



**Afghanistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 6 April 2018**

**Please provide an overview of the current lack of state protection, especially for children in Laghman province and Kunduz province**

A report published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, in a section titled “State Protection” (paragraph 5.2), states:

“The continuing armed conflict has significantly challenged the government’s ability to exercise effective control over large parts of the country, particularly outside major urban centres. In addition, the increase in the number and impact of large-scale attacks that have taken place in Kabul since the beginning of 2016 demonstrates the limits of the government’s ability to protect its citizens even where its security infrastructure is strongest.”  
(Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) (18 September 2017) *DFAT Country Information Report: Afghanistan*, p.28)

A report published by the Landinfo Country of Origin Information Centre of Norway, in a section titled “Changes To Conflict Pattern Since December 2014” (section 2.1), states:

“While the Taliban previously used guerrilla warfare with widespread use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the conflict pattern has now changed to more conventional warfare between the parties. There are reports of frequent regular battles for the purpose of territorial control. The Taliban directly attacks the ANSF, and there has been a big increase in ground combat incidents and direct encounters between the Taliban and the security forces. In addition, the Taliban carry out complex, targeted offensive operations against densely populated areas and district centres. In such operations, up to hundreds of Taliban fighters may participate. In the autumn of 2015, the Taliban managed to gain control of the provincial capital of Kunduz, one of the country’s largest cities. Although they maintained control for a few days only, it was a formidable victory and a morale «boost» for the new strategy. Several provincial capitals, including in Laghman, Helmand and Faryab, have come close to falling to the Taliban.” (Landinfo Country of Origin Information Centre (29 June 2017) *Afghanistan: Recruitment to Taliban*, p.6)

The Executive Summary of a report from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan states:

“In 2017, civilian casualties decreased in 22 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. In the remaining 12 provinces, increased suicide and IED attacks in civilian-populated areas by Anti-Government Elements were the main cause for the increase in casualties, though a few also increased from ground fighting.<sup>15</sup> UNAMA continued to document the highest levels of civilian casualties in Kabul province, mainly from indiscriminate attacks in Kabul city. Of the 1,831 civilian casualties (479 deaths and 1,352 injured) documented in Kabul

province, 88 per cent resulted from suicide and complex attacks carried out by Anti-Government Elements in Kabul city. After Kabul, the highest numbers of civilian casualties were recorded in Helmand, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Faryab, Uruzgan, Herat, Paktya, Kunduz, and Laghman provinces.” (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (February 2018) *Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Annual Report 2017*, p.4)

In a section titled “Ground Engagements: Civilians Caught in the Cross-Fire” this report states:

“Despite the overall decreases in civilian casualties from ground engagements, several provinces continued to record significant increases in civilian deaths and injuries from ground fighting, most notably Farah, Faryab, and Laghman provinces, predominantly due to increased presence of Anti-Government Elements and an intensification of fighting compared to 2016. The highest number of civilian casualties from ground fighting were documented in Faryab, Helmand, Laghman, Nangarhar, and Uruzgan.” (ibid, p.22)

A report published by Oxfam, in a chapter titled “Kunduz Findings”, states:

“Kunduz is an extreme case in this research as it is the province most affected by the ongoing conflict, causing high numbers of civilian casualties. The province is also a strategic location for illicit drug trafficking routes towards Central Asia. Armed violence is currently widespread, and the number of internally displaced people is increasing. The province has nine districts, of which four are currently under Taliban control. The city of Kunduz was briefly taken over by the Taliban in September 2015, the first time the insurgent group managed to take over a provincial capital. A year later, in October 2016, the city again came under siege. It had a disastrous impact on people’s lives, and many fled to more secure districts, neighbouring provinces or Kabul. Many youth fled towards Europe, mostly through Iran. NGOs were also affected as offices were ransacked and equipment was looted. Escalation of the conflict led to loss of infrastructure, especially in the city centre, Char Dara and Imam Sahib districts. Since then, the city of Kunduz and surrounding areas have come under renewed attacks by the Taliban, causing a lot of uncertainty, instability and insecurity.” (Oxfam (January 2018) *Returning to Fragility: Exploring the link between conflict and returnees in Afghanistan*, p.25)

A report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in a chapter titled “Needs Summary”, states:

“Recent assessments indicate that more than a third of children have been exposed to psychological distress due to loss of family and community members, and the constant risk of death and injury - with this being as high as 68 percent in Kunduz.” (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (December 2017) *2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Afghanistan*, p.5)

In a section headed “Children and Youth: Disproportionately affected”

“On top of the physical harm and barriers imposed by the conflict upon children, the mental costs are also significant. More than a third of children

have been exposed to psychological distress due to loss of family and community members and the constant risk of death and injury, while a perception survey conducted in Laghman province in 2017 highlighted fear of airstrikes as the number one concern among local communities.

Psychological distress and trauma affects displaced children and adults alike, with affected adults exposed to prolonged toxic stress affecting their ability to deliver caretaking responsibilities and provide a stable environment for their children.” (ibid, p.13)

A 2015 report on Kunduz Province published by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, in a section headed “Recruitment and Use of Children in Hostilities”

“UNAMA received consistent, credible reports that the Taliban used large numbers of child soldiers during the attack on Kunduz. UNAMA sources indicated that medical facilities in Kunduz treated ‘at least 200’ injured child fighters between 28 September and 13 October. Most of them are boys and are reportedly aged between 10 and 17. Credible sources reported that many of the boys complained that they had been forced to take up arms by Taliban who threatened that their families would be harmed if they refused. One witness reported seeing a child soldier being shot by Taliban as he was trying to escape.” (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (December 2015) *Afghanistan: Human Rights and Protection of Civilians In Armed Conflict – Special Report On Kunduz Province*, p.18)

An article from Indian newspaper The Asian Age states:

“Four men and a woman were arrested trying to carry out a bomb attack in the city of Kunduz in northern Afghanistan. What is more shocking is that the Taliban fighters used a four-month-old baby to hide a bomb which they intended to use in a sick terror attack. Terrorists tried to conceal explosive material within the tiny child's clothing as they were making their way to Kunduz to carry out an atrocity. But they were stopped by police as they entered the city and five people, including one woman, were arrested. According to a story published in The Kabul Times, the bomb was ‘carefully hidden on the body of the infant.’” (The Asian Age (27 January 2018) *Taliban fighters hide bomb in 4-month-old baby's clothes for terror attack, caught*)

A report from the Chinese state news agency Xinhua General News Service states:

“Seven children sustained injuries as an explosive device went off in Khan Abad district of Afghanistan's northern Kunduz province on Tuesday, district governor Hayatullah Amiri said Wednesday. ‘A group of innocent children were playing on a ground in Choga village on Tuesday afternoon when they found a toy-like object and begun playing but the device exploded, injuring seven children,’ Amiri told Xinhua. All the injured children have been taken to hospital, the official added. Hundreds of thousands of mines and unexploded devices left over from the past wars in Afghanistan often cause casualties, mostly children. A similar incident also on Tuesday in the neighboring Imam Sahib district of Kunduz province killed one child and injured two others.” (Xinhua General News Service (14 February 2018) *Blast wounds 7 children in N. Afghan province*)

An article from the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle states:

“A government airstrike in northern Afghanistan has killed over 50 civilians. Afghans who live in areas contested by Taliban militants are finding nowhere to escape as attacks increase. DW spoke with local witnesses. On Monday, the Afghan government conducted airstrikes on Taliban-controlled territory in Dashti-i Archi district in northern Afghanistan's Kunduz province. According to government officials, the strikes targeted a Taliban gathering, but caused heavy civilian casualties. Amid conflicting reports of casualty numbers from the Afghan government, local officials confirmed to DW that the incident killed both Taliban militia and civilians.” (Deutsche Welle (4 April 2018) *Afghans in Kunduz trapped by conflict*)

An article from the Pakistani newspaper Dawn refers to this incident as follows:

“A deadly attack has killed and injured scores in Kunduz, Afghanistan, and has bloodily exposed the dangers inherent in a stepped-up aerial bombardment campaign in the country. The Afghan defence ministry has promised an inquiry, but is also claiming that many militants were killed in the aerial attack. That claim has yet to be independently verified; however, what is already clear is that numerous civilians, many of them children, were killed or injured in the attack. At the time that Afghan helicopter gunships unleashed their weapons on the target, a graduation ceremony for children was being held in the madressah.” (Dawn (5 April 2018) *Kunduz attack*)

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

### References:

The Asian Age (27 January 2018) *Taliban fighters hide bomb in 4-month-old baby's clothes for terror attack, caught*

<http://www.asianage.com/life/more-features/270118/taliban-fighters-hide-bomb-in-4-month-old-babys-clothes-for-terror-attack-caught.html>

(Accessed 6 April 2018)

Deutsche Welle (4 April 2018) *Afghans in Kunduz trapped by conflict*

<http://www.lexisnexis.com>

(Accessed 6 April 2018)

This is a subscription database

Dawn (5 April 2018) *Kunduz attack*

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1399690/kunduz-attack?scrollToPosition=3303>

(Accessed 6 April 2018)

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) (18 September 2017) *DFAT Country Information Report: Afghanistan*  
<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/country-information-report-afghanistan.pdf>  
(Accessed 8 March 2018)

Oxfam (January 2018) *Returning to Fragility: Exploring the link between conflict and returnees in Afghanistan*  
<https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/oxfam/bitstream/10546/620399/4/rr-returning-fragility-afghanistan-310118-en.pdf>  
(Accessed 6 April 2018)

Landinfo Country of Origin Information Centre (29 June 2017) *Afghanistan: Recruitment to Taliban*  
[https://landinfo.no/asset/3588/1/3588\\_1.pdf](https://landinfo.no/asset/3588/1/3588_1.pdf)  
(Accessed 6 April 2018)

UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (February 2018) *Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Annual Report 2017*  
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5a854a614.html>  
(Accessed 6 April 2018)

UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (December 2015) *Afghanistan: Human Rights and Protection of Civilians In Armed Conflict – Special Report On Kunduz Province*  
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/566fd0e64.html>  
(Accessed 6 April 2018)

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (December 2017) *2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Afghanistan*  
[https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/afg\\_2018\\_humanitarian\\_needs\\_overview\\_0.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/afg_2018_humanitarian_needs_overview_0.pdf)  
(Accessed 6 April 2018)

Xinhua General News Service (14 February 2018) *Blast wounds 7 children in N. Afghan province*  
<http://www.lexisnexis.com>  
(Accessed 6 April 2018)  
This is a subscription database

### **Sources Consulted:**

DFAT  
Electronic Immigration Network  
European Asylum Support Office  
European Country of Origin Information Network  
Google  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Landinfo  
Lexis Nexis

Oxfam  
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database  
UNHCR Refworld