



AFGHANISTAN: 10,000 CIVILIAN CASUALTIES FOR SIXTH STRAIGHT YEAR

KABUL/GENEVA, 22 February 2020 - Parties to the conflict in Afghanistan killed and injured more than 10,000 civilians in 2019, according to a new United Nations report that describes continuing record-high levels of civilian harm in the ongoing conflict.

The new report documents 3,403 civilians killed and 6,989 injured, with the majority of the civilian casualties inflicted by anti-government elements. It is the sixth year in a row that the number of civilian casualties has exceeded 10,000.

In addition to continuing record-high levels of harm to civilians, civilian casualty figures for 2019 surpassed a grim milestone. After more than a decade of systematically documenting the impact of the war on civilians, the UN found that in 2019 the number of civilian casualties had surpassed 100,000.

“Almost no civilian in Afghanistan has escaped being personally affected in some way by the ongoing violence,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). “It is absolutely imperative for all parties to seize the moment to stop the fighting, as peace is long overdue; civilian lives must be protected and efforts for peace are underway.”

The figures outlined in the new report – released jointly by UNAMA and the UN Human Rights Office – represent a five per cent decrease over the previous year, mainly due to a decrease in civilian casualties caused by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP). Civilian casualties caused by the other parties increased, particularly by the Taliban (21 per cent increase) and the international military forces (18 per cent increase), mainly due to an increase in improvised explosive device attacks and airstrikes.

In addition to outlining the civilian casualties documented with a rigorous methodology throughout the course of 2019, the report sets out several recommendations and reminds the parties that attacks deliberately targeting civilians or civilian objects are serious violations of international humanitarian law that amount to war crimes.

“All parties to the conflict must comply with the key principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution to prevent civilian casualties,” said Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. “Belligerents must take the necessary measures to prevent women, men, boys and girls from being killed by bombs, shells, rockets and improvised mines; to do otherwise is unacceptable.”

The report calls on all parties to the conflict to conduct prompt, effective and transparent investigations into all allegations of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, with a view to ensuring accountability.

The report is available at <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>.

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UNAMA supports the Afghan people and government to achieve peace and stability. In accordance with its mandate as a political mission, UNAMA backs conflict prevention and resolution, promoting inclusion and social cohesion, as well as strengthening regional cooperation. The Mission supports effective governance, promoting national ownership and accountable institutions that are built on respect for human rights. UNAMA provides 'good offices' and other key services, including diplomatic steps that draw on the organization's independence, impartiality and integrity to prevent disputes from arising, escalating or spreading. The Mission coordinates international support for Afghan development and humanitarian priorities.