

Beat: Local

AFGHAN CASUALTIES HIT RECORD HIGH 11 000 IN 2015 ““ UN REPORT

2015 LEFT MORE THAN 3,500 CIVILIANS DEAD

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USPA NEWS - The United Nations reported on February 14, 2016, that Afghan hostilities in 2015 left more than 3,500 civilians dead, including an unprecedented number of children one in four casualties over the past year was a child - and nearly 7,500 others wounded, making this the highest number of civilian...

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'This report records yet another rise in the number of civilians hurt or killed. The harm done to civilians is totally unacceptable,' said Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of the UN Assistance Mission in the country (UNAMA), in a press release.

The annual report, produced by the UNAMA in coordination with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Office (OHCHR), shows that increased ground fighting in and around populated areas, along with suicide and other attacks in major cities, were the main causes of conflict-related civilian deaths and injuries in 2015.

'We call on those inflicting this pain on the people of Afghanistan to take concrete action to protect civilians and put a stop to the killing and maiming of civilians in 2016,' stressed Mr. Haysom.

UNAMA documented 11,002 civilian casualties (3,545 deaths and 7,457 injured) in 2015, exceeding the previous record levels of civilian casualties that occurred in 2014. The latest figures show an overall increase of four per cent during 2015 in total civilian casualties from the previous year. UNAMA began its systematic documentation of civilian casualties in 2009.

At a press conference today in Kabul, Mr. Haysom told reporters that while the figures in themselves are 'awful,' the statistics and percentages contained in the report do not really reflect the real horror of the phenomenon.

'The real cost we are talking about in these figures is measured in the maimed bodies of children, the communities who have to live with loss, the grief of colleagues and relatives, the families who have to make do without a breadwinner, the parents who grieve for lost children, the children who grieve for lost parents [“] these are the real consequences of the acts described in this report,' he emphasized.

According the report, ground engagements between parties to the conflict caused the highest number of total civilian casualties (fatalities and injuries), followed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide and complex attacks. Ground engagements caused the most fatalities among civilians, followed by targeted and deliberate killings.

'The people of Afghanistan continue to suffer brutal and unprincipled attacks that are forbidden under international law,' UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in the press release, adding that this is happening with almost complete impunity.

'The perpetrators of the violations, documented by UNAMA and my staff, must be held to account,' Mr. Zeid underscored, adding that the international community should emphasize far more vigorously that the rights of civilians should be protected.

Some of the report's other key findings highlight that anti-Government elements continued to cause the most harm ““ 62 % of all civilian casualties ““ despite a 10 % reduction from 2014 in the total civilian casualties resulting from their attacks.

Notwithstanding the overall decrease, the report documents anti-Government elements increasing use of some tactics that deliberately or indiscriminately cause civilian harm, including targeted killings of civilians, complex and suicide attacks, as well as indiscriminate

and illegal pressure-plate IEDs.

Civilian deaths and injuries caused by pro-Government forces caused 17 % of civilian casualties ““ 14 % from Afghan security forces, 2 % from international military forces, and 1 % from pro-Government armed groups. The report documents increased civilian casualties caused by pro-Government forces, including during ground engagements, aerial operations, and the activities of pro-Government armed groups.

In 2015, UNAMA documented a 37 % increase in women casualties and a 14 % increase in child casualties.

'In 2015, the conflict caused extreme harm to the civilian population, with particularly appalling consequences for children. Unprecedented numbers of children were needlessly killed and injured last year ““ one in four casualties in 2015 was a child,' said Danielle Bell, UNAMA Director of Human Rights. 'Other children suffered the loss of parents, and increasingly their mothers, sisters, and female role models ““ one in 10 casualties was a woman.'

Source : United Nations

Ruby BIRD

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