

Cross-border civilian casualties in Afghanistan: October – December 2025

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United Nations
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About this paper

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan’s (UNAMA) Human Rights Service prepared this paper pursuant to the UNAMA mandate under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2626 (2022)¹ to “engage with all stakeholders at the national and subnational levels and civil society and international non-governmental organizations in the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans” and “monitor, report and advocate with regard to the situation for civilians”.

Methodology

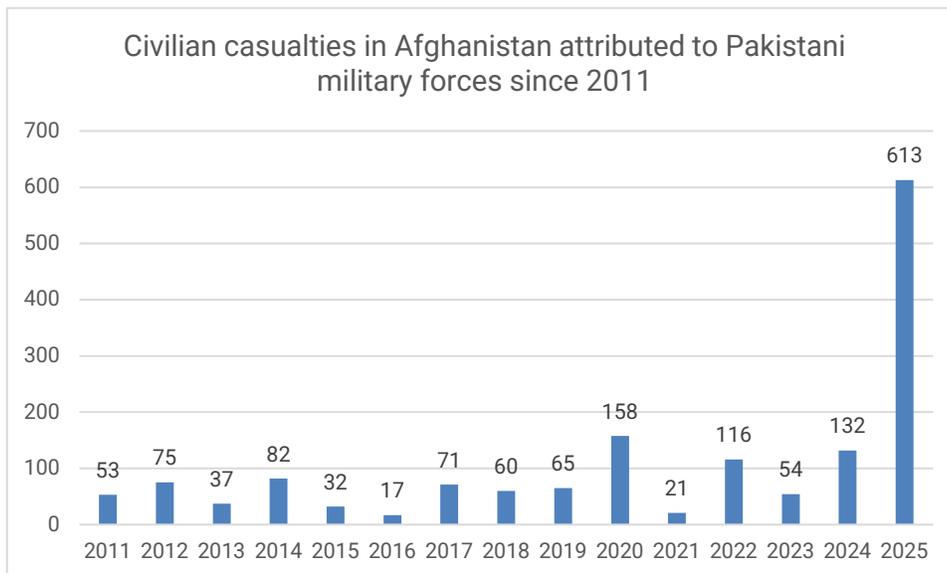
This report presents only data and information on casualties and incidents which have been determined by UNAMA to be credible. Civilian casualties are reported as ‘verified’ where, based on the totality of the information reviewed by UNAMA, it has determined that there is ‘clear and convincing’ information that civilians were killed or injured. In order to meet this standard, UNAMA requires at least three different and independent types of sources, i.e., victim, witness, medical practitioner, local authorities, community leader or other sources. Wherever possible, information is obtained from the primary accounts of victims and/or witnesses of incidents and through onsite fact-finding.

All allegations of civilian casualties contained in this report have been presented to both the *de facto* authorities and to Pakistan.

Introduction

In the last three months of 2025, UNAMA documented 70 civilian deaths and 478 injuries in Afghanistan² attributed to Pakistani military forces.

Most of these civilian casualties occurred between 10 and 17 October 2025, a period of escalated cross-border tensions between the *de facto* security forces of Afghanistan and Pakistani military forces which resulted in over 500 civilian casualties in Afghanistan (47 killed, 456 injured).



[1] Extended by Resolution 2777 (2025).

[2] All references to civilian casualties in this report, unless otherwise stated, refer to civilian casualties in Afghanistan. UNAMA’s mandate pertains only to the monitoring and documentation of civilian casualties which occur in Afghanistan. Therefore, any civilian casualties which may have occurred in Pakistan in the same period do not form part of this report.

UNAMA has systematically documented civilian casualties in Afghanistan from cross-border clashes with Pakistani military forces since 2011.³ Civilian casualties recorded between 1 October and 31 December 2025 far exceed civilian casualties recorded annually from cross-border clashes with Pakistan in previous years.

Civilian casualties on 11 October – Paktya and Kunar

In the evening of 11 October, cross-border clashes between *de facto* security forces and Pakistani military forces took place throughout the night at various points along the border.

- In Paktya province, Dand-e-Patan district, Nari Kando area, *de facto* security forces and Pakistani military forces engaged in heavy firing across the border, which commenced in the evening and continued until the following morning (12 October). Six civilians (four men and two women) were injured, reportedly from mortar fire by Pakistani military forces impacting their homes. One of the victims, who resides in Chamkani district, close to where the cross-border firing was occurring, said that he and his family were woken at around 1am by an explosion which shattered the windows of their house. Fifteen minutes later, a mortar round hit their house, injuring him and another female relative. The man was treated for a head injury at a local clinic, while his relative was hospitalized in Kabul for over three weeks.
- In Kunar province, Nari district, *de facto* security forces and Pakistani military forces engaged in heavy fighting across the border, which started in the evening and continued until the following morning (12 October). In the district administrative centre area, one girl was injured. In Dokalam area, three civilian men, one woman, two boys and one girl were injured and in Barikot area, three civilian men and two boys were injured. All civilian casualties were reportedly due to mortar fire by Pakistani military forces. One of the victims from Dokalam area said that he, his wife and their three children were injured when a mortar round struck their house. The man's hand had to be amputated because of his injuries and his wife was in a coma for over a week.

Civilian casualties on 12 October – Helmand

On 12 October, at around 9am, in Helmand province, Dehshu district, Baramcha area, Haji Halim village, a mortar fired by Pakistani military forces across the border killed one civilian man and injured one other man.

Civilian casualties on 15 October – Kandahar, Khost, Kabul and Paktika

On 15 October, UNAMA documented a total of 457 civilian casualties (35 killed, 422 injured), most of which (89%) occurred in Spin Boldak district of Kandahar province.

- On 15 October, at around 3am, in Kandahar province, Spin Boldak district, an armed clash erupted between *de facto* security forces and Pakistani military forces. Both sides exchanged heavy weaponry, including artillery and mortar fire which continued throughout the day. At least 17 civilians were killed and 346 injured in the fighting. Among the civilians killed were four children, two women and a man; among the injured were 30 women and 126 men. The gender and ages of the remaining victims are unknown. One man came home from buying groceries to find that his house had been destroyed by the bombardment and his family were trapped in the rubble. His six-year-old daughter and four-year-old nephew were killed in the incident and five

[3] From 2011 until the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021, cross-border clashes involved Pakistani military forces and the security forces of the former government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Since 15 August 2021, cross-border clashes have involved Pakistani military forces and *de facto* security forces.

other relatives (mostly children) were injured. His home was also destroyed. Another individual described how a mortar impacted his uncle's home, killing three people and injuring five others. Most of the victims were children.

- Additionally, in the afternoon of 15 October, at around 3.30pm, in Kandahar province, Spin Boldak district, Pakistani military forces carried out aerial attacks which impacted civilian homes in the area. At least seven civilians were killed (among them at least four boys, two girls and one woman) and at least 30 injured (among them at least 12 girls, five boys, seven women, four men and two others). Many of the victims (27 in total) were members of the same family. Their relative said of the attack: "When I regained consciousness, my brother and other relatives were trying to wake me. I saw that much of our house was destroyed, and several family members were trapped under the debris... The explosion killed five of my family members – blood was coming from their eyes, noses and ears." The majority of those killed and injured from his family were children, with the youngest victim aged three months. He said that the family home was destroyed in the incident.
- On 15 October, at around 3.30pm in Kabul city, PD4, Proja-e Taimani area, two explosions took place, killing at least nine people and injuring at least 37 others, among them at least one boy, one girl and two women. The first explosion took place in Street 5 of Proja-e Taimani area where an oil tanker was hit by what sources said was a rocket. The oil tanker exploded in flames and three residential apartments in the area were destroyed. The second explosion occurred five minutes later, around 300-400 metres away from the first explosion, in Street 2 of Proja-e Taimani area, where a single house was damaged by what sources said was a rocket. Nearby residents reported hearing aircraft and/or drones at the time of the explosion. Numerous residences and shops in the area were damaged by the explosions. A witness, who was working as a gardener around 100 metres from where the explosion took place said he laid down on the ground when he heard the explosions. His father and uncle were both injured, and the man said he saw injured children, multiple dead bodies and people who had lost their limbs in the attack.
- On 15 October, in the early morning, in Khost province, Zazi Maidan district, in Satiwan and Palosi area, Pakistani military forces shot at two journalists from Paktya RTA who had gone to cover the cross-border clashes, which resulted in one journalist being killed and another journalist being injured.
- On 15 October, around 7.30am, in Khost province, Zazi Maidan district, in Satiwan and Palosi areas, Pakistani military forces shot at a civilian, who was traveling to his workplace by motorcycle. He was fired at, reportedly by Pakistani border forces, and was shot in his shoulder and hand. He took cover in a trench until the firing stopped and was then transported to the district hospital. The victim reported partially losing movement in one arm because of the shooting and being unable to resume his work as a daily labourer.
- On 15 October, around 4.30pm, in Paktika province, Tarwa district, Noorgul Kala village, a girl and a boy were injured as a result of mortar rounds fired by Pakistani border forces towards Afghanistan.

Civilian casualties after 15 October ceasefire declaration

In the evening of 15 October, the *de facto* authorities of Afghanistan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan announced the implementation of a ceasefire from 5.30pm (Kabul time)/6pm (Islamabad time). UNAMA documented civilian casualties from cross-border firing and airstrikes after the announcement of the ceasefire:

- On 15 October, around 7pm, in Khost province, Zazi Maidan district, in Satiwan and Palosi areas, an artillery shell fired by Pakistani military forces landed near a mosque, injuring a man who was returning home after the *Isha* prayer. He was struck by shrapnel from the shell, injuring his hand and neck.
- On 15 October, at around 7pm, in Kandahar province, Spin Boldak district, Eshpolai area, near Wesh bazaar, Pakistani military forces fired several mortar rounds, one of which struck a residence, killing a civilian man and injuring four others.
- On 17 October, in Paktika province, Urgun district, Khandar village, aerial attacks by Pakistani military forces killed 11 civilians (one girl, three boys and seven men) and injured 14 others (two women, one girl, two boys and nine men). Several cricket players from the Paktika cricket team were among the victims. They were reportedly having dinner inside a home in the village, having participated in a cricket tournament earlier in the day, when the incident happened. One of the injured victims suffered permanent blindness in one eye.

Civilian casualties in November 2025

In November 2025, Pakistan continued to conduct attacks resulting in civilian casualties, with at least 15 killed and 13 injured. Children made up over half of those killed and injured:

- On 6 November, at approximately 6pm, in Kandahar province, Spin Boldak district, Pakistani military forces reportedly fired mortars that hit a residential home, killing five civilians (a man, three women and a girl) and injuring five others (a man, a woman, a boy and two girls). A family member of the victims said he was in the bazaar when he received a call saying that his uncle's house had been hit by mortar fire, killing three family members and injuring five others, most of them children.
- In the evening of 24-25 November, a series of airstrikes carried out by Pakistani military forces killed ten civilians and injured eight others. Most of the victims were children:
 - On 24 November, at around midnight, in Khost province, Gurbuz district, Mughalgai area, an airstrike carried out by Pakistani military forces hit a civilian home, killing 10 civilians (five boys, four girls and one woman) and injuring three others (a woman, a man and a girl).
 - On 24 November, around midnight, in Paktika province, Barmal district, Sharif Khail village, airstrikes carried out by Pakistani military forces hit a civilian home, injuring two children and damaging the house.
 - On 25 November, at approximately 2am, in Kunar province, Asadabad city, Sagay area, an airstrike carried out by Pakistani military forces hit a civilian home, injuring two women and a boy.

Civilian casualties in December 2025

- On 4 December, in Paktika province, Wormamay district, Tor Ragha (Anziri Gate) area, Pakistani border forces opened fire on a group of adult male civilians passing through the border point into Pakistan, where they were employed as daily labourers. Three adult men were killed and three were injured.
- On 5 December, at around 10pm, in Kandahar province, Spin Boldak district, border area, Pakistani military forces and *de facto* security forces engaged in armed clashes for around three

hours, exchanging mortar, artillery and light weapons fire across the border. At least five civilians were killed (three men, one woman and one boy) and five civilians were injured (two men, a woman, a girl and a boy). A number of local residents fled their homes. The Associated Press reported that Pakistani police and hospital officials said that three people had been injured in Chaman, Pakistan, as a result of cross-border firing from Afghanistan.⁴

- On 19 December, at around 10.30am, in Kunar province, Sheltan district, Sano area, Ghund village, an armed clash erupted between *de facto* border security forces and Pakistani military forces. A mortar round fired by Pakistani military forces struck a house in Ghund village, seriously injuring one 15-year-old boy who died in hospital on 22 December.

Impact on the civilian population

Several of the victims and their family members who were interviewed by UNAMA reported suffering permanent disability – such as blindness, loss of limbs or limb function – due to the attacks. They also described experiencing trauma with an effect on their mental health due to the death of relatives, and the events and aftermath of the attacks.

Additionally, numerous houses and businesses were destroyed in these incidents, in addition to livestock being killed.

Families, particularly in Spin Boldak in Kandahar, were displaced as a result of the fighting. UNAMA interviewed several who fled the 15 October fighting and had to evacuate a second time due to mortar fire from Pakistani military forces on 6 November.

Legal framework

Under international humanitarian law, parties to a conflict are obligated to respect the following key principles, including when planning military operations:

Distinction: The civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack and parties to the conflict must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants.⁵ This principle requires that parties to a conflict distinguish between civilians and civilian objects on the one hand, and combatants and military objectives on the other. Attacks may only be directed against the latter. In order for an object or building to be considered a military objective, it must meet two cumulative criteria, namely that (1) by its “nature, location, purpose or use [it] make[s] an effective contribution to military action” and (2) the object’s “total or partial destruction, capture or neutralisation in the circumstances ruling at the time, offer[s] a definite military advantage”.⁶

Proportionality: Prohibits “an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated”.⁷

Precautions in attack: “[...] civilians shall enjoy general protection against the dangers arising from

[4] The Associated Press (AP), *Overnight exchange of fire along the Afghan-Pakistan border kills 5 and wounds 8, officials say*, 6 December 2025. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-pakistan-border-shootout-2d2766c8d15bf94369fb87b46185e1a8>.

[5] Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977, Article 48. See also: ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 1.

[6] Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977, Article 48. See also: ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 1.

[7] Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Article 51(5)(b). See also: ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 14.

military operations”.⁸ “In the conduct of military operations, constant care shall be taken to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects”⁹ and all feasible precautions must be taken with the “view to avoiding, and in any event to minimizing, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects”.¹⁰

Recommendations

All parties to military operations in Afghanistan should:

- Ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, including the principles of precaution, distinction and proportionality to protect civilians from harm.
- Cease the use of indirect fire systems (mortars, rockets and grenades) from and to civilian populated areas.
- Ensure that protocols are in place for the prevention of civilian casualties, particularly in the context of airstrikes.
- Undertake prompt, effective, thorough, independent, impartial and transparent investigations of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, hold perpetrators of violations accountable and uphold victims’ rights to truth, justice and reparations.
- Address the needs of civilian in the aftermath of an incident, for example with medical care, reconstruction of damaged houses and businesses, and financial support.

[8] Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Article 51. See also: ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 15-21.

[9] Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Article 57(1).

[10] Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Article 57(2)(a)(ii).

Annex A: Comments provided by the *de facto* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan

Date: 5 February 2026

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan considers the protection of the life, safety, and dignity of civilians a fundamental principle and strongly condemns any act that leads to the killing, injury, or destruction of property of innocent civilians. In this regard, the Islamic Emirate expresses deep concern regarding the incidents that occurred during the reporting period in Afghanistan's border provinces, where the use of heavy weapons, mortars, and airstrikes resulted in civilian casualties, including women and children.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan emphasizes that any cross-border military action must be carried out in full compliance with the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, particularly the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. Targeting residential areas, civilian homes, and public facilities—whether directly or indirectly—constitutes a clear violation of international legal obligations.

The Islamic Emirate rejects allegations suggesting that attacks against Pakistan were launched from Afghan soil to justify harm inflicted on civilians. The Islamic Emirate has repeatedly emphasized that it does not allow Afghanistan's territory to be used for any kind of insecurity against another country and believes that the only effective solution to border-related issues lies in mutual respect, understanding, and structured diplomatic cooperation, not through military pressure or unilateral use of force.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan calls for an immediate and complete cessation of cross-border military actions, particularly airstrikes and the use of heavy weaponry, which in the past have repeatedly placed the lives of civilians in border areas at serious risk. It also calls for transparent, independent, and impartial investigations into previously occurred incidents.

Furthermore, the Islamic Emirate urges relevant United Nations agencies to fully observe the principle of impartiality in documenting border incidents, to reflect the positions of all involved parties in a balanced manner, and to support the establishment of practical and preventive mechanisms to enhance civilian protection.

End

Annex B: Comments provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan

Date: 28 December 2025

For the past several years, Pakistan has been a target and victim of terrorism emanating from the Afghan soil. This year alone, Pakistan suffered 1,115 civilian casualties on account of terrorism originating from Afghanistan. These included 387 fatalities and injuries to 728 others.

Pakistan has repeatedly shared concrete information with the *de facto* authorities about the presence of terrorist outfits in Afghanistan, in particular Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Balochistan Liberation Army, as well as their terrorist activities targeting Pakistan.

Regrettably, however, it has been observed that instead of taking any concrete and tangible action against the terrorist groups based in Afghanistan, the *de facto* forces routinely resort to cross-border firing when Pakistani troops are undertaking counterterror measures on their side of the border.

In particular, on 11-12 October 2025, *de facto* forces opened unprovoked and indiscriminate firing from across the border using heavy weapons, including artillery and mortars. Attempts were also made to physically assault Pakistan's military installations and infrastructure at 26 locations along the border in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces.

Similarly, on 14-15 October 2025, the *de facto* forces again took to unprovoked and indiscriminate firing using heavy weapons and attacked Pakistan's military positions and civilian infrastructure at 25 locations along the border, including the Chaman terminal, which is used by hundreds of civilian pedestrians and cargo vehicles on a daily basis. These attacks caused multiple civilian and military casualties and inflicted significant damage to infrastructure on the Pakistan side, compelling Pakistani forces to respond.

Pakistan has always demonstrated restraint in the face of provocations by *de facto* forces and has only acted in self-defence. The measures taken by Pakistan's security forces are calibrated and precise, and are targeted against military headquarters, posts and known terrorist camps to ensure zero collateral damage.

