

The header 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 is the text 'Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan'. A dark blue banner with 'Press Release' in white is positioned below the text. The United Nations emblem is visible in the background on the right side.**UNAMA****United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Press Release<http://unama.unmissions.org>**CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN AFGHAN CONFLICT RISE BY 14 PER CENT IN 2013**

KABUL, 8 February 2014 – Civilian casualties in Afghanistan's armed conflict increased by 14 per cent in 2013, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said today in releasing its 2013 Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, prepared in coordination with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

UNAMA documented 8,615 civilian casualties (2,959 civilian deaths and 5,656 injured) in 2013, marking a seven per cent increase in deaths and a 17 per cent increase in injuries compared to 2012.

The rise in civilians killed and injured in Afghanistan's armed conflict in 2013 reverses the decline reported in 2012 and is similar to record high numbers of civilian casualties documented in 2011. Since 2009, the armed conflict has claimed the lives of 14, 064 Afghan civilians and injured thousands more.

The report observed that while improvised explosive devices used by Anti-Government Elements¹ remained the biggest killer of civilians in 2013, increased ground engagements between Pro-Government Forces and Anti-Government Elements emerged as the number-two cause of civilian casualties with rising numbers of Afghan civilians killed and injured in cross-fire. Both factors drove the escalation of civilian casualties in 2013.

"Armed conflict took an unrelenting toll on Afghan civilians in 2013," said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, Ján Kubiš. "Increased use of IEDs by Anti-Government Elements killed and injured thousands of Afghan civilians this year. More ground engagements led to more civilians being killed and injured in their homes and communities from cross-fire. At the start of 2014, it is imperative that all parties, but particularly Anti-Government Elements, halt the worsening impact of the conflict on Afghan civilians."

The report attributed 74 per cent of total civilian deaths and injuries in 2013 to Anti-Government Elements, 11 per cent to Pro-Government Forces (eight per cent to Afghan national security forces and three per cent to international forces) and ten per cent to ground engagements

¹ 'Anti-Government Elements' encompass all individuals and armed groups involved in armed conflict with or armed opposition against the Government of Afghanistan and/or international military forces. They include those who identify as "Taliban" as well as individuals and non-State organized armed groups taking a direct part in hostilities and assuming a variety of labels including the Haqqani Network, Hezb-e-Islami, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and other militia and armed groups pursuing political, ideological or economic objectives including armed criminal groups directly engaged in hostile acts on behalf a party to the conflict.

between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces. Five per cent of civilian casualties were unattributed, resulting mostly from explosive remnants of war.

UNAMA's report found that improvised explosive devices used by Anti-Government Elements caused 34 per cent of all civilian casualties followed by ground engagements between parties to conflict which caused 27 per cent of all Afghan civilian deaths and injuries.

Fifteen (15) per cent of all civilian casualties were from suicide and complex attacks carried out by Anti-Government Elements with another 14 per cent from targeted killings by Anti-Government Elements. Four per cent of civilian casualties in 2013 resulted mainly from escalation of force incidents and search operations of Pro-Government Forces, four per cent were caused by explosive remnants of war and two per cent of all civilian casualties were from the air operations of international forces.

Women and Children

The UNAMA report found that 2013 was the worst year for Afghan women, girls and boys since 2009, with the highest number of deaths and injuries recorded from conflict-related violence. Seven hundred and forty-six (746) women casualties (235 women killed and 511 injured) were documented, an increase of 36 per cent from 2012. IEDs used by Anti-Government Elements again killed the most women causing 177 women casualties (86 deaths and 91 injured), up 20 per cent from 2012. Ground engagements caused the most injuries to women and comprised the majority of women's casualties in 2013.

UNAMA documented 1,756 child casualties (561 children killed and 1,195 injured), an increase of 34 per cent compared to 2012. IEDs killed the most children causing 192 deaths and injuring another 319 children (511 child casualties from IEDs), up 28 per cent from 2012. One hundred and thirty seven (137) children were killed and 504 children injured in ground engagements (641 child casualties from ground engagements), a 59 per cent increase over 2012. Ground engagements caused the most injuries to children in 2013.

"It is particularly alarming that the number of Afghan women and children killed and injured in the conflict increased again in 2013," said Director of Human Rights for UNAMA, Georgette Gagnon. "It is the awful reality that most women and children were killed and injured in their daily lives – at home, on their way to school, working in the fields or traveling to a social event. This situation demands even greater commitment and further efforts by the parties to protect women and children from conflict-related violence."

Anti-Government Elements

UNAMA's report found that Anti-Government Elements continued to deliberately target civilians across the country and carried out attacks without regard for civilian life, causing 6,374 civilian casualties (2,311 civilian deaths and 4,063 injured), up four per cent from 2012.

Indiscriminate use of IEDs by Anti-Government Elements increased in 2013 and remained the leading cause of civilian deaths and injuries. UNAMA recorded 2,890 civilian casualties (962 civilian deaths and 1,928 injured) from IEDs, up 14 per cent from 2012.

Within civilian casualties from IEDs, UNAMA noted an 84 per cent rise in civilian deaths and injuries from radio-controlled IEDs and a 39 per cent decrease in civilian casualties from indiscriminate victim-activated pressure-plate IEDs. Anti-Government Elements continued to

detonate IEDs in public areas used by civilians such as roads, markets, Government offices, bazaars, in and around schools, and bus stations

Suicide and complex attacks caused 1,236 civilian casualties (255 killed and 981 injured) in 73 incidents in 2013. While the number of attacks was similar to 2012, an 18 per cent decrease in civilian casualties from these attacks was noted.

Combined, these IED tactics caused almost half of all civilian casualties in 2013.

The report documented 1,076 civilian casualties (743 deaths and 333 injured) from targeted killings by Anti-Government Elements who increasingly targeted and killed civilian Government officials and workers, community leaders, judicial authorities, tribal elders, election workers and persons supporting the peace process. Targeted attacks by Anti-Government Elements against mullahs (religious leaders) they accused of supporting the Government and in mosques tripled in 2013.

Throughout 2013, UNAMA noted increased public messaging by the Taliban on civilian casualties. However, the situation on the ground for Afghan civilians did not improve. The Taliban increased their indiscriminate use of IEDs and continued to attack civilians.

The UNAMA report observed that the Taliban claimed responsibility for 153 attacks which caused 944 civilian casualties (302 civilians killed and 642 injured) in 2013, marking an increase of 292 per cent in such claims by the Taliban, and a 136 per cent increase in civilian casualties for which the Taliban claimed responsibility compared with 2012. Most of these Taliban attacks used indiscriminate tactics such as IED detonations in public areas or directly targeted civilians or civilian objects, particularly civilian Government personnel and buildings.

UNAMA highlights that indiscriminate attacks and direct targeted attacks against civilians are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law which binds all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan including the Taliban. Attacks on civilians and killings of mullahs, elections workers, tribal elders and other civilians not directly participating in hostilities may amount to war crimes.

“Statements on protecting civilians by the Taliban leadership are not nearly enough to end the killing and injuring of innocent Afghan civilians,” said Special Representative Kubiš. “What is needed is for the Taliban to stop deliberately attacking civilians and using IEDS indiscriminately, and to change their definition of ‘civilian’ and lawful targets in line with international humanitarian law.”

Pro-Government Forces

UNAMA’s report attributed 956 civilian casualties (341 deaths and 615 injured) to all Pro-Government Forces in 2013, up 59 per cent from 2012. This overall rise was linked to increased ground operations with civilian casualties by Afghan national security forces.

Of all civilian casualties by Pro-Government Forces, 57 per cent were attributed to Afghan national security forces, 27 per cent to international military forces and 16 per cent to joint operations. Of the 57 per cent attributed to Afghan forces, the majority were from ground operations led by Afghan forces which resulted in 349 civilian casualties (88 civilian deaths and 261 injured), up 264 per cent from 2012.

With Afghan national security forces leading military operations country wide, UNAMA reinforced the need for improved implementation of directives and rules of engagement mandating civilian protection, and for permanent structures in the Ministries of Defence and Interior to investigate reports of civilian casualties by Afghan forces, initiate remedial measures and take follow-up action. UNAMA’s report also called on the Government of Afghanistan to

investigate any allegations of human rights violations by Afghan forces as required under Afghan and international law.

“Afghan security forces’ lead responsibility for security brings with it increased responsibility for civilian protection,” said Special Representative Kubiš. “It is critically important for Afghan forces to take all possible measures to protect civilians from the harms of conflict.”

Air operations by international forces resulted in 182 civilian casualties (118 civilian deaths and 64 injured) down 10 per cent from 2012, and accounted for 19 per cent of all civilian deaths attributed to Pro-Government Forces. Women and children comprised almost half of civilian deaths from aerial operations. Such civilian casualties, particularly from offensive air strikes, suggest the need for further review by international forces of pre-engagement considerations and precautionary measures.

Despite reports of improved security due to the presence of Afghan Local Police (ALP), from many communities across Afghanistan, UNAMA recorded 121 civilian casualties (32 civilian deaths and 89 injured) by ALP, almost tripling civilian casualties attributed to ALP from 2012. Most of these involved ALP members in certain areas committing summary executions and punishments, intimidation, harassment and illegal searches.

The ALP Directorate in the Ministry of Interior reported it investigated more than 100 cases against ALP members in 2013, referring 59 cases to military prosecutors. Despite these encouraging steps, information on any prosecutions, convictions, suspensions or other action taken was not available. UNAMA called for increased efforts to provide accountability for violations by Afghan Local Police.

The UNAMA report recorded 39 incidents of human rights abuses including killings carried out by Pro-Government armed groups resulting in 55 civilian casualties (18 civilian deaths and 37 injured). The majority of incidents occurred in areas where armed groups held considerable power and influence, including in Uruzgan, Kunduz, Faryab, Baghlan and Jawzjan provinces. The report urged the Afghan Government to speed up efforts to disband and disarm such groups.

UNAMA documented 343 civilian casualties (114 civilian deaths and 229 injured) from explosive remnants of war, a 63 per cent increase in civilian casualties compared to 2012. Most victims were children. The rise was found to coincide with the increase in ground engagements causing civilian casualties. A possible second cause was the escalated pace of closure of bases and firing ranges by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with concerns that high explosive firing ranges had not been sufficiently cleared of unexploded ordnance prior to base closure. The UNAMA report called on ISAF and troop contributing nations to mark all ISAF high explosive ranges to identify potential hazards, and clear such ranges of explosive remnants of war at the earliest opportunity.

Ground Engagements between Parties to the Conflict

UNAMA’s report documented 2,327 civilian casualties (534 civilian deaths and 1,793 injured) from ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces, a 43 per cent increase from 2012, and a new trend in 2013 that posed an increasing risk to Afghan civilians.

The report attributed 44 per cent of civilian casualties from ground engagements to Anti-Government Elements and 16 per cent to Pro-Government Forces; 38 per cent of civilian casualties from ground engagements could not be attributed to either party, and two per cent were unknown. The report observed that this ‘fog of war’ dynamic reflected the changed nature

of armed conflict in Afghanistan in 2013 which was increasingly waged in civilian communities and populated areas with civilians caught in the cross-fire.

In its 2013 report, UNAMA stressed that rising civilian casualties coupled with political and security transition in Afghanistan called for a renewed and robust commitment from parties to the conflict to take further measures to protect Afghan civilians in 2014. The report urged that all parties – in particular Anti-Government Elements - do much more to comply with their legal obligations to prevent civilian death and injury and to increase civilian protection.

“Behind every civilian casualty is a man, woman or child’s life and immense suffering and hardship for an Afghan family and community,” said Director of Human Rights for UNAMA, Georgette Gagnon. “Reduced civilian suffering and fewer civilian casualties together with improvements in human rights protection should be the core benchmarks of improved stability and efforts toward peace in the security and political transition in 2014.”

Selected accounts of Afghan civilians from UNAMA’s 2013 Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict

It was around 10:00 in the morning and I was at home. Suddenly there was gunfire then a big explosion. Our entire house jerked and was covered in dust. The women and children were crying ... Soon after there was another explosion, a suicide attacker detonated his vest. Outside, my uncle and cousins were calling me for help but I couldn’t reach them. Later I found the dead body of a child in my yard. When I walked upstairs I found children’s body parts on my roof. Five children from our neighbour’s house were killed.

- Relative of six victims of a complex attack by Anti-Government Elements in Jalalabad, Nangahar province, August 2013

It was a bazaar day and I had planned to join my friends for lunch at a restaurant in the bazaar. I had just stepped out from my home to meet them when suddenly I heard an explosion. I ran towards the market and saw victims crying and calling for help. I found my cousin and transferred him to Maimana hospital but at 2:00 pm he died from his injuries.

- Cousin of victim of an RC-IED attack by Anti-Government Elements in Maimana, Faryab province, February 2013

We were discussing the poverty in the area, when a group of men on motorcycles ordered the driver to stop. One of the armed men looked inside the car, and shortly after that, they started shooting at us! I can’t remember how long they were firing towards us; but when I opened my eyes, I saw all my colleagues lying lifeless on the car’s chairs. I managed to get out of the car and asked for help. But it was already too late: only one of our colleagues was alive, but he died on the way to the hospital.

- Survivor of Taliban attack in Pashtun-kot district, Faryab province, November 2013

My son, who worked as a driver, was at a relative’s house when the Afghan Local Police arrived. They shot my son in the head. A father’s wish is to always see his son alive; and if dead, then at least in one piece. It was a heinous crime. I want justice to prevail.

- Father of a civilian killed during a search operation of Afghan national security forces in Imam Sahib district, Kunduz province, July 2013

UNAMA shared a draft of its 2013 Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict with the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Comments from all parties were carefully reviewed and addressed as appropriate in the report. UNAMA stands ready to work with all parties to the conflict to support their efforts to protect civilians.

Recommendations to the Parties from UNAMA's 2013 Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict

Anti-Government Elements

- Cease the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of IEDs, particularly in all areas frequented by civilians.
- Cease targeting and killing civilians including religious personnel, judicial authorities and civilian Government workers.
- Cease all attacks from and in civilian locations, including restaurants, public roads, consulates, civilian Government offices, including court houses.
- Prevent civilian casualties through compliance with the international principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack, and apply a definition of 'civilian' that is consistent with international humanitarian law.
- Enforce codes of conduct, instructions and directives instructing members to prevent and avoid civilian casualties and hold accountable those members who target, kill and injure civilians.

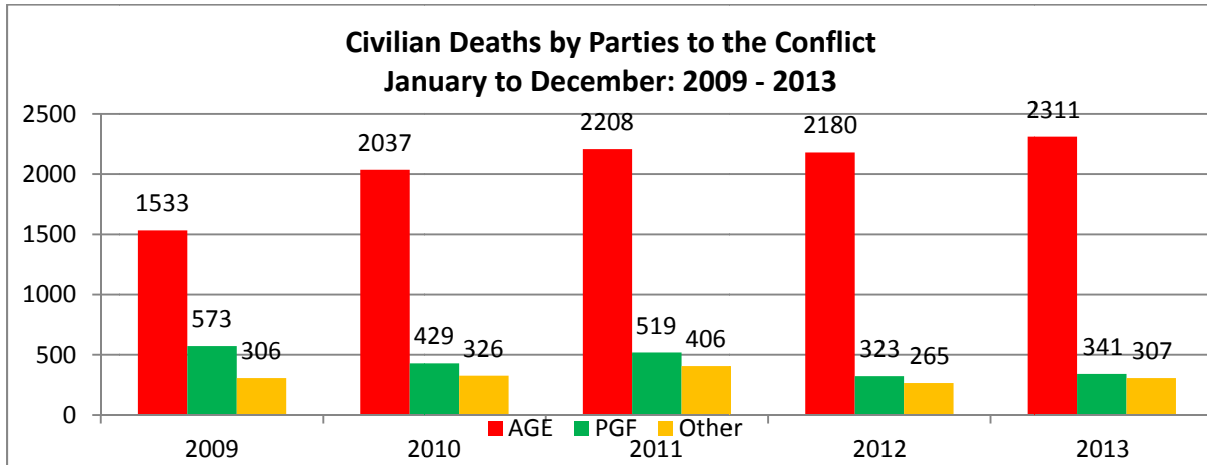
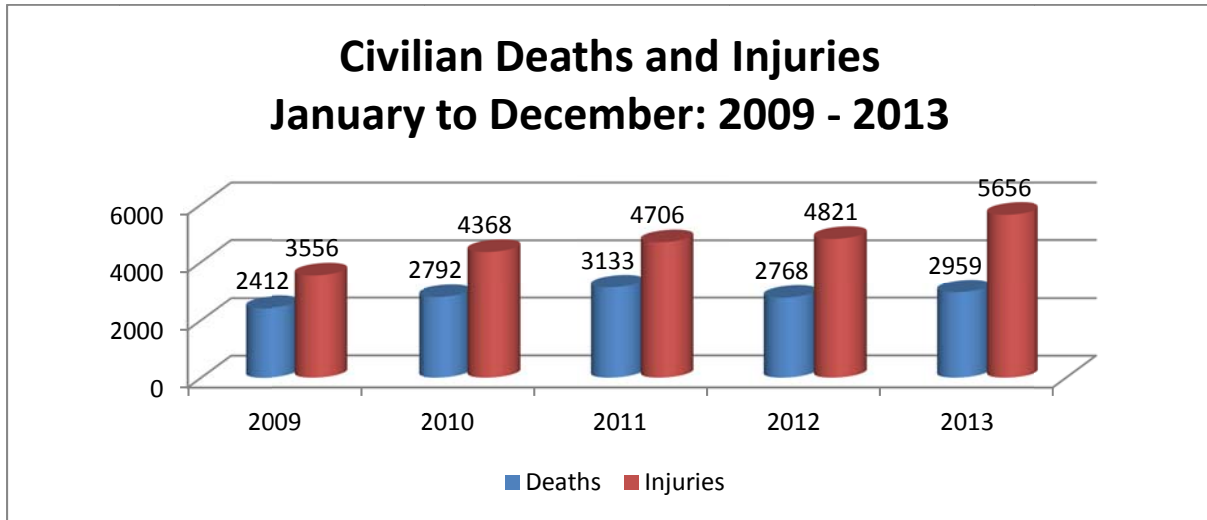
Government of Afghanistan

- Dedicate all necessary resources to enable the full implementation of the national counter-IED strategy. Prioritize the further development of Afghan national security forces' capacity to command, control and effectively conduct counter-IED operations and IED-disposal, including exploitation.
- Take concrete measures to reduce civilian casualties from ground engagements through revision, strengthening and implementation of tactical directives, rules of engagements and other procedures, and ensure proper training and resourcing of all Afghan national security forces on civilian protection measures and mitigation.
- Ensure timely and transparent investigations, and accurate tracking of all incidents of civilian casualties caused by Afghan national security forces and strengthen Government structures to enable improved monitoring, mitigation and accountability for civilian casualties caused by Afghan national security forces.
- Investigate all allegations of human right violations by Afghan national security forces, and prosecute and punish those found responsible as required under Afghan and international law.
- Disband Afghan Local Police groups with longstanding impunity for human rights violations and criminal acts, and investigate and prosecute allegations of human rights violations and criminal acts by Afghan Local Police members.
- Continue to disband and disarm all illegal armed groups.

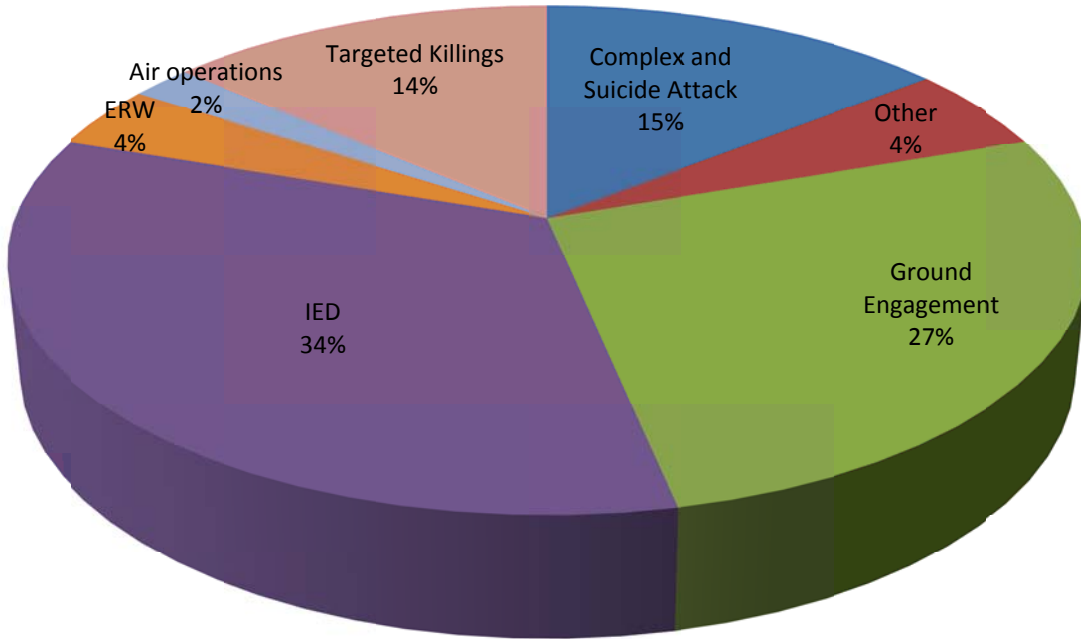
International Military Forces

- Increase support to Afghan national security forces to ensure they are sufficiently resourced, trained and equipped to command, control and effectively conduct counter-IED operations and IED-disposal, including exploitation in 2014-16.
- Prevent civilian harm by taking active measures to map, mark and clear unexploded ordnance from all international military bases and firing ranges that have closed since the onset of ISAF operations.
- Establish a mechanism in ISAF and Afghan national security forces that communicates the suspected presence of unexploded ordnance from aerial and ground operations to appropriate authorities and ensure the marking and clearance of suspect hazardous areas.

- Conduct thorough review of pre-engagement considerations and precautionary measures for offensive aerial operations to identify additional mechanisms to further minimize civilian harm.
- Conduct post-operation reviews and investigations in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan where civilian casualties occurred in operations that involved international security or intelligence forces, and take appropriate steps to ensure accountability, better operational practice and compensation.



Civilian Casualties by tactic and incident type January to December 2013



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