



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

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Current information on Taliban activity

In January 2016 *Voice of America* states:

“The Taliban claims to control 34 of nearly 400 districts across Afghanistan, in more half of the country’s provinces. Afghan and Western security officials quoted this week in *The Washington Post* estimated the Taliban’s influence was even greater; they said the insurgents either control or have a significant presence in roughly 30 percent of the districts” (*Voice of America* (2 January 2016) *Taliban Claims Large Swath of Afghan Territory During 2015*).

Agence France Presse in December 2015 notes:

“The Taliban now control more territory than in any year since they were toppled from power in a 2001 US-led invasion, with the UN estimating that nearly half of all districts across Afghanistan are at risk of falling” (*Agence France Presse* (31 December 2015) *Freed Afghan village reveals key to Taliban 'success'*).

A report issued in December 2015 by *Reuters* states:

“Violence has been at its worst across Afghanistan, with more deaths on both sides of the conflict, as the Taliban has stepped up attacks on government forces since the departure of most foreign combat troops last year. The militants’ brief capture of Kunduz in September underlined the growing military capability they have developed since their hardline Islamist rule was overthrown by U.S.-led coalition forces in late 2001” (*Reuters* (29 December 2015) *Afghan leader promises parliamentary election next year*).

In December 2015 *Reuters* points out that:

“Taliban insurgents have claimed a number of attacks this month, including an assault on a Spanish embassy guesthouse in the capital that began on Dec. 11 and a suicide bombing near Bagram air base that killed six American troops last week. They have also been involved in heavy fighting in their historic heartland in Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, where they have been battling government forces for weeks for control of Sangin district” (*Reuters* (28 December 2015) *One killed, 33 wounded in Kabul suicide attack*).

The *Agence France Presse* in December 2015 notes:

“A Taliban bomber detonated an explosives-packed vehicle near Kabul airport Monday in an attack on a NATO convoy, killing one civilian a day after Pakistan’s army chief visited the Afghan capital in an effort to revive peace talks. Four other civilians were wounded in the early morning attack, which comes amid a worsening security situation in Afghanistan as the Taliban step up their nationwide offensive”

(Agence France Presse (28 December 2015) *Taliban car bomber targets NATO convoy near Kabul airport*).

In December 2015 *Human Rights Watch* notes that:

“On September 28, Kunduz, a strategically important city in northern Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban. It was the first major city taken by the Taliban since the U.S. ejected them from power in late 2001. Afghan government forces did not regain full control of the city for nearly two weeks” (Human Rights Watch (21 December 2015) *Afghanistan: After Kunduz*).

IRIN News in December 2015 states:

“The Taliban has been steadily gaining ground as part of a strategy to encircle the capital. Insurgents now control parts of Babaji, an area on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, and have consolidated positions in nearby Nad-e-Ali and Marjah districts” (IRIN News (16 December 2015) *School closures fuel Taliban recruitment*).

In December 2015 the *United Nations Security Council* states in a report that:

“The overall level of security incidents increased and intensified during the period, as compared with the same period in 2014. The temporary seizure by the Taliban of Kunduz City, as well as 16 district centres, primarily across the north and mainly from August through the end of October, underscored the challenges faced by the Government and security forces in maintaining stability across the country” (United Nations Security Council (10 December 2015) *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security - Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/601–S/2015/942)*, p.4).

The *Institute for the Study of War* in December 2015 notes that:

“Taliban elements possess extensive control over terrain throughout the Afghanistan in 2015” (Institute for the Study of War (10 December 2015) *Afghanistan Threat Assessment: The Taliban and ISIS*, p.1).

The *United States Department of Defence* issued a report in December 2015 which includes stating:

“The Taliban have remained active in their traditional strongholds, namely in Helmand in the south and Logar and Wardak in the east, and also created a sense of instability for brief periods of time in other parts of the country, such as in Kunduz in northern Afghanistan” (United States Department of Defence (December 2015) *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, p.2).

In November 2015 *IRIN News* notes:

“The war between pro-government forces and the Taliban has been intensifying in the north” (IRIN News (24 November 2015) *Food prices rise sharply after fighting disrupts Afghan harvest*).

Voice of America in November 2015 points out that:

“Despite the onset of a harsh winter, the Taliban has not halted its attacks and reportedly has engaged Afghan security forces in fighting in more than a dozen provinces” (Voice of America (19 November 2015) *Taliban Overruns Northeastern Afghan District*).

A report issued by *IRIN News* in October 2015 points out that:

“The replacement of four provincial governors in northern Afghanistan could stem years of steady gains made by the Taliban in the region, where thousands of people have been displaced by violence. While an insurgency has raged in the south since the Taliban government was toppled by an American-led invasion in 2001, northern Afghanistan was for years considered one of the most secure areas in the country. Since 2009, the insurgents have been steadily gaining ground in the north and clashes with pro-government forces have intensified, along with the disruption of humanitarian aid” (IRIN News (8 October 2015) *Can new governors turn the Taliban tide in northern Afghanistan?*).

A report issued in September 2015 by *Amnesty International* notes:

“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” (Amnesty International (29 September 2015) *Afghanistan: Taliban tactics put civilians in harm’s way*).

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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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