



## **Afghanistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Friday 3 & Tuesday 7 June 2016**

### **Information on the current security/conflict situation including in the Balkh region**

In May 2016 *Amnesty International* states that:

“...since 2004 the ongoing conflict has intensified and triggered a new exodus, in particular since 2011, when a combination of a resurgent Taliban and a collapsing economy has driven more and more people to flee their homes and communities” (Amnesty International (31 May 2016) *Afghanistan: “My children will die this winter” Afghanistan’s broken promise to the displaced*, p.6).

This report also notes that:

“Afghans are more desperate to leave than ever...” (ibid, p.7).

This document also states:

“An indicator of how desperate the situation has become is the fact that the number of internally displaced people has more than doubled in three years. There are, as of April 2016, a staggering 1.2 million people displaced within the country” (ibid, p.7).

It is also pointed out in this report that:

“The years since Amnesty International’s last report on displacement in 2012 have been the most violent on record since 2001. As international troops have left the country, Afghan security forces are leading the fight against anti-government groups like the Taliban, who are arguably at their strongest since their ouster in 2001” (ibid, p.11).

This document also notes that:

“It is, unsurprisingly, civilians who have borne the brunt of the rising levels of violence. The level of civilian casualties is at a record high, with the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) reporting that 2015 was the most dangerous year on record for civilians since 2009 when it started collecting such statistics” (ibid, p.12).

This document also notes:

“Over the past years, ground engagement between ANSF and anti-government armed groups has increased significantly – both because ANSF lack the level of air support that NATO used to provide, and because anti-government groups have stepped up such attacks.<sup>20</sup> This has had devastating consequences for ordinary Afghans, who are often caught in the crossfire, driving up civilian casualties significantly and contributing to higher levels of internal displacement” (ibid, p.12).

It is also stated in this report that:

“...the conflict theatre has expanded geographically, shifting from its traditional hot spots in the south and south-east to encompass much of the north and centre of the country as well” (ibid, p.12).

In May 2016 *Reuters* points out that:

“Balkh, a province previously considered one of the most secure in Afghanistan, has recently seen a marked pick up in fighting” (Reuters (23 May 2016) *Afghan governor sees more fighting after Taliban leader killed*).

The *United Nations News Service* in May 2016 notes:

“The United Nations humanitarian wing has reported that since the beginning of the year, about 1,000 Afghans have fled their homes every day due to fighting...” (United Nations News Service (17 May 2016) *Nearly 1,000 Afghans fleeing their homes daily, warns UN relief wing*).

In May 2016 *Reuters* notes in an article that:

“Finland tightened restrictions on giving residence permits to asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia on Tuesday, saying it was now largely safe for them to return to their war-torn homes” (Reuters (17 May 2016) *Finland says refugees can return to safe Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia*).

This document also points out that:

“The Taliban launched a spring offensive in Afghanistan last month, vowing to drive out the Western-backed government in Kabul and restore strict Islamic rule. Finland's center-right coalition government – which includes nationalist Finns party – has tightened its immigration policies since the influx of asylum seekers last year” (ibid).

A report released in April 2016 by the *International Federation for Human Rights* notes that:

“FIDH and its member organisation in Afghanistan Armanshahr/OPEN ASIA strongly condemn the heinous terrorist attack that took place in Kabul on 19 April 2016. This latest attack in an increasing wave of terrorist violence and systematic killing of civilians in Afghanistan clearly indicates that the struggle for peace and justice in the country needs greater commitment from the national Government of Afghanistan and support from the international community” (International Federation for Human Rights (20 April 2016) *Terror attack in Kabul: civilian deaths rise as impunity prevails*).

This document also states that:

“The withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan and the reduction of international aid have resulted in the expansion of the Taliban's operations and a rise in the number of civilian casualties. The Taliban continue to target civilians, which is a war crime under international law...” (ibid).

In April 2016 the *UNHCR* states in a report that:

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

This report also points out that:

“The conflict is increasingly affecting all parts of the country...” (ibid, p.14).

A paper issued by the *UNHCR* in April 2016 points out that:

“Conflict-induced displacement in Afghanistan reached unprecedented levels in 2015” (UNHCR (April 2016) *Afghanistan; Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement; 2015: The Year in Review*, p.2).

A report issued in March 2016 by the *United Nations Security Council* commenting on events from late 2015 into early 2016 states:

“During the reporting period, the security situation was increasingly volatile as the conflict grew in intensity and scope, resulting in high casualties and displacement among Afghan civilians” (United Nations Security Council (7 March 2016) *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, p.2).

In February 2016 *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* produced a report which included stating:

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

The *European Asylum Support Office* in a report issued in January 2016 includes commentary on Balkh which states that:

“Insurgents include Taliban, and also IMU and al Qaeda” (European Asylum Support Office (January 2016) *EASO Country of Origin Information Report. Afghanistan Security Situation*, p.149).

In January 2016 a report published by the *Refugee Studies Centre* notes that:

“...in Afghanistan, its categorisation as ‘post-conflict’ has meant that it is deemed safe for returns to take place. Although violence and insecurity have risen steadily (especially since 2007), the post-conflict label prevails over security assessments in the field” (Refugee Studies Centre (January 2016) *Destination: Europe*, p.33).

## References

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

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