



2019 ELECTION VIOLENCE - ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPACT ON CIVILIANS

KABUL, 15 October 2019 - A special report released today by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) describes the severe impact of election-related violence on civilians, mainly coming from the Taliban's deliberate campaign of violence and intimidation to disrupt Afghanistan's presidential election.

UNAMA's findings indicate that attacks targeting the electoral process caused 458 civilian casualties (85 killed and 373 injured), including 277 civilian casualties (28 killed and 249 injured) on 28 September, polling day, when more than one-third of civilian casualties were children.

The report not only documents the harm to civilians caused by the Taliban's violent offensive to disrupt the election – leading to more than 80 per cent of the election-related civilian casualties documented in the report – but also highlights a pattern of abductions, threats, intimidation and harassment carried out by the Taliban against civilians leading up to and during the elections.

“These attacks, along with public statements made by the Taliban, revealed a deliberate campaign intended to undermine the electoral process and deprive Afghan citizens of their right to participate in this important political process, freely and without fear,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. “Many Afghan people, however, defied the threats and cast their votes – brave acts that I commend.”

Warning civilians of an intention to attack election sites does not release the warning party of its obligations under international humanitarian law. Furthermore, acts or threats of violence intended to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited under international humanitarian law.

“Deliberate acts of violence against voters, election workers, campaigners, election rally sites and polling centres are completely unacceptable,” said Yamamoto, who is also head of UNAMA. “Widespread or systematic attacks against civilian populations may constitute crimes against humanity; the United Nations unequivocally condemns them.”

According to international human rights law, everyone has the right to take part in public affairs, to vote and to be elected to government without discrimination and without unreasonable restrictions. All citizens – whether voters, candidates or election-related staff – have the right to be free from fear and intimidation at all stages of an election process.

UNAMA's special report on 2019 elections violence makes numerous recommendations to enhance efforts to reduce the potential risk of harm to civilians in election periods and is available for download on the Mission's website: <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>.

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