



## **UNAMA ISSUES SPECIAL REPORT ON ATTACKS AGAINST PLACES OF WORSHIP, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AND WORSHIPPERS**

**KABUL, 7 November 2017** – The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today released a special report documenting a sharp increase in attacks against places of worship, religious leaders and worshippers, including attacks against Shi'a Muslim places of worship and congregations.

Since 1 January 2016, UNAMA has recorded 850 civilian casualties (273 killed and 577 injured) in 51 attacks targeting places of worship, religious leaders and worshippers. Civilian casualties from these types of attacks since the beginning of 2016 represent nearly double the cumulative total documented between 2009 and 2015.

“Respect the law, stop targeting worshippers and religious leaders,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, as well as head of UNAMA.

Speaking on the eve of Arba'een commemorations -that take place at the end of the 40-day-period of mourning after Ashura- Yamamoto commended the recent efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to protect places of worship and urged them to take all necessary measures to protect all Afghans, especially those vulnerable to sectarian attacks, to exercise their right to freedom of religion or belief and to worship in safety.

The report highlights a disturbing pattern of attacks by Anti-Government Elements directed at civilians in places of worship, particularly those directed against Shi'a Muslims. The report also documents the targeted killings by Anti-Government Elements of religious scholars and leaders whom they regard as pro-Government, as well as the targeted killing of security personnel amidst other worshippers inside mosques.

The report ends with a series of recommendations, including a call for Anti-Government Elements to immediately cease targeting worshippers and religious leaders.

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

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