



PRESS RELEASE

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UNAMA REPORT RECORDS HEAVY TOLL ON AFGHAN CIVILIANS BY IED ATTACKS

KABUL (27 June 2023) - Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) remain a significant concern in Afghanistan - despite an overall decline in civilian casualties since the Taliban takeover - characterized by a rise in attacks on places of worship and against the minority Hazara community, a United Nations report released today shows.

Of 3,774 civilian casualties between 15 August 2021 and 30 May 2023, three quarters were caused by indiscriminate IEDs in populated areas, including places of worship, schools and markets, said the report by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The majority of civilian casualties resulted from attacks carried out by the self-identified Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP). The report said the number of civilian casualties as a result of IED attacks carried out by ISIL-KP significantly increased in the immediate aftermath of the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021. Suicide attacks, carried out both by ISIL-KP and other actors, were the leading cause of IED-related civilian harm.

“These attacks on civilians and civilian objects are reprehensible and must stop,” said Fiona Frazer, chief of UNAMA’s Human Rights Service. “It is critical that the de facto authorities uphold their obligation to protect the right to life by carrying out independent, impartial, prompt, thorough, effective, credible and transparent investigations into IED attacks affecting civilians.”

UNAMA’s figures indicate a significant increase in civilian harm resulting from IED attacks on places of worship compared to the three-year period prior to the Taliban takeover.

IED attacks on places of worship, mostly Shia Muslim sites, accounted for more than one-third of all civilian casualties recorded during the reporting period.

In addition to attacks on Shia places of worship, the report said there were at least 345 (95 killed, 250 wounded) casualties as a result of attacks targeting the predominantly Shia Muslim Hazara community in schools and other educational facilities, on crowded streets and on public transportation.

The report recommends that the de facto authorities implement protection measures with a view to preventing the recurrence of similar attacks, taking into account the specific risks faced in places of worship and educational facilities and within Hazara Shi’a communities.

The continued attacks are occurring against the backdrop of Afghanistan’s ongoing humanitarian crisis.

“Even prior to 15 August 2021, victims of armed conflict and violence struggled to access essential medical, financial and psychosocial support,” Frazer said. “Help for the victims of violence is now even harder to come by because of the drop in donor funding for vital services.”

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