(71)</sup> Tolo News, Govt Under Fire After Daesh House Found In Kabul, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)); Afghan Times, US arbitrary house searches divesting freedom of residents, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); NATO, Resolute Support Mission, Kabul security: capital city getting an upgrade, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(72)</sup> Afghan Times, US arbitrary house searches divesting freedom of residents, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(73)</sup> Tolo News, Security Check Points Stepped Up In Kabul, 7 Februari 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(74)</sup> Reuters, Kabul 'Green Zone' tightened after attacks in Afghan capital, 6 Augustus 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(75)</sup> Tolo News, Security Check Points Stepped Up In Kabul, 7 Februari 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(76)</sup> Tolo News, Senior Military Officers Review Kabul Checkpoints, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(77)</sup> RFE/RL, New Security Plan In Kabul After Deadly Attacks, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(78)</sup> Reuters, U.S. looks to protect Afghan capital against Taliban bombings, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(79)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 3, 67.

<sup>(80)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

<sup>(81)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

community’, as well as ‘non-displaced conflict affected people’. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict <sup>(82)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 388 incidents related to insurgents in Kabul province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(83)</sup>.

Surobi district is depicted by the BBC as a district with ‘medium’ open Taliban presence, defined as being attacked at least three times a month <sup>(84)</sup>. For example, in December 2017, an IED loaded on a motorcycle targeted the ALP commander and wounded ten individuals, the commander, three bodyguards and six civilians <sup>(85)</sup>. In January 2018 the Afghan Ministry of Defense reported holding ground operations against the insurgents in Surobi district, killing six insurgents and wounding four <sup>(86)</sup>.

According to the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), quoted by UNHCR, Khak- e Jabbar has the same security level as Surobi and Paghman <sup>(87)</sup>.

The following incidents were reported in traditional and social media: In Chahr Asyab, the Ministry of Interior claimed having arrested a suicide bomber in October 2017 <sup>(88)</sup>. In September 2017, in Qarabagh district, two civilians were killed and two or three others wounded in a US drone strike on a wedding party, after some men fired some celebratory rounds into the air <sup>(89)</sup>. In November 2017, one person was killed and 14 wounded, among whom three NATO soldiers <sup>(90)</sup>.

### Security situation in Kabul city

In 2017, Kabul province accounted for the highest number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan, which is due mainly to deliberate attacks in Kabul city; 16 % of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan occurred in Kabul. Suicide attacks and complex attacks, as well as other types of incidents which also include the use of IEDs, pushed up the rate of civilian casualties in Kabul. One high-profile attack in May 2017 alone accounted for a third of all civilian casualties <sup>(91)</sup>. UNAMA stated that in 2017, in Kabul city, suicide and complex attacks caused 1 612 civilian casualties (440 deaths and 1 172 injured), a 17 % increase compared to 2016 <sup>(92)</sup>. In January 2018, at least 174 people were killed in attacks in Kabul city alone <sup>(93)</sup>.

In its map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the district of Kabul city in the second-highest category <sup>(94)</sup>.

Some incidents including attacks with civilian casualties are listed below.

<sup>(82)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 30.

<sup>(83)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(84)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(85)</sup> Tolo News, Car Bomb Wounds 29 in Center of Helmand, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(86)</sup> Ministry of Defense Afghanistan [Twitter], posted on: 15 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(87)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

<sup>(88)</sup> Afghanistan, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Afghan National Police Arrested a Suicide Bomber in Kabul Province, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(89)</sup> Salam Watander, Two dead in U.S. drone strike in Qarabagh, 5 September 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Two Killed In Bombing On Wedding Ceremony In Qarabagh, 4 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Foreign forces airstrike kills two in Kabul’s Qarabagh district, 5 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(90)</sup> Pajhwok [Twitter], posted on: 23 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(91)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 29.

<sup>(92)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 29.

<sup>(93)</sup> Los Angeles Times, As war's toll grows in Kabul, the dead fight for space with the living, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(94)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

- In September 2017, a suicide bomber attempted to enter a cricket stadium in Kabul, where at that time hundreds of people were watching a tournament. The bomber was stopped before entering and blew himself up at the checkpoint, killing at least three people, two policemen and a civilian, and injuring at least five <sup>(95)</sup>.
- In a suicide attack of a foreign military convoy in September 2017 and claimed by the Taliban, at least three civilians were injured, according to the Afghan Ministry of Interior, quoted by RFE/RL <sup>(96)</sup>.
- UNAMA reported that end of September 2017, ‘a magnetic IED attached to a police vehicle providing security to a Shia mosque during Ashura, killed four civilians and injured 19, including two boys and a woman’ <sup>(97)</sup>.
- A suicide bomber believed to be 12-13 years old killed at least four people and injured 13 more in an attack at the end of October 2017, claimed by ISKP <sup>(98)</sup>.
- A complex attack on a TV station Shamshad TV in November 2017 <sup>(99)</sup>.
- Eleven people were killed when a suicide bomber tried to enter the building where a political rally was taking place in November 2017. According to the police, quoted by RFE/RL, the victims included nine policemen, and seven wounded police officers <sup>(100)</sup>. According to UNAMA, nine civilians, including one child, were killed in the attack claimed by ISKP, while 16 others were wounded. The Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan stated that the attack, using explosive weapons in civilian populated areas, was a ‘serious violation of humanitarian law’ <sup>(101)</sup>.
- Six to ten people, among them several civilians, were killed when a suicide bomber targeted an NDS compound in Kabul in December 2017, one week after militants stormed an NDS training centre in Kabul with heavy weapons. Both attacks were claimed by ISKP <sup>(102)</sup>.
- In January 2018, a suicide attack, claimed by ISKP, targeting a shopkeepers’ demonstration in eastern Kabul, on Jalalabad Road, killed 13 civilians and injured an additional 19, according to UNAMA findings. UNAMA explained that 12 of the 13 victims killed were police officials ‘performing legitimate law enforcement functions of helping to restore order and safety for civilians during a violent incident’. UNAMA further clarified that ANP personnel ‘are regarded as civilians unless they are directly participating in hostilities. The officers killed in the attack were not engaged in the armed conflict’. UNAMA added that ‘the use of indiscriminate explosive devices in civilian populated areas, in circumstances

<sup>(95)</sup> RFE/RL, At Least Three Killed In Suicide Blast Outside Kabul Cricket Stadium, 13 September 2017 ([url](#));

Reuters, Suicide bomb near cricket stadium in Afghan capital kills at least three, 13 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(96)</sup> RFE/RL, Three Civilians Wounded By Kabul Suicide Attack On Danish Military Convoy, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(97)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 33.

<sup>(98)</sup> BBC News, Kabul Green Zone attacked by suicide bomber, 31 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(99)</sup> BBC News, Afghan television channel Shamshad TV back on air after attack, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(100)</sup> RFE/RL, Suicide Bomber Kills At Least 11 At Kabul Rally For Northern Governor, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(101)</sup> UNAMA, UNAMA condemns killing of civilians in Kabul suicide attack, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(102)</sup> Guardian (The), Kabul suicide attack kills six near Afghan intelligence agency, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, At Least Six Killed in Suicide Attack in Kabul, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, At Least Ten Killed In Suicide Blast Near Afghan National Intelligence Office, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Gunmen Attack NDS Training Center in Kabul, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

almost certain to cause immense suffering to civilians, may amount to war crimes’<sup>(103)</sup>. Tolonews reported that the death toll had risen to 20, while 30 others were wounded<sup>(104)</sup>.

- Also in January, the Taliban claimed an attack at the Intercontinental Hotel in which they killed at least 22 persons<sup>(105)</sup>. Human Rights Watch and the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan both stated the intentional killing of civilians could amount to a war crime<sup>(106)</sup>.
- Later in January 2018, an ambulance laden with explosives exploded in a crowded and populated area in the centre of Kabul killing, according to initial reports, at least 95 people, and injuring 158 more<sup>(107)</sup>. Afghan officials raised the number of victims to 103 killed and 235 wounded<sup>(108)</sup>. The Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan stated that the use of an ambulance and a medical emblem was a ‘clear violation of international humanitarian law’<sup>(109)</sup>. Reporting on the effect of this attack, The Guardian quoted the ambulance service saying that ‘call out have dropped 40 % since the attack, as ambulances face long, invasive searches on their way to hospitals’<sup>(110)</sup>.
- In February 2018, a truck loaded with 2 000 kg explosives was seized en route to Parwan from Kabul. This demonstrates, according to UNHCR, the ability of AGEs to conduct attacks despite security measures by ANSF<sup>(111)</sup>.
- End of February 2018, a suicide bomber killed three and wounded five to seven in the diplomatic area of Kabul, near the US Embassy and NATO headquarters<sup>(112)</sup>.
- A former Deputy Speaker for the Upper House of Parliament and former Adviser to Afghan Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, was gunned down in Kabul, together with his bodyguard, in Kabul in February 2018. No one claimed responsibility for this attack<sup>(113)</sup>.
- In March 2018, a car bomb targeting foreign embassy vehicles killed a girl instead, and wounded 22 people more, none of them related to the target<sup>(114)</sup>.
- A suicide car bomb targeting a foreign security company inside the city killed three civilians and wounded two others in March 2018<sup>(115)</sup>.
- A so-called sticky bomb or magnetic IED exploded in the vicinity of a protest tent in support of the fate of Pashtun in Pakistan, killing one person and wounding 13 more<sup>(116)</sup>.

<sup>(103)</sup> UNAMA, UNAMA preliminary findings on latest Kabul attack, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(104)</sup> Tolo News, Death Toll Rises To 20 In Kabul Suicide Attack, 5 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(105)</sup> BBC News, Afghan Intercontinental Hotel attack: Death toll in Kabul reaches 22, 22 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(106)</sup> HRW, Kabul Hotel Attack a War Crime, 22 January 2018 ([url](#)); UNAMA, UNAMA condemns Taliban attack on civilians at Intercontinental Hotel, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(107)</sup> BBC News, Kabul attack: Taliban kill 95 with ambulance bomb in Afghan capital, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(108)</sup> Tolo News, Kabul Attack Death Toll Rises To 103, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(109)</sup> UNAMA, Statement by Tadamichi Yamamoto on Attack near High Peace Council Facility in Kabul, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(110)</sup> Guardian (The), Real patient or suicide bomber? The perils of being a Kabul ambulance driver, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(111)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

<sup>(112)</sup> Tolo News, Death Toll Rises To Three In Kabul City Bombing, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)); DW, Multiple attacks in Afghanistan leave many dead, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Suicide Blast, Attacks Kill Dozens In Afghanistan, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(113)</sup> RFE/RL, Ex-Afghan Lawmaker, Bodyguard Gunned Down In Kabul, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(114)</sup> AP, Car bomb explodes near Australian embassy vehicles in Kabul, 3 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); RFE/RL, One Afghan Killed, 22 Wounded In Kabul Bombing Targeting Australians, 2 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(115)</sup> RFE/RL, Suicide Car-Bomb Attack Kills At Least Three In Kabul, 17 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(116)</sup> AP, Afghanistan: Sticky Bomb Blast in Kabul Kills 1, Wounds 13, 24 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Bomb Kills One, Injures 13 At Protest Camp In Kabul, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)).

Shia Muslim civilians were deliberately attacked during the following attacks in Kabul city, almost all claimed by ISKP:

- During the preparations of Ashura commemorations in September 2017, a suicide bomber disguised as a shepherd targeted a Shia mosque in Kabul. At least five people were killed and 20 more injured, among which children, in the attack claimed by ISKP <sup>(117)</sup>.
- In October 2017, in an attack claimed by ISKP, a suicide attacker lobbed a grenade into the women's section of an Imam-e-Zaman Shi'a mosque in Kabul city and detonated his suicide vest in the second row of worshippers, according to UNAMA, killing 69 worshippers and injuring another 60, including women and children <sup>(118)</sup>.
- In December 2017, a suicide bomber targeted a Shia education centre in the Hazara-dominated area of Dasht-e Barchi of Kabul, killing 41 mainly young Shia civilians and wounding 80 more <sup>(119)</sup>.
- In March 2018, a suicide bomber tried to enter a commemoration of the 23<sup>rd</sup> death anniversary of Hazara leader Abdullah Mazari in Dasht-e Barchi. When intercepted by the police, he detonated his explosives, killing seven to ten persons, including policemen, and wounding 22 more <sup>(120)</sup>.
- In March 2018, a suicide bomber again targeted a learning centre in Dasht-e Barchi. Wearing a suicide vest, the attacker first tried to throw a hand grenade into a class with 600 students. This grenade exploded in his hand, killing only the assailant and injuring six to eleven students <sup>(121)</sup>.
- In a suicide attack near a hospital, the Kabul University and a Shiite shrine in March 2018, 29 civilians celebrating Newroz were reportedly killed and 52 wounded. The attack was claimed by ISKP <sup>(122)</sup>.

Body and vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIED) were used in complex attacks by the Taliban or ISKP against ANSF targets, such as a suicide bomber targeting military cadets as they were leaving a minibus at the gates of a military academy in Kabul in October 2017. At least 15 cadets were killed in the attack claimed by the Taliban <sup>(123)</sup>. The same military academy again came under attack by five gunmen in January 2018. Eleven soldiers were reportedly killed, and 16 others wounded in the attack, this time claimed by ISKP <sup>(124)</sup>.

A rocket attack on the international airport, hours after the US Secretary of Defense made a surprise visit to Kabul in September 2017, was claimed by both the Taliban and ISKP <sup>(125)</sup>.

<sup>(117)</sup> BBC News, Suicide 'shepherd' bomber kills several people near Kabul mosque, 29 September 2017 ([url](#)); New York Times, (The), Kabul Reels After Attack on Another Shiite Mosque, 29 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(118)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(119)</sup> BBC News, Afghanistan suicide bomb attack: Dozens killed in Kabul, 28 December 2017 ([url](#)); Ruttig, T., Five questions to make sense of the new peak in urban attacks and a violent week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(120)</sup> RFE/RL, At Least Seven Dead In Kabul Suicide Bombing, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Salam Watandar, Suicide attack in Kabul kills 7 people, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 killed, 22 injured in Kabul suicide bombing, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Hazaras Protest After an ISIS Attack Kills 10 in Kabul, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(121)</sup> NRC, Afghanistan attack targets Kabul classroom with 600 children inside, 19 March 2018, available at ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 students wounded in Kabul grenade blast, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(122)</sup> Tolo News, 29 Killed In Deadly Bombing In Kabul: Health Ministry, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)); AP, Police report large explosion on road to Shiite shrine in Kabul as Afghans celebrate new year, heavy casualties feared, 21 March 2018, available at ([url](#)); AFP, Kabul attack: Explosion close to Ali Abad hospital kills at least 26 people, injures 18 others, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(123)</sup> BBC News, Military cadets killed in Kabul minibus suicide bombing, 21 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(124)</sup> Al Jazeera, Afghanistan: Gunmen attack Kabul military academy, 29 January 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Eleven Afghan Soldiers Killed In Predawn Attack On Army Post, 29 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(125)</sup> Tolo News, Rocket Attack On Kabul International Airport, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)).



While the Taliban claimed to have targeted the military section of the airport, UNAMA stated that ‘several of the rockets struck civilian structures, [...]killing one woman and injuring two women, two men and two children’<sup>(126)</sup>. In press reports on this issue, the only civilian casualties mentioned were caused by the US air strike in return: according to quoted US and NATO sources, a malfunctioning missile struck a residential home and made several civilian casualties<sup>(127)</sup>. More rocket attacks, but without casualties, targeted NATO compounds inside the Green Zone in October 2017<sup>(128)</sup> and the Indian Embassy in January 2018<sup>(129)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order**

UNOCHA considered Kabul, including Kabul city, as one of the ‘most conflict affected’ provinces<sup>(130)</sup>. In 2017 and in the first months of 2018, several high-profile attacks took place in Kabul city, according to the Deutsche Welle, highlighting ‘the limitations faced by the government in Kabul in ensuring public security’<sup>(131)</sup>. In January 2018, President Ashraf Ghani was quoted saying that Kabul was ‘under siege’ and US General Nicholson said Kabul was ‘under attack’<sup>(132)</sup>. A number of press reports around the end of January/beginning of February covered the impact of a continuous string of attacks on civilians. According to psychologists interviewed by Tolonews, ‘a huge percentage of the population is extremely stressed’<sup>(133)</sup>. At the end of January 2018, the Los Angeles Times stated that ‘the attacks seem to come quicker than Afghans can recover from the one before’, reporting on residents’ anger at ‘political squabbles’ and efforts to curb corruption in the security forces that are perceived as ‘too slow’. Residents ‘feel even more vulnerable. Some Kabul residents said they were avoiding crowds and busy streets, restricting their movements and returning home before nightfall’<sup>(134)</sup>. Deutsche Welle reported ‘a state of shock’ and ‘fear and hopelessness are spreading throughout the city’<sup>(135)</sup>. Around the same time, residents interviewed by US Public Radio Station PRI stated that they want to protest the violence, but do not dare to because they fear suicide bombers will attack the demonstrations. Kabul residents also cancel their appointments and when they leave the house, they carry ‘in case I die’ notes on them<sup>(136)</sup>. The Economist also reported on the anxiety of ordinary Kabul residents, who claimed to be afraid to go on the streets to protest against the government<sup>(137)</sup>. The Washington Post reported on ‘a deeper sense of anxiety that things are out of control, that the government is failing to serve the public and consumed by political power struggles’<sup>(138)</sup>. Borhan Osman, Senior Analyst at the International Crisis Group, reported in an interview by The Guardian a ‘whole wave of people leaving their country, especially the young and the educated, and it’s not that much to do with actual day-to-day security dynamics – more the overall erosion of

<sup>(126)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 22-23.

<sup>(127)</sup> BBC News, Kabul air strike: US attack causes civilian casualties, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)); Reuters, Militants attack Kabul airport during Mattis visit, U.S. strike hits civilians, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(128)</sup> Washington Post (The), Early morning rocket attacks hit near NATO compound in Kabul’s ‘Green Zone’, 21 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(129)</sup> Times of India (The), Rocket lands inside the premises of Indian embassy in Kabul, all employees safe, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(130)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(131)</sup> DW, Why Central Asian states want peace with the Taliban, 27 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(132)</sup> CBS, Kabul under siege while America's longest war rages on, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(133)</sup> Tolo News, Psychologists Claim Attacks Creating Fear Among The Public, 29 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(134)</sup> Los Angeles Times, An increase in bombings spreads fear in Afghanistan. It could also be a message to President Trump, 29 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(135)</sup> DW, Kabul residents in shock after wave of violence, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(136)</sup> PRI, Violence in Kabul is so extreme, citizens are carrying around 'in case I die' notes, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(137)</sup> Economist (The), Afghanistan’s fragile government picks a dangerous fight, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(138)</sup> Washington Post (The), Afghans, fearing more insurgent violence, feel abandoned by struggling government, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)).

hope in the future, the [lack of] confidence about prospects of peace’. Further, he notes that chaos and despair, and distrust in the government, are actually the reason behind these high-profile attacks in Kabul <sup>(139)</sup>.

Criminality in the form of gang-related violence, abductions, thefts and murder is on the rise in the city of Kabul, with some observers calling the increase in the most recent months ‘sharp’ <sup>(140)</sup>. At the end on 2017, the government announced a plan to tackle crime by seizing illegal weapons and cars, and in February 2018 declared that crime had fallen by 40 % in the previous month because of their measures. However, residents interviewed by Tolonews disputed these claims and stated that the government measures had little effect on the armed groups inside the city, and crime continued to rise <sup>(141)</sup>.

In February 2018, UNAMA announced that a long-standing land dispute between two tribes in the Uzbin Valley of Surobi was solved due to mediation of several government officials, religious scholars and community elders and civil society <sup>(142)</sup>.

According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) poppy cultivation was limited to the Uzbeen Valley in Surobi, where the security situation was assessed as ‘extremely poor’. In 2017, poppy cultivation increased by 9 % <sup>(143)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA registered, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, 353 individuals displaced from Kabul Province, of whom 343 from Surobi district, 6 from Bagrami and 4 from Guldara <sup>(144)</sup>.

In December 2016, UNOCHA assessed 49 displaced persons from Surobi district and 15 from Paghman district who respectively went to Charikar district (Parwan province) and Gardez district (Paktia province) <sup>(145)</sup>. In the first 6 months of 2017, 641 IDPs arrived in Bagrami, Dehsabz and Qarabagh districts from Baghlan, Laghman and Nangarhar provinces <sup>(146)</sup>.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix, 437 693 individuals or 9 % of the population of Kabul province is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. Of these, 5 425 people either live in a tent or in open air. Almost 70 000 people, or 2 % of the province’s population, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. According to IOM, 56,350 people, or 1 % of its population, fled Kabul to go abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(147)</sup>. UNHCR has facilitated the return of over 1.3 million Afghan refugees to Kabul since 2002, and there are over 200 000 conflict-induced displaced persons in the province <sup>(148)</sup>.

<sup>(139)</sup> Guardian (The), New wave of Afghans seek a way out as fear grips Kabul, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(140)</sup> Arab News, Afghan drive to seize illegal weapons amid Kabul crime wave, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)); Daily Outlook Afghanistan, The Causes of Rising Crime in Kabul, 13 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Kabul Records ‘Sharp Rise’ In Crime In Past Week, 10 February 2018 ([url](#)); IWPR, Jobless Afghans Slip Into Crime, 4 April 2018 ([url](#)); UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

<sup>(141)</sup> Arab News, Afghan drive to seize illegal weapons amid Kabul crime wave, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Kabul Records ‘Sharp Rise’ In Crime In Past Week, 10 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(142)</sup> UNAMA, Community Unites to Resolve Long Standing Tribal Conflict in Surobi District, 13 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(143)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(144)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(145)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict induced Displacements [map], 10 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(146)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict induced Displacements [map], 10 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(147)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(148)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

### Situation of the displaced in Kabul city

In June 2017, UNHCR and the Norwegian refugee Council made the following assessment:

‘Kabul province has received the highest number of returnees in 2017, and historically since 2002. Its capacity to absorb and reintegrate refugees returning to Afghanistan, as well as IDPs from other provinces is minimal. IDPs and returnees are mostly settling in the outskirts of the capital (eg. PD 21, Bagrami, PD 8, PD 12, PD 16) where basic services are lacking’<sup>(149)</sup>.

In the period from 1 September 2017 to 26 March 2018, 4 296 individuals were displaced to Kabul district, primarily from Parwan, Nangarhar and Logar<sup>(150)</sup>.

The total number of IDPs in Kabul is unknown. There are different categories of IDPs: those fleeing armed conflict and security problems; returnees who could not return to their place of origin and live in secondary displacement; people fleeing natural disaster; and nomads such as Kuchi and Jogi. Of the total, 40 % of returnees do not or cannot return to their place of origin. IDPs in Kabul do not necessarily live separated from the other urban dwellers and often mingle with other vulnerable groups such as the urban poor, returnees and economic migrants<sup>(151)</sup>. UNHCR commented that Kabul city is ‘one of the fastest growing city in Asia and is largely uncontrolled, over 70 % of the city is informally built/expanded. Majority of returnees and IDPs tend to settle in the informally expanded areas mainly due to low cost of living despite the fact that basic services are not existing in those areas’<sup>(152)</sup>. They are often referred to ‘Kabul Informal Settlements’ or KIS, which include some of the poorest and most vulnerable households in the city<sup>(153)</sup>. UNHCR pointed out that returnees and IDPs not necessarily all settle in KIS sites<sup>(154)</sup>. In March 2018, there were an estimated 60 recognised informal settlements, housing 65 000 returnees and IDPs. The proportion of IDPs in these camps is estimated at 68 %, the rest mainly being returnees. The biggest proportion of IDPs in the Kabul Informal Settlements come from Helmand. Over half of the KIS population lives from ‘unskilled daily labour without a contract’, the rest living out of humanitarian assistance, skilled daily labour without contract, or borrowing. Only 6 % had a business income, and 3 % were formally employed. 62 % of the IDPs and 46 % of the returnees in KIS were found to be ‘severely food insecure’<sup>(155)</sup>.

For example, in October 2017, large amounts IDPs reportedly arrived in Kabul coming from Sia Gird/Ghorband district in Parwan<sup>(156)</sup> and in November 2017 another group reportedly fled military operations in Kapisa to Kabul<sup>(157)</sup>. In January 2018, 500 people arrived in Kabul, in secondary displacement from three other provinces<sup>(158)</sup>.

Apart from internal displacement due to the conflict in Afghanistan, Kabul city saw large flows of Afghan refugees returning from neighbouring countries. Following 1 million returnees in 2016, 2017 saw over 610 000 migrants, both documented and undocumented, returning to

<sup>(149)</sup> UNHCR and NRC, Afghanistan: Central Region Protection Cluster Factsheet - MAY 2017, 17 June 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(150)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

<sup>(151)</sup> Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S. and Martin, E., Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul, June 2012 ([url](#)), p. 6

<sup>(152)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

<sup>(153)</sup> Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S. and Martin, E., Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul, June 2012 ([url](#)), p. 6; Bjelica, J., Afghanistan’s Returning Refugees: Why Are So Many Still landless?, 29 March 2016 ([url](#)).

<sup>(154)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

<sup>(155)</sup> REACH, Informal Settlement Food Security Assessment. Initial Findings, 28 February 2017, available at: ([url](#)), pp. 10, 11, 18.

<sup>(156)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 2 -8 October 2017, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(157)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 6 - 12 November 2017, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(158)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 15 to 21 January 2018, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran <sup>(159)</sup>. Together with Jalalabad city, Kabul city receives large IDP and returnee populations, putting further strain on the city's services and absorbing a large share of the humanitarian needs related to displacement and returnees <sup>(160)</sup>. According to data from UNHCR, more than one in four of all returnees since 2002, or almost 1 million individuals, have settled in Kabul <sup>(161)</sup>.

A study by OXFAM among returnee populations in Kabul found that most returnees depend on relatives for accommodation and other in-kind support. Those who have returned some years ago reported a deterioration of the situation for returnees in Kabul, because of increased prices, unemployment, insecurity and crime <sup>(162)</sup>. Around 80 % of Kabul's population, a mix of recent and long term IDPs, returnees, economic migrants and original inhabitants, lives in informal settlements. Not only newly displaced or returnees, but also some older-generation displaced people still find it hard to integrate in the city and find stable employment, and are often cut off from humanitarian help destined for recent arrivals <sup>(163)</sup>. Due to these massive and prolonged population movements, Nassim Majidi, Director of Consultancy Samuel Hall, refers to the humanitarian situation in Kabul as a 'powderkeg, with poverty, greater risks of natural disasters, disease and social instability' <sup>(164)</sup>.

For more information on Kabul city, see EASO Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan - Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City <sup>(165)</sup>.

## 2.2 Badakhshan

### 2.2.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Badakhshan

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban fully control 14 districts nationwide, of which two in Badakhshan: Yamgan and Warduj. Further, they have a 'low' 'active and physical presence' (district attacked at least once in three months) in Arghanjkhwa, Shuhada, Baharak, Raghestan, Kohestan and Yaftal-e Sufla <sup>(166)</sup>. In February 2018, RFE/RL reported that the Taliban control 'large swathes of rural Badakhshan'. They have controlled Warduj and Yamgan district imposing 'harsh rules in the two districts in the name of implementing the Islamic Shari'a law' prohibiting TV-sets, women to go out without a male companion and requiring men to attend the mosques. Corporal punishments for transgressions deemed a 'vice' are also reported. Inhabitants of these two districts have fled to the district of Baharak in search of protection <sup>(167)</sup>. In February 2018, the terrorism monitoring blog Long War Journal (LWJ) said that Badakhshan has become a 'Taliban hotbed' since 2012: 'Of Badakhshan's 28 districts, LWJ assesses three to be Taliban controlled and another nine to be contested' <sup>(168)</sup>. Between October 2017 and February 2018, also other media reported on the Taliban's control over

<sup>(159)</sup> IOM and UNHCR, Return to Afghanistan 2017, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(160)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(161)</sup> UNHCR, Refugee returnees to Afghanistan by province, last updated: 21 April 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(162)</sup> OXFAM, Returning to Fragility. Exploring the link between conflict and returnees in Afghanistan, January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 23.

<sup>(163)</sup> Guardian (The), Pressure builds in 'powderkeg' Kabul as refugees return home, 15 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(164)</sup> Guardian (The), Pressure builds in 'powderkeg' Kabul as refugees return home, 15 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(165)</sup> EASO, Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan - Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City, August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(166)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(167)</sup> RFE/RL, Taliban Increasing Presence In Remote Afghan Region Bordering China, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(168)</sup> LWJ, US launches airstrikes on Taliban training camps, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)).

Warduj district and surrounding areas and the district of Yamgan<sup>(169)</sup>, which was acknowledged by the Afghan Ministry of Defense <sup>(170)</sup>.

Apart from the Taliban, foreign fighters are reported in the province. These foreign fighters reportedly come from Uzbekistan, China (Uyghur Muslims) <sup>(171)</sup> and Tajikistan <sup>(172)</sup>. The presence of IS is reported <sup>(173)</sup>. In addition, there are other active insurgent groupings such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which consists primarily of Chinese Uyghurs <sup>(174)</sup>. Analysts suggest that the presence of Chinese militants in Afghanistan is most likely exaggerated <sup>(175)</sup>. Local members of parliament warned in December 2017 of the increasing presence of foreign fighters, linked to the Islamic State, in the north-east of Afghanistan <sup>(176)</sup>.

During 2017 and also in January 2018, several Taliban fighters have joined the peace process in Badakhshan <sup>(177)</sup>. In March 2018, the Chinese news agency Xinhua News reported intensified Taliban activity in Badakhshan, ‘as government forces mounted pressure in winter to shrink militants’ operational abilities ahead of spring’ <sup>(178)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Badakhshan**

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(179)</sup>. Air strikes are being carried out as well <sup>(180)</sup>, with a Taliban training camp being destroyed in the process <sup>(181)</sup>.

For example, in September 2017, ACLED quoted BBC Monitoring stating that the Afghan security forces launched an attack against the Taliban in Warduj district, causing heavy casualties among the Taliban <sup>(182)</sup>. Warduj has changed hands several times over the previous four years <sup>(183)</sup>. Based on several sources, ACLED reported on regular military operations,

<sup>(169)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan airstrikes against Taliban kill 8 in Badakhshan province, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Foreign Forces Target Taliban In Badakhshan Drone Strike, 10 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(170)</sup> Ariana News, Afghan Forces Soon to Launch Winter Offensive against Militants: MoD, 13 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(171)</sup> RFE/RL, Taliban Increasing Presence in Remote Afghan Region Bordering China, Gandhara, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(172)</sup> RFE/RL, Taliban Increasing Presence in Remote Afghan Region Bordering China, Gandhara, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces adopt aggressive approach, amplify operations on militants, 13 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(173)</sup> National (The), Afghanistan’s president asks Taliban to join peace talks, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)); VOA , US Launches Airstrikes in NE Afghanistan to Deter Cross-Border Terrorism, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)); Diplomat (The), Why Would China Help Build an Afghan Military Base in Badakhshan?, 5 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(174)</sup> RFE/RL, Taliban Increasing Presence in Remote Afghan Region Bordering China, Gandhara, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(175)</sup> Callahan, T., and Marty, F.J., Tilting at Windmills: Dubious US claims of targeting Chinese Uyghur militants in Badakhshan, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(176)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, IS presence expanding in north, northeast: MPs, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(177)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, In Badakhshan, 40 Taliban insurgents join peace process, 9 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(178)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 10 security personnel killed, 9 injured in N. Afghanistan, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(179)</sup> National (The), Afghanistan’s president asks Taliban to join peace talks, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)); Eurasiareview, Belt and Road and US-China Relations in 2018 – Analysis, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)); Arab News, Regional army chiefs vow to step up attacks on Taliban, 15 February 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces adopt aggressive approach, amplify operations on militants, 13 February 2018 ([url](#)); VOA , US Launches Airstrikes in NE Afghanistan to Deter Cross-Border Terrorism, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(180)</sup> Firstpost, 12 Taliban militants killed in Afghan airstrikes in Badakhshan, Faryab and Sari Pul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Army Chiefs Meet to Boost Coordination in Fighting Terror, 14 February 2018 ([url](#)); Diplomat (The), US Air Campaign in Afghanistan Hits Targets Near Tajik and Chinese Border, 9 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(181)</sup> USDOD, U.S. Forces Strike Taliban, East Turkestan Islamic Movement Training Sites, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)); LWJ, US hits Pakistani Taliban training camp in eastern Afghanistan, 8 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(182)</sup> ACLED, Data, n.d. ([url](#)).

<sup>(183)</sup> LWJ, US launches airstrikes on Taliban training camps, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)); Diplomat (The), US Air Campaign in Afghanistan Hits Targets Near Tajik and Chinese Border, 9 February 2018 ([url](#)).

including regular air strikes, every month from September 2017 to February 2018 in the districts of Jurm, Tagab, Warduj, Baharak, Darayim, Yaftali Sufla, Kohistan, Fayzabad, Raghistan, and Argo. These reports mentioned dozens of Taliban casualties<sup>(184)</sup>. In March 2018, ANSF launched a military operation to clear Jurm district of insurgents<sup>(185)</sup>.

For the first time in years in Badakhshan, according to local officials, the US army conducted drone strikes against Taliban and ISKP targets in Raghistan district in October 2017, inflicting casualties among insurgents as reported by local officials<sup>(186)</sup>. According to an unpublished report quoted by analysts of the Afghanistan Analysts Network, there were two US and three Afghan air force air strikes in 2017<sup>(187)</sup>. In January and February 2018, several air strikes reportedly killed dozens of foreign fighters in Badakhshan<sup>(188)</sup>. The US military claimed to play a 'leading role' in the strikes that targeted Taliban training facilities in Badakhshan with a 'record number' of guided missiles<sup>(189)</sup>. The targets were Taliban training camps and support networks for the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, active in China and Tajikistan<sup>(190)</sup>.

During the military operation in Jurm in March 2018, Afghan officials claimed to have killed several Chinese militants<sup>(191)</sup>. The presence of Chinese militants in Afghanistan is said to be the main reason for increasing Chinese security presence in Badakhshan<sup>(192)</sup>. There are several reports of joint Afghan-Chinese patrol inside Badakhshan<sup>(193)</sup>.

Confrontations between IS and the armed forces were reported by sources consulted by ACLED in the province in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018<sup>(194)</sup>.

## 2.2.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

### General

In 2017, UNAMA documented 61 civilian victims (21 deaths and 40 injured), a decline of 64 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, non-suicide IEDs, and targeted and deliberate killings<sup>(195)</sup>. UNOCHA considered Badakhshan as a province of 'high protection concern', defined as: 'new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host community', as well as 'non-

<sup>(184)</sup> ACLED, Data, n.d. ([url](#)).

<sup>(185)</sup> Tolo News, 27 Insurgents Killed In Badakhshan Operation, 1 April 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(186)</sup> Tolo News, Foreign Forces Target Taliban In Badakhshan Drone Strike, 10 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(187)</sup> Callahan, T., and Marty, F.J., Tilting at Windmills: Dubious US claims of targeting Chinese Uyghur militants in Badakhshan, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(188)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 17 foreign rebels killed in Badakhshan airstrike, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 foreign rebels killed in Badakhshan airstrike, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, RSM vows to eliminate Taliban, their financial resources, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, US expands anti-rebel air campaign to north, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)); Callahan, T., and Marty, F.J., Tilting at Windmills: Dubious US claims of targeting Chinese Uyghur militants in Badakhshan, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(189)</sup> Military.com, Air Force Sets Another B-52 Smart Bomb Record in Afghanistan, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)); VOA, US Expands Anti-Taliban Airstrikes to Northern Afghanistan, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(190)</sup> US Central Command, U.S. Airstrikes Target Terrorist Networks in Northern Afghanistan, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(191)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Chinese rebels among 7 dead in Badakhshan offensive, 31 March 2018 ([url](#)); Frontier Post (The), Chinese militant among seven killed in Afghan forces operation, 1 April 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(192)</sup> Ariana news, Report: China Ramps Up Security Presence in Afghanistan, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(193)</sup> Callahan, T., and Marty, F.J., Tilting at Windmills: Dubious US claims of targeting Chinese Uyghur militants in Badakhshan, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(194)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(195)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p.

displaced conflict affected people'. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict <sup>(196)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 70 incidents related to insurgents in Badakhshan province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(197)</sup>.

In a map depicting 'conflict severity' in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA placed Baharak, Jurm, Argo and Tagab districts in the middle category. All other districts were in the lowest two categories <sup>(198)</sup>.

In March 2018, an ANSF military operation to clear Jurm district of insurgents allegedly resulted in civilian casualties <sup>(199)</sup>. A gun battle between Taliban and ANSF during this clearing operation in Jurm district reportedly resulted in the death of four civilians and eight wounded, when ANSF responded to Taliban shootings from a residential house <sup>(200)</sup>.

In September 2017, UNOCHA reported conflict with civilian casualties in the districts of Raghistan, Yaftal and Argo <sup>(201)</sup>. A roadside bomb targeting the head of a local uprising force killed one woman and injured two ANP officials in Khash district in October 2017 <sup>(202)</sup>. UNAMA reported the case of 100 civilians abducted in October 2017 in Badakhshan <sup>(203)</sup>. In December 2017, the Police Chief of Yaftal-i Paen/Darayim district stated that the Taliban patrol the villages of the district on a daily bases, kidnapping whoever they doubt, mostly ANSF personnel <sup>(204)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

In January 2018, the Taliban desecrated the grave of a fallen soldier, exhuming the body and dragging it around behind their vehicle in Raghistan district. Dozens of residents who attended the funeral were abducted and beaten by the Taliban <sup>(205)</sup>. In March 2018, the Taliban were accused of killing a woman accused of adultery in Yamgan district, beheading a young woman accused of having an 'illegitimate relationship' in Baharak district, and shooting a woman who refused to marry a Taliban commander <sup>(206)</sup>.

In September 2017, UNAMA recorded an incident of Afghan Local Police blocking the provision of health supplies <sup>(207)</sup>. In October 2017, members of the ALP from Warduj stormed the Governor's house, injuring six people and destroying the office. They claimed both ANA

<sup>(196)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 30.

<sup>(197)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(198)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(199)</sup> Tolo News, 27 Insurgents Killed In Badakhshan Operation, 1 April 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(200)</sup> AP, Afghan Official Says Bomb Kills Provincial Council Member, 30 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(201)</sup> UNOCHA, Meeting Minutes Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(202)</sup> Middle East Press, Mine blast in 'Khash' district of Badakhshan province, 15 October 2017 ([url](#)); Bakhtar News, Mine Blast Took The Life of Woman, Wounded 2 Policemen, 16 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(203)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 35.

<sup>(204)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Police officer released from Taliban captivity in Badakhshan, 30 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(205)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban pull out soldier's body from grave in Badakhshan, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(206)</sup> Pasaban, Taliban shot down a woman for adultery in Badakhshan, 15 March 2018 ([url](#)); Bakhtar News, Young Woman Beheaded By Taliban Militants In N. Afghanistan, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)); DID Press, Head of Woman Cut Off in Badakhshan, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban leader kills defiant Badakhshan 'fiancée', 25 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(207)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 15.

and ANP did not intervene when their post was attacked by the Taliban, leaving one ALP member dead <sup>(208)</sup>.

Part of the security paradigm in Badakhshan is the narcotics trade and production and illegal mining <sup>(209)</sup>. In January 2018, drug labs were destroyed in Argo district during a clearing operation against the Taliban that lasted multiple days <sup>(210)</sup>. Local officials claimed the provincial mines department received zero income from mining, with all revenue from mining in Badakhshan going to local powerful figures and the Taliban <sup>(211)</sup>. In a cross-border incident in November 2017, two civilians were killed by Tajik border guards, who allegedly took them for smugglers <sup>(212)</sup>. In a clash between smugglers and ANSF in Shahr-i Buzarg district in February 2018, four ANSF personnel were killed and six others injured <sup>(213)</sup>. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Badakhshan was one of the country's major poppy cultivating provinces. In 2017, opium poppy cultivation in Badakhshan province was estimated at 6 298 hectares. Poppy cultivation occurred primarily in Argo, Darayim and Kishim districts <sup>(214)</sup>. Badakhshan is rich in resources such as gold, ruby and lapis lazuli; according to Pajhwok Afghan News, armed men and militants illegally extract the province's mines <sup>(215)</sup>.

In September 2017, the national radio station Salam Watandar, created in 2003 with international support, reported a provincial education official as stating that all of the 15 schools in the district of Warduj have remained closed for two years, affecting up to 10 000 children. All teachers and other directorate of education staff fled the district and 500 pupils followed them to other areas in the province. The claims were disputed by the Taliban <sup>(216)</sup>. In March 2018, these schools were still closed <sup>(217)</sup>.

According to the Baharak Chief of Police, residents of Jurm and Yamgan had no access to education and healthcare because of insurgents' presence in these districts <sup>(218)</sup>. An article on the same subject suggested in February 2017 that 12 000 pupils were deprived from education in Warduj district, many of them fleeing the country or joining the Taliban for that reason <sup>(219)</sup>.

UNHCR reported that pro-government militia stopped humanitarian aid to vulnerable populations in September 2017 in Warduj in response to which the insurgents in control of Warduj refused to let humanitarian aid through the district to reach Ishkashim, Shighnan, and Wakhan <sup>(220)</sup>.

<sup>(208)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, ALP members storm Badakhshan governor's house, 6 injured, 7 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(209)</sup> Ali, O., The 2015 Insurgency in the North (2): Badakhshan's Jurm district under siege, 14 September 2015 ([url](#)); Matta, B., Violence in Badakhshan Persists: what last year's Jurm attack still tells us about insecurity in the north, 10 April 2016 ([url](#)).

<sup>(210)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 drug labs destroyed in Badakhshan's Argo district, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(211)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal extraction of Badakhshan mines goes on, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(212)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Afghan civilians killed in Tajikistan security forces firing, 9 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(213)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 BSP killed, 6 injured in overnight Badakhshan raid, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(214)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 5, 25.

<sup>(215)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal extraction of Badakhshan mines goes on, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(216)</sup> Salam Watandar, Thousands of Children deprived of education in Badakhshan, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(217)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 years on, Taliban keep 16 Warduj schools closed, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(218)</sup> Tolo News, Badakhshan Forces Waiting For Order To Launch Offensives, 13 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(219)</sup> Tolo News, All Schools Remain Closed In Warduj District Of Badakhshan, 22 February 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(220)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Kunduz Province. Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 11 October 2017 ([url](#)).



## Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 September 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 15 027 persons internally displaced from Badakhshan (3 967 from Jorm, 2 776 from Yaftali Sufla, 2 331 from Yawan, 2 198 from Warduj, 1 953 from Kohestan, 735 from Tagab, 676 from Yamgan, 217 from Argo, 154 from Baharak, and 20 from Zebak) <sup>(221)</sup>.

When the districts of Warduj and Yamgan fell to the Taliban in 2015, ‘thousands’ of inhabitants reportedly fled the districts because of school closures, the imposition of harsh punishments and the illegal taxation of the population, a displacement that continued at least until February 2018 <sup>(222)</sup>.

WFP, as quoted by UNOCHA, regularly reports food insecurity among several IDP communities across the province that remain dependent on humanitarian aid from international organisations or international NGOs whose access is uncertain due to snowfall or sometimes dependent on local arrangements with insurgents and ALP <sup>(223)</sup>. IDPs in Badakhshan are amongst the most vulnerable to extreme winter conditions <sup>(224)</sup>.

## 2.3 Badghis

### 2.3.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Badghis

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘medium’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Gormach, Bala Murghab, Muqur, Qala-i Naw, and Qadis, and ‘low’ in Jawand (district attacked at least once in three months) <sup>(225)</sup>.

During the course of 2017, Taliban fighters were active in several districts, such as Bala Murghab <sup>(226)</sup>, Qala-i Naw <sup>(227)</sup>, Ab Kamari <sup>(228)</sup> and Qadis <sup>(229)</sup>. As of March 2018, the Ghormach district, which had been at the centre of intensive fighting over the past year, was under full Taliban control <sup>(230)</sup>. According to Pajhwok Afghan News, Ghormach district was entirely under Taliban control since August 2017. Pajhwok also reported that the routes to the district were blocked <sup>(231)</sup>. In the previous years, the district changed hands several times

<sup>(221)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(222)</sup> RFE/RL, Taliban Increasing Presence In Remote Afghan Region Bordering China, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(223)</sup> UNOCHA, Meeting Minutes Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Meeting Minutes Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Meeting Minutes Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(224)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 24; UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 69, 31 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(225)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(226)</sup> Tolo News, 15 Taliban Killed In Attack On Badghis District, 28 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(227)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Taliban attack on security checkpoint kills 5 in W. Afghanistan, 16 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(228)</sup> Tolo News, District Police Chief Killed in Badghis, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(229)</sup> Reuters, Dozens dead in Afghanistan violence as Ramadan begins, 27 May 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(230)</sup> Ali, O. and Ruttig, T., Battle for Faryab: Fighting intensifies on one of Afghanistan’s major frontlines, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(231)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban overrun Faryab’s Ghormach district, 13 August 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 killed as conflict in Faryab intensifies, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Besieged soldiers in Ghormach forced to eat stale food, 16 September 2017 ([url](#)).

between insurgents and ANSF<sup>(232)</sup>. In October 2017, the New York Times quoted local officials claiming they had freed about 500 besieged ANSF personnel in Ghormach<sup>(233)</sup>.

In a report from October 2017, DID Press Agency stated 180 to 200 armed men from Qadis district joined the Taliban, after mediation by community elders. The report cited local officials that claimed neglect by the local government as the reason for joining the Taliban. Qadis district is labelled as ‘insecure since 2015’<sup>(234)</sup>.

No ISKP-related incidents were reported by sources consulted by ACLED in Badghis in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018<sup>(235)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Badghis**

Security operations conducted in the province<sup>(236)</sup> also resulted in the killing of insurgents<sup>(237)</sup> and Taliban commanders<sup>(238)</sup>. These operations also entail air strikes against the insurgents<sup>(239)</sup>. Clashes between the Taliban and the Afghan security and defence forces occur and are sometimes described as ‘heavy’<sup>(240)</sup>.

According to Pajhwok Afghan News, since August 2017, ANSF in Ghormach district were ‘besieged in their camp and a number of security posts’ for months. Pajhwok also reported that the routes to the district were blocked<sup>(241)</sup>. In the previous years, the district changed hands several times between insurgents and ANSF<sup>(242)</sup>.

### **2.3.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

UNAMA documented 132 civilian casualties (38 deaths and 94 injured) in 2017, a 1 % decrease compared to 2016. Ground engagements constituted the leading cause for civilian deaths and injuries, followed by targeted and deliberate killings and non-suicide IEDs<sup>(243)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Badghis as one of the ‘most conflict affected’ provinces<sup>(244)</sup>. In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents,

<sup>(232)</sup> LWJ, Taliban overruns district in Afghan northwest, 14 August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(233)</sup> New York Times (The), Afghan Forces Killed in Friendly-Fire Airstrike, Capping Deadly Week, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(234)</sup> DID Press Agency, 200 Residents of Badghis Attend Taliban group, 7 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(235)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(236)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Nearly 100 militants killed in past 24 hours: MoD, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Afghanistan Times, Counter-terrorism sweeps: 131 insurgents killed, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 31 Insurgents Killed In Afghan Forces Operations, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, At Least 31 Suspected Militants Killed In Afghanistan, Army Says, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(237)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Nearly 100 militants killed in past 24 hours: MoD, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Suicide bomber shot dead before reaching target, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Casualties as police, Taliban clash in Badghis, 27 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(238)</sup> Tolo News, 15 Taliban Killed In Attack On Badghis District, 28 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(239)</sup> Tolo News, Air Force Conducts 51 Flights As Offensives Continue, 9 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(240)</sup> AP, Islamic State attacks Afghan intelligence compound in Kabul, 18 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)); Rasad News Agency, بادغیس ټرور دو مامور پولیس توسط افراد مسلح ناشناس در, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, District Police Chief Killed in Badghis, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban Deputy Shadow Governor Killed in Helmand, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Casualties as police, Taliban clash in Badghis, 27 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(241)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban overrun Faryab’s Ghormach district, 13 August 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 killed as conflict in Faryab intensifies, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Besieged soldiers in Ghormach forced to eat stale food, 16 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(242)</sup> LWJ, Taliban overruns district in Afghan northwest, 14 August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(243)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(244)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 18.

civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places Ghormach and Qadis districts in the highest category, and the districts Bala Murghab, Muqur, Ab Kamari and provincial capital Qala-i Naw in the category below. The remaining district, Jawand, is in the middle category <sup>(245)</sup>. In an assessment of November 2017, WFP assessed Bala Murghab and Jawand as ‘highly insecure’ and four other districts as ‘volatile’ <sup>(246)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 112 incidents related to insurgents in Badghis province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(247)</sup>.

In September 2017, insurgents fired rocket-propelled grenades at a clinic under construction. The clinic was destroyed and there were three civilians casualties in a nearby private house <sup>(248)</sup>. During an attack on a check post on the Herat-Qala-i Naw highway, in the district of Qala-i Naw, insurgents killed six policemen and abducted two more in September 2017 <sup>(249)</sup>. Further attacks on ANSF positions occurred in Muqur and Bala Murghab in November 2017 and Ab Kamari in December 2017, resulting in several casualties among ANSF personnel <sup>(250)</sup>. In February 2018, 15 members of the ANSF reportedly escaped a Taliban prison in Muqur. The men had been captured at different times over the previous year <sup>(251)</sup>. In March 2018, the Taliban reportedly kidnapped five bus passengers in Qala-i Naw. The kidnapped individuals were said to be businessmen and the reason for the kidnapping was considered by local residents to be ransom <sup>(252)</sup>.

Insurgents attacked the district of Abkamari in October 2017, triggering the displacement of hundreds of families and thousands of persons, and the creation of a ‘popular uprising force’ <sup>(253)</sup>.

During a failed suicide attack on an army base in a main bazaar in Qala-i Naw in February 2018, an insurgent threw a hand grenade at the security personnel, wounding three <sup>(254)</sup>.

ANSF efforts to retake the district of Ghormach from the Taliban took place in September 2017 to January 2018, resulted in civilian casualties <sup>(255)</sup>. More fighting in Ghormach took place in January 2018 <sup>(256)</sup>. Meanwhile, the Ghormach district Chief of Police was exposed as engaging in the practice of *bacha bazi* <sup>(257)</sup>.

<sup>(245)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(246)</sup> WFP, Badghis Emergency Assessment Report, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 11.

<sup>(247)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(248)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 14-15; Pajhwok Afghan News, One Badghis woman killed, 2 wounded in Taliban attack, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(249)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 policemen killed in Taliban attack on checkpoint, 16 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(250)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Casualties as police, Taliban clash in Badghis, 27 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, District police chief killed along with guard in Badghis attack, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(251)</sup> Afghan Voice Agency, 15 Security Force Members Escape From Taliban Custody in Badghis, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(252)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kidnap 5 passengers in Badghis, 30 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(253)</sup> UNOCHA, Ad hoc Operational Coordination Team Meeting Minutes, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(254)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Suicide bomber shot dead before reaching target, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(255)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 insurgents killed in Faryab in 24 hours, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens of militants eliminated in Faryab offensive, 7 October 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Afghan, US Special Forces To Target Insurgents In North, 8 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 killed as conflict in Faryab intensifies, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban loses two commanders during clashes in Faryab province, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(256)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban loses two commanders during clashes in Faryab province, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(257)</sup> Salam Watander, Ghormach police commander: I was excited and kissed the boy, 29 November 2017 ([url](#)).

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

In September 2017, UNOCHA reported that access to Ghormach was impeded due to security conditions <sup>(258)</sup>. In September 2017, Taliban forced the closure of 25 health facilities in the districts of Ab Kamari, Bala Murghab, Jawand, Qadis and Muqur, according to UNOCHA, affecting 175 000 people. Only after several days and mediation by community elders could the clinics reopen <sup>(259)</sup>. In November, humanitarian actors raised concerns about access to humanitarian help to Bala Murghab due to unspecified incidents. They pleaded for the safe passage of humanitarian convoys <sup>(260)</sup>. In December 2017, UNOCHA had documented 21 incidents involving health facilities or workers in the province in 2017, the second-highest number after Nangarhar <sup>(261)</sup>. UNAMA also documented the closure of 34 clinics in Badghis in 2017, the majority of which lasted for two weeks <sup>(262)</sup>. Towards the end of December 2017/beginning of January 2018, another eight health facilities in Ab Kamari, Qadis and Bala Murghab were closed for up to one week, depriving around 100 000 people from access to healthcare. They reopened after negotiations by community elders <sup>(263)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Badghis was, with 24 723 hectares, the third main poppy cultivating province of Afghanistan, after Helmand and Kandahar <sup>(264)</sup>. Further, the Taliban are said to tax the revenues of widespread pistachio cultivation in the province <sup>(265)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 36 052 IDPs from Badghis (644 from Ab Kamari; 1 793 from Bala Murghab; 14 581 from Ghormach; 2 967 from Jawand; 2 459 from Muqur; 7 214 from Qadis; 2 394 from Qala-i Naw) <sup>(266)</sup>.

In 2017, Badghis witnessed the third largest displacement countrywide, with 26,659 conflict-induced IDPs <sup>(267)</sup>. In September 2017, UNOCHA reported that Badghis was among the three provinces reporting the highest number of displaced persons, after Kunduz and Nangarhar <sup>(268)</sup>. The reasons for displacement in Badghis are reported by WFP as violence, conflicts and illegal taxation by insurgents <sup>(269)</sup>.

Based on UNOCHA numbers, SIGAR concluded that as of December 2017, over 6 % of the population of Badghis was displaced due to conflict. This was nationwide the third highest percentage, after Nangarhar and Uruzgan <sup>(270)</sup>.

<sup>(258)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 4 to 10 September 2017, 10 September 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(259)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 68, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 2; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week 25, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 2

<sup>(260)</sup> UNOCHA, Minutes of Ad hoc Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting – Western Region, 14 November 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(261)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 71, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(262)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 15

<sup>(263)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week 25, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 2; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 1 to 7 January 2018, 7 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1; DID Press Agency, Taliban Close 8 Health center in Badghis, 28 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(264)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 5, 13, 32.

<sup>(265)</sup> IWPS, Insurgents profit from Badghis pistachio, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(266)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(267)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 1 to 7 January 2018, 7 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(268)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 68, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(269)</sup> WFP, Badghis Emergency Assessment Report, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 11.

<sup>(270)</sup> SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 149-151,

Displacement of thousands of persons from Ghormach district, often referred to as a district of the neighbouring Faryab province, took place in September 2017 <sup>(271)</sup>.

Displacement took place from the districts of Ab Kamari, Muqur, Qadis, Jawand, Bala Murghab and Qala-i Naw districts to Qala-i Naw city in October 2017 <sup>(272)</sup>. For example, 200 families had to flee fighting between Taliban and a popular uprising force in October 2017 in Ab Kamari. During the attack, the Taliban was said to loot and burn the houses of those who fled the area, for presumed support for the government <sup>(273)</sup>.

## 2.4 Baghlan

### 2.4.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Baghlan

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban fully control 14 districts nationwide, of which one in Baghlan: Dahan-e Ghori. Further, they have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Burka, ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Baghlan-e Jadid and Doshi, and ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) in Pul-e Khumri, Nahrin, Khwajahejran, Khost Wa Fereng, Khenjan and Tala Wa Barfak <sup>(274)</sup>. According to an article by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, ‘Dand-e-Shahabuddin, Burka and Baghlan-e Markazi districts all have a significant Taleban presence’ and ‘Dahana-e Ghori has been fully under Taleban control for the past two years’ <sup>(275)</sup>.

Dand-e Ghori and Dand-e Shahabuddin are some of the Pashtu enclaves in the province and Taliban strongholds since 2010. Because of its strategic location along the highway connecting Kabul to the north of Afghanistan, these areas not far from the provincial capital have been heavily contested for several years already <sup>(276)</sup>.

In October 2017, Focus, an NGO active in the area, mentioned ‘noticeable movements’ of insurgent members in Tala Wa Barfak district <sup>(277)</sup>. This was followed by ANSF operations in dispersing Taliban insurgents into the villages <sup>(278)</sup>.

According to a high-ranking government official, IS presence was still weak in the north of Afghanistan in May 2017, and he had no information on any IS presence in Baghlan province <sup>(279)</sup>. There were however reports in sources consulted by ACLED on acts of violence committed by IS against the civilian population in the south of Baghlan province in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(280)</sup>.

<sup>(271)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 4 to 10 September 2017, 10 September 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 11 to 17 September 2017, 17 September 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1;

<sup>(272)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week 19, 24 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(273)</sup> Tolo News, 200 Badghis Families Displaced After Taliban Seize Villages, 7 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(274)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(275)</sup> IWPR, Overnight Ban on Telecoms in Afghan Provinces, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(276)</sup> Ali, O., Taleban in the North: Gaining ground along the Ring Road in Baghlan, 15 August 2016, ([url](#)); HRW, “Education on the Front Lines” Military Use of Schools in Afghanistan’s Baghlan Province, 17 August 2016 ([url](#)), pp. 9-14.

<sup>(277)</sup> UNOCHA, Meeting Minutes Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(278)</sup> UNOCHA, Baghlan Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting Minutes, 29 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(279)</sup> Diplomat (The), What’s Behind the Taliban’s Major Gains in Northern Afghanistan?, 18 May 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(280)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Baghlan**

Military operations are being conducted in Baghlan<sup>(281)</sup>. In the course of these military operations, insurgents<sup>(282)</sup>, and in some cases also their leaders, are killed<sup>(283)</sup>.

For example, military operations and clashes in Tala Wa Barfak were reported in February 2018, following a failed attempt to kidnap engineers overseeing reconstruction projects<sup>(284)</sup>.

The area of Dand-e Shahabuddin in Pul-e Khumri district saw the launch of a military operation called Alborz 22 in January 2018<sup>(285)</sup>. The operation lasted until 13 February 2018 and included air strikes<sup>(286)</sup>. The operation later reportedly went on in the Dand-e Ghori and Dahan-e Ghori areas<sup>(287)</sup>.

### **2.4.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

In 2017, UNAMA documented 222 civilian victims (66 deaths and 156 injured), a decline of 38 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, unexploded ordnance or landmines and targeted and deliberate killings<sup>(288)</sup>. Ground engagements caused 131 civilian casualties (33 deaths and 98 injured), also a decrease of 38 % compared to 2016<sup>(289)</sup>.

UNAMA highlights that there is a link between the number of victims from explosive remnants of war and the use of indirect weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades. Baghlan is among provinces with a high number of incidents of detonation of explosive remnants of war causing civilian casualties, and also among the provinces with the highest use of indirect weapons<sup>(290)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the districts of Pul-e Khumri and Baghlan-e Jadid (Baghlan-e Markazi) in the highest category, and Dushi and Khenjan in the category below<sup>(291)</sup>.

<sup>(281)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 9 militants in northern province, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Taliban commander among 8 killed in N. Afghan province, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)); Afghanistan Times, Four Taliban killed in Baghlan, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Taliban killed, 3 wounded in Baghlan clash, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(282)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 9 militants in northern province, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 9 militants in northern Baghlan province, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(283)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Taliban commander among 8 killed in N. Afghan province, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(284)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Taliban killed, 3 wounded in Baghlan clash, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)); Bakhtar News, Joined Military Operation Begin In Balkh, Baghlan Provinces, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 9 militants in northern Baghlan province, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(285)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 26 militants killed, 29 wounded, claims Ministry of Defence, 26 January 2018 ([url](#)); Frontier Post, (The), Afghan forces starts operation against militants in Baghlan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)); Bayanshamal, Clarification of 2 villages from Taliban in Baghlan, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Five Taliban Insurgents Killed in Ongoing Baghlan Operation, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(286)</sup> Bayanshamal, End of Alborz-22 operation in Baghlan, 13 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Dand-i-Shahabuddin residents seek compensation for destroyed homes, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(287)</sup> Bayanshamal, Baghlan Provincial Council demands extension of operations, 1 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(288)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(289)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(290)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(291)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)).

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 95 incidents related to insurgents in Baghlan province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(292)</sup>.

In November 2017, humanitarian actors in the province declared the security situation to be ‘critical within Tala Wa Barfak district, Burka district and Pul-e Khumri’ <sup>(293)</sup>.

Air strikes during military operations in the area of Dand-e Shahabudin in Pul-e Khumri district destroyed a number of residential houses, sparking protest by local inhabitants <sup>(294)</sup>.

In March 2018, five ALP officials from Dahan-e Ghorri were killed and three others wounded in an attack on their post in Dand-e Ghorri <sup>(295)</sup>.

Attacks against police check posts and clashes between ANSF and Taliban have further occurred in the outskirts of the provincial capital in November, December 2017 and January 2018 <sup>(296)</sup>. In the Chasm-e Shar area along the highway to Balkh, the Taliban operate mobile checkpoints, according to AAN Analyst Obaid Ali <sup>(297)</sup>. The Taliban are said to control the road between Baghlan and Kunduz <sup>(298)</sup>. In January 2018, attacks against police posts have also been reported in Burkah district <sup>(299)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

In Pul-e Khumri, the director of a local TV station escaped a targeted attack in October 2017. His bodyguard was killed <sup>(300)</sup>. In March 2018, the Institute for War and Peace reported that all mobile phone providers were forced by the Taliban to switch off their services between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Residents also feared violence when apprehended by the Taliban with certain SIM cards in their mobile phones <sup>(301)</sup>.

The destruction of a power pylon in Baghlan caused a ‘major power outage’ in Kabul in March 2018. The Taliban claimed to target electricity supply to Kabul to put pressure on the Afghan government to speed up welfare projects in Kunduz and Baghlan. A similar incident took place in 2017 <sup>(302)</sup>.

According to protestors demanding the resignation of the district chief of police, murder, theft and land grabbing and other crimes are on the rise in the district of Nahrin <sup>(303)</sup>. Over 14 000 acres of land have been usurped by powerful individuals in the province, according to local Land Authority <sup>(304)</sup>. A local official was accused of land grabbing <sup>(305)</sup>. Armed men linked to

<sup>(292)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(293)</sup> UNOCHA, Baghlan Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting Minutes, 5 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(294)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Dand-i-Shahabuddin residents seek compensation for destroyed homes, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(295)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 ALP men killed, 3 wounded in Baghlan attack, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(296)</sup> Tolo News, Four Taliban Killed After Attacking Baghlan Check Post, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Taliban attack kills 2 police in Afghan northern Baghlan province, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)); Afghan OSINT, [Twitter], 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(297)</sup> Ali, O., [Twitter], 14 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(298)</sup> DND, Roads leading to Takhar Province are under control of Taliban in Afghanistan, 10 March 2019 ([url](#)).

<sup>(299)</sup> Bayanshamal, 9 Armed government opponents killed and wounded in Baghlan, 8 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(300)</sup> RSF, Shooting attack on TV station director in Baghlan, 13 October 2017 ([url](#)); NAI, Perpetrators Trying to Kill Private TV station “Tanvir” Director Manager Should be prosecuted, 12 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(301)</sup> IWPR, Overnight Ban on Telecoms in Afghan Provinces, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(302)</sup> Tolo News, Major Power Outage Hits Kabul After Pylon Destroyed, 20 March 2018 ([url](#)); Ariana News, Power supply to Kabul ‘temporarily’ repaired, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)); National (The), Taliban blow up Afghan power lines over funding dispute, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Power restored to Kabul after Taliban sabotage act, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(303)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Protestors seek removal of Nahrin district police chief, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(304)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Above 14,000 acres of land usurped in Baghlan, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(305)</sup> Salam Watandar, Secretary of Baghlan PC charged with land-grabbing, 24 December 2017 ([url](#)).

the Hezb-e Islami are also reported to loot and extort local businesses, some accusing them of murder, robbery, kidnapping and harassment in an atmosphere of impunity <sup>(306)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) noted in November 2017 a 25 % increase in poppy cultivation in Baghlan to 1 057 hectares in 2017. The main opium-poppy-cultivating districts were Deh Salah, Pul-e Hisar, Andrab and Khwajah Hijran (Jalgah), according to UNODC <sup>(307)</sup>.

In Baghlan, coal mines are reported to be the second-most important source of income of the Taliban after drug production <sup>(308)</sup>, ever since a number of mines in the province had passed under insurgent control in 2017 <sup>(309)</sup>. There were reports of incidents where the Taliban set up checkpoints to collect money from coal-transporting vehicles <sup>(310)</sup>.

One of the reasons cited by the governor of the province for the worsening security situation is corruption <sup>(311)</sup>. In December 2017, pro-Taliban demonstrations took place in Dahna-i Ghori <sup>(312)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 28 763 persons displaced from Baghlan (7 from Andarab; 10 186 from Baghlan-e Jadid; 2 800 from Burka; 1 242 from Dahana-i Ghori; 35 from Dehsalah; 926 from Doshi; 21 from Nahrin; 12 719 from Pul-e Khumri; 827 from Tala Wa Barfak) <sup>(313)</sup>.

In September 2017, UNOCHA reported that heavy fighting in Pul-e Khumri district resulted in 700 people being displaced to Pul-e Khumri City <sup>(314)</sup>. In the following two weeks, around a thousand people were displaced per week from the Surkh Kotal area in Pul-e Khumri to Pul-e Khumri city <sup>(315)</sup>. By the end of October 2017, over 3 000 people were displaced in Pul-e Khumri and Burka districts <sup>(316)</sup>. In October 2017, insurgent movements and ANSF operations in Tala-wa-Barfak district triggered displacement of hundreds of families from the district to Pul-e Khumri city <sup>(317)</sup>.

In November 2017, 500 conflict-related IDPs from Baghlan arrived in Panjshir and 500 more arrived in Kabul <sup>(318)</sup>. In January 2018, displacement took place from Baghlan to Kapisa <sup>(319)</sup>

<sup>(306)</sup> Salam Watandar, HI men blamed for extortion in Baghlan, 4 January 2018 ([url](#)); DID Press, Hezb-e Islami Commander Behind Murder and Robbing Cases: Baghlan Residents, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(307)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 23-24.

<sup>(308)</sup> Diplomat (The), Why the Americans Shouldn't Dig for Coal in Afghanistan, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(309)</sup> IWA, Besides corruption, influence of local powerbrokers challenge improving mining in Baghlan, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)); Diplomat (The), Why the Americans Shouldn't Dig for Coal in Afghanistan, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(310)</sup> Khaama Press, 9 Taliban insurgents killed in Baghlan operations, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(311)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Baghlan governor vows to tighten noose around corrupt, 28 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(312)</sup> Ahmad Yar (@Pashtunist), [Twitter], 20 December 2017 ([url](#)); Salahudin, [Twitter], 20 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(313)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(314)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 18 to 24 September 2017, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(315)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 25 September to 1 October 2017, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 2 - 8 October 2017, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(316)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 30 October – 5 November 2017, 5 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(317)</sup> UNOCHA, Meeting Minutes Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Baghlan Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting Minutes, 29 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(318)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 6 - 12 November 2017, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 27 November – 3 December 2017, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(319)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 1 to 7 January 2018, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.



and due to military operations in the province, a total of nearly 10 000 people were displaced to and within the provincial capital Pul-e Khumri<sup>(320)</sup>. A number of families were even displaced to Nangarhar<sup>(321)</sup>.

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, 183 536 individuals or 17 % of the population of Baghlan is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. Over 100 000 people, or 12 % of the population, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Baghlan had also the second-highest amount of individuals fleeing abroad, 93 910 or 12 % of its population<sup>(322)</sup>.

## 2.5 Balkh

In December 2017, President Ghani announced the dismissal of Provincial Governor Mohammad Atta Noor, a political opponent of the National Unity Government (NUG) with a strong local powerbase<sup>(323)</sup>. Mr Noor, who held this position for the previous 14 years, has refused to step down, causing both a rift within the country and in his own political party, Jamiaat-e Islami<sup>(324)</sup>. In March 2018, this issue was solved with the resignation of Atta Noor as part of an agreement between the NUG and Jamiaat-e Islami party<sup>(325)</sup>. The President appointed MP Mohammad Ishaq Rahgozar to succeed him as Province Governor<sup>(326)</sup>.

### 2.5.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Balkh

In September 2017, Pajhwok Afghan News reported the return of Taliban insurgents to Chimal, after a military clearing operation<sup>(327)</sup>. According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a 'medium' 'active and physical presence' (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Chahar Bolak and Chimal, and 'low' presence and activity (district attacked at least once in three months) in Dawlatabad and Sholgareh districts<sup>(328)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents were recorded in sources consulted by ACLED in the province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 along the border with Sar-e Pul<sup>(329)</sup>. ANSF claimed to have killed 17 ISKP affiliates in Chahar Bolak district in January 2018<sup>(330)</sup>.

<sup>(320)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 15 to 21 January 2018, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1;

UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 22 to 28 January 2018, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(321)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, In Nangarhar, more than 15,000 families displaced this year, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(322)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(323)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghan Governor's Dismissal Highlights Rift In Party, Risks To Unity Government, 19 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(324)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghan Governor's Dismissal Highlights Rift In Party, Risks To Unity Government, 19 December 2017 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Second Afghan Governor Defies Kabul Order to Resign, Adding to U.S. Headache, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)); Bjelica, J. and Adili, A. Y., The E-Tazkera Rift: Yet another political crisis looming?, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(325)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Ishaq Rahgozar to replace Noor as Balkh governor soon, 13 March 2018 ([url](#)); Salam Watandar, Ishaq Rahgozar appointed as new governor of Balkh, 22 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(326)</sup> RFE/RL, Powerful Afghan Governor Resigns, Ending Standoff With Ghani, 23 March 2018 ([url](#)); Reuters, Powerful Afghan governor defying President Ghani agrees to go, 22 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(327)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Militants back in recently cleared Chamtal areas, 7 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(328)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(329)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(330)</sup> Bakhtar News, 17 ISIS Affiliates Killed In Balkh, 17 January 2018 ([url](#)).

### **(Pro-)government forces and military operations in Balkh**

The Afghan defence and security forces have conducted military operations <sup>(331)</sup>. There are also clashes between insurgents and security forces <sup>(332)</sup>.

For example, in September 2017, ACLED quoted Xinhua, stating that the military had executed military operations, including air power, killing several Taliban <sup>(333)</sup>. In December 2017, ANSF claimed to have arrested 19 Taliban in Chintal <sup>(334)</sup>.

The province also houses Camp Marmal, a camp managed by the German Federal Army (TAAC-North: Train, Advise, Assist Command – North) <sup>(335)</sup>, as well as Camp Shaheen <sup>(336)</sup>.

## **2.5.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

### **General**

With 129 civilian casualties (52 deaths and 77 injured) documented by UNAMA, Balkh province saw a 68 % decrease in civilian casualties in 2017 compared to 2016. Non-suicide IED explosions were the leading cause of civilian casualties in Balkh province in 2017 followed by ground engagements, and unexploded ordnances and landmines <sup>(337)</sup>. For example, in one incident in Dawlatabad in December 2017, six children were killed when playing with a landmine <sup>(338)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 85 incidents related to insurgents in Balkh province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(339)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places Chintal district as the most affected in the province, in the second-highest category, and the district of Balkh and Dawlatabad in the medium category below <sup>(340)</sup>. An IED targeting a military vehicle killed two soldiers, and wounded three others in Chintal in September 2017, according to a report by BBC Monitoring, quoted by ACLED <sup>(341)</sup>. Several more attacks on a check post in Chintal were reported by BBC Monitoring as quoted by ACLED, in October and November 2017, each time killing several ANSF members <sup>(342)</sup>.

Six policemen were killed in an ambush in an unnamed location in Balkh in October 2017 <sup>(343)</sup>. A magnetic IED targeted a local ALP commander in Khulm district in November 2017, killing

<sup>(331)</sup> Khaama Press, Clashes in Balkh province leaves over 20 militants dead, wounded, 16 January 2018, ([url](#)).

<sup>(332)</sup> Tolo News, Taliban Local Commander Killed In Balkh Clash, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(333)</sup> ACLED, Data, Last updated: 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(334)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Helmand: 3 Taliban-linked heroin-making labs bombed, 21 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(335)</sup> NATO, Resolute Support Mission, Resolute Support deputy commander condemns Taliban attack, 11 November 2016 ([url](#)); Reuters, Germany could send more soldiers to Afghanistan - defence minister, 19 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(336)</sup> BBC News, Afghan soldier attacks US troops at Camp Sheheen, 17 June 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, New Balkh Governor Vows To Fight Corruption, Ensure Security, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(337)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(338)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 Balkh children killed by the bomb they were playing with, 28 December 2017 ([url](#)); Bakhtar News, Six Children Lost Their Lives Following Mine Blast, 29 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(339)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(340)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(341)</sup> ACLED, Data, Last updated: 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(342)</sup> ACLED, Data, Last updated: 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(343)</sup> Chicago Tribune (The), Taliban storm army base with suicide car bombs, killing 43 Afghan soldiers, 19 October 2017 ([url](#)).

the driver and wounding 14 others, including a teacher and his students <sup>(344)</sup>. In January 2018, 18 people, including members of ALP and a local uprising force and civilians, were killed at a check post in Sholgara district <sup>(345)</sup>.

### Security situation in Mazar-e Sharif

Insurgents were able to conduct several attacks in Mazar-e Sharif: in October, gunmen on a motorcycle killed the Governor’s Spokesman in a targeted attack in Mazar-e Sharif <sup>(346)</sup>. In November 2017, a suicide bomber targeted a well-known person and tribal elder in Mazar-e Sarif, killing the man and wounding two other <sup>(347)</sup>. Later that month another man was killed in an explosion in his car in Mazar-e Sharif <sup>(348)</sup> and in December 2017, nine civilians and two policemen were injured when a roadside bomb hit a police car <sup>(349)</sup>. One civilian was killed and two more injured when a magnetic bomb hit their vehicle in the provincial capital <sup>(350)</sup>.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

Several sources report on increased criminality in Mazar-e Sharif, noting a rise in kidnappings, robberies and impunity for ‘illegal armed groups’ <sup>(351)</sup>. According to local residents and officials quoted in Pajhwok Afghan News, the number of armed men is on the rise in Mazar-e Sharif. These armed men, often linked to local powerful figures, are accused of the rise in criminality inside the city <sup>(352)</sup>. Clashes over land disputed between armed gunmen linked to politicians and influential people have occurred in October <sup>(353)</sup>. In December 2017, three people were killed in an armed clash between rival political groups in a dispute over a development project <sup>(354)</sup>. In January 2018, another shooting between armed men linked to two members of parliament who have a land dispute, ended in at least two wounded persons in Mazar-e Sharif <sup>(355)</sup>. In December 2017, five prisoners were able to escape from prison after a gun battle with their guards <sup>(356)</sup>. In January 2018, three girls were killed in crime <sup>(357)</sup> and in February 2018, a businessman transferring a large amount of money was killed and the son of another businessman was abducted <sup>(358)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Balkh, poppy-free until 2015, was one of the country’s major poppy cultivating provinces. In 2017, opium poppy

<sup>(344)</sup> 1TV News, One killed, 14 wounded in Balkh bombing, 1 November 2017 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, At Least Eight Killed In Fuel Tanker Blast In Central Afghanistan, 1 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(345)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 people mysteriously killed in Balkh checkpoint, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(346)</sup> Khaama Press, Gunmen attack the spokesman of Balkh governor in Mazar-e-Sharif city, 11 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(347)</sup> Ariana News, Suicide Attack Kills a Businessman in Mazar-e-Sharif City, 9 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, One Dead In Explosion In Mazar-e-Sharif City, 9 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(348)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Man killed as blast rips through car in Mazar-i-Sharif, 22 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(349)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Police among 11 injured in Mazar-i-Sharif roadside bombing, 30 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(350)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 person killed, 2 injured in Balkh blast, 17 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(351)</sup> Security Analyst, EASO meeting in Malta, 23 November 2017; Ariana News, Businessman Son Abducted in Balkh Province, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Three Women Shot Dead In Balkh, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Mazar-i-Sharif garrison failing to bar illegal gunmen: Residents, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(352)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal gunmen seen behind insecurity in Mazar-i-Sharif, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(353)</sup> Heart Of Asia, Balkh-based jihadi commanders clash over land, 30 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(354)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 killed as rival groups clash over township in Balkh, 29 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(355)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 injured as gunmen loyal to MPs clash in Balkh, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(356)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Prisoners flee Balkh jail after gunbattle with security guards, 27 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(357)</sup> Tolo News, Three Women Shot Dead In Balkh, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 girls found dead in Mazar-i-Sharif yet to be identified, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(358)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 people held after businessman murder in Balkh, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)); Ariana News, Businessman Son Abducted in Balkh Province, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)).

cultivation in Balkh province was estimated at 12 116 hectares, almost sixfold from 2016. Poppy cultivation occurred primarily in Chintal, Chahar Bolak and Balkh districts <sup>(359)</sup>.

According to UNAMA, abuses by pro-government armed groups took place in Balkh in 2017 <sup>(360)</sup>. Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) officials in the northern region were quoted by Pajhwok stating they had registered 500 armed groups, of which only 150 had been disarmed <sup>(361)</sup>. BBC Monitoring, quoted by ACLED, reported that residents of Chintal complained about looting by public uprising forces, under the guise of anti-terror operations <sup>(362)</sup>.

In September 2017, a staff member of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was shot and killed in Mazar-e Sharif. ICRC subsequently announced a reduction in its presence in the northern region of Afghanistan <sup>(363)</sup>. ICRC's orthopaedic centre in Mazar-e-Sharif, where the shooting happened, was closed for over a month <sup>(364)</sup>. UNOCHA reported that 'the reduction of activities and footprint of the ICRC will mainly leave a gap in the emergency assistance provided to communities in rural areas, including the local and displaced population. In 2016, more than 150 000 displaced people received assistance from ICRC working together with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) which often has access to communities in need as the only humanitarian partner' <sup>(365)</sup>. Humanitarian organisations reported difficulties accessing contested areas in the region, after the withdrawal of the ICRC and due to the complicated and deteriorating security situation <sup>(366)</sup>. According to IOM, several villages in the district of Chintal are controlled by the Taliban and remain outside government and humanitarian reach, due to regular skirmishes and abductions <sup>(367)</sup>. The presence of insurgents affected the provision of health care: in Chahar Bolak, Dawlatabad and parts of Chintal district, insurgents did not allow humanitarian health teams to conduct a polio immunisation campaign <sup>(368)</sup>.

## Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 2 072 persons displaced from Balkh (378 from Chahar Bolak; 1 624 from Chintal; 7 from Dawlatabad; 63 from Keshنده) <sup>(369)</sup>.

In October 2017, UNOCHA reported that so far, more than 5 800 individuals were displaced to Mazar-e Sharif <sup>(370)</sup>. In November 2017, the Provincial Head of Refugees and Repatriation Department was quoted saying Balkh hosted 2 500 families, since the start of the year, from neighbouring provinces Faryab, Sar-e Pul, Jawzjan and Kunduz <sup>(371)</sup>.

<sup>(359)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 5, 23.

<sup>(360)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 52.

<sup>(361)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal gunmen seen behind insecurity in Mazar-i-Sharif, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(362)</sup> ACLED, Data, Last updated: 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(363)</sup> ICRC, Afghanistan: ICRC reduces its presence in the country, 9 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(364)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 69, 31 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(365)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 69, 31 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(366)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 12 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(367)</sup> IOM, Baseline Mobility Assessment Summary Results, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, June 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 20-21.

<sup>(368)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 3 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(369)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(370)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 68, 11 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 2.

<sup>(371)</sup> Bakhtar News, Balkh Hosts 2500 Displaced Families, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

Nahr-e Shahi district is home to the Faryabi Ha and Aman Abad settlements consisting of hundreds of IDPs from Faryab<sup>(372)</sup>. Some of these IDPs have no shelter and live in tents<sup>(373)</sup>.

From September 2017 to March 2018, 6 505 IDPs fled to Balkh, primarily from Faryab province<sup>(374)</sup>. According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, 181 507 individuals or 12 % of the population of Balkh is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. 13 548 people, or 1 % of the population, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Almost 80 000 people from Balkh, or 6 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017<sup>(375)</sup>.

## 2.6 Bamyan/Bamian

### 2.6.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Bamyan

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a 'low' 'active and physical presence' (district attacked at least once in three months) in Sayghan and Shibar districts<sup>(376)</sup>. As the province is largely ethnically Hazara, the inhabitants are believed not to condone insurgent activities<sup>(377)</sup>. Another reason given by UNAMA is the pro-active involvement of religious scholars in peace processes at both local and central government level<sup>(378)</sup>.

The Shibar District Governor blamed a formerly detained Taliban commander who recruits in Baghlan's Dand-e Ghorī and Tala Wa Barfak districts for the rise of insecurity in his district<sup>(379)</sup>.

No ISKP-related incidents were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in Bamyan in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018<sup>(380)</sup>.

#### (Pro-)government forces and military operations in Bamyan

Some examples of clashes between ANSF and insurgents were found, or attacks conducted against ANSF checkpoints in the province<sup>(381)</sup>.

### 2.6.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

In 2017, UNAMA documented 4 civilian victims (4 injured), a decline of 60 % compared to 2016. The primary cause of civilian casualties in Bamyan consists of threats, intimidation and

<sup>(372)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 3 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(373)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Faryab Insecurity, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(374)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail 24 April 2018.

<sup>(375)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(376)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(377)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2017 casualties: nearly 25,000 people killed, wounded in Afghanistan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(378)</sup> UNAMA, Bamyan religious scholars gather to discuss peace-building in Afghanistan, 20 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(379)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah, Bamyan incidents leave 32 militants dead, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Freed Taliban governor fuelling insecurity in Bamyan, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(380)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(381)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan casualties down 40 percent in September, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah, Bamyan incidents leave 32 militants dead, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Freed Taliban governor fuelling insecurity in Bamyan, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)); ACLED, Data, Last updated: 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

harassment, followed by unexploded ordnances and landmines, and ground engagements <sup>(382)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 10 incidents related to insurgents in Bamyan province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(383)</sup>.

Pajhwok claimed they had received no reports of an attack in Bamyan for more than one year, before six people were killed in a clash between ANSF and Taliban in September 2017 <sup>(384)</sup>. ACLED quoted BBC Monitoring who stated that around 80-100 Taliban attacked a police post in Shibar district in a clash that lasted 12 hours and left five Taliban and one policeman killed <sup>(385)</sup>. In September and October 2017, Pajhwok reported a number of attacks on ANSF posts in Shibar district, in which two policemen were killed and two injured <sup>(386)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Bamyan was poppy-free in 2017 <sup>(387)</sup>.

### **Displacement**

No conflict-induced displacement was documented by UNOCHA in the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018 <sup>(388)</sup>.

## **2.7 Daykundi / Daikundi / Day Kundi**

### **2.7.1 Actors in the conflict**

#### **Insurgent groups in Daykundi**

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban only have a 'low' 'active and physical presence' (district attacked at least once in three months) in Gizab district <sup>(389)</sup>. As the province is largely ethnically, Hazara, the inhabitants are believed not to condone insurgent activities <sup>(390)</sup>. The district of Gizab however is mixed Pashtun-Hazara <sup>(391)</sup>.

No ISKP-related incidents were reported in open sources consulted by ACLED in Daykundi in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(392)</sup>.

<sup>(382)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(383)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(384)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan casualties down 40 percent in September, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(385)</sup> ACLED, Data, Last updated: 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(386)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah, Bamyan incidents leave 32 militants dead, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Freed Taliban governor fuelling insecurity in Bamyan, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(387)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(388)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(389)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(390)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2017 casualties: nearly 25,000 people killed, wounded in Afghanistan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(391)</sup> van Bijlert, M., Trouble in Gizab; the fight everyone chose to ignore, 31 October 2011 ([url](#)).

<sup>(392)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

## **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Daykundi**

In March 2017, 31 insurgents were killed by the ANSF in Daykundi <sup>(393)</sup>. Late in December 2017, one source described Daykundi as a calm province <sup>(394)</sup>.

### **2.7.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

According to UNAMA there were 43 civilian casualties in Daykundi in 2017: 16 persons were killed and 27 injured due mainly to unexploded ordnances and landmines, followed by ground engagements and targeted and deliberate killings. This marks a 59 % decrease as compared to 2016 <sup>(395)</sup>. Pajhwok Afghan News stated they had not received any report of casualties in Daykundi in 2017 <sup>(396)</sup>. It must be added that Pajhwok places Gizab district in Uruzgan <sup>(397)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places Gizab district as the most affected in the province, in the second-highest category <sup>(398)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 2 incidents related to insurgents in Daykundi province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(399)</sup>.

ACLED quoted Pajhwok Afghan News reporting on the killing of two civilians by suspected Taliban, and injuring a third in Gizab district, in October 2017 <sup>(400)</sup>. In November 2017, the Taliban was said to have tried to overrun the Gizab district <sup>(401)</sup>.

In a Taliban attack on military checkpoints in Kajran District in January 2018, one Afghan soldier was killed and another wounded, according to BBC Monitoring, as quoted by ACLED <sup>(402)</sup>.

#### **Impact of the conflict on law and order**

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that in Daykundi, Gizab district excluded, poppy cultivation increased by more than 300 % compared to 2016 <sup>(403)</sup>.

#### **Displacement**

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 567 displaced persons from Daykundi (529 from Gizab/Patoo; 31 from Kajran; 7 from Miramor) <sup>(404)</sup>.

<sup>(393)</sup> Global Incident Map, A global display of terrorism and other suspicious events, n.d. ([url](#)).

<sup>(394)</sup> Los Angeles Times, There are the Afghanistan’s best troops. The U.S. is backing a plan to create many more of them, 10 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(395)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(396)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2017 casualties: nearly 25,000 people killed, wounded in Afghanistan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(397)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids to overrun Uruzgan capital, towns repulsed, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(398)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(399)</sup> [url](#). See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(400)</sup> ACLED, Data, Last updated: 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(401)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids to overrun Uruzgan capital, towns repulsed, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(402)</sup> ACLED, Data, Last updated: 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(403)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 27.

<sup>(404)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

In September, there were reports of growing numbers of Afghan internally displaced persons (IDPs) seeking refuge in Daykundi <sup>(405)</sup>. In mid-January 2017, approximately 1 000 people were reportedly displaced from Gizab district due to insecurity and arrived in Nili district <sup>(406)</sup>.

## 2.8 Farah

### 2.8.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Farah

Insurgents are active in several districts, such as Bala Buluk, Bakwa, Pusht Rod and Anar Dara <sup>(407)</sup>. In 2017, the Taliban focused on the province capital, Farah City, even invading the capital in January 2018 <sup>(408)</sup>.

In December 2017, the Herat Shadow-Deputy Governor and the leader of Taliban ‘special forces’ Red Brigade in Khak-e Safed was reportedly killed in an airstrike <sup>(409)</sup>.

Farah was one of the provinces where the Taliban launched large-scale attacks to capture district administrative centres, temporarily overrunning Shib Koh <sup>(410)</sup>. In January 2018, the Taliban started a campaign to take over the entire province <sup>(411)</sup>. According to scholar and expert on Afghanistan Antonio Giustozzi, military success in Farah is an early aim in the Taliban traditional ‘spring offensive’ in 2018 <sup>(412)</sup>. In March 2018, Farah was considered ‘on the verge of collapse’ by local senators <sup>(413)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in almost all districts of the province, with attacks at least twice a week. Only in Farah district, their presence is assessed as ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month), and in Pur Chaman their presence is assessed as ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) <sup>(414)</sup>.

No ISKP-related incidents were reported open sources consulted by ACLED in Farah in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(415)</sup>.

<sup>(405)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, What is the UN doing to resolve conflict in Afghanistan, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(406)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 8 January to 14 January 2018, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(407)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah: Taliban overrun Anar Dara district, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 killed as police, Taliban clash in Farah, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); La Stampa, Afghanistan, 50 soldati italiani spostati a Farah per placare le rivolte, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(408)</sup> LWJ, As security in Farah worsens, Taliban stage deadly attack, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 15 soldiers killed in western Afghan attack, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(409)</sup> Khaama Press, Another commander of the Red Unit of Taliban killed in Farah province, 14 December 2017 ([url](#)), Afghan Ministry of Defense, Release Number 417, 22 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(410)</sup> UN Secretary-General (UNSG), The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(411)</sup> Washington Post, Outgunned in urban centers, Taliban wages fierce fight in remote western Afghanistan, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(412)</sup> Giustozzi, A., Do the Taliban Have any Appetite for Reconciliation with Kabul?, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(413)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Growing insecurity, Senate summons security bosses, 13 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(414)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(415)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).



### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Farah**

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(416)</sup>, sometimes taking the form of air strikes <sup>(417)</sup>, involving the killing of insurgents <sup>(418)</sup>. Taliban commanders were also killed in the course of operations and air strikes <sup>(419)</sup>. Violent clashes occurred between the Taliban and the security forces <sup>(420)</sup>.

For example, in March 2018, hundreds of Taliban attacked the district centre of Anar Dara, and managed to capture it briefly, before being pushed out by an Afghan military air and ground operation resulting in heavy fighting that left dozens of dead on both sides <sup>(421)</sup>.

A multi-day military operation, including air strikes, took place in September 2017 in Bala Buluk <sup>(422)</sup>; and in December 2017 <sup>(423)</sup>. Several air strikes in December 2017 allegedly killed dozens of Taliban <sup>(424)</sup>.

Since mid-July 2017, Italian and US troops have been stationed in Farah province with a view to assisting the Afghan security forces within the framework of the Resolute Support NATO mission <sup>(425)</sup>. In future, the Italian soldiers are expected to provide support to the Afghan forces in the districts of Bala Buluk, Bakwa and Pusht Rod, where the number of attacks on Afghan army and police bases has been on the rise <sup>(426)</sup>.

## **2.8.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

### **General**

In 2017 UNAMA documented 338 civilian victims (156 deaths and 182 injured). This represents an increase of 29 % compared to 2016, contrary to the national trends in 2017.

<sup>(416)</sup> Dawn, 18 Afghan troops killed in Farah fighting, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, At Least 31 Suspected Militants Killed in Afghanistan, Army Says, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 31 Insurgents Killed In Afghanistan Forces Operations, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 10 Taliban, Daesh Insurgents Killed in Afghan Strikes, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 49 militants killed in counter-terrorism operations in 7 provinces: MoI, 29 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, MoD confirms ISIS militants among 34 killed in latest operations, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 43 militants killed in 17 provinces in past 24 hours, MoI claims, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(417)</sup> Tolo News, 31 Insurgents Killed In Afghanistan Forces Operations, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 10 Taliban, Daesh Insurgents Killed in Afghan Strikes, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 43 militants killed in 17 provinces in past 24 hours, MoI claims, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(418)</sup> Tolo News, Afghan Forces Kill 49 Insurgents Across The Country, 29 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(419)</sup> Khaama Press, Another commander of the Red Unit of Taliban killed in Farah province, 14 December 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Taliban senior commander among 3 killed in Afghan western Farah province, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(420)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan army kills 10 insurgents in western province, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 20 ANA Soldiers Killed In Taliban Attack in Farah, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)); Asia News, Farah may fall under the control of the Taliban – foreign Taliban commanders are leading the war, 10 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(421)</sup> Al Jazeera, Afghan forces battle Taliban fighters in Farah province, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, Afghan troops push back Taliban fighters in Farah province, 13 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Forces regain Anar Dara control amid intense battle, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(422)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah: Civilian killed as bomb rips through rickshaw, 5 October 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Commanders among 15 rebels killed in Farah offensive, 19 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens of militants killed in Farah offensive, 26 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(423)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 militants killed, 6 injured in 24 hours: MoD, 15 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 41 militants killed in round-the-clock offensives: MoD, 29 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(424)</sup> Khaama Press, Another commander of the Red Unit of Taliban killed in Farah province, 14 December 2017 ([url](#)), Afghan Ministry of Defense, Release Number 417, 22 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(425)</sup> Repubblica, Afghanistan, nuovo contingente di soldati italiani e americani a Farah, 29 July 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 50 Italian troops in Farah to support Afghan forces, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(426)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 50 Italian troops in Farah to support Afghan forces, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)); La Stampa, Afghanistan, 50 soldati italiani spostati a Farah per placare le rivolte, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

Most of them are victims from ground engagement, targeted or deliberate killings and aerial attacks <sup>(427)</sup>. Farah was one of the provinces where the number of civilian casualties of ground engagements rose ‘most notably’, predominantly due to increased presence of insurgents and the intensification of fighting compared to 2016. Ground engagements caused 157 civilian casualties (53 deaths and 104 injured), a 107 % increase compared to 2016 <sup>(428)</sup>. Aerial operations caused 46 civilian casualties (11 deaths and 35 injured) <sup>(429)</sup>.

According to the Long War Journal, the security situation in Farah province has worsened since the end of 2016 <sup>(430)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the districts of Farah and Bala Buluk in the highest category, and several other districts, such as Khaki Safed, Pusht Rod and Qala Kah, in the category below <sup>(431)</sup>. UNOCHA considered Farah as a province of ‘high protection concern’, defined as: ‘new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host community’, as well as ‘non-displaced conflict affected people’. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict <sup>(432)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 129 incidents related to insurgents in Farah province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(433)</sup>.

Examples of civilian casualties include the following: in a force protection incident, ANSF opened fire on a civilian bus after it did not stop at a police check post, injuring six civilians <sup>(434)</sup>. During an attack on a police check post in Pusht Rod, mortars hit houses in the vicinity, killing a civilian and burning several grocery stores <sup>(435)</sup>; in November 2017, a rocket hit a civilian home, killing three members of one family <sup>(436)</sup>, a mother and two children <sup>(437)</sup>; in December 2017 two women were killed and three others wounded by a mortar that struck their house in Bala Buluk <sup>(438)</sup> and also in December 2017, a six-year-old, a fifteen-year-old and an older man were killed in crossfire in Pusht Rod district, that injured another man <sup>(439)</sup>. More clashes at check posts erupted in January and February 2018 in Bala Buluk, Farah City

<sup>(427)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(428)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 22.

<sup>(429)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 45.

<sup>(430)</sup> LWJ, As security in Farah worsens, Taliban stage deadly attack, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(431)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(432)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 30.

<sup>(433)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(434)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 people injured as police opens fire on passenger bus, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(435)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 dead as Taliban storm Farah police posts, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(436)</sup> UNOCHA, Meeting Minutes Farah Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 15 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(437)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Security personnel, civilians among 31 dead in Farah clashes, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(438)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 women of a family killed, 3 wounded by mortar shell, 23 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(439)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 24.

and Anar Dara <sup>(440)</sup>. In January 2018, the police killed a student at a check post, after a verbal clash. In subsequent violent protests over the incident, at least two more were injured <sup>(441)</sup>.

In September 2017, a multi-day military operation in Bala Buluk, including air strikes, , allegedly caused civilian casualties, killing of livestock and destruction of residences and the displacement of whole communities <sup>(442)</sup>.

In September 2017, in a number of cases, insurgents attacked ANSF positions and check posts along the roads, ending prolonged firefights with dozens casualties on either or both sides in the districts of Bala Buluk, Pusht Rod and Farah city <sup>(443)</sup>; in October, in Pusht Rod, and Bala Buluk <sup>(444)</sup>; in November, in the districts of Bala Buluk and Farah city and the Regi area <sup>(445)</sup>; and in February and March 2018, in Bala Buluk in February 2018 <sup>(446)</sup>.

In 2017, Pajhwok Afghan News counted 100 targeted attacks, roadside bombing and magnetic bomb explosions in Farah <sup>(447)</sup>. The use of IEDs was illustrated in September 2017 with a roadside bomb attack on a vehicle of the border police, near the border with Iran <sup>(448)</sup>; an IED in a rickshaw killed a civilian and a landmine two Taliban in October <sup>(449)</sup>; Again several Taliban were killed in an explosion of their own IED in December in Shib Koh in December 2017 and in Anar Dara in February 2018 <sup>(450)</sup>; also in February, several football players were killed when their vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Anar Dara district and that same month three civilians including a woman were killed in a similar incident in Shib Koh district <sup>(451)</sup>.

Examples of targeted killings include NDS officials in September and November <sup>(452)</sup> - a former NDS officer and a policeman in November 2017 – in both attacks civilians in the vicinity were also killed <sup>(453)</sup>; civilians were also killed in the firefight that erupted after a roadside bomb

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<sup>(440)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 police killed, 6 wounded in Farah attack, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 killed as police, Taliban clash in Farah, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah: 25 Afghan soldiers killed in Taliban attack, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 police, ANA soldiers killed in Farah, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Casualties as violence escalates in various parts, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(441)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Triggered by student's killing, Farah protest turns violent, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(442)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah: Civilian killed as bomb rips through rickshaw, 5 October 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Commanders among 15 rebels killed in Farah offensive, 19 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens of militants killed in Farah offensive, 26 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(443)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 militants killed, 7 wounded in Farah clash, 11 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 dead as Taliban storm Farah police posts, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 more Farah police killed in Taliban night attack, 29 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, FARAH: 5 police killed, 2 wounded in Taliban attack, 28 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(444)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban notorious commander among 3 killed in Farah clash, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(445)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah: 8 police killed in Taliban attack on checkpoint, 13 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Security personnel, civilians among 31 dead in Farah clashes, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Police commander among 12 dead in Farah gunbattle, 17 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 dead, as many injured in Farah clashes, 19 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(446)</sup> AP, Afghan Officials: Attacks Kill 10 Police; Blast Kills 2 Kids, 15 February 2018, available at: ([url](#)); BBC News, Taliban attacks Afghan soldiers in Farah, killing at least 24, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(447)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2017 casualties: nearly 25,000 people killed, wounded in Afghanistan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(448)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 border police killed in blast near Iran border, 8 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(449)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah: Civilian killed as bomb rips through rickshaw, 5 October 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 dead in Farayb clinic explosion, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(450)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens of militants killed in fresh offensives, 26 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 militants blown up by own explosives in Farah, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(451)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah blast leaves two footballers dead, 3 wounded, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Woman among 3 civilians killed in Farah blast, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(452)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 security personnel among 13 killed in Parwan, Farah unrest, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, District NDS official killed in Farah, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(453)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Retired NDS official among 3 killed in violence, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)).

failed to kill its target, the Pusht Rod Chief of Police <sup>(454)</sup>; a police officer in Farah city and a prosecutor of Pusht Rod district were killed in February 2018 <sup>(455)</sup>.

The Taliban closed the Farah-Herat highway in the vicinity of Farah city and in Bala Buluk on several occasions in January 2018 and kidnapped several passengers from their vehicles <sup>(456)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

As the Taliban approached the city and security forces were absorbed by the fighting, residents reported a rise in crime, such as armed carjackings, thefts, robberies and killings in Farah City in early 2018 <sup>(457)</sup>. Following a public protest against growing insecurity, the Governor of Farah resigned in February 2018, quoting ‘the presence of mafia and the need for public unity’ as the main reasons behind his decision <sup>(458)</sup>. Meanwhile, the Taliban executed three kidnappers in Khak-i Safed in March 2018 <sup>(459)</sup>. In Purchaman district, residents accused one family, occupying most of the senior government positions in the district, of abuse of power by conducting killings, forced marriages, illegal taxations, and several other crimes <sup>(460)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Farah was one of the ‘main poppy cultivating provinces of Afghanistan’. The 12,846 hectares were cultivated with poppy, an increase of 41 % compared to 2016. The main opium-poppy-cultivating districts in Farah were Bala Buluk, Bakwah, Khak-e Safed, Pusht Rod and Gulistan where, UNOCHA stated, ‘security was very poor’ <sup>(461)</sup>.

In September 2017, UNOCHA reported limited humanitarian capacities outside the provincial capital, with only two actors present outside the capital: one working in mine action and the other implementing health services <sup>(462)</sup>. According to UNOCHA, ‘conflict has an equally debilitating impact on the ability of children to obtain the healthcare they need or nutrients they require to reach their full potential’. The conflict in Farah hinders 50 % of children to complete all immunisation vaccination rounds <sup>(463)</sup>. In November 2017, it was reported that ‘repetitive attacks’ on transports for the World Food Program (WFP) had hampered the delivery of food to affected communities <sup>(464)</sup>. In February 2018, WFP truckers refused to transport humanitarian shipments to Farah and access through air service was also suspended due to artillery shelling of the Farah airport <sup>(465)</sup>. UNOCHA recorded 10 incidents against aid workers, assets, activities and related to humanitarian access in Farah in 2017 <sup>(466)</sup>. Citing reasons of ‘effectiveness, cost efficiencies and security considerations’, UNAMA closed its Farah provincial office, but opened again in January 2018 <sup>(467)</sup>.

<sup>(454)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Pushtrod district police chief survives bomb attack, 14 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(455)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, District prosecutor killed in Farah, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Woman among 3 civilians killed in Farah blast, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(456)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Militants kidnap 7 passengers on Farah-Herat highway, 6 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kidnap 5 passengers on Farah-Heart highway, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(457)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Farah residents seek end to growing carjacking, 4 January 2018 ([url](#)); Washington Post, Outgunned in urban centers, Taliban wages fierce fight in remote western Afghanistan, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Crimes on the increase in Farah, say residents, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(458)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Over 2,000 killed, wounded in Afghanistan in January, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(459)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban execute 3 alleged kidnappers in Farah, 2 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(460)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, For Mubariz family, Purchaman lives come cheap: Residents, 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(461)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 5, 33.

<sup>(462)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 69, 31 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(463)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 13.

<sup>(464)</sup> UNOCHA, Meeting Minutes Farah Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 15 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(465)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 12 to 18 February 2018, 12 February 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(466)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 71, 12 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(467)</sup> UN Secretary-General (UNSG), Special report on the strategic review of the United Nations

## Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 18 400 persons displaced from Farah (393 from Anardara; 90 from Bakwa; 8 650 from Bala Buluk; 3 966 from Farah; 265 from Gulestan; 605 from Khak-e Safed; 20 from Lash-e Juwayn; 103 from Purchaman; 3 576 from Pusht Rod; 681 from Qala-e Kah; 51 from Shib Koh) <sup>(468)</sup>.

In January 2018, more than 7 000 families fled fighting in the rural areas of Farah to Farah city, where they worried about the advancements of the Taliban towards the city <sup>(469)</sup>. These IDPs demonstrated against the violence end of January 2018, claiming the Taliban were overrunning security checkpoints and killing ANSF personnel on a daily basis. They claimed that the province was on the verge of falling into Taliban hands. A former governor was quoted saying that the Taliban were ‘trying hard to turn the province into a hub and a supply corridor in the southwestern part of the county’ <sup>(470)</sup>.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix, 138,890 individuals or more than one in five inhabitants of Farah is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. 196,643 people, or 38 % of the population, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 80,000 people from Farah, or 16 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(471)</sup>.

## 2.9 Faryab

### 2.9.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Faryab

The Taliban are active in parts of Faryab province <sup>(472)</sup>, mostly in the district capitals and in villages in the vicinity of these cities in the districts of Shirin Tagab, Khwaja Sabz Posh, Dawlatabad, Pashtun Kot, Almar, Qaysar, Bilcheragh, Kohestan, and Garziwan. The remaining districts Andkhoy, Khan-e Char Baghh, Qurghan and Qaramqol are considered to be ‘relatively calm and Taliban activities limited to far-flung areas’, while fighting continues around the province capital <sup>(473)</sup>. The largest presence of Taliban fighters can be found in Pashtunkot district, which houses a hydro-electric dam which supplies, among others, the capital Maymana with drinking water <sup>(474)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018 based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Almar district and ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three

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Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 10 August 2017 ([url](#)), p. 12; UN Secretary-General (UNSG), The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5; Pajhwok Afghan News, UNAMA restarts mission in Farah after 6 months, 6 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(468)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(469)</sup> Tolo News, Thousands Flee As Taliban Advances On Farah City, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(470)</sup> VOA, Taliban’s Threat Forces Dozens of Families to Flee Farah Province in Afghanistan, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(471)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(472)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces air raids kill 5 militants in northern Faryab, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(473)</sup> Ali, O. and Ruttig, T., Battle for Faryab: Fighting intensifies on one of Afghanistan’s major frontlines, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(474)</sup> Ali, O. and Ruttig, T., Battle for Faryab: Fighting intensifies on one of Afghanistan’s major frontlines, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 40 Commandos 'Under Siege' in Faryab, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

times a month) and ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) most of the province, except for Maymana, Khan-e Char Bagh and Andkhoy districts <sup>(475)</sup>.

According to security analyst Deedee Derksen, several Junbesh commanders have switched sides to the Taliban since Junbesh leader Dostum, indicted for alleged sexual assault to a political opponent, fled the country to Turkey in May 2017. During her research, she came across examples in five districts of Faryab, citing only Qaysar and Kohestan as examples <sup>(476)</sup>. In March 2018, a local uprising commander, linked to rivalling Jamiaat party, joined the Taliban with hundreds of his men in Garziwan district <sup>(477)</sup>.

In November 2017, the Afghan secret service presumed that Islamic State was active in nine provinces, Faryab among them <sup>(478)</sup>. In April 2017, IS claimed to have supporters in Faryab province <sup>(479)</sup>. ISKP-related incidents were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in Faryab in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(480)</sup>. There were reports of ISKP militants from Jawzjan presence in Bilcherag district of Faryab in December 2017 <sup>(481)</sup> and clashes between Taliban and ISKP in January 2018 <sup>(482)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Faryab**

Military operations are regularly being conducted in the province <sup>(483)</sup>, sometimes taking the form of air strikes <sup>(484)</sup>. These operations involved the killing of Taliban insurgents <sup>(485)</sup> and in some cases of their commanders as well <sup>(486)</sup>. Fighting between Afghan security forces and

<sup>(475)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(476)</sup> Derksen, D., In Afghanistan, Today’s Pro-Government Militias could be Tomorrows Insurgents, 11 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(477)</sup> Ariana News, Uprising Commander Joins Taliban in Faryab, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Jamiat Commander In Faryab Joins The Taliban, 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(478)</sup> Reuters, Islamic State beheads 15 of its own fighters: Afghan official, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)); Washington Times (The), Islamic State’s Afghan faction expanding north, as U.S. and coalition forces hammer main hubs, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(479)</sup> VOA, A Look at Islamic State’s Operations in Afghanistan, 29 April 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(480)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(481)</sup> Tolo News, Afghan, US Special Forces To Target Insurgents In North, 8 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Dawlatabad police check-post captured by Taliban, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(482)</sup> Afghan OSINT, [twitter], 25 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(483)</sup> Tolo News, Two Local Taliban Commanders Killed in Faryab Operation, 15 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 2 local Taliban commanders killed in N. Afghanistan clash, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces air raids kill 5 militants in northern Faryab, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Woman arrested while planting roadside mine in North of Afghanistan, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban’s shadow district chief Mullah Zabiullah killed in Faryab, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Security Forces Push Back Taliban Onslaught in Faryab, 15 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(484)</sup> Ali, O. and Ruttig, T., Battle for Faryab: Fighting intensifies on one of Afghanistan’s major frontlines, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban suffer casualties in Afghan Air Force airstrikes in Faryab, 13 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 5 Taliban militants killed, 3 wounded in Faryab airstrikes, 4 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan Air Force intensifies airstrikes in northern Faryab province, 30 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 25 rebels killed in Faryab airstrikes, Taliban deny, 11 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(485)</sup> Tolo News, Two Local Taliban Commanders Killed in Faryab Operation, 15 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 2 local Taliban commanders killed in N. Afghanistan clash, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan forces kill Taliban shadow governor for Faryab province, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban suffer casualties in Afghan Air Force airstrikes in Faryab, 13 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 5 Taliban militants killed, 3 wounded in Faryab airstrikes, 4 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan Air Force intensifies airstrikes in northern Faryab province, 30 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(486)</sup> Khaama Press, Afghan forces kill Taliban shadow governor for Faryab province, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban’s shadow district chief Mullah Zabiullah killed in Faryab, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)); Salaam Times, Troops kill key Taliban commander in Faryab, 1 February 2018 ([url](#)).

the Taliban occurs <sup>(487)</sup>; In March 2018, NATO announced the intention to station dozens of soldiers in the province <sup>(488)</sup>. In the future, 300 US soldiers are to be stationed in the province <sup>(489)</sup>.

With heavy fighting around the capital, ANSF supported by international military forces, are trying hard to prevent the city from falling into Taliban hands. Obaid Ali and Thoma Ruttig called the province in March 2018 ‘one of the major frontlines’ <sup>(490)</sup>.

## 2.9.2 Recent security trends and impact on civilians

### General

In 2017, UNAMA documented 639 civilian victims (182 deaths and 457 injured). This represents an increase of 7 % compared to 2016, contrary to the national trends in 2017. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, non-suicide IEDs and targeted or deliberate killings <sup>(491)</sup>. Faryab was one of the provinces where UNAMA recorded a ‘significant increase’ in the number of civilian casualties of ground engagements compared to 2016. Ground engagements caused 393 civilian casualties (84 deaths and 309 injured), a 27 % increase compared to 2016 <sup>(492)</sup>. Faryab province experienced the highest number of aerial operations by the Afghan Air Force that caused civilian casualties: UNAMA recorded 12 incidents that resulted in 36 civilian casualties (nine deaths and 27 injured) <sup>(493)</sup>. In 2017, UNAMA recorded 49 civilian casualties (15 deaths and 34 injured) from pro-Government armed groups, the highest number of all provinces recorded by UNAMA. For example: UNAMA recorded an incident jointly attributed to ANP, ANCOF and a pro-Government armed group in Faryab, resulting in the death of seven civilians while they fled from a place where Taliban had recently fought with them <sup>(494)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Faryab as one of the ‘most conflict affected’ provinces <sup>(495)</sup>. In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the majority of the province in the highest category. Of the 14 districts, only the four northernmost districts - Qaramqol, Qorghon, Khan-e Char Bagh and Andkhoy - are not in the highest two categories of conflict severity <sup>(496)</sup>. UNOCHA considered Faryab as a province of ‘very high protection concern’, defined as: ‘new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host community’, as well as ‘non-displaced conflict affected

<sup>(487)</sup> Ali, O. and Ruttig, T., Battle for Faryab: Fighting intensifies on one of Afghanistan’s major frontlines, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces air raids kill 5 militants in northern Faryab, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, At Least 31 Suspected Militants Killed In Afghanistan, Army Says, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(488)</sup> Bakhtar News, NATO Troops To Be Stationed In Faryab, 5 March ([url](#)); Salam Watandar, NATO Forces set to be deployed in Faryab, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)); US Centcom, Enhanced capabilities support Afghan Army in Maimanah, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(489)</sup> New York Times (The), Taliban Briefly Take Afghan District as Security Worsens, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(490)</sup> Ali, O. and Ruttig, T., Battle for Faryab: Fighting intensifies on one of Afghanistan’s major frontlines, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(491)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(492)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 22.

<sup>(493)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 46.

<sup>(494)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 52.

<sup>(495)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(496)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

people'. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict <sup>(497)</sup>.

UNAMA highlights that there is a link between the number of victims from explosive remnants of war, and the use of indirect weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades. Faryab is among provinces with a high number of incidents of detonation of explosive remnants of war causing civilian casualties, and also among the provinces with the highest use of indirect weapons <sup>(498)</sup>. For example, three children were killed and one more was wounded in Khawja Sabz Posh district in March 2018, according to the source, due to a mortar impacting a residential area or because they were playing with an unexploded mortar <sup>(499)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 147 incidents related to insurgents in Faryab province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(500)</sup>.

Examples of incidents with civilian casualties include 4 to 5 civilians killed when a mortar landed on a market in on the bazaar in the Khwaja Sabz Posh district in January 2018. Over 40 people, including women and children, were also wounded <sup>(501)</sup>. Later in January 2018, several civilians were killed and injured in an air strike in Khwaja Sabz Posh, although the accounts are mixed <sup>(502)</sup>. A mortar impacting a house in Pashtun Kot district killed three women and a man <sup>(503)</sup>. And two people, including a child, were killed and five others wounded in a Taliban ambush in Garziwan district in March <sup>(504)</sup>. When the Taliban stormed several checkpoints in Bilcheragh district in March, there were also reports of civilian casualties <sup>(505)</sup>.

Some examples of incidents of targeting and intimidation of civilians and of members of the pro-government forces, including former members, and their family, are: The Taliban killed a former member of a pro-government militia and his wife, even after they dislocated, and abducted the children of two pro-government militia commanders, in order to force them to withdraw and stop fighting <sup>(506)</sup>. In October 2017, three religious scholars were killed in Qaysar district, reportedly over their 'opinion on religious issues and beliefs' <sup>(507)</sup>. In January 2018, the Taliban shot a shopkeeper on allegations of connections to the government in Shirin Tagab <sup>(508)</sup>. In February and March 2018, local press reports stated that the Taliban have been in control of 50 km of the road between Maymana and Mazar-e Sharif in the districts of Dawlatabad and Shirin Tagab, running a checkpoint to search vehicles for government employees. Despite several clearing operations by the ANSF, they remained in control of that road for the previous seven months <sup>(509)</sup>. Local residents reported that in the beginning of March 2018 the Taliban 'continue to stop, search and even kill passengers travelling on the

<sup>(497)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 30.

<sup>(498)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(499)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Mortar attack kills 3 children, wounds another in Afghanistan's northern Faryab province, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Unexploded munition kills 3 Faryab children, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(500)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(501)</sup> New York Times (The), Taliban Fighters Using High-Tech Gear Kill Afghan Forces, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Five Killed In Afghan Market Attack, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Rocket Attack Kills 4 Civilians In Faryab, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(502)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Mixed claims as airstrike hits Faryab home, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(503)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 civilians killed, as many injured in Faryab unrest, 8 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(504)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 civilians killed, as many injured in Faryab unrest, 8 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(505)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Strategic area of Balcharagh district falls to Taliban, 15 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(506)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 10, 12.

<sup>(507)</sup> Killid Group (The), Three Religious Scholars Killed in Faryab, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(508)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban gun down shopkeeper in Faryab, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(509)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban run check post on highway in Faryab, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).



Maymana – Jawzjan highway’<sup>(510)</sup>. Later that month, ANSF claimed to have cleared the road from Taliban checkpoints on that road, that had remained closed for one year<sup>(511)</sup>. In February 2018, several members of uprising forces were killed and wounded in Khwaja Sabz Posh, Pashtun Kot and Almar districts<sup>(512)</sup>. In March 2018, a police commander was killed by a sniper in Shirin Tagab district<sup>(513)</sup>.

### Further impact of the conflict on services and law and order

In a case of corporal punishment in parallel justice procedures by the Taliban, a boy and a girl from Kohistan district received a public lashing in February 2018<sup>(514)</sup>.

In February 2018, armed men linked to Vice-President Dostum were accused of surrounding the airport in Maymana, in an attempt to capture a member of parliament<sup>(515)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Faryab lost its poppy-free status in 2013. Since then the province area under opium poppy cultivation continuously expanded. In 2017, opium poppy cultivation in Faryab province was estimated at 22,797 hectares. This includes the cultivation in Ghormach district, according to UNODC ‘a major opium poppy cultivating district’<sup>(516)</sup>.

According to a study conducted by SIGAR, more than seventeen schools in the province were open and in an operational state in the period from May to September 2017. Problems cited included absence of teachers and structural deficits<sup>(517)</sup>.

UNOCHA reported that Faryab is one of the provinces with the highest number of trauma cases due to conflict seen by the health facilities in the province. Yet in 2017, Faryab was one of these places where health facilities were forced to close<sup>(518)</sup>. Faryab was one of the provinces affected by the withdrawal of ICRC’s activities in northern Afghanistan, following a number of incidents targeting ICRC personnel<sup>(519)</sup>.

Due to continuous conflict, humanitarian actors could not travel to several districts in Faryab province or on the highway connecting the province with neighbouring Jawzjan in October 2017<sup>(520)</sup>. In November 2017, UNOCHA reported that members of an armed group and local people temporarily blocked the Andkhoy-Maymana highway, adding that ‘insecurity along the highway remains a major challenge for humanitarian partners working in the area’<sup>(521)</sup>. This situation was still ongoing in January 2018, when UNOCHA reported that ‘fighting over control of the highway connecting Maymana with Andkhoy has disrupted the flow of aid supplies from Mazar-e Sharif to Maymana since last November’, adding that the aid delivery to 3,000

<sup>(510)</sup> Salam Watandar, The Taliban on Maimana – Jawzjan highway cause fear, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(511)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Maimana-Mazar highway reopens after a year, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(512)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 pro-govt militiamen killed, 6 wounded in Faryab, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(513)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Top police officer gunned down in Faryab, 22 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(514)</sup> 1 TV, Taliban publicly lash boy and girl in Faryab, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Rights Watchdog Reacts To Kangaroo Court Incident In Faryab, 2 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(515)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Dostum-linked gunmen try to capture lawmaker, 18 February 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(516)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 14-15.

<sup>(517)</sup> SIGAR, Quarterly report to the United States Congress, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 42-43.

<sup>(518)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 26.

<sup>(519)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 69, 31 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(520)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 2 - 8 October 2017, 8 October 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(521)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 20 - 26 November 2017, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1;

families in Maymana had to be postponed<sup>(522)</sup>. In February 2018 UNOCHA noted that ‘insecurity along the Andkhoy-Maymana highway, Faryab Province, persists’<sup>(523)</sup>.

Also secondary roads into the districts were frequently considered ‘unsafe’: In September 2017, humanitarian actors found the security along the road from Maymana to Garziwan, Kohestan, Khwaja Sabz Posh, Shirin Tagab, Bilcheragh and Ghormach ‘not safe’<sup>(524)</sup>. In October 2017, the access to Khwaja Sabz Posh, Shirin Tagab, Dawlatabad, Kohestan, Garziwan and Bilcheragh was considered ‘challenging’, with humanitarian agencies unable to travel to these districts to implement the humanitarian activities or assess the needs of IDPs<sup>(525)</sup>.

Insecurity on the roads hindered farmers and traders reaching markets or importing food supplies in Khwaja Sabz Posh and Shirin Tagab districts increasing food prices and reducing food security. Insecurity equally limited access to healthcare and education<sup>(526)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 47,839 persons displaced from Faryab (5 749 from Almar; 7 from Andkhoy; 4 803 from Bilcheragh; 5 355 Dawlatabad; 553 from Garziwan; 6 906 from Khwaja Sabz Posh; 3 204 from Kohestan; 45 from Maymana; 10 597 from Pashtun Kot; 7 from Qaramqol; 3 678 from Qaysar; 6 935 from Shirin Tagab)<sup>(527)</sup>.

In September 2017, some 1,700 people were reportedly displaced from Pashtun Kot to Maymana City<sup>(528)</sup> and displacement also took place from Bandar, a cluster of 75 villages in Kohestan district, following significant clashes between ANSF and insurgent groups<sup>(529)</sup>. A further 273 families were assessed as IDPs by humanitarian actors in Qaysar district<sup>(530)</sup>.

In October and November 2017, UNOCHA mentions displacement from Faryab to Balkh, Sar-e Pul and Jawzjan<sup>(531)</sup>. Humanitarian agencies recorded 1,382 IDP families in Maymana city and 101 families in Qaysar district<sup>(532)</sup>. In February 2018, UNOCHA recorded another 567 individuals displaced from or within Faryab<sup>(533)</sup>. Thousands of displaced people from Faryab amongst other places reportedly suffered from harsh winter conditions and complained about the lack of help in Jawzjan<sup>(534)</sup>.

According to SIGAR, 3.16 % of Faryab’s population consists of internally displaced persons<sup>(535)</sup>.

<sup>(522)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 1 to 7 January 2018, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(523)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 29 January to 4 February 2018, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(524)</sup> UNOCHA, Faryab (Operational Coordination Team) OCT meeting, 12 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(525)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 3 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 3; UNOCHA, Faryab (Operational Coordination Team) OCT meeting, 24 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(526)</sup> WFP, Faryab Province – Rapid Emergency Assessment, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(527)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(528)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 18 to 24 September 2017, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(529)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 25 September to 1 October 2017, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(530)</sup> UNOCHA, Faryab (Operational Coordination Team) OCT meeting, 24 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(531)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 23 to 29 October 2017, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1;

UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 6 - 12 November 2017, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(532)</sup> UNOCHA, Faryab (Operational Coordination Team) OCT meeting, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(533)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 12 - 18 February 2018, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1;

<sup>(534)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Exposed to cold weather, Jawzjan IDPs in need of help, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(535)</sup> SIGAR, Quarterly report to the United States Congress, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 151.

## 2.10 Ghazni

### 2.10.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Ghazni

Both the Haqqani network and the Taliban are active in some regions of the province <sup>(536)</sup>.

The Taliban were able to gain influence in Ghazni after 2001, like in many other regions in southern Afghanistan with a Pashtun majority <sup>(537)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018 based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban fully control 14 districts nationwide, including the district of Nawa in Ghazni. Further, they have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Rashidan, Jaghatu, Khwaja Umari, Zanakhan, Ghazni, Dehyak, and Andar. The rest of the province saw ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) or ‘low’ Taliban presence (district attacked at least once in three months) except for Malestan and Jaghori districts <sup>(538)</sup>.

The Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs refuted the presence of IS in Ghazni province <sup>(539)</sup>. However, ISKP-related incidents were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in the province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018, especially along the border with Paktika <sup>(540)</sup>.

#### (Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Ghazni

Military operations were being conducted in Ghazni province <sup>(541)</sup>; insurgents were killed and arrested <sup>(542)</sup>. Air strikes took place as well <sup>(543)</sup>, with Taliban being killed in the process <sup>(544)</sup>. The province is seeing armed clashes between security forces and insurgents <sup>(545)</sup>.

The strict rule imposed by the Taliban – closing of schools, stop of construction projects, etc. – has led to counter-reactions. The inhabitants of a village in Andar district organised their own militia, a ‘popular uprising movement’ to fight back the insurgents in 2012; other districts in Ghazni followed suit. According to the militiamen the security situation improved as a

<sup>(536)</sup> VOA, IS Leaflets Threaten Residents in Restive Afghan Province, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(537)</sup> IWPR, Afghan Local Police Accused of Extortion, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(538)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(539)</sup> VOA, IS Leaflets Threaten Residents in Restive Afghan Province, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(540)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(541)</sup> Tolo News, Afghan Forces Conduct 22 Operations Against Terrorists, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Security Leaders Under Fire Over Spike In Casualty Toll, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 25 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Ghazni Operation, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Senior al-Qaeda Member Killed In Joint Military Operation, 5 December 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces launch operation to trace militants in eastern province, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)); ANI, Afghan forces kill 28 insurgents: Ministry of Defence, 3 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Afghanistan Times, Afghanistan- Nearly 50 terrorists killed in anti-terror drills, 25 March 2018 ([url](#)); Afghanistan Times, Afghanistan- 530 militants dead in military raids, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); VOA, Dozens of Militants Dead as Taliban Rival Groups Clash in Afghanistan, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(542)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 29 Taliban killed in Helmand, Ghazni operations, 13 March 2018 ([url](#)); Afghanistan Times, Afghanistan- Nearly 50 terrorists killed in anti-terror drills, 25 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Senior al-Qaeda Member Killed In Joint Military Operation, 5 December 2017 ([url](#)); Afghanistan Times, Afghanistan- 530 militants dead in military raids, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); VOA, Dozens of Militants Dead as Taliban Rival Groups Clash in Afghanistan, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(543)</sup> Khaama Press, Drone strike on Taliban gathering leaves 26 dead in Ghazni, 1 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(544)</sup> Khaama Press, Drone strike on Taliban gathering leaves 26 dead in Ghazni, 1 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 53 Taliban claimed killed, 28 wounded nationwide, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(545)</sup> VOA, Dozens of Militants Dead as Taliban Rival Groups Clash in Afghanistan, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 5 policemen killed in fresh attack in Afghanistan, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)).

consequence; schools and health clinics were reopened according to the members of this militia. These militias were later incorporated in the ALP program. As they originate from the local communities, people tend to trust them. Nevertheless, there have been instances of corruption and abuse also within these militias through illegal checkpoints <sup>(546)</sup>.

### 2.10.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

In 2017 UNAMA documented 353 civilian victims (139 deaths and 214 injured). This represents a decrease of 11 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, non-suicide IEDs or targeted or deliberate killings <sup>(547)</sup>. Ghazni is among the provinces with a high number of incidents of detonation of explosive remnants of war causing civilian casualties, and also among the provinces with the highest use of indirect weapons. This highlights, according to UNAMA, the link between the number of victims from explosive remnants of war, and the use of indirect weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades <sup>(548)</sup>. Ghazni is one of the provinces where ALP were accused of causing civilian casualties in 2017 <sup>(549)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the Andar district in the highest category. Most of the districts along the Kabul-Kandahar highway, Dehyak, Ghazni district, Waghaz, Qarabagh, Giro, Muqur and Gelan, and the western district of Ajrestan were in the highest two categories of conflict severity. The western districts Jaghori, Malestan and Nawur are in the lowest category <sup>(550)</sup>. UNOCHA considered Ghazni as one of the ‘most conflict affected’ provinces <sup>(551)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 149 incidents related to insurgents in Ghazni province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(552)</sup>.

Incidents with civilian casualties include an air strike in Deh Yak district in September 2017, targeting Taliban fighters. Local residents claimed four civilians were also killed in the incident <sup>(553)</sup>; a roadside bomb killed two civilians and injured three more in Qarabagh district in December 2017 <sup>(554)</sup>; during a military operation in January 2018, a rocket impacted a civilian home and killed eight persons, of whom six or seven children, and wounding three more in Qarabagh district <sup>(555)</sup>.

In October 2017, a complex attack targeting the premises of the District Governor and police headquarters in Andar district happened <sup>(556)</sup>. The attack, which lasted, according to one source, nine hours, claimed the lives of 15 to 25 policemen and five civilians, while injuring 15

<sup>(546)</sup> IWPR, Afghan Local Police Accused of Extortion, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(547)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(548)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(549)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 50.

<sup>(550)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(551)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(552)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(553)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilians among at least 10 dead in Ghazni airstrike, 18 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(554)</sup> 1TV News, Three police, two civilians killed in Ghazni, 28 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(555)</sup> VOA, Afghan Fighting Kills at Least 7 Civilians, Mostly Children, 26 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 children, woman killed as mortar shell hits Ghazni house, 26 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(556)</sup> RFE/RL, Dozens Killed In Afghan Suicide, Gun Attacks, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)).

to 55 others <sup>(557)</sup>. According to Thomas Ruttig, the attack lasted for three days, and the Taliban were briefly capable of taking over the district centre, before being driven out by ANSF supported by US air strikes. Besides the five civilians killed, at least 28 security personnel were killed and 18 others wounded, according to Thomas Ruttig <sup>(558)</sup>. In an ambush on ANSF reinforcements, seven were killed <sup>(559)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

In January 2018, six policemen were arrested for their involvement in kidnapping, murder and armed robbery, while they were supposed to provide security on the main highway in Ghazni <sup>(560)</sup>.

In January 2018, The Taliban interfered in a long standing and violent dispute between Pashtun and Hazara communities over land and water in Qarabagh. After Pashtun was killed, the Taliban kidnapped 11 Hazara and closed off the road to a Hazara village <sup>(561)</sup>. The conflict further escalated in March 2018, when three members of a family, including a woman and child, were killed and two other abducted <sup>(562)</sup>. The two abducted were later released, in exchange for eight persons detained by the Taliban <sup>(563)</sup>. Local officials stated that these ethnic clashes had resulted in the death of dozens of people while 14 had been abducted <sup>(564)</sup>. Residents of Qarabagh district closed the highway connecting Kabul and Kandahar for several days, protesting the violence. This protest was violently broken up by the security forces, wounding several protesters <sup>(565)</sup>. The Taliban is said to widely collect taxes from media outlets, businessmen and ordinary citizens in Ghazni <sup>(566)</sup>.

In 2017, Ghazni lost its status of poppy-free province, for the first time in more than two decades, since 1995. Poppy is being cultivated again, on 1,027 hectares, as at November 2017. Opium poppy was mainly cultivated in Ajrestan district where the security situation was assessed by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime as ‘extremely poor’ <sup>(567)</sup>.

In January 2018, Pajhwok reported that remote areas in Ghazni had no female health care workers; they are only working in Malistan, Jaghatu, Khwaja Omari and Jaghori districts.

Patients had trouble reaching female doctors because the security on the roads hindered transporting patients to health care centres in other districts <sup>(568)</sup>.

In March 2018, local officials claimed three shrines had been attacked or blown up in two months’ time in the province of Ghazni <sup>(569)</sup>.

<sup>(557)</sup> Tolo News, Taliban Attack Claims 20 In Ghazni As Violence Continues, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)); AP, Wave of Taliban suicide attacks on Afghan forces kills at least 74, 17 October 2017, available at: ([url](#)); Ariana News, Militants Attack in Ghazni’s Andar District Leaves 30 Killed, 60 Injured, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(558)</sup> Ruttig, T., The ‘Humvee Bomb’ Series: The October wave of Taleban attacks in 2017 context, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(559)</sup> DW, Afghanistan: ‘Biggest terrorist attack’ strikes security forces, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(560)</sup> Ariana News, Six Afghan Police forces arrested over kidnapping and murder, 1 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(561)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban out to foment ethnic trouble in Ghazni: Governor, 13 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(562)</sup> Khaama Press, Gunmen kill 3 of a family and abduct 2 others in Ghazni province, 3 March 2018 ([url](#));

Pajhwok Afghan News, Woman, child among 3 gunned down in Ghazni, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(563)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Ghazni hostages freed after deal with Taliban, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(564)</sup> Tolo News, Govt Accused Of ‘Taking Sides’ In Ghazni Dispute, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(565)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Ghazni hostages freed after deal with Taliban, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Protesters block Kabul-Kandahar road for a 3rd day, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 wounded as security forces set alight protest camp, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(566)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban collecting taxes from all in Ghazni, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(567)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(568)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, No female doctor in remote Ghazni areas, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(569)</sup> Salam Watandar, Explosion destroys Sakhi shrine in Ghazni ([url](#)).

## Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 September 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 1,747 persons displaced from Ghazni (35 from Ajrestan; 504 from Andar; 60 from Dehyak; 56 from Ghazni; 28 from Khwaja Umari; 14 from Malestan; 210 from Muqur; 56 from Nawa; 7 from Nawur; 259 from Qarabagh; 308 from Waghaz; 210 from Walimuhammad-e Shahid) <sup>(570)</sup>.

In October 2017, more than 1,800 displaced people reportedly arrived in Ghazni centre, nearly 700 people arrived in Malestan, primarily displaced from within the province and from neighbouring Uruzgan <sup>(571)</sup>.

In November 2017, pro-government forces conducted operations to recapture Andar district of Ghazni, displacing 160 families to neighbouring villages. UNHCR reported that these IDPs did not return to their places of origin out of fear for further insurgent attacks <sup>(572)</sup>. In the second week of December 2017, UNOCHA indeed reported that ‘fierce armed clashes in Andar district’, reportedly displaced around 3,500 people within the district and 2,800 to Ghazni centre <sup>(573)</sup>.

Armed clashes reportedly further displaced 2,450 individuals in Andar district during the third week of December 2017 <sup>(574)</sup>.

In February 2018, UNOCHA reported In Ghazni, nearly 3,400 people arriving in Ghazni city from several districts, due to military operations, intimidation and forced taxation by insurgents <sup>(575)</sup>.

## 2.11 Ghor/Ghowr

### 2.11.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Ghor

According to a BBC study of January 2018 based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘medium’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Chaghcharan, Shahrak, Du Layna, and Pasaband, and a ‘low’ presence (district attacked at least once in three months) in Tulak, Saghar, and Taywara. No presence or activity reported by the BBC only in the eastern districts Dawlat Yar and Lal Wa Sarjangal, and in Charsadra <sup>(576)</sup>.

According to analyst Thomas Ruttig, ‘Ghor is known for its particularly confusing pattern of conflicts, involving insurgent groups and “freelancing” militias, the dividing line between

<sup>(570)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(571)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 16 to 22 October 2017, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(572)</sup> Protection Cluster Afghanistan, November 2017 - Central Region Update, December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(573)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 4 December – 10 December 2017, 10 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(574)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 11 December – 18 December 2017, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(575)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 29 January to 4 February 2018, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(576)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

which is all but hermetic' <sup>(577)</sup>. For example, a group of fighters hailing from Ghor joined the branch of ISKP active in Jawzjan <sup>(578)</sup>.

In 2017, self-declared members of Islamic State were active in the province <sup>(579)</sup>; they do not seem to have any formal ties to the ISKP group in Nangarhar province <sup>(580)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in Ghor in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(581)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Ghor**

In October 2017, the Afghan Ministry of Defense stated to have conducted ground and air operations in Ghor, without providing details about the impact of these operations <sup>(582)</sup>. Further operations were reported in December 2017 <sup>(583)</sup> and January 2018 <sup>(584)</sup>. During an operation in Lal Wa Sarjantal in February 2018, ANSF forces arrested what the assumed was a 'senior ISKP commander' <sup>(585)</sup>.

### **2.11.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

In 2017, UNAMA documented 33 civilian victims (19 deaths and 14 injured), a 59 % decrease compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from non-suicide IEDs, ground engagement, and unexploded ordnances or landmines <sup>(586)</sup>. According to figures consulted by Pajhwok and without distinguishing between civilians or combatants, there were 85 people killed in Ghor in 2017 and 31 injured and there were 8 targeted attacks, roadside bombing and magnetic bomb explosions in the province <sup>(587)</sup>. In a map depicting 'conflict severity' in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the majority of the province in the second-highest category <sup>(588)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 59 incidents related to insurgents in Ghor province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(589)</sup>.

In October 2017, a suicide attacker targeted a local police commander and strongman linked to Jamiaat-e Islami in a mosque in Du Layna district. Depending on the source, 10, 20 or 30

<sup>(577)</sup> Ruttig, T., The 'Humvee Bomb' Series: The October wave of Taleban attacks in 2017 context, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(578)</sup> Ali, O., Precarious Consolidation: Qari Hekmat's IS-affiliated 'island' survives another Taleban onslaught, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(579)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 38; Pajhwok Afghan News, Weapons seized, senior Daesh held in Ghor, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(580)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 38.

<sup>(581)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(582)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 43 insurgents eliminated in security operations: MoD, 6 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(583)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 04.12.2017, 4 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(584)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes 8 January 2018, 8 January 2018, available at: ([url](#)); BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 15.01.2018, 15 January 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(585)</sup> Khaama Press, Senior ISIS leader arrested by Afghan forces in Ghor province, 12 February 2018 ([url](#));

Pajhwok Afghan News, Weapons seized, senior Daesh held in Ghor, 11 February 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(586)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(587)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2017 casualties: nearly 25,000 people killed, wounded in Afghanistan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(588)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(589)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

people were killed in the attack <sup>(590)</sup>. And in a clash between Taliban and members of the Hezb-e Islami in January 2018, two sons of a Hezb-e Islami commander were killed <sup>(591)</sup>. In January 2018, two people were killed and six injured, including children and women, in an explosion inside a house in the capital Chaghcharan/Ferozkoh <sup>(592)</sup>. The alleged son of one of the victims, also a commander of an ‘illegal armed group’, killed two persons in a revenge attack in Du Layna a few days later <sup>(593)</sup>.

AP reported in March 2018 that a shepherd was killed by a roadside bomb intended to target the police. Five more were wounded <sup>(594)</sup>. Later in March, the same happened twice in the vicinity of the provincial capital, killing in total three civilians and injuring five more <sup>(595)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

While ‘poppy-free’ until 2011, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that area under opium poppy cultivation continuously expanded in the province, last time by 246 % (from 2016 to 2017). Chaghcharan, Pasaband and Taywara were said to be the main opium cultivating districts <sup>(596)</sup>.

According to a local police officer, smugglers took advantage of the impassibility of the roads in order to smuggle drugs and arms <sup>(597)</sup>.

While the province boasts three major rivers – Hariroud, Murghab and Farahroud – residents still lack drinking water. According to a high-ranking official, the government had strived to build a water supply system for the province capital, but powerful local individuals had thwarted these efforts <sup>(598)</sup>.

In November 2017, humanitarian actors reported restricted access to an area north of the provincial capital Chaghcharan, Ghalmin. The area was said to be under insurgent control for two months then and humanitarian actors were unable to reach its IDPs ‘due to ongoing conflict and also landmines around the roads leading to the area’. As a result, 3,000 children could not be reached for their polio vaccinations <sup>(599)</sup>. Access to health care was also reported to be ‘challenging’ in Pasaband <sup>(600)</sup>. In January, five employees of the health authority were abducted while conducting a vaccination campaign in Chaghcharan, allegedly because this campaign was not launched from the insurgent-held areas <sup>(601)</sup> and in March 2018, four healthcare workers, doctor, a midwife, a vaccinator and a driver, were abducted in Saghar district, and were threatened during their abduction to pay 10 % of their income to the

<sup>(590)</sup> BBC News, Afghan suicide mosque attacks kill scores of worshippers, 21 October 2017 ([url](#)); Dawn, At least 60 dead, 45 wounded in two separate attacks on mosques in Afghanistan, 20 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(591)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kill HIA commander’s sons in Ghor clash, 13 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(592)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 15.01.2018, 15 January 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 killed, 6 injured in Ghor blast, 12 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(593)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal commander kills 2 individuals in Ghor attack, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(594)</sup> AP, 5 Afghan policemen killed in Taliban attack, 5 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); AP, Botched Suicide Attack Wounds 5 Students in Afghan Capital, 18 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(595)</sup> Bakhtar News, Mine Blast Took The Life of Civilian, Wounded 2, 28 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(596)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 33.

<sup>(597)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 smugglers detained with 100kg of opium in Ghor, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(598)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Ghor residents in trouble after water wells dry up, 10 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(599)</sup> UNOCHA, Ad hoc Operational Coordination Team Meeting – Ghor Province. Meeting Minutes, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Senior hajj official joins Taliban militants in Ghor, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(600)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team Meeting – Ghor Province. Meeting Minutes, 8 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(601)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes 8 January 2018, 8 January 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 health workers kidnapped in Ghor, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)); Bakhtar News, Taliban Abduct 5 Medical Staffs In Ghor, 3 January 2018 ([url](#)).



Taliban<sup>(602)</sup>. This incident was confirmed by the Press Spokesman of the Province Governor, but denied by the Public Health Director<sup>(603)</sup>.

During conflict between ANSF and insurgents, farmers in Taiwara district have been prevented from working their lands<sup>(604)</sup>. In November 2017, humanitarian actors reported diversions of food and seeds consignments in Shahrak, due to ‘substantial presence’ of insurgents and illegal armed groups<sup>(605)</sup>. In February 2018, five trucks carrying wheat for the WFP from Herat to Chaghcharan, again were targeted and consigned<sup>(606)</sup>.

In December 2017 and January 2018, two private radio stations operating in the province were attacked and set on fire<sup>(607)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 19 689 persons displaced from Ghor (7 885 from Chaghcharan; 234 from Charsadra; 338 from Dawlatyar; 2 875 from Du Layna; 7 from Lal Wa Sarjangal; 350 from Pasaband; 35 from Saghar; 3 106 from Shahrak; 4 382 from Taywarah; 456 from Tolak; 21 Unknown)<sup>(608)</sup>.

In November 2017, humanitarian actors reported that conflict and insurgent control of an area north of Chaghcharan displaced ‘hundreds of families’ in the area and to Chaghcharan<sup>(609)</sup>. In February, nearly 600 people were reportedly displaced to Chaghcharan, from Pasaband, Charsadra, Taywarah, Tolak, Shahrak and Du Layna districts<sup>(610)</sup>.

## 2.12 Helmand

### 2.12.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Helmand

Helmand is known for being a Taliban stronghold<sup>(611)</sup>; the group controls or influences large stretches of this Afghan province<sup>(612)</sup>, more specifically the northern and southern areas of Helmand. The province used to be a battleground for a long time, in particular the area around Sangin district<sup>(613)</sup>.

<sup>(602)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Abducted health workers released in Ghor, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(603)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Abducted health workers released in Ghor, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); ZDF, Taliban entführen Impfteam, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(604)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team Meeting – Ghor Province. Meeting Minutes, 8 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(605)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team Meeting – Ghor Province. Meeting Minutes, 8 November 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Western Region. Minutes of Ad hoc Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(606)</sup> Frontier Post (The), Gunmen seized 5 WFP wheat trucks in Ghor, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(607)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Private radio station set on fire in Ghor, 24 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Private radio station in Ghor set alight, 22 January 2018 ([url](#)); AFJC, Second radio station attacked and burned to ashes in Ghor province, 22 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(608)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(609)</sup> UNOCHA, Ad hoc Operational Coordination Team Meeting – Ghor Province. Meeting Minutes, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(610)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 19 - 25 February 2018, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(611)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan army kills 28 militants in restive province of Helmand, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(612)</sup> NPR, In Helmand, Afghan General Fights Taliban 'Cancer' With Some Help From U.S. Marines, 8 November 2017 ([url](#)); VoA, Taliban Overruns Afghan District Near Iranian Border, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(613)</sup> AP, Marines see Afghan forces improve in Helmand battles, 5 February 2018, ([url](#)).

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017 the Taliban fully control 14 districts nationwide, of which six in Helmand alone: Baghran, Musaqala, Nawzad, Sangin, Reg and Deh-e Shu. Further, they have a 'high' 'active and physical presence' (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Nad-e Ali/Marja district, and medium (districts attacked at least three times a month) or low presence (district attacked at least once in three months) in the rest of the province <sup>(614)</sup>.

2017 was said to be one of the deadliest years for Taliban insurgents in Helmand, with 2 000 members killed <sup>(615)</sup>. The ongoing military operations against the Taliban have also contributed to weakening the group <sup>(616)</sup>. Nevertheless the Taliban are still recruiting new members among the local youth. Job opportunities are scarce, therefore people join the Taliban <sup>(617)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents were reported in the sources consulted by ACLED in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(618)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Helmand**

Military operations are being regularly conducted in the province <sup>(619)</sup>. In September 2017, the ANSF conducted intense ground offensive search operation in order to clear Nawa district from insurgents, after having regained it from insurgents previously. While they managed to open and clear the road to Nawa district, the roads to Nad-e Ali/Marja and Garmser remained closed, according to humanitarian actors in the region <sup>(620)</sup>. In November 2017 and January 2018, the ANSF freed dozens of civilian abductees together with ANSF members held in captivity by the Taliban <sup>(621)</sup>. In February 2018, it was reported that Afghan forces, supported by US troops, had been able to gain ground in recent months <sup>(622)</sup>, even though the Taliban controlled about half of the province <sup>(623)</sup>.

<sup>(614)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(615)</sup> Tolo News, 2017 Was A Deadly Year For Taliban In Helmand, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(616)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban weakened in Helmand but more police needed: Hayat, 13 January 2018 ([url](#));

VOA, Taliban Overruns Afghan District Near Iranian Border, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(617)</sup> Tolo News, 2017 Was A Deadly Year For Taliban In Helmand, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(618)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(619)</sup> Tolo News, Two Border Policemen Killed in Helmand Car Bomb, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Ten Suspected Insurgents Killed In Afghanistan's Helmand, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Four Taliban Insurgents Killed in Helmand Operation, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 25 Insurgents Killed In Military Operations: MoD, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 6 Taliban militants killed, 2 held alive in Helmand operations, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan commandos seize hundreds of landmines, rockets in Helmand, 17 January 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan army kills 28 militants in restive province of Helmand, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)); Nation (The), 13 militants killed in Helmand military operation, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Key Taliban Member Arrested In Helmand, 18 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(620)</sup> UNOCHA, Southern Region. Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(621)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 35; BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 22.01.2018, 22 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(622)</sup> AP, Marines see Afghan forces improve in Helmand battles, 5 February 2018, ([url](#)).

<sup>(623)</sup> AP, Marines see Afghan forces improve in Helmand battles, 5 February 2018, ([url](#)); BBC News, Afghanistan arrests 'German Taliban fighter' in Helmand, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)).

There are air strikes as well <sup>(624)</sup>, some of which are causing heavy losses to the insurgents <sup>(625)</sup>. Air strikes also target illicit drug labs, which in Helmand constitute one of the main sources of income for the Taliban <sup>(626)</sup>. According to accounts from areas affected by the bombing, ‘the air strikes have mainly hurt civilians and their livelihoods rather than the Taliban’ <sup>(627)</sup>.

The Taliban tend to attack checkpoints and smaller bases at night <sup>(628)</sup>. For this reason, night-raids by Afghan special forces have been reintroduced. These are controversial because they resulted in high rates of civilian casualties in the past and were viewed as unacceptable violations of privacy, but have meanwhile been cautiously welcomed by local officials and activists <sup>(629)</sup>.

Sangorian, a government-affiliated militia comprising some 500 to 1 000 fighters, was founded by the Afghan secret service (NDS – Directorate of National Security) to infiltrate insurgent groupings and fight them from the inside. Sangorian claims credit for defeating Taliban attempts to overrun the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah <sup>(630)</sup>.

## 2.12.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

### General

In 2017, UNAMA documented 991 civilian victims (386 deaths and 605 injured). This represents an increase of 10 % compared to 2016, contrary to the national trends in 2017. This is the second-highest number, after Kabul. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, non-suicide IEDs or suicide and complex attacks <sup>(631)</sup>. According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, however, there were 1 900 civilian casualties in Helmand in 2017 <sup>(632)</sup>. The increase in civilian casualties was, according to UNAMA, mainly driven by suicide and complex attacks and other types of incidents involving IEDs <sup>(633)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Helmand as one of the ‘most conflict affected’ provinces <sup>(634)</sup>. In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the districts in the middle of the province - Lashkargah, Nahr-e Saraj, Sangin, Nad-e Ali/Marja and Garmser - in

<sup>(624)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban militants suffer heavy casualties in Helmand airstrikes, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Commandos Arrest Foreign Fighter in Helmand Night Raid, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 29 Taliban killed in Helmand, Ghazni operations, 13 March 2018 ([url](#)); IWPR, Afghanistan: Cautious Welcome for Renewed Night Raids, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban’s most senior group member killed in Helmand province, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(625)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban militants suffer heavy casualties in Helmand airstrikes, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan army kills 28 militants in restive province of Helmand, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)); Reuters, Commander of Taliban 'special forces' killed in Afghanistan: officials, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(626)</sup> Washington Post, The U.S. begins bombing Taliban drug labs as Trump’s Afghanistan strategy takes hold, 20 November 2017 ([url](#)); Washington Post, Afghan leaders in Helmand criticize U.S. airstrikes on Taliban drug labs, 21 November 2017 ([url](#)); Reuters, Commander of Taliban 'special forces' killed in Afghanistan: officials, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(627)</sup> ICG, U.S. Bombing of Afghan Drug Labs Won’t Crush the Taliban, 11 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(628)</sup> New York Times (The), Wave of Taliban Attacks Kills at Least 20 Afghan Soldiers, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Two Civilians Killed In Taliban Attack In Helmand, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(629)</sup> IWPR, Afghanistan: Cautious Welcome for Renewed Night Raids, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(630)</sup> RFE/RL, Secret Afghan Force Mimics, Infiltrates Taliban, 15 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(631)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(632)</sup> Tolo News, 1900 Civilians Killed and Wounded in Helmand in One Year, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(633)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(634)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 18.

the highest category. The northern districts Bagrah, Kajaki and Musaqala were in the middle category, and all other districts in the lower two categories <sup>(635)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Helmand as a province of ‘high protection concern’, defined as: ‘new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host community’, as well as ‘non-displaced conflict affected people’. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict <sup>(636)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 308 incidents related to insurgents in Helmand province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(637)</sup>.

Air operations caused 67 civilian casualties (58 deaths and nine injured) in Helmand in 2017, according to UNAMA <sup>(638)</sup>.

In 2017, for instance, the number of civilian casualties resulting from air strikes in Sangin district in Helmand province, in Chahar Dara district in Kunduz province and in Deh Bala district in Nangarhar province accounted for 50 % of all civilian casualties caused by international air strikes in the whole of Afghanistan, a comparatively high rate <sup>(639)</sup>. For example, an air strike was said to have killed a child in Nad-e Ali in March 2018 <sup>(640)</sup>.

The provincial capital Lashkargah is reportedly witnessing protracted conflict over the past two years <sup>(641)</sup>. In a heavy explosion targeting a border police post in Lashkargah in November 2017, one policeman was killed, others were wounded and several houses near the explosion were ‘badly damaged’ according to a statement of the provincial government <sup>(642)</sup>. The targets for three of these attacks were the branches of the New Kabul Bank, at a moment when ANSF personnel lined up for collecting their wages. These incidents caused in all 112 civilian casualties (32 deaths and 80 injured) in 2017. Other attacks targeted ANSF - one convoy in Nawayi Barakzai (Nawa) district and one check post in Nahr-e Sarraj district. These caused six civilian casualties (the death of one civilian man and injuries to five children) <sup>(643)</sup>. In December 2017, a pressure-plate IED placed on a main road and intended for Afghan national security forces killed another six civilians, including a woman and a girl, and injured two men and a boy in Marja district <sup>(644)</sup>. The number of victims of pressure-plate IEDs in Helmand rose by 40 % compared to 2016, to 235 civilian casualties (103 deaths and 132 injured) in 2017 <sup>(645)</sup>. In February 2018, one person was killed and two other injured when a car bomb exploded near an NDS building <sup>(646)</sup>. According to the AIHRC, eight children and women were wounded in this attack, and schools, kindergartens, health clinics and residential homes were

<sup>(635)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(636)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 30.

<sup>(637)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(638)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 45.

<sup>(639)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 47.

<sup>(640)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Casualties as security forces, Taliban clash in Helmand, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(641)</sup> UNOCHA, Southern Region. Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(642)</sup> Khaama Press, Heavy explosion rocks Lashkargah city in Helmand province, 10 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Explosion In Lashkargah City Leaves One Dead, 10 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(643)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 29-30.

<sup>(644)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 31.

<sup>(645)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 32.

<sup>(646)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 26.02.2018, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)).

damaged <sup>(647)</sup>. A suicide bomber targeted the audience of a wrestling game in Lashkargah in March 2018, reportedly killing at least 15 people and injuring more than 40, including children. This attack prompted a peace sit-in and hunger strike <sup>(648)</sup>. The protests later spread to Gereshk district <sup>(649)</sup>. Hundreds of people took to the streets, holding a sit-in and pledging to organise a long march in the Taliban-controlled city of Musa Qala to demand peace talks. The protesters also included women, who are rarely seen in the streets in this conservative region of Afghanistan <sup>(650)</sup>.

On the other hand, UNAMA noted a decrease in large-scale offensive operations in civilian population centres, causing 467 civilian casualties (145 deaths and 322 injured), a 7 % decrease compared to 2016. Still, the majority of the civilian casualties in Helmand were due to ground engagement and Helmand saw the second-highest number of victims of ground engagements <sup>(651)</sup>. For example, in October 2017 in Nawa district, a seven-year-old boy was killed and three boys, three women and two men (all from one family) were injured by stray bullets as they were fleeing the fighting in their vehicle <sup>(652)</sup>.

Helmand is among the provinces with a high number of incidents of detonation of explosive remnants of war causing civilian casualties, and also among the provinces with the highest use of indirect weapons. This highlights, according to UNAMA, the link between the number of victims from explosive remnants of war, and the use of indirect weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades <sup>(653)</sup>. There are examples of incidents with civilian casualties.

- Eight people, including a child, died when a mortar shell hit their home in October 2017 <sup>(654)</sup>.
- In December 2017, three children were maimed when they were herding cattle and hit a landmine <sup>(655)</sup>.
- In December 2017, a car bomb targeting a convoy of Public Order Police, killed two persons and injured 31 others, according to government officials quoted in Pajhwok, mostly civilians <sup>(656)</sup>.
- A mortar landing on a residential home in Marja in February 2018 killed four members of one family, and wounded three more <sup>(657)</sup>.

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<sup>(647)</sup> AIHRC, Suicide attack in the second district of Lashkargah, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(648)</sup> UNAMA, UNAMA condemns attack targeting civilians at Helmand sports event, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban welcome Helmand peace sit-ins with warning, 28 March 2018 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Afghan Hunger Strikers Demand Cease-Fire: 'Our Blood Is Finished', 29 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 hunger strikers hospitalized as Helmand peace rally widens, 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(649)</sup> Tolo News, Another Sit-In Camp Established In Helmand, 5 April 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(650)</sup> New York Times (The), Taliban's Rare Silence on Talks Charges Up a New Peace Conference, 27 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(651)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 20-22.

<sup>(652)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 24.

<sup>(653)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(654)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 23.10.2017, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(655)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Helmand landmine blast leaves 3 children injured, 2 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(656)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 dead, 31 injured in Lashkargah car bombing, 19 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(657)</sup> AIHRC, Mortar landed in a residential home in Helmand Province, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)).

In targeted killings, the police chief of Nad-e Ali was killed in September 2017 <sup>(658)</sup>, and a cleric in January 2018 <sup>(659)</sup>. A suicide attack on a NDS building in Lashkargah targeted a meeting between Taliban and NDS <sup>(660)</sup>.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

The province is a major centre of opium production <sup>(661)</sup>, which to a large degree helps finance Taliban activities <sup>(662)</sup> and encourages corruption among the political class <sup>(663)</sup>. According to estimates by government officials, in early 2017, the Taliban controlled 85 % of the poppy-growing province of Helmand <sup>(664)</sup>. According to government officials, more and more farmers in the central, southern and northern districts of Helmand province are cultivating opium poppy <sup>(665)</sup>. In 2017, Helmand province was the country's major poppy cultivating province <sup>(666)</sup>.

The conflict has an impact on the delivery of health care services : in 2017, Helmand was in the highest category of provinces experiencing 'humanitarian incidents', including eight incidents of targeting health workers or health facilities <sup>(667)</sup>. 24 % of all children in Helmand did not complete all immunisation vaccination rounds due to the conflict <sup>(668)</sup>. And according to UNOCHA, maternal mortality rate in Helmand far exceeds the already 'unacceptably high' national average <sup>(669)</sup>. According to Action Contre La Faim, a humanitarian actor in the province, 'Lashkargah and its outskirts have been strongly affected by fighting and displacement in and suffer from limited availability of public services and lack of economic development'. Lack of access to sanitation facilities and clean water lead to diarrhoea and chronic malnutrition <sup>(670)</sup>. In March 2018, the provincial director responsible for education told Pajhwok that ANSF had occupied 20 schools in Helmand and used at least a part of them as a security post. Of the 400 schools in Helmand, 102 were closed. This affected the access to education for of 165 000 students, including 23 000 girls <sup>(671)</sup>.

An NGO affiliated with the Education Department signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Taliban in Helmand on solutions to education-related problems. The two sides have agreed to protect of madrassas, schools and other buildings and to open closed schools and madrassas. The Educational Department of the province was not involved, as the Spokesman of the Governor confirmed <sup>(672)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 17 356 persons displaced from Helmand (7 from Baghran; 1 118 from Garmser; 89 from Kajaki; 3 292 from

<sup>(658)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 09.10.2017, 9 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(659)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 15.01.2018, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(660)</sup> Tolo News, Death Toll Rises To Seven In Lashkargah Suicide Bombing, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(661)</sup> IWPR, Afghanistan: Cautious Welcome for Renewed Night Raids, 28 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(662)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, New appointments reflect power struggle within Taliban, 1 February 2018 ([url](#)); NPR, In Helmand, Afghan General Fights Taliban 'Cancer' With Some Help From U.S. Marines, 8 November 2017 ([url](#)); Diplomat (The), 5 Reasons Why Helmand Matters to the Taliban, 31 May 2016 ([url](#)).

<sup>(663)</sup> NPR, In Helmand, Afghan General Fights Taliban 'Cancer' With Some Help From U.S. Marines, 8 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(664)</sup> RFE/RL, Sixteen Afghan Pro-Government Fighters Killed In Taliban Attack, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(665)</sup> Tolo News, Helmand Farmers Cultivating Poppies Year Round, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(666)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 27.

<sup>(667)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 71, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(668)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 13.

<sup>(669)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 27.

<sup>(670)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 69, 31 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(671)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 Helmand schools used as security bases: official, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(672)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban agree to reopening closed schools in Helmand, 14 February 2018 ([url](#)).

Lashkargah; 84 from Musaqualah; 3 889 from Nad-e Ali / Marja; 2 468 from Nahr-e Saraj; 5 240 from Nawa-e Barakzai; 1 169 from Sangin) <sup>(673)</sup>.

Local authorities reported thousands of IDPs from conflict-affected areas. In November 2017, for example, 7 500 IDPs arrived in Gereshk town, Nahr-e Saraj district <sup>(674)</sup>. In January 2018 1 200 displaced people arrived from Sangin and 2 100 from Nad-e-Ali/Marja arrived in Lashkargah, ‘reportedly due to sporadic clashes and incidents with improvised explosive devices’ <sup>(675)</sup>.

## 2.13 Herat

### 2.13.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Herat

According to a BBC study of January 2018 based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘medium’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Shindand and Gulran districts, and a ‘low’ presence or activity (district attacked at least once in three months) in Kushk, Kushk Kuna, Ghoryan, Guzara, Adraskan, and Chisht-i Sharif <sup>(676)</sup>.

Various sources claim that Iran is training and funding Afghan Taliban fighters <sup>(677)</sup>.

Rivalling Taliban groups clashed with each other in Shindand district in October, causing dozens of casualties from both sides <sup>(678)</sup>.

In Herat, ISKP has for the first time claimed responsibility for attacks carried out outside Nangarhar and Kabul provinces <sup>(679)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents (acts of violence against civilians) were recorded by sources consulted by ACLED in Herat province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 <sup>(680)</sup>.

#### (Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Herat

In November 2017, ANSF conducted a ten-day military operation codenamed Azam Kahlid 21 in Shindand <sup>(681)</sup>. In December 2017, humanitarian actors in the region reported ‘large scale operations’ by international military forces and ANSF in Shindand district in which ‘many insurgents were killed’. However, according to the same source, after ANSF withdrew,

<sup>(673)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(674)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 6 - 12 November 2017, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(675)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 8 to 14 January 2018, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(676)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(677)</sup> RFE/RL, Leaders Mark Start Of Work On Afghan Section Of TAPI Pipeline, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Afghan Militants “Trained In Iran” Surrender Before TAPI Attack, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)); Il Post, L’Iran si sta facendo largo in Afghanistan, 13 August 2017 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), In Afghanistan, U.S. Exists, and Iran Comes In, 5 August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(678)</sup> Khaama Press, Deadly infighting among Taliban leaves 50 dead, wounded in Herat, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)); VOA, Dozens of Militants Dead as Taliban Rival Groups Clash in Afghanistan, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(679)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 39.

<sup>(680)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(681)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 75 militants killed in Herat fresh offensive, 20 November 2017 ([url](#)).

insurgent splinter groups clashed with each other again <sup>(682)</sup>. Clashes in Shindand were also reported in December 2017 <sup>(683)</sup>.

An air strike on a Taliban gathering in Chisht-e Sharif in October 2017 reportedly killed hundreds of Taliban <sup>(684)</sup>. However UNHCR stated there were no Taliban casualties in the air strike <sup>(685)</sup>. Clashes and another air strike in Shindand in December 2017 killed eight Taliban in Chisht-e Sharif <sup>(686)</sup>.

Italian army forces are stationed in Herat to assist Afghan forces in the west of Afghanistan under the Train Advise Assist Command West (TAAC-W) <sup>(687)</sup>.

### 2.13.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

UNAMA documented 495 civilian casualties (238 deaths and 257 injured) in 2017, contrary to the national trends in 2017, an increase by 37 % compared to 2016. IEDs, suicide and complex attacks and targeted and deliberate killings were the main causes of civilian casualties in Herat province <sup>(688)</sup>. Suicide and complex attacks and other types of incidents involving IEDs were the main drivers of the increase in Herat <sup>(689)</sup>. While fighting increased in Herat in 2017, UNAMA recorded fewer civilian casualties from ground engagements in this province: 87 civilian casualties (38 deaths and 49 injured), a 58 % decrease compared to 2016 <sup>(690)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the southern districts Shindand in the highest category and Adraskan in the category below <sup>(691)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Herat as a province of ‘high protection concern’, defined as: ‘new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host community’, as well as ‘non-displaced conflict affected people’. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict <sup>(692)</sup>.

Herat, once declared the ‘deadliest province for landmines’ was declared ‘landmine-free’ in February 2018 <sup>(693)</sup>. In mid-February 2018, the Halo Trust mine clearance organisation announced that 14 of 16 districts of the province were considered safe following 10 years of minefield clearance operations. In these areas, the Press Spokesman of the Province Governor confirmed, there was no longer a danger of being exposed to land mines and other unexploded ordnance. Given the bad security situation and the presence of insurgents, the districts of Gulran and Shindand have not been cleared of mines yet <sup>(694)</sup>.

<sup>(682)</sup> UNOCHA, Minutes of Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting – Western Region, 6 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(683)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Nearly a dozen militants killed in Herat incidents, 24 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(684)</sup> Khaama Press, Airstrike target a gathering of 300 Taliban militants in Herat, 25 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(685)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2017.

<sup>(686)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 50 rebels killed, 19 injured in past 24 hours: MoD, 22 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Nearly a dozen militants killed in Herat incidents, 24 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(687)</sup> Italy, Ministero della Difesa, Contributo nazionale, n.d. ([url](#)).

<sup>(688)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(689)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(690)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(691)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(692)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 30.

<sup>(693)</sup> Reuters, Most landmines in Afghanistan are a legacy of conflicts in the 1980s and 1990s, 15 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(694)</sup> Arab News, Thousands of lives saved as Herat cleared of landmines, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)).



In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 125 incidents related to insurgents in Herat province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(695)</sup>.

UNAMA documented an increasing number of victims from ISKP in Herat province, where they claimed one complex attack and two remote-controlled IEDs in 2017 <sup>(696)</sup>. For example, in December 2017, 'ISKP detonated a remote-controlled IED outside a library in a predominately ethnic Hazara neighbourhood, killing one civilian woman and three men and injuring a boy, two women, and seven men' according to UNAMA <sup>(697)</sup>. In March 2018, they again claimed an attack on a Shia mosque in Herat city: two suicide attackers tried to enter the mosque during prayers, but were repulsed by security guards. One was killed and the other detonated his suicide vest outside, killing at least one person and wounding eight others <sup>(698)</sup>.

Other incidents of IEDs or roadside bombs with civilian casualties include:

- A bomb hidden in a motorbike exploded in front of a busy shop in Herat city in December 2017, killing between three or four people and wounding six to ten more <sup>(699)</sup>;
- A motorcycle hitting a roadside bomb in Shindand in September 2017 killing a civilian and wounding another <sup>(700)</sup>;
- A bomb exploded either inside or near a civilian house in Shindand district in January 2018 and reportedly killed five civilians, among them women and children, and injured three more, believed to be relatives of Taliban members <sup>(701)</sup>;
- A car hit a roadside bomb in Kushk district in January 2018, killing its driver <sup>(702)</sup>;
- A roadside bomb killed at least 12 civilians in Gulran district in January 2018, wounding another person <sup>(703)</sup>;
- In March 2018, a motorcycle packed with explosives was detonated near a busy market, killing one person and wounding seven more <sup>(704)</sup>.

A roadside bomb further targeted ANSF personnel in Ghoryan district in September 2017 <sup>(705)</sup>; and militants raided a security checkpoint in Koshk Kuhna in October 2017 <sup>(706)</sup>. Clashes were also reported in Guzara in March 2018 <sup>(707)</sup>.

<sup>(695)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(696)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 27, 39.

<sup>(697)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 41.

<sup>(698)</sup> Reuters, At least one dead in blast near mosque in Afghan city of Herat, 25 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(699)</sup> Tolo News, Explosion In Herat Leaves Three Dead, 21 December 2017 ([url](#)); Ariana News, Four Killed in Herat Explosion, 21 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(700)</sup> AP, Afghan official: 2 people killed by roadside bombs, 30 September 2017, available in: ([url](#)).

<sup>(701)</sup> Ariana News, Five Civilians Including Children Killed In Explosion In Herat, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan news, 8 of a family killed, wounded in Herat explosion, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(702)</sup> Ariana News, Five Civilians Including Children Killed In Explosion In Herat, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(703)</sup> AP, Roadside bomb kills 12 civilians in Afghanistan's Herat province, 21 January 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Roadside bomb kills 12 civilians in W. Afghanistan, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 civilians dead in Herat landmine explosion, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(704)</sup> Khaama Press, Motorcycle bomb explosion leaves 1 dead, 7 wounded in Herat, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(705)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 policemen killed, 1 wounded in Herat roadside bombing, 26 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(706)</sup> PressTV, Eleven troops killed as Taliban storm army bases in Afghanistan, 25 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(707)</sup> Tolo News, Taliban Commander Killed in Herat Clash, 29 March 2018 ([url](#)).

In two separate incidents two employees of a road construction company and later five teachers were abducted in Shindand district in March 2018. One of the teachers was subsequently killed <sup>(708)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

The province is said to be a major corridor for human trafficking to Iran, especially the trafficking of children <sup>(709)</sup>. UNHCR noted, however, that the main illegal entry point for migrants is Nimroz, while Herat sees only ‘small movements’ of illegal migrants crossing into Iran <sup>(710)</sup>.

In a parallel justice case, a woman was shot by the Taliban in Shindand in September 2017 <sup>(711)</sup>. In December 2017, humanitarian actors in the region reported an acid attack on two girls going to school in Herat city <sup>(712)</sup>. According to reporting, the girls may have been targeted because their father is a civil society activist <sup>(713)</sup>.

In 2017, UNODC reported an increase in poppy cultivation by 432 % compared to 2016, mainly in Shindand and Kushk (Rabat-e Sangi), ‘where security was very poor’ according to UNODC <sup>(714)</sup>.

In November 2017, the chairman of Herat’s education department declared that over 219 schools, or nearly 23 % of all schools in Herat, were controlled by the Taliban. Because of the insecurity in these areas, the government is unable to control education in Shindand, Goryan, Kushk Kuhna, Adraskan and Obe districts. In these areas, the Taliban monitor the schools, and the government official voiced his satisfaction with the Taliban monitoring <sup>(715)</sup>. In Pashtun Zarghoon, the Taliban were said to have burned a public school for girls in December 2017, affecting the education of 600 girls <sup>(716)</sup>.

Work on the Afghan section of the TAPI line was inaugurated in mid-March 2018. This 1,800 km natural gas pipeline is to supply Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India with 33 billion cubic metres of Turkmen natural gas for 30 years. The pipeline is to run alongside the Herat-Kandahar highway, thus through an area with a strong Taliban presence. However, the Taliban declared their support for TAPI, calling it an ‘important project’ for the country <sup>(717)</sup>. Within the scope of the TAPI project, 70 Taliban have agreed to join in the peace process <sup>(718)</sup>. Thousands of security forces have been deployed to ensure security for the TAPI project <sup>(719)</sup>.

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<sup>(708)</sup> 1TV News, Taliban abduct two in Herat, 29 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban Abducts Schoolteachers In Herat, 30 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(709)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Wounded souls of deported Afghan children, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(710)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2017.

<sup>(711)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 10.

<sup>(712)</sup> UNOCHA, Minutes of Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting – Western Region, 6 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(713)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Unidentified individuals spray acid on sisters in Herat, 21 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(714)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 33.

<sup>(715)</sup> Tolo News, Over 200 Herat Schools Controlled By Taliban, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)); LWJ, Afghan official ‘happy’ Taliban controls 219 schools in Herat, 29 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(716)</sup> Salam Watandar, Taliban Torch Girls’s School in Herat, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(717)</sup> RFE/RL, Leaders Mark Start Of Work On Afghan Section Of TAPI Pipeline, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(718)</sup> Tolo News, Taliban Group Ready To Join Peace Process, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(719)</sup> Tolo News, Seven Die In Kandahar-Herat Highway Accident, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)).

## Displacement

UNOCHA recorded, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, 7 134 persons displaced from Herat (889 from Adraskan; 574 from Gulran; 21 from Injil; 69 from Kushk; 208 from Kushk Kohna; 59 from Obe; 5 314 from Shindand) <sup>(720)</sup>.

In September 2017, almost 1 500 individuals were displaced from Shindand and Adraskan districts in Herat and neighbouring provinces Ghor and Badghis to Herat city <sup>(721)</sup>.

In November 2017, a number of humanitarian actors, part of the Protection Cluster, reported the destruction of IDP shelters in Police Rah makeshift shelters in Injil district on the highway to Karukh, despite their calls to halt the destruction of IDP shelters before winter <sup>(722)</sup>.

With one of the two major border crossings to/from Iran in Islam Qala, Herat is one of the major exit and entry points for migration to/from Iran. Some returnees do not return to their area of origin and stay in Herat. The city's absorption capacity has so far 'proven to be high', according to Oxfam <sup>(723)</sup>.

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, 489,363 individuals or one in five residents of Herat is either an IDP or returnee from abroad, of whom 164 871 live in the Jebrail settlement of Herat city, the largest IDP- and returnee-settlement in the country. More than 8 000 IDPs and returnees in Herat live in tents or in open air. 77 518 people, or 4 % of the population, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 100 000 people from Herat, or 6 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(724)</sup>. UNHCR stated they weren't able to confirm this information <sup>(725)</sup>.

For more information on Herat City, see EASO Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan - Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City <sup>(726)</sup>.

## 2.14 Jawzjan/Jowzjan

### 2.14.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Jawzjan

The Taliban are active in some districts of the province <sup>(727)</sup>, with certain districts having come under their control or influence <sup>(728)</sup>. According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a 'high' 'active and physical presence' (districts attacked at least twice a week) in the southern districts Qush Tepa and Darzab and a 'medium' (districts attacked at least three times a month) to

<sup>(720)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(721)</sup> UNOCHA, Minutes of Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting – Western Region, 9 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(722)</sup> Protection Cluster Afghanistan, November 2017 - Western Region Update, December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(723)</sup> OXFAM, Returning to Fragility. Exploring the link between conflict and returnees in Afghanistan, January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 20.

<sup>(724)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(725)</sup> UNHCR, e-mail, 24 April 2018.

<sup>(726)</sup> EASO, Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan - Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City, August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(727)</sup> Khaama Press, Gen. Dostum's commander killed in Taliban ambush in Jawzjan, 21 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(728)</sup> Tolo News, 1396 Was A Challenging Year In Terms of Security, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)).

'low' presence (district attacked at least once in three months) in northern Khanyab, Qarqin, Mardyan, Mingajik, Aqcha, Khanaqa and Fayzabad <sup>(729)</sup>.

Local residents reported to Reuters that since Qari Hekmatyar, a former Taliban commander, switched sides to ISKP <sup>(730)</sup>, many foreign fighters have arrived in southern Darzab and Qush Tepa. These foreign fighters are accused of abuses, such as forcing local girls into marriage, and forcing schools to allow bomb- and gun training to take place in their classes <sup>(731)</sup>. Since the end of 2017, there have been several reports about foreign IS fighters joining ISKP in southern Jawzjan including French, Algerian and Uzbeks nationals <sup>(732)</sup> where they are allegedly being trained by mentors from Sudan, Chechnya, Uzbekistan and France according to Pajhwok <sup>(733)</sup>. An ISKP training centre is believed to be located in Sardar village, Darzab <sup>(734)</sup>. In December 2017, local officials claimed ISKP was recruiting children as young as 9-10 years old in the province <sup>(735)</sup> and officials were quoted fearing ISKP could soon extract minerals, including gold and uranium, from mines in Darzab and Qush Tepa <sup>(736)</sup>. It is not clear whether these IS fighters are allied with the ISKP group in Nangarhar <sup>(737)</sup>. Another source alleges there are contacts between the two IS groups <sup>(738)</sup>. Jawzjan province witnesses armed conflict between Taliban and ISKP <sup>(739)</sup>.

ISKP-related security-relevant incidents (skirmishes and acts of violence against civilians) were recorded in sources consulted by ACLED in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(740)</sup>.

#### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Jawzjan**

Military operations (ground engagements and air strikes) are being conducted in the province <sup>(741)</sup>, in which Taliban and IS supporters are being killed <sup>(742)</sup> as well as foreign ISKP

<sup>(729)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(730)</sup> Ali, O., Precarious Consolidation: Qari Hekmat's IS-affiliated 'island' survives another Taleban onslaught, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(731)</sup> Reuters, Islamic State seizes new Afghan foothold after luring Taliban defectors, 1 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(732)</sup> DID News, North of Afghanistan; Refuge for French ISIL members, 10 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, French, Uzbek Daesh Militants Killed in Jawzjan Air Operation, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, French woman with Daesh detained in Jawzjan, 23 March 2018 ([url](#)); AFP, French female IS fighter caught in Afghanistan: officials, 23 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(733)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh foreign mentors recruiting Jawzjan youth, 12 November 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(734)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh foreign mentors recruiting Jawzjan youth, 12 November 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(735)</sup> Ariana News, Daesh prepares 12 children to conduct suicide attacks in Jawzjan, 20 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(736)</sup> Times of Islamabad, Daesh close to extracting Uranium from Afghanistan, 12 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(737)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 38.

<sup>(738)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 Islamic State militants arrested in Jawzjan, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(739)</sup> Tolo News, US Airstrikes Kill 37 Daesh Fighters in Jawzjan, 17 March 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Daesh Insurgents In Burqas Kill 15 Taliban Members in Jawzjan, 25 October 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh foreign mentors recruiting Jawzjan youth, 12 November 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(740)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(741)</sup> Anadolu Agency, 'More than 40 militants' killed in Afghanistan, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, US Airstrikes Kill 37 Daesh Fighters in Jawzjan, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 42 Daesh And Taliban Fighters Killed In Afghan Airstrikes, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, French, Uzbek Daesh Militants Killed in Jawzjan Air Operation, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(742)</sup> Swiss Info, Afghanistan: uccisi da Usa 37 militanti Isis in Jawzjan, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Six Daesh Militants Killed In Jawzjan Clash, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 13 Daesh insurgents killed in Jawzjan airstrike, 4 March 2013 ([url](#)); Anadolu Agency, 'More than 40 militants' killed in Afghanistan, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)).

fighters (Uzbeks, French, Algerians, Chechen) <sup>(743)</sup>. ISKP commanders were also among those killed <sup>(744)</sup>.

Clashes between the Afghan forces and IS supporters and Taliban fighters are also taking place <sup>(745)</sup>. Clashes between ANSF and Taliban were also reported in Faizabad <sup>(746)</sup> and Aqcha <sup>(747)</sup>.

In Darzab and Qush Tepa districts, a three-party conflict raged, with both Taliban and ANSF fighting against a self-identified ISKP group, and each other, for control over the area. All parties conducted offensives, including ANSF and international military forces' air strikes, in which officials often claim to have killed foreign fighters <sup>(748)</sup>.

In some districts women took up arms joining militia to fight back insurgents in Qush Tepa <sup>(749)</sup> and in Darzab <sup>(750)</sup>.

### 2.14.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

In 2017, UNAMA documented 118 civilian victims (46 deaths and 72 injured). This represents a 47 % decrease compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagements, followed by targeted and deliberate killings and non-suicide IEDs <sup>(751)</sup>.

In a map depicting 'conflict severity' in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the southern district Darzab in the highest category, and Qush Tepa in the category below. The districts Mardyan, Aqcha and Khanaqa were in the middle category and all other districts were in the lower two categories <sup>(752)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 144 incidents related to insurgents in Jawzjan province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(753)</sup>.

Incidents including civilian casualties include the ones mentioned below.

<sup>(743)</sup> Tolo News, French, Uzbek Daesh Militants Killed in Jawzjan Air Operation, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, French, Algerian Fighters Join Daesh in Afghanistan: Report, 10 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(744)</sup> Khaama Press, Top ISIS leaders Omair and Abu Samaya killed in North of Afghanistan, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(745)</sup> Swiss Info, Afghanistan: uccisi da Usa 37 militanti Isis in Jawzjan, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(746)</sup> Tolo News, Five Taliban Killed in Jawzjan Clashes, 12 October 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban's Key Commander Killed In Jawzjan Clash, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(747)</sup> Ariana News, 4 Afghan soldiers held hostage by Taliban in Jawzjan, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(748)</sup> Tolo News, Daesh Insurgents In Burqas Kill 15 Taliban Members In Jawzjan, 25 October 2017 ([url](#)); Ali, O., Qari Hekmat's Island: A Daesh enclave in Jawzjan?, 11 November 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, IS key leader detained in Afghan northern Jawzjan province, 25 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 Daesh insurgents killed in Jawzjan airstrike, 7 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, French, Uzbek Daesh Militants Killed in Jawzjan Air Operation, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)); Anadolu Agency, US strikes kill 25 Daesh militants in Afghanistan, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Uzbek nationals among 14 ISIS militants killed in Jawzjan airstrikes, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)); Ali, O., Precarious Consolidation: Qari Hekmat's IS-affiliated 'island' survives another Taleban onslaught, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 13 Daesh insurgents killed in Jawzjan airstrike, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 60 Daesh rebels killed and wounded in Jawzjan offensive, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, US Airstrikes Kill 37 Daesh Fighters In Jawzjan, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 Daesh, 3 Taliban killed in Jawzjan, Farah incidents, 27 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(749)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Feature: Gun-toting women in N. Afghanistan take stand against Taliban, IS, 17 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(750)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghan Women Take Up Arms Against The Taliban, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(751)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(752)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(753)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

- In September 2017, members of ISKP abducted 12 civilians from a Taliban-controlled area in Qush Tapa district, in order to exchange them with 20 people abducted by Taliban <sup>(754)</sup>. Other sources reported the abduction of 35 civilians, by both sides of the conflict <sup>(755)</sup>.
- In January 2018, a local uprising commander was quoted reporting ten civilians being killed in an air strike targeting ISKP members in Darzab district, including five women, four men and a child <sup>(756)</sup>. To RFE/RL, the Chief of Police in Jawzjan acknowledged the death of two civilians who he said attended the ISKP meeting for a matter of conflict resolution <sup>(757)</sup>. A few days later, Tolonews also reported that ten civilians were killed and four wounded in an air strike targeting ISKP in Darzab, but in a different setting <sup>(758)</sup>. It is unclear if these reports describe the same incident.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

UNAMA documented one case of parallel justice structure punishment by the ‘self-identified ISKP group’ in Jawzjan <sup>(759)</sup>. In December 2017, members of this group shot a man for killing his own father in Darzab district <sup>(760)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Jawzjan lost its poppy-free status in 2015. Since then the province area under opium poppy cultivation continuously expanded. In 2017, opium poppy cultivation in Jawzjan province was estimated at 3,237 hectares. This is almost eight times more than in 2016 <sup>(761)</sup>.

Both ALP and other pro-government groups in Jawzjan are being accused of abuses and causing civilian casualties <sup>(762)</sup>.

Local officials reported that all schools in Darzab and Qush Tapa were closed by members of ISKP in 2017. This affected 50 to 70 schools or 30,000 children <sup>(763)</sup>. Due to insecurity, access to markets and food supply were badly affected, resulting in rising food prices and increased food insecurity in Qush Tapa district, especially in rural areas, according to an assessment by WFP in September 2017 <sup>(764)</sup>.

<sup>(754)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 40.

<sup>(755)</sup> First Post, Taliban, Islamic State abduct 35 civilians in Afghanistan's Jawzjan province, 10 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(756)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 10 civilians, 26 Daesh militants killed in Jawzjan airstrikes, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(757)</sup> RFE/RL, Police Chief Claims Airstrikes Killed Foreign Fighters In Northern Afghanistan, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(758)</sup> Tolo News, Residents Claim 10 Civilians Killed In Jawzjan Airstrike, 5 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(759)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 36.

<sup>(760)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 40.

<sup>(761)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 24.

<sup>(762)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 50-52.

<sup>(763)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Conflict leaves 59 schools closed in Jawzjan, 5 December 2017 ([url](#)); 1TV News, Daesh closes dozens of schools in north Afghanistan: local officials, 9 December 2017 ([url](#)); Salaam Times, ISIS, Taliban shutter schools in Jawzjan, Ghazni provinces, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(764)</sup> WFP, Sayad and Qush Tapa Districts – Emergency Market Assessment Bulletin #7, September 2017 ([url](#)).

## Displacement

UNOCHA recorded, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, 9 646 persons displaced from Jawzjan (735 from Aqcha; 2 786 from Darzab; 630 from Khanaqa; 1 456 from Mardyan; 14 from Mingajik; 2 821 from Qushtepa; 1 204 from Shiberghan) <sup>(765)</sup>.

Numerous families were displaced from the Aqcha, Qush Tepa and Darzab districts to the centre of the province <sup>(766)</sup>.

In February 2018, local officials were quoted stating ‘thousands of civilians’ were displaced by Taliban-ISKP fighting in Darzab and Qush Tepa <sup>(767)</sup>.

## 2.15 Kandahar

### 2.15.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Kandahar

Kandahar is a former stronghold of the Taliban <sup>(768)</sup>. Being considered the place where the group was founded, it is of strategic importance to the Taliban. A major source of income for the Taliban in Kandahar province is opium production. The province borders on Pakistan’s Baluchistan province, which serves as a safe haven and general recruiting ground for the grouping <sup>(769)</sup>. ISKP-related incidents (acts of violence against civilians) were recorded in open sources consulted by ACLED in Kandahar province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 <sup>(770)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018 based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017 the Taliban fully control 14 districts nationwide, of which one in Kandahar: Reg district in the south. Further, they have a ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) and ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) ‘active and physical presence’ in most other districts, except for Daman district and Kandahar district, where Taliban are said to have initiated deadly suicide attacks, car bombs and targeted killings <sup>(771)</sup>.

#### (Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Kandahar

In February and March 2018, security forces had carried out operations <sup>(772)</sup>.

<sup>(765)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(766)</sup> IWPR, Families Flee IS in Northern Afghanistan, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Exposed to cold weather, Jawzjan IDPs in need of help, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(767)</sup> VOA, Taliban, IS Fighting Causes Families to Flee in Northern Afghanistan, 1 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Exposed to cold weather, Jawzjan IDPs in need of help, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(768)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Two civilians injured in S. Afghan shoot out, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(769)</sup> LWJ, Taliban overruns Afghan army camp in Kandahar, 19 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(770)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(771)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(772)</sup> Tolo News, Death Toll Rises To Four In Kandahar Attack, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Two civilians injured in S. Afghan shoot out, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pakistan Today, Afghan forces’ operations kill 36 militants in Kandahar, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban insurgents suffer casualties in Kandahar and Paktika operations: MoD, 2 September 2017 ([url](#)).

Air strikes are being conducted as well <sup>(773)</sup> in which insurgents were killed <sup>(774)</sup>. Also, there were clashes between Taliban militants and security forces <sup>(775)</sup>. For example, ANSF offensives, including air strikes, aiming at regaining territory were reported in Ghorak and Nad-e Ali <sup>(776)</sup>.

Female police also provide assistance on the front lines: Some 110 female officers are serving throughout Kandahar and also at the airport <sup>(777)</sup>.

## 2.15.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

### General

The UN reported in February the ‘insurgents continued to exert pressure on Afghan security forces by launching coordinated attacks on checkpoints, outposts and bases of the ANSF in Kandahar’ <sup>(778)</sup>.

In 2017 UNAMA documented 716 civilian victims (271 deaths and 445 injured), a decrease of 18 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from non-suicide IEDs, ground engagements, and unexploded ordnances and landmines <sup>(779)</sup>. UNAMA recorded 110 civilian casualties (25 deaths and 85 injured) from unexploded ordnances (UXO) in Kandahar in 2017 <sup>(780)</sup>. Additionally, UNAMA reported on civilian casualties by cross-border shelling in Kandahar in 2017 <sup>(781)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Kandahar as one of the ‘most conflict affected’ provinces <sup>(782)</sup>. In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the districts Maywand, Shahwalikot and Nesh in the highest category. The districts of Ghorak, Khakrez, Kandahar City (Dand), Daman, Arghestan and Miyanshin were in the category below <sup>(783)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Kandahar as one of the four provinces where persons exhibiting very high protection concerns are located, defined as: ‘new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host community’, as well as ‘non-displaced conflict affected people’. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict <sup>(784)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 172 incidents related to insurgents in Kandahar province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(785)</sup>.

<sup>(773)</sup> ANI, US airstrike kills 13 Taliban militants in Afghanistan, 19 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 25 Taliban killed, 14 wounded in Kandahar airstrike, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pakistan Today, Afghan forces’ operations kill 36 militants in Kandahar, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(774)</sup> ANI, US airstrike kills 13 Taliban militants in Afghanistan, 19 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 25 Taliban killed, 14 wounded in Kandahar airstrike, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(775)</sup> Tolo News, Death Toll Rises To Four In Kandahar Attack, 7 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(776)</sup> LWJ, Taliban overruns 3 districts in southern Afghanistan, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Southern Region. Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 30 October 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 1-2.

<sup>(777)</sup> Reuters, Female police officers help security on Afghan front line, 9 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(778)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(779)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(780)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(781)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(782)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(783)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(784)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 30.

<sup>(785)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.



The decrease in casualties from ground engagements in Kandahar was, according to UNAMA ‘significant’ : a 25 % decrease, but still 192 civilian casualties (25 deaths and 167 injured) <sup>(786)</sup>. For example in September 2017, five boys were killed by a stray bullets while hiding in their garden in Khakrez <sup>(787)</sup>. On the other hand, Kandahar is among the provinces with a high number of incidents of detonation of explosive remnants of war causing civilian casualties, and also among the provinces with the highest use of indirect weapons. This highlights, according to UNAMA, the link between the number of victims from explosive remnants of war, and the use of indirect weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades <sup>(788)</sup>.

Pressure-plate IEDs (PP-IED) caused 168 civilian casualties (85 deaths and 83 injured), a 36 % decrease <sup>(789)</sup>. In September 2017, six civilians were killed by an IED hidden in their truck <sup>(790)</sup> and in November 2017, for example, in Arghistan district a pressure-plate IED killed eight civilians, including three women and a two-year-old boy, and injured two more. According to UNAMA, ‘the Taliban had placed this device on that road to restrict the movement of the Afghan national security forces who had recently re-taken the village’ <sup>(791)</sup>.

UNAMA reported seven incidents of search operations causing 37 civilian casualties (25 deaths and 12 injured) in Kandahar in 2017. For example three men and a boy were killed and two men, four boys and a girl injured, all inside their homes, by stray bullets during a search operation in Shahwalikot <sup>(792)</sup>.

More examples of IEDs killing civilians are:

- In September an IED incident in Daman district killed 6 civilians <sup>(793)</sup>
- A roadside bomb killing eight civilians, including three women and a child, in Maroof district in November 2017 <sup>(794)</sup>;
- An IED targeting a convoy of international military forces killed a female civilian passer-by and wounded four to seven more civilians in Kandahar city or Daman district, depending on the source, in December 2017 <sup>(795)</sup>.
- In January 2018, a suicide bomber targeted a police convoy in Kandahar City, killing two policemen and two civilians, and wounding six policemen and four civilians <sup>(796)</sup>.

In September 2017, humanitarian actors reported that insurgents intensified their attacks and clashes in Shahwalikot, Khakrez, Arghistan and Ghorak districts. This resulted in civilian

<sup>(786)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(787)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 12.

<sup>(788)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(789)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 32.

<sup>(790)</sup> Reuters, Roadside bomb claims six civilian lives in Kandahar, 18 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 civilians killed in Kandahar roadside bombing, 18 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(791)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 32.

<sup>(792)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 53.

<sup>(793)</sup> UNOCHA, Southern Region. Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(794)</sup> Reuters, Roadside bomb kills eight in Afghanistan: local official, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(795)</sup> 1TV News, Car bomb targeting convoy of foreign forces kills civilian in Kandahar, 17 December 2017 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Deadly Taliban Attacks on NATO Convoy and Police in Afghanistan, 17 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(796)</sup> VOA, Suicide Bomber Kills 4 in Afghanistan's Kandahar, 26 January 2018 ([url](#)); Bakhtar News, Suicide Attack Took The Lives of 4, Wounded 10 In Kandahar, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)).

casualties. In response, ANSF conducted air strikes and ground offensives, reportedly also killing 13 civilians <sup>(797)</sup>. In September 2017, for example, a woman was killed and five other persons wounded when their car was being fired at in Shahwalikot in September 2017 <sup>(798)</sup>.

In two attacks on ANSF personnel, in Maroof in September and in Maywand in October 2017, the Taliban used captured Humvees as suicide bombs, killing dozens of soldiers <sup>(799)</sup>. The Taliban attacked and overran briefly the Maroof district centre in September 2017 <sup>(800)</sup> and again conducted coordinated attacks on its District Administrative Centre (DAC). These attacks resulted in displacement to Kandahar city and inside the districts. Further attacks on ANSF check points were reported in Arghandab <sup>(801)</sup>.

In November 2017, the Taliban attacked 15 security posts in one night in three different districts: Maywand, Zhari and Naway, killing dozens of policemen <sup>(802)</sup>.

In November 2017, the International NGO Safety office reported that the focus of the insurgents was Maywand, with ‘many coordinated attacks’ and the overrunning of security checkpoints. Further, a large-scale suicide attack targeted an international military convoy in Kandahar city / Dand district <sup>(803)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

In September 2017, UNOCHA reported that 60 000 children were reportedly deprived from polio vaccination, because insurgents did not grant the vaccination teams permission to work in areas under their control <sup>(804)</sup>. According to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, with five cases in 2017, the district of Shahwalikot has the highest number of polio cases in the world <sup>(805)</sup>. In December 2017, another case emerged of a 2-year-old girl was diagnosed with wild polio in December 2017 <sup>(806)</sup>.

In 2017, Kandahar experienced ten incidents of targeting health workers or health facilities <sup>(807)</sup>. For example, in December 2017, NDS Special Forces raided and partly burned a healthcare facility in Maywand <sup>(808)</sup>. And 16.5 % of the population on Kandahar suffers from acute malnutrition, which, according to UNOCHA, exceeds emergency levels <sup>(809)</sup>. In January 2018, two NGO staff were reportedly beaten and detained by two members of the Afghan

<sup>(797)</sup> UNOCHA, Southern Region. Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(798)</sup> AP, Afghan official: 2 people killed by roadside bombs, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(799)</sup> Tolo News, 12 Security Force Members Killed in Kandahar Suicide Bombing, 28 September 2017 ([url](#));

Guardian (The), Taliban suicide attackers kill scores of Afghan soldiers in Kandahar, 19 October 2017 ([url](#)); Ruttig, T., The ‘Humvee Bomb’ Series: The October wave of Taleban attacks in 2017 context, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(800)</sup> AP, 12 Afghan security officials killed, 4 wounded in Kandahar, 28 September 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(801)</sup> LWJ, Taliban overruns 3 districts in southern Afghanistan, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Southern Region. Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 30 October 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 1-2.

<sup>(802)</sup> AP, Taliban fighters storm 15 security posts in Afghanistan's Kandahar province, kill 27 policemen, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)); DW, Taliban night vision attacks in Kandahar, Farah kill dozens, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(803)</sup> UNOCHA, Southern Region. Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) Meeting Minutes, 27 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 2.

<sup>(804)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 68, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 2.

<sup>(805)</sup> Lanzer, T., Statement by Toby Lanzer, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator: First Round of Polio Vaccination in Shahwalikot Completed, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(806)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 25 - 31 December 2017, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(807)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 71, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(808)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 15.

<sup>(809)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 13.

Local Police in Maywand<sup>(810)</sup>. In January 2018, humanitarian actors reported difficulties in reaching IDP families in Khakrez district<sup>(811)</sup>.

Kandahar was in 2017 the second most important poppy cultivating province, after Helmand. Kandahar province also saw an increase in poppy cultivation by 37 % (+ 7 500 hectares as against a total of 18 010 hectares), while 48 hectares were eradicated compared to four hectares eradicated in 2016<sup>(812)</sup>. In a bid to find alternative crops for farmers currently cultivating narcotics plants, the Afghan government will make pistachio fields available, including 250 fields in Kandahar<sup>(813)</sup>. The main opium poppy cultivation districts were Maywand, Zahri, Nesh, Spin Boldak and Panjwayi<sup>(814)</sup>.

During an operation in Maywand district in January-February 2018, a special forces unit of the NDS, backed by air force, claimed to have killed 50 Taliban and arrested 32 individuals<sup>(815)</sup>. However, witnesses told HRW that in addition to the 50 Taliban killed, at least 20 civilians were also killed, while fleeing the bombardments. The NDS operatives were also accused of summarily executing detained persons during this operation<sup>(816)</sup>.

Kandahar, alongside four other provinces (Herat, Farah, Nimroz and Helmand), will accommodate the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline<sup>(817)</sup>. These provinces are largely under Taliban control, and the security situation there is problematic. In view of building the pipeline, the Taliban and neighbouring Pakistan have signalled their willingness to support the TAPI project<sup>(818)</sup>. In Afghanistan, the pipeline is to be built alongside the Kandahar-Herat section of the highway. Thousands of security forces have been deployed to ensure security for the TAPI project<sup>(819)</sup>.

## Displacement

UNOCHA recorded, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, 13 230 persons displaced from Kandahar (35 from Arghandab; 245 from Arghestan; 63 from Daman; 622 from Ghorak; 933 from Khakrez; 616 from Maruf; 67 from Maywand; 401 from Miyanshin; 7 679 from Nesh; 1 892 from Shahwalikot; 677 Unknown)<sup>(820)</sup>.

In October 2017, humanitarian actors reported conflict and insecurity leading to displacement of several hundreds, to Kandahar city, and in Ghorak and Sangin districts, two districts considered hard to reach as the road to Ghorak was closed for civilians<sup>(821)</sup>.

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, 257,899 individuals or 17 % of the population of Kandahar is either an IDP or returnee from abroad, of which almost 12 000 live either in tents or in the open air. 196 266 people, or 16 % of the population, fled their homes

<sup>(810)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 15 to 21 January 2018, 21 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(811)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 22 to 28 January 2018, 28 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(812)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 15.

<sup>(813)</sup> Tolo News, Four Taliban Insurgents Killed in Helmand Operation, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(814)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 5, 13, 28.

<sup>(815)</sup> Tolo News, 50 Taliban Militants Killed In Kandahar Offensive, 2 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(816)</sup> HRW, Afghanistan: Alleged Summary Executions by Special Forces, 21 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(817)</sup> Tolo News, Thousands Of Security Forces Deployed To Ensure TAPI Safety, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(818)</sup> New York Times (The), Afghanistan Breaks Ground on 1.127-Mile "Peace Pipeline", 23 February 2018 ([url](#));

Asia Foundation, A Pipeline for Landlocked Afghanistan: Can It Help Deliver Peace?, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(819)</sup> Tolo News, Thousands Of Security Forces Deployed To Ensure TAPI Safety, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(820)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(821)</sup> UNOCHA, Southern Region. Minutes of Ad hoc OCT Meeting. 16 October 2017 ([url](#)).

in the years 2012-2017. Over 16 000 people from Kandahar, or 1 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(822)</sup>.

## 2.16 Kapisa

### 2.16.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Kapisa

Taliban militants are active in several districts; their activities include targeted/deliberate killings, by means of small arms fire or explosives, on security forces, government officials, NATO and foreign diplomatic personnel and Afghan civilians <sup>(823)</sup>.

Insurgents operate in the following districts: Tagab, Alasay, and Nejrab <sup>(824)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018 based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, in 399 districts and questioning 1 200 individuals, the Taliban have a 'high' 'active and physical presence' (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Tagab and 'medium' presence and activity (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Alasay and Nejrab. The BBC also reports a low Taliban presence and activity in the Kohband and Hisa-i Duwum-e Kohestan districts (district attacked at least once in three months) <sup>(825)</sup>.

No ISKP-related incidents were recorded in sources consulted by ACLED in Kapisa province in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(826)</sup>.

#### (Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Kapisa

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(827)</sup>, with Taliban and ISKP supporters <sup>(828)</sup> and sometimes their leaders being killed <sup>(829)</sup>.

Air strikes were carried out as well, involving the killing of Taliban commanders <sup>(830)</sup>. There are clashes between the insurgents and Afghan security forces <sup>(831)</sup>.

<sup>(822)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(823)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban suffered heavy losses in joint operations: NATO, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); AP, Bomb kills 3 tribal elders in Afghanistan; 9 police killed, 23 February 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(824)</sup> Khaama Press, ISIS militants among 7 killed in Nangarhar and Kapisa drone strikes, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 of a Taliban family killed in Kapisa blitz, 24 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban ban women from shopping in Kapisa's Tagab, 8 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Car full of explosives seized in Kapisa, 5 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(825)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(826)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(827)</sup> Khaama Press, ISIS militants among 7 killed in Nangarhar and Kapisa drone strikes, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Anadolu Agency, Afghan government says 171 terrorists killed, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 of a Taliban family killed in Kapisa blitz, 24 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(828)</sup> Khaama Press, ISIS militants among 7 killed in Nangarhar and Kapisa drone strikes, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Anadolu Agency, Afghan government says 171 terrorists killed, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Prominent Taliban leader killed in Afghan forces ambush in Kapisa province, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(829)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban suffered heavy losses in joint operations: NATO, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Prominent Taliban leader killed in Afghan forces ambush in Kapisa province, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(830)</sup> Tolo News, Taliban Suffers Heavy Casualties in Kapisa Airstrike, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 of a Taliban family killed in Kapisa blitz, 24 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(831)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 5 intelligence officers killed in E. Afghan attack, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)); AP, Bomb kills 3 tribal elders in Afghanistan; 9 police killed, 21 February 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

With the advent of winter, security forces have begun conducting night-time raids backed by air support in unsafe areas of Kapisa province <sup>(832)</sup>.

## 2.16.2 General security trends and impact on the civilian population

### General

In 2017 UNAMA documented 101 civilian victims (34 deaths and 67 injured), a 19 % decrease compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, non-suicide IEDs, and targeted and deliberate killings <sup>(833)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the district Tagab in the highest category and the districts Nejrab in the category below. Alasay in the middle category, and all other districts in the lower two categories <sup>(834)</sup>. EMERGENCY NGO Hospital in Kabul reported to UNOCHA an increased number of war-wounded referrals from Kapisa <sup>(835)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 78 incidents related to insurgents in Kapisa province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(836)</sup>.

A remote-controlled IED detonated in a bazaar in Hisa-i Duwum-e Kohistan in September 2017, wounding nine civilians, including children <sup>(837)</sup>.

In a targeted attack, the head of the provincial Ulema council and his bodyguard were both killed in September 2017 in Hisa-i –Awal-e Kohistan. This was, according to Tolonews, the latest in ‘a number of local government and security officials [that] have been killed in different incidents in Kapisa province’ in the previous months <sup>(838)</sup>. In another targeted attack, gunmen shot and killed the chief of police in February 2018 <sup>(839)</sup>. And in March 2018, an ALP commander was killed in Tagab together with all other members of his family, including women and children <sup>(840)</sup>.

An air strike in Nejrab district in November 2017 targeting a Taliban commander killed at least five civilians, including women and children, presumably family of the target <sup>(841)</sup>.

Military operations in Tagab in November 2017 caused displacement of 600 families or 4,200 individuals, and reportedly also civilian casualties and destruction of houses <sup>(842)</sup>. See also [Displacement](#).

<sup>(832)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 of a Taliban family killed in Kapisa blitz, 24 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(833)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(834)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(835)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 10.

<sup>(836)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(837)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 civilians injured in Kapisa explosion, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); AP, Afghan official: 2 people killed by roadside bombs, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(838)</sup> Tolo News, Head Of Kapisa Ulema Council Assassinated, 9 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(839)</sup> BAMF, Briefing Notes vom 26.02.2018, 26 February 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(840)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Unknown armed men kill all members of a family in Kapisa, 27 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News (@pajhwok), [Twitter], 27 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(841)</sup> Tolo News, Airstrike Leaves Five Civilians Dead In Kapisa, 24 November 2017 ([url](#)); BAAG, Afghanistan in November 2017; Key News, 12 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(842)</sup> Afghanistan Protection Cluster, Central Region Update, November 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Kapisa. Meeting Summary, 19 November 2017 ([url](#)).

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

In September 2017, the Taliban reportedly threatened to punish all women who went out to the bazaar and all shopkeepers who sold goods to women in Tagab district. The Taliban reportedly only gave permission for accompanied women to go out to visit the doctor. Local security officials confirmed the ban on women in the public sphere, but denied it was being implemented <sup>(843)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 poppy cultivation had increased with 59 % to 968 hectares in 2017. Poppy cultivation occurred primarily in Tagab and Alasay districts <sup>(844)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 13 690 persons displaced from Kapisa (2 002 from Alasay; 56 from Hisa-i Awal-e Kohestan; 238 from Nejrab; 11 394 from Tagab) <sup>(845)</sup>.

UNOCHA continuously reported conflict and insecurity induced displacement in and from Tagab district, with a peak of 4 200 displaced in November 2017 <sup>(846)</sup>.

In January and February 2018, UNOCHA additionally reported the displacement of hundreds of displaced families from Alasay and Nejrab districts, for reasons of military operations, threats, insecurity and intimidation <sup>(847)</sup>. In mid-March 2018, some 1 300 persons were displaced to the Mahmud-e Raqi, Hisa-i Awal-e Kohestan and Hisa-i Duwum-e Kohestan districts from Kapisa, Laghman, Nuristan and Parwan provinces due to ongoing armed conflict in their villages and insecurity <sup>(848)</sup>.

## 2.17 Khost

### 2.17.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent Groups in Khost

In September 2017 an international organisation was quoted in EASO's Afghanistan Security Situation report from December 2017, saying that the long and porous border makes Khost province of great strategic importance as many insurgents have found a safe haven across the border in Pakistan. The Haqqani network is named as the dominant insurgent actor in the

<sup>(843)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban ban women from shopping in Kapisa's Tagab, 8 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(844)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(845)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(846)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 11 to 17 September 2017, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Kapisa. Meeting Summary, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Kapisa. Meeting Summary, 19 October 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 12 - 19 November 2017, 19 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Kapisa. Meeting Summary, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team (OCT) – Kapisa. Meeting Summary, 3 January 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 15 to 21 January 2018, 21 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Kapisa OCT Meeting - Central Region, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(847)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team (OCT) – Kapisa. Meeting Summary, 3 January 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 15 to 21 January 2018, 21 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Kapisa OCT Meeting - Central Region, 18 January 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 29 January to 4 February 2018, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(848)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 12 to 18 March 2018, 18 March 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1.

province<sup>(849)</sup>. The province is the birthplace of Jalaluddin Haqqani, the founder of the Haqqani network<sup>(850)</sup>. The Haqqani network operates in Khost province<sup>(851)</sup>.

In recent years, parts of Khost province have seen a Taliban-led insurgency<sup>(852)</sup>. According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) or ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) ‘active and physical presence’ in the entire province<sup>(853)</sup>. Suicide attacks and other attacks occur<sup>(854)</sup>.

ISKP-related security-relevant incidents (acts of violence against civilians, skirmishes) were recorded in sources consulted by ACLED in Khost province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018<sup>(855)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Khost**

Military operations are being conducted in the province<sup>(856)</sup>. Some high-ranking Taliban leaders were killed in air strikes<sup>(857)</sup>. There are clashes between insurgents and Afghan security forces<sup>(858)</sup>.

Military operations involving ANSF and international military forces were launched in October 2017<sup>(859)</sup>.

The Khost Protection Force is a pro-government militia, outside the ANSF structure and supported and trained by the CIA<sup>(860)</sup>, that operates in Khost and Paktyia.

### **2.17.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

Khost is considered a contested Afghan province<sup>(861)</sup>; insurgents from the Taliban and the Haqqani network are active in some districts. The insurgents try to launch attacks in the form

<sup>(849)</sup> EASO, Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan Security Situation, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 170.

<sup>(850)</sup> VOA, US Strike Reportedly Kills Haqqani Network Commander in Pakistan, 14 Juni 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(851)</sup> Economist (The), Pakistan’s army is getting serious about defeating domestic terrorism, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), A much-feared Taliban offshoot returns from dead, 19 July 2017 ([url](#)); Congressional Research Service, Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy, 13 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(852)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan gun battle claims 4 lives of civilians, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan forces thwart deadly VBIED attack in Khost province, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(853)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(854)</sup> Arab News, Botched suicide attack wounds 5 students in Afghan capital, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 35.

<sup>(855)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(856)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 28 militants killed as gov’t forces continue operations in Afghanistan, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report | 19 - 25 February 2018, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(857)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Drone attack kills 6 including Taliban key commander in Afghan’s Khost province, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(858)</sup> Telepolis, Ohne Plan und Perspektive: Mehr deutsche Soldaten für den Irak und Afghanistan, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan gun battle claims 4 lives of civilians, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(859)</sup> Express Tribune (The), US, Afghan forces launch major operation near Kurram border in coordination with Pak Army, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)); Frontier Post (The), 27 fighters of Haqqani network killed in Khost operation, 30 October 2017 ([url](#))

<sup>(860)</sup> Die Presse, Außer Kontrolle: Der Schattenkrieg der CIA, 17 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(861)</sup> Economist (The), Pakistan’s army is getting serious about defeating domestic terrorism, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 28 militants killed as gov’t forces continue operations in Afghanistan, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

of car bombs, roadside bombs and coordinated attacks in, amongst other provinces, Khost<sup>(862)</sup>.

The Ghulam Khan border crossing into North Waziristan is located in Khost; it was closed in 2014 in the course of a military operation against the Taliban and other groupings<sup>(863)</sup>. The border crossing, which lies on a major trading route between Pakistan and Afghanistan, was not reopened until early March 2018<sup>(864)</sup>.

In 2017 UNAMA documented 181 civilian victims (41 deaths and 140 injured), a 21 % increase compared to 2016, contrary to the national trend. Most of the victims were casualties of non-suicide IEDs, targeted and deliberate killings, and suicide and complex attacks<sup>(865)</sup>. According to UNAMA, the increase was mainly driven by suicide and complex attacks and other types of incidents involving IEDs<sup>(866)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the district Sabari in the second-highest category, the districts Terzayi, Khost/Matun, Musakhel, Nadirshahkot, and Spera in the middle category, and all other districts in the lower two categories<sup>(867)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 71 incidents related to insurgents in Khost province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website<sup>(868)</sup>.

In an air strike by ANSF in Alisher district in February 2018, seven members of one family were killed<sup>(869)</sup>. In February 2018, Pajhwok reported on military operations in Sabari and Alisher districts, reportedly causing several casualties, among them a girl<sup>(870)</sup>. In March 2018, local residents claimed that this operation caused the death of four members of one family<sup>(871)</sup>.

UNAMA reported specific problems with the Khost Protection Force. This is a pro-government militia, outside the ANSF structure and supported and trained by the CIA<sup>(872)</sup>, that operates in Khost and Paktyia. There have been allegations of human rights abuses, criminality and civilian casualties attributed to the Khost Protection Force. Although the number of civilian casualties attributed to this group decreased in 2017, from 32 in 2016 to 5 in 2017, UNAMA was worried about the atmosphere of impunity in which this group continues to operate<sup>(873)</sup>. A report from Khost issued on a US-based progressive news site in December 2017 documented life in the province. It quoted residents ‘living under a regime of fear’ from constant surveillance, the abusive behaviour in impunity of the Khost Protection Force and the imminent threat of drone and regular air force strikes<sup>(874)</sup>.

<sup>(862)</sup> Khaama Press, Afghan forces thwart deadly VBIED attack in Khost province, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(863)</sup> Anadolu Agency, Key trade route between Pakistan, Afghanistan reopens, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(864)</sup> Anadolu Agency, Pakistan losing lucrative export market in Afghanistan, 13 March 2018 ([url](#)); Anadolu Agency, Key trade route between Pakistan, Afghanistan reopens, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(865)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(866)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(867)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(868)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(869)</sup> Tolo News, Seven Members Of One Family Killed In Khost, 9 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 members of a family killed in Khost operation, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(870)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 10 people suffer casualties in Khost operation, 21 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(871)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Protest as 4 of a family killed in Khost operation, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(872)</sup> Die Presse, Außer Kontrolle: Der Schattenkrieg der CIA, 17 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(873)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 52-53.

<sup>(874)</sup> ThinkProgress, Afghans fearful as CIA-backed militias patrol the ground and U.S. drones haunt the skies, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)).



Drone strikes were reported in Khost in September 2017 targeting a vehicle carrying several Taliban <sup>(875)</sup> and October 2017, targeting a Pakistani Taliban (TTP) commander <sup>(876)</sup>.

In September 2017, a remote controlled IED exploded on a market, killing four civilians and wounding 14, including two boys <sup>(877)</sup>. In December 2017, a bomb exploded near a football stadium where Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was holding a political rally, without reports of casualties <sup>(878)</sup>.

Targeted killings include, the killing of a healthcare professional in Tera Zayi in October 2017 <sup>(879)</sup> and the abduction and killing of a civilian whom the Taliban – incorrectly according to UNAMA – assumed being a police officer <sup>(880)</sup>.

In September 2017, Pajhwok reported that ‘heavy weapons were used every day’ in a tribal conflict between Mangal and Moqbil tribes in Khost, leading to the displacement of dozens of families <sup>(881)</sup>. In December 2017, Pajhwok reported on the resumption of the clashes, reportedly causing several casualties <sup>(882)</sup>.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

In October 2017, residents demonstrated to ask the resignation of chief of police and the head of the crime branch, over allegations of incompetence and collision with criminals. They claimed crimes such as armed robberies and kidnappings had surged and the authorities were not doing enough to prevent them or prosecute those involved <sup>(883)</sup>. In a kidnapping attempt in September 2017, for example, a businessman was killed in the capital Khost City. The assailants reportedly also wounded a child before kidnapping it <sup>(884)</sup>. In December 2017, several policemen were arrested after they allegedly let escape arrested criminals <sup>(885)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Khost was poppy-free in 2017 <sup>(886)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 1 134 persons displaced from Khost (826 from Khost (Matun); 49 from Musakhel; 56 from Sabari; 70 from Spera; 21 from Tani; 112 from Terezayi) <sup>(887)</sup>.

<sup>(875)</sup> Pajwok Afghan News, Commander among 6 rebels killed in Khost strike, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Drone attack kills 6 including Taliban key commander in Afghan's Khost province, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(876)</sup> Anadolu Agency, Pakistani Taliban commander killed in US drone strike, 30 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(877)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 civilians dead, 14 wounded as blast rocks Khost City, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Four Civilians Killed in Khost Market Blast, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)); UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 32.

<sup>(878)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Iran-made bomb used in Khost attack, claims Hekmatyar, 11 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(879)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 14.

<sup>(880)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 35.

<sup>(881)</sup> Pajwok Afghan News, Commander among 6 rebels killed in Khost strike, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(882)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Casualties as rival Khost tribes resume clash, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(883)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Enraged Khost protestors want police chief sacked, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(884)</sup> Pajwok Afghan News, Khost businessman killed, child kidnapped by gunmen, 14 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(885)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 Khost policemen detained over escape of criminal, 30 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(886)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(887)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

In September 2017, the director of the Department for Refugees and Repatriation in Khost was quoted stating there were 18 000 IDP families in Khost province, including those fleeing neighbouring province Paktya <sup>(888)</sup>.

In November 2017, humanitarian actors in the province reported the displacement of hundreds of families, up to 1 400 persons, from Urgun district due to armed conflict between local communities and Kuchi nomads <sup>(889)</sup>.

In February 2018, humanitarian actors in the province reported on a large number of Kuchi nomads were stranded in the province because Pakistan had closed the border. They were said to be living in open areas, without adequate shelter, because the weather hindered them from returning to their provinces of origin in Afghanistan <sup>(890)</sup>. The border crossing was reopened in early March 2018 <sup>(891)</sup>.

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, 122 560 individuals or 17 % of the population of Khost is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. 41 792 people, or 7 % of the population, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Almost 20 000 people from Khost, or 3 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(892)</sup>.

## 2.18 Kunar

### 2.18.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Kunar

Different insurgent organisations are active in remote districts of the province; among them the Taliban <sup>(893)</sup>, IS <sup>(894)</sup> and also al-Qaida <sup>(895)</sup>. Conflicts erupted between insurgent groups as well <sup>(896)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a 'high' 'active and physical presence' (districts attacked at least twice a week) in the districts of Nari, Dangam, Shigal Wa Sheltan, Dara-i Pech and Chapar Dara. They also have a 'medium' (districts attacked at least three times a month) or 'low' (district attacked at least once in three months) active presence in most other districts, except for Asadabad, Narang and Nurgal <sup>(897)</sup>.

The province witnesses activities by Taliban fighters, in particular members of TTP, a Taliban grouping whose members fled into this border province in the east of Afghanistan to find

<sup>(888)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, More than 110 IDP families get cash, food aid in Khost, 14 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(889)</sup> UNOCHA, Operation Coordination meeting – Khost. Meeting Summary, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 12 - 19 November 2017, 19 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(890)</sup> Action Contre La Faim, 200,000 Kuchis Nomads trapped in Afghanistan in need of assistance, 11 February 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(891)</sup> Anadolu Agency, Pakistan losing lucrative export market in Afghanistan, 13 March 2018 ([url](#)); Anadolu Agency, Key trade route between Pakistan, Afghanistan reopens, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(892)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(893)</sup> LWJ, Taliban video documents takeover of district center in Kunar, 2 September 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan Air Force carry out more raids on ISIS targets in Kunar, 11 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(894)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 3 IS fighters in eastern Kunar province, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan Air Force carry out more raids on ISIS targets in Kunar, 11 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(895)</sup> Khaama Press, US drone strike kills 7 ISIS militants in Kunar province, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(896)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(897)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

shelter from attacks by the Pakistani military <sup>(898)</sup>. The actual numbers of al-Qaida members, also in Kunar, are disputed <sup>(899)</sup>.

It is likewise not known how many IS fighters are currently in Kunar, but the number is estimated to be several hundreds <sup>(900)</sup>. The Afghan government has been accused of inflating the number of IS fighters throughout the country <sup>(901)</sup>. The IS operatives in Kunar are said to be receiving training by foreigners <sup>(902)</sup>. In July 2017, IS leaders had their base in Kunar in the Shigal wa Sheltan district <sup>(903)</sup>. Islamic State supporters are reported to have started to actively recruit members in Kunar province, focussing in particular on the large number of jobless youths <sup>(904)</sup>. However, it is still questionable whether IS actually exercises control in Kunar province <sup>(905)</sup>.

ISKP-related security-relevant incidents were recorded in sources consulted by ACLED in Kunar province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 <sup>(906)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Kunar**

Military operations are being conducted regularly in the province <sup>(907)</sup>. Taliban and IS fighters, among others, were killed in the process <sup>(908)</sup>. Insurgents were also killed in air strikes and drone attacks <sup>(909)</sup>. Air strikes also led to the deaths of members of the Pakistan Taliban, Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), among them the son of Pakistan TTP head Mulla Fazlullah <sup>(910)</sup>.

The province has seen clashes between security forces and insurgents <sup>(911)</sup>.

<sup>(898)</sup> ANI, 4 IS militants killed in US drone strike in Afghanistan, 16 March 2018, available at: [\(url\)](#); Al Jazeera, Pakistan Taliban chief's son among 20 killed in 'US drone strike', 8 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); LWJ US military confirms death of Pakistani Taliban commander, 3 March 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(899)</sup> LWJ, Afghanistan's terrorist resurgence: Al Qaeda, ISIS, and beyond, 27 April 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(900)</sup> Pajwhok Afghan News, Hundreds of Daesh rebels emerge in Kunar: Police chief, 5 July 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(901)</sup> Tolo News, MPs Accuse Govt Of Inflating Daesh Numbers, 10 January 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(902)</sup> Pajwhok Afghan News, Hundreds of Daesh rebels emerge in Kunar: Police chief, 5 July 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(903)</sup> Osman, B., Another ISKP leader "dead": Where is the group headed after losing so many amirs?, 23 July 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(904)</sup> VOA, Unemployment Leads Dozens of Youths to Join IS Ranks in Eastern Afghanistan, 4 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Khaama Press, Kandahar resident arrested for having links with ISIS loyalists, 24 January 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(905)</sup> VOA, Unemployment Leads Dozens of Youths to Join IS Ranks in Eastern Afghanistan, 4 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); New York Times (The), ISIS Leader in Afghanistan Is Killed by Drone, Pentagon Says, 14 July 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(906)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(907)</sup> ANI, 4 IS militants killed in US drone strike in Afghanistan, 16 March 2018, available at: [\(url\)](#); Salzburger Nachrichten, 27 Taliban bei Drohnenangriff in Afghanistan getötet, 7 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 3 IS fighters in eastern Kunar province, 20 February 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(908)</sup> ANI, 4 IS militants killed in US drone strike in Afghanistan, 16 March 2018, available at: [\(url\)](#); Salzburger Nachrichten, 27 Taliban bei Drohnenangriff in Afghanistan getötet, 7 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 3 IS fighters in eastern Kunar province, 20 February 2018 [\(url\)](#); Khaama Press, Top ISIS leaders reportedly killed in Kunar drone strike in East of Afghanistan, 4 July 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(909)</sup> Khaama Press, US airstrike leaves 4 ISIS militants dead in Kunar province of Afghanistan, 16 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Pakistan Today, Suspected US drone strike kills at least six alleged terrorists, 12 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Salzburger Nachrichten, 27 Taliban bei Drohnenangriff in Afghanistan getötet, 7 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Geo News, Suspected US drone strike killst at least 20 alleged terrorists in Kabul, 7 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); LWJ US military confirms death of Pakistani Taliban commander, 3 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Khaama Press, Afghan Air Force carry out more raids on ISIS targets in Kunar, 11 January 2018 [\(url\)](#); Khaama Press, Airstrikes leave 3 ISIS militants dead in Kunar province of Afghanistan, 9 January 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(910)</sup> Al Jazeera, Pakistan Taliban chief's son among 20 killed in 'US drone strike', 8 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Reuters, Afghanistan drone strike kills 20 Pakistani Taliban, officials say, 8 March 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(911)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 Taliban killed, 3 wounded in Kunar clash, 5 March 2018 [\(url\)](#).

US and Afghan military forces regularly conducted air strikes, primarily against ISKP targets in Kunar<sup>(912)</sup>. A drone strike on a TTP training camp in March 2018 killed reportedly around 20 suicide bombers in training and also the son of the movements' leader Mullah Fazlullah<sup>(913)</sup>.

Pakistani security forces fire artillery shells across the border into Kunar province. The districts affected include Asmar, Shigal wa Sheltan, Marwara, Sarkano, Dangam, Nari, and Khaskunar<sup>(914)</sup>; numerous families had to flee from these districts in late 2017<sup>(915)</sup>.

### 2.18.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

In 2017, UNAMA documented 224 civilian victims (70 deaths and 154 injured), a 43 % decrease compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, targeted and deliberate killings, and unexploded ordnances or landmines<sup>(916)</sup>. Although, according to UNAMA, the fighting in Kunar increased including due to increased infighting between insurgent groups, the number of civilian casualties from ground engagements (134 civilian casualties: 33 deaths and 101 injured) decreased by 42 %, as civilians reportedly avoided areas where these groups usually clashed with each other<sup>(917)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Kunar as one of the 'most conflict affected' provinces<sup>(918)</sup>. In a map depicting 'conflict severity' in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the district Sarkani in the highest category and most of all other districts in the category below. Provincial capital Asadabad, Narang and Chawkey districts are in the middle category, and only Nurgal in the category below<sup>(919)</sup>.

Kunar is among provinces with a high number of incidents of detonation of explosive remnants of war causing civilian casualties, and also among the provinces with the highest use of indirect weapons. This highlights, according to UNAMA, the link between the number of victims from explosive remnants of war, and the use of indirect weapons, such as mortars,

<sup>(912)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, A dozen Daesh militants perish in Kunar drone blitz, 5 September 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Dozens Of Militants Killed In Nuristan Airstrikes, 9 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh network in Kunar destroyed with key members killed: Police, 14 September 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Drone strikes kill 18 IS militants in eastern Afghanistan, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Drone strikes kill 18 IS militants in eastern Afghanistan, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Daesh Commander Killed In Kunar Airstrike, 11 November 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan Air Force carry out more raids on ISIS targets in Kunar, 11 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 Daesh militants eliminated in Kunar drone strike, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, ISIS local leader among 3 killed in US drone strikes in Kunar province, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(913)</sup> AP, US drone targeting Pakistani Taliban kills 21 in Afghanistan, 8 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Tolo News, TTP Leader's Son Killed in Kunar Drone Strike, 8 March 2018 ([url](#)); Express Tribune (The), TTP chief's son among 21 killed in US drone strike, 8 March 2018 ([url](#)); Reuters, Afghanistan drone strike kills 20 Pakistani Taliban, officials say, 8 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(914)</sup> Daily Pakistan, Pakistan fired 120 mortars shells into Afghanistan to target militants, claims Afghan media, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 221 Kunar families who fled Pakistani shelling receive aid, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Pakistan fires 340 more shells into Kunar, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(915)</sup> Tolo News, ANSF Retaliates Against Pakistan's Barrage Of Missiles On Kunar, 22 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 221 Kunar families who fled Pakistani shelling receive aid, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(916)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(917)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(918)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(919)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

rockets and grenades<sup>(920)</sup>. For example, in February 2018, ‘a person was reportedly killed touching unexploded ordnance in Shegal Wa Sheltan District and two bystanders were injured’<sup>(921)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 102 incidents related to insurgents in Kunar province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website<sup>(922)</sup>.

In a drone strike targeting ISKP in October 2017, local residents reported at least 14 to 15 civilians were killed<sup>(923)</sup>.

In September 2017, ISKP kidnapped and later beheaded two civilians they accused of spying for the government and foreign forces<sup>(924)</sup> and in November 2017, ISKP killed the appellant court’s executive head in Kunar province<sup>(925)</sup>.

In Kunar, UNAMA reported cross-border shelling from the Pakistani side, causing displacement, the destruction of homes and livestock<sup>(926)</sup>. In November 2017, local officials claimed Pakistan had fired over 1,000 missiles into all of the six districts bordering Pakistan, resulting in at least 5 civilian casualties, displacement and destruction of homes<sup>(927)</sup>. In January 2018, one civilian was killed and eight others were wounded in cross-border shelling from Pakistan<sup>(928)</sup> and in February 2018, four to five civilians, among them two children, were reportedly wounded in a raid of 180 cross-border missiles in Dangam<sup>(929)</sup>.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

Insecurity continued to hamper polio vaccination efforts in the province<sup>(930)</sup>. In March 2018, a cases of polio was detected in Kunar<sup>(931)</sup>. Food production in Kunar, was affected by natural disasters and pests, and 16.2 % of the population suffered from acute malnutrition, which, according to UNOCHA, exceeds emergency levels<sup>(932)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) documented a 28 % increase in poppy cultivation in 2017. The main opium poppy cultivating districts were Sarkani, Noor Gal, Shigal Wa Sheltan, Watapoor and Dangam<sup>(933)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 19,228 persons displaced from Kunar (77 from Barkunar; 172 from Chapadara; 3 638 from Chawkay; 2 861

<sup>(920)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(921)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 19 - 25 February 2018, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(922)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(923)</sup> RFE/RL, Accounts Differ Over Civilian Deaths In Afghan Drone Strike, 16 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(924)</sup> Khaama Press, ISIS behead two Afghan civilians on espionage charges in Kunar, 15 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians in Kunar decapitated by Daesh fighters, 15 September 2017 ([url](#)), VOA, IS Beheads 2 Afghans Accused Being American Spies, 14 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(925)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Kunar appellant court official shot dead by Daesh rebels ([url](#)).

<sup>(926)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(927)</sup> Bakhtar News, Pakistani Forces Resumed Missile Shelling On Kunar Province, Casualties Feared, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, ANSF Retaliates Against Pakistan’s Barrage Of Missiles On Kunar, 22 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(928)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Kunar: At least 1 dead, 8 wounded in Pakistan shelling, 9 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(929)</sup> Khaama Press, 5 civilians wounded in Pakistani artillery shelling in Kunar, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)); 1TV News, Four Afghans injured by Pakistan shelling in Kunar, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(930)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Poliovirus found in Kunar’s sewers, says official, 1 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(931)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 positive polio cases detected in Kunar, Kandahar, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(932)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(933)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

from Dangam; 280 from Dara-i Pech; 501 from Ghaziabad; 2 984 from Khaskunar; 842 from Marawara; 72 from Narang; 197 from Nari; 10 from Nurgal; 2 305 from Sarkani; 4 202 from Shigal Wa Sheltan; 1 087 Watapur) <sup>(934)</sup>.

In November 2017, humanitarian actors reported the displacement of over 1 600 persons due to cross-border shelling and 400 persons in Chawkay district due to the ‘emergence of a new armed group’ <sup>(935)</sup>. In January 2018, active conflict between ANSF and insurgents displaced around 1 000 people in Chawkay and Khas Kunar districts <sup>(936)</sup>.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix, 159 217 individuals or 26 % of the population of Kandahar is either an IDP or returnee from abroad, of which almost 12 000 live either in tents or in the open air. 47 699 people, or 10 % of the population, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 10 000 people from Kunar, or 2 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(937)</sup>.

## 2.19 Kunduz

### 2.19.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Kunduz

Taliban fighters, in particular members of the Red Unit, a Taliban unit which is attacking more and more government bases, operate in Kunduz province <sup>(938)</sup>. Some districts, such as the newly established districts Atqash, Gultapa, Gulbad, are under Taliban control <sup>(939)</sup>. Taliban militants are also active in parts of the Dasht-e Archi and Chardarah districts <sup>(940)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018 based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Dasht-e Archi and Char Dara and a ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) and ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) active presence in the rest of the province <sup>(941)</sup>. In November 2017, local authorities and residents claimed 4,000 Taliban had arrived in Dasht-e Archi and controlled most of the territory, restricting the freedom of movement of residents <sup>(942)</sup>.

ISKP-related security incidents were recorded in sources consulted by ACLED in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(943)</sup>. However, according to UNAMA, one ISKP-

<sup>(934)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(935)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 12 - 19 November 2017, 19 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; Afghanistan Protection Cluster, November 2017 – Eastern Region Update, December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(936)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 8 to 14 January 2018, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(937)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(938)</sup> New York Times (The), Taliban Fighters Using High-Tech Gear Kill Afghan Forces, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)); Asia Times, Taliban’s ‘Red Unit’ poses new threat to Afghan security, 17 January 2018 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Taliban ‘Red Unit’ With Night Vision Kills Dozens of Afghan Officers, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(939)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, After 2 years of inception, 3 Kunduz districts still in Taliban control, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(940)</sup> EFE, Ataques contra postos de controle deixam pelo menos 17 mortos no Afeganistão, 9 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Kunduz: 10 Taliban killed in Chardara operation, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Strategic Areas in Kunduz Cleared Of Taliban, 25 October 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 11 militants killed, 20 injured in Afghan northern Kunduz, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(941)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(942)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Most area of Dasht-i-Archi district under Taliban control: Saadi, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(943)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

related incident was recorded in September 2017 in the district of Chapahar, when a one deminer was killed after being kidnapped by ISKP-insurgents <sup>(944)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Kunduz**

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(945)</sup>. Air strikes take place regularly <sup>(946)</sup>. Sometimes, Taliban fighters are arrested <sup>(947)</sup>. There are clashes between the insurgents and Afghan security forces <sup>(948)</sup>.

The German military has a large base in Kunduz province <sup>(949)</sup>.

The district of Chahar Dara was labelled by UNAMA as one of the districts in the ‘frontlines for fighting’ between insurgents and pro-government armed forces <sup>(950)</sup>. For example, ANSF conducted operations in this district in September 2017 <sup>(951)</sup>, in November 2017 <sup>(952)</sup> and in January 2018, ANSF launched a military operation ‘Pamir 17’ in Chahar Dara, to clear several villages from Taliban fighters <sup>(953)</sup>.

In December 2017, ANSF launched a military operation called ‘Pamir 14’ into Imam Sahib <sup>(954)</sup>.

### **2.19.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

Kunduz City briefly came under Taliban control in 2015, and once again partly in 2016 <sup>(955)</sup>. In both cases it was recaptured by Afghan troops <sup>(956)</sup>. In February 2018, Tolonews reported that the security situation in the province capital Kunduz City had greatly improved <sup>(957)</sup>.

In 2017, UNAMA documented 377 civilian victims (93 deaths and 284 injured), a decrease of 41 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, aerial

<sup>(944)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p 18.

<sup>(945)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 villages cut off as Taliban dynamite Kunduz bridge, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2,000 families flee homes as Kunduz raids continue, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Strategic Areas In Kunduz Cleared Of Taliban, 25 October 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 11 militants killed, 20 injured in Afghan northern Kunduz, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(946)</sup> LWJ Taliban suicide bomber kills dozens in Afghan capital, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 18 militants killed, 5 wounded in Kunduz airstrikes and operations: MoD, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)); Guardian (The), US airstrikes kill scores of civilians in Kunduz province, Afghans say, 4 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Six Taliban Insurgents Killed in Kunduz Airstrikes, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(947)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 6 Taliban militants detained in N. Afghanistan, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(948)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5; Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 dead, 5 hurt as Taliban storm ALP checkpoint in Kunduz, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Taliban Fighters Using High-Tech Gear Kill Afghan Forces, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban’s Red Unit commander among 3 killed in Kunduz clash, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(949)</sup> RFE/RL, German Cabinet Approves Troop Increase For Afghanistan, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)); Süddeutsche Zeitung, Bundesregierung will Auslandseinsätze verlängern, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(950)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 47.

<sup>(951)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 19 militants killed in Kunduz offensive, 4 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 militants killed, 5 arrested in Kunduz offensive, 12 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(952)</sup> Afghanistan Times, Kunduz offensive: Civilians, militants suffer casualties, 5 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(953)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2,000 families flee homes as Kunduz raids continue, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(954)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 31 rebels killed in Kunduz offensive, Taliban refute, 9 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(955)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Taliban attempts to recapture northern Afghan Kunduz city cause concerns among residents, 8 July 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(956)</sup> BBC News, Kunduz assault: Taliban forces 'defeated', 4 October 2016 ([url](#)); Reuters, Afghan forces push into Taliban-held Kunduz city amid fierce clashes, 1 October 2015 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Taliban ‘Red Unit’ With Night Vision Kills Dozens of Afghan Officers, 14 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(957)</sup> Tolo News, Kunduz City Lights Up Ahead Of Nowruz, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)).

attacks and non-suicide IEDs<sup>(958)</sup>. The reduction in civilian casualties was most notable in the number of casualties from ground engagements: 159 civilian casualties (27 deaths and 132 injured), a 54 % decrease. This decrease was primarily due to the absence of any new effort to overtake the city of Kunduz, whereas there were two such efforts in 2016<sup>(959)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Kunduz as one of the ‘most conflict affected’ provinces<sup>(960)</sup>. In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 - a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the districts of Khanabad and Kunduz in the highest category, and the rest of the province in the category below<sup>(961)</sup>. UNOCHA considered Kunduz as one of the four provinces of ‘very high protection concern’, defined as: ‘new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host community’, as well as ‘non-displaced conflict affected people’. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict<sup>(962)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 211 incidents related to insurgents in Kunduz province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website<sup>(963)</sup>.

UNAMA highlights that there is a link between the number of victims from explosive remnants of war and the use of indirect weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades. Kunduz is among the provinces with a high number of incidents of detonation of explosive remnants of war causing civilian casualties, and also among the provinces with the highest use of indirect weapons<sup>(964)</sup>. The Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (CMAC) and United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) gave the following statistics in October 2017: In the period 2012-2014 there was a total of 87 civilian casualties, 14 by mines and 73 by explosive remnants of war, but in 2015-2017, a total of 262 civilian casualties were recorded: 9 by mines, 156 by explosive remnants of war and 97 by pressure-plate IEDs (PPIEDs)<sup>(965)</sup>.

While ground engagements decreased in Kunduz, aerial operations caused 109 civilian casualties (43 deaths and 66 injured) in Kunduz. Especially in the district of Chahar Dara, civilians suffered from air strikes from the international military forces<sup>(966)</sup>. In one air strike in Chahar Dara in November 2017, UNAMA believed at least 10 civilians were killed by US bombs, while the US claimed there were no civilian casualties in that strike<sup>(967)</sup>. Later that month however, General Nicholson, commander of US forces in Afghanistan, reportedly apologized for ‘recent’ civilian casualties in Kunduz<sup>(968)</sup>. According to residents, the Taliban

<sup>(958)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(959)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 20-21.

<sup>(960)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(961)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(962)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)) p. 30.

<sup>(963)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(964)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(965)</sup> UNOCHA, Kunduz Province. Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 5 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(966)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 45.

<sup>(967)</sup> Guardian (The), UN says at least 10 civilians died in Afghanistan airstrike, contradicting US, 9 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(968)</sup> Ariana News, Nicholson Apologizes for Civilian Casualties in Kunduz Airstrikes, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, US General Warns Of More Pressure On Pakistan, Taliban, 28 November 2018 ([url](#)).



forced them after previous air strikes to help remove the bodies of their fighters from the rubble, when the air strikes resumed in which the civilians were killed <sup>(969)</sup>.

UNOCHA and press reports reported military operations, including air strikes, that lasted for more than a week in Imam Sahib, Dasht-e-Archi and Kunduz in October 2017 <sup>(970)</sup>.

Without reported civilian casualties, operation ‘Pamir 14’ in Imam Sahib displaced thousands of people and reportedly residential homes were destroyed <sup>(971)</sup>.

In Qala-i Zal Taliban regularly stormed security posts. These clashes often lasted for hours and resulted casualties on both sides <sup>(972)</sup>. During a Taliban raid on a village in Qala-i Zal, three pro-government militiamen and one civilian were killed in February 2018 <sup>(973)</sup>.

Civilian victims of IEDs include two boys that stepped on a PPIED in Imam Sahib district in September 2017 while pasturing their sheep <sup>(974)</sup>. Four civilians were wounded when an IED targeted an ANP-vehicle in a bazaar in Kunduz City in March 2018 <sup>(975)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

Following an US air raid on the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in 2015, MSF opened another clinic in Kunduz City in July 2017 <sup>(976)</sup>.

In January 2018, the Taliban exploded a bridge in the district of Imam Sahib, cutting off several villages and raising the price of food and transportation immediately <sup>(977)</sup>.

Economic destitution and joblessness as a consequence of corruption and nepotism are said to be the main drivers for insurgent recruitment in Kunduz <sup>(978)</sup>. In January 2018, UNHCR expressed their concern about child recruitment by insurgents to become fighters in different districts across Kunduz province and forced displacement of family members of ANSF personnel <sup>(979)</sup>.

UNOCHA reported that 68 % of children in Kunduz ‘have been exposed to psychological distress due to loss of family and community members, and the constant risk of death and injury’ <sup>(980)</sup>. Kunduz was in 2017 also one of the provinces where polio still occurred <sup>(981)</sup>.

Issues with ALP and pro-government militia persist in Kunduz <sup>(982)</sup>. The provincial chief of police admitted in September 2017 that 1 500 armed men linked to pro government militias

<sup>(969)</sup> New York Times (The), U.S. Strikes Caused at Least 13 Civilian Casualties, Afghans Say, 4 November 2017 ([url](#)); Bureau of Investigative Journalism (The), US response further confuses controversial Kunduz strike, 15 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(970)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Kunduz Province. Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 11 October 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 43 insurgents eliminated in security operations: MoD, 6 October 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 Taliban eliminated, 2 wounded in Kunduz fighting, 17 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(971)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Latest clashes in Imam Sahib leave 2,000 families displaced, 17 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(972)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA soldiers among 8 killed in Kunduz clash, 15 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(973)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Taliban attack kills 4 in N. Afghanistan province, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(974)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 31.

<sup>(975)</sup> Pasbanan, 4 civilians injured in an IED attack in Kunduz city, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(976)</sup> Al Jazeera, Military blunders continue after MSF Kunduz bombing, 4 October 2017 ([url](#)); Reuters, MSF reopens first Kunduz clinic since deadly hospital air strike in 2015, 22 July 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(977)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 villages cut off as Taliban dynamite Kunduz bridge, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(978)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Increasing jobless youth raises concerns in Kunduz, 8 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(979)</sup> UNOCHA, Kunduz Province. Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 17 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(980)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(981)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Another Nangarhar child tests positive for polio, 27 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(982)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 49-52.

were present in the province <sup>(983)</sup>. Examples include an instance in October 2017, where the ALP blocked residents from a village to reach the district centre, preventing them from their livelihood activities. The reason for this blockade was that the ALP accused them, based on their ethnicity, of supporting the insurgents <sup>(984)</sup>. In 2017, news agencies reported that kidnappings and robberies in Afghanistan were ‘rife’ inside Kunduz city and perpetrators were armed men linked to militias who, because of their role in fighting in favour of the state, operate in impunity <sup>(985)</sup>. In March 2018, residents reported four kidnappings for ransom, of which one resulted in the death of the hostage, a 17-year-old boy <sup>(986)</sup>. Also in March 2018, members of the ALP were accused of gang-raping two women in Dasht-e Archi <sup>(987)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Kunduz was poppy-free in 2017 <sup>(988)</sup>.

## Displacement

ANSF operations in the province resulted in numerous families being displaced to Kunduz City <sup>(989)</sup>.

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 58,951 persons displaced from Kunduz (868 from Aliabad; 11 531 from Chardarah; 5 741 from Dasht-e Archi; 14 150 from Emamsaheb; 3 483 from Khanabad; 15 632 from Kunduz; 7 546 from Qala-i Zal,) <sup>(990)</sup>.

For example, in October 2017, UNOCHA reported that ‘more than 7 000’ IDPs within Imam Sahib district, around 1 000 people displaced within Dasht-e Archi, and around 2 200 people from Dasht-e Archi and Imam Sahib to Kunduz City <sup>(991)</sup>. Later that month, UNOCHA reported that ‘more than 7 300 people’ had been additionally displaced from Imam Sahib, Chahar Dara and Dasht-e-Archi <sup>(992)</sup>.

Joint ANSF and international military forces operations, backed by international military air support, reportedly displaced around 1 000 families from Chahar Dara in November 2017 and around 2 000 families in Imam Sahib district in December 2017 <sup>(993)</sup>. There were unconfirmed reports of over 21 000 people (or more than 3 000 families) displaced in Imam Sahib and Kunduz districts and more than 7 600 people reportedly arrived in Kunduz City from Chardarah and Dasht-e Archi districts in November 2017 <sup>(994)</sup>.

Clearing operations in Chahar Dara in January 2018 displaced around 2 000 families, according to government officials quoted by Pajhwok. The displaced in Kunduz City reported difficult

<sup>(983)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Kunduz residents fret over presence of illegal gunmen, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(984)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 50.

<sup>(985)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Kunduz residents fret over presence of illegal gunmen, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)); Reuters, Crime, casualties undermine U.S. gains on Afghan battlefield, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(986)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Increasing kidnap incidents worry Kunduzis, 15 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(987)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, ALP forces gang-rape 2 women in Kunduz, 25 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(988)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 25.

<sup>(989)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 villages cut off as Taliban dynamite Kunduz bridge, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2,000 families flee homes as Kunduz raids continue, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(990)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(991)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 16 to 22 October 2017, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(992)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 23 to 29 October 2017, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(993)</sup> UNOCHA, Kunduz Province. Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 5 November 2017 ([url](#));

UNOCHA, Kunduz Province. Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 12 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(994)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 30 October – 5 November 2017, 5 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 6 - 12 November 2017, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

circumstances because of the lack of shelter and the harsh winter circumstances <sup>(995)</sup>. Humanitarian actors spoke about 7 000-10 000 individuals, and unverified reports of 60 000 displaced people <sup>(996)</sup>. Reportedly, ‘at least 35 houses were completely destroyed or severely damaged in the airstrikes and military operations’ <sup>(997)</sup>. Humanitarian actors warned that ‘the scale of damage to civilian infrastructure and homes caused by airstrikes and the subsequent mining of these areas by Non State Armed Groups prevents the possible return of displaced families, even after the airstrikes have ended’ <sup>(998)</sup>.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix, 158 268 individuals or 13 % of the population of Kunduz is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. 69 004 people, or 7 % of the population, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. More than half a million people, or 57 % of its population, have been IDPs but are returned <sup>(999)</sup>. In the years 2015-2016, there have been repeated and partially successful attempts to take over Kunduz city in coordinated attacks from the insurgents’ side. Both the attacks and the government response often include the use of heavy weapons and air strikes. According to UNOCHA, these attacks and government response ‘have led to widespread displacement from Kunduz city in all directions’ <sup>(1000)</sup>. In 2017, UNOCHA recorded 39 550 IDPs from Kunduz, the second-highest number after Nangarhar <sup>(1001)</sup>. At the start of the winter, in November 2017, the Provincial Refugees and Repatriation Director warned that thousands of families were left without proper shelter and were exposed to winter-related illnesses <sup>(1002)</sup>. 78 973 people from Kunduz, or 8 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(1003)</sup>.

## 2.20 Laghman

### 2.20.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Laghman

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘medium’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Alisheng and Alingar, and a low presence and activity (district attacked at least once in three months) in the rest of the province <sup>(1004)</sup>.

Insurgent groups, including Taliban and ISKP supporters, have been trying to expand their activities in remote parts of the province <sup>(1005)</sup>. Clashes between Taliban and ISKP insurgents are reported to have spilled over, for the first time, from Nangarhar to Laghman province,

<sup>(995)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2,000 families flee homes as Kunduz raids continue, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(996)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 15 to 21 January 2018, 21 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 22 to 28 January 2018, 28 January 2018, ([url](#)).

<sup>(997)</sup> UNOCHA, Kunduz Province. Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(998)</sup> ACBAR, Putting Protection at the Heart of the Peace Process, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(999)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1000)</sup> UNOCHA, North and North Eastern Regions Kunduz Emergency Preparedness, 13 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1001)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 1 to 7 January 2018, 7 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1002)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Winter diseases attack children of Kunduz IDPs, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1003)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1004)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1005)</sup> Khaama Press, Afghan forces rescue 30 people from the militants cell in Laghman, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

with both sides sustaining heavy losses <sup>(1006)</sup>. In July 2017, insurgent activities were recorded in the three districts: Alingar, Alishing and Dawlatshah <sup>(1007)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in the province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 <sup>(1008)</sup>. ANSF also targeted ISKP positions repeatedly in Laghman in this reporting period <sup>(1009)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Laghman**

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(1010)</sup>. Air strikes are being carried out <sup>(1011)</sup> which result in the deaths of insurgents, among them Taliban leaders <sup>(1012)</sup>. There are also clashes between insurgents and security forces <sup>(1013)</sup>.

Military operations were reported in November and December 2017 in Alingar <sup>(1014)</sup>. In March 2018, ANSF launched an operation named ‘Selab 23’ into Mehterlam and Alingar districts <sup>(1015)</sup>. These operations include air strikes <sup>(1016)</sup>. In February 2018, local officials claimed to have freed 30 civilians from a Taliban prison in Laghman <sup>(1017)</sup>.

Laghman is host to an international military base (Forward Operating Base Gamberi) <sup>(1018)</sup>.

## **2.20.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

### **General**

In the province of Laghman attacks by insurgent groups have been on the rise in recent years <sup>(1019)</sup>.

In 2017, UNAMA documented 354 civilian casualties (84 deaths and 270 injured). This represents an increase of 14 % compared to 2016, contrary to the national trend in 2017.

<sup>(1006)</sup> VOA, Fighting Between Taliban, IS Expands to New Afghan Territory, 30 November 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban and ISIS clashes spread to Laghman as both sides suffer heavy casualties, 29 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1007)</sup> Tolo News, Officials Hoping To Increase ALP Footprint In Laghman, 18 July 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1008)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1009)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 Daesh, Taliban insurgents eliminated in the east, 26 September 2017 ([url](#));

Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 militants killed in Laghman-Nangarhar offensives, 20 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1010)</sup> Tolo News, 28 Insurgents Killed In Afghan Operations: MoD, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Drone strike kill 3 militants, injures 3 more in Laghman province, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 Taliban killed in Laghman night raids: official, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 15 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Laghman Operation, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1011)</sup> Khaama Press, Drone strike kill 3 militants, injures 3 more in Laghman province, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)); Times of Islamabad, 20 ISIS militants including commander killed in Afghanistan airstrikes, 6 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1012)</sup> Khaama Press, Drone strike kill 3 militants, injures 3 more in Laghman province, 26 February 2018 ([url](#));

Xinhua News Agency, Taliban key commander killed in Afghan eastern Laghman province, 9 January 2018 ([url](#));

Tolo News, Senior Taliban Commanders Killed In Laghman Air Raids, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Prominent Taliban leader killed during clashes with ALP forces in Laghman, 19 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 15 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Laghman Operation, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1013)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 7 militants in eastern Laghman province, 20 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1014)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Laghman raid kills 4 Taliban including commander, 29 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 Taliban killed in Laghman night raids: official, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 41 militants killed in round-the-clock offensives: MoD, 29 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1015)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Several villages of Nangarhar, Laghman purged of rebels, 3 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1016)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Laghman: 7 Taliban killed in airstrike, opium seized, 8 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1017)</sup> DID News Agency, 30 Afghan Civilian Released from Taliban’s Jail: local official, 19 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1018)</sup> Foreign Policy, As More Troops Deploy to Afghanistan, Pentagon Mum on Numbers, 3 October 2017 ([url](#)); Reuters, Afghan military would support more foreign troops, official says, 10 February 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1019)</sup> Khaama Press, Drone strike kill 3 militants, injures 3 more in Laghman province, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan forces rescue 30 people from the militants cell in Laghman, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); Times of Islamabad, 20 ISIS militants including commander killed in Afghanistan airstrikes, 6 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Prominent Taliban leader killed during clashes with ALP forces in Laghman, 19 December 2017 ([url](#)).

Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagements, non-suicide IEDs, and targeted and deliberate killings <sup>(1020)</sup>. Ground engagements accounted for 263 civilian casualties (48 deaths and 215 injured) in the province, a 42 % increase compared to 2016 <sup>(1021)</sup>. Together with Nangarhar and Zabul, Laghman saw the highest number of civilian casualties occur from ALP ground engagements <sup>(1022)</sup>.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, which combines three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the central districts (Mehterlam, Alisheng and Alingar) in the highest category of severity. The two other districts, Qarghayi and Dawlatshah, are placed in the mid-level category <sup>(1023)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 136 incidents related to insurgents in Laghman province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1024)</sup>.

Civilian casualties were reported in September 2017, when a roadside bomb killed two civilians in their truck in Mehterlam <sup>(1025)</sup> and when Taliban fired rockets at the Kabul Jalalabad highway in Qarghayi district injured six civilians <sup>(1026)</sup>. In a bomb attack in Mehterlam city in December 2017, a civilian was killed and six or seven children injured <sup>(1027)</sup>. In another report on the same incident, authorities were quoted claiming that three children were killed and six others wounded in the explosion <sup>(1028)</sup>. IEDs targeting ANSF were also reported in October in Qarghayi <sup>(1029)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

In 2017, health facilities were closed temporarily in Laghman province because of threats by anti-government groupings <sup>(1030)</sup>, depriving 500 000 people from access to healthcare <sup>(1031)</sup>.

Fighting in Alishang district, displaced around thousand individuals and, together with illegal checkpoints, reportedly impeded humanitarian access <sup>(1032)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) documented a 64 % increase in poppy cultivation in the province in 2017. Increases were documented in all six districts <sup>(1033)</sup>.

<sup>(1020)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1021)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 22.

<sup>(1022)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 50.

<sup>(1023)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1024)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1025)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Roadside blast leaves 2 civilians dead in Laghman, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1026)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 civilians injured by Taliban-fired rockets, 14 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1027)</sup> 1TV News, Two killed, seven injured in Laghman explosions, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, NDS employee, civilian killed in Laghman explosions, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1028)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Roadside mine blast kills 3 Afghan children, injures 6, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1029)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 Afghan soldiers wounded in Laghman roadside bombing, 6 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1030)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 15.

<sup>(1031)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 11.

<sup>(1032)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 25 September to 1 October 2017, 1 October 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1033)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 21.

## Displacement

UNOCHA collected, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, data on 9 449 persons displaced from Laghman (4 847 from Alingar; 2 149 from Alishang; 126 from Dawlatshah; 2 327 from Mehtarlam/Bad Pash) <sup>(1034)</sup>.

According to UNOCHA field reports from September-October 2017, clashes between insurgents and ANSF displaced thousands people in Alisheng, and hundreds more fled towards Kabul <sup>(1035)</sup>.

UNOCHA described ‘active fighting between armed groups, threats and intimidation’ as the reasons for the displacement of nearly 1 500 people from Alingar in December 2017 <sup>(1036)</sup>. One month later, another 700 people fled intimidation by insurgents from Alingar district, according to UNOCHA field reporting <sup>(1037)</sup>. In February 2018, fighting, threats and intimidation again displaced thousands in and from Laghman district <sup>(1038)</sup>. Armed clashes and subsequent clearing operations displaced more than 3 000 later in February 2018 in Alingar and Mehterlam districts <sup>(1039)</sup>.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix, 130 491 individuals, or 22 % of the Laghman population is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. Of that number, approximately 9 384 of them live in tents or outdoors. According to IOM’s displacement monitoring matrix, 88 788 people, or one in five of its residents, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 20 000 people from Laghman, or 5 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(1040)</sup>.

## 2.21 Logar

### 2.21.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent in Logar

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in most of the province, except for Azra (‘medium’, districts attacked at least three times a month) and Khoshi (‘low’; district attacked at least once in three months) <sup>(1041)</sup>.

Taliban fighters are active in several districts of the province <sup>(1042)</sup>. The Haqqani network is also alleged to have a presence in parts of the province and to be launching attacks in

<sup>(1034)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1035)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 25 September to 1 October 2017, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 18 to 24 September 2017, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 2 -8 October 2017, 8 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1036)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 4 December – 10 December 2017, 10 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1037)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 15 to 21 January 2018, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1038)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 5 - 11 February 2018, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1039)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 4 - 11 March 2018, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1040)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1041)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1042)</sup> Tolo News, Army On Offensive Against Taliban in Logar, 12 February 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces kill 3 militants, defuse 16 mines in southern, eastern provinces, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Tribal elder gunned down in Logar mosque, 27 December 2017 ([url](#)); AP, Islamic State, Taliban

Logar<sup>(1043)</sup>. In March 2017, the ISKP allegedly tried to recruit young men in Logar province<sup>(1044)</sup>. In November 2017, the Provincial Governor claimed that 11 Chechen nationals were arrested, together with their families. They were believed to have come from neighbouring Nangarhar, where ISKP has activities<sup>(1045)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents (skirmishes) were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in the province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018<sup>(1046)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Logar**

Military operations are being conducted regularly in the province<sup>(1047)</sup>; Taliban leaders and members of the Haqqani network were killed<sup>(1048)</sup>. Air strikes are being carried out as well<sup>(1049)</sup>, killing insurgents<sup>(1050)</sup>. There are clashes between the insurgents and Afghan security forces<sup>(1051)</sup>.

### **2.21.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

As Logar is close to the outer districts of Kabul city, it was the scene of heavy fighting between the Taliban and security forces<sup>(1052)</sup>.

In 2017, UNAMA documented 148 civilian casualties (67 deaths and 81 injured). This represents a decrease of 35 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagements, targeted and deliberate killings and aerial attacks<sup>(1053)</sup>. While fighting in Logar increased in 2017, according to UNAMA, there were less civilian casualties from ground engagements: 35 civilian casualties (11 deaths and 24 injured), a 66 % decrease compared to 2016<sup>(1054)</sup>.

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battle in eastern Afghanistan, 28 November 2017, available at: [\(url\)](#); Xinhua News Agency, Foreign nationals among 10 militants killed in E. Afghan province, 25 October 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1043)</sup> Tolo News, Mastermind Of VIP Protection Unit Attack Killed In Logar, 11 September 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1044)</sup> Jamestown Foundation, Islamic State Gains Ground in Afghanistan as Its Caliphate Crumbles Elsewhere, 26 January 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1045)</sup> Tolo News, 11 Chechen Nationals Arrested By Security Forces in Logar, 30 November 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1046)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1047)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 25 Taliban, 7 Daesh insurgents killed in fresh raids, 25 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Tolo News, 28 Insurgents Killed In Afghan Operations: MoD, 3 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Tolo News, Army On Offensive Against Taliban in Logar, 12 February 2018 [\(url\)](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 Taliban killed, 6 injured in Logar operation, 21 January 2018 [\(url\)](#); Tolo News, Nearly 100 Insurgents Killed In Afghan Operations: MoD, 4 February 2018 [\(url\)](#); Khaama Press, 10 ISIS fighters among 58 militants killed, claims Afghan defense ministry, 4 January 2018 [\(url\)](#); Khaama Press, Key Taliban commander among 8 killed in Logar operations, 21 November 2017 [\(url\)](#); IANS, Eight militants killed in Afghanistan's Logar province, 30 October 2017, available at: [\(url\)](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 64 militants, 12 soldiers killed in new wave of violence, 14 October 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1048)</sup> Tolo News, Army On Offensive Against Taliban in Logar, 12 February 2018 [\(url\)](#); Khaama Press, Key Taliban commander among 8 killed in Logar operations, 21 November 2017 [\(url\)](#); IANS, Eight militants killed in Afghanistan's Logar province, 30 October 2017, available at: [\(url\)](#); Tolo News, Mastermind Of VIP Protection Unit Attack Killed In Logar, 11 September 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1049)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 25 Taliban, 7 Daesh insurgents killed in fresh raids, 25 March 2018 [\(url\)](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 rebels killed, 4 civilians injured in Logar airstrike, 24 February 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1050)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 25 Taliban, 7 Daesh insurgents killed in fresh raids, 25 March 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1051)</sup> Tolo News, Army On Offensive Against Taliban in Logar, 12 February 2018 [\(url\)](#); RFE/RL, U.S. Soldier Killed In Afghanistan's Logar Province, 5 November 2017 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1052)</sup> Tolo News, Army On Offensive Against Taliban in Logar, 12 February 2018 [\(url\)](#).

<sup>(1053)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 [\(url\)](#), p. 67.

<sup>(1054)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 [\(url\)](#), p. 21.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 which combines three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the central districts of Logar (Pul-e Alam, Baraki Barak and Charkh) in the second-highest category of severity, and Mohammad Agha in the category below. Azra, Khoshi and Kharwar are in the lowest two categories <sup>(1055)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 140 incidents related to insurgents in Logar province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1056)</sup>.

Examples of incidents involving civilian casualties that occurred in the reporting period include:

- Three civilians were killed and three were wounded when Taliban opened fire on an ALP vehicle in a bazaar in Mohammad Agha in September 2017 <sup>(1057)</sup>.
- During a battle between ANSF and insurgents in December 2017, a mortar struck a market and killed three civilians <sup>(1058)</sup>.
- In November 2017, a suicide bomber attempted to target the Provincial Governor’s convoy as it passed a bazaar in the capital Pul-e Alam. The explosion wounded 11 civilians instead <sup>(1059)</sup>.
- In October 2017, a boy and two men were killed and another was wounded when they struck an unexploded mortar round while cutting grass with sickles <sup>(1060)</sup>.

In an incident of targeting, Taliban beheaded an ALP-member in January 2018 and reportedly put his head on a stake with a note threatening to do the same to other ALP members unless they quit <sup>(1061)</sup>.

Local officials told Pajhwok that four civilians were wounded in an air strike in Charkh district in late February 2018 <sup>(1062)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

Logar has been ‘poppy-free’ for three consecutive years (2015-2017) <sup>(1063)</sup>.

Conservative views on gender roles and insecurity is keeping many girls away from school in Logar, where only 7 % of the girls finish high school <sup>(1064)</sup>. In certain areas of the province, the Taliban are trying to convey their religious views in schools <sup>(1065)</sup>.

<sup>(1055)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1056)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1057)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 civilians killed and wounded in Logar gun attack, 29 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1058)</sup> AP, Roadside bomb kills 7 in Afghanistan, 24 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(1059)</sup> AP, Official: IS, Taliban battle in eastern Afghanistan, 28 November 2017, available at: ([url](#)); Ariana News, Suicide Attack in Logar Leaves 11 Injured, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1060)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 16.

<sup>(1061)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban trick, behead ALP member in Logar, 17 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1062)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 rebels killed, 4 civilians injured in Logar airstrike, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1063)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(1064)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Only 7pc of Logar girls graduate from high school each year, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1065)</sup> IWPR, Afghanistan: Action Pledged On Taleban School Takeover, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)).



## Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 3,168 persons displaced from Logar (1 622 from Baraki Barak; 1 058 from Charkh; 133 from Kharwar; 224 from Khoshi; 89 from Mohammad Agha; 42 from Pul-e Alam) <sup>(1066)</sup>.

In November and December 2017, humanitarian actors reported the arrival of 225 IDP families who fled to Pul-e Alam and Mohammad Agha districts after fleeing ‘insecurity and continuous conflicts’ between ANSF and insurgents in insecure districts of Logar province, as well as Wardak and Kunar <sup>(1067)</sup>. In January 2018, another 1 050 individuals were displaced from Baraki Barak and Charkh to Pul-e Alam (as well as from Paktia and Khost provinces) and Mohammad Agha districts. They were said to be fleeing ‘military operations, insecurity, intimidation, and economic problems’ as explained by a representative of the DoRR <sup>(1068)</sup>.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix, 147,544 individuals, or 27 % of the population in Logar is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. Of that number, approximately 18 000 live in the Shairak settlement in Pul-e Alam. According to IOM’s displacement monitoring matrix, 112 285 people, or 28 % of its residents, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 43 000 people from Logar, or 11 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017. That is the highest proportion after Farah <sup>(1069)</sup>.

## 2.22 Nangarhar

### 2.22.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Nangarhar

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in the western districts of Hisarak, Sherzad and Khogyani, and the district of Batikot in the centre of the province. Most other districts have a ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) to ‘low’ Taliban activity and presence (districts attacked at least once in three months), except for Goshta district <sup>(1070)</sup>.

Since 2014, there have been more and more reports on stepped-up IS activities in some remote parts of the province, which also includes Achin district <sup>(1071)</sup>. ISKP demonstrated strong resistance, even though Afghan and international forces carried out joint operations. The group launched several attacks against civilians and military targets, in particular in Kabul and Nangarhar <sup>(1072)</sup>.

<sup>(1066)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1067)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Logar. Meeting Summary, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Logar. Meeting Summary, 20 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1068)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Logar. Meeting Summary, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1069)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1070)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1071)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 Daesh rebels killed in Nangarhar airstrikes, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Active ISIS recruiter arrested by Afghan forces in Nangarhar, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban militants kill ex-commander on charges of ISIS links in Nangarhar, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1072)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5.

In Nangarhar, the Taliban and ISKP fight for control of natural mines and territory, in particular in the Tora Bora region where goods are being smuggled from and to Pakistan<sup>(1073)</sup>. The southern and south-eastern districts saw an increasing fragmentation of the insurgency since 2007 and particularly since 2012, with Taliban shadow governors struggling to control their combatants and impose clear chains of command<sup>(1074)</sup>. Nonetheless, as atrocities committed by ISKP having reached a peak, the Taliban gained more influence. It became less easy for ISKP to recruit people<sup>(1075)</sup>. Armed conflicts between the Taliban and ISKP occurred, with a view to territorial gains<sup>(1076)</sup>. In one case, Taliban militants killed a former commander for allegedly having ties with ISKP<sup>(1077)</sup>.

A number of Taliban and ISKP militants joined the peace process in Nangarhar<sup>(1078)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents (acts of violence against civilians, clashes with armed forces, acts of violence) were reported in sources compiled by ACLED in Nangarhar province in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018<sup>(1079)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Nangarhar**

Military operations are being regularly conducted in the province<sup>(1080)</sup>. Air strikes are also being carried out<sup>(1081)</sup>. These operations sometimes involve the killing of insurgents<sup>(1082)</sup>.

In January 2018, for example, operations were conducted in the district of Heska Mena/Deh Bala against ISKP, including air strikes<sup>(1083)</sup>. In March 2018, joint ANSF and international military force operations were conducted in Chaparhar district<sup>(1084)</sup>.

For 2017, UNAMA named specifically Deh Bala district as one of the three frontline districts in Afghanistan where international military air strikes took place<sup>(1085)</sup>.

<sup>(1073)</sup> Arab News, Daesh struggling for survival, say Afghan officials, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1074)</sup> EASO, Country of Origin Information Report Afghanistan Security Situation, December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1075)</sup> Arab News, Daesh struggling for survival, say Afghan officials, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1076)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(1077)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban militants kill ex-commander on charges of ISIS links in Nangarhar, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1078)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban and ISIS members join peace process in East of Afghanistan, 5 October 2017 ([url](#));

Khaama Press, 15 ISIS and Taliban group members join peace in East of Afghanistan, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1079)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1080)</sup> VOA, 'Insider' Attack Wounds US Soldier in E. Afghanistan, 11 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan forces confiscated 21 rockets in Nangarhar province, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, US drone strikes kill ISIS militants in Nangarhar province, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Active ISIS recruiter arrested by Afghan forces in Nangarhar, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 16 Taliban and ISIS militants killed, wounded in Nangarhar operations, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1081)</sup> Khaama Press, US drones target ISIS hideouts in Nangarhar province, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, ISIS militants among 7 killed in Nangarhar and Kapisa drone strikes, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Several ISIS militants killed in latest US drone strikes in East of Afghanistan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 78 ISIS militants killed, wounded in Afghan-US airstrikes in Nangarhar, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1082)</sup> Khaama Press, US drones target ISIS hideouts in Nangarhar province, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, ISIS militants among 7 killed in Nangarhar and Kapisa drone strikes, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 16 Taliban and ISIS militants killed, wounded in Nangarhar operations, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1083)</sup> 1TV News, 60 IS militants, one civilian killed Nangarhar offensive, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Haska Mena civilian casualties confirmed, probe urged, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1084)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 civilians killed in Nangarhar night raid: Residents, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Senators Ask Govt to Probe Civilian Casualties in Nangarhar, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)); Afghanistan Times, Nine civilians martyred in Nangarhar-Operations ensuing civilian casualties must abort: Karzai, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, 'Poor, innocent' Afghan farmers killed in raid targeting Taliban, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1085)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 45, 47.

UNAMA stated that search operations were conducted in Nangarhar involving NDS Special Forces <sup>(1086)</sup>.

## 2.22.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

### General

In 2017 UNAMA documented 862 civilian casualties (344 deaths and 518 injured). This represents an increase of 1 % compared to 2016, contrary to the national trends in 2017. This is the third highest number, after Kabul and Helmand. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagements, non-suicide IEDs, and targeted and deliberate killings <sup>(1087)</sup>. The increase was driven by suicide and complex attacks and other types of incidents involving IEDs <sup>(1088)</sup>. While fighting in Nangarhar increased in 2017, according to UNAMA, there were less civilian casualties from ground engagements: 227 civilian casualties (53 deaths and 174 injured), a 12 % decrease compared to 2016 <sup>(1089)</sup>.

UNOCHA considered Nangarhar as one of the ‘most conflict affected’ provinces <sup>(1090)</sup>. In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, combining three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the districts in the south and the centre of the province in the highest category of severity (Achin, Deh Bala, Pachieragam, Khogiyani, and Chaparhar). Hisarak, Surkhrod, Kot, Shinwar, Muhmand Dara and Lalpur were in the category below the highest. Sherzad, Rodat, Batikot Behsud and Jalalabad were in the middle category, and all other districts in the lower two categories <sup>(1091)</sup>. UNOCHA considered Nangarhar as one of the four provinces where persons exhibiting ‘very high protection concerns’ are located, defined as having a high number of: ‘new IDPs, natural disaster affected people, returnees, refugees and vulnerable members of the host community’, as well as ‘non-displaced conflict affected people’. These are people living in close proximity (1 km) to explosive hazards resulting from conflict <sup>(1092)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 740 incidents related to insurgents in Nangarhar province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1093)</sup>.

The Taliban and ISKP continued competing over territorial control in the province <sup>(1094)</sup>, and both were targeted by ANSF and international military forces <sup>(1095)</sup>. In Khogiyani, fighting between Taliban and ISKP in the months of October and November 2017 displaced tens of thousands (see [displacement](#)), and several civilians were killed in the crossfire <sup>(1096)</sup>. NRC also reported that civilians were tortured for helping the adversaries when territory changed

<sup>(1086)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 53.

<sup>(1087)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1088)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(1089)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(1090)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(1091)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1092)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 30.

<sup>(1093)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1094)</sup> UN Secretary-General (UNSG), The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(1095)</sup> IRIN News, Afghan attacks force aid rethink, leave local NGOs more exposed, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1096)</sup> VOA, Civilians Caught in Taliban, IS Crossfire in Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, 16 October 2017 ([url](#)); Dawn, IS, Taliban fight for key towns in Nangarhar, 29 November 2017 ([url](#)); VOA, Afghan Civilians Bear Brunt of Taliban, IS Clashes in Eastern Nangarhar, 20 October 2017 ([url](#)).

hands<sup>(1097)</sup>. In January 2018, for example, residents of the district of Heska Mena/Deh Bala claimed that several civilians, including women and children, were killed and wounded in operations against ISKP. Local officials blamed the civilian casualties on the fact that ISKP fighters hide in civilian homes that are subsequently targeted by air strikes<sup>(1098)</sup>. In March 2018, there were again reports about civilian casualties during joint ANSF and international military force operations in Chaparhar district<sup>(1099)</sup>.

Taliban and ISKP militants regularly attack local officials and security forces in the province<sup>(1100)</sup>. Ground engagements involving ISKP caused 22 civilian casualties in Nangarhar in 2017<sup>(1101)</sup>. Two incidents of targeted killing, 18 incidents involving the abduction of 81 civilians causing eight deaths and three injured<sup>(1102)</sup>. In November 2017, two remote controlled IEDs placed by ISKP killed two deminers and injured another<sup>(1103)</sup>.

Some examples of IED incidents involving civilian casualties include:

- The detonation of remote-controlled IED (RCIED) targeting an ANBP convoy, killing a civilian bystander and injuring four children and women<sup>(1104)</sup>.
- The detonation of an RCIED when a child touched its wiring in Achin in December 2017, killing a young girl, wounding three other girls and a woman<sup>(1105)</sup>.
- A suicide bomber targeted the crowd attending the funeral of a former governor, killing at least 17 persons and wounding 13 more in Heska Mena (Deh Bala) district in December 2017<sup>(1106)</sup>.
- An explosion during a cricket match killed four cricketers and a civilian in February 2018<sup>(1107)</sup>.
- Three civilian were wounded by a Taliban-planted bomb in Chaparhar district in March 2018<sup>(1108)</sup>.

<sup>(1097)</sup> NRC, Thousands flee clashes between Taliban and Islamic State in Eastern Afghanistan, 27 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1098)</sup> 1TV News, 60 IS militants, one civilian killed Nangarhar offensive, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Haska Mena civilian casualties confirmed, probe urged, 2 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1099)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 civilians killed in Nangarhar night raid: Residents, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Senators Ask Govt to Probe Civilian Casualties in Nangarhar, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)); Afghanistan Times, Nine civilians martyred in Nangarhar-Operations ensuing civilian casualties must abort: Karzai, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, 'Poor, innocent' Afghan farmers killed in raid targeting Taliban, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1100)</sup> RFE/RL, Taliban Briefly Captures District In Western Afghanistan, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1101)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 39.

<sup>(1102)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 34-36.

<sup>(1103)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 18.

<sup>(1104)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 32.

<sup>(1105)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 40.

<sup>(1106)</sup> RFE/RL, Bombing Kills At Least 17 At Funeral In Eastern Afghan City, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)); AFP, 18 dead in attack on Afghan funeral: Officials, 31 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(1107)</sup> BAAG, Afghanistan in February 2018, Key News, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1108)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Fresh violence leave 1 civilian dead, 6 injured, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)).

- A magnetic bomb attached to a fuel tanker went off on the ring road of Jalalabad in Behsud district. In the incident two people were killed, several were wounded and 30 shops were burnt down <sup>(1109)</sup>.

Examples of targeted killings include the killing of an imam by the Taliban in Khogyani in November 2017, on the accusation of supporting the government <sup>(1110)</sup>. Similarly, a mullah was killed by ISKP in Chaparhar district in September 2017, for ‘encouraging his congregation to support the government’ <sup>(1111)</sup>. In November 2017, ISKP reportedly beheaded 15 of its own members in Achin district <sup>(1112)</sup>. In Shirzad district, the Taliban executed two civilians in December 2017, for unknown reasons according to press reports <sup>(1113)</sup>. In February 2018, the bodies of nine civilians, including three elders, were found in a mass grave in Achin. They were part of a group of 15 that had been abducted by ISKP 18 months before <sup>(1114)</sup>.

Aerial operation in Nangarhar caused 94 civilian casualties (57 deaths and 37 injured) in 2017. Specifically Deh Bala district in Nangarhar was named as one of the three frontline districts in Afghanistan where civilians suffered most from international military air strikes <sup>(1115)</sup>.

UNAMA stated the vast majority of the civilian casualties from search operations were caused in Nangarhar and Kandahar. Of the 13 incidents with civilian casualties in Nangarhar in 2017, ‘12 search operations involving NDS Special Forces resulted in 38 civilian casualties (28 deaths and 10 injured). In one case, NDS Special Forces entered a home in Mohmand Dara district and shot dead all seven civilian men inside. The victims, all from the same family, had been displaced from Achin district due to heavy fighting’ <sup>(1116)</sup>. In another example, three men were killed by NDS personnel during a search operation in September 2017. A fourth man was wounded. The men had assumed the plain-clothed NDS personnel were burglars <sup>(1117)</sup>.

Nangarhar is among provinces with a high number of incidents of detonation of explosive remnants of war causing civilian casualties, and also among the provinces with the highest use of indirect weapons. This highlights, according to UNAMA, the link between the number of victims from explosive remnants of war, and the use of indirect weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades <sup>(1118)</sup>.

In September 2017, two boys were killed and three others injured by cross-border shelling from Pakistan into Nazyan district, while also displacing many families. Pakistani forces also

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<sup>(1109)</sup> Bakhtar News, Fuel Tanker Blast Took The Lives of 2 Civilians In Nangarhar, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 people killed, 30 shops gutted in Jalalabad blaze, 2 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1110)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 38.

<sup>(1111)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 40.

<sup>(1112)</sup> Independent, Isis beheads 15 of its own fighters after infighting in Afghanistan, say officials, 24 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1113)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban execute two civilians over unknown charges in Nangarhar, 10 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1114)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Bodies of 9 civilians abducted by Daesh found in Achin, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Bodies Found Of Nine People Abducted Last Year In Afghanistan, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1115)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 45, 47.

<sup>(1116)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 53.

<sup>(1117)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 48, 53.

<sup>(1118)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

shot and killed a boy who did not obey orders to stop at the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan <sup>(1119)</sup>.

### Security Situation in Jalalabad

During a presentation at an EASO conference in November 2017, an analyst employed by an international organisation in Afghanistan, who follows the security situation throughout the country very closely but who wished to remain anonymous, stated that Jalalabad city marked a ‘major security deterioration’ specifically since August 2017, caused by an increase in major crimes, including the targeting of businessmen, industrialists and doctors, an influx of insurgents escaping operations by ANSF and international military forces, and an ongoing power struggle <sup>(1120)</sup>.

In a complex attack on the office of Save the Children in January 2018 in Jalalabad, five civilians were killed and 21 injured. UNAMA detailed that those killed were four Save the Children staff and one shopkeeper; those injured were five Save the Children staff and six children while the remaining were civilians living or working in the area <sup>(1121)</sup>. The attack was claimed by ISKP <sup>(1122)</sup>. Other examples of incidents involving civilian casualties in Jalalabad include:

- One person was reportedly killed and eight others injured when a bomb exploded inside a vegetable shop in September 2017 <sup>(1123)</sup>.
- At least six civilians, including a woman and a child, were reportedly killed and 13 others wounded when a suicide bomber on a motorbike detonated his explosives outside a football stadium shortly after the end of a rally in support of President Ashraf Ghani in December 2017 <sup>(1124)</sup>.
- In February 2018, at least one civilian was killed and three others were wounded in an explosion inside the city <sup>(1125)</sup>.
- In another attack targeting a political rally by Hezb-e Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, at least three were killed and eight wounded in Jalalabad in March 2018 <sup>(1126)</sup>.

A number of targeted attacks happened inside the city during the reporting period.

- An employee of the Pakistani Consulate in the city was attacked and shot in the head five times by gunmen on a motorcycle while shopping near his home <sup>(1127)</sup>.
- In December 2017, two NDS personnel, including reportedly the Director of the Jalalabad Intelligence Unit, were killed in two bomb attacks claimed by ISKP. Ten others, including civilians, were wounded in the explosions <sup>(1128)</sup>.

<sup>(1119)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)) p. 19.

<sup>(1120)</sup> Security analyst, EASO meeting in Malta, 23 November 2017.

<sup>(1121)</sup> UNAMA, UNAMA condemns attack on humanitarian workers in Jalalabad, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1122)</sup> BBC News, Save the Children offices attacked in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)); Guardian (The), Isis claims attack on Save the Children office in Afghanistan, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1123)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 civilian killed, 8 injured in Jalalabad explosion, 13 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1124)</sup> Tolo News, Six Civilians Killed in Jalalabad Suicide Attack, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)); Skynews, Deadly attacks at TV station and football stadium in Afghan city of Jalalabad, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1125)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Blast kills 1 civilian, wounds 3 in Afghan eastern Jalalabad city, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1126)</sup> 1TV News, Deadly blast hits near Hekmatyar rally in Jalalabad, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 killed, 8 wounded in Jalalabad blast, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1127)</sup> Express Tribune (The), Pakistani consulate official shot dead in Afghanistan, 6 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1128)</sup> RFE/RL, Taliban 'Red Unit' Commander Killed In Afghanistan, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)); VOA, Suicide Bomber Kills Six Afghan Civilians, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)).

- A bomb went off in a hotel where tribal elders were gathering, killing three and wounding two more in February 2018 <sup>(1129)</sup>.
- A suicide bomber targeted the Head of Haj and Religious Affairs' office in March 2018, killing the target, while also killing another person and wounding ten more <sup>(1130)</sup>.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

UNAMA reported one incident of parallel justice punishments attributed to ISKP in Nangarhar in 2017 <sup>(1131)</sup>.

In eastern Afghanistan, the increase in opium poppy cultivation was especially high in Nangarhar province a plus of 32 % in the aggregate, even though 204 hectares were eradicated. The main opium poppy cultivating districts are Khogyani, Chaparhar, Batikot, Darah-e Nur, Hesarak, Lal Pur, Mohmand Dara, Rodat, Shinwari and Sherzad <sup>(1132)</sup>.

Nangarhar is one of the places where cases of the 'wild polio' virus were reported <sup>(1133)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 128 781 persons displaced from Nangarhar (1 834 from Achin; 10 847 from Chaparhar; 2 559 from Dehbala; 33 from Durbaba; 56 from Goshta; 182 from Hesarak; 89 300 from Khogyani; 182 from Kot; 7 490 from Lalpur; 333 from Muhmand Dara; 14 473 from Pachieragam; 84 from Rodat; 11 from Sherzad; 1 380 from Shinwar; 17 from Surkhrod) <sup>(1134)</sup>.

Parts of Nangarhar have been a battleground for years, creating large-scale displacements. At the same time Nangarhar also hosts hundreds of thousands of returnees from Pakistan <sup>(1135)</sup>. UNOCHA claimed, at the end of 2017, that almost one million people lived in informal settlements in Nangarhar, primarily in and around Jalalabad, and that this number had doubled in seven months' time <sup>(1136)</sup>. According to UNOCHA, 'the districts of Achin, Dehbala, Durbaba, and Kot have experienced significant depopulation' due to 'threat of repeated or intensified fighting'. The population movements were concentrated in and around Jalalabad <sup>(1137)</sup>. Due to a combination of high numbers of IDPs and high numbers of returnees, the number of informal settlements in Nangarhar province rose from 29 to 53 in six months' time in 2017, and its population doubled to almost a million in less than seven months. In 2017, one in three residents of Nangarhar was either IDP or a returnee. Such a rise has a profound impact, according to UNOCHA, 'overloading health facilities, schools, depressing labour wages and increasing rents' <sup>(1138)</sup>.

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, 808 902 individuals, or 34 % of the population in Nangarhar is either an IDP or returnee from abroad, which is nationwide both the highest number in absolute terms as proportionally. Of that number, approximately

<sup>(1129)</sup> RFE/RL, Three Tribal Elders, Nine Police Killed In Afghanistan, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1130)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghan Religious Official Killed By Suicide Bomber, 7 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1131)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 34-36.

<sup>(1132)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 5, 21.

<sup>(1133)</sup> UN Secretary-General (UNSG), The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 11.

<sup>(1134)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1135)</sup> IRIN News, Afghan attacks force aid rethink, leave local NGOs more exposed, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1136)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Humanitarian Response Plan (January 2018 - December 2021), 1 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 7.

<sup>(1137)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 11.

<sup>(1138)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, November 2017, ([url](#)), pp. 5, 8, 11.

37 000 live in the Chamtala settlement in Khogyani and over 33 000 in the Khalis Family settlement near Jalalabad, the second and third biggest IDP settlements in Afghanistan. According to IOM's displacement monitoring matrix, 252 285 people, or 16 % of its residents, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 32 000 people from Nangarhar, or 2 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(1139)</sup>.

In 2017, displacement in Nangarhar continued to be very high. Nangarhar was the province with the highest conflict-induced displacement in 2017. Of the more than 448 000 people displaced by conflict in Afghanistan in 2017, UNOCHA recorded 123 538 IDPs in Nangarhar, followed by Kunduz with 39 550 and Badghis with 26 659 <sup>(1140)</sup>.

In Khogyani, fighting in October and November displaced 51 600 people: '33 000 displaced people have found shelter scattered across Khogyani District, 9 800 have fled to Pachir Wa Agam and 9 600 to Surkh Rod districts. Some 4 500 have sheltered in Behsud District and approximately 1 100 in Jalalabad City' according to UNOCHA. 'Although some have found shelter with relatives, others are erecting makeshift shelters in open areas' <sup>(1141)</sup>.

## 2.23 Nimroz

### 2.23.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Nimroz

Taliban fighters are active in Nimroz province <sup>(1142)</sup>. According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a 'medium' 'active and physical presence' (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Kasht Rod, and a 'low' activity/presence (district attacked at least once in three months) in neighbouring Chakhansur <sup>(1143)</sup>. According to an article on the Institute for War and Peace Reporting website however, large parts of Nimroz province are under Taliban control, which fosters smuggling <sup>(1144)</sup>.

No ISKP-related incidents were reported in the sources consulted by ACLED in the province in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 January 2018 <sup>(1145)</sup>.

<sup>(1139)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1140)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 1 to 7 January 2018, 7 January 2018, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1141)</sup> UNOCHA, Situation update: Khogyani displacements and response, 8 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1142)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of February 27th, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 5; LWJ, Taliban fighters mass in western Afghan province, 30 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1143)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1144)</sup> IWPR, Drugs Trade Thrives in Afghan Province, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1145)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).



### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Nimroz**

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(1146)</sup>. Air strikes are being carried out, killing insurgents <sup>(1147)</sup>. There are clashes between the insurgents and Afghan security forces <sup>(1148)</sup>.

#### **2.23.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

##### **General**

In 2017 UNAMA documented 99 civilian casualties (34 deaths and 65 injured). This represents a decrease of 24 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagements, targeted and deliberate killings and non-suicide IEDs <sup>(1149)</sup>.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, combining three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the Khashrod / Dularam district in the north-eastern corner of the province in the second-highest category. The rest of the province is in the lowest category, except for the capital, Zaranj, which is placed in the second-lowest category <sup>(1150)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 48 incidents related to insurgents in Nimroz province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1151)</sup>.

Anti-government elements are active on the highway between Helmand and Nimroz. Insurgents are responsible for abductions, set up checkpoints and carry out direct attacks <sup>(1152)</sup>. Targeted roadside IED attacks in Kasht Rod district in September 2017 killed the commander of the highway police and three patrolling policemen, and wounded two others a few days later <sup>(1153)</sup>. Other attacks in the same area were the killing of the Kasht Rod district chief in November 2017 <sup>(1154)</sup>; a policeman killed and two others wounded in February 2018 in Kasht Rod <sup>(1155)</sup>; and in November 2017, 12 soldiers were killed in an attack on their check post on the main road in Kasht Rod <sup>(1156)</sup>.

<sup>(1146)</sup> Tolo News, Security Leaders Under Fire Over Spike In Casualty Toll, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 25 Insurgents Killed In Military Operations: MoD, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 28 militants killed as gov’t forces continue operations in Afghanistan, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Air Force Conducts 51 Flights As Offensives Continue, 9 February 2018 ([url](#)); Arab News, Afghanistan launches offensive against Taliban after Kabul attacks, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1147)</sup> Tolo News, Dozens Of Insurgents Killed In ANSF Operations, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Intelligence official gunned down in Zaranj, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Over 60 rebels killed in military offensives countrywide, 9 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1148)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Nine soldiers killed in insurgent attack in western Afghanistan, 27 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1149)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1150)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1151)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1152)</sup> Khaama Press, Foreigners among 6 militants killed on Helmand-Nimroz highway, 5 January 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1153)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Highway police chief killed in Nimroz blast, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 policemen killed, 2 injured in Nimroz blast, 14 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1154)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, District chief killed in Nimroz roadside bombing, 25 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1155)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi accident, Nimroz blast leave woman, policeman dead, 10 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1156)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 soldiers killed as Taliban storm security post in Nimroz, 27 November 2018 ([url](#)).

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

In December 2017 and January 2018, there were reports of Taliban checkpoints on the roads, used to tax passengers and goods <sup>(1157)</sup>.

A September 2017 article by Foreign Policy magazine report from the province, Nimroz is described as a lawless drug-smuggling hub <sup>(1158)</sup>. Local residents and public representatives complained about a surge in drug addictions, robberies and burglaries in February 2018. A local official stated crime had risen by 50 % compared to the previous year, while other officials denied this and claimed crime had actually decreased <sup>(1159)</sup>. In September 2017, a trader was kidnapped and subsequently killed in the provincial capital Zaranj <sup>(1160)</sup>. The alleged kidnappers were arrested and sentenced to death three month later <sup>(1161)</sup>. In the case of kidnapping a nine-year-old boy, the kidnappers were also sentenced to death a few days before <sup>(1162)</sup>. In January 2018, Iranian security personnel claimed to have freed an Iranian national kidnapped in Iran and held captive in Nimroz <sup>(1163)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Nimroz was one of the country's major poppy cultivating provinces. In 2017, opium poppy cultivation in Nimroz province more than doubled to 11 466 hectares. Poppy cultivation occurred primarily in Kash Rod and Chahr Burjak districts. 14 hectares of poppy fields were rededicated in 2017 <sup>(1164)</sup>. Nimroz is said to be a strategic region for drug trafficking as the province shares a 235 km border with Iran, is located north of Pakistan and also borders on Helmand, the province where half of all Afghan opium is produced <sup>(1165)</sup>.

According to a United Nations report, the highest rate of methamphetamine treatments was recorded in treatment centres in Kunduz and Nimroz <sup>(1166)</sup>. The province has seen the number of drug addicts rise in recent years; among those affected are also Afghans returning from foreign countries, mainly from Iran <sup>(1167)</sup>. Zaranj City has two rehabilitation centres, for female and male drug addicts respectively <sup>(1168)</sup>.

Work on the Afghan section of the TAPI line was inaugurated in mid-March 2018. This 1 800 km natural gas pipeline is to supply Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India with 33 billion cubic metres of Turkmen natural gas for 30 years. The pipeline is to run across five provinces in the south of the country – Herat, Farah, Helmand, Nimroz, and Kandahar, thus through an area with a strong Taliban presence. However, the Taliban declared their support for TAPI, calling it an 'important project' for the country <sup>(1169)</sup>. In exchange of jobs in the TAPI

<sup>(1157)</sup> Salam Watandar, Deteriorating security situation on Helmand-Nimroz highway after opening of Chabahar, 29 December 2017 ([url](#)); VOA, Taliban Looking for New Means to Support Insurgency in Southern Afghanistan, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban running 'customs check-point' on Nimroz road, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1158)</sup> FP, On the Edge of Afghanistan, 12 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1159)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Robberies, drug addicts increasing in Nimroz, say residents, 13 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1160)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Trader kidnapped, killed in Nimroz capital, 3 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1161)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Nimroz court sentences 3 men to death in trader's murder, 21 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1162)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Nimroz court sentences 2 kidnappers to death, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1163)</sup> Tolo News, Iranian Military Frees Iranian Hostage in Afghanistan, 1 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1164)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 5, 33.

<sup>(1165)</sup> IWPR, Hopes Overflow for Afghan Water Project, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1166)</sup> UN News Centre, Synthetic drugs are making headway in Afghanistan, UN agency reports, 14 February 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1167)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Most of drug addicts in Nimroz returned from Iran, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1168)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Population of Nimroz drug addicts reaches 13,000, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1169)</sup> Asia Foundation, A Pipeline for Landlocked Afghanistan: Can It Help Deliver Peace?, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Leaders Mark Start Of Work On Afghan Section Of TAPI Pipeline, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

project, 70 Taliban have indicated they were prepared to join in the peace process<sup>(1170)</sup>. Thousands of security forces have been deployed to ensure security for the TAPI project<sup>(1171)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 11 persons displaced from Nimroz (from Khashrod / Dularam)<sup>(1172)</sup>.

According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, 76 980 individuals, or 31 % of the population in Nangarhar is either an IDP or returnee from abroad, which is nationwide the second-highest proportion, after Nangarhar. According to IOM's displacement monitoring matrix, 10 750 people, or 6 % of its residents, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 15 000 people from Nimroz, or 9 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017<sup>(1173)</sup>.

In Nimroz is one of the two major border crossings to Iran, the Milak crossing. When flooding caused the closure of the Islam Qala border crossing in Herat province, 195 000 returnees came through Milak, 'overwhelming response capacity in Nimroz'<sup>(1174)</sup>.

## 2.24 Nuristan

### 2.24.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Nuristan

The province, having a long tradition of Salafi activism, attracts several militant groups inspired by this form of Sunnite Islam<sup>(1175)</sup>. Insurgents are active in various districts. Taliban insurgents as well as other groups operate in the province<sup>(1176)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a 'high' 'active and physical presence' (districts attacked at least twice a week) in the eastern districts Barg-e Matal and Kamdesh, and a 'medium' (districts attacked at least three times a month) to 'low' activity/presence (district attacked at least once in three months) in the rest of the province, except for the provincial capital Porun<sup>(1177)</sup>.

ISKP is said to be active in Nuristan<sup>(1178)</sup> and to have also recruited new members<sup>(1179)</sup>. The Province Governor, however, denied any ISKP activity in the province; a fatwa against the

<sup>(1170)</sup> Tolo News, Taliban Group Ready To Join Peace Process, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1171)</sup> Tolo News, Seven Die In Kandahar-Herat Highway Accident, 14 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1172)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1173)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1174)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 10, 13.

<sup>(1175)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghans Turn Remote Town Into A Safe Haven Against Insurgents, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1176)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban leader killed in Afghan police ambush in Nuristan, 18 April 2017 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Afghans Turn Remote Town Into A Safe Haven Against Insurgents, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)); Reuters, Taliban kill 26 Afghan soldiers as fighting intensifies, 26 July 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1177)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1178)</sup> Documenting Afghanistan, What is Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), 21 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Mps Accuse Govt Of Inflating Daesh Numbers, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Afghans Turn Remote Town Into A Safe Haven Against Insurgents, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)); Salam Watandar, Militants using sniper rifles in Kunar, Nuristan, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1179)</sup> RFE/RL, Worries Over New IS Sanctuary In Eastern Afghan Province, 4 June 2017 ([url](#)).

group is alleged to have been pronounced by religious scholars in the province<sup>(1180)</sup>. Nevertheless, lashes take place between the Taliban and ISKP supporters in Nuristan<sup>(1181)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents were recorded in the sources consulted by ACLED in the province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 along the border with Kunar<sup>(1182)</sup>.

The leader of the Pakistani Tehrik-e Taliban (TTP), Mullah Fazlullah, is believed to have fled to Nuristan with his supporters and to be continuing his operations from there<sup>(1183)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Nuristan**

Military operations are being conducted in the province<sup>(1184)</sup>, also taking the form of air strikes<sup>(1185)</sup> and resulting in the death of insurgents<sup>(1186)</sup>. There are clashes between the insurgents and Afghan security forces<sup>(1187)</sup>. The inhabitants of Parun, the capital of the province, joined forces in October 2017 in a bid to ensure peace and to stop the insurgents with the help of the Afghan security forces<sup>(1188)</sup>.

### **2.24.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

According to the representative of an international organisation contacted by EASO for this report, due to limited access to information and the lack of international community and IMF/ANSF presence throughout the province, an accurate assessment of the security situation is difficult; it is believed that incidents are significantly underreported. As a result of inaccessibility, mountainous terrain, and inadequate ANSF presence, the security situation remains volatile in Nuristan<sup>(1189)</sup>.

In 2017, UNAMA documented 41 civilian casualties (11 deaths and 30 injured). This represents an increase of 14 % compared to 2016, contrary to the national trend. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, non-suicide IEDs, and targeted and deliberate killings<sup>(1190)</sup>. According to UNAMA, the increase was mainly driven by suicide and complex attacks and other types of incidents involving IEDs<sup>(1191)</sup>.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, combining three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the district

<sup>(1180)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Governor rules out Daesh presence in Nuristan, 6 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1181)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghan Governor Says Taliban Fighting IS In Eastern Province, 28 June 2017 ([url](#)); Kaama Press, Clashes reported among the Taliban and ISIS militants in Nuristan, 28 June 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1182)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1183)</sup> Arab News, US-Pakistan relations on the mend thanks to reward offer, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Daily Times, TTP ex-spokesman surrenders to army, 17 April 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1184)</sup> Anadolu Agency, 70 militants dead as Afghan forces repulse major attack, 13 September 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban leader killed in Afghan police ambush in Nuristan, 18 April 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1185)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh fighters killed in Nuristan, Kunar airstrikes, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, A-29s carry out deadly airstrikes on Taliban in Nuristan leaving over 50 dead, 9 September 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Dozens Of Militants Killed In Nuristan Airstrikes, 9 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1186)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh fighters killed in Nuristan, Kunar airstrikes, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Dozens Of Militants Killed In Nuristan Airstrikes, 9 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1187)</sup> Anadolu Agency, 70 militants dead as Afghan forces repulse major attack, 13 September 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban Attack Nuristan’s Barg-e Matal District, Clashes Ongoing, 11 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1188)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghans Turn Remote Town Into A Safe Haven Against Insurgents, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1189)</sup> International organisation, e-mail, 14 September 2017. The local contact is an international organisation active in the province. The organisation wished to remain anonymous for security reasons.

<sup>(1190)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1191)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

Kamdesh, bordering Pakistan and Kunar province, in the second-highest category and Waygal in the category below. All other districts are in the lowest two categories <sup>(1192)</sup>.

Parun is considered to be a safe district; the majority of its population are Nuristani. The homogeneity of the local population helps prevent the destabilisation of their communities by outsiders. However, neighbouring districts Barg-e Matal, Kamdesh and Waygal are described as experiencing ‘relentless fighting’, causing residents in those areas to be displaced to Parun <sup>(1193)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 71 incidents related to insurgents in Nuristan province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1194)</sup>.

In September 2017, the Taliban launched a major attack of more than 300 fighters who attacked the district centre of Barg-e Matal but were repulsed by the ANA <sup>(1195)</sup>. According to local officials ‘one child was killed and three other civilians were wounded in the Taliban gunfire. Two mosques and eight civilian houses were also destroyed’ <sup>(1196)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

In 2017, Nuristan lost its opium-free status; 121 hectares of opium were cultivated in Nurgaram and Mandol districts <sup>(1197)</sup>.

### **Displacement**

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 747 persons displaced from Nuristan (21 from Barg-e Matal; 118 from Kamdesh; 217 from Mandol; 32 from Nurgeram; 9 from Poruns; 350 from Waygal) <sup>(1198)</sup>.

## **2.25 Paktia/Paktya**

### **2.25.1 Actors in the conflict**

#### **Insurgent groups in Paktia**

Insurgents are active in several districts of the province <sup>(1199)</sup>. Insurgents include members of the Taliban <sup>(1200)</sup> and of al-Qaida <sup>(1201)</sup>. But the Haqqani network is also operational in Paktia

<sup>(1192)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1193)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghans Turn Remote Town Into A Safe Haven Against Insurgents, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1194)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1195)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan forces repulse massive Barg-i-Matal attack, 11 September 2017 ([url](#));

Anadolu Agency, 70 militants dead as Afghan forces repulse major attack, 13 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1196)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 security personnel, 35 rebels dead in Barg-i-Matal battle, 12 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1197)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 21.

<sup>(1198)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA,

Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1199)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, In Zurmat district, 13 schools for girls stay shut, 25 March 2018 ([url](#)); Ouest France,

Afghanistan. Un mystérieux Allemand arrêté chez les talibans, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Gailani Rejects

Claims Of Trying To Get Anas Haqqani Freed, 9 January 2018 ([url](#)); Deutsche Welle, Taliban verlieren Stadt in

ostafghanischer Provinz Paktia, 4 August 2017 ([url](#)); Die Zeit, Taliban-Kämpfer infiltriert Armee und tötet US-

Soldaten, 11 June 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1200)</sup> RFI, Afghanistan: les talibans attaquent un camp de police, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1201)</sup> RFI, Afghanistan: les talibans attaquent un camp de police, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, Taliban kills

scores in Afghanistan’s Paktia and Ghazni, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)); Die Zeit, Taliban-Kämpfer infiltriert Armee und

tötet US-Soldaten, 11 June 2017 ([url](#)).

province<sup>(1202)</sup>, which is said to be the birthplace of the Haqqani network<sup>(1203)</sup>. The province is described, by analyst Bill Roggio of the Long War Journal, as a ‘bastion’ of the Haqqani Network<sup>(1204)</sup>. In November 2017, the village elders of Paktia province agreed to act as mediators between the Afghan government and the Haqqani network<sup>(1205)</sup>.

In October 2017, UNOCHA reported ongoing armed clashes in Janikhel district<sup>(1206)</sup>, which previously had fallen into Taliban hands for two weeks in July-August 2017<sup>(1207)</sup>. In late March 2018, fighting was again reported in Janikhel<sup>(1208)</sup>, a district of special importance to, among others, the Haqqani network as its geographical position affords many advantages to those able to control it<sup>(1209)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Zurmat, Gardez, Janikhel, Dand Wa Patan and Alikhel or Jaji district. In the remaining districts, the Taliban have a ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) or ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) presence and activity<sup>(1210)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents (skirmishes) were reported in sources compiled by ACLED along the border to Khost province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018<sup>(1211)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Paktia**

Military operations are being conducted in the province<sup>(1212)</sup>, also taking the form of air strikes<sup>(1213)</sup> and resulting in the deaths of insurgents<sup>(1214)</sup>. There are also clashes between insurgents and security forces<sup>(1215)</sup>.

In December 2017, in a briefing to humanitarian actors in the province, the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority reported that the number of military operations in Zurmat district has increased, and that this could lead to further displacement<sup>(1216)</sup>.

<sup>(1202)</sup> Die Zeit, Taliban-Kämpfer infiltriert Armee und tötet US-Soldaten, 11 June 2017 ([url](#)); Congressional Research Service, Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy, 13 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(1203)</sup> Al Jazeera, Taliban kills scores in Afghanistan’s Paktia and Ghazni, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1204)</sup> LWJ, Taliban suicide assault teams kill Paktia police chief, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1205)</sup> Tolo News, Paktia Elders Ready To Bring Haqqani Leader To Peace Table, 10 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1206)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 16 to 22 October 2017, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1

<sup>(1207)</sup> Ruttig, T., and Muzhary, F., At the End of a Long Curve: The fall of Janikhel, 8 August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1208)</sup> Tolo News, 1396 Was A Challenging Year In Terms Of Security, 20 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1209)</sup> Diplomat (The), Strategic District in Paktia, Afghanistan Falls to Taliban, 29 August 2016 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1210)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1211)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1212)</sup> Europa Press, Afghanistan anuncia la muerte de 51 presuntos insurgentes en operaciones durante las últimas 24 horas, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)); ANI, Afghanistan: Security forces kill 63 militants in 24 hours, 25 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(1213)</sup> Turkish Radio and Television, 51, عضو طالبان و داعش در نقاط مختلف افغانستان کشته شدند, 28 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Seven militants killed in airstrike in eastern Afghanistan, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)); Rasad News Agency, با کشته شدن تمامی مهاجمان طالب پایان پکتیا حمله تروریستی در ولایت

<sup>(1214)</sup> Turkish Radio and Television, 51, عضو طالبان و داعش در نقاط مختلف افغانستان کشته شدند, 28 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Seven militants killed in airstrike in eastern Afghanistan, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1215)</sup> Tolo News, Security Leaders Under Fire Over Spike In Casualty Toll, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)); Radio France Internationale, Afghanistan: les talibans attaquent un camp de police, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1216)</sup> UNOCHA, Central Region Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) – Gardez (Paktya). Meeting Summary, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)).

An Afghan military base, the US military base Forward Operating Base (FOB) Gardez and the Advising Platform Lightning where the Task Force Southeast is stationed are located in the province (<sup>1217</sup>).

Paktia is also home to a base of the Khost Protection Force, which is a pro-Government paramilitary group with bases in Khost and Paktya (<sup>1218</sup>).

## 2.25.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

### General

In 2017, UNAMA documented 491 civilian casualties (116 deaths and 375 injured). This represents an increase of 154 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from suicide or complex attacks, targeted and deliberate killings and ground engagements (<sup>1219</sup>). According to UNAMA, the increase was mainly driven by suicide and complex attacks and other types of incidents involving IEDs (<sup>1220</sup>). In Paktya province, UNAMA documented four suicide and complex attacks in 2017, resulting in 255 civilian casualties (51 deaths and 204 injured), compared to none of these types of attacks in 2016 (<sup>1221</sup>).

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, which combines three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places Janikhel, Alikhel/Jaji, SayedKaram/Mirzaka, provincial capital Gardez, Shawak and Zurmat districts in the second-highest category and most of all other districts in the middle category (<sup>1222</sup>). Thomas Ruttig, Co-Director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), described the province as one that ‘appeared to be otherwise calm’ in November 2017, except for fighting around Janikhel district centre and an occasional air strike (<sup>1223</sup>).

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 54 incidents related to insurgents in Paktia province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website (<sup>1224</sup>).

The Taliban conducted a significant complex suicide attack on a police training facility in Gardez city on 17 October 2017. According to AAN’s reporting, ‘the total number of casualties, including attackers and civilians, was estimated to be over 80 dead and around 200 wounded’ (<sup>1225</sup>).

According to UNAMA, Paktya was one of the three provinces marking an increase in targeted killings in 2017 (<sup>1226</sup>). In January 2018, a government official was killed by a magnetic IED

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(<sup>1217</sup>) Fort Hood Sentinel, Task Force Southeast continues to train, advise, assist Afghan forces, 31 August 2017 ([url](#)); Special Operations Forces News, Task Force Southeast -SFA / TAA in Gardez, Afghanistan, 22 June 2017 ([url](#)); U.S. Army, Mission of Task Force Southeast – Train, Advise, Assist, 19 June 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1218</sup>) UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 52-53.

(<sup>1219</sup>) UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

(<sup>1220</sup>) UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

(<sup>1221</sup>) UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 30.

(<sup>1222</sup>) UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

(<sup>1223</sup>) Ruttig, T., The ‘Humvee Bomb’ Series: The October wave of Taliban attacks in 2017 context, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1224</sup>) <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

(<sup>1225</sup>) Ruttig, T., The ‘Humvee Bomb’ Series: The October wave of Taliban attacks in 2017 context, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1226</sup>) UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

attached to his car in Gardez city <sup>(1227)</sup>. In January 2018, an IED exploded in Gardez city, killing one civilian and injuring a second <sup>(1228)</sup>.

In March 2018, there were reports of fighting with the Taliban in Zurmat, and a Taliban attack on a check post in Zurmat <sup>(1229)</sup> which resulted in the killing of seven police officers <sup>(1230)</sup>.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

In one incident involving criminal behaviour by the Afghan Local Police, several ALP officers broke into a house in an attempted robbery in Zurmat in September 2017. However, the robbery resulted in the ALP killing the homeowner, a teacher who was home at the time; two of his family members were also injured <sup>(1231)</sup>. UNAMA reports that the ANP arrested the four ALP officers and their case was in process in the primary court <sup>(1232)</sup>.

UNOCHA reported that a health facility in Janikhel was occupied by ANSF, despite negotiations led by department of Public Health <sup>(1233)</sup>. After ANSF retook the district centre in November 2017, the soldiers vacated the health facility and healthcare workers were able to return to the clinic and resume operations <sup>(1234)</sup>.

UNAMA reported that it received 2017 reports that the Khost Protection Force in Paktya seized personal belongings and weapons from civilians, detained and questioned people, and transferred some to NDS while releasing others (see [Khost](#) for more details) <sup>(1235)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Paktya was poppy-free in 2017 <sup>(1236)</sup>.

In December 2017, residents complained that many roads in and around Gardez are permanently closed for security reasons. This forces residents to take secondary ‘dust’ roads, on which the claim to lose a lot of time, are often robbed and cannot transport patients to hospitals <sup>(1237)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 9,517 persons displaced from Paktya (483 from Ahmadaba; 1 351 from Alikhel (Jaji); 63 from Chamkani; 4 543 from Janikhel; 266 from Lija Ahmad Khel / Laja Mangel; 1 289 from Sayedkaram / Mirzaka; 49 from Shawak; 112 from Zadran; 1 361 from Zurmat) <sup>(1238)</sup>.

In September 2017, UNOCHA reported the arrival of more than 2 600 people displaced by a ‘volatile security situation’ in Janikhel district <sup>(1239)</sup>. In December 2017, local officials reported

<sup>(1227)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Paktia blast leaves 1 civilian dead, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1228)</sup> Tolo News, One Killed, One Wounded In Paktia Roadside Blast, 20 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1229)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Nearly 100 militants killed in past 24 hours: MoD, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kill 7 police, briefly hold Paktia post, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1230)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kill 7 police, briefly hold Paktia post, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1231)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, ALP personnel kill high school teacher in Paktia, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)); UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 50.

<sup>(1232)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 50.

<sup>(1233)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 16 to 22 October 2017, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1

<sup>(1234)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 20 - 26 November 2017, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1235)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 52-53.

<sup>(1236)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(1237)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Life paralyzed in Gardez due to security barriers, 10 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1238)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1239)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 11 to 17 September 2017, 17 September 2017, ([url](#)).



that 700 families or 4 900 individuals had arrived in Gardez from Zurmat, Jani Khil, Laja Ahmad Khi and Ali Khil (Jaji) districts <sup>(1240)</sup>.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix, 92 693 individuals, or 14 % of the population in Paktiya is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. According to IOM’s displacement monitoring matrix, 42 517 people, or 8 % of its residents, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 28 000 people from Paktiya, or 5 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(1241)</sup>.

## 2.26 Paktika

### 2.26.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Paktika

Insurgents belonging to the Taliban, the Haqqani network, al-Qaida and other anti-government groups, such as the Tehrik-e Taliban (TTP), are active in Paktika <sup>(1242)</sup>. The Haqqani network is also operational in Paktika <sup>(1243)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban fully control 14 districts nationwide, of which one in Paktika: Dila district. Further, they have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Gomal, Janikhel, Turwo, Omna, Sarobi, Sarrawzah, Urgun, Sharan, Naka, and Ziruk. In the remaining districts, they have a ‘medium’ presence and activity (districts attacked at least three times a month), except for Zarghunshahr, where they supposedly have only a ‘low’ presence and activity (district attacked at least once in three months) <sup>(1244)</sup>.

In August 2017, the government denied that the district of Gomal had fallen in Taliban hands, claiming to have ‘tactically retreated’ from the DAC <sup>(1245)</sup>. The Taliban later spread a video showing they were in control of the DAC <sup>(1246)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents were reported in sources consulted by ACLED along the border with Ghazni in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 <sup>(1247)</sup>.

<sup>(1240)</sup> UNOCHA, Central Region Humanitarian Regional Team (HRT) – Gardez (Paktya). Meeting Summary, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1241)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1242)</sup> Khaama Press, 3 militants killed, vehicle destroyed in Paktika airstrike: Mol, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)); LWJ, US military confirms death of Pakistani Taliban commander, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Top TTP Leader With Al Qaeda Links Killed In US Airstrike In Paktika, 2 March 2018 ([url](#)); Congressional Research Service, Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy, 13 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(1243)</sup> Congressional Research Service, Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy, 13 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence foil suicide attack plotted by Haqqani network in Paktika, 4 April 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1244)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1245)</sup> Pajwok Afghan News, Paktika officials deny Gomal district’s fall to Taliban, 26 August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1246)</sup> LWJ, Video shows Taliban overran district center in Afghan east, 11 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1247)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Paktika**

Military operations are being conducted regularly in the province <sup>(1248)</sup>. Air strikes are also being carried out <sup>(1249)</sup>, resulting in the killing of insurgents <sup>(1250)</sup>.

#### **2.26.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

##### **General**

In 2017, UNAMA documented 158 civilian casualties (62 deaths and 96 injured). This represents a decrease of 5 % compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from non-suicide IEDs, targeted and deliberate killings and ground engagements <sup>(1251)</sup>.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, which combines three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places Urgun district in the second-highest category and most of all other districts in the middle category <sup>(1252)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 76 incidents related to insurgents in Paktika province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1253)</sup>.

At times, insurgents launch attacks, including coordinated attacks and suicide attacks <sup>(1254)</sup>. For example in September 2017, humanitarian actors in the province reported 25 days of continuous clashes in Gomal district. The fighting left the District Administrative Centre (DAC) compound destroyed and ANSF had to move to the nearby border battalion <sup>(1255)</sup>.

Clashes between security forces and insurgents were reported on several other occasions <sup>(1256)</sup>.

In a shooting incident between policemen in the capital Sharan, two policemen and a civilian were killed, while 21 others were wounded <sup>(1257)</sup>. Residents of Gyan district claimed that six civilians were killed and four injured, in fighting between insurgents and ANSF in December 2017, a claim ANSF dismissed <sup>(1258)</sup>. In February, two civilians and a policeman were killed, and

<sup>(1248)</sup> RFE/RL, Ten Suspected Insurgents Killed In Afghanistan’s Helmand, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 Taliban killed in Paktika offensive, 22 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1249)</sup> LWJ, US military confirms death of Pakistani Taliban commander, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Top TTP Leader With Al Qaeda Links Killed In US Airstrike In Paktika, 2 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 3 militants killed, vehicle destroyed in Paktika airstrike: Mol, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 65 Insurgents Killed In Foreign Forces Operations In Paktika, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, After Kabul attack, US airstrikes kill 63 Taliban in Paktika, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1250)</sup> LWJ, US military confirms death of Pakistani Taliban commander, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Top TTP Leader With Al Qaeda Links Killed In US Airstrike In Paktika, 2 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, After Kabul attack, US airstrikes kill 63 Taliban in Paktika, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1251)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1252)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1253)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1254)</sup> Khaama Press, 3 militants killed, vehicle destroyed in Paktika airstrike: Mol, 26 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1255)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team (OCT) meeting - Paktika Province. Minutes of Meeting, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1256)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, ALP man singlehandedly kills 15 Taliban in Paktika, 15 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 Taliban, 2 border police killed in Paktika, 25 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 police killed, 3 wounded in Paktika, Ghazni attacks, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 Taliban insurgents killed in Paktika clashes, 11 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1257)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Paktika rally demands probe into police infighting, 27 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1258)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 Taliban killed in Paktika offensive, 22 December 2017 ([url](#)).

six to twelve wounded in the explosion of an IED on a motorbike on a market in Yahyakhel district <sup>(1259)</sup>.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

Tolnews reported in November 2017 that due to insecurity government officials from Sarrawzah, Gyan and Nakah district do not enter the district anymore and have set up office in neighbouring districts, or in the provincial capital. Further, the Taliban closed the roads Wormamay, Turwo/Tarwah and Wazakhaw districts <sup>(1260)</sup>. The Paktika-Ghazni highway links the both provinces; late in March 2018, the road was reopened, following a one-week blockade due to demonstrations against the worsening security situation. The Governor of the province promised to take the necessary steps <sup>(1261)</sup>.

In September 2017, in clashes in Gomal district, a basic health clinic was damaged <sup>(1262)</sup>. In March 2018, a health clinic was damaged during conflict in Nika district, stopping its operations, serving a community of around 40 000 people <sup>(1263)</sup>.

The Taliban are said to have blocked anti-polio vaccination campaigns in the province, warning residents not to vaccinate their children <sup>(1264)</sup>. In Dila district, insurgents are said to have taken away the money residents received from humanitarian actors to rebuild their houses and burnt the money, warning everybody to stop receiving any assistance from the government <sup>(1265)</sup>. In January 2018, Pajhwok reported that 39 schools remained closed in the province due to ‘Taliban hurdles’ and opposing tribal elders <sup>(1266)</sup>.

The province has no female doctor and because of a lack of antenatal and neonatal care, maternal mortality rates are high. Conservative attitudes, however, are said to be gradually changing <sup>(1267)</sup>. In some districts, e.g. in Barmal, Afghan inhabitants carry Pakistani identity cards <sup>(1268)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Pakitka was poppy-free in 2017 <sup>(1269)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 2,464 persons displaced from Paktika (28 from Bermel; 126 from Dila; 707 from Gomal; 28 from Gyan; 84 from Matakhan; 238 from Naka; 63 from Sarobi; 35 from Sharan; 1 078 from Urgun; 77 from Wazakhah) <sup>(1270)</sup>.

<sup>(1259)</sup> Tolo News, Three Killed In Paktika Motorbike Bombing, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Policeman among 3 killed in Paktika explosion, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1260)</sup> Tolo News, Paktika District Officials Forced To Work From Provincial Capital, 26 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1261)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Protesters conditionally reopen Paktika-Ghazni road, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1262)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team (OCT) meeting - Paktika Province. Minutes of Meeting, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1263)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 12 - 18 March 2018, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1264)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban impede anti-polio vaccination campaign in Paktika, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1265)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 8 to 14 January 2018, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1266)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 39 schools remain closed in Paktika, 25 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1267)</sup> IWPR, Afghanistan: A New Generation of Midwives, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1268)</sup> IWPR, Controversy Over Afghans Issued Pakistan IDs, 22 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1269)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(1270)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

In September 2017, humanitarian actors in the province reported around 100 families displaced due to clashes in Gomal district to Urgun, Sarobi and Sharan <sup>(1271)</sup>. Other reports state the violence displaced 500 families <sup>(1272)</sup>. ‘Heavy armed clashes’ between insurgents and ANSF reportedly led 800 more into displacement in October 2017 <sup>(1273)</sup>. In November 2017, 220 new IDPs were reported in Sharan, coming from Gayan, Gomal and Waza Khwa districts. The displacement was caused by ‘continues conflict between ANSF and Taliban, threats and shortages of drinking water’ according to the Head of Department of Refugees and Repatriation <sup>(1274)</sup>. UNOCHA reported in March 2018 that more than 1 200 people reportedly arrived in Sharana from Urgun and Mata Khan districts <sup>(1275)</sup>.

Paktika, sharing a long border with Pakistan, hosts around 30,000 Pakistani refugees who fled military operations in North and South Waziristan <sup>(1276)</sup>.

## 2.27 Panjshir/Panjsher

### 2.27.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Panjshir

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban has no presence or activity in any of the province’s seven districts <sup>(1277)</sup>.

#### (Pro-)Government forces and military operations

According to one source, Panjshir is regarded as the last major pro-government stronghold in Afghanistan <sup>(1278)</sup>.

### 2.27.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

Panjshir was the only province in Afghanistan where UNAMA did not document a single civilian casualty in 2017 <sup>(1279)</sup>. In September 2017, an international organisation active in the country reported in an e-mail to EASO that the latest major security incidents in the province were: In May 2013, attacks against the Provincial Governor’s office; in May 2014, an attack against the district administrative centre of Dar and against the gate to the province; and finally, in May 2015, against the Administrative and Chief of Police building <sup>(1280)</sup>. Without providing any details, in October 2017, Pajhwok reported that the first attack on security

<sup>(1271)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team (OCT) meeting - Paktika Province. Minutes of Meeting, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1272)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds flee clashes in Paktika’s Gomal, 7 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1273)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 23 to 29 October 2017, 29 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1

<sup>(1274)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team (OCT) meeting - Paktika Province. Minutes of Meeting, 13 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1275)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 12 - 18 March 2018, 19 March 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1276)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 37; Pajhwok Afghan News, Waziristan refugee families in Paktika seek assistance, 21 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1277)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1278)</sup> Buzz Feed, “At 3 P.M. My Son Came Home. By 9 P.M. He Was Dead”, 28 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1279)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1280)</sup> International organisation, e-mail, 14 September 2017. The local contact is an international organisation active in the province. The organisation wished to remain anonymous for security reasons.

forces in three years had occurred <sup>(1281)</sup>. In an article on 2017 casualties, Pajhwok described one attack in Panjshir in which one person was killed and six others were wounded <sup>(1282)</sup>. In an e-mail to EASO about the 2017 incident in Panjshir, the director and editor-in-chief of Pajhwok Afghan News shared the content of the original Dari-language article describing this incident. The incident happened when a criminal resisted arrest and threw a hand grenade at the ANSF <sup>(1283)</sup>.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, which combines three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the whole province in the lowest category <sup>(1284)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 1 incident in Panjshir province was found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1285)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

In 2017, Panjshir was one of the opium-free provinces of Afghanistan <sup>(1286)</sup>.

### **Displacement**

No conflict-induced internal displacement was reported by UNOCHA for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018 <sup>(1287)</sup>.

## **2.28 Parwan**

### **2.28.1 Actors in the conflict**

#### **Insurgent groups in Parwan**

Taliban militants are active in remote districts of Parwan province <sup>(1288)</sup>. In November 2017, the districts of Seyagerd/Ghorband and Shinwari were considered most vulnerable in terms of security <sup>(1289)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘medium’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Ghorband district. Further they have a ‘low active presence’ (district attacked at least once in three months) in Shinwari, Salang, Jabalussaraj, Bagram and Koh-e Safi <sup>(1290)</sup>.

<sup>(1281)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan casualties surge by 39pc in October, 5 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1282)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2017 casualties: nearly 25,000 people killed, wounded in Afghanistan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1283)</sup> Karokhel, D., e-mail, 17 March 2018. Mr. Karokhel is director and editor in chief of Pajhwok Afghan News.

<sup>(1284)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1285)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1286)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(1287)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1288)</sup> Khaama Press, Senior government official killed in Parwan explosion, 15 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Ongoing Clashes Displace Dozens Of Families In Parwan, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Parwan Ulema Council chief and 7 students killed in Madrasa explosion, 9 May 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1289)</sup> LWJ, Taliban video shows fighters entering valley after Afghan forces retreat, 10 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, ANSF Advancing In Seyagerd As Air Operations Intensify, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Afghan Forces Killed in Friendly-Fire Airstrike, Capping Deadly Week, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1290)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

ISKP-related incidents (skirmishes on the border with Kabul) were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 <sup>(1291)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Parwan**

Early in September 2017, ANSF launched a ground operation against insurgents in Jabalussaraj district, reportedly backed by drone strikes <sup>(1292)</sup>. Military operations were further also being conducted on several occasions in the province <sup>(1293)</sup>; with Taliban fighters being killed <sup>(1294)</sup> and weapons being confiscated <sup>(1295)</sup>. Air strikes are carried out as well <sup>(1296)</sup>.

There are clashes between security forces and Taliban <sup>(1297)</sup>.

### **2.28.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population**

#### **General**

Reports from ‘restive’ districts of Parwan province speak of roadside bombs, suicide attacks, targeted/deliberate killings and other attacks, sparking ANSF operations <sup>(1298)</sup>. Taliban insurgents sometimes launch attacks on security forces in some parts of the province <sup>(1299)</sup>.

According to UNAMA, there were 77 civilian casualties in Parwan in 2017: 20 persons were killed and 57 injured due mainly due to unexploded ordnances and landmines, followed by targeted and deliberate killings and ground engagements. This represents a decrease of 31 %, compared to 2016 <sup>(1300)</sup>.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, which combines three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the district Seyagerd/Ghorband, in the second-highest category, and Shinwari and Bagram in the middle category. All other districts are in the lowest two categories <sup>(1301)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 54 incidents related to insurgents in Parwan province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1302)</sup>.

In September 2017, US airplanes dropped leaflets over Parwan province that were deemed offensive to Islam. The Taliban subsequently claimed that a suicide attack carried out near the Bagram base, that injured between four to six civilians, was in response to this ‘insult’ to

<sup>(1291)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1292)</sup> Afghanistan Times, Key Taliban commander killed in Parwan, 4 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1293)</sup> Tolo News, Ten Insurgents Killed In Parwan Special Operation, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, One Killed in Afghan-Foreign Troops Night Raid in Parwan, 20 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban Ammunition Cache Found In Parwan, 9 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Forces Push Back Taliban From Seyagerd’s Fandoqestan Valley, 4 October 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, ANSF Advancing In Seyagerd As Air Operations Intensify, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1294)</sup> Tolo News, Ten Insurgents Killed In Parwan Special Operation, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1295)</sup> Tolo News, Taliban Ammunition Cache Found In Parwan, 9 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1296)</sup> Tolo News, ANSF Advancing In Seyagerd As Air Operations Intensify, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1297)</sup> Tolo News, Ongoing Clashes Displace Dozens Of Families In Parwan, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Clashes Ongoing In Parwan’s Seyagerd District, 29 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1298)</sup> Khaama Press, 5 Afghan intelligence staff killed in Parwan attack, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1299)</sup> Ariana News, 10 Taliban Militants Killed in Parwan Province, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)); AP, Afghanistan: Blast at Bagram Airfield results in casualties, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1300)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1301)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1302)</sup> [url](#). See introduction for further information on this source.

Islam <sup>(1303)</sup>. One week later, a vehicle-borne suicide attack targeting a foreign military convoy wounded six international soldiers and three civilians <sup>(1304)</sup>.

At the end of September 2017, the Taliban launched a coordinated attack on several security posts in Seyagerd/Ghorband district, overrunning several of them. The subsequent fighting over territory lasted for several days and displaced several thousand civilians (see [Displacement](#)) <sup>(1305)</sup>. According to some reports, Taliban shelling killed seven civilians, including two girls, and injured seven other civilians. The Taliban were also said to have tortured residents and looted their houses according to local media sources <sup>(1306)</sup>.

In November 2017 in the capital, Chahrikar, a magnetic IED attached to a fuel truck detonated, killing eight civilians and wounded around 25 people. The detonation happened when a passenger bus was passing by the truck. No group claimed responsibility <sup>(1307)</sup>. Xinhua News Agency reported that 15 people were killed and 30 more wounded in the attack <sup>(1308)</sup>.

Examples of targeted killings include:

- In November 2017, government officials were targeted by a roadside bomb, killing the Deputy Head of the Education Department Parwan and wounding the Head of Department <sup>(1309)</sup>
- In February 2018, five NDS personnel were killed when a gunman opened fire on their car in Bagram district <sup>(1310)</sup>.

Parwan is one of the opium free provinces of Afghanistan <sup>(1311)</sup>.

## Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 6 632 persons displaced from Parwan (6 531 from Seyagerd/Ghorband; 101 from Shinwari) <sup>(1312)</sup>.

UNOCHA reported that ‘heavy armed clashes’ in Shinwari and Seyagerd/Ghorband districts in September 2017 displaced around 1,750 people to villages within the districts <sup>(1313)</sup>. According to the Deputy Provincial Governor, reporting to humanitarian actors, the conflict occurred in Seyagerd/Ghorband end of September 2017 and took place between insurgents and ANSF. Reportedly, 95 % of about 1,500 – 2,000 families living in the area were displaced to Chahrikar and Bagram districts and ‘many of them’ also left for Kabul. One official stated that there were also ‘reports about casualt[ies] and destruction of houses’ <sup>(1314)</sup>. In March 2018, the Parwan DoRR stated that 350 families had arrived in Chahrikar, Jabalussaraj and Bagram districts from

<sup>(1303)</sup> Reuters, U.S. forces apologize for ‘highly offensive’ Afghan propaganda leaflet, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)); AP, Afghanistan: Blast at Bagram Airfield Results in Casualties, 6 September 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(1304)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 foreign soldiers wounded in Bagram car-suicide attack, 11 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1305)</sup> Tolo News, Ongoing Clashes Displace Dozens Of Families In Parwan, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 security personnel among 13 killed in Parwan, Farah unrest, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1306)</sup> 1TV News, Taliban launch mass attack in Afghan province near Kabul, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Fierce clashes in Siyagard district displace thousands, 3 October 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Security forces retake Parwan’s Fandujistan valley, 4 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1307)</sup> Tolo News, 8 Killed In Fuel Tanker Explosion In Parwan, 1 November 2017 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, At Least Eight Killed In Fuel Tanker Blast In Central Afghanistan, 1 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1308)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Bomb attack against oil tanker leaves 15 dead in Afghan town, 2 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1309)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Parwan blast kills, injures senior education officials, 15 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1310)</sup> Tolo News, Five NDS Employees Killed in Parwan ‘Terrorist Attack’, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1311)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

<sup>(1312)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1313)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report; Week of 25 September to 1 October 2017, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1314)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Parwan. Meeting Summary, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

insecure districts in 5 other provinces, as well as from insecure districts of Samangan and the Ghorband valley <sup>(1315)</sup>.

## 2.29 Samangan

### 2.29.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Samangan

Taliban fighters as well as members of ISKP and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) were active in some districts <sup>(1316)</sup>. Chardarah district in Kunduz is important for the Taliban as it gives them access to Samangan province; according to one source, fighting the Taliban in Kunduz would also have repercussions in Samangan <sup>(1317)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘low ‘active and physical presence’ (district attacked at least once in three months) in all districts, except for the northern districts of Hazrat-e Sultan and Feroznakhchir <sup>(1318)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents were reported by sources consulted by ACLED in the north of Samangan between 1 January 2017 and 31 January 2018 <sup>(1319)</sup>.

#### (Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Samangan

Military operations have been conducted in Samangan <sup>(1320)</sup>. This involved insurgents being arrested <sup>(1321)</sup>; explosives being found and confiscated <sup>(1322)</sup> and Taliban leaders being killed <sup>(1323)</sup>.

### 2.29.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

The Taliban and members of other groupings among them – have tried in recent years to extend their activities to several districts in the province <sup>(1324)</sup>. In September 2017, the security situation in the province reportedly began to deteriorate along with rising violence in the northern provinces of the country <sup>(1325)</sup>.

<sup>(1315)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Pawan Province. Meeting Summary, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1316)</sup> Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence foil coordinated Taliban attack in Samangan province, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1317)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 20 militants killed as Afghan forces target Taliban base in N. Kunduz province, 5 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1318)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1319)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1320)</sup> Tolo News, Key Taliban Member Arrested In Samangan, 16 October 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence foil coordinated Taliban attack in Samangan province, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1321)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Car bomb seized, 2 suspected detained in Samangan, 5 December 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Key Taliban Member Arrested In Samangan, 16 October 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence foil coordinated Taliban attack in Samangan province, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1322)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 Taliban held with 500kg of explosive in Samangan, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence foil coordinated Taliban attack in Samangan province, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1323)</sup> Ariananews, Taliban Financial Officer, A Key Member Killed in Samangan, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1324)</sup> Khaama Press, Prominent Taliban leaders killed in Afghan forces targeted operation in Samangan, 14 May 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Senior Taliban leader arrested in North of Afghanistan, 6 April 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1325)</sup> Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence foil coordinated Taliban attack in Samangan province, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)).



In 2017, UNAMA documented 38 civilian casualties (14 deaths and 24 injured). This represents a 28 % decrease compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from unexploded ordnance or landmines, followed by ground engagements and non-suicide IEDs <sup>(1326)</sup>.

For example, two civilians were killed and four more injured in the Dara-i Suf-e Payin district during a shooting incident between two rival groups of ‘uprising forces’ <sup>(1327)</sup>.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017 combining three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the district Dara-e Suf-e Payin, in the second-highest category and Ruy-e Duab and Aybak in the middle category. All other districts are in the lowest two categories <sup>(1328)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 35 incidents related to insurgents in Samangan province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1329)</sup>.

In September 2017, the Taliban attacked the house of an ALP commander and reconciled former Taliban member; the Taliban killed this person’s father and injured the commander and a woman in the house <sup>(1330)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

In 2017, the Taliban were accused of kidnapping truck drivers employed by an important coalmine, and burning their trucks, apparently for not paying taxes to the Taliban <sup>(1331)</sup>. Furthermore, the Taliban were also accused of kidnapping four employees of a construction company in Aybak in February 2018 <sup>(1332)</sup>.

Without specifying or giving examples, UNAMA mentioned the abusive behaviour of pro-government armed groups in Samangan <sup>(1333)</sup>. In 2017, Samangan lost its opium-free status <sup>(1334)</sup>; farmers are growing opium poppy in the province <sup>(1335)</sup>.

In early 2018, Abdulkarim Khaddam had to step down from Province Governor of Samangan in the wake of a political conflict within the government <sup>(1336)</sup>; the new governor is Abdul Latif Ibrahimi <sup>(1337)</sup>.

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<sup>(1326)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1327)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians killed, 4 injured in Samangan clash, 3 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1328)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1329)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1330)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 killed as Taliban attack ALP commander home, 22 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1331)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Rebels set alight 4 coal trucks in Samangan, 10 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Insurgents torch 2 coal trucks in Samangan, 9 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1332)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 construction firm workers kidnapped in Samangan, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1333)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 52.

<sup>(1334)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 24.

<sup>(1335)</sup> Deutsche Welle, Opiumproduktion in Afghanistan erreicht Rekordhöhe, 15 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1336)</sup> Guardian (The), Afghan provincial governor defies president’s order to step down, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)); Citizen (The), Afghanistan: Bloodier Days Ahead, 1 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1337)</sup> Reuters, Rebel Afghan governor gives way after political deal, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, New Samangan governor arrives; takes charge today, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

## Displacement

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 3,840 displaced persons from Samangan (623 from Aybak; 784 from Dara-i Suf-e Bala; 1 343 from Dara-i Suf-e Payin; 105 from Khuram Wa Sarbagh; 985 from Ruy-e Duab) <sup>(1338)</sup>.

## 2.30 Sar-e Pul/ Sar-e Pol

### 2.30.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Sar-e Pul

Armed anti-government elements are active in some districts, launching attacks <sup>(1339)</sup>. Taliban fighters are active in the province <sup>(1340)</sup> and are recruiting new supporters <sup>(1341)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban fully control 14 districts nationwide, of which one in Sar-e Pul: Kohestanat. Further, they have a ‘medium’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Sayad and a ‘low’ presence (district attacked at least once in three months) in Sancharak, Sozmaqala and Gosfand districts <sup>(1342)</sup>.

ISKP is gaining ground in some districts of the province <sup>(1343)</sup>. Foreign fighters are also reported to have joined ISKP in northern Afghanistan, also in Sar-e Pul province <sup>(1344)</sup>. According to Obaid Ali, an analyst specialising in the insurgency in the north of Afghanistan, a small group of Taliban fighters temporarily joined the self-identified ISKP fighters in Jawzjan in 2017, but after a few months re-established connections with the Taliban (to conduct the joint operation and massacre in Mirza Olang, Sayad district, in August 2017) <sup>(1345)</sup>. Afghan Lawmakers stated in December 2017 that ISKP was actively recruiting in Sar-e Pul <sup>(1346)</sup>.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is active in the province and runs a training camp in Sar-e Pul <sup>(1347)</sup>; what is more, the leader of the movement is said to be recruiting for ISKP in the province <sup>(1348)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents (acts of violence against civilians and remote violence) were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in Sar-e Pul province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 <sup>(1349)</sup>.

<sup>(1338)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1339)</sup> Khaama Press, ISIS militants behead alleged sorcerer in North of Afghanistan, 26 June 2017 ([url](#)); UNAMA, Speaking out against violent extremism, afghans strive to create a new peace dialogue, 6 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1340)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghan Police Discover Mass Graves After Village Attack, 6 August 2017 ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, ISIL expands in Afghan-Pakistan areas, widening attacks, 2 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1341)</sup> LWJ, Taliban promotes Abu Bakr Siddique training camp, 2 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1342)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1343)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 15 militants killed in fresh airstrike in Afghanistan, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)); AFP, Afghanistan forces to launch operation against Islamic State in the north, 12 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, ISIL expands in Afghan-Pakistan areas, widening attacks, 2 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1344)</sup> AFP, Afghanistan forces to launch operation against Islamic State in the north, 12 December 2017, available at: ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Growing foreign insurgents’ activities in Afghanistan, 24 January 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1345)</sup> Ali, O., Precarious Consolidation: Qari Hekmat’s IS-affiliated ‘island’ survives another Taleban onslaught, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1346)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh not on run but recruiting in north, northeast: MPs, 5 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1347)</sup> LWJ, Taliban promotes Abu Bakr Siddique training camp, 2 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1348)</sup> Tolo News, Governor Concerns Over Sar-e-Pul Security, 3 February 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1349)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

In some cases, the insurgents also join the peace process in Sar-e Pul <sup>(1350)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Sar-e Pul**

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(1351)</sup>, resulting in arrests <sup>(1352)</sup> and deaths of insurgents <sup>(1353)</sup>. Air strikes are being carried out as well <sup>(1354)</sup>, with insurgents being killed in the process <sup>(1355)</sup>. There are clashes between insurgents and security forces <sup>(1356)</sup>.

In October 2017, local officials claimed that Mirza Olang fell for a second time this year to the Taliban, and was subsequently retaken after ‘large-scale military’ operations, including air strikes <sup>(1357)</sup>.

### **2.30.2 Recent security trends and impact on the conflict**

#### **General**

The security situation in Sar-e Pul province has reportedly worsened in recent years after Taliban militants and other anti-government groups launched operations in certain districts <sup>(1358)</sup>.

In 2017, UNAMA documented 108 civilian victims of conflict (67 deaths and 41 injured). This represents an 11 % increase compared to 2016, contrary to the national trend. Most of the victims were casualties from targeted and deliberate killings, ground engagements and unexploded ordnance or landmines <sup>(1359)</sup>. According to UNAMA, the increase in casualties was mainly driven by suicide and complex attacks and other types of incidents involving IEDs <sup>(1360)</sup>.

In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, which combines three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the northern district Sar-e Pul, Sayad and Sancharak in the second-highest category, and Sozmaqala in the middle category. The other districts - Kohestanat, Balkhab and Gosfandi - were in the lower two categories <sup>(1361)</sup>.

<sup>(1350)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 11 Taliban join peace process in Sar-i-Pul, 22 January 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Eight Insurgents Renounce Violence In Sar-e-Pul, 23 January 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1351)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 15 militants killed in fresh airstrike in Afghanistan, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 5 civilians killed as Afghan forces fight for retaking Tabar valley in northern Afghanistan, 16 December 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Mass grave in northern province exposes IS brutality in Afghanistan, 16 August 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban’s deputy governor and 6 Tajik militants among dozens killed in Kunduz, 8 April 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Growing foreign insurgents’ activities in Afghanistan, 24 January 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1352)</sup> Khaama Press, Growing foreign insurgents’ activities in Afghanistan, 24 January 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1353)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 5 civilians killed as Afghan forces fight for retaking Tabar valley in northern Afghanistan, 16 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1354)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 15 militants killed in fresh airstrike in Afghanistan, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1355)</sup> Military Times, Is ISIS gaining ‘serious’ ground in Afghanistan? Russia says yes. The US says no, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, 15 militants killed in fresh airstrike in Afghanistan, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)); Die Zeit, Taliban und IS ermorden mehr als 50 Zivilisten, 6 August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1356)</sup> Die Zeit, Taliban und IS ermorden mehr als 50 Zivilisten, 6 August 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1357)</sup> Tolo News, Mirza Olang Valley Once Again Falls To The Taliban, 14 October 2017 ([url](#)); PressTV, Taliban seizes Shia-dominated Mirza Olang in northern Afghanistan, 14 October 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban leader among 5 killed as A-29s pound their hideouts in Mirza Olang, 12 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1358)</sup> UNAMA, Speaking out against violent extremism, afghans strive to create a new peace dialogue, 6 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1359)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1360)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 3.

<sup>(1361)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 67 incidents related to insurgents in Sar-e Pul province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1362)</sup>.

In Sancharak, heavy fighting between insurgents and ANSF was reported in October 2017 <sup>(1363)</sup>. In December 2017, two pro-government militias started fighting each other and one allegedly switched sides to the insurgency, after which the Taliban seized a part of the district. This led to ANSF operations to retake the territory lost. There were reports of several civilian casualties, including women and children, as the Taliban allegedly hid in residential homes <sup>(1364)</sup>.

Three targeted killings in Sar-e Pul were attributed to self-identified ISKP fighters by UNAMA <sup>(1365)</sup>.

### Impact of the conflict on law and order and services

In September 2017, WFP's 'rapid assessment' of food security in Sayyad stated that due to insecurity, access to markets and food supply were 'severely constrained,' resulting in rising food prices and increased food insecurity, especially in rural areas <sup>(1366)</sup>.

Crime was reported to have decreased by 40 % in the first eight months of the Solar year 1396 (March-November 2017). A local official linked crime to the presence of 'illegal armed groups' said to outnumber the ANSF two to one <sup>(1367)</sup>.

The UNODC stated in November 2017 that Sar-e Pul lost its poppy-free status in 2013. Since then the province area under opium poppy cultivation continuously expanded. In 2017, opium poppy cultivation in Sar-e Pul province was estimated at 3 550 hectares, more than double the area in 2016. The main opium cultivating districts were Sayyad and Sar-e Pul districts <sup>(1368)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, data on 7 483 persons displaced from Sar-e Pul (84 from Balkhab; 42 from Gosfandi; 466 from Kohestanat; 7 483 from Sancharak; 1 214 from Sar-e Pul; 8 043 from Sayad; 171 from Sozmaqala) <sup>(1369)</sup>.

In September 2017, UNOCHA reported more than 2 000 people displaced from Sayyad and Sar-e Pul districts to Sar-e Pul city <sup>(1370)</sup>. In December 2017, fighting in Sancharak reportedly displaced 2 000 families or 5 000 to 7 000 individuals, depending on the source <sup>(1371)</sup>.

<sup>(1362)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1363)</sup> DIDPress, On the Verge of collapse; Sar-e Pul's Sancharak district, 23 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1364)</sup> New York Times (The), Deadly Taliban Attacks on NATO Convoy and Police in Afghanistan, 17 December 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 11 December – 18 December 2017, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds flee Sar-i-Pul's Tabar area, clash continues, 14 December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Joined by uprising commander, Taliban overrun Tabar area, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)); NRC, "We would've been killed in our village if we didn't leave", 14 December 2017 ([url](#)). <sup>(1365)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 40.

<sup>(1366)</sup> WFP, Sayad and Qush Tapa Districts – Emergency Market Assessment Bulletin #7, September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1367)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Crime cases 40pc down in Sar-i-Pul this year, 21 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1368)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 24.

<sup>(1369)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1370)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 18 to 24 September 2017, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1371)</sup> New York Times (The), Deadly Taliban Attacks on NATO Convoy and Police in Afghanistan, 17 December 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 11 December – 18 December 2017, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds flee Sar-i-Pul's Tabar area, clash continues, 14

## 2.31 Takhar

### 2.31.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Takhar

Taliban insurgents are active in certain districts of the province<sup>(1372)</sup>. The Taliban announced that Darqad district was their central base in the area<sup>(1373)</sup>. On 40 hectares (100 acres) of land in Darqad district, the Taliban have built a township featuring housing, health centres and shops<sup>(1374)</sup>. The township was known under the name Omari Town<sup>(1375)</sup>. According to reports in February 2018, control of the region had been taken back by the Afghan security forces<sup>(1376)</sup>.

In October 2017, Khaama Press stated that insurgent groups had stepped up activities in the province in recent years. Takhar province borders on some troubled provinces in northern Afghanistan; insurgents travel through Takhar to other provinces to launch operations there<sup>(1377)</sup>. In February and March 2018, insurgent activities and clashes between Afghan security forces and rebels are frequently recorded in Takhar<sup>(1378)</sup>. At times, Afghan security forces come under attack in the province<sup>(1379)</sup>.

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) ‘active and physical presence’ in Yangi Qala, Darqad, Khwaja Ghar and Eshkashem districts<sup>(1380)</sup>.

No ISKP-related incidents were reported sources consulted by ACLED in Takhar province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018<sup>(1381)</sup>.

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December 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Joined by uprising commander, Taliban overrun Tabar area, 13 December 2017 ([url](#)); NRC, “We would’ve been killed in our village if we didn’t leave”, 14 December 2017 ([url](#)).<sup>(1372)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban local leaders among 11 killed, wounded in Takhar operations, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 1396 Was A Challenging Year In Terms Of Security, 20 March 2018 ([url](#)).<sup>(1373)</sup> Salam Watander, Taliban establishing townships in Takhar, 7 October 2017 ([url](#)).<sup>(1374)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban inaugurate township in Takhar’s Durqad district, 24 January 2018 ([url](#)).<sup>(1375)</sup> 1TV News, Afghan forces retake area in Takhar from Taliban after three years, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)).<sup>(1376)</sup> Fergana News, Afghan Army Takes Control of Taliban-Built Residential Complex, 13 February 2018 ([url](#)); 1TV News, Afghan forces retake area in Takhar from Taliban after three years, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan forces evict Taliban militants in northern district, destroy bazaar named after Taliban founder, 9 February 2018 ([url](#)).<sup>(1377)</sup> Khaama Press, Explosion rips through a hotel in North of Afghanistan, casualties feared, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)).<sup>(1378)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban local leaders among 11 killed, wounded in Takhar operations, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Officials: 16 security personnel martyred in Takhar attack, 8 March 2018 ([url](#)); Ansar News, Officials: 16 security personnel martyred in Takhar attack, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).<sup>(1379)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids leave 17 security personnel dead in Takhar, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); AP, Taliban kills 8 police officers in northern Afghanistan, 25 April 2017, available at: ([url](#)).<sup>(1380)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).<sup>(1381)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

### **(Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Takhar**

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(1382)</sup>; sometimes high-ranking Taliban leaders are killed <sup>(1383)</sup> and insurgents are arrested and killed <sup>(1384)</sup>. Air strikes are being carried out as well, with Taliban being killed in the process <sup>(1385)</sup>. The province sees armed clashes between security forces and insurgents <sup>(1386)</sup>.

Air strikes were used in an attack on Taliban hideouts in Yangi Qala district in February 2018, leading to the killing of eight Taliban and their commander and injury of ten other fighters <sup>(1387)</sup>.

The NDS carried out operations against the Taliban in Namakab district, capturing a Taliban commander who was transferring RPG rockets to the group <sup>(1388)</sup>. In December, insurgents from the Taliban took over three police check posts and four villages in Dasht-e Qala and the Bagh-e Paen area following a retreat by security forces; the Taliban claimed three police were killed and two wounded in the attack <sup>(1389)</sup>. Clearing operations by NDS also occurred in Qamgozar area in February 2018, leading to the killing of five Taliban and a commander <sup>(1390)</sup>. Further clearing operations ongoing in February 2018 were in Darqad, Khwaja Bahauddin, Dast-e Qala and Yangi Qala, with reportedly dozens of insurgents killed, injured and captured <sup>(1391)</sup>.

### **2.31.2 Recent security trends and impact on the population**

#### **General**

In 2017, UNAMA documented 98 civilian victims (36 deaths and 62 injured). This represents an 8 % decrease compared to 2016. Most of the victims were casualties from ground engagement, followed by unexploded ordnance or landmines and aerial attacks <sup>(1392)</sup>.

In a map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, a combination of three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the districts in the north of the province, Darqad and Khwaja Bahauddin, in the second-highest category.

<sup>(1382)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban local leaders among 11 killed, wounded in Takhar operations, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA helicopter makes hard landing in Takhar, 10 February 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Taliban key commander among 8 killed in Afghan northern Takhar province, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, A dozen Taliban killed, 30 wounded in Takhar operation, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban loses one of its most senior leaders in Takhar province, 23 June 2017 ([url](#)); Salaam Times, 11 ISIS, 6 Taliban militants killed in Nangarhar, Takhar, 20 June 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1383)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Taliban key commander among 8 killed in Afghan northern Takhar province, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban loses one of its most senior leaders in Takhar province, 23 June 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, US forces confirm death of top Taliban leader Quari Tayib, 22 April 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1384)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban commander among five killed in Takhar operation, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Salaam Times, 11 ISIS, 6 Taliban militants killed in Nangarhar, Takhar, 20 June 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1385)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 8 militants killed in conflicts in northern Afghanistan, 26 March 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, At Least 31 Suspected Militants Killed In Afghanistan, Army Says, 6 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Nine Insurgents Killed In Afghan Airstrikes, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1386)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Afghan battle kills 2 security personnel, wounds 9 other, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); Washington Post, At least 30 die in Afghan violence, including 10 Shiites in Kabul suicide attack, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 16 Security Force Member Killed in Takhar, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1387)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, Airstrikes kill 8 militants including key Taliban commander in Afghan northern Takhar province, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1388)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban military commander held in Takhar, 29 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban’s head of military in Takhar arrested, 29 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1389)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban capture 3 security posts, villages in Takhar, 12 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1390)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban commander among five killed in Takhar operation, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1391)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, A dozen Taliban killed, 30 wounded in Takhar operation, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1392)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

Two districts bordering Kunduz, Khwaja Ghar and Eshkashem were in the middle category, and all the other districts in the lower two categories (<sup>1393</sup>). Pajhwok news also identified the most insecure districts as of February 2018 as Darqad and Khwaja Bahauddin, as well as mentioning Dasti Qala and Yangi Qala (<sup>1394</sup>). Sources describe Takhar as formerly a relatively calm area, though Taliban activity has reportedly increased and now occurs ‘often’, including coordinated attacks (<sup>1395</sup>) and ‘heavy clashes’ (<sup>1396</sup>).

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 74 incidents related to insurgents in Takhar province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website (<sup>1397</sup>).

According to Pajhwok Afghan News, reporting in September 2017, Afghan forces were fighting directly with the Taliban in various parts of Takhar, including in Darqad, Yangi Qala, Khwaja Bahauddin, Khwaja Ghar and Eshkashem districts (<sup>1398</sup>). As of late September, Khwaja Ghar is reportedly experiencing instability due to ongoing confrontations between ALP and the Taliban. Three ALP were killed and two wounded in Taliban clashes on 26 September (<sup>1399</sup>). In March 2018, the Taliban attacked an army post in Khwaja Ghar, killing seven to ten soldiers. ALP sent to reinforce the army were ambushed, and another six to ten ALP personnel were killed. Several more were wounded (<sup>1400</sup>).

In October 2017, a bomb attack on a hotel in Qinar Bazarr, Eshkashem district killed several people and wounded another 7 or 8 people. No group claimed responsibility (<sup>1401</sup>).

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

The Taliban reportedly attacked a vehicle carrying health workers in Khwaja Pasti in September (<sup>1402</sup>).

Pajhwok also reported that civilians complained of social and security problems caused by illegal armed groups that were killing local people and looting in the areas around Taloqan and throughout districts of Takhar, due to the lack of government control over such groups (<sup>1403</sup>). According to the Provincial Governor’s Spokesman, there are 2 700 police officers for all of Takhar province, leading to an inadequate presence of police across more

(<sup>1393</sup>) UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

(<sup>1394</sup>) Pajhwok Afghan News, A dozen Taliban killed, 30 wounded in Takhar operation, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1395</sup>) Khaama Press, Explosion rips through a hotel in North of Afghanistan, casualties feared, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1396</sup>) Xinhua News Agency, 7 police, 15 militants killed in northern Afghan checkpoint attack, 20 December 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1397</sup>) <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

(<sup>1398</sup>) Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal armed men destabilises Takhar: Residents, 10 September 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1399</sup>) Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 ALP killed, 2 wounded in Takhar clash, 26 September 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1400</sup>) Tolo News, 16 Security Force Member Killed In Takhar, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Officials: 16 security personnel martyred in Takhar attack, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); AP, Taliban Attacks Remote Afghan Army Outpost, Killing 10, 9 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids leave 17 security personnel dead in Takhar, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1401</sup>) 1TV News, Bomb kills three at hotek in Takhar, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Explosion rips through a hotel in North of Afghanistan, casualties feared, 22 October 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1402</sup>) Pajhwok Afghan News, Insurgents attack Takhar public health workers, 13 September 2017 ([url](#)).

(<sup>1403</sup>) Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal armed men destabilises Takhar: Residents, 10 September 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Proliferation of gunmen leaves Takharis on the edge, 8 January 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Takhar residents fret over illegal gunmen’s presence, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)).

mountainous areas, for example, where ‘community justice’ by local armed actors is carried out <sup>(1404)</sup>.

Takhar was mentioned by UNAMA as one of the provinces where ALP caused civilian casualties <sup>(1405)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Takhar was poppy-free in 2017 <sup>(1406)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, data on 13 654 persons displaced from Takhar (42 from Baharak; 7 from Chahab; 21 from Chal; 9 002 from Darqad; 249 from Eshkashem; 3 983 from Khwaja Bahauddin; 7 from Rostaq; 343 from Yangi Qala) <sup>(1407)</sup>.

According to UNOCHA, there were reports that insecurity in some parts of Takhar in early November 2017 led to instances of displacement <sup>(1408)</sup>. In January 2018, UNOCHA reported that there were 557 conflict-related IDP families across different parts of Takhar, and that 158 of them were particularly vulnerable <sup>(1409)</sup>. In February 2018, UNOCHA meeting minutes from Takhar noted that military operations had displaced a number of families from Darqad and Yangi Qala district centres <sup>(1410)</sup>.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix, 164,625 individuals, or 14 % of the population in Takhar is either an IDP or returnee from abroad. According to IOM’s displacement monitoring matrix, 30 795 people, or 3 % of its residents, fled their homes in the years 2012-2017. Over 87 000 people from Takhar, or 9 % of its population, fled abroad in the years 2012-2017 <sup>(1411)</sup>.

## 2.32 Uruzgan

### 2.32.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Uruzgan

Uruzgan is one of the provinces of the country where opium production and, as a consequence, Taliban presence has increased in the course of 2017 <sup>(1412)</sup>. The Taliban are reported to be active in the Chora, Charchino and Tirinkot districts <sup>(1413)</sup>. Considered as one of

<sup>(1404)</sup> RFE/RL, Afghan woman’s beating exposes consequences of using militia for security, 6 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Investigation ordered into public beating of Takhar woman, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)); Ariana News, Unknown men hang market guardian in Takhar province, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1405)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 10, 50.

<sup>(1406)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 25.

<sup>(1407)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1408)</sup> UNOCHA, Takhar Operational Coordination Team (OCT) meeting, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1409)</sup> UNOCHA, Takhar Operational Coordination Team (OCT) meeting on IDP coordination, 16 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1410)</sup> UNOCHA, Takhar Operational Coordination Team (OCT) meeting on IDP coordination, 13 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1411)</sup> IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix. Baseline Mobility Assessment. Summary Results November – December 2017, 26 March 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1412)</sup> Eurasia Review, How To Win The Drug War In Afghanistan – Analysis, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1413)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 70 Taliban killed, 15 wounded in Uruzgan raids, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan violence claims 21 lives in 24 hours, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids to overrun Uruzgan capital, towns repulsed, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).



the most contested provinces in the south of the country, Uruzgan is said to be the birthplace of Mullah Omar, the founder of the Taliban and has an important symbolic status for all parties to the conflict <sup>(1414)</sup>.

According to the US SIGAR report from October 2017, 5 out of 6 districts in Uruzgan province are under insurgent control or influence <sup>(1415)</sup>. According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Khas Uruzgan, Chora/Chinarto and Shahid-e Hassas districts. Further, they have a ‘medium’ presence (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Tirinkot and Dherawud districts <sup>(1416)</sup>.

At the end of November 2017, the Taliban reportedly launched operations attempting to capture the provincial capital of Tirinkot, as well as attempting to overrun Chora, Charchino, Gizab districts <sup>(1417)</sup>.

There were conflicting reports about whether the Taliban successfully attacked and temporarily took over the district centre of Shahid-e Hassas <sup>(1418)</sup> following multiple ‘large-scale operations’ in Uruzgan between September and December <sup>(1419)</sup>. The Taliban did reportedly capture some police check posts during the attacks, which were later retaken <sup>(1420)</sup>. In March 2018, local officials claimed the district centre of Khas Uruzgan was under siege for more than a month by then, and that it was on the verge of collapsing entirely to the Taliban <sup>(1421)</sup>. Later that month, security officials reported that 15 ANA soldiers surrendered to the Taliban <sup>(1422)</sup>.

There were reports in sources consulted by ACLED of clashes between ISKP and the armed forces in the south and north-east of Uruzgan in the period 1 January 2017 - 31 January 2018 <sup>(1423)</sup>.

### **(Pro-)Government groups and military operations in Uruzgan**

Both the Afghan security forces and the Afghan army persevere with anti-terrorist operations in the province to curb insurgent and terrorist activity <sup>(1424)</sup>. Armed anti-government forces are fought in particular in the troubled districts of the province <sup>(1425)</sup>.

Operations are being carried out in the Chora, Charchino districts and in the capital, Tirinkot <sup>(1426)</sup>; these involve insurgents – and sometimes high-ranking leaders – being

<sup>(1414)</sup> Guardian (The), US airstrike kills at least seven Afghan police officers in Uruzgan, 19 September 2016 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1415)</sup> SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 107.

<sup>(1416)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1417)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids to overrun Uruzgan capital, towns repulsed, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1418)</sup> SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 84.

<sup>(1419)</sup> UNSC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as of December 15th, 15 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(1420)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids to overrun Uruzgan capital, towns repulsed, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1421)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Khas Uruzgan district on the verge of collapse, 10 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1422)</sup> Killid Radio, 15 ANA Soldiers Surrender, 2 Killed in Uruzgan, 27 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1423)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1424)</sup> Khaama Press, 22 militants killed in Uruzgan and Helmand airstrikes: MoD, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Coordinated Taliban attack responded with massive airstrikes in Kandahar, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Anadolu Agency, ‘More than 40 militants’ killed in Afghanistan, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1425)</sup> Republic, 28 Taliban Militants Killed In Afghanistan, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1426)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 70 Taliban killed, 15 wounded in Uruzgan raids, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids to overrun Uruzgan capital, towns repulsed, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Dozens of Soldiers in Uruzgan Under Taliban Siege for Months, 11 April 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 11 Taliban insurgents killed in Uruzgan air and ground operations, 9 February 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 45 Insurgents Killed in Clearing Operations Across The Country, 23 January 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban suffer heavy casualties in Uruzgan air and ground raids, 1 January 2017 ([url](#)).

killed <sup>(1427)</sup>. Air strikes are being conducted as well <sup>(1428)</sup>. Clashes between security forces and insurgents are also regularly reported <sup>(1429)</sup>.

On 6 September 2017, 40 Taliban insurgents were reportedly killed in a security forces operation outside Tirinkot city, while 5 others were killed in raids in Khas Uruzgan district <sup>(1430)</sup>. Air strikes killed 18 insurgents and two Taliban commanders in Gagrak and Yaklinga areas of Tirinkot city on 17 September 2017 <sup>(1431)</sup>. On 20 September, the Afghan forces conducted air and ground force clearing operations in areas of Tirinkot city (Sola, Garamab, and Nachin) that reportedly killed 25 insurgents and injured 11 others <sup>(1432)</sup>. In Tirinkot, in the areas of Sola, Chapa Khak, and Kabutar Khana, ongoing ground operations on 23 December 2017 by Afghan security forces reportedly left 54 insurgents dead and as many injured following gun battles in the clearing operation <sup>(1433)</sup>. Air strikes in December 2017 in Sabzak, in Tirinkot, killed 8 insurgents and a local commander, according to local news <sup>(1434)</sup>.

The inhabitants of the Tirinkot, Khas Uruzgan, Charchino and Dehrawud districts took up arms late in January 2018 <sup>(1435)</sup>.

### 2.32.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

Uruzgan is reportedly one of 11 provinces with the highest number of security incidents <sup>(1436)</sup>. In 2017, UNAMA indicated that, Uruzgan was among the nine provinces with the highest civilian casualty rates <sup>(1437)</sup>. Throughout 2017, UNAMA documented 639 civilian casualties in Uruzgan (344 deaths and 518 injured), marking a 26 % decrease from 2016. The leading causes of civilian casualties in the province were ground engagements, non-suicide IEDs and aerial attacks <sup>(1438)</sup>. In a UNOCHA map depicting ‘conflict severity’ in 2017, a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement are used to categorise provinces and their districts. UNOCHA places two out of Uruzgan’s five districts

<sup>(1427)</sup> Khaama Press, Local Taliban leader among 6 killed in US airstrike in Uruzgan, 16 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban raids to overrun Uruzgan capital, towns repulsed, 28 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 60 Taliban killed, 80 wounded in Uruzgan offensive, 26 January 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 22 militants killed in Uruzgan and Helmand airstrikes: MoD, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1428)</sup> Khaama Press, Coordinated Taliban attack responded with massive airstrikes in Kandahar, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 42 Daesh And Taliban Fighters Killed in Afghan Airstrikes, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Nine Insurgents Killed In Afghan Airstrikes, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 20 Insurgents Killed In Uruzgan Airstrike, 14 February 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, 11 Taliban insurgents killed in Uruzgan air and ground operations, 9 February 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban suffer heavy casualties in Uruzgan air and ground raids, 1 January 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1429)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 70 Taliban killed, 15 wounded in Uruzgan raids, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan violence claims 21 lives in 24 hours, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban attack security posts in Tarinkot city, 28 January 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Four Insurgents Killed in Uruzgan Operation, 25 January 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1430)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 45 militants killed in Uruzgan operation: police, 6 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1431)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Commanders among 18 rebels dead in Uruzgan blitz, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1432)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 25 Taliban killed, 11 wounded in Uruzgan offensive, 20 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1433)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 23 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1434)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Commander among 8 Taliban dead in Uruzgan blitz, 8 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1435)</sup> Salaam Times, Hundreds of Uruzgan residents take up arms against Taliban, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1436)</sup> SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 84.

<sup>(1437)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1438)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 4.

(Tirin Kot and Chora/Chinarto) in the highest category of ‘severity’ and the remaining three (Dehrawud, Shahid-e Hassas, Khas Uruzgan) in the second-highest category <sup>(1439)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 154 incidents related to insurgents in Uruzgan province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1440)</sup>.

Ground engagements were the main cause of civilian casualties in Uruzgan in 2017 and Uruzgan was among the 5 provinces with the highest casualties from ground fighting. However, UNAMA also noted that there was a decrease in casualty rates, particularly in Uruzgan, due to a reduction in large-scale operations inside major population centres and reduced harm by Afghan forces <sup>(1441)</sup>. There were 332 casualties from ground engagements in Uruzgan in 2017 (36 deaths and 296 injured), a drop of 36 % compared to 2016 <sup>(1442)</sup>. Also, UNAMA recorded two incidents of search operations that caused civilian casualties in Uruzgan throughout the year <sup>(1443)</sup>. Examples of incidents involving civilian casualties include a mortar which struck a house during an ANSF operation in Tirinkot, killing two children and wounding another child and their father <sup>(1444)</sup>. In February 2018, several clashes in different districts around the province, resulted in people being killed, including insurgents, policemen and civilians. In Tirinkot, three members of one family - a man, a woman and a baby - were killed by the Taliban <sup>(1445)</sup>.

On 1 April 2018, civilians, most of them displaced, protested continued operations against the Taliban in their province. They claimed that two years of operations against the Taliban had not delivered security, to the contrary, many civilians were killed and their residences, farms and orchards have been destroyed, according to the protestors <sup>(1446)</sup>.

On 30 September, the Taliban and security forces engaged in heavy clashes near the Chora district centre, leading to the capture of 7 security check posts <sup>(1447)</sup>. The attack was carried out by 30 insurgents and left 26 members of the security forces dead <sup>(1448)</sup>. The Taliban reportedly planted explosives along the roads leading into the district centre <sup>(1449)</sup>. The Lower House of Parliament drew attention to the attack when MPs claimed that the security forces in Chora had requested backup but did not receive it, and complained that the Taliban have greater numbers than the security forces in the area <sup>(1450)</sup>.

In February 2018, the Taliban closed the road connecting the province to Kandahar, and subsequently abducted 30 passengers, including 19 policemen. Two days later, nine were released, but 21 suspected of being ANSF personnel, remained in Taliban custody <sup>(1451)</sup>.

<sup>(1439)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)) p. 9.

<sup>(1440)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1441)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 20.

<sup>(1442)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)) p. 21.

<sup>(1443)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)) p. 53.

<sup>(1444)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Mortar shell kills 2 children in Uruzgan, 22 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1445)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan violence claims 21 lives in 24 hours, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1446)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Only civilians affected in ongoing Uruzgan operation, 1 April 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1447)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Security force, Taliban clash near Chora district centre, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1448)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Lawmakers to grill security bosses over Uruzgan deaths, 7 October 2017 ([url](#));

Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens of militants killed in Uruzgan offensive, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1449)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan’s Chori district is on the verge of collapse, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1450)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Lawmakers to grill security bosses over Uruzgan deaths, 7 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1451)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 kidnapped passengers freed, 21 still in captivity, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, Afghan policemen kidnapped in Taliban bus attack, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)).

According to UNAMA, there were 505 civilian casualties caused by pressure-plate IEDs across the country in 2017, and of those, about one fifth, or 102 casualties, were in Uruzgan province (causing 27 deaths and 75 injured). This was a 9 % increase over 2016 for this type of attack <sup>(1452)</sup>.

Local media reported on incidents of civilians killed and injured by explosions and improvised devices in the reporting period. Nine civilians and four security force members were injured on 3 September 2017 in separate attacks by a motorcycle-VBIED and a grenade attack in two separate explosions in Uruzgan <sup>(1453)</sup>. A roadside bomb on 11 November 2017 caused injuries to several security force members and pro-government militiamen in Tirinkot city <sup>(1454)</sup>. In December 2017, a five-member gang responsible for planting IEDs and carrying out targeted killings were arrested in Tirinkot and admitted to killing eight security officials and using IEDs to target government vehicles <sup>(1455)</sup>.

Uruzgan was among the five provinces with the highest casualties caused by air strikes. Aerial attacks were the third most common cause of civilian casualties in Uruzgan, causing 58 civilian casualties throughout the year (13 deaths and 45 injured) <sup>(1456)</sup>.

UNAMA indicates that in 2017 Uruzgan was among the ten provinces with the highest number of civilian casualties caused by explosive remnants of war <sup>(1457)</sup>. For example, in November 2017, seven children in Chora district were injured when they were playing with an unexploded mortar that detonated <sup>(1458)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on services and law and order**

UNAMA stated that due to threats by insurgents throughout Afghanistan, 147 health facilities were forced to temporarily close in 2017, with 46 of those closures happening Uruzgan, across all districts <sup>(1459)</sup>. As an illustration of the impact, a UNOCHA field report from September 2017 noted that at the time, 40 closures of health facilities in Uruzgan had deprived an estimated 420,000 people of access to health and medical services <sup>(1460)</sup>. In December, UNOCHA reported that 30 facilities re-opened after three months of closure <sup>(1461)</sup>. Uruzgan is one of the few places where polio-cases were still being reported in 2017 <sup>(1462)</sup>. According to Uruzgan Governor's Spokesman speaking in October 2017, at least 80 schools were closed due to recent conflicts in the province <sup>(1463)</sup>. Insecurity and road blockades are hindering reconstruction programmes, but also, local strongmen hinder reconstruction projects by

<sup>(1452)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 32.

<sup>(1453)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 killed, 12 wounded in Uruzgan violence, 3 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1454)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Policeman killed, 3 militiamen injured in Tirinkot blast, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1455)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5-man target killing squad busted in Uruzgan, 3 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1456)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 45.

<sup>(1457)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(1458)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17; Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 children injured in Uruzgan mortar shell explosion, 29 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1459)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 15. For example, see also: UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 18 to 24 September 2017, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1; Pajhwok Afghan News, All health centres Uruzgan closed after Taliban threat, 23 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1460)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 25 September to 1 October 2017, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1461)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 11 December – 18 December 2017, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1462)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 new polio cases detected in Kandahar, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1463)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Conflict in Uruzgan leaves 80 schools closed, 5 October 2017 ([url](#)).

demanding a share of the money invested before projects can take off in the area under their influence <sup>(1464)</sup>. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission claimed that in the past 16 years, due to insecurity, no judge or prosecutor has ever been available in any of the districts of Uruzgan outside the provincial capital Tirinkot. This led people in rural areas to entirely rely on Taliban-provided justice <sup>(1465)</sup>.

In two incidents involving police conduct, civilians were killed: In February 2018, a verbal dispute between a police officer and civilians ended with the policeman shooting one person dead and wounding five more. Later, the police officer was arrested <sup>(1466)</sup>. In another verbal clash between local and national policemen, resulting in a firefight, a woman was killed inside her house by a stray bullet <sup>(1467)</sup>.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in November 2017 that Uruzgan was one of the ‘main poppy cultivating provinces’ of Afghanistan: ‘a fourth of the arable land was under opium poppy cultivation in 2017’. The surface of land cultivated with poppies increased by 39 % compared to 2016. The main opium poppy cultivating districts were Tirinkot, Dehrawud and Shahid-e Hassas <sup>(1468)</sup>. The government plans pistachio fields to be established in Kandahar, Uruzgan and Helmand to offer local farmers an alternative to producing opium. Uruzgan province is set to receive 140 such fields <sup>(1469)</sup>.

### Displacement

UNOCHA collected, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, data on 24 915 persons displaced from Uruzgan (7,236 from Chora/Chinarto; 128 from Dehrawud; 4 615 from Khas Uruzgan; 12 936 from Tirinkot) <sup>(1470)</sup>.

The US SIGAR reports from both October 2017 and January 2018 state that roughly 6 % of Uruzgan’s population has been displaced due to conflict; among the highest rates in the country <sup>(1471)</sup>. According to UNOCHA, reporting in mid-September 2017, Uruzgan had the fourth highest total number of IDPs (17 062) in the country <sup>(1472)</sup>.

During the reporting period for this EASO report, UNOCHA noted a number of displacement instances in Uruzgan. In early September 2017, military operations caused displacement of 2 954 IDPs in Uruzgan <sup>(1473)</sup>. Also in mid-September, 13 000 IDPs reportedly arrived in Tirinkot from several other areas of the province; 7 700 people were reportedly displaced from Shahwalikot and Nesh to Kandahar City <sup>(1474)</sup>. In October of 2017, heavy fighting near the district centre of Chora caused the displacement of over 2 000 people <sup>(1475)</sup>.

<sup>(1464)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Strongmen, insecurity impede development schemes, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1465)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan districts without judges and prosecutors, 28 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1466)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 civilian killed, 5 injured in Uruzgan police firing, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1467)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Police infighting leaves woman dead, 3 injured in Uruzgan, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1468)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 5, 13, 28.

<sup>(1469)</sup> Khaama Press, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Helmand to get 450 pistachio fields in alternative for opium, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1470)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1471)</sup> SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 October 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 176-177; SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)), pp. 176-177.

<sup>(1472)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 11 to 17 September 2017, 17 September 2017, ([url](#)), p.1.

<sup>(1473)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 4 to 10 September 2017, 10 September 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1474)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 11 to 17 September 2017, 17 September 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1475)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 2-8 October 2017, 8 October 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1; UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 2 -8 October 2017, 8 October 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1.

## 2.33 Wardak/ Maidan Wardak

### 2.33.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Wardak

Armed anti-government insurgents are active in various districts (<sup>1476</sup>). These include the Taliban (<sup>1477</sup>) and the Haqqani network, which, according to some sources, had headquarters in a part of Wardak province (<sup>1478</sup>).

Armed anti-government insurgents are especially active districts along the highway which links Kabul to the southern and south-eastern provinces (<sup>1479</sup>).

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban have a ‘high’ ‘active and physical presence’ (districts attacked at least twice a week) in Jalrez, Nerkh and Jaghatu districts and a medium presence (districts attacked at least three times a month) in Sayadabad, Chack and Daymirdad districts. No Taliban presence or activity was reported in both Behsud districts (<sup>1480</sup>).

No ISKP-related incidents were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in the province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 (<sup>1481</sup>).

#### (Pro-)Government forces and military operations in Wardak

Large-scale military operations are being conducted in Wardak province (<sup>1482</sup>); this involves insurgents being killed and arrested (<sup>1483</sup>). Leaders of such groupings were also killed in such

<sup>(1476)</sup> Khaama Press, Key Haqqani network commanders arrested in Maidan Wardak province, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1477)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 2 Taliban commanders among 10 killed in Afghan eastern Wardak province, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, In pictures: Equipments seized from Taliban medical facility in Wardak, 9 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1478)</sup> Ariana News, Afghan Intelligence Kills 21 Members of Haqqani Network in Maidan Wardak, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Winter Operation Making Steady Progress In Wardak, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Top Haqqani network leader among dozens killed in Wardak night operation, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)); ISW, The Haqqani Network, March 2012 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1479)</sup> Khaama Press, Key Haqqani network commanders arrested in Maidan Wardak province, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban’s huge cache of heavy weapons discovered in Wardak province, 1 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Militants responsible for the destruction of electricity pylons killed in Wardak, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Top Haqqani network leader among dozens killed in Wardak night operation, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Clashes in Maidan Wardak province leaves 15 Taliban insurgents dead, wounded, 21 August 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban’s military commission chief killed in Wardak province, 11 July 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1480)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1481)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1482)</sup> Tolo News, Winter Operation Making Steady Progress In Wardak, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, One Haqqani militant killed, 5 arrested in eastern Afghanistan, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Dozens Of Insurgents Killed In ANSF Operations, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, A Night With Deminers Clearing The Maidan Wardak Highway 23 January 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban Commanders Killed In Wardak Operation, 22 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban Shadow District Governor Killed in Wardak, 1 July 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan news, Notorious Taliban commander among 7 dead in Maidan Wardak, 19 May 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1483)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, One Haqqani militant killed, 5 arrested in eastern Afghanistan, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Dozens Of Insurgents Killed In ANSF Operations, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Winter Operation Making Steady Progress In Wardak, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)).

operations <sup>(1484)</sup> . Air strikes are being carried out as well, with insurgents being killed in the process <sup>(1485)</sup>.

The police are putting in a lot of effort into demining the highway through Wardak, as this southern section connects nine provinces with the capital Kabul <sup>(1486)</sup>.

There are clashes between the Taliban and Afghan security forces <sup>(1487)</sup>.

Air strikes against the Taliban occurred in Maydan Wardak, for instance, on 10 September 2017, several senior Taliban leaders were targeted and killed in a series of air strikes conducted in the Salman Fars area of the province <sup>(1488)</sup>.

Media sources report that Afghan forces were conducting operations around the city of Maydan Shahr, including Deh Afghanan and Qala-i Ziyarat at the end of October 2017, leading raids against the Taliban, killing and injuring a number of fighters <sup>(1489)</sup>.

Local news reported that, at the end of November, an operation called Khalid-96 was launched by the Afghan police, army and special forces in Wardak, in at least 10 villages of Jalrez district, leading to the killing of between 24 and 25 militants, including a half dozen commanders <sup>(1490)</sup>. Also in late November 2017, security forces reportedly killed a top Haqqani network leader in Wardak in security sweeps <sup>(1491)</sup>. He was one of more than 20 insurgents killed in the raid in Nerkh district <sup>(1492)</sup>.

Sayadabad was the site of further security operations in early December, which resulted in the discovery of a Taliban medical facility, used to treat insurgents from the area and surrounding provinces; an unspecified number of insurgents and commanders were reportedly killed in the operations <sup>(1493)</sup>. On 24 December 2017, 15 Taliban insurgents who had been destroying electricity towers in the province were killed in military operations in Sayadabad <sup>(1494)</sup>. In January 2018, Afghan forces raided a Taliban hideout, also in Sayadabad, killing 10 insurgents, including 2 commanders <sup>(1495)</sup>.

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<sup>(1484)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 2 Taliban commanders among 10 killed in Afghan eastern Wardak province, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Top Haqqani network leader among dozens killed in Wardak night operation, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban Shadow District Governor Killed in Wardak, 1 July 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1485)</sup> Independent, Taliban commander killed in airstrike, 24 November 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama Press US airstrike leaves 9 militants dead in Maidan Wardak province of Afghanistan, 12 August 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News Drone kills senior Taliban in Maidan Wardak, 10 April 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1486)</sup> Tolo News, A Night With Deminers Clearing The Maidan Wardak Highway, 23 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1487)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 children killed in Maidan Wardak crossfire, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Afghan Forces Foil Attack On Wardak Police Base, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Taliban Commander Killed In Wardak, 11 July 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1488)</sup> Khaama Press, Senior Taliban leaders among several dead in Maidan Wardak airstrikes, 10 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1489)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians, 7 insurgents killed in Wardak incidents, 25 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1490)</sup> Tolo News, Winter operation making steady progress in Wardak, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 43 militants suffer casualties in Maidan Wardak operation, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1491)</sup> Khaama Press, Militants responsible for the destruction of electricity pylons killed in Wardak, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1492)</sup> Khaama Press, Top Haqqani network leader among dozens killed in Wardak night operations, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1493)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban's major treatment facility busted in Wardak, 8 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1494)</sup> Khaama Press, Militants responsible for the destruction of electricity pylons killed in Wardak, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, Afghan army kills 15 militants interrupting power cords, 24 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1495)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 2 Taliban commanders among 10 killed in Afghan eastern Wardak province, 14 January 2018 ([url](#)).

Also in February 2018, Afghan security operations in Wardak continued with an operation launched in Jalrez district, in which the MoD claimed it killed 4 insurgents and injured 2 others <sup>(1496)</sup>.

### 2.33.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

According to the 2017 UNAMA annual report, 42 civilians were killed and 41 injured in Wardak due mainly to ground engagements, targeted and deliberate killings and aerial attacks. This marks a 35 percent decrease compared to 2016 <sup>(1497)</sup>.

UNOCHA maps Afghanistan's 'conflict severity' in 2017 by a combination of three indicators - security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement - UNOCHA places the two districts of Sayadabad and Jalrez in the second-highest category of severity, followed by the four districts of Jaghatu, Chak, Daymirdad and Nerkh, which are listed in the mid-level category of conflict severity. The remaining districts have a low level of conflict severity: the western districts of Markaz-e Behsud, Hesa-i Awal-e Behsud and the eastern district of Maydan Shahr <sup>(1498)</sup>.

UNOCHA reported that at the end of October 2017 heavy fighting was ongoing in the districts of Chak, Jaghato, Nerkh and Jalrez <sup>(1499)</sup>. Between 6 and 11 November, UNOCHA noted that heavy fighting continued in these districts and prevented humanitarian assistance partners from accessing the area <sup>(1500)</sup>. The fighting was reportedly between the Taliban and ANSF, and the Taliban fighting with HIG <sup>(1501)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 74 incidents related to insurgents in Wardak province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website <sup>(1502)</sup>.

A Taliban commander and four insurgents were reportedly killed in Nerkh district on 7 September 2017 following operations sparked by Taliban attacks on security check posts <sup>(1503)</sup>.

In March 2018, two children were killed in the crossfire during a clash between insurgents and ANSF in Sayadabad district. Eight more were wounded in this incident <sup>(1504)</sup>. Also in March 2018, five members of the Haqqani Network, including two notorious commanders, were arrested and one was killed during a night raid in Sayedabad <sup>(1505)</sup>. Later in March 2018, residents of Sayadabad claimed four civilians were killed during a night raid on their village

<sup>(1496)</sup> Tolo News, 11 insurgents killed in Wardak and Zabul operations, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1497)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1498)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017, ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1499)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 23 to 29 October 2017, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1500)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 6 - 12 November 2017, 12 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1;

<sup>(1501)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Meeting – Maydan Wardak; Meeting Summary – 17 October 2017, 17 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1502)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1503)</sup> Tolo News, Taliban local commander killed in Wardak operation, 7 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1504)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 children killed in Maidan Wardak crossfire, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1505)</sup> Khaama Press, Key Haqqani network commanders arrested in Maidan Wardak province, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 HN members arrested in Maidan Wardak raid, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)); Xinhua News Agency, One Haqqani militant killed, 5 arrested in eastern Afghanistan, 11 March 2018 ([url](#)).



carried out by Afghan security forces. Three more were wounded. Local authorities claimed that two civilians and three Taliban were killed <sup>(1506)</sup>.

In the week of February 12-18, UNOCHA reported that armed clashes between armed opposition groups occurred in Nerkh and Jalrez districts <sup>(1507)</sup>.

In October 2017, local media reported that the Taliban fired mortars into Maydan Shahr city, killing 2 civilians and injuring two others <sup>(1508)</sup>.

On 18 October 2017, the Afghanistan Times reported that the Taliban conducted a coordinated attack in Jaghato district centre, detonating a car bomb and then launching an attack; however, security forces apparently repelled it and killed 30 Taliban fighters <sup>(1509)</sup>.

In September, a suicide bomber who was attempting to target a security forces convoy in Maydan Wardak, blew himself up, killing himself and injuring another person <sup>(1510)</sup>. In early November 2017, 15 Taliban attackers blew up a suicide bomb at the gate of an ANP base in Dasht-e Top and then tried to storm the base, but were all killed by the police <sup>(1511)</sup>.

According to the New York Times, reporting on 21 September 2017, the Taliban killed the police chief in Jaghato that month by detonating an IED, and have used roadside bombs to kill three security chiefs in Jaghato within the space of one month <sup>(1512)</sup>.

In another example, on 23 November 2017, Afghan forces used rockets and air strikes to attack and kill roughly 20 Taliban insurgents who were sheltering in a religious school in the 'central eastern province of Wardak'; no civilians were harmed <sup>(1513)</sup>. However, Pajhwok reported that the operation occurred in Nerkh, and that 34 militants were killed in the attack, while the Taliban claimed that those killed were madrassa students <sup>(1514)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

As of November 2017, Wardak province had been completely opium-free, at least since 2006. In 2005, 106 hectares of poppy cultivation were still documented in Daymirdad <sup>(1515)</sup>.

### **Displacement**

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 3,759 persons displaced from Wardak (315 from Chak; 322 from Jaghato; 315 from Jalrez; 1 694 from Nerkh; 1 113 from Sayadabad) <sup>(1516)</sup>.

According to UNOCHA, between 23 and 29 October 2017, over 1 000 displaced people arrived in Maydan Shahr, following 'heavy armed clashes' in Wardak and Paktika provinces. UNOCHA states that at that time the fighting was 'ongoing' and that additional displacement was

<sup>(1506)</sup> Tolo News, Wardak Residents Claim 4 Civilians Killed In Govt Forces Raid, 30 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1507)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 12 - 18 February 2018, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)) p. 1.

<sup>(1508)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians, 7 insurgents killed in Wardak incidents, 25 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1509)</sup> Afghanistan Times, 30 Taliban killed as police repulsed Taliban attack on Jaghato district, 18 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1510)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Bomber dies before reaching target in Wardak, 29 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1511)</sup> Tolo News, All 15 militants gunned down in Wardak base attack: police chief, 8 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1512)</sup> New York Times (The), 3 police chiefs are killed in a month in a volatile Afghan district, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1513)</sup> Reuters, Afghan air strike kills about 20 Taliban at religious school – officials, 24 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1514)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 43 militants suffer casualties in Maidan Wardak operation, 23 November 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1515)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5.

<sup>(1516)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

anticipated<sup>(1517)</sup>. The following week, in early November, UNOCHA reported that ongoing conflict had caused families to be displaced to Maydan Shahr, and additionally that 500 families from Wardak and Nagarhar had been displaced to Kabul city due to ongoing heavy clashes in those provinces<sup>(1518)</sup>. UNOCHA noted that, at that time, the conflict was limiting access for humanitarian assistance into the area<sup>(1519)</sup>. Armed clashes between opposition groups in February resulted in over 2 100 people being displaced from Nerkh and Jalrez districts to the provincial capital of Wardak Province<sup>(1520)</sup>. In the last week of February, UNOCHA reported that 4,500 people had been internally displaced to the provincial capital<sup>(1521)</sup> and to Dashte Top area of Sayadabad district as a result of insecurity and armed clashes<sup>(1522)</sup>.

In the final week of February 2018, UNOCHA reported insecurity and armed clashes between pro-government militia groups and insurgents in the province, and that local officials were predicting displacements into March 2018 as a result<sup>(1523)</sup>. In the same period, UNOCHA also reported that HIG and the Taliban were fighting each other in Nerkh, Chak, Sayadabad and Jalrez, causing IDPs<sup>(1524)</sup>.

## 2.34 Zabul

### 2.34.1 Actors in the conflict

#### Insurgent groups in Zabul

Taliban and other insurgent groups are active in certain districts<sup>(1525)</sup>. Taliban and al-Qaida members<sup>(1526)</sup> as well as ISKP supporters are reported to be active in the province<sup>(1527)</sup>. The two districts of Khak-e Afghan and Daychopan are among those that see an ISKP and al-Qaida presence<sup>(1528)</sup>. According to a February 2018 article by Pajhwok Afghan News, the Head of the Zabul Provincial Council claimed that there were active ISKP centres in four districts of Zabul: Daychopan, Khak-e Afghan, Naw Bahar and Arghandab<sup>(1529)</sup>. However, in the same article, the Zabul Governor contradicted this claim, stating that there were no Daesh militants in the province, and that only Khak Afghan district (also called Khak-e Afghan or Kakar district) of the province was under Taliban control. He added that security problems in the province were created by Pakistani and Iranian intelligence groups<sup>(1530)</sup>.

<sup>(1517)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 23 to 29 October 2017, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1518)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 30 October – 5 November 2017, 5 November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1519)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 30 October – 5 November 2017, 5 November 2017, ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1520)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 12 - 18 February 2018, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1;

<sup>(1521)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 26 February – 4 March 2018, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1

<sup>(1522)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Meeting – Mayan Wardak; Meeting Summary – 27 Feb 2018, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1523)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 26 February – 4 March 2018, 4 March 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1524)</sup> UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Meeting – Maydan Wardak; Meeting Summary – 27 Feb 2018, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1525)</sup> Khaama Press, ISIS suffer heavy casualties in Zabul province of Afghanistan, 26 April 2017 ([url](#)). QNA, Air strike in Afghanistan kills 10 militants, 23 April 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(1526)</sup> QNA, Air strike in Afghanistan kills 10 militants, 23 April 2017, available at: ([url](#)).

<sup>(1527)</sup> Khaama Press, Key ISIS leader Gul Agha killed in Zabul operations, 5 May 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1528)</sup> Voice of America, IS Leaflets Threaten Residents in Restive Afghan Province, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, ISIS suffer heavy casualties in Zabul province of Afghanistan, 26 April 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1529)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Daesh has active centres in 4 districts of Zabul', 4 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1530)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Daesh has active centres in 4 districts of Zabul', 4 February 2018 ([url](#)).

According to a BBC study of January 2018, based on research conducted between 23 August and 21 November 2017, the Taliban fully control 14 districts nationwide, of which one in Zabul: Kakar district. Further, they have a ‘low’ (district attacked at least once in three months) or ‘medium’ (districts attacked at least three times a month) ‘active and physical presence’ in the rest of the province, except for provincial capital Qalat <sup>(1531)</sup>.

ISKP-related incidents were reported in sources consulted by ACLED in Zabul province in the period 1 January 2017 – 31 January 2018 <sup>(1532)</sup>.

### **(Pro)-Government forces and military operations in Zabul**

Military operations are being conducted in the province <sup>(1533)</sup>, resulting in the killing of insurgents <sup>(1534)</sup> and sometimes also of their leaders <sup>(1535)</sup>.

There are clashes between security forces and Taliban <sup>(1536)</sup>.

For example, in October 2017, the MoD carried out Zabul security operations in Mizan and Shahjoy districts which inflicted ‘heavy casualties’ on the Taliban, leading to the killing of 23 and injury of 28 fighters <sup>(1537)</sup>. Also, in December 2017, the Afghan government reported that its special forces, police, army, and NATO Resolute Support forces had conducted operations in Zabul, Ghazni and Paktia, reportedly leading to the killing of a senior Al-Qaeda leader <sup>(1538)</sup>. In January 2017, the Ministry of Defence carried out security operations in 9 provinces, including Arghandab district of Zabul, and killed 8 ‘terrorists’ and destroyed their hideouts <sup>(1539)</sup>. In late February 2018, security forces conducted clearing operations which led to the killing of two militants and injury of several security force members <sup>(1540)</sup>. In March 2018, more security operations were conducted in several districts of Zabul <sup>(1541)</sup>, including one in the district of Shah-e Safa where the Afghan police claimed to have killed 14 Taliban and injured 20 more <sup>(1542)</sup>.

<sup>(1531)</sup> BBC News, Taliban threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC finds, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1532)</sup> ACLED, Islamic State in Afghanistan, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1533)</sup> Hans India (The), Afghanistan: 48 terrorists killed in military operation, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)); Bundeswehr Journal, Einfluss und Kontrolle der Taliban in Afghanistan nehmen zu, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 45 rebels killed in fresh operation: MoD, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 Taliban killed, 20 injured in Zabul operation, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, 11 Insurgents Killed In Wardak And Zabul Operations, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Taliban militants and their local leaders suffer heavy casualties in Zabul operations, 10 October 2017 ([url](#)); QNA, Air strike in Afghanistan kills 10 militants, 23 April 2017, available at: ([url](#)); Khaama Press, ISIS suffer heavy casualties in Zabul province of Afghanistan, 26 April 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1534)</sup> Hans India (The), Afghanistan: 48 terrorists killed in military operation, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 45 rebels killed in fresh operation: MoD, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 Taliban killed, 20 injured in Zabul operation, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1535)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban militants and their local leaders suffer heavy casualties in Zabul operations, 10 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1536)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 dead in Zabul blasts, Taliban attack, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Five Police Killed In Taliban Attack In Zabul, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Police Suffer Heavy Casualties in Zabul Clashes, 21 May 2017 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Army Battalion Chief Killed In Zabul, 12 April 2017 ([url](#)); Salzburger Nachrichten, Taliban töteten 15 Polizisten in Afghanistan, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1537)</sup> Khaama Press, Taliban militants and their local leaders suffer heavy casualties in Zabul operations, 10 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1538)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Senior Al-Qaeda leader among 81 killed in Afghanistan, 5 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1539)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 26 militants killed, 29 wounded, claims Ministry of Defence, 26 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1540)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Zabul: Police officer escape unhurt in bomb attack, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1541)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Nearly 100 militants killed in past 24 hours: MoD, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 45 rebels killed in fresh operation: MoD, 16 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 71 militants killed in round-the-clock operations: MoD, 23 March 2018 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, 53 Taliban claimed killed, 28 wounded nationwide, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1542)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 Taliban killed, 20 injured in Zabul operation, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)).

### 2.34.2 Recent security trends and impact on the civilian population

#### General

Overall, in 2017, UNAMA recorded 333 civilian casualties in Zabul (107 deaths, and 226 injured), primarily from ground engagements, non-suicide IEDs and unexploded ordnances and landmines<sup>(1543)</sup>. Over the course of 2017, UNAMA documented an increase in civilian casualties in 12 provinces, including Zabul, which saw a 3 % increase over 2016<sup>(1544)</sup>. Zabul's minor increase in civilian casualties was due to ground engagements during 2017<sup>(1545)</sup>. IEDs were the second-highest tactic used in the province in 2017<sup>(1546)</sup>. Zabul was also among the 10 provinces with the highest incidence of explosive war remnants causing civilian casualties<sup>(1547)</sup>.

UNOCHA maps Afghanistan's 'conflict severity' in 2017 by a combination of three indicators: security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict-induced displacement. For Zabul, UNOCHA places the district of Shahjoy in the highest category of severity, followed by Arghandab, the second highest. Six districts had mid-level conflict severity: Shomulzay, Nawbahar, Shinkay, Qalat, Tarank Wa Jaldak, and Daychopan. The three remaining districts have a low-mid level of conflict: Atghar, Mizan, and Kakar districts<sup>(1548)</sup>. According to UNODC, the main opium-cultivating districts of Zabul were Tarank Wa Jaldak and Mizan, where security was described as 'poor'; overall cultivation in 2017 reportedly increased by 56 % since 2016<sup>(1549)</sup>.

In the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2018, 90 incidents related to insurgents in Zabul province were found in open media sources by the Global Incidents Map website<sup>(1550)</sup>.

Several clashes and security operations resulted in casualties:

On 21 September 2017, 5 police officers were killed and two were wounded when their check post on the outskirts of Shahjoy district centre was assaulted<sup>(1551)</sup>. In other clashes and attacks on security check posts, six security force members and eight Taliban were killed in Arghandab district on 30 October 2017<sup>(1552)</sup>. An IED explosion in Kharan area of Qalat resulted in the killing of two policemen and the injury of another, also in October 2017<sup>(1553)</sup>.

UNAMA reported that in November 2017 Afghan security forces mistakenly killed a civilian in Mizan district of Zabul after firing in the direction where Taliban shooting was coming from<sup>(1554)</sup>.

<sup>(1543)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1544)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 4, 67.

<sup>(1545)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(1546)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 67.

<sup>(1547)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 17.

<sup>(1548)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

<sup>(1549)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017. Cultivation and Production, November 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 27, 28.

<sup>(1550)</sup> <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/>. See introduction for further information on this source.

<sup>(1551)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 police killed in Taliban attack in Zabul, 21 September 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1552)</sup> Tolo News, Six police killed in Taliban attack in Zabul, 30 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1553)</sup> Tolo News, Two policemen killed in Zabul roadside mine blast, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1554)</sup> UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 49.

Pajhwok reported that government forces killed three militants in Shahjoy in clashes at the end of December 2017 <sup>(1555)</sup>. Also in December, six insurgents in Shamulzay district were killed when an IED they were building exploded <sup>(1556)</sup>.

In February 2018, a convoy carrying the head of the Zabol provincial council was attacked by militants outside Qalat, which led to an exchange of gunfire <sup>(1557)</sup>. On 17 February 2018, a police check post in Mullah Din area of the capital, Qalat, was attacked and five policemen were killed <sup>(1558)</sup>. An ANSF vehicle also hit a roadside bomb in Arghandab district. Two bodyguards were injured while the deputy police chief escaped unhurt <sup>(1559)</sup>.

On 22 February, two civilians were killed, including one woman, and one was injured by a roadside bomb in Zabol <sup>(1560)</sup>.

In March 2018, Associated Press and several Afghan media sources quoted local government officials who stated a (retired) Pakistani army general and his bodyguard were killed in Shahjoy district. He was supposedly killed by explosives attached to his motorbike <sup>(1561)</sup>. Another report stated that it was unclear who was behind the attack, while no statement was issued from Pakistan's military media <sup>(1562)</sup>.

### **Impact of the conflict on law and order and services**

According to UNOCHA, there were four security incidents in Zabol during December 2017 that affected health facilities or health workers <sup>(1563)</sup>. Numerous schools had to be closed in 2017 due, among other things, to insurgent activities <sup>(1564)</sup>.

In February 2018, Province Governor Khyal Mohammad Hussaini initiated investigations on the count of corruption against a politician in the province <sup>(1565)</sup>. He also called upon the citizens to rely on local jirgas instead of the courts, as people allegedly preferred the decisions of a local jirga over judgments handed down by a court <sup>(1566)</sup>.

Like in the whole southern part of the country, opium cultivation also increased in Zabol in 2017 (increase of 768 hectares or 56 % from 2016); no poppy fields were eradicated in 2017 <sup>(1567)</sup>.

<sup>(1555)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 50 rebels killed, 19 injured in past 24 hours: MoD, 22 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1556)</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 6 militants killed in premature explosion in S. Afghanistan, 19 December 2017 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1557)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Zabol PC head survives armed attack, 19 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1558)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 policemen killed in Taliban attack on Zabol checkpoint, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Five police killed in Taliban attack in Zabol, 17 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1559)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Zabol: Police officer escape unhurt in bomb attack, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1560)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 dead in Zabol blasts, Taliban attack, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolo News, Woman killed in Zabol roadside explosion, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, At least 10 dead after insurgent attack, roadside blast in Afghanistan, 22 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1561)</sup> AP, Botched suicide attack wounds 5 students in Afghan capital, 18 March 2018, available at: ([url](#)); Khaama Press, Reports emerge regarding killing of a Pakistani General in Zabol, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)); Bakhtar News, Pakistani General Gunned Down In Afghanistan, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1562)</sup> Daily Pakistan, Pakistani general killed in Zabol blast, Afghan media's absurd claim stuns social media, 18 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1563)</sup> UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 71, 31 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 4.

<sup>(1564)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Half of Zabol schools shut by insecurity, fighting, 14 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1565)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Acting mayor flees Zabol with 2m afghanis, says official, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1566)</sup> Pajhwok Afghan News, Zabol governor prefers jirgas over courts to resolve disputes, 30 January 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1567)</sup> UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017, November 2017 ([url](#)).

**Displacement**

UNOCHA collected data, for the period 1 January 2017 – 26 March 2018, on 9 640 persons displaced from Zabul (476 from Daychopan; 261 from Mizan; 168 from Qalat; 7 426 from Shahjoy; 1 309 from Shomulzay) <sup>(1568)</sup>.

UNOCHA reported that during the week from 25 September to 1 October 2017, over 2 500 people were displaced from Shahjoy district villages into the district centre due to ‘ongoing conflict’ <sup>(1569)</sup>.

UNOCHA reported providing humanitarian aid to 800 IDPs in Qalat during October 2017 <sup>(1570)</sup>; however, in early November, aid operations were briefly suspended because of ‘government interference’ <sup>(1571)</sup>.

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<sup>(1568)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Conflict Displacement 2017, last updated: 19 February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, updated as of 31 March 2018 ([url](#)).

<sup>(1569)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 25 September to 1 October 2017, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1570)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 23 to 29 October 2017, 2 October 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

<sup>(1571)</sup> UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report, Week of 30 October – 5 November 2017, 5 November 2017 ([url](#)), p. 1.

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## Annex II : 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 September 2017 until 31 March 2018.

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
- 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 province, possibly with separate focus on some contested areas:

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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