



## **Afghanistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 4 December 2012**

### **Have any employees of demining NGOs encountered problems with insurgent groups in Afghanistan? Any recent examples (notably in 2011/2012)?**

An IRIN News report states:

“Taliban insurgents and other armed groups as well as criminal gangs in Afghanistan have been deliberately targeting demining NGOs, particularly in the volatile southern provinces, says the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO). At least 10 deminers were killed, 23 injured and 12 abducted in 2010, said ANSO. ANSO’s figures differed from those supplied to IRIN by the UN-affiliated Mine Action Coordination Center for Afghanistan (MACCA), which said 17 deminers were killed, 35 injured and 73 abducted in 2010. ‘Most commonly it [insurgent opposition to demining activities] is simply to do with them clearing areas that the IEA [Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan] wants to leave untouched perhaps because they laid the field, or benefit from it not being usable by other forces,’ ANSO director Nic Lee told IRIN.” (IRIN News (18 January 2011) *Afghanistan: Deminers in the firing line*)

An IRIN News report on the killing of four deminers in July 2011 states:

“Thirty-one people, among them 20 deminers, were abducted ‘by the Taliban or other militants’, according to the Sediqi, while working in Shamalga village, Balabuluk District, on 6 July 2011. Four deminers were later killed, and 27 people released after negotiations between tribal elders and the militants, local government officials said. In April five deminers from the same organization (Demining Agency For Afghanistan - DAFA) were killed when their bus hit a roadside bomb in the southern province of Kandahar.” (IRIN News (13 July 2011) *In Brief: Afghan Interior Ministry condemns killing of deminers*)

A Cable News Network (CNN) report on this incident states:

“The Taliban has killed four members of an international landmine clearing agency working in western Afghanistan, an official with the group said Monday. ‘The Taliban killed four demining staff of the Demining Agency for Afghanistan, including two team leaders, a paramedic and a section leader,’ according to Mohammad Dawood Farahi, operation Manager of Demining Agency for Afghanistan. Thirty-one people working for the non-governmental agency were kidnapped in Farah province Wednesday. Twenty-seven people were set free, but given a warning.” (Cable News Network (CNN) (10 July 2011) *Taliban kills 4 workers from demining group, frees 27 others*)

A BBC News report states:

“Twenty-seven Afghan landmine clearers who were kidnapped last week have been released by militants who killed four of them over the weekend. Thirty-one deminers were seized in western Farah province on 6 July. On Sunday, officials said that the bodies of six deminers were found. But the provincial government has now said that only four hostages were beheaded. The abductions were blamed on Taliban but a spokesman for the insurgent group denied any involvement.” (BBC News (11 July 2011) *Kidnapped Afghan deminers are released*)

A Pajhwok Afghan News report on the abduction of deminers in May 2012 states:

“Unidentified gunmen abducted nearly a dozen deminers in the eastern province of Nangarhar, officials said. The deminers were abducted on Sunday morning by unidentified gunmen in the Khewa (Kuz Kunar) district, governor's spokesman, Ahmad Zai Abdulzai told Pajhwok Afghan News, but did not reveal further details. Police headquarters media office confirmed that six employees of a demining organisation were kidnapped in the district. However, a security official said that more than 10 deminers of the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA) were abducted and area people were trying to seek their release.” (Pajhwok Afghan News (13 May 2012) *6 deminers abducted in Nangarhar*)

A report from the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, in a section headed “Kandahar”, states:

“A demining NGO was targeted for robbery by gunmen in rural Kandahar during the past fortnight. In a village near to the Arghistan DAC on the 8th, gunmen entered a demining worksite and abducted four staff members in one of their vehicles, bringing some of the deminers' equipment with them; after stopping at a nearby location, the gunmen physically assaulted the deminers and then released them approximately five hours later after destroying their vehicle. Regardless of whether the gunmen responsible were armed criminals or associated with the armed opposition in some form, the motives of this incident -as with so many that affect demining organizations across the country -seem to have been exclusively those of predatory criminality, the radio and mine-detection equipment being of considerable value for any armed group.” (Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (15 September 2012) *Country Summary*, p.15

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.

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