

Cross-border civilian casualties in Afghanistan: January – March 2026

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United Nations
Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

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 paper presents data and information on casualties and incidents in Afghanistan, which UNAMA has determined to be credible. Civilian casualties are reported as 'verified' where, based on the totality of the information reviewed by UNAMA, it has determined there is 'clear and convincing' information that civilians were killed or injured. 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 civilian casualties in Afghanistan documented by UNAMA and contained in this paper have been presented to Afghanistan's *de facto* authorities and to the government of Pakistan.

In accordance with the UNAMA mandate from the United Nations Security Council, UNAMA's Human Rights Service is mandated only to monitor incidents which occurred in Afghanistan. UNAMA is not mandated to monitor incidents which may have occurred in Pakistan.

Context

In October 2025, an escalation in cross-border armed violence between 10-17 October 2025 resulted in over 500 civilians killed and injured (47 killed, 456 injured).² At meetings held in Doha on 18 and 19 October and in Istanbul from 25 to 30 October, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to declare, and subsequently maintain, a ceasefire, resulting in a reduction in civilian casualties for a period.

Between 1 January and 31 March 2026, UNAMA documented over 750 civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan³ because of cross-border armed violence between Afghanistan's *de facto* security forces and Pakistani military forces. Most of these civilian casualties occurred as a result of airstrikes in February and March.

On 21 February, Pakistani military forces carried out airstrikes in Nangarhar and Paktika provinces that killed 13 civilians and wounded seven others, including children.⁴ On 22 February, Pakistan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting released a statement on X which said that the airstrikes targeted Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP)⁵ locations in Afghanistan following recent suicide bombings in Pakistan.⁶

[1] Extended by UNSC Resolution 2818 (2026).

[2] UNAMA, *Cross-border civilian casualties: October – December 2025*, 8 February 2026 (updated 11 May 2026). Source: <https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/ENGLISH%20-%20UNAMA%20HRS%20paper%20on%20cross-border%20civilian%20casualties%20updated.pdf>.

[3] 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. As such, any civilian casualties which may have occurred in Pakistan in the same period do not form part of this report.

[4] UNAMA, *Statement on civilian casualties*, 23 February 2026. Source: <https://unama.unmissions.org/en/press-releases/unama-statement-civilian-casualties>.

[5] Both TTP and ISIL-KP are listed in the UN Security Council ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List.

[6] X account of Pakistan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (x.com/MolB_Official/status/2025316690855354804).

On 26 February, the *de facto* authorities announced the commencement of “extensive offensive operations against military centers and facilities of Pakistani forces” in response to what they deemed “repeated acts of rebellion and assaults”.⁷

On 26 February, Pakistan announced the start of Operation *Ghazab lil-Haq* (Righteous Fury) against terrorists and terrorist organisations in Afghanistan,⁸ and in the early morning of 27 February carried out airstrikes in Kabul and Paktika, killing 14 civilians and injuring a further 14.

Fighting between Afghanistan’s *de facto* security forces and Pakistani military forces in border areas continued throughout February and March with Pakistani military forces also conducting airstrikes in border-adjacent areas of Afghanistan, as well as the capital Kabul, that resulted in civilian casualties. On 16 March, Pakistani military forces conducted airstrikes impacting the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Centre, a healthcare facility for drug-addicted individuals in Kabul, which killed and injured hundreds of patients of the facility.

On 18 March, Afghanistan and Pakistan announced what they termed a “temporary pause in operations” over Eid-al-Fitr, starting at midnight on 18/19 March and ending at midnight on 23/24 March.⁹ During the temporary pause, UNAMA recorded civilian casualties in Kunar province as a result of cross-border fire by Pakistani military forces. Cross-border firing by Pakistani military forces causing civilian casualties continued in Kunar province after the conclusion of the temporary pause.

On 1 April, talks between Afghanistan’s *de facto* authorities and Pakistani authorities commenced in Urumqi, hosted by China.

Breakdown of civilian casualties

Between 1 January and 31 March 2026, UNAMA documented a total of 372 civilians killed and 397 injured as a result of cross-border armed violence between Afghanistan’s *de facto* security forces and Pakistani military forces.

Most of these civilian casualties occurred after Pakistan announced the start of Operation *Ghazab lil-Haq* on 26 February, with over half attributed to the 16 March airstrikes by Pakistani military forces impacting the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Hospital in Kabul (see below under “Omid Hospital airstrikes” for further details).

[7] X account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities (https://x.com/Zabehulah_M33/status/2027058330103955907?s=20).

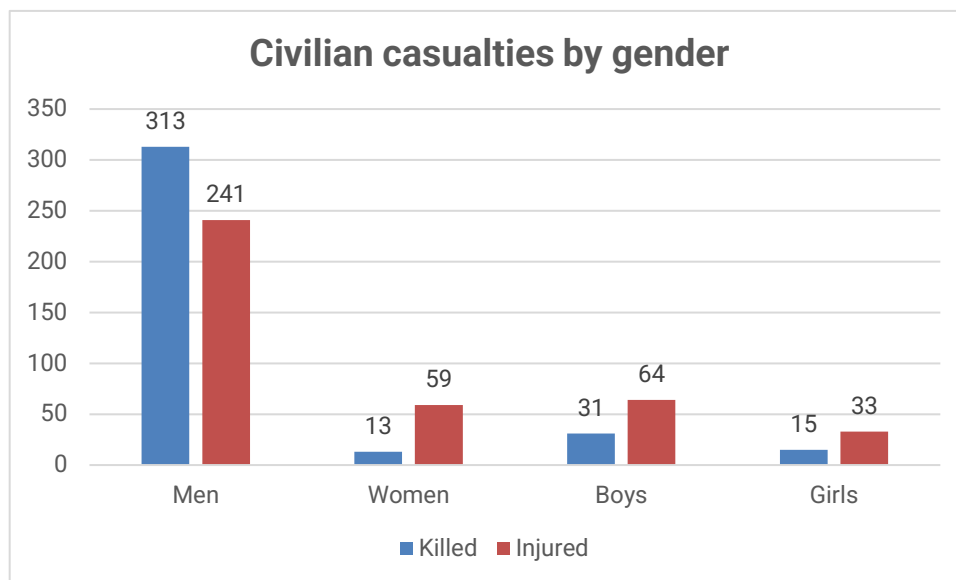
[8] Dawn, *DG ISPR tells Afghan Taliban regime to choose between terrorist organisations and Pakistan*, 27 February 2026. Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1976171>.

[9] X account of Pakistan’s Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting (<https://x.com/i/status/2034269962894823924>) and X account of the Deputy spokesperson for the *de facto* authorities (<https://x.com/FitratHamd/status/2034300688478425386?s=20>).

Gender

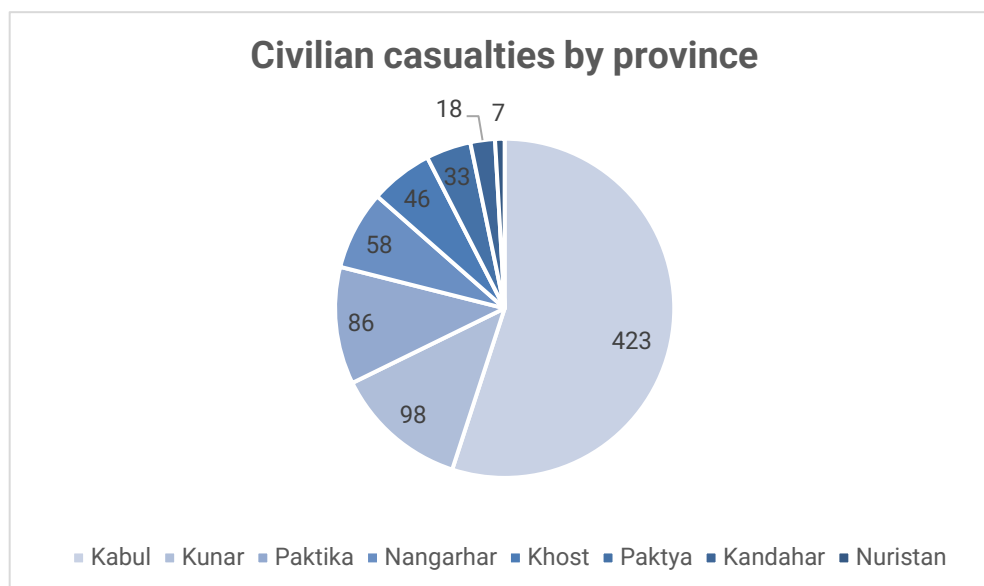
Among the total civilian casualties were 72 women, 554 men, 48 girls and 95 boys.

Up until the 16 March airstrike on the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Centre, women and children made up over half of civilian casualties recorded, however as the Omid Hospital housed only males, this breakdown changed after the incident.



Location

The provinces with the highest numbers of civilian casualties were: Kabul (55%), Kunar (13%) and Paktika (11%).



Attribution of civilian casualties

UNAMA documented a total of 95 incidents of which 94 were attributed to Pakistani security forces and one to Afghanistan's *de facto* security forces.

Tactics

The leading cause of civilian casualties was airstrikes (64%) with the remaining (35%) caused by indirect cross-border firing (mortars, artillery) and one incident of targeted killing.

Omid Drug Rehabilitation Hospital

On 16 March 2026, at around 8.50pm in Kabul city, PD9, Udkhel area, airstrikes by Pakistani military forces impacted the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Hospital (Omid Hospital), a facility for the treatment of drug-affected individuals.

In the aftermath of the airstrikes, UNAMA visited Omid Hospital and observed the impact of the airstrikes. UNAMA also met with victims of the airstrikes in hospitals in Kabul, unharmed survivors who had been relocated to other facilities, family members whose relatives were killed or missing, health care workers – including first responders – who had tended to the killed and injured, and staff of the Kabul Legal Medical Department (morgue).

Based on UNAMA's visit to the site and discussions with eyewitnesses, three airstrikes impacted the facility, causing significant damage to its structures and killing at least 269 people (all male) and injuring a further 122 (including one woman). The vast majority of those killed and injured were patients of the hospital.

The airstrikes occurred at the conclusion of *tarawih* evening prayers, when numerous patients were leaving the mosque (*masjid*).

Based on accounts gathered by UNAMA and UNAMA's visit to the site, the first airstrike impacted the *masjid*/sleeping areas of the Omid Hospital. The second impacted a food storage area made up of shipping containers, as well as some of the sleeping quarters. The third impacted buildings within the hospital's vocational training area which were largely constructed with wood, causing a large fire.

The leading cause of harm to those killed and injured was shrapnel wounds and burns.

While UNAMA has independently verified at least 269 civilian deaths and 122 injuries as a result of the airstrikes, the real figure may be significantly higher. The exact number of patients present in the hospital at the time of the attack is unknown and patient records are also reported by hospital staff to have been destroyed by the airstrikes. Additionally, several bodies were unable to be identified because of the nature of the injuries or because they were reduced to dismembered body parts. UNAMA viewed photographs of victims killed in the attack who were completely unrecognisable due to extensive burns. UNAMA has spoken to families who remain unable to find their loved ones and due to the lack of accurate and complete patient records, the full number of missing patients has not been definitively established. The *de facto* authorities informed UNAMA they are working to determine how many individuals remain missing, however the number of missing persons has not been shared to date.

Some relatives reportedly took the bodies of their killed relatives directly from hospitals and buried them, while other bodies were transferred – either directly from the airstrike site or after having first been admitted to hospital – to the Legal Medical Department to undergo forensic processes and provide family members with an opportunity to find their relatives. UNAMA was informed that the Legal Medical Department did not have capacity to store all the bodies, and some were transferred to other institutions

in Kabul including: the 400-bed *de facto* Ministry of Defence Hospital, the 300-bed *de facto* Ministry of Interior Hospital and the *de facto* GDI Hospital.

To provide people with the opportunity to locate family members who had been killed in the airstrikes, the Legal Medical Department established a facility where photographs of unidentified bodies were projected on a screen. Family members could view the photographs to identify their relatives and, if successful, take their bodies to be buried. The *de facto* authorities also carried out two mass funeral ceremonies of bodies that could not be identified, the first on 18 March and the second on 26 March.¹⁰ UNAMA was informed that the first burial was of bodies that had been dismembered and could not be identified; while the second was of bodies that had not been identified or claimed by family members. According to the *de facto* authorities, around 50 bodies were buried in each of the mass funerals.

The *de facto* authorities have stated that more than 411 people were killed and over 261 injured in the airstrikes¹¹ and that 491 people had survived.¹²

The Embassy of Pakistan in Afghanistan informed UNAMA in writing: “Pakistan’s actions on the night of 16 March were directed solely against terrorist and military infrastructure. The targets included drone storage and technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage sites, which were being used by the Afghan Taliban regime to carry out attacks against innocent Pakistani civilians. The strikes were precise, deliberate and professional. No hospital, drug rehabilitation centre, or civilian facility was targeted”.¹³



Image of damaged vocational training area, Omid Rehabilitation Hospital, 24 March 2026



Image of damaged structures, Omid Rehabilitation Hospital, 24 March 2026

[10] Bakhtar News, *Second Mass Funeral Held for Martyrs of Omid Hospital Attack*, 26 March 2026. Source:

<https://www.bakhtarnews.af/en/Second-Mass-Funeral-Held-for-Martyrs-of-Omid-Hospital-Attack>

[11] See Annex A: Comments provided by the *de facto* Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[12] X account of the spokesperson for the *de facto* Ministry of Public Health:

<https://x.com/SharafatAmar/status/2033888761462112697?s=20>.

[13] See full response from the Embassy of Pakistan in Afghanistan at Annex B to this report.



Image of damaged sleeping quarters, Omid Rehabilitation Hospital, 24 March 2026

Impact on civilians

UNAMA spoke with several individuals whose family members had been killed and injured in the cross-border armed violence between 1 January and 31 March 2026 who spoke of their trauma and grief. One interviewee lost 14 members of his family when an airstrike impacted his home in Paktika province, Barmal district, Ibrahim Khail village on the morning of 27 February:

"...while the women were preparing food [for suhoor] and we were about to eat, a villager called me and informed me that he heard the sound of the aircraft again and that we should take cover. There was a basement room beneath my house, and we all went down there, expecting the aircraft to leave shortly. However, only a few minutes after we entered, a bomb was dropped on us. Fourteen members of my family were killed and five were injured in the strike, which occurred during the suhoor hours. The bodies of my family members were torn apart; we gathered their remains in sacks to ensure no body parts were left behind. In the early morning, we dug graves and buried them after funeral prayers... No one remains in the village now. I cannot bear to stay either, as my home has become a place of grief. Three days ago, my entire family was with me; today, no one remains. Last year, an earthquake struck this same village, killing 13 members of my family. Now, 14 more have been killed. My entire family has been wiped out. I am devastated."¹⁴

Another interviewee was at the mosque in his village in Khost province, Terezai district, on 8 March performing *tarawih* prayers when he heard explosions:

"...after hearing the explosions, I told the villagers that we should go back to our houses to check the situation and assist our families.

At that time, my wife was trying to take our daughter from the house to a locally made mud bunker for safety... While evacuating, my wife's clothes became stuck in prickly acacia thorns. As she tried to free her shirt, she accidentally lost her hold on our daughter. At that moment, a mortar missile struck nearby. As a result, my four-year-old daughter was killed, and my wife was injured."¹⁵

UNAMA also interviewed individuals who had been wounded in the conflict, with shrapnel injuries being the most reported.

The ongoing fighting in border-adjacent areas has resulted in significant displacement. As of 1 April, just over 94,000 people (around 13,400 families) were assessed as being displaced.¹⁶ Additionally, numerous civilian houses and infrastructure (mosques, schools, livestock), as well as private businesses have been damaged or destroyed.

UNAMA has also documented the military use of a school and a hospital by *de facto* security forces.

Killing of NGO worker in Nuristan province¹⁷

An NGO worker, employed in a clinic in Kamdish district, Nuristan province was shot and killed while travelling to Kunar province with her family on 19 March. The family had been unable to travel home since the 26 February outbreak of fighting as Pakistani military forces had reportedly been firing at vehicles travelling on the road connecting Kamdish district in Nuristan and Nari district in Kunar province.

Following the announcement of an Eid pause in operations, the family sought reassurance from local *de*

[14] Family member of victims of an airstrike, Paktika province.

[15] Family member of victims of indirect firing, Khost province.

[16] OCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Situation Update #3 Humanitarian Impact of Afghanistan-Pakistan Military Escalation, 5 April 2026. Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-situation-update-3-humanitarian-impact-afghanistan-pakistan-military-escalation-5-april-2026>.

[17] The description of this incident is based on firsthand accounts gathered by UNAMA.

facto authorities and others who confirmed a ceasefire and told them they could travel home on 19 March.

At around 5am on 19 March, the woman, her husband and their three children began the journey home in a rented taxi to travel from Kamdish district of Nuristan to Barikot area of Nari district, Kunar province. They approached local residents on the way to check if there had been any shelling, all confirmed there had been none and that it was safe to proceed.

When they reached Baghichai area of Kamdish district, Pakistani military forces began firing at their vehicles with small arms fire, mortar and artillery. They decided to get out of the vehicle and walk along the bank of the river to escape the firing. They then attempted to cross the river to reach a safer area. While they were crossing the river, the NGO worker was shot in her right side, was unable to walk any further and fell into the water and drowned, along with her three-year-old son.

Local residents heard the firing and arrived to help. They recovered the bodies of the woman and her son from the river and brought her husband and two surviving children, along with the bodies of their killed family members, to a nearby house. Local tribal elders began communicating by phone with elders near the Pakistani military forces' checkpoint, requesting their permission to allow a taxi to pass to transfer the dead bodies to Kunar. Pakistani military forces denied the request. The next morning (20 March), the bodies were transported via an alternative route, on foot. After walking for one whole day, the family – along with the bodies of the NGO worker and her child – reached Barikot area of Nari district. The woman and her son were buried the following morning (21 March) in Kiralla village of Asadabad city, Kunar province.

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.¹⁸ 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”.¹⁹
- **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”.²⁰
- **Precautions in attack:** “[...] civilians shall enjoy general protection against the dangers arising from military operations”.²¹ “In the conduct of military operations, constant care shall be taken to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects”²² and all feasible precautions must be taken with the “view to avoiding, and in any event to minimizing, incidental loss of civilian life,

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

[19] Additional Protocol I, Article 48. See also: ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 1.

[20] Additional Protocol I, Article 51(5)(b). See also: ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 14.

[21] Additional Protocol I, Article 51. See also: ICRC Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 15-21.

[22] Additional Protocol I, Article 57(1).

injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects”.²³

Attacks on healthcare facilities: As primary providers of medical care and assistance to the civilian population, medical personnel and facilities are explicitly afforded special protections under international humanitarian law.²⁴ Medical personnel, units and transports shall be respected and protected, and personnel shall be granted all available help in the performance of their duties.²⁵ International humanitarian law also protects equipment and supplies used for medical purposes.²⁶ Parties to the conflict using healthcare facilities for military purposes, including by taking shelter inside, may cause such facilities to lose their protection from attack, placing them at risk.²⁷ If a hospital is used for military acts, protection ceases only after a proper warning is given and disregarded, allowing for a reasonable time limit.

Recommendations

To the Government of Pakistan:

- Ensure compliance with obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of precaution, distinction and proportionality, to protect civilians from harm.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of target verification procedures and precautionary measures employed before carrying out airstrikes, with a view to identifying gaps and implementing recommended changes.
- Cease the use of indirect fire systems (mortars, rockets and grenades) from and to civilian populated areas.
- Investigate all allegations of human rights violations and international humanitarian law violations with a view to ensuring accountability.

To Afghanistan’s *de facto* authorities:

- Cease the practice of firing mortars, rockets, and grenades in civilian-populated areas and avoid establishing checkpoints or engaging in hostilities in the vicinity of civilian property.
- Investigate all allegations of human rights violations and international humanitarian law violations and publicly report on findings.
- Address the needs of civilians in the aftermath of an incident, for example with medical care, reconstruction of damaged houses and businesses, and financial support.
- Develop a mechanism for persons whose relatives remain missing from the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Hospital to approach the *de facto* authorities for information about the fate of their family members. Steps should then be taken to compile a record of the missing and find and make available any records or information on their whereabouts.
- Ensure that the civilian population has timely access to information about the security situation and availability and location of assistance during periods of hostilities to allow them to take measures to protect themselves, in particular ensuring that women and girls have equal access to such information.

[23] Additional Protocol I, Article 57(2)(a)(ii).

[24] Medical facilities or “units” include hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies; medical transports expressly used for conveying the sick and injured are protected. See Additional Protocol I, Article 12 and ICRC, Customary International Law Study, Rules 28, 29.

[25] Additional Protocol I, Articles 12, 15, 21; ICRC Customary international Law Study, Rules 25, 28, 29.

[26] Additional Protocol I, Article 12; ICRC Customary international law study, Rules 25, 28.

[27] See Additional Protocol I, Article 12; ICRC, Customary international law study, Rule 28.

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

Date: 2 May 2026

In recent months, the continued violence against civilians in various provinces of Afghanistan has become a matter of deep concern. Military attacks carried out from Pakistani territory have caused widespread civilian casualties, destruction of public facilities, and violations of people's fundamental rights.

According to available figures, more than 760 civilians have been martyred and hundreds more have been injured. In particular, an attack on a healthcare center stands as the deadliest incident in this situation, in which more than 411 civilians lost their lives and over 261 others were injured. Such attacks targeting civilian objectives are in clear contradiction with the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and are unacceptable.

The protection of civilians, healthcare centers, educational institutions, and residential areas is a fundamental principle that must be strictly observed during any military action. Failure to respect these principles not only increases human suffering but also negatively affects regional stability and trust.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan expresses its deep concern in this regard and strongly condemns any form of violence by Pakistan against civilians. The Islamic Emirate emphasizes that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and safety of the people are fundamental values, and all parties must respect them in practice.

Accordingly, it is requested from international organizations and relevant parties to conduct an independent and transparent investigation into these incidents, take practical steps to ensure compliance with international laws, and guarantee that such incidents against civilians are not repeated.

End

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

Embassy of Pakistan Kabul

- i. Pakistan took the extreme step of precision aerial strikes in response to the continued unwarranted aggression by Afghan Taliban regime and increasing cross-border attacks by TTP, BLA targeting Pakistani security forces and civilians.
- ii. Since the beginning of this year, 130 civilians and security personnel have embraced martyrdom. In 2025, 1,200 Pakistanis were martyred including 400 civilians. These are real people and families, not fabricated numbers.
- iii. On the basis of credible intelligence, Pakistan's actions on the night of 16 March were directed solely against terrorist and military infrastructure. The targets included drone storage and technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage sites, which were being used by the Afghan Taliban regime to carry out attacks against innocent Pakistani civilians.
- iv. The strikes were precise, deliberate and professional. No hospital, drug rehabilitation centre or civilian facility was targeted
- v. As part of established practice, video footage of all six strikes was released by the Ministry of Information shortly after the operation, clearly showing the nature of the targets.
- vi. The secondary explosions visible in the footage further confirm that ammunition storage facilities were struck with precision.
- vii. Buildings in the vicinity of the ammunition strategic facilities remain intact even today, showing precision of the strikes and on-targeting of any rehabilitation facilities.
- viii. Baseless allegations (by Afghan Taliban regime and its Indian patrons) have been unleashed following a familiar pattern of misinformation campaign aimed at obscuring the presence terrorist infrastructure being used against Pakistan.
- ix. The fact that Afghanistan is a safe haven for regional and international terrorist organisations including TTP, BLA and other affiliates, under the watch, facilitation and patronage of the Afghan Taliban regime has been widely recognised both by regional countries and the international community.
- x. Pakistan remains open to dialogue and engagement, provided that it leads to concrete and verifiable actions by the Afghan Taliban regime in line with their commitments to international community.
- xi. In view of the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr, Pakistan upon its own initiative as well as on the request from the brotherly Islamic countries of KSA, Qatar and Turkiye, decided to announce temporary pause amidst ongoing "Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq" against the terrorists and their support infrastructure in Afghanistan.
- xii. The pause shall be applicable from midnight 18/19 March to midnight 23/24 March 2026.
- xiii. Pakistan's gesture is in good faith in line with the Islamic norms. However, in case of any cross-border attack, drone attack or any terrorist incident Pakistan, "Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq" shall immediately resume with renewed intensity.
- xiv. Pakistan remains resolute in its fight against terrorism and will continue to take necessary measures to protect its citizens and deny safe haven to those who plan and execute terrorist attacks from across the border.

8 April 2026