



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Afghanistan

Afghanistan – AFG38494 – Taliban
Targets – NGO and UN Workers –
Government Employees – Civilians – State
Protection, Kabul and Kandahar

7 April 2011

1. Are there recent reports of people working for NGOs or the UN being attacked by the Taliban or other fundamentalist groups in Kabul or elsewhere?

Reports indicate that people working for non-government organisations (NGOs) in Afghanistan, as well as people perceived to be associated with the international community, continue to be at risk of harm from armed opposition groups (AOGs), including the Taliban. Sources report incidents of harm towards both Afghan national and foreign NGO workers across Afghanistan, including in Kabul. Sources conflict on the degree to which NGO workers are deliberately targeted or are simply unintended casualties.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) states that Afghan nationals working for “some UN agencies or international and local non-governmental organizations (INGOs and NGOs, respectively) reportedly face intimidation, attacks, abduction and death at the hands of the Taliban and other armed anti-Government groups, particularly in areas where these groups are active”. Politically and criminally motivated abductions of NGO staff by anti-Government forces are reportedly commonplace, and increased “significantly” during 2010.¹

Human Rights Watch reports that civil society activists in general are regularly threatened and targeted with violence.² The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan concurs, also adding that individuals deciding to take up employment with development organisations are often conscious that “their decision may have life or death consequences”.³ It is noteworthy that many international NGOs operating in Afghanistan do not provide their staff with weapons, nor do they protect their employees and premises with armed guards.⁴

The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) reports that during 2010, there were 126 security incidents involving NGOs, in which 28 people died and 33 people were injured. This represents a 27 per cent drop in the total number of incidents, but a 42 per cent increase in fatalities of NGO workers from 2009. Of the 28 deaths, 22 were attributed to armed opposition groups, three to criminal incidents and a further three deaths occurring as casualties during clashes between government forces and armed opposition groups. Twenty of the 28 who died were Afghan

¹ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 12–13 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

² Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Afghanistan*, 24 January – Attachment 2

³ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March, p. 4
<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf>
– Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 3

⁴ ‘Criminal groups pose significant risk to NGOs’ 2010, *IRIN News*, 4 October
<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=90662> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 4

nationals. Abductions also increased in 2010, with 74 individuals, all Afghan nationals, being taken. The ANSO states that “without a doubt the purpose of some attacks is precisely what it seems to be, to kill or injure NGO staff”.⁵

There are several recent reports of United Nations and NGO workers being harmed across Afghanistan. These include:

- On 1 April 2011, seven UN workers were killed in northern Mazar-e Sharif during protests against the burning of a Koran by an American Pastor Wayne Sapp. The next day, hundreds of people took part in similar protests in Kandahar. The UN compound in Kandahar was stormed by protesters and a further ten people were killed, including UN workers and security guards. The Taliban denies responsibility for the attacks.⁶
- The latest fortnightly report from the ANSO reports that Eastern and Northern Afghanistan continually report the majority of incidents involving NGOs. So far this year, there have been 11 incidents involving NGOs, with three national NGO staff killed.⁷ However, NGO presence in West and South Afghanistan has remained unaffected by security incidents to date in 2011.⁸
- In September 2010, in Kunar province, a British aid worker was kidnapped by insurgents, and subsequently died during a rescue attempt.⁹
- In August 2010, ten employees of the NGO International Assistance Mission and three Afghan nationals working for Oxfam International died in Badakshan province in Northeast Afghanistan.¹⁰
- A team of eye medic aid workers were also shot in a remote province of the country in August 2010. The Taliban claimed responsibility but motivation for the attack was reportedly unclear.¹¹
- In July 2010, Taliban suicide bombers stormed a USAID compound in northern Kunduz province, killing two Afghan security staff and at least two foreign aid workers. *National Public Radio* reported that the attack was part of a campaign to halt development projects in the area.¹²
- The *Pajhwok Afghan News* reports that in May 2010, five UN workers were kidnapped by the Taliban in northern Baghlan province.¹³

⁵ The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office 2011, ‘ANSO Quarterly Data Report Q4 2010’ January, p. 9
[http://www.afgnsso.org/2010Q/ANSO20Quarterly%20Data%20Report%20\(Q4%202010\).pdf](http://www.afgnsso.org/2010Q/ANSO20Quarterly%20Data%20Report%20(Q4%202010).pdf) – Attachment 5

⁶ ‘Afghanistan: Deadly Kandahar protest at Koran burning’ 2011, *BBC News*, 2 April
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/world-south-asia-12944851> – Attachment 6

⁷ One death of the three is reported as an unintended casualty.

⁸ Afghanistan NGO Safety Office 2011, ‘The ANSO Report’, Issue 68, 16-28 February
[http://www.afgnsso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20\(16-28%20February%202011\)%20\(Read-Only\).pdf](http://www.afgnsso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20(16-28%20February%202011)%20(Read-Only).pdf) – Accessed 21 March 2011 – Attachment 7

⁹ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Afghanistan*, 24 January – Attachment 2

¹⁰ ‘Criminal groups pose significant risk to NGOs’ 2010, *IRIN News*, 4 October
<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=90662> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 4

¹¹ ‘Motive for Aid Worker Killings in Afghanistan Still Uncertain’ 2010, *Compass Direct*, 12 August – Attachment 8

¹² ‘Attack on USAID Compound in Afghanistan Kills 4’ 2010, *National Public Radio*, 2 July – Attachment 9

¹³ ‘Kidnapped UN workers freed’ 2010, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 17 May
<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2010/05/17/kidnapped-un-workers-freed> – Accessed 1 April 2011 – Attachment 10

- The Taliban also stormed a guesthouse used by the organisation in October 2009, 10 days prior to presidential elections.¹⁴ Five foreign UN employees, one Afghan civilian and two Afghan security staff died in the attack, which took place in Kabul. Whilst this attack occurred more than twelve months ago, it is noteworthy nonetheless, as its significance was such that over 600 foreign staff were subsequently relocated outside of Afghanistan.¹⁵

Those working for NGOs involved in demining are disproportionate victims of harm from AOGs, possibly due to their role in clearing battlefields.¹⁶ At least ten deminers were reportedly killed in 2010, while 23 were injured and 12 abducted due to targeted attacks by the Taliban and other armed opposition groups. Targeting of demining NGOs by AOGs is a particular problem in the Southern provinces.¹⁷ The ANSO also reports a “clear and direct opposition to the work of deminers”.¹⁸

It is also noted that women’s rights activists in particular are intimidated,¹⁹ and face “systematic violence and threats at the hands of anti-Government armed groups, local warlords and militias.”²⁰ Women working for international organisations may be targeted by virtue of simply being in the public sphere. Activists or humanitarian workers may be at risk as a result of simply being perceived to be associated with the international community.²¹

Despite the long list of incidents involving NGO workers, *IRIN News* quotes the director, ANSO as stating “[w]e don’t believe the Taliban have a strategic intent to target NGOs” and that in fact the Taliban sometimes prohibit attacks on NGOs in areas under their control. According to the article, the risk to non-government workers comes from collateral damage or being caught up in incidents for which they are not the primary target, and harm from criminal gangs.²² ANSO also reports that the presence of newer “irregular forces” such as criminal gangs may create a challenging and fluid power structure for NGOs to negotiate with.²³ The issue of civilian casualties is further discussed in the response to Question 6.

¹⁴ ‘UN staff killed in Kabul attack’ 2009, *BBC News*, 28 October – Attachment 11

¹⁵ Amnesty International 2010, *International Report – Afghanistan*, 28 May – Attachment 12

¹⁶ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 13 – <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

¹⁷ ‘Deminers in the Firing Line’ 2011, *IRIN News*, 18 January – Attachment 13

¹⁸ The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office 2011, ‘ANSO Quarterly Data Report Q4 2010’ January, p. 9 [http://www.afgnso.org/2010Q/ANSO%20Quarterly%20Data%20Report%20\(Q4%202010\).pdf](http://www.afgnso.org/2010Q/ANSO%20Quarterly%20Data%20Report%20(Q4%202010).pdf) – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 5

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Afghanistan*, 24 January – Attachment 2

²⁰ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 13 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

²¹ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 11–12 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

²² ‘Criminal groups pose significant risk to NGOs’ 2010, *IRIN News*, 4 October – <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=90662> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 4

²³ The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office 2011, ‘ANSO Quarterly Data Report Q4 2010’ January, p. 3 [http://www.afgnso.org/2010Q/ANSO%20Quarterly%20Data%20Report%20\(Q4%202010\).pdf](http://www.afgnso.org/2010Q/ANSO%20Quarterly%20Data%20Report%20(Q4%202010).pdf) – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 5

2. Are there any reports of family members of such people being attacked?

The UNHCR states that family members of humanitarian aid workers have been targeted by groups such as the Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami, particularly if they live in areas where aid is delivered.²⁴ However, no further reports on this issue or individual cases were located.

3. To what extent are people who work for the Afghan government targeted by the Taliban in Kabul or other places?

Sources indicate that officials, employees and supporters of the Government of Afghanistan at all levels remain at risk of being systematically targeted by AOGs, including the Taliban. This risk appears to be present throughout Afghanistan, but increased in areas controlled by anti-Government groups.²⁵

The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan reports that high level provincial officials such as governors and council members, civilians such as doctors and teachers and individuals perceived to be supportive of the Government of Afghanistan have been targeted and killed by anti-Government groups. Many have been targeted on suspicion of spying. At least 16 people were abducted in 2010, on suspicion of spying, at illegal checkpoints where anti-Government groups stopped vehicles to check for suspected government spies.²⁶

The UNHCR argues that persons imputed to support the Karzai Government and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) are at risk; Government officials and civil servants, Government-aligned tribal leaders and national cleric council members have all been targeted by armed opposition groups.²⁷ A report to US Congress reports that the Taliban's strategic goal remains to cause sufficient damage to the Government and international forces to promote a rapid withdrawal of troops. Civilians associated with the Government of Afghanistan are targeted to this end.²⁸

Several high profile provincial and deputy Governors have been targeted over the past 12 months by killings, explosive attacks and abductions.²⁹ A high profile victim in recent times was the Deputy Governor of Kandahar, who was killed in January 2011.³⁰

²⁴ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 12–13 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

²⁵ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 7 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

²⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf> – Accessed 31 March 2011, p. 17 – Attachment 3

²⁷ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 7 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

²⁸ Government of the United States of America 2010, *Report to Congress – Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, November, p. 42 – Attachment 14

²⁹ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 7 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

³⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan website 2011, 'Today's Afghan Headlines' source: *Tolo TV*, 13 January <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=4647&mid=5294&ItemID=12164> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 15

However, the risk does not appear to be limited to high-profile officials. In January 2011, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that “the Taliban expanded and strengthened its campaign of intimidation against a wider and larger group of civilians who worked for, or were perceived by the Taliban to be supportive of the Government of Afghanistan and international military forces.”³¹ Spiritual leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, recently ordered Taliban members to “capture and kill any Afghan who is supporting or working for Coalition forces or the Government of Afghanistan, as well as any Afghan women who are helping or providing information to Coalition forces”.³²

Security staff and police are particularly vulnerable to attack. For example, security staff were amongst those killed in the recent attacks on the UN compound in Kandahar.³³ A suicide attack targeting National Directorate of Security workers traveling by minibus killed two people in January 2011.³⁴ A UN Mission report notes that members of the recently established Afghan Local Police live in the community, mainly in rural areas where there is no national security force presence. There is a reportedly high risk that officers and their families will also become targets for AOGs.³⁵ The responses to Questions 7 and 8 contain further information on state protection and targeting of police.

In addition to employees, Government buildings are sometimes targeted by extremist groups. For instance in February, a suicide bomber attacked a census office in Kabul while civilians waited to collect identity cards. The *New York Times* reported that the target was reportedly the local district Governor and the aim was to derail a recruitment program for the Afghan Local Police.³⁶ During the same month, a rocket impacted in the vicinity of the Ministry of Defence.³⁷ In January 2010 around 20 militants targeted several ministries in the capital, killing at least ten people.³⁸

In the political realm, it is noted that the September 2010 election campaign period saw the Taliban claim responsibility for killing three candidates. Election monitors were threatened and abducted during this period, and female campaigners throughout Afghanistan also reported threats and intimidation.³⁹

³¹ UK Home Office 2011, *Operational Guidance Note: Afghanistan*, March, p. 8

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d8b3a232.html> – Accessed 4 April 2011 – Attachment 16

³² UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 8 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

³³ ‘Afghanistan: Deadly Kandahar protest at Koran burning’ 2011, *BBC News*, 2 April <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/world-south-asia-12944851> – Attachment 6

³⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan website 2011, ‘Today’s Afghan Headlines’ source: *Tolo TV*, 13 January <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=4647&mid=5294&ItemID=12164> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 15

³⁵ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf> – Accessed 31 March 2011, p. 41 – Attachment 3

³⁶ ‘31 Killed in Suicide Attack on Afghan Census Office’ 2011, *New York Times* website, 21 February <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/22/world/asia/22afghanistan.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 17

³⁷ Afghanistan NGO Safety Office 2011, ‘The ANSO Report’, Issue 68, 16-28 February [http://www.afgnsso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20\(16-28%20February%202011\)%20\(Read-Only\).pdf](http://www.afgnsso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20(16-28%20February%202011)%20(Read-Only).pdf) – Accessed 21 March 2011 – Attachment 7

³⁸ ‘Taliban militants attack Afghan capital’ 2010, *The Guardian*, 18 January – Attachment 18

³⁹ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Afghanistan*, 24 January – Attachment 2

4. Are there any reports of the targeting of close family members of such people?

The UNHCR states that family members of local and central government officials at all levels are at an increased risk of being targeted in areas controlled by anti-Government groups.⁴⁰ The UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan also reports that throughout 2010, “[p]ersons and relatives of persons perceived to be supportive of the Government of Afghanistan and/or international military forces, high-level provincial government officials, such as governors, district governors, *shura* and provincial council members, and religious elders and ordinary civilians such as doctors, teachers, students and construction workers were targeted and killed.”⁴¹ Family members of Afghan Local Police recruits also reportedly have a high risk of becoming targets for AOGs.⁴²

5. Are there any reports of people in Afghanistan having been targeted for having close relatives in foreign countries?

No reports were located to indicate that Afghan nationals are targeted purely on the basis of having close relatives overseas.

6. To what extent does the Taliban carry out attacks against civilians in Kabul?

Sources report that there have been a number of suicide attacks on ISAF and Government targets in Kabul in recent years, many of which result in civilian casualties. There are few reports of civilians specifically being targeted. The Taliban has a code of conduct which includes provisions which aim to reduce civilian casualties. However, it appears the code is not generally observed and that civilian casualties resulting from AOG activity are on the rise.⁴³

In January 2011, the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack at a Kabul supermarket, reportedly targeting the head of private security company Blackwater. According to an article in *The Age*, the attack “indicated a disconcerting level of Taliban surveillance”. The attack killed at least nine people.⁴⁴

In February 2011, two rockets were fired and impacted in the vicinity of two government buildings. Whilst there were no civilian casualties on that occasion, ANSO advises that such

⁴⁰ UNHCR 2010, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, 17 December, p. 8-10 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 1

⁴¹ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March, p. iii <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 3

⁴² United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March, p. 41 <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 3

⁴³ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March, p. iv <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 3

⁴⁴ ‘Taliban supermarket attack kills nine, but misses American target’ 2011, *The Age*, 30 January <http://www.theage.com.au/world/taliban-supermarket-attack-kills-nine-but-misses-american-target-20110129-1a90d.html> – Accessed 1 April 2011 – Attachment 19

indirect fire attacks tend to be inaccurate and thus pose a risk for civilians in the target area.⁴⁵ ANSO also cautions NGOs operating in the capital to be wary of future attacks on civilian venues which are high profile and easily accessible. This warning does not specifically mention the Taliban, but rather armed opposition groups in general.⁴⁶

More generally, sources suggest that anti-Government groups appear unwilling to discriminate between military and civilian targets when they employ explosives.⁴⁷ The Institute for War and Peace recently stated that 2011 suicide bombings by the Taliban have resulted in 400 deaths, with many victims being non-combatants.⁴⁸ A UN Mission report states that 2,777 civilians were killed in 2010. Seventy five per cent (2,080) of these deaths were attributed to AOGs, an increase of 28 per cent from 2009. Twenty one per cent of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detonations and 46 per cent of suicide attacks in 2010 resulted in civilian deaths and injuries. The report also states that the Afghani population has been “systematically terrorized” by unlawful warfare tactics used by armed opposition groups. A breakdown of civilian casualties by province is not available; however the UN does report that half of all civilian assassinations in 2010 occurred in the southern provinces.⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch attributes increased numbers of civilian casualties to increased insurgent activity.⁵⁰ According to the UN, the increased number of assassinations has fed a widespread perception that civilians are increasingly becoming targets in insurgent attacks.⁵¹

Generally, the Taliban has been known to target girls’ schools, causing harm to civilians and closing schools. It is also noteworthy that at least 30 civilians were killed and 31 wounded by Taliban attacks on election day in 2009.⁵²

7. To what extent does the Afghan state provide protection against attacks by the Taliban or other fundamentalist groups in Kabul?

In 2011, the UK Home Office reports that Kabul has largely been insulated from the worst violence Afghanistan has seen during the last decade, and is currently well-protected:

The U.S. military and Afghan security officials claimed to have killed or captured hundreds of would-be assailants around Kabul during 2010, significantly blunting the effectiveness of insurgent forces looking to target the capital. A series of checkpoints

⁴⁵ Afghanistan NGO Safety Office 2011, ‘The ANSO Report’, Issue 68, 16-28 February [http://www.afgnso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20\(16-28%20February%202011\)%20\(Read-Only\).pdf](http://www.afgnso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20(16-28%20February%202011)%20(Read-Only).pdf) – Accessed 21 March 2011 – Attachment 7

⁴⁶ Afghanistan NGO Safety Office 2011, ‘The ANSO Report’, Issue 67, 1-15 February, p. 2 [http://www.afgnso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20\(1-15%20February%202011\).pdf](http://www.afgnso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20(1-15%20February%202011).pdf) – Accessed 1 April 2011 – Attachment 20

⁴⁷ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March, p. 7 <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 3

⁴⁸ Institute for War and Peace Reporting 2011, *Taliban Step Up Pressure with Suicide Strikes*, 7 March <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d75d3e51a.html> – Accessed 4 April 2011 – Attachment 21

⁴⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf> – Accessed 31 March 2011, p. i – Attachment 3

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Afghanistan*, 24 January – Attachment 2

⁵¹ ‘Afghan civilian casualties rise 31 per cent in first six months of 2010’ 2010, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan website, source: Tolo TV, 10 August <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1741&ctl=Details&mid=1882&ItemID=9955> – Accessed 1 April 2011 – Attachment 22

⁵² Amnesty International 2010, *Annual Report 2010 – Afghanistan*, 28 May – Attachment 12

known as the ‘Ring of Steel’ has been erected around Kabul’s perimeter to provide the capital with an extra layer of protection.⁵³

Despite this, an Asia Foundation survey reports that at 21 per cent, the Central/Kabul region has the highest proportion of respondents who state they have “no confidence at all in government law enforcement services”.⁵⁴ However it is also noteworthy that 34 per cent of Central/Kabul respondents reported that they never feared for their personal safety, or for that of their families.⁵⁵

The Institute for War and Peace Reporting recently stated that Kabul has experienced a substantial drop in overall crime over the past six months, with a 17 per cent reduction in recorded serious crimes and a significant reduction in kidnappings. The head of criminal investigations within the Kabul police attributes the drop to improved information gathering, recruitment and training techniques; corruption-related suspensions; and the new power police have to open fire on suspects who attempt to escape police. Female officers have also been recruited, allowing female suspects to be searched during house searches. However the report quotes an academic as stating he is unconvinced that overall crime rates have fallen, particularly outside of Kabul.⁵⁶ This suggests that, if anything, Kabul experiences a comparatively good level of police protection from fundamentalist activity compared to some other areas of Afghanistan.

8. What is the current situation vis-à-vis state protection in Kandahar?

Sources indicate that Kandahar remains volatile, with reports of recent extremist activity, and that law enforcement figures have not only been unsuccessful in protecting civilians but are also themselves targets of insurgent attacks.

Over the course of 2010, the Taliban reportedly increased attacks in Kandahar province by at least 20 per cent. The Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO) reports that a sharp drop in attacks at the end of the year could be attributed to an “early winter reprieve”.⁵⁷

The UN reports a 248 per cent increase in civilian assassinations by armed opposition groups in Kandahar province for 2010.⁵⁸ In February, a public bathhouse was attacked by a suicide bomber, killing one civilian and injuring 16. There were also two devices detonated whilst a crowd watched a dog fight during the same fortnight, killing nine civilians and injuring five police and four civilians.⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch reports that the Red Cross has reported “close to a thousand new patients with weapon-related injuries in August and September 2010, double

⁵³ UK Home Office 2011, *Operational Guidance Note: Afghanistan*, March, p. 2

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d8b3a232.html> – Accessed 4 April 2011 – Attachment 16

⁵⁴ The Asia Foundation 2010, *Afghanistan in 2010: A Survey of the Afghan People*, 9 November, p. 35 – Attachment 23

⁵⁵ The Asia Foundation 2010, *Afghanistan in 2010: A Survey of the Afghan People*, 9 November, p. 29 – Attachment 23

⁵⁶ Institute for War and Peace Reporting 2011, ‘Open Season for Kabul Police’, UNHCR Refworld, 14 March <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d7f25492c.html> – Accessed 1 April 2011 – Attachment 24

⁵⁷ The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, ‘ANSO Quarterly Data Report Q4 2010’ January, p. 2

[http://www.afgnsso.org/2010Q/ANSO%20Quarterly%20Data%20Report%20\(Q4%202010\).pdf](http://www.afgnsso.org/2010Q/ANSO%20Quarterly%20Data%20Report%20(Q4%202010).pdf) – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 5

⁵⁸ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March, p. i

<http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/March%20PoC%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf> – Accessed 31 March 2011 – Attachment 3

⁵⁹ Afghanistan NGO Safety Office 2011, ‘The ANSO Report’, Issue 68, 16-28 February

[http://www.afgnsso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20\(16-28%20February%202011\)%20\(Read-Only\).pdf](http://www.afgnsso.org/2011/The%20ANSO%20Report%20(16-28%20February%202011)%20(Read-Only).pdf) – Accessed 21 March 2011 – Attachment 7

the previous year.”⁶⁰ As discussed in response to Question 6, around half of civilian assassinations in 2010 occurred in southern Afghanistan, where Kandahar is located.

The police are also targets for the Taliban in Kandahar. In February, a suicide car bomb exploded outside the Chief of Police’s house.⁶¹ The Chief was then targeted again with explosives on a separate occasion.⁶² *The Statesman* reports that the alleged target in the bathhouse suicide bombing mentioned above was a border police patrol officer.⁶³ ANSO reports an “extremely active” reporting period in early February which included the killing of an on-duty police officer, an attack and four-hour fight with security forces, targeting the Headquarters of the Afghanistan National Police.⁶⁴ ANSO also reports targeted killings of civilians who were associated with the police.⁶⁵ An Afghan police convoy was bombed on the Kandahar-Spin Boldak Main Road shortly after.⁶⁶

Other recent reports of attacks against prominent state targets in Kandahar were located. Recent notable attacks claimed by the Taliban include the killing of the Deputy Governor of Southern Kandahar in January 2011⁶⁷ and an attack on the Dand District Governor’s Convoy.⁶⁸

Attachments

1. UNHCR 2010, UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 17 December
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0b55c92.html> – Accessed 31 March 2011.
2. Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Afghanistan*, 24 January.
3. United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2011, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, March
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