

**UNAMA****United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Press Statement<http://unama.unmissions.org>**UNAMA REMINDS INSURGENTS OF THEIR DUTY TO PROTECT CIVILIANS**

KABUL, 26 JUNE 2012 – Last week, 214 Afghan civilians were killed or wounded in 48 separate incidents in Afghanistan. Anti-government elements were responsible for 98 per cent of these civilian casualties. Two gruesome suicide attacks alone – one in Khost and a separate attack against the Spozhmai Hotel at Qargha Lake -- resulted in the deaths of at least 38 Afghan civilians with 38 others suffering injuries.

Anti-government elements have consistently used these tactics in locations frequented by ordinary citizens. They have also directly targeted civilians, resulting in a disproportionate number of civilian deaths and injuries -- all of which is in clear violation of international humanitarian law.

The plight of civilians in armed conflicts, including in Afghanistan, featured highly in a debate yesterday at the UN Security Council on the importance of protecting civilians. The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in his remarks urged parties to conflict to do more to comply with international humanitarian and human rights laws. He stressed: "All violations require our attention and action. But some demand particular scrutiny. Among them: the growing use of explosive weapons in populated areas."

He also urged for a more systematic engagement with non-state armed groups. These groups and their leaders, the Secretary-General said, must understand their responsibilities and the consequences of violating international humanitarian and human rights laws. As for civilians trapped in conflict, survival often depends on international aid, he noted. "We need to do more... much more... to ensure safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access."

Tomorrow, on 27 June, the Council will again consider Afghanistan and debate the UN Secretary-General's quarterly report on the country. The Secretary-General will reiterate the critical need for all parties to the conflict to do more to protect civilians – a point UNAMA has repeatedly drawn attention to. Afghan women, children and men have long paid a disproportionate price in terms of lives lost and blood spilled, particularly as a result of attacks by anti-government elements.

UNAMA has repeatedly noted that it is time for anti-government elements to live up to their public statements recognizing their duty to protect civilians and to take action to make sure that their attacks do not target civilians.

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

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