

The logo for UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) features the acronym 'UNAMA' in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized globe with latitude and longitude lines, rendered in a light blue color. The globe is partially obscured by the text.**United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Press Statement<http://unama.unmissions.org>**UNAMA CONDEMNS CIVILIAN CASUALTIES CAUSED BY ILLEGAL PRESSURE PLATE IED AND URGES ANTI-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS TO CEASE THEIR USE**

KABUL, 20 October 2012 – The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) condemns the killing of at least 18 women in Dawlatabad District, Balkh on 19 October 2012. The deaths occurred early in the morning when a civilian bus taking guests to a wedding celebration drove over a pressure plate improvised explosive device (IED) planted on a busy public road. Another 15 civilians were injured, including six children, seven women and two men. No combatant casualties were reported.

UNAMA offers its condolences to the families of those killed and wishes a speedy recovery for those injured.

Taliban operatives active in Dawlatabad District, Balkh are suspected of planting the anti-personnel landmine-like pressure plate IED, which is consistent with documented patterns and tactics of choice by the Taliban. Although the Taliban through its leader Mullah Omar banned the use of anti-personnel landmines in 1998 denouncing such weapons as “un-Islamic” and “anti-human”, anti-Government elements continue to use these landmine-like IEDs with devastating harm to civilians.

UNAMA calls on the Taliban leadership to publicly reiterate a ban on these weapons and to stop their use.

IEDs are by far the biggest killer of civilians in Afghanistan’s armed conflict. UNAMA’s tracking of civilian casualties reveals that IEDs killed 340 civilians and injured a further 599 over the past nine months (1 January to 30 September 2012), an increase of almost 30 per cent compared to the same period last year. The majority of IEDs used in Afghanistan are victim-activated pressure plate IEDs and cause the most civilian deaths and injuries.

Victim-activated pressure plate IEDs function like massive anti-personnel land mines, which are a prohibited weapon under international law. These IEDs are particularly harmful as they fail to distinguish between military and civilian targets and can be detonated by any person, including children stepping on them or any vehicle driving over them.

“Any use of this heinous weapon should cease immediately,” said Ján Kubiš, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. “I repeat once again UNAMA’s many calls to all anti-Government elements to protect and respect the lives of all Afghan civilians.”

See UNAMA’S 2012 Mid-Year Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict online:
<http://unama.unmissions.org>