









The HAG quarterly report analyses access restrictions encountered by humanitarian workers during the second quarter of 2021 (Q2 2021). The report is based on the Access Monitoring and Reporting Framework, which records access impediments encountered by humanitarians in Afghanistan and logs them according to seven different categories of access constraints, which are then further divided into different types of access incidents.

Access Constraint	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Tendency
1) Interference in the Implementation of Humanitarian Activities	138	70	
2) Levy Request	22	6	
3) Military Operation and Kinetic Activity	67	171	
4) Movement Restriction	154	253	
5) Physical Environment and Lack of Infrastructure	12	28	
6) Violence/Threats Against Humanitarian Personnel/Assets/Facilities	115	65	
7) Landmines/UXO	0	0	
Overall Number of Access Constraints	508	593	

Summary

- Humanitarian partners in Afghanistan continue to deliver much needed services to people in need despite a continuously challenging access environment;
- In Q2 2021, the HAG recorded 593 access impediments, compared to 508 in Q1 2021;
- The increase was driven by an increase in access constraints and movement restrictions as a result of military operations and kinetic activity;
- The Taliban initiated most access constraints in Q2 2021 (461), followed by community members (51), ANDSF (33) and ACG (22);
- Interference attempts, levy requests and acts of violence against humanitarians decreased as a result of limited humanitarian footprint and operations;
- Q2 was the deadliest quarter for humanitarians on HAG record, with 16 humanitarians killed.

Overall Access Constraints

In Q2 2021, the HAG recorded 593 access constraints, compared to 508 in Q1 2021 and 336 in Q4 2020. The increase in access incidents in Q2 2021 is mainly due to a deterioration in the security environment, with kinetic activity and military operations impeding humanitarian access, including by significantly restricting movement of humanitarian partners. At the same time, access incidents stemming from interferences, levy requests and violence against humanitarian actors and/or facilities decreased compared to Q1 2021.

Maydan Wardak, Hirat, Farah, Balkh and Baghlan were the five provinces that logged most access constraints in Q2, with Maydan Wardak logging most interference attempts as well as most incidents stemming from military activity, while Farah logged the highest level of movement restrictions (see figure 1). Meanwhile, Kabul continued to log most violent acts and threats against humanitarian personnel and/or assets, which can be explained by a high level of crime within the Afghan capital.

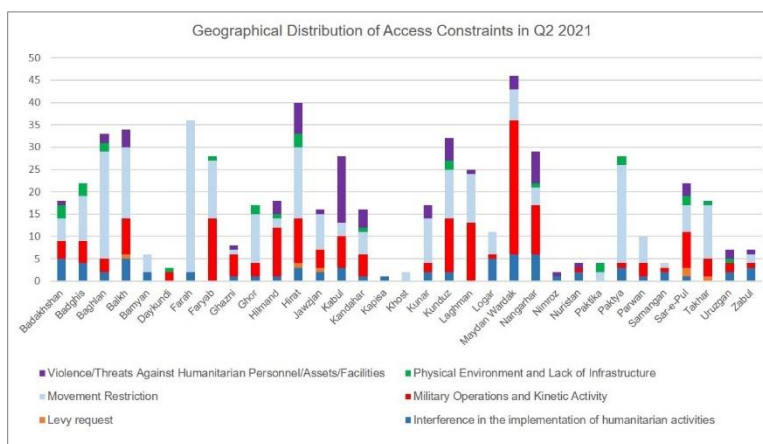


Figure 1

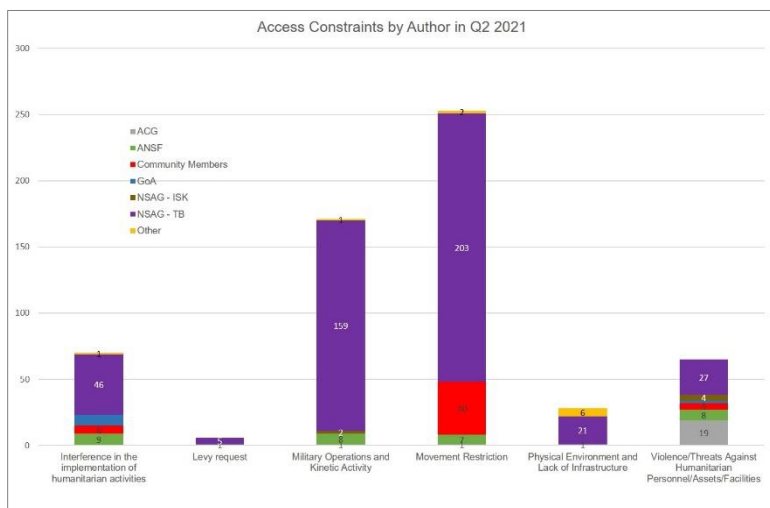


Figure 2

In Q2 2021, the Taliban continued to perpetrate most incidents (461), followed by constraints initiated by community members (51) and ANDSF (33). The high number of community-initiated access constraints is not linked to a deterioration of local acceptance, rather most incidents are linked to community members gathering and protesting and thereby indirectly impeding humanitarian movement (see figure 2). Despite a continuously challenging economic environment, hardly hit by conflict and the Covid-19 pandemic, reports of ACG-authored incidents decreased this quarter, with the 22 ACG-authored incidents being the lowest quarterly

number since Q3 2019. This does not necessarily mean that criminality is decreasing across the country, it could also be the result of restricted humanitarian movement due to conflict and Covid-19, which limits their exposure to criminal activity.

Fighting between ANDSF and the Taliban intensified in Q4 2020 and reached a new high in Q2 2021 fueled by a breakdown in the peace talks taking place in Doha and the annulment of a peace conference planned to take place in Turkey. In April, US President Biden announced that the US force withdrawal would be completed no later than 11 September 2021 although with the withdrawal of the US forces from the Bagram airfield on 1 July, the withdrawal manifested two months ahead of plan. The intensification of fighting resulted in record numbers of access constraints stemming from military operations and kinetic activity as well as movement restrictions (see figure 3).

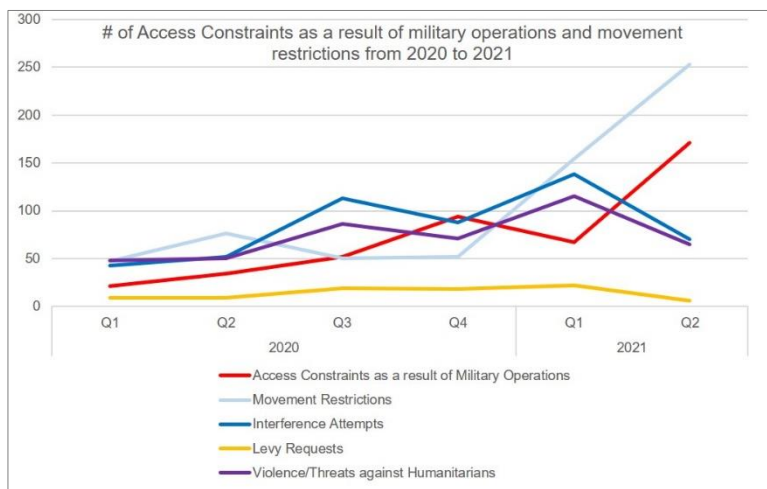


Figure 3

At the same time, the HAG observed a reduction in interference attempts, levy requests and violence/threats against humanitarian actors and facilities in Q2 after Q1 logged record numbers. This is unlikely the result of an improving access environment but rather due to limited humanitarian movement and operations which leads to less exposure.

While the number of violent acts/threats against humanitarians decreased, down from 115 incidents in Q1 to 65 in Q2, this quarter was nonetheless the deadliest quarter for humanitarians on HAG records, with 16 humanitarians killed and 39 injured.

Meanwhile, the number of abductions and detentions decreased by 70 per cent this quarter, down from 64 individuals abducted/detained in Q1 to 19 in Q2, with the decrease being likely linked to the reduced humanitarian footprint due to ongoing fighting.

The access environment is expected to remain extremely challenging in the coming months, with conflict activity likely to remain high. This will continue to impede humanitarian movement and operations and will require high level advocacy to negotiate humanitarian corridors or cessation of hostilities to enable safe and secure access of humanitarians to people in need. New territorial gains made by the Taliban during the last two months, will require from humanitarian partners to extend and intensify their engagement with Taliban interlocutors at a local level, including engagement with newly arrived interlocutors who might not be familiar with humanitarian work. The extended territorial control of the Taliban also led to concerns about access for female staff members to beneficiaries as well as access of female beneficiaries to assistance, with reports of Taliban members in certain areas restricting movement of women and imposing strict regulations. This space needs to be watched to better understand how/if the extended presence of the Taliban impedes access of female staff members and to develop mitigation measures as well as advocacy strategies.

1) Interference in the Implementation of Humanitarian Activities

Access Constraint	Incident Type	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Tendency
1) Interference in the Implementation of Humanitarian Activities	Bureaucratic Impediment	7	2	↓
	Interference with beneficiary selection	16	7	↓
	Interference with programming	106	51	↓
	Interference with staff recruitment	9	10	↑
	Total	138	70	↓

In Q2 2021, the HAG recorded 70 interferences in the implementation of humanitarian activities, a 50 per cent decrease compared to the 138 incidents recorded in Q1 2021. The Taliban continued to author most interference attempts (46), followed by ANDSF (nine), while GOA and community members authored eight and six incidents respectively.

While most incidents continued to be logged as interference with programming (51), incidents decreased by over 50 per cent, as did interferences with beneficiary selection and bureaucratic impediments. Interference with staff recruitment was the only type that increased this quarter (see figure 4).

The overall decrease in interferences is not attributable to an improved access environment, rather it is the result of a limited humanitarian footprint due to ongoing fighting and movement restrictions. This statement is reinforced by the fact that the number of interferences with recruitment remained stable, with recruitment happening despite limited operations. Another reason for the decrease might be related to the Taliban being too tied up with ongoing fighting to interfere with humanitarian activities as indicated by the fact that the number of GOA and ANDSF initiated incidents slightly increased in Q2, while the number of Taliban initiated incidents decreased by more than 50 per cent.

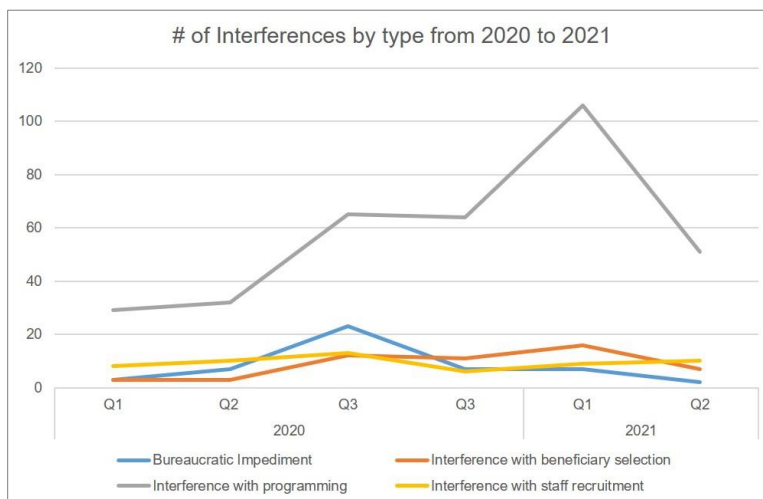


Figure 4

Out of the 51 interferences in programming that were recorded in Q2 2021, 36 were initiated by the Taliban, with ANDSF initiating another eight and GOA and community members authoring three incidents each. The Taliban continued to push humanitarian entities to register with them, demanded urgent health supplies and politicized aid delivery by publishing photos of aid distributions under the Taliban flag on social media. The HAG also continued to record incidents of the Taliban limiting and/or preventing polio and Covid-19 vaccination programs. In three instances, the Taliban opposed the presence of female staff, with a Taliban

member in Logar accusing an NGO of misleading women by allowing female staff members. The NGO initially suspended their operations but following engagement with the Taliban leadership was allowed to continue their programming, including female staff presence. This case highlights the importance of engaging the Taliban, if necessary on several levels, on the benefits of having female staff which is a core condition of principled humanitarian operations. Both parties to the conflict continued to pressure humanitarian partners to prioritize communities living in areas under their respective control. With the deterioration of the political and security situation such interferences will likely increase, making it essential for humanitarian partners to sensitize both parties to the conflict on operational independence and the impartiality of humanitarian assistance.

The HAG recorded ten interference attempts with staff recruitment in Q2, with nine of these incidents logged during the previous quarter. Six of these incidents were authored by the Taliban, with GOA and ANDSF authoring three incidents and community members one incident. In five instances, Taliban members requested from partners to recruit locally. While it is sometimes challenging to recruit locally for technical positions that require expert knowledge, local recruitment is a powerful tool to increase local acceptance and should be used as much as possible. In another case, Taliban members expressed opposition with an NGO hiring female deminers and stated that female demining teams were contrary to Taliban principles, threatening the NGO of becoming a potential target if they did not stop their operations.

In Q2, the HAG recorded seven instances of interference with beneficiary selection compared to 16 incidents in Q1. The reduced number of incidents is likely the result of a limited humanitarian footprint in Taliban controlled areas. In all four incidents initiated by Taliban members, they attempted to either interfere or take control of the beneficiary selection process which resulted in delays to the distribution of food and other assistance to affected communities. In Balkh Province, a Taliban Shadow District Governor for Balkhab stopped an IO fleet convoy, arguing that last time the distributed food assistance did not reach people in need. He encouraged the IO to liaise with elders in the district to ensure that the assistance reached those who are truly in need. In Hirat Province, IDPs from the informal IDP site in Shahrak-e Sabz complained that they had not received assistance despite several assessments conducted in the site. This incident highlights the need for a coordinated approach among humanitarian actors as well as good communication with beneficiaries to manage expectations and limit their frustration. In the Central Region, OCHA in support of an NGO engaged provincial authorities after they refused to allow an NFI distribution in a Taliban controlled area.

The number of bureaucratic impediments decreased to two in Q2, compared to seven in Q1. This does not necessarily mean that bureaucratic impediments are occurring less often, with the NGO law as well as the issue with MoUs for emergency response programs remaining unresolved. Given that these issues have been continuing for a while, partners are less inclined to report on them. Custom's fees on humanitarian goods, including oxygen tanks for the Covid-19 response remained an issue for partners and often resulted in delays to the humanitarian response.

2) Levy Request

Access Constraint	Incident Type	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Tendency
2) Levy Request	In cash	21	3	↓
	In kind	1	3	↓
	Total	22	6	↓

In Q2 2021, the HAG recorded six levy requests, out of which five were authored by the Taliban and one was authored by pro-government militias. This is quite a significant decrease compared to 22 levy requests recorded in Q1 2021 and while there is some hope that the continued advocacy with the Taliban leadership in Doha bore fruit, it is too early to say whether the decrease in reported levy requests indicates an actual improvement on the ground.

It is interesting to note that while the number of in-cash levy requests decreased, the number of in-kind requests increased this quarter (see figure 5). In all three incidents, the Taliban took a percentage of the distributed food items from beneficiaries post distribution. It seems possible that the Taliban are shifting their levy requests from in-cash to in-kind, as it is more difficult for humanitarian partners to prevent post-distribution taxation despite post-distribution monitoring as many beneficiaries are reluctant to report those incidents out of fear to lose all assistance.

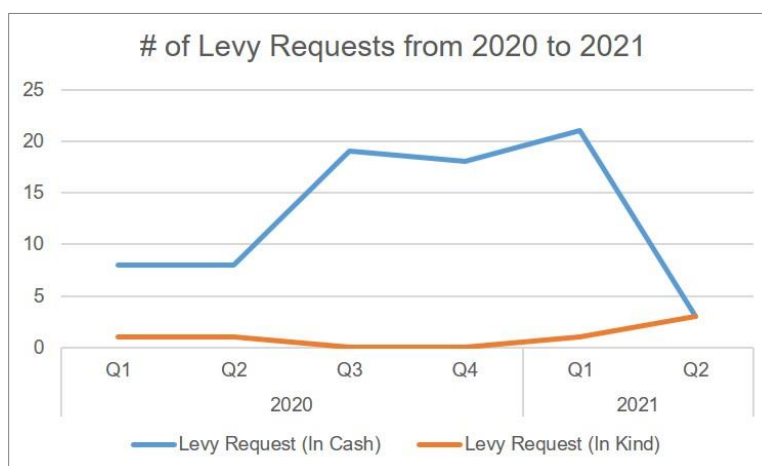


Figure 5

The three in-cash requests were made up of one request for 10 per cent of the overall budget and two requests for road tax, with humanitarian convoys stopped along the road. One of the road tax requests was made by pro-government militias, with the humanitarian community concerned that the recent emergence/formation of new pro-government militias will create new access challenges for humanitarian partners.

3) Military Operation and Kinetic Activity

Access Constraint	Incident Type	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Tendency
3) Military Operation and Kinetic Activity	Airstrike	2	3	↑
	Attack with heavy weaponry	12	17	↑
	Crossfire	5	6	↑
	IED	15	25	↑
	Ongoing Fighting	33	119	↑
	Search Operation	0	1	↑
	Total		67	171

Following the April announcement of US President Biden to withdraw US troops no later than 11 September, May and June saw the vast majority of US forces leaving the country, with the withdrawal technically completed with the departure from the Bagram base on 1 July. As expected, the withdrawal incited the Taliban to shift their focus from rural areas to urban centres, with Maymana in Faryab Province being the first provincial capital to come under significant pressure. At the end of June, the Taliban had extended their territorial control to 146 out of 401 districts, with another 148 districts being contested, leaving the GOA in control of 107 districts (*see figure 6*).

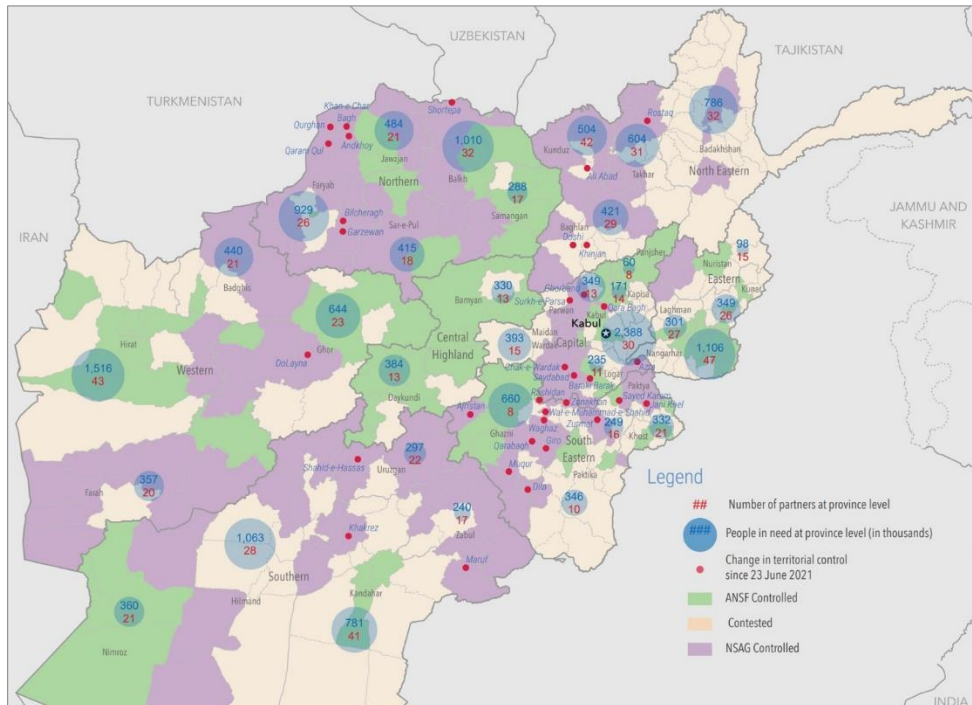


Figure 6

While it remains true that humanitarian actors are not a direct target, with both GOA and Taliban officials reiterating their support for humanitarian activities, military operations and kinetic activity continue to impede humanitarian activity, with access constraints stemming from kinetic activity reaching their highest level on HAG records this quarter (see figure 7).

While increases were observed among all incident types, the increase in access constraints as a result of ongoing fighting and due to IED presence was most significant, rising by 260 and 66 per cent respectively. The ongoing fighting forced humanitarian actors to abort or delay planned movement, relocate staff members and led to an overall limitation of the humanitarian footprint across the country, during a time when humanitarian needs continue to be high. IED presence along major routes, planted by the Taliban to impede advancement of ANDSF was another hindrance for humanitarians, making safe movement challenging. While ongoing fighting impacted humanitarian action indirectly, the HAG recorded four IED incidents that directly targeted humanitarian partners. All four incidents were attributed to the Taliban although it remains difficult to clearly establish authorship of the incidents. In three instances, the target were health partners, with two incidents specifically targeting female health workers in Nangarhar Province, which raised serious concerns among partners about the safety and security for their female staff members. Six humanitarians were wounded during the four IED incidents.

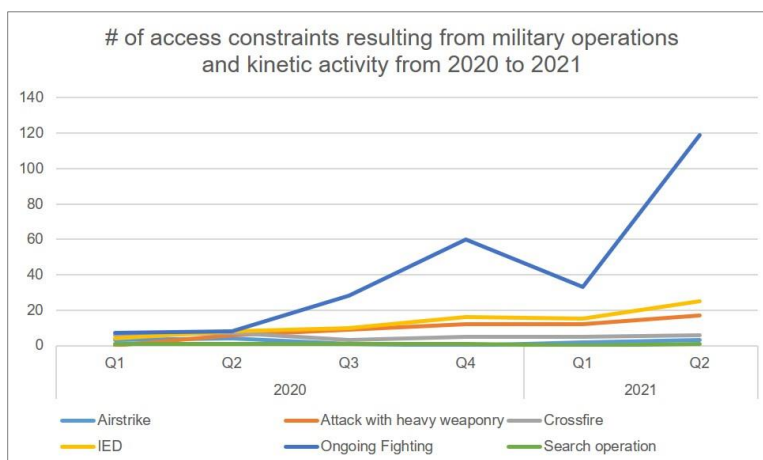


Figure 7

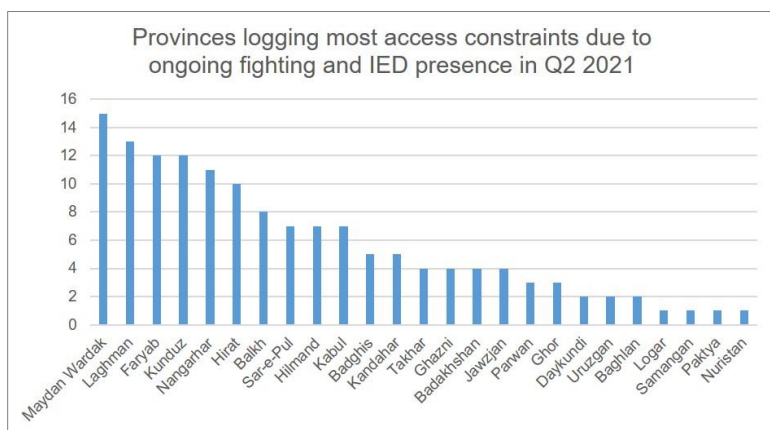


Figure 8

Maydan Wardak, Laghman, Faryab, Kunduz and Nangarhar were the five provinces that logged most access constraints due to ongoing fighting and IED presence along the roads (see figure 8).

While the increase in access constraints as a result of attacks with heavy weaponry was less significant in terms of numbers, up from 12 incidents in Q1 to 17 incidents in Q2, those incidents are of major concern due to their impact on humanitarian facilities. In all except two instances, it was health facilities that sustained collateral damage due to the firing of heavy weaponry by conflict parties, thereby depriving people in need from much needed health services. In the remaining two incidents, it was an NGO-run school and a private residence of a humanitarian staff that were damaged.

In another six instances, humanitarians got caught in crossfire, with all except one incident occurring in and around health facilities. While no humanitarian was injured during an attack with heavy weaponry, two sustained injuries during crossfire.

The ANDSF responded to the Taliban advance by further increasing their airstrikes, with Q2 recording 454 airstrikes, compared to 399 in Q1. In at least three instances, these airstrikes impacted on humanitarian facilities. In Sar-e Pul and Hilmand provinces, an NGO-run school and the private residence of an NGO staff member were targeted by airstrikes, after Taliban entered these facilities to seek shelter and ask for food. While in the first incident no one was injured as school activities had been paused due to insecurity, in the second incident, the NGO staff together with three Taliban members was killed. In the third incident, AAF targeted a health facility in Baghlan Province with at least two airstrikes after injured Taliban members entered the clinic to seek medical attention. During the airstrikes, five NGO staff were wounded and two Taliban members killed. The targeting of humanitarian facilities is of major concern and requires advocacy with both parties to the conflict to raise their awareness to the fact that the occupation of humanitarian facilities might turn them into targets for the opposing sides. Additionally, more advocacy needs to be done with ANDSF to ensure they understand their responsibilities under IHL which states that *'medical units exclusively assigned to medical purposes must be respected and protected in all circumstances'*¹ and that humanitarians must not be targeted for delivering medical assistance to people in need, including parties to the conflict 'hors combat'.

Overall IED incidents in Afghanistan (not directly impacting humanitarian activities)

In Q2 2021, the HAG recorded 1444 IED incidents in its IED database which tracks all IEDs recorded across the country, not only those impacting humanitarian activities directly. This is a slight decrease compared to the 1656 IED incidents recorded in Q1 2021. The predominant number of IED incidents was attributed to the render safe procedures (RSP), making out approximately 43 per cent (630) of all IED incidents recorded in Q2 2021 in Afghanistan. RSP were predominantly recorded within the borders or in the vicinity of the major provincial capitals. This is most likely linked to two factors: a large number of potential targets for NSAGs and the relatively high capacity of ANDSF EOD teams as compared to their capacity in more remote and rural areas.

The second most common type of IED incidents were roadside IED (RSIED), accounting for 32 per cent of all recorded IED incidents in Q2 2021 (472), which is quite a significant increase compared to the 324 RSIEDs recorded in Q1 2021. RSIEDs have become one of the primary types of Taliban asymmetric attacks to impede ANDSF advancement. While humanitarians are not a direct target, the presence of RSIEDs along major routes also impedes humanitarian movement. In disputed areas where RSIEDs have been emplaced, it is essential for humanitarian actors to build a level of acceptance among the local community to use their knowledge of the areas prior to conducting missions to mitigate the risk of being affected by RSIEDs. In

¹ https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule28

most cases, Taliban have no interest in fully impeding civilian movement and indicated cleared secondary routes for civilian and humanitarian movement.

Kandahar (221), Nangarhar (162), Hirat (119), Khost (114) and Kabul (75) provinces recorded most IED incidents, although this also includes the rendered safe IEDs (see figure 9).

In Q2 2021, the 1444 IED incidents resulted in 2639 casualties. This includes both military and civilian casualties as well as six humanitarian casualties. Kabul (281), Pul-e Alam, (205), Jalalabad (127), Arghandab (111) and Kandahar (48) districts were the districts recording most IED casualties (see figure 10).

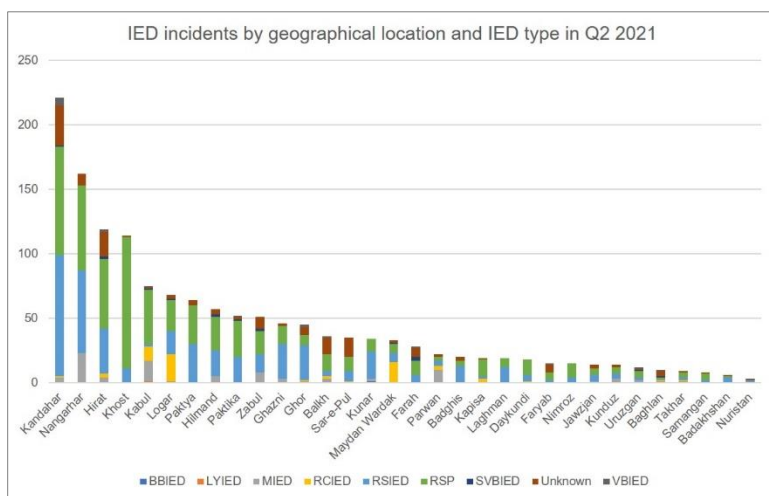


Figure 9

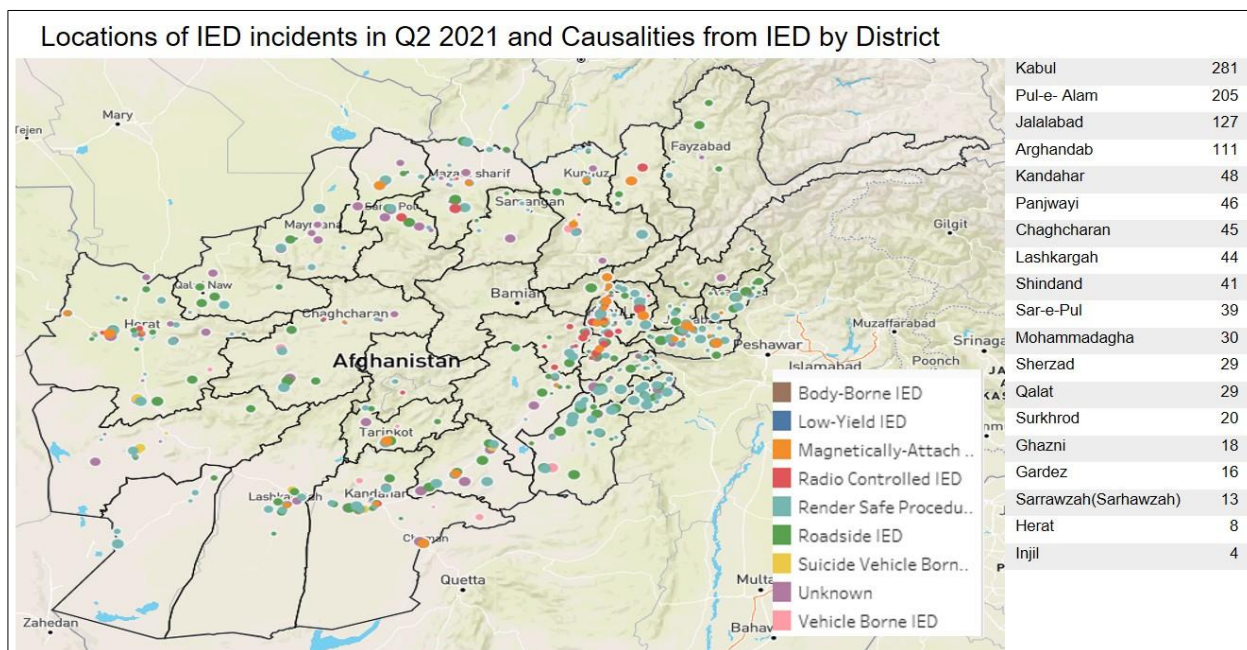


Figure 10

4) Movement Restrictions

Access Constraint	Incident Type	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Tendency
4) Movement Restriction	Checkpoint	93	101	↑
	Demonstration	22	45	↑
	Other	0	1	↑
	Road Closure (not linked to weather hazard)	38	106	↑
	Total	154	253	↑

In Q2 2021, the HAG recorded 253 movement restrictions affecting humanitarian operations, compared to 154 movement restrictions in Q1 2021. The main reason for the 60 per cent increase, is a rise in road closures and demonstrations affecting humanitarian movement (see figure 11). Most road closures occurred as a result of Taliban members attacking an ANDSF position, with the ongoing fighting impeding safe and secure movement for humanitarians and leading to delays in the humanitarian response. In five instances, road closures occurred as a result of ANDSF clearing operations. The vast majority of demonstrations/protests were not directly targeted against humanitarian actors but rather indirectly impeded humanitarian movement.

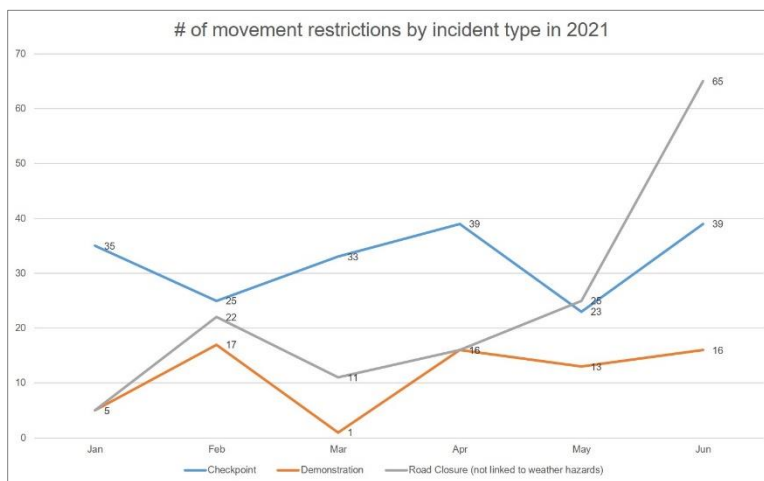


Figure 11

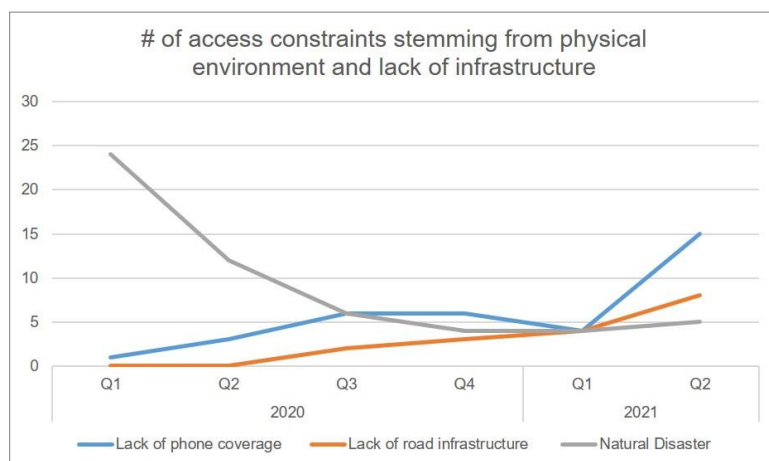
The number of checkpoints remained relatively stable, with 101 checkpoints logged in Q2 2021, compared to 93 in Q1. The drop in the number of checkpoints in May is likely linked to the Eid holidays, with less checkpoints recorded during the Eid period. All except three checkpoints were manned by Taliban and targeted GOA and ANDSF members as well as commercial transporters rather than humanitarians. There are four incidents on record, where humanitarians were directly stopped at a Taliban checkpoint. In the northern Region, Taliban members withheld a private commercial contractor who was transporting education kits for an NGO for three days until they released the driver together with their vehicle. In the central Region, an IO staff member traveling with their family was harassed during a search at a Taliban checkpoint, and only allowed to continue after 30 minutes. In the western Region, an IO fleet convoy was stopped at gunpoint by Taliban members and prevented from continuing to their final destination – a DAC under government control – despite prior coordination with the Taliban. Such incidents are expected to become more frequent in the upcoming months, with both conflict parties likely to politicize humanitarian assistance and prioritize assistance to people living in areas under their respective control.

There are three incidents on HAG record, where ANDSF and PGM members manned checkpoints and impeded access for humanitarians. In the central Region, an NGO ambulance was stopped for 90 minutes at two different NDS and ANP checkpoints due to background checks on a male patient being referred by the health partner. While it is not unreasonable for ANP and NDS wanting to establish the identity of individuals passing through the area, more advocacy needs to be done with them to understand their responsibility to enable that wounded and sick receive, to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, the medical care and attention required by their condition.

5) Physical Environment and Lack of Infrastructure

Access Constraint	Incident Type	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Tendency
5) Physical Environment and Lack of Infrastructure	Lack of Phone Coverage	4	15	↑
	Natural Disaster	4	5	↑
	Lack of Road Infrastructure	4	8	↑
	Total	12	28	↑

In Q2 2021, the HAG recorded 28 access constraints stemming from physical environment and lack of infrastructure, compared to 12 such incidents in Q1 2021. The increase is attributable to a lack of phone coverage and road infrastructure, both as a result of a rise in conflict activity in June (see figure 12). It is a known tactic of the Taliban to shut down telecommunication networks ahead or during an offensive, to impede communications among GOA and ANDSF members. While in some cases, telecommunications networks were just temporarily interrupted, Taliban in other instances, fully destroyed telecommunications infrastructure. This also impacted the humanitarian response, making it difficult to receive up to date information on IDP movement from affected areas but also creating challenges for humanitarian entities to check on their staff located in disputed areas.



The HAG also recorded eight incidents of Taliban destroying public infrastructure, mainly bridges and roads to impede ANDSF advance, with such incidents likely significantly underreported. The destruction of key infrastructure also impacts humanitarian movement, with movement through secondary routes extending the transport time and secondary routes not always being passable for cargo trucks.

Figure 12

6) Violence/Threats Against Humanitarian Personnel/Assets/Facilities

Access Constraint	Incident Type	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Tendency
6) Violence/Threats Against Humanitarian Personnel/Assets/Facilities	Abduction	13	7	↓
	Arrest/Detention	15	4	↓
	Arson	1	1	→
	Assassination/Shooting	5	4	↓
	Attack on facility/asset	10	2	↓
	Attack on personnel	8	5	↓
	Intimidation/Threat	25	14	↓
	Hijacking of Vehicles	1	1	→
	Occupation of facilities or assets	1	8	↑
	Robbery	36	20	↓
	Total		115	65

While the overall numbers of violent incidents against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities decreased in Q2, down from 115 incidents in Q1 to 65, this quarter logged the highest number of humanitarian casualties on HAG record, with 16 humanitarians killed (see figure 13).

In one of the deadliest attacks on humanitarians in Afghanistan, armed men, on 8 June, entered a project site of an NGO involved in humanitarian mine clearance and proceeded to open fire towards NGO staff members, killing 10 NGO staff members and wounding another 16. One of the wounded later died from the wounds sustained during the attack, raising the casualty figures to 11 killed and 15 wounded. The incident was later claimed by ISK.

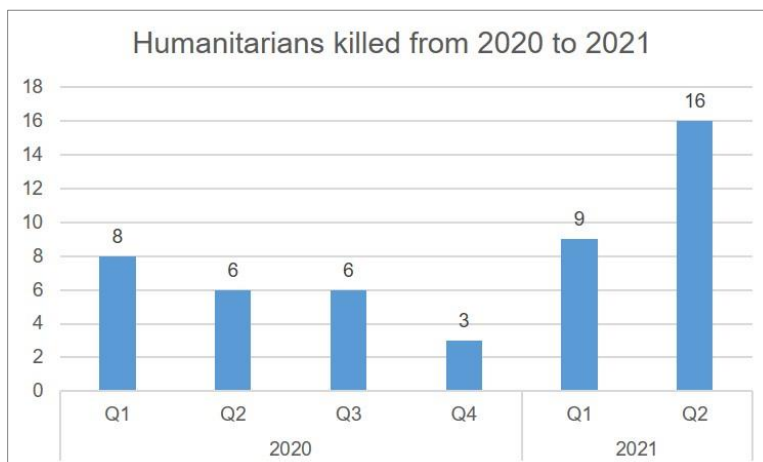


Figure 13

In Q2 2021, Taliban perpetrated most acts of violence and threats against humanitarians (27), followed by ACG (19) and ANDSF (eight). ACG members continued to author most robberies and thefts, while Taliban members were behind most intimidations and threats as well as behind most abductions and assassinations

and shootings (see figure 14). All incident types, except for those relating to the occupation of facilities or assets decreased in Q2 2021. This is in line with previous statements, that limited humanitarian footprint due to ongoing fighting reduced the exposure of humanitarian partners and thereby resulted in a decrease of access constraints.

Meanwhile, ANDSF and Taliban each occupied humanitarian facilities on four different occasions in May and June, with all incidents occurring in the southern and northeastern regions during military operations. On 18 June, a health partner from Nahr-e Saraj District reached out to OCHA for support after Taliban members had entered one of their health facilities, seeking shelter. OCHA subsequently liaised with the Ministry of Defence to minimize the threats of airstrike and simultaneously reported the issue to the Taliban Health Commission asking the Commissioner to ensure that the Taliban fighters would vacate the occupied facility. Due to ongoing fighting, many humanitarian facilities were temporarily closed, with often only one or two unarmed guards left behind, making it easy for conflict parties to use these facilities as shelter or fighting positions.

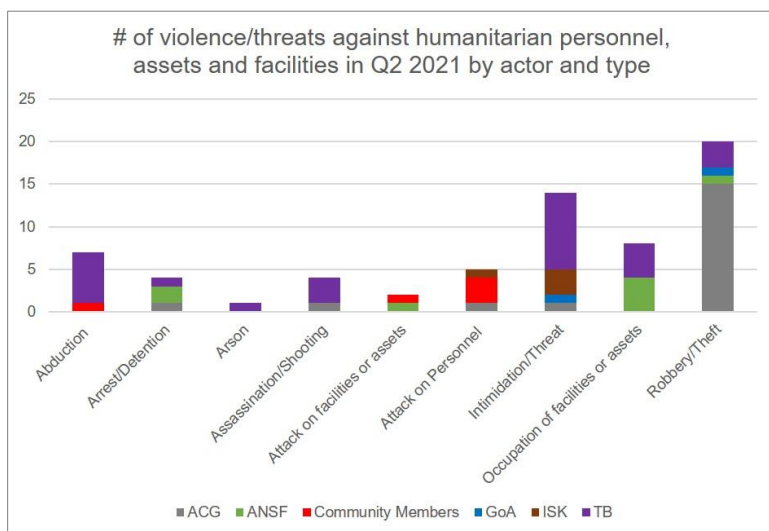


Figure 14

After concerningly high numbers of abductions and detentions over the last year, numbers dropped this quarter to seven abductions and four arrests/detentions, compared to 13 and 15 such incidents in Q1 2021.² In line with previous analysis, it is not assessed that the access environment improved, rather the decrease in abductions and detentions is attributed to the limited humanitarian footprint. In the southern Region, Taliban members prevented a mobile health team from returning to their duty station over the weekend and held them in a government building for a few days. For once, the abduction was not the result of the Taliban being unhappy with the partner's services, rather they wanted to pressure them into continuing their services in the area and preventing them from finishing their activities in the province.

Four out of 14 threats and intimidations were directed towards female staff, with three of these attributed to ISK in Nangarhar. In a first incident, a community elder warned a demining NGO that there was a threat against female mine risk educators working in Jalalabad cities and surroundings. Meanwhile, some health actors limited footprint of their female staff after the circulation of an ISK issued letter, threatening female employees working as vaccinators with death.

After a spike in robberies and thefts in Q1 2021, with 36 incidents on record, the number decreased to 20 incidents in Q2 2021, which is in line with the quarterly average in 2020. Most robberies continued to happen in urban centres, including Kabul, Mazar and Hirat cities. In Injil District, Hirat Province, unknown armed men robbed an IO contracted financial service provider on their way to a cash distribution site. The robbers stole approx. 58,500 USD. This is the third incident in the western Region since October 2020, of robbers

After a spike in robberies and thefts in Q1 2021, with 36 incidents on record, the number decreased to 20 incidents in Q2 2021, which is in line with the quarterly average in 2020. Most robberies continued to happen in urban centres, including Kabul, Mazar and Hirat cities. In Injil District, Hirat Province, unknown armed men robbed an IO contracted financial service provider on their way to a cash distribution site. The robbers stole approx. 58,500 USD. This is the third incident in the western Region since October 2020, of robbers

² If a humanitarian is taken by the Taliban but released within 24 hours, it is counted as a detention. If the individual is held for more than 24 hours, it is logged as an abduction.

targeting financial service providers and acquiring large amounts of money. All three incidents occurred in government-controlled territory in Badghis and Hirat provinces, raising the question of armed criminal groups specifically targeting financial service providers heading to cash distribution sites.

HAG Recommendations:

- Partners operating in Taliban controlled, or influenced areas require a coherent, well-developed access strategy, including on strong and principled engagement with local Taliban;
- While local implementing partners and community elders can play an important role in facilitating engagement with Taliban, the HAG cautions against attempts to fully outsource outreach to external partners and advises to consider direct engagement at a local level;
- The HAG advocates to find local solutions for local issues and only elevating issues to the TPC in Doha as a last resort when district and provincial-level engagement proved unsuccessful;
- Humanitarian negotiations should be guided by the Humanitarian and Joint Operating Principles;
- Humanitarian negotiations, including on levy exemptions, are more likely to succeed when carried by a collective of humanitarian partners, as we are stronger when we speak in a joint and unified voice rather than trying to resolve issues on our own;
- Unprincipled humanitarian action by individual organizations has negative impacts for the broader humanitarian community and, ultimately, the people we aim to serve;
- Humanitarian partners are encouraged to report access incidents to the HAG to help understand broader access dynamics.

The HAG remains available to support partners on any access related issue.

Abbreviations

AAF	Afghan Air Force
ACG	Armed Criminal Group
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Force
HAG	Humanitarian Access Group
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
IO	International Organization
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group
SVBIED	Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
TPC	Taliban Political Commission

For further information, please contact:

Sean Ridge, Head of CASU ridges@un.org, Tel: +93 793001138

Nadja Leuenberger, Humanitarian Affairs Officer leuenberger2@un.org, Tel: +93 793001147

Teri Ann Bryans, CMCoord Officer bryans@un.org, Tel: +93 793001112

Yurii Khomchenko, HAG Co-Chair, yurii.khomchenko@nrc.no, Tel: +93 708827424

Ahmad Wali Raisi, CMCoord, Access Officer raisi@un.org, Tel: +93 793001179

Belal Dawlat, Access Assistant dawlat@un.org, Tel: +93 79300112