



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Afghanistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 7 April 2016**

### **Information on indiscriminate violence in Kunduz province**

A report issued in September 2015 by *BBC News* commenting on Kunduz states that:

“The city is estimated to have about 300,000 residents but those numbers are likely to be fluid because fighting prompted many to flee the city earlier this year” (BBC News (29 September 2015) *Battleground Kunduz: The city the Taliban seized*).

In September 2015 a document issued by *Amnesty International* states that:

“The Taliban are exposing civilians to danger during the conflict in Kunduz by hiding in people’s houses and conducting door-to-door searches for Afghan security personnel or government staff, Amnesty International said. With fighting ongoing in Kunduz as Afghan security forces try to recapture the provincial capital, reports from local residents indicate that Taliban fighters have hidden in people’s houses to blend in with the civilian population. Government officials have also confirmed at least 16 civilian casualties, but the actual number could be much higher with the UN trying to confirm reports of at least 110 civilians killed. “Civilians are bearing the brunt of the horrific violence that is unfolding in Kunduz. By hiding in the residential homes Taliban fighters are exposing civilians to attacks. There are also reports of Taliban conducting house-by-house searches looking for people linked to the Afghan security forces or government,” said David Griffiths, South Asia Research Director at Amnesty International” (Amnesty International (29 September 2015) *Afghanistan: Taliban tactics put civilians in harm’s way*).

A report released in October 2015 by *Amnesty International* notes that:

“Mass murder, gang rapes and house-to-house searches by Taliban death squads are just some of the harrowing civilian testimonies emerging from Kunduz as Afghan forces today claimed to have regained control of key areas of the northern city, Amnesty International said” (Amnesty International (1 October 2015) *Afghanistan: Harrowing accounts emerge of the Taliban’s reign of terror in Kunduz*).

In October 2015 a publication issued by *Amnesty International* points out that:

“The bombing of a Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in Afghanistan today is a deplorable loss of life that must be urgently and impartially investigated, Amnesty International said. The MSF surgical hospital in Kunduz in northern Afghanistan was this morning hit by repeated airstrikes, killing at least nine staff members and an unknown number of patients. Many are still unaccounted for” (Amnesty International (3 October 2015) *Afghanistan: Bombing of Kunduz hospital a deplorable loss of life that must be investigated*).

A report issued in October 2015 by the *Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission* states that:

“Targeted and arbitrary killings, civilian casualties and targeting civilian areas, rape, destruction, plunder and pillaging communities property and civilian sites, the use of human shields, hostage-taking, putting limits to the public service ( food, drinking water, health services, electricity, transportation, etc.), blocking roads, paving the way for escape of prisoners, and forcing families to leave their homes, are the violations committed during the armed conflict in Kunduz and Taliban and its associated groups is responsible for all these violations except bombing of MSF's Hospital” (Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (17 October 2015) *The Report on the Investigation of Human Rights and Humanitarian Rights Situation in Kunduz Province Armed Conflict*).

In December 2015 *Reuters* states:

“At least 848 Afghan civilians were killed or wounded following a Taliban attack on the northern city of Kunduz in September, according to a U.N. report that detailed the grim conditions endured by residents during two weeks of fighting” (Reuters (12 December 2015) *At least 848 Afghan civilian casualties in Kunduz: U.N.*).

This report also notes that:

“...UNAMA...said most casualties had been caused from small arms fire or explosives during heavy fighting in residential areas. "In most of these cases, UNAMA could not attribute the casualties to a specific party to the conflict," it said, although it also detailed reports of deliberate killings by the Taliban of civilians including people associated with the government” (ibid).

The *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* in December 2015 states that:

“The battle following the Taliban’s attack on the city led to a loss of protection of the most basic human rights, including the rights to life and security of person. The deterioration of security, the breakdown of the rule of law and the absence of governance enabled an environment in which civilians were subjected to arbitrary killings, assault, other forms of violence, including gender-based violence, threats and widespread criminality” (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (December 2015) *Afghanistan: Human Rights and Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Special Report on Kunduz Province*, i).

This document also notes that:

“UNAMA received several reports of civilians being killed by ‘sniper-fire’ from unknown persons and locations as they ventured from their homes in search of food or water or to flee the city” (ibid, p.2).

This report also points out that:

“UNAMA received multiple reports of civilian casualties caused by rockets, mortars or other explosive weapons fired by both parties to the conflict” (ibid, p.5).

This publication also states that:

“UNAMA received multiple reports that members of the Taliban had intentionally killed civilians during the fighting in Kunduz, in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law” (ibid, p.13).

It is also noted in this document that:

“Although most civilian casualties resulted from mortar, rockets, grenades, artillery, and aerial attacks in densely populated areas, UNAMA received numerous reports of civilians shot by ‘sniper fire’ when they ventured out of their homes to flee the conflict, or simply to obtain food and water. While it remains unclear if these incidents amounted to intentional targeting of civilians by sniper fire or whether the victims were caught in crossfire during active fighting, such incidents demonstrate the increasingly desperate situation of civilians trapped in the city as the fighting dragged on” (ibid, p.14).

The *United Nations Human Rights Council* states in a report issued in February 2016 that:

“On 28 September, the Taliban launched an attack on and captured Kunduz city, in the north-east, precipitating more than two weeks of urban fighting as pro-Government forces attempted to regain control of the area. Fighting continued until 13 October, when the Taliban formally announced its withdrawal from the city. During this period, UNAMA/OHCHR recorded a preliminary figure of 848 civilian casualties (289 deaths and 559 injured) from conflict-related incidents in Kunduz city and surrounding districts. The vast majority of civilian casualties reportedly resulted from ground fighting between Taliban fighters and Afghan security forces. UNAMA/OHCHR also received reports of civilian casualties from targeted or deliberate killings, as well as parallel justice punishments” (United Nations Human Rights Council (11 February 2016) *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and on the achievements of technical assistance in the field of human rights in 2015*, pp.4-5).

This document also states that:

“During its occupation of Kunduz, the Taliban clearly targeted human rights defenders and Government employees through systematic searches of their homes and destroyed and looted the property and premises of the Government, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. Kunduz residents complained of water and electricity outages and food scarcity, which were exacerbated by significant restraints on humanitarian access owing to the fighting. The absence of governance during this period and the complete breakdown of rule of law resulted in the loss of protection of the most basic human rights. Once inside the city, the Taliban immediately freed over 600 male prisoners...from the Kunduz prison, allegedly providing some with weapons, and thereby enabling them to join the fight against Afghan security forces. This chaos created an environment in which arbitrary killings, opportunistic criminality and destruction took place with complete impunity” (ibid, p.5).

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

## References

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (17 October 2015) *The Report on the Investigation of Human Rights and Humanitarian Rights Situation in Kunduz Province Armed Conflict*

<http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/report-investigation-human-rights-and-humanitarian-rights-situation-kunduz>

This is a subscription database  
Accessed Thursday 7 March 2016

Amnesty International (3 October 2015) *Afghanistan: Bombing of Kunduz hospital a deplorable loss of life that must be investigated*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/10/afghanistan-bombing-of-kunduz-hospital-a-deplorable-loss-of-life-that-must-be-investigated/>

Accessed Thursday 7 March 2016

Amnesty International (1 October 2015) *Afghanistan: Harrowing accounts emerge of the Taliban's reign of terror in Kunduz*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/10/afghanistan-harrowing-accounts-emerge-of-the-talibans-reign-of-terror-in-kunduz/>

Accessed Thursday 7 March 2016

Amnesty International (29 September 2015) *Afghanistan: Taliban tactics put civilians in harm's way*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/afghanistan-taliban-tactics-put-civilians-in-harms-way/>

Accessed Thursday 7 March 2016

BBC News (29 September 2015) *Battleground Kunduz: The city the Taliban seized*

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34387853>

Accessed Thursday 7 March 2016

Reuters (12 December 2015) *At least 848 Afghan civilian casualties in Kunduz: U.N*

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-fighting-report-idUSKBN0TV07720151212>

Accessed Thursday 7 March 2016

United Nations 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>

United Nations Human Rights Council (11 February 2016) *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and on the achievements of technical assistance in the field of human rights in 2015*

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/56f171fc4.html>

Accessed Thursday 7 March 2016

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.

## Sources Consulted

Amnesty International  
BBC News  
Electronic Immigration Network  
European Country of Origin Information Network  
Freedom House  
Google  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
International Crisis Group  
IRIN News  
Lexis Nexis  
Minority Rights Group International  
Online Newspapers  
Refugee Documentation Centre E-Library  
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database  
Reliefweb  
Reuters  
United Kingdom Home Office  
United States Department of State  
UNHCR Refworld