

The header banner features the UNAMA logo in large blue letters, followed by the full name 'United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan' in a smaller blue font. Below this, it says 'Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan'. A dark blue wavy bar contains the text 'Press Statement' in white. On the right side of the banner, there is a faint background image of the United Nations emblem (a world map) and the website URL 'http://unama.unmissions.org' in white text.**UNAMA****United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Press Statement<http://unama.unmissions.org>

UNAMA CALLS ON THE PARTIES TO PRIORITIZE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF SECURITY FORCES IN TRANSITION PERIOD

KABUL, 31 MAY 2012 – The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) expresses its strong concerns that conflict-related violence continues to kill and injure many Afghan women, men and children throughout the country. 2011 marked the fifth year in a row that civilian casualties increased in the armed conflict in Afghanistan. UNAMA documented 3,021 civilian deaths in 2011 with 77 per cent of all civilian deaths attributed to anti-Government elements and 14 per cent to pro-Government forces - Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and international forces.

While UNAMA has documented a 21 per cent decrease in civilian casualties over the first four months of 2012 in comparison with the same period in 2011, civilian casualties continue to occur at unacceptably high levels. From 1 January to 30 April 2012, UNAMA recorded 579 civilian deaths and 1,216 injuries (79 per cent of all civilian casualties were attributed to anti-Government elements with nine per cent attributed to pro-Government forces and 12 per cent unattributed).

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used by anti-Government elements remain the biggest killer of civilians in Afghanistan causing 31 per cent of all Afghan civilian deaths. UNAMA reiterates its strong demand on the Anti-Government Elements to stop using victim-activated pressure plate IEDs and publicly commit to banning the use of these illegal and indiscriminate weapons. In the context of transition, IEDs will continue to present major medium and long-term potential for causing devastating harm to civilians, with Afghan National Security Forces taking on the leading role in IED prevention, site exploitation and disposal. To support this effort, UNAMA called on NATO, particularly signatory States to Amended Protocol II¹ of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to dedicate additional resources to ensure effective, centralized management of counter-IED and IED disposal throughout the transition period. ANSF supported by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) have already commenced work to develop a holistic Government counter-IED strategy.

With the start of the third phase of transition of security responsibilities from ISAF to ANSF that will in the coming six months bring 75 per cent of the population of Afghanistan across all 34 provinces under ANSF responsibility, UNAMA calls on the Government of Afghanistan and NATO to continue to put the highest priority on the protection of civilians in the armed conflict, and to ensure increasingly effective oversight and accountability of ANSF.

¹ Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as amended on 3 May 1996 (Protocol II to the 1980 Convention as amended on 3 May 1996).

At the recent NATO/ISAF May meeting in Chicago, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon reinforced the critical importance of prioritizing civil protection during transition, calling on Afghan National Security Forces, in particular, to “prioritize the protection of civilians — including special measures to protect the human rights of all citizens, particularly women and girls in armed conflict.”

UNAMA is encouraged by the recent initial steps of the Afghan National Security Forces towards promptly fulfilling their commitment to establish a civilian casualty mitigation unit within ANSF structures. This unit will investigate and document all civilian casualties related to ANSF operations aimed at improving civilian protection, and accountability and compensation for civilian casualties caused by the ANSF. UNAMA notes commitment of NATO and ISAF to provide the ANSF with all necessary support in the establishment and development of this unit.

“Conflict-related violence still harms Afghan children, women and men every day across Afghanistan,” said Ján Kubiš, United Nations Special Representative for the Secretary-General in Afghanistan. “Protecting civilians from the consequences of war and preventing civilian casualties should always be the highest priority and strengthened even further during transition of security responsibilities.”

UNAMA emphasized that Afghan National Security Forces have an essential role in protecting Afghan women and securing the gains made by women in the past decade, and that Afghan forces should be adequately trained and resourced to carry out this crucial function. UNAMA noted that transition agreements between the NATO and other international partners and the Afghan government should uphold the principles of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which requires all parties to take special measures to protect women and girls in armed conflict and stresses the critical role of women in all efforts to promote peace and security.

“To the Afghan people, the credibility and success of transition of security to Afghan forces will be measured by reduced civilian casualties and real improvements in security, particularly in conflict-affected areas,” said Kubiš. “Only through increased actions to protect civilians will deaths and injuries to Afghan women, children and men from the conflict be radically reduced during transition.”

UNAMA noted that while the Afghan Local Police (ALP) have enabled some improvements in security in a number of areas where it operates, UNAMA continued to document human rights abuses by the ALP in other areas. UNAMA encourages NATO/ISAF and the Afghan Ministry of Interior to increase their efforts to further improve recruitment, vetting, command and control, oversight and accountability of the ALP. UNAMA noted that transition planning should also clarify future plans for the ALP including how its conduct will be monitored.

Afghan National Security Forces are obliged to apply national and international standards on human rights and humanitarian law. UNAMA stressed that all planning and future commitments for training of Afghan security forces (all army, police and special forces) should include thorough training on already mandatory international humanitarian and human rights law and provision of related technical support.

UNAMA also encouraged the Afghan National Police to continue the process of moving away from a primarily security-based, military style institution to a police model that enhances the development of a trusted and accountable relationship with communities, based on the rule of law and community and democratic policing principles, which are crucial to the success and effectiveness of a functioning police force. UNAMA further welcomed the Afghan Ministry of Interior’s creation of the *Police-e-Mardumi Secretariat* within the Ministry of Interior to coordinate

and enhance democratic policing initiatives across the Ministry of Interior and to serve as the interface with civil society.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Kabul, Afghanistan

All media contact details are online at: <http://unama.unmissions.org>