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19th June 2013

A commentary on the June 2013 Afghanistan Operational Guidance Note

This commentary identifies what the ‘Still Human Still Here’ coalition considers to be the main inconsistencies and omissions between the currently available country of origin information (COI) and case law on Afghanistan and the conclusions reached in the June 2013 Afghanistan Operational Guidance Note (OGN) issued by the UK Border Agency. Where we believe inconsistencies have been identified, the relevant section of the OGN is highlighted in blue.

An index of full sources of the COI referred to in this commentary is also provided at the end of the document.

This commentary is a guide for legal practitioners and decision-makers in respect of the relevant COI, by reference to the sections of the Operational Guidance Note on Afghanistan issued in June 2013. Access the complete OGN on Afghanistan [here](#).

The document should be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. This document should not be submitted as evidence to the UK Border Agency, the Tribunal or other decision makers in asylum applications or appeals. However, legal representatives are welcome to submit the COI referred to in this document to decision makers (including judges) to help in the accurate determination of an asylum claim or appeal.

The COI referred to in this document is not exhaustive and should always be complemented by case-specific COI research.

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2. Country Assessment

2.2 Actors of protection

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

2.2.15 Conclusion: If the applicant's fear is of ill-treatment/persecution by the state authorities, or by agents acting on behalf of the state, then consideration needs to be given as to whether the fear is based on a localised, random or national threat. It should be noted that the role of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is not as a source of protection for the individual citizen.

2.2.16 If the ill-treatment/persecution is at the hands of non-state agents, then the provision of state protection outside of Kabul and other main cities might not be accessible due to the structural weakness of the security services. In Kabul and other cities the authorities are in general willing to offer protection to citizens; however their willingness and ability to do so needs to be judged against the individuals facts of each claim. It is important therefore that caseworkers refer to the most up to date country information to ascertain whether in the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision is made, effective protection is available for an individual applicant, taking full account of their personal circumstances.

2.2.17 Effective protection is generally not available, even in Kabul, for women (see section 3.12.11)

It is considered that the COI provided at paragraphs 2.2.2 – 2.2.14 of the OGN is generally consistent with the COI available in the public domain with regards to the inability of the police to provide effective protection in Afghanistan. In addition to setting out the structure of the police force (paragraphs 2.2.2 and 2.2.3) and NATO's role (2.2.10), the COI included illustrates issues with the vetting of police recruits and local-level oversight (2.2.4); limited female police officers (2.2.5); human rights abuses committed by the police (2.2.6 and 2.2.9), lack of accountability and impunity (2.2.7 and 2.2.8); lack of training, illiteracy and corruption (2.2.8), weaknesses and bias of the judicial system (2.2.11 and 2.2.13).

Given that these structural weaknesses affect the security forces in general, not just in those areas outside of Kabul and other main cities, it is questionable whether effective protection would ever be accessible in Afghanistan. Whilst the willingness and ability of the authorities to provide protection should be assessed based on the individual facts of each claim, as the OGN recognises, there are additional structural issues undermining police protection in Kabul not addressed in the OGN which are relevant for such cases.

Non-exhaustive, illustrative COI has been presented on the following additional issues which undermine the effectiveness of the police focusing on the situation specific to Kabul. Some COI which refers to the situation for the police in general has been presented to provide greater context. The sources of COI are mainly from 2013, although where further background was considered relevant, older sources have been included:

- *Capacity of police force, especially in Kabul*
- *Ability of the police to protect against insurgent attacks, especially in Kabul*
- *Insurgent infiltration of the security forces, especially in Kabul*

In order to assist in conducting further research on insurgent attacks in Kabul, or elsewhere in Afghanistan, a *database of useful sources to consult on the security situation in Afghanistan* has also been included in the Appendix.

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Capacity of police force, especially in Kabul

➤ [Centre for Strategic and International Studies, The Afghan War in 2013: Meeting the Challenges of Transition -- Volume III: Security and the ANSF, May 2013](#)

[...] Accepting the Real-World Capability of the Police Forces

It is almost as dangerous to lump all of the elements of the Afghan police together as it is to indulge in the absurdity of focusing on 352,000 men as a measure of progress when it includes so many different force elements and excludes critical elements like the ALP [Afghan Local Police].

Each element of the police forces has a radically different mix of capabilities; and level of political interference, corruption, and ties to power brokers and criminal networks. Each element has very good units within it, but the larger elements all have many mediocre and some bad and corrupt units as well. The fact that current rating systems ignore these realities out of political considerations (and sometimes a basic lack of professional competence) does not make them any less real.

Dealing with Key Force-Building Challenges

The ANP [Afghan National Police] is a very mixed force—subject to politics, power brokers, and corruption to a far greater extent than the ANA [Afghan National Army]. The AUP [Afghan Uniform Police] and Afghan Border Police (ABP) are critically dependent on effective governance and the other elements of the rule of law—capabilities lacking or critically weak and corrupt in at least half the districts in the country. While recent reports do reflect real progress, such progress needs to be kept in far more careful perspective than is the case for the ANA, particularly because the current rating systems—while politically correct—are fundamentally dishonest and incompetent because they do not assess either the level of support from governance and the other elements of the rule of law, or the level of political interference, corruption, and ties to power brokers and criminal networks. [...]

The scale of the problems involved are summarized in Figure 32 to Figure 35:

- Figure 32 shows the pace of the buildup in manpower and the level of problems in attrition and turnover that still need to be addressed. The problems involved are more serious than with the ANA, but like the ANA, it should be stressed that the goal is not to meet the total in manpower, but to create a stable manpower base with the proper training, and steadily more experienced officers and manpower. Like all other aspects of the sometimes - mindless race to 352,000, quantity per se rarely tells in the combat performance of an inexperienced and half-formed force. Quality always does.

- Figure 33 highlights the progress in manning by corps and equipment. It is critical to understand that most of the ANP will succeed or fail at the local and district levels and on the basis of the interaction between units at the District level with local governance; the other elements of the rule of law; and the relative power of insurgents, criminals, power brokers, militias, and the ALP:

Partnering with the ANP will be far harder after the 2014 election and as US and other ISAF forces and advisors withdraw, and partnering at the MoIA [Ministry of Interior Affairs] and provincial levels can only have a limited impact after 2014. Nevertheless, the ANP will need outside advisors and partners through 2016 to 2018. In practice, trying to do this from Kabul, rather than from at least several facilities in the “four corners” of the country, will again be a recipe for exceptional risk. It will take whatever presence Afghan politics—and US/allied funding and political will—makes practical to build understanding, personal relationships, and credibility. This will be particularly true in trying to deal with serious problems at the district Police Chief level and in governance and the rest of the elements of a prompt justice system.

As for equipment, the costs shown in Figure 32 are scarcely a measure of progress, and the ANA is almost certain to have several years to half a decade in which it will need logistics push and equipment resupply and replacement to make up for its problems in logistics and maintenance. The ANA does need “tough love” to push it into self-reliance, but “tough love” does not consist of letting it walk off a cliff as a learning experience. It is also clear that the present equipment mix and T O & Es [Tables of Organisation and Equipment] will not survive engagement with reality, will evolve to absorb the equipment the US and its allies leave behind, and must adapt to suit Afghan experience versus US and ISAF theory.

Figure 34 reinforces the warning given earlier about the MoD and MoIA: These remain major challenges in force building and will continue to pose challenges through at least 2016-2018. The MoIA is as important to ANP development as the MoD is to ANA development.

Figure 34 shows that the MoIA has considerably more internal problems in moving towards a successful Transition. Once again, even if one could ignore the reality that Afghan politics tend to be a blood sport, the uncertain leadership that may emerge after 2014, the risk of some eventual move towards a coup,

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corruption and the impact of political power brokers, and ethnic/sectarian/tribal divisions—there would still be a major lack of experience and professional competence and a need to create and adapt planning and management systems through the MoD.

- Figure 35 shows the relative level of progress in force building using force generation metrics that again are an increasingly poor measures of future combat capability. The CUAT and CM force rating systems shown in Figure 34 are not without value, but they are largely measures of whether a force has been generated with all of the previous measures and can meet some kind of limited test for independent combat operations. Historically, they are very limited measures of how well a force does in combat over time and particularly given the caveats about the local character of most police operations; and the importance of politics, power brokers, tribal/ethnic/sectarian factions, corruption, ties to criminal networks, and accommodation with insurgents or local militia and armed forces.

- Moreover, the ANP and outside assistance efforts need to focus on the key elements of the order of battle and not manpower goals or doing everything at once:

- Elements of 2 SOF [Special Operations Forces] commands
- 6 Civil order police brigades

Once again, the time for a focus on force generation is over. The time for a focus on force effectiveness is now. There is only one year until Transition, and the report identifies many areas of continuing challenges that make current transfer plans seem more cosmetic than real.

[...] Uncertain Progress in Many ANP Force Elements: Setting the Stage

There are far more serious limitations to the development effort for the various parts of the ANP than is the case for the ANA. The 2011 Department of Defense Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan provides a good starting point for assessing the limits in progress to date:[...]

[...] Dealing Realistically with the Afghan Police Force

It has long been clear that generating effective police forces presents even more problems than generating an effective ANA, and that adequate outside funding and trainers/mentors/partners will be critical. Moreover, success will be far more dependent on the level of outside aid and funding in civil programs.

Official reporting on the various elements of the ANP has disguised a corrupt force with many elements that are actively involved in power brokering and which has little overall counterinsurgency capability.

This force alienates many Afghans, and is not supported by the necessary elements of governance and other parts of the justice system in much—if not most—of Afghanistan. Corruption and incompetence are major problems in Kabul as well as most other areas.

The majority of current indicators as well as experience in past efforts to build regular police efforts in wartime—such as in Iraq—warn that the bulk of the Afghan police will be corrupt and have at best limited effectiveness. Nothing can be done from the outside that will determine the relative post-Transition strength of the central government versus local power brokers in controlling the police, or the rise of local police leaders that become the equivalent of mini-warlords. The question is not how good the AUP and ABP will become as Transition proceeds, but how bad.

The answer is that the best elements of the police will continue to support the central government and the MOIA, but that most of the police are likely to remain as they are. Other elements will become tied to local power brokers, while still other elements will become passive or reach a modus vivendi with any insurgent or hostile group that threatens them. The Western dream of creating an effective civil police force will not survive Transition and engagement with reality in much, if not most, of the country.

The end result will often be corrupt or passive elements tied to local leaders or that cooperate with insurgents. This will be the result not only of problems within key elements of the police force, but also of a lack of effective civil governance and the other elements of the rule of law in the field—without the support and control of which a civil police force cannot be effective. The failure to tie the assessment of police development to these other two criteria for success has made current effectiveness ratings of the ANP largely meaningless—a problem compounded by deliberately ignoring the scale of corruption.

Moreover, even if these problems did not exist, the entire police development effort would be limited by the lack of progress in governance or the creation of the other elements comprising the rule of law and the permeating climate of corruption, interference by power brokers, and the impact of criminal networks. In addition, there is already growing political pressure that has the potential to divide the ANSF by ethnicity and may be a prelude to post- withdrawal power struggles.

Furthermore, corruption is endemic within the police, as is the abuse of power and extortion. The unclassified readiness and capability assessment systems currently being used to show progress within the

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ANP are virtually meaningless since they do not assess the integrity of police units. Worse, unclassified reporting does not indicate the scale of police coverage in any given district, show whether the other elements of governance and the justice system are present, or whether there are even detention facilities. No unclassified effort is made to assess areas where the police (and sometimes the ANA) do not interfere with insurgent operations or have de facto arrangements that allow both to operate in ways that affect commerce, transportation, and Transition. The present system for reporting on progress in the police is almost solely oriented towards force generation and support of counterinsurgency. The system that ISAF uses to assess the ANP (which is nearly identical to the ANA assessment system) overstates the capabilities of the police because it focuses on manning, equipping, and training—instead of focusing on more important factors such as corruption, loyalty, and the functioning of the justice system. The ANP is essentially being trained to become a light paramilitary counter-insurgency (COIN) force, with little in the way of traditional police training. In most areas, the police are not linked to a functioning justice system at all. These issues affect every aspect of the Afghan government. Moreover, the present separation of the police development effort from matching efforts to improve governance and the rule of law creates yet another set of problems. Police forces cannot operate in a vacuum. They need a successful government presence and popular governance to win the support of the people and support for their justice efforts. There must be prompt justice that the people accept and find fair enough to support or tolerate. Incarceration must set acceptable standards and jails must not become training and indoctrination facilities for insurgents and criminal networks. [...]

➤ [UN General Assembly, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General, 5 March 2013](#)

[...] 14. As at 25 December, the number of Afghan National Police personnel stood at 148,983 and Afghan National Army soldiers at 181,950, against surge targets of 152,000 and 195,000, respectively. In a joint statement issued on 12 January, the Presidents of Afghanistan and the United States reaffirmed that strengthening Afghan capabilities, including through the accelerated provision of appropriate equipment and enablers, was a key priority. The number of Afghan Public Protection Force personnel currently stands at 13,407. [...]

➤ [U.S. Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012](#)

[...] 2.6: AFGHAN NATIONAL POLICE CAPACITY AND GROWTH

As with the ANA, the ANP continued to make steady progress, increasing in size and capability during the reporting period. The ANP's growing operational effectiveness was demonstrated in an increase in capability ratings during the reporting period. Although progress was not uniform across all sections of the ANP, some units, such as the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), are now highly effective, frequently partnering with ISAF forces in successful operations. Progress has been less rapid in other areas, such as the development of ANP logistics capabilities, and the development of the Afghan Border Police. The ANP remain significantly behind their ANA counterparts in developing the capabilities necessary to transfer to full Afghan lead by the end of 2014. [...]

The ANP did not meet its end-strength growth targets this reporting period, finishing 8,548 below the target goal of 155,706. Earlier this year, the ANP were recruiting at a pace to achieve the October objective ahead of schedule. However, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) ceased recruiting during April 2012 to focus on rebalancing ANP assets. The ANP had more low-level recruits than necessary at the time, but was facing a shortage of officers and NCOs. The MoI opted to pause input of new (and mostly low-level) recruits to focus on ensuring that officers and NCOs were serving in actual officer and NCO billets, as well as to effect the reassignment of personnel from over-strength units to under-strength units. The MoI also used the recruiting pause to improve overall force quality by using training capacity to provide NCO training for promotable patrolmen and to train untrained patrolmen. Although this pause will slightly delay ANP from meeting its end-state force growth goal, NTM-A sees this as a positive sign of the MoI's increasing independence and ability to assess its own recruiting needs accurately. [...]

The ANP generally reflects the ethnic make-up of local communities, as personnel typically serve in the area where they join the force. However, when aggregated at the national level, Tajiks are significantly overrepresented in the force and Pashtuns are represented equivalent to the Afghan population, but Hazara, Uzbeks, and other ethnic groups are underrepresented to varying degrees. Attrition²⁵ in the ANP

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remained relatively steady during the reporting period, averaging 1.1 percent, consistent with the goal of 1.4 percent.

[...] TRAINING

[...] The training priority over the coming months will focus on supporting training for promotable patrolmen, replacing losses due to attrition, and shifting the focus of the ANP from COIN missions to a rule-of-law-based police force. [...]

EQUIPPING

The ANP remains under-equipped as a result of fielding challenges, including battle loss replacement needs and the closure of Pakistani GLOCs earlier this year. Distribution of vehicles in particular was slowed by the GLOC closures. [...]

LOGISTICS CAPABILITIES

During the reporting period, the ANP logistics system has made steady progress toward self sufficiency, although major challenges remain. As a result of a deliberate decision to place initial focus of force generation on ANP policing units, the development of enablers – in particular logistics capabilities – was delayed, and ANP logistics capabilities are not expected to be self-sufficient until late 2014. [...]

ANP logistics nodes at the regional level and below continue to require Coalition assistance in order to effectively provide sustainment. The biggest logistics challenges include the recruitment of specialized policemen and the retention of trained logisticians, while ensuring fielded equipment is operational. Additionally, logistics continues to challenge the operational readiness of the ALP. Each District Chief of Police is authorized three AUP personnel to assist in ALP management and supply; however, the level of support varies from district to district. NTM-A is working with available ALP logisticians to establish better accountability of issued equipment, better coordination of services, and improved knowledge of the logistics system. [...]

Ability of the police to protect against insurgent attacks, especially in Kabul

➤ [Reuters, Explosion in Kabul coincides with Afghan security handover, 18 June 2013](#)

[...] A bomb targeted a senior Shia Muslim cleric in the west of Kabul on Tuesday, police said, shortly before the international military coalition marked its final handover of security to national forces.

At least three civilians were killed and 21 wounded in the blast, which is bound to fuel concern over how the 352,000-strong Afghan security forces will tackle an intensifying insurgency after most foreign combat troops leave the country by the end of 2014.

The explosion happened as Mohammad Mohaqiq, a prominent Hazara politician and the country's senior Shia cleric, passed by the area in a convoy, interior ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said.

Mohaqiq is also a senior member of the body set up by President Hamid Karzai in 2010 to help broker a peace pact with the Taliban, the High Peace Council.

Mohaqiq escaped unscathed, though several of his bodyguards were wounded, a police spokesman said.

The attack came a week after two large-scale attacks in Kabul claimed by the Taliban, with militants attacking the capital's airport on 10 June, and a suicide bomber killing at least 17 people outside the supreme court the next day.

The explosion occurred 90 minutes before hundreds of local and international officials watched a ceremony on the outskirts of the capital to mark the security handover of the final tranche of provinces and districts to Afghan control. [...]

➤ [Agence France-Presse, Taliban bomber kills 15 at top Afghan court, 11 June 2013](#)

[...] A Taliban suicide car bomber on Tuesday targeted staff at Afghanistan's top court, killing 15 civilians and wounding 40 others in the second attack in two days in the heavily fortified capital, police said.

Women and children were among those killed and injured in the powerful explosion at the entrance to the Supreme Court, near the US embassy as buses waited to take court staff home at the end of the working day, officials said.

The Taliban claimed responsibility and threatened further attacks on the judiciary if it continued to sentence to death members of its militia.

The bomber struck at around 4:00 pm (1130 GMT) in the crowded area, close to a block of residential flats home to middle-class Afghans.[...]

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Tuesday's attack was the deadliest in Kabul since May 16 when a suicide car bomb struck a foreign military convoy, killing 15 people including five Americans. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Insurgents Attack Kabul Airport, 10 June 2013](#)

[...] An attack on the main airport in the Afghan capital, Kabul, by Taliban insurgents has ended following a long gunbattle.

Kabul police chief Ayub Salangi told journalists all the attackers had been killed by Afghan security forces.

"The number of the enemy in the area was seven. Two of them carried out suicide attacks and five other enemies have been killed by security forces," Salangi said. "As of now, the moment I am talking to you, thank God, security forces have not suffered any casualties."

The airport is also the site of NATO command headquarters.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid earlier said the Taliban had launched the attack and were targeting NATO.

However, Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqi disputed the Taliban's spokesman's claim.

"It seems their main aim was to kill or injure civilians," Sediqi said. "The site of the attack is a residential area north of the airport. The Taliban spokesman's claim that they have targeted the military guard [at the airport] is simply a lie. [The Taliban] are always lying and deceiving the people."

Kabul police said that insurgents wearing suicide vests had taken over one or two buildings under construction near the airport and from there had launched their assault on the NATO headquarters at the airport.

Police said they were searching the surrounding area for insurgents.

The attack began at 4:30 a.m. and caused authorities to cancel all flights in and out of Kabul's international airport.

The airport was reopened shortly after the incident was over.

Officials said there was no damage to the runway or the airport itself.

The Taliban has launched several major attacks in the capital and elsewhere in the country since the militant group announced its "spring offensive" against foreign military bases and diplomatic posts in April. [...]

➤ [Afghanistan Analysts Network \(Thomas Ruttig\), After the 'operational pause': How big is the insurgents' 2013 spring offensive? 2 June 2013](#)

[...] With two high-profile attacks in Kabul and one in Jalalabad in the two last weeks, Afghanistan's insurgents seem to have made true on their promise of a 'monumental' spring offensive. In terms of propaganda, the three attacks were successful: the media in Afghanistan and abroad gave the incidents wide coverage. AAN Co-Director Thomas Ruttig has been investigating insurgent activity over the past six months and comes to the conclusion that the level of violence this year has been high, approximately on a par with 2011, which was the worst year since the war began in 2001. There are larger concentrations and bolder attacks by the insurgents, combined with an influx of foreign fighters and madrassa students from Pakistan, although so far, mainly operating in peripheral areas. This could mean, however, the start of a build-up for more powerful attacks over the summer and into 2014. With the pending withdrawal of NATO combat forces, the Afghan war seems slowly to be changing its character, looking less like an insurgency against a foreign 'occupation' and more of a struggle between two indigenous contenders for power.

After the recent insurgent attacks in Kabul and Jalalabad it has been widely debated whether there has actually been an upsurge of violence this year, particularly since the Taleban announcement, on 27 April 2013, of the start of what they said would be a 'monumental' spring offensive, dubbed 'Khaled ben Walid', after a general and companion of the Prophet Muhammad, who united the Arabian peninsula under a caliphate for the first time in history.

In order to answer how violent 2013 has been so far, a focus on Kabul or, more generally, urban centres is not sufficient. Much of the violence is happening in rural areas. In trying to assess the scale of the fighting, it is a pity that ISAF has stopped its regular (if not comprehensive)(1) reporting of insurgent activity (it argued that the Afghan government is in the lead now and should do the reporting – which it is not). That means the only country-wide sets of data still publicly available comes from ANSO, the Afghan NGO Safety Office which publishes quarterly, and the United Nations mission's human rights team – which monitors civilian casualties and publishes bi-annually. Another source is media reporting, which, although not

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covering all incidents in the provinces, provides a fairly good picture because it covers at least most of the more extensive insurgent operations.

Although ANSO's report for the second quarter is not expected until mid-July, its data on insurgent activity in the first quarter of the year, which does not cover the high-profile May attacks, already shows that the total the number of insurgent attacks has grown by 47 per cent, compared with the first quarter of 2012. 25 out of 34 provinces had a higher rate of incidents and 14 even exceeded the peak year 2011. ANSO predicts that 'the current re-escalation trend will be preserved throughout the entire season, that 2013 is set to become the second most violent year after 2011' and that the 'volume of suicide/complex attacks in Kabul ... should be closer to that of 2011 than 2012'. According to the UN, the number of civilian casualties is also already up this year. The ICRC has said violence is cutting off Afghans from basic services in even greater numbers.

ANSO has concluded that these figures already challenge 'the linear logic that the shrinking [international military] presence will result in less military determination by the [Taliban]' and that 'the downturn [in violence] noted last year was not reflective of a permanently degraded [insurgent] capability but rather linked to the [armed] opposition adopting an operational pause ... which since has come to an end'. [...]

The Taliban, including the Haqqani network, continue to conduct high-profile attacks in the Afghan capital. This seems aimed at attracting international media and possibly 'donor' attention as well as spreading uncertainty among the Afghan population, government and armed forces, by projecting that the insurgency can hit everywhere in the country, penetrating even ANSF's 'rings of steel' around major city centres. The availability and use of ANSF uniforms or even (as in the case of their 14 September 2012 night attack against the airfield of Camp Bastion) western army uniforms facilitate such surprise attacks. (A crack down on uniform sales started in 2011 has obviously failed, see here). Such high-profile strikes in urban centres, even if successful, will not alter the strategic situation with the government and international forces controlling urban centres and main transport routes. [...]

Another trend in 2013 is that the Taliban attack and temporarily try to take over district centres in more peripheral areas, using concentrations of up to several hundred fighters. This seems to be happening for the first time since 2006/07 when the Taliban even established fortified positions in districts just outside Kandahar, something which was interpreted as the preparation for an attack on the city itself. It was only to be prevented by massive US-Canadian counter-attacks. Allied airpower, so far, makes sure that today, if take-overs of district centres happen, the Taliban are pushed out soon again. Such moves by the Taliban seem aimed primarily at showing strength and testing the capabilities of the ANSF and scoping out how far the IMF will still support Afghan allies. At the same time, by quickly withdrawing, they minimise losses. It cannot be excluded, however, that such attacks might turn into attempts to occupy territory longer term. All in all, however, the ANSF and their western allies are so far able to prevent territorial gains by the insurgents; the government still holds all provincial and most district capitals.

The ANSF have become more professional in fighting insurgents during these incidents. Their capacity in preventing attacks, however, seems to have remained limited, despite periodic reports of foiled attacks (see one example here) the validity of which is difficult to establish. Even ISAF, usually more positive about Afghan developments, stated after the 29 May 2013 attack on the provincial governor's office in Panjshir that it 'will heighten concerns about the militants' ability to strike in districts where they have little presence or public support'. [...]

➤ [BBC, Major attack on Afghan capital 'thwarted', 30 May 2013](#)

[...] A potentially devastating attack on the Afghan capital has been foiled and a large amount of weapons recovered, the Afghan intelligence agency has said.

The National Directorate of Security said its forces carried out a raid on a militant hide-out in Kabul.

An insurgent of the Pakistan-based militant Haqqani network was killed and six others arrested, it said.

The network - which has links to al-Qaeda and the Taliban - has carried out a series of high-profile attacks.

Most have been against foreign troops in Afghanistan. The US has long described it as a major threat and last year designated it as a terrorist organisation.

Militant groups including the Taliban have regularly targeted Kabul.

On Friday security forces fought insurgents for hours in the centre of Kabul, after a major explosion shook the city. At least two people and a number of militants were killed. [...]

➤ [Pahjwok Afghan News, 5 AWCC guards killed in Kabul bomb attack, 28 May 2013](#)

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[...] The Afghan Wireless Communication Company (AWCC) chairman survived a roadside bomb explosion that killed his five bodyguards in the Qarah Bagh district of central Kabul province, police said on Tuesday. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Afghan Suicide Bomber Blows Himself Up, Mosque Blast Kills Many, 25 May 2013](#)

[...] An ostensible suicide bomber has died in the Afghan capital after his explosives-laden vest went off prematurely.

Police said that the man's suicide vest went off on May 25 after he left a house in Kabul's suburbs.

The explosion injured no one else. [...]

➤ [Agence France-Presse, Policeman, five gunmen killed in Kabul Taliban attack, 24 May 2013](#)

[...] Explosions rocked central Kabul for several hours on Friday after Taliban gunmen launched a major suicide and gun attack centred on a compound of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

One police officer was killed and five militants were shot dead as security forces hunted down the attackers, with prolonged bursts of gunfire and grenade blasts heard across the Afghan capital.

A United Nations building and several other official premises were caught up in the coordinated assault that started when a suicide car bomb sent a plume of dark smoke into the sky.

Commandos shot dead five gunmen who were firing and throwing grenades from a building, interior ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi told AFP.

One policeman was killed by the suicide car bomb and at least five local civilians and two police officers were injured, he said.

No other fatalities were immediately reported, but an Italian woman working for IOM was seriously wounded by a grenade explosion.

"I strongly condemn today's terrorist attack centred on a compound of the International Organization for Migration," Jan Kubis, head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), said in a statement.

"Three IOM staff members were injured, one seriously. A staff member from the International Labour Organization was also injured." [...]

The suicide bombing on the NATO convoy on May 16 was the first major attack in Kabul since March 9, when a bomber on a bicycle killed nine people outside the defence ministry during a visit by US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel.

The attacks further underline the capital's vulnerability to militant assaults as 100,000 NATO troops gradually withdraw from Afghanistan ahead of the end of international combat operations next year. [...]

➤ [Agence France-Presse, Kabul suicide bombing of NATO convoy kills 15, 16 May 2013](#)

[...] A suicide car bomb targeted a foreign military convoy in Kabul on Thursday, killing 15 people including five Americans in the deadliest attack in the Afghan capital for nearly a year, officials said.

The powerful explosion, which struck at 8:00 am (0330 GMT) in the Shah Shaheed southeastern residential district, also injured about 40 passers-by including many children going to school, officials said.

Nine Afghans including two children died, along with two US soldiers and four NATO-contracted civilians who were travelling through the city's busy rush-hour traffic.

A Western military source in Kabul said the two soldiers and three of the contractors were from the United States, without giving further details.

Hezb-i-Islami, an insurgent group that is independent from Taliban militant forces, claimed responsibility for the attack.

One NATO sports utility vehicle was completely destroyed in the blast and surrounding streets were quickly cordoned off as US troops arrived at the scene. Schoolgirls fled the area in tears as the clean-up operation began.

Thursday's bomb was the first major attack in Kabul since March 9 when a suicide bomber on a bicycle killed nine people outside the defence ministry during a visit by US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel.

It further underlined the capital's vulnerability to militant assaults as 100,000 NATO troops gradually withdraw from Afghanistan ahead of the end of international combat operations next year.

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➤ [US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2013 Annual Report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 30 April 2013](#)

[...] Background

[...] Dissenting members of the majority faith and minority religious communities continue to face significant restrictions on the free practice of religion. Governmental and non-state actors have taken action against individuals for activity deemed to be “unIslamic.” In addition, the Afghan government remains unable to protect citizens against violence and intimidation by the Taliban and other armed groups. [...]

Security Problems: The transition of security from International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) to the Afghan government continues to move ahead towards the 2014 withdrawal date of combat forces, with large sections of the country now under government responsibility. The Afghan government is struggling with its expanded security responsibilities, and the serious security situation exacerbates the religious freedom and human rights problems in many parts of the country. Despite the handover of responsibility, President Karzai’s government does not exercise full control over the country, particularly outside Kabul and the major provincial centers, even with the active support of U.S. and ISAF troops. [...]

➤ [Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, Quarterly Data Report Q.1 2013, Jan 1st - March 31st, April 2013](#)

[...] Countrywide, the number of attacks by the armed opposition has grown by 47% on Q1 2012, challenging the linear logic that the shrinking IMF presence will result in less military determination by the IEA. Instead, the opposition has demonstrated an effective transition to domestic targets while consolidating its position in the East. This increased conflict activity has resulted in NGO staff and projects being impacted in 39 separate incidents this quarter, a 63% increase over Q1 2012, denoting a return to the levels recorded for the equivalent periods in 2011 and 2009.

The armed opposition authored 20 NGO incidents, while 11 were caused by pro - Government forces (ANSF, IMF) and 8 by criminals. This authorship pattern indicates that incidents caused by combatants (AOG, ANSF, IMF) have increased by 158% over Q1 2012 as criminality has dropped by one third, though it has remained stable in urban areas. The sole case of kidnap for ransom of an NGO worker by criminals in Kabul city highlights the ambient - although statistically limited - risks of urban criminality. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Afghan Spy Agency Says Huge Truck Bomb Defused In Kabul, 15 March 2013](#)

[...] Afghanistan's intelligence agency says security forces in Kabul have defused a massive truck bomb with nearly eight tons of explosives.

Shafiqullah Tahiri, a spokesman for the National Directorate of Security (NDS), told a news conference on March 15 that the attack could have caused massive destruction in the capital.

"According to the investigations by the National Directorate of Security experts, this truck bomb could have destroyed an area around 1.5 kilometers [in radius]," he said. "Now imagine what kind of catastrophe that would have been if [the bomb] had exploded."

Tahiri added that the attack was planned by the Al-Qaeda-linked Haqqani network and the Pakistani-based Taliban leadership. He offered no concrete evidence of the plot.

"This massive terrorist attack was planned and plotted by the Haqqani insurgent network and the [Taliban's] Quetta Shura outside the borders of Afghanistan," he said. "And it was fortunately prevented by National Directorate of Security officers."

Tahiri said security forces discovered the explosives during a night raid earlier this week. The explosives were hidden in cement bags in a truck in eastern Kabul.

According to Tahiri, security forces killed five suspected plotters and arrested two others. He said the militants had been planning to target a military facility in the capital.

News of the plot comes almost a week after a suicide bomber blew himself up outside the Defense Ministry in Kabul. That attack killed nine people while U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was visiting a NATO facility nearby.

It also comes amid serious strains in U.S.-Afghan relations as NATO-led combat troops prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

This week, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Joseph Dunford, warned about the increased risk of attacks by militants and rogue Afghan soldiers because of a series of inflammatory anti-American remarks by Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

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On March 10, Karzai accused the United States of colluding with the Taliban to keep the country unstable and give foreign forces an excuse to stay beyond 2014.

A statement from Karzai's office on March 14 said the president wanted to "correct" rather than damage U.S.-Afghan relations. [...]

➤ [Agence France Presse, Kabul suicide bomber kills nine during Hagel visit, 9 March 2013](#)

[...] A suicide bomber on a bicycle killed nine people outside the defence ministry in central Kabul on Saturday during a visit to the Afghan capital by new US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel.

The blast occurred near the main entrance gate of the heavily-guarded ministry, and Taliban militants immediately claimed the attack was timed to send a message to Hagel, who arrived in Kabul late on Friday.

One Afghan soldier covered in blood at the scene said he had helped carry five people from the attack site, where several cars were damaged and a wall was left pock-marked.

Hagel, a decorated Vietnam war veteran, was at a US facility less than a mile from the attack when the loud explosion followed by gunfire was heard across Kabul.

"I wasn't sure what it was," he told reporters afterwards. "I was in a briefing. We are in a war zone and I have been at war. We should not be surprised when bombs go off."

Zahir Azimi, spokesman for the Afghan defence ministry, told reporters at the scene that the bomber had arrived on a bicycle and detonated himself 30 metres (100 feet) from the ministry gate.

Police said in a statement that nine civilians had died and 13 others were injured including two military personnel, without giving further details.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told AFP: "This was not a direct attack to target him (Hagel) but we want to send a message that we are always capable of hitting Kabul even when the top US defence official is there." [...]

➤ [UN General Assembly, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General, 5 March 2013](#)

[...] 19. Attacks in central Kabul — a suicide attack on 6 December that seriously wounded the Director General of the National Directorate of Security, in addition to complex attacks on the headquarters of the Directorate on 16 January and the Traffic Police on 21 January — garnered significant attention. Overall, however, from 16 November to 15 February, there were fewer suicide and spectacular attacks than in the corresponding period in 2011/12, largely owing to successful operations by Afghan and international security forces. On 3 February, six alleged suicide attackers were arrested by Afghan security forces in Kabul. Apart from insurgency-related violence, the population continued to face diverse sources of insecurity, including crime. Anger at the kidnapping and killing of the child of a well-known trader in the city of Herat, whose body was found on 31 January, led to commercial strikes and demonstrations demanding capital punishment for the offenders amid rising kidnappings aimed at city traders. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Suicide Bomber Targets Afghan Army Bus, 27 February 2013](#)

[...] A suicide bomber in Kabul has detonated his explosives near a bus carrying Afghan army personnel.

Kabul police say the attack wounded at least six soldiers and four civilians.

Defense Ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said the bomber attempted to get on the bus and when he was stopped, he detonated his explosives outside the bus.

A witness told the AP news agency that he saw man in a black coat slide himself under the bus before setting off a huge blast. [...]

➤ [The Guardian, Afghan security forces prevent suicide bombing in Kabul, 24 February 2013](#)

[...] Afghan security forces in Kabul have shot dead a suicide bomber before he was able to blow himself up outside the headquarters of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) on Sunday morning, during which there were three further attacks across the country.

Security officials said a soldier guarding the entrance to the NDS headquarters shot the man after he refused to get out of his car near the heavily fortified Wazir Akbar Khan area of the capital. [...]

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➤ [UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Annual Report 2012; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2013](#)

[...] Executive Summary

[...] Armed conflict in Afghanistan continued to take a terrible toll on Afghan civilians in 2012. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 7,559 civilian casualties (2,754 civilian deaths and 4,805 injuries) from armed conflict in 2012. While these numbers reflect a 12 percent reduction in civilian deaths and a minimal increase in civilians injured compared to 2011 they underscore the continuing high human cost of armed conflict in Afghanistan - which demands even greater commitment and redoubled efforts by all parties to reduce civilian casualties and improve protection of civilians in 2013. Over the past six years, 14, 728 Afghan civilians have lost their lives in the armed conflict.

Anti-Government Elements increasingly targeted civilians throughout the country and carried out attacks without regard for human life. UNAMA documented 6,131 civilian casualties (2,179 civilian deaths and 3,952 injuries) by Anti-Government Elements in 2012, an increase of nine percent compared to 2011. 81 percent of the total civilian casualties in 2012 were attributed to Anti-Government Elements.²¹

Of the 6,131 civilian casualties caused by Anti-Government Elements, UNAMA recorded a 108 percent increase in civilian casualties from targeted killings 22 and a rise in casualties from the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), particularly illegal pressure plate IEDs which are victim-activated. These extremely harmful IEDs are detonated by any person, including children, stepping on them or any vehicle such as civilian minibuses driving over them. Afghan women, children and men also faced increased threats, intimidation, harassment and interference with their rights to education, health, access to justice and freedom of movement by Anti-Government Elements in conflict-affected areas. [...]

UNAMA found that deaths and injuries of civilians decreased in early 2012 with the number of civilian casualties rising in the last half of 2012. Key factors contributing to the decrease in the first five months of 2012 included an unseasonably harsh winter which impeded insurgent movements and effects of earlier military operations against Anti-Government Elements. From 1 July and 31 December 2012, however, UNAMA documented a 13 percent increase in civilian casualties compared with the same period in 2011, noting a 17 percent increase in civilian casualties from IEDs placed in public and civilian locations and intensified conflict in some parts of the country.²⁵ [...]

Anti-Government Elements and Protection of Civilians

Throughout 2012, UNAMA documented the continued high and indiscriminate use by Anti-Government Elements of improvised explosive devices in particular pressure plate IEDs and other tactics such as suicide and complex attacks in areas populated by civilians.

IEDs remained the single biggest threat to civilians in 2012, causing 2,531 civilian casualties with 868 civilians killed and 1,663 injured in 782 separate incidents, a three percent increase over 2011.²⁶ Where intended targets appeared to be military, those responsible for placing or detonating the IED failed to take precautions to protect civilians, failed to distinguish between military targets and civilians and/or demonstrated no regard for the presence of civilian activity in violation of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

UNAMA highlights that the impact of IEDs on the lives of Afghan children, women and men extends well beyond the immediate threat to their right to life. Legacy IEDs-planted but undetonated IEDs - in community spaces hindered access to health and education, and created an environment of insecurity with civilians living under the constant threat of death, maiming, serious injury and destruction of property. Communities in districts with a high prevalence of IEDs also faced serious repercussions from Anti-Government Elements when they sought to report or reported IED locations to Afghan National Security Forces.

UNAMA recorded 1,077 civilian casualties (698 civilians killed and 379 injured) from targeted killings,²⁸ a 108 percent increase from 2011. Many of these casualties resulted from the intentional targeting of civilians perceived to be supporting the Government, including Government officials, religious leaders, tribal elders, off-duty police officers and persons supporting the peace process. Of these 1,077 civilian casualties, targeted killings and injuries of Government civilian employees increased by a staggering 700 percent. Particularly disturbing were targeted killings of women by Anti-Government Elements demonstrated by the killings of the head and deputy head of the Laghman Department of Women's Affairs in August and December 2012.

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UNAMA continued to document incidents of killings, mutilations, beatings and other human rights abuses by Anti-Government Elements following a parallel and illegal judicial procedure. These procedures imposed punishments, usually execution, after summary trials of civilians suspected of spying for the Government or other alleged crimes. UNAMA recorded 33 killings of civilians in 17 separate incidents of punishments carried out following a 'hearing' or sentence passed by Anti-Government Elements. Such procedures are a violation of international humanitarian law.²⁹

UNAMA confirmed 121 incidents of Anti-Government Elements threatening, intimidating and harassing civilians including house burnings and assaults, a 17 percent increase in incidents compared with 2011. UNAMA notes the high likelihood of under-reporting of such incidents, given extreme insecurity, lack of access to remote communities and constraints such communities have in reporting abuses.³⁰ [...]

➤ [Center for Civilians in Conflict, Caring for Their Own: A Stronger Afghan Response to Civilian Harm, 5 February 2013](#)

[...] Executive Summary

As responsibility for security in Afghanistan transitions from international to Afghan forces, civilian casualties remain alarmingly high. In recent years, international forces have taken positive steps to minimize civilian suffering, including offering ex gratia ("out of kindness") or condolence payments to civilians they harm during combat operations. The Afghan government has also developed programs to provide such payments to civilians suffering from the war. While laudable, this Afghan assistance is plagued by challenges that counteract efforts to ease civilian suffering. More broadly, the capacity of the Afghan government and security forces to prevent and respond appropriately to civilian casualties is woefully underdeveloped. As Afghan forces prepare to take over security operations from international forces, urgent steps must be taken to bolster Afghan systems for responding appropriately to civilian harm. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Afghan Police Arrest Six Suspected Suicide Bombers, 4 February 2013](#)

[...] Afghan police say they have arrested six men whom they accuse of planning to carry out suicide bombing attacks.

The Kabul deputy police chief, General Mohammad Daoud Amin, told RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan that police seized six vests that could be used for suicide bombings, as well as some 50 grenades and guns, when the suspects were arrested in a raid in the capital Kabul on February 3.

Amin said investigators have not yet learned what targets the suspects may have been planning to attack. An investigation has been launched into the identities of the men. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Standoff With Afghan Insurgents Ends, 21 January 2013](#)

[...] A shoot-out with insurgents at Kabul's traffic-police headquarters has come to an end.

Afghan authorities told RFE/RL that five insurgents were involved in the deadly attack.

The fighting followed a coordinated assault involving a suicide car bombing and insurgents with suicide-bombing vests.

Afghan Deputy Interior Minister Abdurrahman Rahman said three insurgents entered the building, destroyed stairs leading to upper floors, and gained access to a weapons storeroom.

After hours of fighting, security forces killed the militants barricaded inside the building. Rahman told reporters that three traffic-police officers were killed and 18 people were wounded.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack in a text message to the media.

The four-story traffic-police department is located in the west of the capital near several key police units and the parliament building.

"I was asleep when the explosion happened," said Qandagha Jan, a Kabul resident.

"The explosion was so huge that all the windows of our house broke. Our children were playing in the yard at the time."

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) spokesman Guenter Katz noted that militants increasingly target Afghan security forces as the country prepares for the planned withdrawal of most foreign troops by the end of 2014.

"The last two attacks we have seen were indeed against Afghan government installations. [Whether] this is a trend, we don't know," Katz said.

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"This would be speculation, but it's very clear that the more and more the Afghan security forces are getting into the lead, the more they are targeted by the insurgents." [...]

➤ [Emergency - Life Support for Civilian War Victims, Car bomb attack in Kabul: Ten wounded transferred to Emergency NGO's Hospital, 16 January 2013](#)

[...] This morning a car bomb exploded in Kabul, near the National Directorate of Security's facilities. One attacker died during the explosion, four others were killed during shootings with the police.

Three civilians died in the attack, twenty-seven have been injured. Ten of them have been transferred to EMERGENCY's Surgical Centre for war victims. None of them is in life-threatening conditions. [...]

➤ [International Crisis Group, Afghanistan: The Long, Hard Road To The 2014 Transition, October 2012](#)

[...] IV. Security Challenges

[...] Security has progressively worsened since the first elections were held in 2004, despite a massive injection of international aid and military resources. Even as NATO has invested heavily in building the ANSF in recent years, insurgents have demonstrated determination to capture the strategic narrative and expose the government's weaknesses, including by several spectacular attacks in and around the capital, Kabul, and in strategically critical cities such as Kandahar and Jalalabad.

The situation worsened considerably in the wake of the September 2010 polls, which saw violence hit an all-time high on election day. Security further deteriorated shortly after President Karzai announced plans to begin transferring responsibility for it in several parts of the country from NATO to the government by July 2011.⁹³ The downward trend continued almost unabated through much of 2011 and early 2012. Following an unusually severe winter that saw record snowfalls and lasted well into late March 2012, civilian casualties dropped by nearly 15 per cent to 1,154 killed and 1,954 injured in the first half of the year. This trend saw a marked reverse over the summer months, with UNAMA noting that August 2012 was the second deadliest month on record: 374 civilians killed and 581 injured.

Statistics demonstrate a notable increase overall in targeted killings of civilians and government officials, from 94 during January-June 2009 to 255 for the same six-month period in 2012.⁹⁵ More than a dozen members of parliament have been killed since the first elections in 2005, and eleven candidates were killed during the 2010 campaign. Scores of mid-level government officials have recently been assassinated, as insurgents have ramped up such operations.⁹⁷ Likewise, Afghans who work for non-governmental organisations and development agencies are regularly targeted, and intimidation campaigns frequently force them to live outside their home villages. The Taliban's use of targeted killings and threats has been especially effective most recently in the north-eastern provinces of Nuristan and Kunar, where cross-border shelling between Pakistan and Afghanistan has additionally plagued an already exposed population.⁹⁸

As the 2014 campaign approaches and political competition heats up, targeted killings are likely to increase, a phenomenon witnessed repeatedly since 2003.⁹⁹ It has become increasingly clear that ISAF is unable to dislodge the Taliban from its strongholds in the south and east. A widening trust deficit between NATO and Afghan forces has also put ISAF further on the defensive. The Taliban, the Haqqani network and other affiliated insurgent actors have exploited these weaknesses by sending fighters into particularly vulnerable areas such as Kunar, Nuristan, Paktika, Paktia, Ghazni, Wardak and Logar.¹⁰⁰ ISAF and Western officials have repeatedly stated that conditions on the ground will dictate the pace of NATO's withdrawal, emphasising that Afghan forces will reach their peak of 352,000 as the international drawdown accelerates in late 2012. Planning for the massive logistical challenge of withdrawing more than 100,000 troops is well underway, however, and the exercise is likely to absorb a considerable portion of deployed international military resources. By September, U.S. troops in country were down from about 100,000 to 68,000, returning their strength to the pre-2009 surge level. Already by April, security in 138 districts across twenty provinces and with half the country's population had been placed under the control of Afghan forces. ISAF commander General John Allen has said that he will require "significant combat power in 2013", but few additional specifics on the pace of the U.S. drawdown have been offered.

A little more than 39,000 troops from 50 other NATO troop-contributing nations were operating in summer 2012, but reductions in these non-U.S. NATO forces have also already begun. Canada ended its combat mission in 2011, and France's estimated 3,200 will probably have left by the end of 2012. By the

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end of 2012, 500 of 9,000 UK troops are expected to exit, and London has indicated it is considering accelerating withdrawals. In April 2012, Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that Australia planned to withdraw its 1,550 by the end of 2013. Although many individual NATO missions have emphasised the intention to maintain a phased withdrawal through the end of 2014, significant troop reductions starting in 2013 are also anticipated from Germany, Spain, Italy and several other contributing nations.¹⁰²

Although the ANSF continues to make progress in meeting growth benchmarks, there are serious concerns about operational capabilities. Attrition rates have remained consistently high, and the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) has been unable to increase recruitment among Pashtuns in the south. Literacy levels among Afghan soldiers and police are exceptionally low, despite encouraging NTM-A efforts to provide literacy training for roughly 198,000 soldiers and police. Afghan forces still lag behind, meanwhile, in critical areas such as logistics, supply and air power. All these factors will impact the success of a transition strategy that calls for their reduction from the 352,000 anticipated in October 2012 to 228,500 by 2017.¹⁰³ [...]

Assurances from NATO and U.S. military commanders aside, there can be little doubt that levels of insecurity are likely to remain high, if not increase, ahead of the 2014 presidential election.¹¹⁶ With the majority of Afghan security forces unable to meet even the most basic operational benchmarks, particularly in the crucial areas of supply, logistics and air support, it seems highly improbable that they will be able to fill the gaps left by departing international forces by the time the campaign gets underway in earnest in late 2013.¹¹⁷ Simply put, security conditions will likely be far from ideal for the 2014 elections. [...]

Insurgent infiltration of the security forces, especially in Kabul

- [Afghanistan Analysts Network \(Thomas Ruttig\), After the 'operational pause': How big is the insurgents' 2013 spring offensive? 2 June 2013](#)

[...] The Taliban, including the Haqqani network, continue to conduct high-profile attacks in the Afghan capital. This seems aimed at attracting international media and possibly 'donor' attention as well as spreading uncertainty among the Afghan population, government and armed forces, by projecting that the insurgency can hit everywhere in the country, penetrating even ANSF's 'rings of steel' around major city centres. The availability and use of ANSF uniforms or even (as in the case of their 14 September 2012 night attack against the airfield of Camp Bastion) western army uniforms facilitate such surprise attacks. (A crack down on uniform sales started in 2011 has obviously failed, see here). Such high-profile strikes in urban centres, even if successful, will not alter the strategic situation with the government and international forces controlling urban centres and main transport routes. [...]

- [Centre for Strategic and International Studies, The Afghan War in 2013: Meeting the Challenges of Transition -- Volume III: Security and the ANSF, May 2013](#)

[...] Insider Attacks: "Green-on-Blue" and "Green-on-Green"

Transition planning and the aid effort must also address a problem that emerged as a key issue in the late summer of 2012: attacks by Afghan forces on US, ISAF, and other Afghan forces.

US Central Command (US CENTCOM) distinguishes four types of "green-on-blue" attacks: Infiltration, when insurgents join the ANSF to "conduct an attack, collect information, obtain material, or create distrust/confusion"; co-opting, in which insurgents "recruit or persuade existing ANSF members to conduct an activity by using intimidation, blackmail or connections"; mimicking, when insurgents "impersonate ISAF or ANSF personnel to conduct a quick attack by using uniforms or forged ID cards"; and destabilizers, ANSF members who attack fellow ANSF or ISAF soldiers because of "stress, mental instability, or drug use."

In May 2011, 10,000 ANSF uniforms were taken out of bazaars, but it remains unclear how or why they got there and how many are still on the market.

These "green-on-blue" killings need to be put in perspective. On one hand, the numbers involved are still very limited; there were 2 attacks in 2007, rising to 37 in 2012 with over 60 NATO soldiers and civilian contractors killed ("green-on-green" incidents are not reported).

For example, "green-on-blue" deaths in August 2012 totaled 15 out of 53 ISAF casualties that month, or 28% of the total. ISAF reporting also showed the trend in total Coalition deaths was dropping; the total of

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53 casualties for August 2012 was the highest in 2012—but is typical of the patterns during the campaign season and compares with 82 in 2011 and 79 in 2010.

Total Coalition deaths stemming from “green-on-blue” attacks in 2012 were 61, in 45 attacks. These data can be seen in Figure 39. On the other hand, the political impact of “green-on-blue” deaths is very significant. The Taliban and insurgents are fighting a political war to influence and dominate the Afghan people and to drive out the US, other ISAF forces, and aid efforts. The insurgents know that the actual numbers involved are not the issue; what counts is their political impact. [...]

The Political and Strategic Impact of Such Attacks

What are now called “insider attacks” are having a major effect in influencing media coverage of the war, the US Congress, the American public, and the attitudes of other ISAF and donor countries. Like other Taliban and insurgent high-profile attacks on Afghan officials and major targets in Kabul, as well as the pervasive insurgent effort to infiltrate and influence the Afghan countryside and cities, they are having a major impact on overall support for the war in what is a battle of political attrition. [...]

Seeking to Solve the Problem

These attacks have led to unconfirmed media reports that much of the existing vetting system had previously been ignored in the rush to expand Afghan forces. The ISAF was then forced to temporarily suspend training for 1,000 personnel—as ISAF expands the ALP from 16,300 to 30,000—in the hope that more intense vetting methods would reduce the problem.

At the same time, ISAF had to deal with the political impact of the fact that some 25,000 Afghan soldiers and more than 4,000 Afghan national policemen remained in training for a total force that was then over 350,000. [...]

➤ [UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Annual Report 2012; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2013](#)

[...] Shifts in Taliban narrative addressing targets of attacks

In a statement issued on 2 May 2012 on the inception of their Al-Farooq Spring operation, the Taliban stated they consider all Government supporters performing civilian law enforcement activities as lawful targets.

Messages explicitly calling on Taliban members and Afghans to carry out attacks against such Government officials and their supporters were also made in several statements in the first half of 2012. UNAMA highlights again that the Taliban’s definition of “civilians” is not consistent with international humanitarian law, which stipulates that “civilians” are individuals who are not combatants (members of military/paramilitary forces) or members of organized armed groups of a party to a conflict, and includes all persons not directly participating in hostilities.

UNAMA observed a shift in this Taliban narrative in the second half of 2012 to a greater focus on military targets. In a 22 October statement, the Taliban declared they only used remote controlled IEDS on military targets. In a 24 October statement, the Taliban urged their followers to increase their efforts at infiltration into “the ranks of the enemy”, as this tactic would achieve better results [...]

➤ [Afghanistan Analysts Network - Author: Foschini, Fabrizio, Striking at Kabul, in 2013: the attack on the traffic police HQ, 21 January 2013](#)

[...] How effective are insurgents’ attacks inside the capital compared to the past? Until now, the Taleban have not focussed all their resources on attacks in the capital and, apart from sporadic rocket attacks on the city, a tactic that the Taleban borrowed from the mujahedin, their major focus has been to strike as close as possible to the heart of power, whatever the target and whatever the civilian casualties might be. Their preference, therefore, has been to launch sporadic, high-profile attacks which create the perception of instability and of a vulnerable city.

Reasonably good intelligence on troop movements has allowed insurgents to target military convoys, relatively successfully, usually using vehicle-borne suicide bombs, especially on major routes like the airport road, Jalalabad and Darulaman roads. They have also, and this since a very early stage in the conflict, been able to gather valuable intelligence as to the movements of government officials (although some major successes, like the killing of senior adviser to the president, Jan Mohammad Khan, in his house the 17 July 2011, can be put down rather to inadequate security arrangements). The relatively weak commitment of state cadres and the murky relations of some with the insurgency have helped with intelligence gathering. Still, the phenomenon is less organised and consistent than the full-time ‘moles’

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that some mujahedin factions managed to plant inside the PDPA regime. During that period, several high-ranking officers, including a brigadier general and a colonel, were imprisoned and some were executed for alleged links with the mujahedin.

Connivance inside the Afghan armed forces of today appears limited to the lower levels and to be more opportunistic. The drive to pump up the number of the ANSF has led to some carelessness in recruitment and undoubtedly allowed individuals with links to the insurgents to infiltrate. Even so, fratricidal attacks (of Afghan soldier/police against his fellow) appear more often caused by personal antagonism than ideology, and to happen mainly in the provinces and to target foreign troops or trainers. However, the use of military uniform as disguise to allow an insurgent to approach targets is more commonly seen in the capital. Such a ruse has enabled both single attackers and commando groups to attack targets such as the military airport and police stations. [...]

➤ [U.S. Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012](#)

[...] Executive Summary

[...] While small in number, insider attacks have the potential to significantly disrupt the Coalition mission in Afghanistan. However, the relationship between the ANSF and the Coalition remains strong, particularly out in the field, where soldiers face a common enemy every day. The motivations behind the majority of the attacks in 2012 are varied and include but are not limited to: infiltration, impersonation, co-option, post-traumatic stress, inter-personal disputes and extremist views. Regardless, insider attacks are helpful to the insurgency, whether the insurgency is directly responsible or not. As such, ISAF and the Afghan government are approaching this as both an enemy tactic and an issue that has a cultural component. Coalition forces and the ANSF are working together on a comprehensive, combined response and have implemented several measures, including requiring higher-level approval for some partnered operations. ANSF investigations into insurgent ties to ANSF members have already resulted in more than 400 arrests. However, the overall efficacy of our counter-measures cannot yet be assessed, as most measures have only recently been implemented. [...]

1.8: INSIDER ATTACKS

Although statistically small in number, Insider Attacks (formerly referred to as Green-on-Blue incidents) have had a negative impact on the Coalition mission in Afghanistan. The frequency of these attacks has steadily risen since 2008, but has increased sharply in 2012 thus far. ISAF continues to assess the motivations behind the attacks, where possible, which are a combination of infiltration, impersonation, co-option, post-traumatic stress, inter-personal disputes and extremist views. The ANSF itself also continues to face insider attacks, formerly known as Green-on-Green incidents. The ANSF is working with ISAF and GIROA to mitigate these attacks as well.

Although ISAF lacks the data to conclusively determine the cause many attacks due to the death of the majority of the attackers, insurgent propaganda and messaging has played a role in many attacks. Insurgents have adopted insider attacks as a tactic to create a seam between ISAF and the ANSF, sowing mistrust between partners and undermining domestic support for the campaign. Such attacks are helpful to the insurgency whether or not the insurgency is directly responsible

Figure 5: Insider Attacks on ISAF Personnel

Figure 6: Insider Attacks on ANSF Personnel

Insider attacks are characterized by incidents in which ANSF members knowingly attack and/or help facilitate an attack against the Coalition with the intent to maim or kill Coalition personnel; incidents in which insurgents portray themselves as ANSF members with the intent to target Coalition Force (CF) personnel; and incidents in which previously friendly third-country nationals and local nationals, for whatever reason, seek to attack CF personnel.

The probable motives for Insider Attacks are categorized as:

- Infiltration: An existing insurgent member clandestinely joins the ANSF through the standard recruitment process in order to support the insurgency by conducting intelligence collection, sabotage, subversion, or attacks.
- Co-option: An existing ANSF member is recruited to assist or act on behalf of the insurgency. A member can be recruited through various means, including ideological pressures, financial incentives, intimidation, extortion, or familial and tribal ties. In contrast to infiltration, co-opting an existing ANSF

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member circumvents the initial screening and vetting process to which new ANSF recruits are subjected.

- Impersonation: An insurgent or non-ANSF member poses as an ANSF member to conduct attacks. With the availability of counterfeit uniforms and IDs, impersonation is often easier to accomplish than co-option or infiltration. More sophisticated cases of impersonation have often incorporated some level of facilitation, complicity, or awareness by ANSF members, whether by providing an ID, escorting the individual onto base, or simply knowing of the attacker's intentions to target ISAF members.
- Personal motives: An ANSF member acts intentionally yet independently as an individual perpetrator – without direct guidance, command, or pre-planning by external entities.

In cases the attacker's motive cannot be discerned, the category "Unknown" is used. Insider attacks incidents do not include cases of misidentification, negligent discharge, or any other ANSF-inflicted accidental injury or death of CF personnel. Between May 2007 and the end of September 2012, a total of 79 Insider Attacks occurred. Of those 79 incidents, five (six percent) are possibly or likely attributable to infiltration; 11 (14 percent) are assessed as likely or possibly attributable to co-option; 30 (38 percent) are possibly or likely attributable to personal motives; three (four percent) are considered related to unknown reasons but having insurgent ties, and 30 (38 percent) to unknown (or pending due to ongoing investigations). Of the 79 insider attacks, 69 resulted in CF (military and civilian personnel) deaths and/or wounded, causing a total of 116 CF deaths and 164 CF wounded. As of the end of the reporting period, there have been 37 attacks in 2012, resulting in 51 coalition deaths (32 U.S deaths) and 74 wounded.

The Taliban has adapted its propaganda, hoping to inspire attacks through themes of praise, revenge, and provision of support and sanctuary. For example, in Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar's August 2012 Eid al-Fitr address, he praised ANSF members who conduct insider attacks and urged other ANSF to do as "your brave friends have done." Taliban statements have promoted the protection and facilitation of a ttrackers out of Afghanistan, and projected a willingness to support those committing insider attacks, even those without prior Taliban affiliation. As part of this messaging, the Taliban claims attacks they did not engineer and exaggerates ISAF casualty numbers for attacks that do occur.

The cause of the majority of insider attacks in 2012 has yet to be determined, and sometimes the cause is impossible to determine given that in many cases, the attacker is killed during the incident. There may be a correlation in attacks inspiring one another. Seventeen events in 2012 occurred within 48 hours of a previous attack; however, there is no hard evidence to definitively conclude that these subsequent attacks were inspired by a previous event. [...]

Specific attention has fallen on the ANSF recruit vetting process and a system of targeted re-vetting of the enlisted force is also being developed. The Afghan security ministries will enforce vetting procedures to mitigate infiltration threats. The ANSF has an eight-step process to vet recruits: 1) issuing an Afghan ID card; 2) gathering background information from tribal elders; 3) gathering personal information about family members; 4) conducting criminal background checks; 5) completing a formal application process; 6) drug screening; 7) medical screening; and 8) collecting the individual's biometric data. To ensure the effectiveness of screening, the process is undergoing review and evaluation, and improvements are being implemented for new recruits, including a new measure, issued by Presidential Directive, which requires ANA recruits to be interviewed by a four-person council consisting of Ministry of Defense (MoD), Ministry of Interior (MoI), NDS, and medical department officials. As a temporary measure, ALP training has been slowed to permit adequate resources to be applied to re-vetting more than 16,000 ALP personnel. The increase in vetting capacity will require the provision of additional equipment for drug testing, biometrics, and surveillance. [...]

➤ [International Crisis Group, Afghanistan: The Long, Hard Road To The 2014 Transition, October 2012](#)

[...] IV. Security Challenges

[...] It is difficult to overestimate the corrosive effect of factionalism in the ANSF officer corps and the risks it poses to continued NATO support for a long-term training and advisory mission. Pervasive fears of Taliban infiltration of Afghan forces may be well founded, but analysis suggests that lack of cohesion between officers and rank and file in both police and army has expanded opportunities for infiltration, as well as increased internal friction between rival factions in the armed forces. The killings of NATO officers in Kabul at the interior ministry and in Kandahar in February 2012 and the sharp rise of "green-on-blue" attacks that followed are strong examples of the widening trust deficit between the heavily factionalised

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ANSF and the Balkanised ISAF command.¹⁰⁷Such insider attacks account for 13 per cent of ISAF deaths in 2012. The astounding increase in such attacks and fears over weakness in vetting procedures led the U.S. to temporarily halt recruitment for the controversial local police program in September. In August 2012 alone, fifteen of 53 ISAF soldiers killed (28 per cent) were victims of fratricidal attacks. Although the early years of the NATO training mission witnessed a number of green-on-blue incidents, they were little noticed at the time. The numbers have increased, and reports suggest that ISAF officials have sought to suppress details about some.¹⁰⁹ The attempt to spin these attacks as isolated occurrences appears to have blinded ISAF leadership to the risks they might pose to overall perceptions of the mission. Insurgent infiltration only partially explains the recent wave. Attacks on NATO advisers are as much a product of frustration between Afghan soldiers and police and their NATO handlers and of tensions between Afghan security leaders at the regional command level and in Kabul over access to resources and political power.¹¹⁰ The sooner ISAF leadership acknowledges that obvious fact publicly, the quicker it may find a workable solution to the problem. Otherwise, ISAF may be forced to continue to respond to insider attacks by imposing ad hoc restrictions on the training and partnering mission, as it did in September, to the peril of the overall mission. [...]

As political competition heats up in the approach to the elections, there is a genuine risk that internecine competition between leaders of factions within the ANSF could lead not only to more green-on-blue incidents, but also to an increase in already high attrition rates and, in the worst case, disintegration of command and control soon after U.S. and NATO forces withdraw. Such scenarios do not bode well for long-term ANSF sustainability. In the short term, ISAF will need to remain on alert to the vulnerabilities created by fragmentation within security institutions. In the longer term, the Afghan government and international forces will need to reassess the type of security assistance given to the Afghan forces and may need to halt altogether programs such as the Afghan Local Police, which are particularly prone to insurgent infiltration. [...]

➤ [Landinfo, Afghanistan: Human Rights and Security Situation, Report of Dr. Antonio Giustozzi, 9 September 2011](#)

[...] 6. Insurgent Controlled Areas

[...] 6.4 Other Areas

[...] The Taliban has increasingly developed an ability to strike at will almost anywhere; harassment and targeting of 'collaborators' now occurs even in the cities, even if on a small scale in Kabul and in the north and west. Those who fled and have given up their jobs, as well as their family members, do not appear to have been actively targeted in the cities. The Taliban potentially has the resources and skills to track down people, particularly if these are not in hiding but have to work; extensive infiltration of the police also helps the Taliban's information gathering efforts. However, these escapees who no longer collaborate for the government are a low priority target to the Taliban, whose assets in the cities are limited and usually devoted to high profile targets, ranking from serving government officials upwards. In Kabul, for example, colonels of the police and army have been targeted, as well as commanding officers of the security services. In the provinces, particularly in the south, government officials of any rank, even low ones, have been targeted. The Taliban do not seem to systematically transfer information about targeted individuals from one area to the other; they maintain no databases. What typically happens is that the Taliban operating in a specific area will request information from other Taliban about a suspect individual, whenever needed. The flow of information therefore depends on the intensity of Taliban operations: the greater the presence, the greater the request of information. Often individuals apprehended by the Taliban as suspect spies are asked to provide references in order to verify their identity and activities. The risk to the escapees from Taliban-controlled areas seems to derive mainly from chance contact with the Taliban, who may consider them an opportunity target. Usually the poorest and the Pashtun-populated areas of the big cities are the places where most Taliban infiltration of the cities occurs; in Kabul these are Bagrami suburb, south-eastern Kabul, Southern Kabul and parts of western Kabul. In central Kabul, the Taliban are known to have developed a network of informers, among else buying shops in strategic locations and staffing them with members and sympathisers, the purpose being to observe embassies and government buildings. Such effort is clearly geared towards high value targets and collaborators. [...]

8. Conclusion- Main Factors Affecting the Security and Human Rights of Afghan Civilians

[...] The Taliban have been constantly expanding their information gathering operations; some parts of the country, in particular the south but also the south-east, the east and the provinces south and west of

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Kabul (Wardak, Logar) are thoroughly covered and there is little that the Taliban do not know, not least because they have extensively infiltrated the police and the state administration. In other parts of the country, like most of Kabul, most of the west and most of the north, the Taliban's presence on the ground is more modest and their ability to collect information more limited. More importantly, the Taliban's ability to auction off the information collected is more limited in these areas, where they have to rely on a few hit teams in order to carry out their strategy of targeted killing. As a result, while the Taliban target even low level collaborators in the areas where they are present in force, they limit themselves to high profile targets elsewhere. Killings of low profile collaborators of the government is not being reported in these areas We can expect they policy of targeted intimidation and killing to continue expanding, but the rate of expansion will depend on the ability of the Taliban to establish a strong presence in ever newer areas. There are already some areas of the regions less affected by the insurgency, where the Taliban are able to extensively target collaborators: a few suburbs of Kabul, Pashtun-populated areas of the north, etc. [...]

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2.3 Internal Relocation

Relevance of internal relocation

Whilst the conclusion of the internal relocation section does not specifically address the ‘relevance’ assessment of internal relocation¹, the OGN does include COI on the ability of insurgents to track down a target:

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

2.3.2 Very careful consideration must be given to whether internal relocation would be an effective way to avoid a real risk of ill-treatment/persecution at the hands of, tolerated by, or with the connivance of, state agents. If an applicant who faces a real risk of ill-treatment/persecution in their home area would be able to relocate to a part of the country where they would not be at real risk, whether from state or non-state actors, and it would not be unreasonable to expect them to do so, then asylum or humanitarian protection should be refused.

2.3.3 The UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 17/12/2010, state the following in relation to internal relocation:

- Given the wide geographic reach of some armed anti-Government groups, a viable internal relocation alternative may not be available to individuals at risk of being targeted by such groups. It is particularly important to note that the operational capacity of the Taliban (including the Haqqani network), the Hezb-e-Eslami (Gulbuddin) and other armed groups in the southern, south-eastern and eastern regions is not only evidenced by high-profile attacks, such as (complex) suicide bombings, but also through more permanent infiltration in some neighbourhoods and the regular distribution of threatening —night-letters.
- Furthermore, some non-State agents of persecution, such as organized crime networks, local commanders of irregular or paramilitary outfits and militias, as well as the Taliban and the Hezb-e-Eslami (Gulbuddin), have links or are closely associated with influential actors in the local and central administration. As a result, they largely operate with impunity and their reach may extend beyond the area under their immediate (de facto) control.

2.3.6 In commenting on security in Kabul, the Danish Immigration Service Fact Finding Mission report on Afghanistan of May 2012 cited the International Police Co-operation Board as stating that —There are places in Afghanistan where Afghan National Police (ANP) is functioning well in terms of providing security, especially in Kabul and other big cities like Herat, Mazar - i - Sharif and Faizabad . In the same report other sources noted: —UNHCR commented that in general Kabul could be an option for safety, but to what extent the city could be a safe place for a person fleeing a conflict depends on the profile of the person and the nature of the conflict the person has fled from . —An international NGO informed the delegation that Kabul is one of few places in Afghanistan where the security situation is relatively good and stable even though incidents are occurring also in Kabul. As regards tracing in Kabul the report goes on to note: —An international organization stated that if someone is fleeing a conflict in his or her area of origin, it depends on the seriousness of the conflict whether he or she will be traced down in Kabul. Afghanistan is a tribal society with close family networks, which means that if you really want to find someone, you will be able to trace him/her down. Concerning the possibility of tracking down someone in Kabul, an independent policy research organization in Kabul stated that Kabul is a big city and people do not even know their neighbours anymore. There are newcomers every day and people move around and stay in rented accommodation, however, that it is not difficult for the government to find people in Kabul if they are in search of a particular person.

For additional COI on this issue, see section [3.11 Locally engaged staff](#).

¹ For a discussion of the ‘relevance’ and ‘reasonableness’ assessments of internal relocation see: [UNHCR, Guidelines on International Protection No. 4: "Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative" Within the Context of Article 1A\(2\) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 23/07/2003](#)

Reasonableness of internal relocation

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

2.3.7 Conclusion: All returns from the UK are currently to Kabul and whilst Afghanistan has a significant displaced civilian population, the courts have identified that UK returnees are in a more favourable position due to the packages available to them (see 2.3.9 below). For further evidence on returnees accessing support – see section –Minors 3.13.13. [...]

2.3.9 In the Country Guidance case of AK (Article 15(c)) Afghanistan CG [2012] UKUT 163 (IAC) (18 May 2012) (see section 2.4 and summary of key findings) the Upper Tribunal concluded at Para 243: —Whilst when assessing a claim [in the context of Article 15(c)] in which the respondent asserts that Kabul city would be a viable internal relocation alternative, it is necessary to take into account (both in assessing —safety and —reasonableness) not only the level of violence in that city but also the difficulties experienced by that city’s poor and also the many IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] living there, these considerations will not in general make return to Kabul unsafe or unreasonable, although it will still always be necessary to examine an applicant’s individual circumstances. It is essential therefore that case owners when considering internal relocation to Kabul as a reasonable option, take account in their conclusions of the humanitarian situation in Kabul. Case owners should also note the following paragraphs in AK:

- Para 224: —we [the judges] do not think that the situation of UK returnees to Kabul (even limiting this category to persons whose home area is not Kabul) and IDPs in Kabul are wholly the same. As noted earlier [paras 84-85] (leaving to one side irregular migrant returnees), there are return and reintegration packages available. It would be unwise to exaggerate the importance of such packages: they are chiefly designed to cushion against immediate travails on return. That said, by assisting with skills training and inquiries related to employment opportunities, they clearly do help position returnees advantageously as compared to IDPs marooned in squatter settlements in outlying areas. (UK returnees who previously lived in Kabul would ordinarily have the additional advantage of knowing the city and having family and or social networks there).
- Para 245: —Since we did not have full submissions on the issue of safety of different routes of return in Afghanistan, we do not seek to give guidance on it, although we are bound to say nothing in the evidence before us indicates that the main routes of travel from Kabul to other major cities and towns experience violence at an intensity sufficient to engage Article 15(c) for the ordinary citizen. The position may be different when it comes to travel from the main cities and towns to villages.....Routes of this kind may be under the control of the Taliban and/or other insurgents and hence will require a case-by-case approach; [...]

As set out in the highlighted paragraphs above, the conclusion of this section of the OGN considers that the situation for returnees to Kabul is ‘more favourable’ than the situation for IDPs. However, it should be noted that the reintegration packages referred to in the Country Guidance case AK at paragraphs 84 and 85 differ depending on whether a returnee is voluntarily returned or not:

➤ [AK \(Article 15\(c\)\) Afghanistan CG \[2012\] UKUT 163 \(IAC\) \(18 May 2012\)](#)

[...] 84. In a note produced by UKBA dated March 2012, assistance to returnees to Afghanistan is said to be of two kinds:

(1) Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) packages

For those in the asylum stream they consist of £500 cash on departure with a further £1,000 reintegration assistance (£1,500 for family cases) as cover for flights and onward travel. For irregular migrants, assistance is limited to flights and onward travel, although for vulnerable persons there is an option for Refugee Action to apply for up to £1,000 reintegration assistance. Until August 2012 the provider in Afghanistan is the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). It is said to provide a meet and greet service at the airport and to deliver reintegration assistance. The latter consists of non-cash payments for certain activities, goods and services in Afghanistan that help build a new life. Reintegration options are co-ordinated at IOM Kabul’s main office. Post-arrival, IOM assists with onward transportation and/or temporary accommodation if required.

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(2) Reintegration Services for enforced returnees

This service, which is part of the UK/Afghanistan/UNHCR Tripartite Returns Memorandum of Understanding, currently consists, inter alia, in reception at Kabul Airport by IOM staff and an IOM doctor, onward transportation to the returnee's final destination, temporary accommodation with full board for up to fourteen days at the Jangalak Reception Centre. The reintegration component is said to consist, inter alia, in assistance in vocational and educational training, in kind, support towards the development of a small business and employment/job referrals for those interested in direct employment.

85. The note states that UKBA has a Migration Delivery Officer based at the British Embassy in Kabul who "oversees the provision of services to returnees". The officer liaises directly with the Afghan Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation to resolve any problems identified by returnees or regarding conditions on return, as appropriate". [...]

It is also reported that returnees who are unable to reintegrate often find themselves in IDP like situations:

➤ [IDMC, AFGHANISTAN: Comprehensive response urgently required as displacement crisis worsens, 25 March 2013](#)

[...] Patterns of displacement

[...] Complex population movements

[...] Internal displacement takes place in the context of many other population movements, including rural-urban migration and refugee return, often complicating the task of identifying and assisting IDPs. (MoRR, October 2012). Approximately 40 per cent of returning refugees have not reintegrated into their communities of origin (HPG, June 2012, p.6). Refugee returnees who cannot reintegrate often find themselves in IDP-like situations. Others are forced into secondary displacement due to conflict or natural disasters and become IDPs (MoRR, July 2012). [...]

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

[...] Conclusion

[...] 2.3.8 In accordance with current caselaw careful consideration must be given to the up to date security, human rights and humanitarian conditions in the prospective area of relocation at the time of the decision, including the availability of traditional support mechanisms, such as relatives and friends able to assist the displaced individual. Single males and nuclear family units may, in certain circumstances, subsist without family and community support in urban and semi-urban areas with established infrastructure and under effective Government control.

2.3.10 Unescorted internal travel for single women and female heads of household who do not have a male support network can be extremely difficult. Discrimination and harassment are common, as would be establishing themselves in an area where they did not have such a support network. Sufficient protection is not available to them, even in Kabul, and it would therefore generally be unduly harsh to expect single women and female heads of household who have a well-founded fear of persecution in one part of Afghanistan, and who do not have a male support network, to relocate internally. This conclusion was confirmed by the Upper Tribunal in AK (Article 15(c)) Afghanistan CG [2012] UKUT 163 (IAC) (18 May 2012) – para 249 B (v). [...]

The above highlighted sentences identify some of the factors that need to be taken into consideration when assessing internal relocation options, which are drawn from the December 2010 UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines. However, it should be noted that the December 2010 UNHCR Guidelines highlight four additional 'reasonableness' factors relating to internal relocation that should be taken into account when assessing IFA for 'Individuals at Risk of Targeted Persecution' as follows (emphasis added):

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➤ [UNHCR, UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Afghanistan, 17/12/2010, section III, C, 1. Individuals at Risk of Targeted Persecution](#)

[...] Whether an IFA/IRA is “reasonable” must be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking fully into account the security, human rights and humanitarian environment in the prospective area of relocation at the time of the decision. To this effect, the following elements need to be taken into account: (i) the availability of traditional support mechanisms, such as relatives and friends able to host the displaced individuals; **(ii) the availability of basic infrastructure and access to essential services, such as sanitation, health care and education;** (iii) **ability to sustain themselves, including livelihood opportunities;** (iv) **the criminality rate and resultant insecurity, particularly in urban areas;** as well as (v) **the scale of displacement in the area of prospective relocation.** [...]

However, no COI on these issues is provided in the ‘Internal Relocation’ section of the June 2013 Afghanistan OGN.

Sources have been presented below to provide an indication of the information available in the public domain at the time of writing this commentary in relation to these additional 4 relevant issues which should form part of an individual assessment of internal relocation. Given that the likely area of relocation proposed by the UKBA will be the capital city of Kabul, the sources below focus on the general situation there. Where information specific to Kabul was not found, COI which referred to the general situation (e.g. unemployment) has been presented to provide further context. When addressing the question of ‘serious harm’ and internal armed conflict, it might also be useful to include evidence that expressly addresses the legacy of the internal armed conflict in Afghanistan in terms of ‘serious mental traumas’, including the mental health/PTSD legacy. COI has been included which post-dates the previous ‘Still Human Still Here Commentary on the February 2012 Afghanistan OGN’ of March 2012.

COI is presented below on the following issues:

- [Access to basic infrastructure and essential services in Kabul](#)
- [Livelihood opportunities](#)
- [Criminality rate in Kabul](#)
- [Scale of displacement in Kabul](#)
- [Mental health treatment and psychological support](#)

For information on the security situation in Kabul, see the COI presented above in the Actors of Protection section on [Ability of the police to protect against insurgent attacks, especially in Kabul](#).

It is imperative that the specific characteristics of the claimant (e.g. age, gender, educational background, religion, ethnicity, family ties, health etc.) are taken into consideration when researching individualised COI on Kabul or any other place of proposed relocation. To assist in researching the most up to date information on the situation and treatment of IDPs in Afghanistan, [a database of useful sources to consult on the situation for internally displaced persons in Afghanistan](#) has been provided in the Appendix of this report.

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Access to basic infrastructure and essential services in Kabul

- [Amnesty International, Annual Report 2013 - The State of the World's Human Rights – Afghanistan, 23 May 2013](#)

[...] Refugees and internally displaced people

By the end of October, about half a million people remained internally displaced as a result of the conflict and natural disaster. Many continued to seek refuge in city slums and other informal settlements, fashioning makeshift shelters from plastic sheeting, and living under the constant threat of forced and sometimes violent evictions. Poor sanitation and lack of access to education and health care coupled with bitter 2011/2012 weather conditions meant that scores died of illness, cold or both. Over 100, mainly children, reportedly died during this period amid criticism over the lack of timely humanitarian assistance provided. By March, the government had responded with an announcement that it was developing a comprehensive national policy on internal displacement. [...]

- [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Afghanistan; Comprehensive response urgently required as displacement crisis worsens, 25 March 2013](#)

[...] Summary

[...] IDPs face a wide range of physical threats and restrictions to their freedom of movement. They often live in life-threatening conditions, without access to sufficient food and water, adequate housing, security of tenure or employment. Increasing numbers seek relative safety in cities and towns where they face discrimination and are even more deprived and marginalised than the non-displaced urban poor. Over three quarters of IDPs now wish to settle permanently where they are. This right is not recognised by the government, which continues to link assistance and solutions for IDPs to return to their place of origin. Under these circumstances, and without adequate international assistance, growing numbers of Afghans risk prolonged displacement in dire conditions. [...]

[...] While a decade of unprecedented reconstruction assistance has led to development gains, endemic poverty and poor social and economic conditions ensure that most of the population is highly vulnerable. Afghanistan ranks 172 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index. Major gaps in the provision of basic services require a humanitarian response to grave health, education and housing needs. One-third of its 27 million population lives below the poverty line, over 30 per cent per cent of Afghans are food insecure and at least one Afghan woman dies every two hours due to pregnancy-related causes (OCHA, December 2012). [...]

Background

Complex population movements

[...] Refugee returnees who cannot reintegrate often find themselves in IDP-like situations. Others are forced into secondary displacement due to conflict or natural disasters and become IDPs (MoRR, July 2012).

[...] Growing urban displacement

Urban displacement is a growing concern in Afghanistan. Since 2001, tens of thousands of IDPs have sought the relative protection found in such cities as Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat. Here they live among the urban poor in informal settlements often lacking title deeds, formal tenancy agreements or the consent of private or state landowners to settle or develop the land on which they reside. In Kabul approximately 32,000 acutely vulnerable people, including numerous IDPs, live in dire conditions in over 50 illegal settlements (Samuel Hall, December 2012, p.7). [...]

Basic needs unmet

IDPs are unable to enjoy even basic rights to food and water, adequate housing, health, education or employment. Chronic under- and unemployment leaves many struggling to survive. IDPs have fewer vocational skills and most depend on casual daily labour. Many IDPs have incomes well below the national average and are unable to meet basic needs. The vast majority of IDPs spend over three quarters of income on food, with almost half spending above 90 per cent (NRC/IDMC/SamuelHall/JIPS, November 2012, pp.25-33. With few resources at their disposal, large numbers of IDPs (40 per cent) live in overcrowded poor quality shelters or shacks, often illegally occupying private or government land without adequate sanitation, electricity or access to basic services. Lack of security of tenure leaves IDPs at constant risk of eviction. Exposed to the elements, over 100 IDPs, including children, died in Kabul's slums during the severe winter of 2011-2012 (AI, February 2012, p.30; AI/NRC, October 2012). [...]

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➤ [Amnesty International, Afghanistan: 17 winter deaths in camps highlight government protection failure, 21 January 2013](#)

[...] At least 17 people, including 11 children, have died mostly from the cold in Afghanistan's displacement settlements in early January, highlighting the desperate and immediate need for improved aid delivery during the bitter cold winter months, Amnesty International said.

According to information Amnesty International has received, the deaths occurred in camps and settlements in Kabul and Herat provinces. Community leaders there criticized the Afghan government and international aid agencies for inconsistent and inadequate levels of assistance.

"These deaths were a preventable tragedy that unfortunately shows the inadequate co-ordination of winter assistance to hundreds of thousands of people living in displacement camps across the country," said Polly Truscott, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia-Pacific Director.

"The fact that children and the elderly are among the dead highlights the need to protect those groups that are most vulnerable to the harsh winter conditions. Priority must be given to those most at risk during the winter months, such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities and those needing medical care, including pregnant women."

The previous 2011/12 winter was unusually cold in Afghanistan, and more than 100 people, mostly children, died in displacement camps as a result of the harsh winter conditions. [...]

➤ [UNOCHA, Afghanistan: More funds, long-term solutions needed to help urban poor, 4 January 2013](#)

[...] The UN has warned that more funding and long-term support are needed to help tens of thousands of displaced people in Kabul cope with Afghanistan's harsh winter weather.

"We don't have anything," said Halima, a widow and mother of eight living in Kabul's Ada Mazar settlement. "We urgently need food and fuel to face the winter."

Ada Mazar is one of 55 informal settlements in Kabul where thousands of families live in makeshift tents and mud houses without proper protection from the cold, and with limited access to clean water and medical care. Dozens of children died from hypothermia in these settlements last winter, prompting the Government and aid agencies to step up winter aid with the help of the Kabul Informal Settlement Task Force this season.

UN agencies and humanitarian partners started distributing winter aid supplies, including warm meals, clothing, blankets and firewood, to over 5,000 families living in the settlements at the beginning of December. Last week, the World Food Programme reached more than 4,500 children under five with high energy biscuits.

Funding for humanitarian work is a problem in Afghanistan, where the needs are enormous. Last year, UN agencies and their partners appealed for US\$448 million for urgent life-saving work, but received less than 50 per cent of this amount. This year's appeal for \$471m has not received any funding so far, making Afghanistan one of the top five under-funded crises in the world. [...]

➤ [IOM, Country Fact Sheet Afghanistan, October 2012](#)

[...] III. HOUSING

Housing is the most important concern for returnees, with high inflation in real estate prices, great demographic pressure on Afghanistan's urban centers, and a general shortage of dwellings that are in good condition.

Kabul is currently home to nearly 4 million people. A high number of people who fled the country are still returning home. More than 2 million houses were destroyed or damaged beyond repair, while all basic health and education facilities ceased functioning. According to surveys conducted on behalf of Afghanistan's Ministry for Housing and Urban Development, an average of 2.8 families, or 18-20 persons, are thought to live in houses generally built to accommodate six.

Afghan authorities have been taking some limited steps to try and remedy the housing shortage, mostly relying on the expansion of the private construction sector. Cities such as Kabul, Jalalabad and Herat have seen large-scale real estate projects multiply over the past time.

However, little control is exerted over construction volumes, heights, prices, etc. Priority is also given to office buildings.

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A land distribution programme has been established by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation for the purpose of distributing intact and uncultivated governmental land to address the housing needs of eligible returnee and IDP compatriots. So far government land for distribution has been identified in 29 provinces. This represents over 300,000 plots, 17,800 of which have been distributed. To be eligible for this programme, returnees must (a) possess a Tazkera (national ID card) from his/her respective province (b) possess a Voluntary

Repatriation Form (VRF) or other valid documents that confirm his/her return to the country or from internal displacement to the area of origin and permanent residence (c) does not own land or house under his/her name; the name of a spouse or minor child in Afghanistan. Returnees should however be aware that the programme is still very much in its infancy, and plots represent little more than deserted land, in the absence of infrastructure.

Buying a house or an apartment remains a distant dream for most of Kabul's citizens. A simple three-room apartment now costs around USD 80,000 while houses start from USD 100,000 and go up to a staggering three million dollars in different parts of the city. In addition, landlords are keen to request up to 12 months' advance rent payment.

- Kabul

The average monthly rent, in a safe area, for an apartment large enough to house one family (3 Rooms) is USD 300 –500. The average price of a similar property is above USD 100,000. [...]

➤ [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Challenges of IDP Protection: Research study on the protection of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, November 2012](#)

[...] Key Findings

[...] Wherever they are found, and regardless of gender or length of displacement, IDPs indicated their three major protection priorities are employment, food and water and housing.

[...] The majority of IDP households spend over three quarters of their income on food, with over half spending above 90%. Over a third had not eaten for several days prior to being surveyed. IDPs who were displaced in 2012 report the same nutritional deficiencies as those displaced 10 years ago. Water is in short supply, of low quality and often the cause of disputes with members of host communities and other IDPs. [...]

Housing, land and property

Of IDPs interviewed, the number of households that owned their dwelling dropped significantly, from 70% pre-displacement to 26% with only 21% holding a legal record of their ownership. IDPs arrive in places of refuge with few resources, typically lacking the financial resources and social networks to live anywhere but in tents and cramped, insubstantial mud homes. Respondents who were displaced before the fall of the Taliban in 2001 were no more likely to own land than those who were displaced between the end of 2001 and 2009. Because they often illegally occupy private or government owned land, IDPs are sometimes threatened by evictions, whether lawful or otherwise. Many choose to live in informal camp-like settlements on state land in the belief their high visibility will reduce threats of eviction.

Many IDPs (unlike repatriating refugee returnees) have been excluded from government-sponsored Land Allocation Schemes since identity documentation is required and IDPs are ineligible if they do not return to their original, often insecure, province of origin. In any case, allocated areas often lack access to water, basic services and income-generation opportunities.

Of the IDPs sampled, 44% had built their dwellings without assistance. Often IDPs –especially in female-headed households – lack skills and build precarious structures, often being forced to re-build with each passing rainstorm. Dwellings offer little protection against the cold: during the winter of 2011-12 over a hundred IDP infants and children in informal settlements in Kabul died of cold.

Privacy is limited, and girls and boys – sometimes distant relatives – are forced to sleep in the same room, thus violating opposing traditional social mores. Lack of space and living in cramped circumstances can increase the risks of violence against women. [...]

➤ [Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan; Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process; Report from Danish Immigration Service's fact finding mission to Kabul, Afghanistan; 25 February to 4 March 2012, 29 May 2012](#)

[...] 1.5 Access to basic rights

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MoRR [Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation] emphasized that Kabul no longer has the capacity to absorb more people and basic services cannot be provided in Kabul. According to MoRR, there are 500,000 IDPs in Afghanistan and many of them are in Kabul. These people have been displaced due to natural disasters (droughts) as well as conflicts. Furthermore, Kabul has received another category of internally displaced persons due to unemployment in rural areas which causes movements to urban places and creation of informal settlements.

AIHRC [Afghan Independent Human Right Commission] highlighted that during the Taliban period, Kabul had around 500,000 inhabitants. Due to the conflicts in different areas in the last decades - and to some extent also due to natural disasters such as the drought, the return of refugees, better economic opportunities and operation of the international NGOs - many people have fled to Kabul in recent years. Now the city has more than five million inhabitants and has reached its limits, according to AIHRC. At present, there is no more room for people to settle in Kabul, people cannot find a decent livelihood, and houses as well as public services such as water and sanitation are not available. This winter (2012), many people, and especially many children, have died due to the cold weather in Kabul.

UNHCR pointed out that Kabul has grown rapidly within the last ten years and is now a city of approximately 5 million people. UNHCR further pointed out that the living conditions in Kabul are difficult, especially in the so-called informal and illegal settlements where a mixture of groups of returnees, migrants and people fleeing conflict in their area of origin have settled. As an example, UNHCR mentioned that drinking water is problematic. At present, mobile water tanks are supplying people with drinking water in these areas, but the supply is not sufficient and the government does not allow a permanent solution such as installation of water pumps in the area.

The position of the government is that the inhabitants of these sites are migrants who have come to Kabul for economic reasons and should go back to their area of origin. Furthermore, the Kabul municipality does not allow NGOs to work on more durable solutions in these areas. Kabul's informal settlements include 43 different sites in Kabul, each with a relatively homogenous ethnic group, according to UNHCR. 19,400 persons (3,235 families) are living in these informal settlements throughout Kabul.²

The settlements have no protection against eviction and as the government wants to develop Kabul as a capital city, these settlements are subject to being bulldozed.

According to DRC [Danish Refugee Council], access to some basic rights such as access to water is poor in the informal settlements, especially because the government does not allow permanent improvements. In some settlements, 1,000 families are sharing one water pump.

When asked whether IDPs live under worse conditions in Kabul compared to their place of origin, DRC stated that if one sees the situation in the settlements in Kabul, one cannot imagine that these people could have lived under worse conditions before. Most of them were farmers before coming to Kabul and their economic situation would probably have been better, but they have come to Kabul for safety. DRC believes, however, that some IDPs will not face any security problem if they go back to their area of origin, but they remain in Kabul due to better access to health care services, better livelihood opportunities, and hope for better future in the city compared to their place of origin.

An international organization in Kabul stated that important improvements in Kabul's infrastructure such as providing 24 hours electricity supply have been made as a consequence of the international presence. However, living conditions in Kabul are tough. Although Kabul faces the same problems as any other big city, the situation in Kabul is worse than in other major cities in Afghanistan because the demand for jobs and social services is higher than what the city can offer.

According to the international organization, everything is more expensive in Kabul than in other places of Afghanistan, in particular housing and food. In other cities like Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat, the cost of living is lower than in Kabul and food is cheaper. Many people who are coming to Kabul need to have two jobs to sustain themselves and their families. For example, there are people who have a job during the day and work as guards in the night.

1.5.1 Access to housing

When asked whether it is possible for people who flee a conflict in their area of origin to move to and settle in Kabul, an Afghan law practitioner explained that generally there is no legal barrier for people from other places in Afghanistan to come and settle in Kabul. The Afghan law practitioner added, however, that finding a place to live in Kabul is a major problem as rents are very high.

There are though areas with lower rents such as Pol-e-Charkhi, Kotal-e-Khair Khana or suburbs of

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Kabul. The same source added that some of the people who have come to Kabul live in tents as they cannot afford other accommodation and the government does not provide any shelters for them.

According to MoRR, many IDPs live in tents in Kabul which are quite hard to live in during cold winters and hot summers, for example this winter where the weather has been very cold.

MoRR pointed out that according to the Presidential Decree number 104 from 2005, all returnees and IDPs have to return to their place of origin, and the government will allocate a plot of land to returnees to settle on. MoRR is working to prepare these IDPs to return to their areas of origin with the assistance of aid organizations and donors.

According to UNHCR, housing is problematic in Kabul because of scarcity and rents are high. As regards access to housing in Kabul, DRC stated that housing is expensive in Kabul, and many live in extremely bad conditions either in tents or mud houses and have done so for the last 8 - 10 years.⁴

DRC added that the Afghan authorities do not seem to be willing to provide any help in the informal settlements mainly because the government want these people to go back to their areas of origin. According to DRC, even when NGOs want to provide help, they are told by the authorities that many among the settlers have settled illegally on land they do not own, and the NGOs should therefore not help them. Some of these people may also face eviction by the government.

When asked about the house rents in Kabul, DRC mentioned as an example that a family of six should pay about 100US dollars per month for a flat in a low middle class neighbourhood. DRC added that for the same reason DRC sees no movements out of the informal settlements.

Concerning house rent paid by a single person, DRC stated that normally single people live with friends and rent a flat together with others, and it is hence difficult to estimate how much the single persons pay. Housing in Kabul is a big problem, according to IOM. Renting a house in Kabul is very expensive. In central Kabul, the rent for a small house for six to seven family members will vary between 300 to 450US dollars per month depending on the location. In comparison, a teacher's salary is 80US dollars per month. IOM added that people will usually join family members and stay with their relatives in Kabul. This is also what many of the returnees on the Assisted Voluntary Return programme (AVR) are doing, according to IOM. In this way, they will manage the expenditures by sharing the rent and squeezing together.

Asked whether a young single man would be able to manage on his own in Kabul, IOM replied that IOM did not have any examples from their AVR programme of young men staying on their own in Kabul as they would normally have other family members to stay with. [...]

Livelihood opportunities

- [Centre for Strategic and International Studies, The Afghan War in 2013: Meeting the Challenges of Transition -- Volume II: Afghan Economics and Outside Aid, May 2013](#)

[...] Economic and Aid Challenges

[...] The flow of military spending and aid has come to dominate the market sector of Afghan GDP and vastly exceed Afghanistan's ability to raise internal revenues. The central government probably cannot function or survive without outside civil and economic aid at levels that can provide it with popular support and economic stability well beyond 2017. It cannot possibly fund effective ANSF unless the US and outside donor nations foot most of the bill.

At present, however, far too much of the outside effort at the national, international organization, and NGO level lives in a state of denial. They make unrealistic estimates of future development options that focus on massive changes in areas like mining and regional cooperation. They use macro-economic indicators that have no real validity or application to Afghan society. They use data with no credible source or definition to claim progress that has not occurred.

As a World Bank study issued in 2013 notes,⁷

...[A]s is well known, collecting reliable data on Afghanistan is extremely difficult. Moreover, much of the information that is available is subject to large margins of uncertainty and often problems of incompleteness, incomparability, and so on. Data are frequently changed and updated.

Collecting and triangulating data on issues such as jobs, aid inflows, and security costs have posed major challenges..

[...] Per Capita Income Data Provide Only the Roughest Warnings

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These problems in estimating the GDP make any estimates of increases in Afghan per capita income even more speculative and illustrate the almost constant analytic dishonesty of many international organizations, NGOs, and governmental structures like USAID and the US State Department in making claims about progress in health and education that have no basis in reliable population data and which are almost universally selected to imply that aid has produced exaggerated benefits. No reputable organization ignores gross uncertainty in its estimates or fails to provide parametric analysis when gross uncertainty exists.

The problems involved become clear from even a brief review of other sources, even if one ignores the massive uncertainties in Afghanistan's population data discussed in the following section.

For example, the CIA estimated in early 2013 that the Afghan GDP per capita was only \$1,000 in 2011, which ranked a dismal 217th in the world. The CIA also warned that,

Afghanistan's economy is recovering from decades of conflict. The economy has improved significantly since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 largely because of the infusion of international assistance, the recovery of the agricultural sector, and service sector growth. Despite the progress of the past few years, Afghanistan is extremely poor, landlocked, and highly dependent on foreign aid. Much of the population continues to suffer from shortages of housing, clean water, electricity, medical care, and jobs.

Criminality, insecurity, weak governance, and the Afghan Government's difficulty in extending rule of law to all parts of the country pose challenges to future economic growth. Afghanistan's living standards are among the lowest in the world. While the international community remains committed to Afghanistan's development, pledging over \$67 billion at nine donors' conferences between 2003-10, the Government of Afghanistan will need to overcome a number of challenges, including low revenue collection, anemic job creation, high levels of corruption, weak government capacity, and poor public infrastructure.

Once again, sources sharply disagree. For example, the Afghan CSO calculated GDP per capita of \$629 in 2010-2011, which suddenly leaped to \$715 in 2011-2012—evidently because of higher disbursements in aid and military spending and a low estimate of population growth.²² The UN put GDP per capita at \$586 in 2011. ²³ The IMF estimated GDP per capita in current prices at \$620 in 2012, and the per capita income in PPP terms at \$993. ²⁴ The World Bank estimated gross national income per capita at only \$470 in 2011, using the Atlas method. ²⁵ This makes the CIA estimate of Afghan per-capita income roughly 2.1 times the World Bank estimate— which may be a result of different methods and definitions, but highlights the need for any reputable reporting on progress in Afghanistan to explicitly explain and validate the use of statistical data and show the range of uncertainty in other sources.

This clearly highlights the failure of international organizations and US agencies like USAID to examine the validity of any of the progress numbers they use— including data on education, medical care, and the numbers of Afghans affected—which makes it impossible to trust any aspect of their statistics.

Nevertheless, most outside agencies do agree that the CIA is correct in drawing broad conclusions about Afghanistan's real-world economic problems. For example, the WorldBank warned in its May 2012 evaluations of Afghan prospects for Transition that, Afghanistan remains one of the world's least developed countries, with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of only \$528 in 2010 -11. More than a third of the population live below the poverty line, more than half are vulnerable and at serious risk of falling into poverty, and three-quarters are illiterate. Additionally, political uncertainty and insecurity could undermine Afghanistan's transition and development prospects.

The large aid inflows that have benefited Afghanistan have also brought problems. Aid has underpinned much of the progress since 2001—including that in key services, infrastructure, and government administration— but it has also been linked to corruption, poor aid effectiveness, and weakened governance. Aid is estimated to be \$15.7 billion—about the same as the size of the GDP in fiscal year 2011.

Despite the large volume of aid, most international spending “on” Afghanistan is not spent “in” Afghanistan, as it leaves the economy through imports, expatriated profits of contractors, and outward remittances. Other countries' experience shows that the impact of large aid reductions on economic growth may be less than expected. The main issue is how to manage this change, mitigate impacts, and put aid and spending on a more sustainable path. [...]

The World Bank also provided another analysis in the spring of 2013 that documented many real positive trends since 2001, but put them in an honest perspective lacking in so many exaggerated official claims of progress:

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Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2010 gross domestic product (GDP) was US\$15.9 billion (excluding opium production), after nearly a decade of strong growth.

With an estimated population of 30.6 million, the country has a per capita GDP of US\$528. In spite of encouraging progress, social indicators are still dismal (and suggest wide gender gaps): 36 percent of people are poor, and about 75 percent of the population is illiterate. (p. 47)

[...]. On the basis of limited available data, unemployment and underemployment are estimated at 8 percent and 48 percent, respectively, even with current rapid economic growth. Weakening labor markets during the transition could worsen the jobs outlook, affecting household incomes and possibly other aspects of the transition.

The direct employment impact of aid, while significant, does not seem to be excessively large. An estimated 6–10 percent of the working population has benefited from aid-financed job opportunities, most of them short term (less than six months)...US\$500 million decline in aid delivered outside Afghanistan's budget could directly affect 11,000–18,000 six-month jobs. It may also worsen underemployment and reduce household incomes (because of fewer casual labor opportunities and lower pay for skilled employees) rather than lead to much higher open unemployment. The impact will be greater in conflict-affected provinces (which have received much more aid per capita) and in urban centers. A gradual decline in aid would mute the employment impact, allowing labor markets to adjust and the security, mining, and civilian public sectors to grow and partly offset aid-related job losses.

Slower economic growth and the associated employment effects are expected to increase poverty, but aid reductions would probably not markedly affect it, because higher donor spending—particularly the massive stabilization-oriented expenditures in some of the more insecure and conflict-affected provinces—appears to have only modestly affected poverty. [...]

..According to the NRVA 2007/08, 66.5 percent of those in the working-age population (16 years and older) participated in the labor market. Only about 6.8 percent of the population could be considered unemployed in 2009 based on the conventional definition of the term. However, the relatively low level of open unemployment is counterbalanced by the severity of underemployment: more than 48 percent of those employed work fewer than 35 hours a week, on average.

...Underemployment is particularly widespread in rural areas and among the self employed, including day laborers and family workers, who make up about 77 percent of the workforce. (pp.61-62) [...]

...Underemployment will rise because the activities affected by declining financial inflows (services, construction) are relatively labor intensive. Roughly 6– 10 percent of the working population has benefited from aid- financed jobs, though most are short term. So declining aid can be expected to heighten underemployment (with fewer casual labor opportunities and lower pay for skilled employees), even if unemployment is not greatly affected. The adverse impact of lower economic growth on employment is likely to be much larger than the direct employment impact of declining aid, making the slowing of economic growth a concern during transition.

[...] Taking a Guess at Some Key Population Trends Affecting Every Element of Development and Transition
The problems in Transition planning are not simply a lack of accurate population data. Most Transition models do not account for demographic factors that the World Bank and US working studies have shown will be critical. While none of the numbers quoted in such studies are reliable, the broad trends in such data almost certainly are. 38 The following guesstimates illustrate some of the “factoids” and trends involved—many of which contradict the data from other studies quoted earlier:

[...] Unemployment

- With a labor force of 15 million people, unemployment will increase from its current level of about 35-40% (31% in agriculture, 26% in industry, 43% in services).
- The World Bank estimated in November 2011 that unemployment and especially underemployment in Afghanistan—respectively estimated at 8% and 48%—are already high, even with today's rapid economic growth. Roughly 6-10% of the working population has benefited from aid -financed job opportunities, most of these in short-term employment. Declining aid, therefore, can be expected to exacerbate underemployment levels (with fewer casual labor opportunities and lower pay for skilled employees).
- Almost 43% of the population is under 15 years of age, leading to a near-future bulge in employable people.
- The lack of jobs, due in large part to slowing economic growth, will cause flight from Afghanistan.
- Annual population growth will outpace job creation.
- The best case for full implementation of the “New Silk Road” (NSR) and other new aid efforts is creating 150,000 jobs over next three years.

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- The CIA estimates annual increases in labor force may outpace best-case impact of NSR over three years: the estimate of growth in 2010 was 392,116 males and 370,295 females.
- An estimated 28% literacy among the population over 15 years of age (43% male, 12.6% female).
- Even these estimates tacitly assume that there is no increase in the negative economic impacts of the insurgency and civil violence following US and ISAF withdrawal. They ignore the impact on drug production and the behavior of criminal networks and large numbers of armed men who will suddenly be unemployed. [=...]

➤ [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Afghanistan; Comprehensive response urgently required as displacement crisis worsens, 25 March 2013](#)

[...] Basic needs unmet

[...] Chronic under- and unemployment leaves many struggling to survive. IDPs have fewer vocational skills and most depend on casual daily labour. Many IDPs have incomes well below the national average and are unable to meet basic needs. [...]

➤ [UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Corruption in Afghanistan: Recent patterns and trends, December 2012](#)

[...] Key Findings

[...] Recruitment in the public sector has shown itself to be an area of concern in Afghanistan as it is largely based on bribes or patronage. About 80 per cent of citizens with a family member recruited into the civil service in the last three years declared that the family member in question received some form of assistance or paid a bribe to be recruited. Civil servants in the four sectors covered in the integrity surveys also acknowledged that assistance with recruitment is widespread. For example, some 50 per cent of police, local government staff and school teachers indicated that they received assistance during their recruitment. [...]

4. RECRUITMENT PRACTICES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

In addition to bribery related to public service delivery, Afghan citizens are also confronted with corrupt practices related to public sector recruitment. Job opportunities in the public sector can be attractive to job seekers, not only for the nature of the work itself but also for the advantages typical of employment in the civil service, such as job security, social status and stable remuneration. Though usually regulated in order to ensure transparency, the civil service recruitment process leaves varying degrees of discretion to the officials responsible and vulnerability to corrupt practices is high. As public sector jobs are often coveted, a lack of transparency and objectivity can make recruitment procedures vulnerable to nepotism and bribery.

The demand for public sector jobs in Afghanistan is confirmed by the 2012 survey findings, which show that 52 per cent of Afghan households have at least one member who applied for a job in the public sector in the three years prior to the survey and that, on average, more than half of those applications were successful.

In a large share of cases in which a household member was recruited into the public sector, citizens reported that recruitment was in some way facilitated by nepotism and/or the payment of bribes. As shown in table 1, almost 45 per cent of all such households used both those means, some 23 per cent only relied on the assistance of relatives/friends and almost 13 per cent paid a bribe but had no personal assistance during their recruitment. Less than one in five (19 per cent) secured a public job without assistance from a relative, friend or member of their own community and without paying a bribe. Such a lack of transparency in the recruitment process is a major blow to long-standing attempts to build a civil service based on competence and integrity. [...]

➤ [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Challenges of IDP Protection: Research study on the protection of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, November 2012](#)

[...] Key Findings

[...] Unemployment rates for IDPs are well below national averages and increase with length of displacement. Due to post-displacement difficulties in securing employment the IDP households surveyed have seen their monthly incomes decrease by 21%.

[...] Employment and livelihoods

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On average, household income decreased by 21% as a result of internal displacement. 62% of surveyed IDPs stated that employment-related issues were their main problems during displacement. After being displaced, IDPs typically move away from agriculture to construction and other day-labour in the informal sector. IDPs enter urban areas – often after suffering the losses associated with displacement, including those of assets and social networks spanning generations – at a unique disadvantage. Women from rural origins, no longer with the opportunity to do farming work and denied jobs in the male-dominated construction sector, are forced into perilous dependence on irregular tailoring, sewing or begging. Though many IDPs seek to diversify income, they often lack means to purchase equipment or access capital. Trapped in the informal economy, IDPs become more dependent than the non-displaced on daily labour that is usually badly paid, temporary and insecure.

Household circumstances generally do not improve: prolonged IDPs reported a higher rate of unemployment than more recent IDPs. Researchers found that an average of only 1.12 individuals were contributing to the respondents' monthly household income, typically relying heavily on a single individual to meet all of the household's economic needs. Rural IDP households earn significantly more than urban households. This suggests high levels of irregular and insufficient employment in urban areas and that urban IDPs' motivations in remaining in the city are primarily driven by the desire to find security and are unrelated to economic or employment opportunities.

Without sufficient employment opportunities, over 90% of IDPs reported having had to borrow money for basic needs after being displaced. Over 30% of IDPs reported borrowing money at least six times in the previous year to buy food.

Those IDPs who have received livelihoods-related assistance from the humanitarian community are critical of its temporary nature. The International Labour Organisation has noted that "most jobs that have been generated by the international development assistance tend to be casual or temporary and are clearly not sustainable without continuing aid inflows."⁶ IDPs reported lack of transparency in the selection of IDP beneficiaries. Lack of a proper methodology to conduct pre-assessments led to incomplete surveys, leaving some IDP households excluded. This often results in jealousy and internal tensions within beneficiary communities. [...]

➤ [IOM, Country Fact Sheet Afghanistan, October 2012](#)

[...] II. ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET

1. General information

Afghanistan's economy is characterized by high unemployment and underemployment rates. Knowledge of the local economic fabric is rather limited, and macro-economic policies have yet to be implemented, creating an environment that is favorable to the emergence of an unregulated, largely informal economy. Construction and international aid are major sources of income. However the latter two entail extensive use of foreign human and technical resources, making it difficult to assess the impact of current efforts on Afghanistan's economy.

2. Income

Depending on the type of jobs undertaken, income varies from an estimated average of AFA 12,000 for business managers and skilled professionals in urban areas, to AFA 2,200 for agriculture workers based in urban areas. With the exception of the latter category, income in urban areas is higher, especially for skilled workers. Recent research also seems to indicate that the potential for income generation is higher in the central and northern regions. It is to be noted that figures represent rough indications at best, and that business earnings do not necessarily equate household income levels. While the average business income, across all geographical and age groups, is estimated to be slightly above AFA 5,000. Average household monthly earnings can be as low as AFA 2,300. The prevalence of agriculture as the most common field of activity in many areas tends to drive down average income figures. A majority of households also benefit from secondary sources of income, mostly through family connections – support from relatives in country or abroad – or direct work abroad. Seasonal and relatively short-term cross-border migration to Pakistan and Iran, is also a widespread phenomenon. The impact of remittances on the Afghan economy, while largely undocumented to date, is understood to be considerable.

Income generated from public sector activities, despite higher qualification levels, is generally quite low, ranging from USD 50 to 200 per month on average. The civil service reform is expected to see some changes in income levels in a mid to long-term perspective.

3. Unemployment and Assistance

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Unemployment is not recorded on a regular basis. It is however expected to reach up to 45% in some regions, for a national average of 30-35%. Rates are high among all age groups, the youth (aged 16 to 25) being the most active group (around 25% unemployment). Seasonality can in rural areas exert a significant influence over both unemployment and under-employment (up to 40%) rates. In spite of such high levels, demand is strong for skilled professionals in a variety of activities. Surveys indicate that up to two thirds of all businesses require additional employees. Current efforts are concentrated on the establishment of Employment Assistance Centers in all 34 Afghan provinces, designed to increase institutional understanding of local economic fabrics by establishing links with the private sector and employment needs, provide socio-economic counseling and guidance, offer referral and placement services for employment, skills acquisition or financing purposes.

4. Economic Activity

Economic activity is mostly handled through market and bazaar structures, be it in rural or urban 11 areas, with the exception it seems of the Western region, where economic activity functions on a mobile basis. Urban bazaars outrank rural ones by size as well as customer bases, in some cases catering to up to 60 villages, while rural bazaars usually supply a maximum of 10 settlements. The majority of businesses are long running, small, family-owned structures, employing one or two workers on average. Urban areas of the central and northern regions do however present larger scale activities, e.g. clothing factories in Kabul city or the gas industry in Jawzjan province. In some successful instances, labor-intensive activities such as carpentry and construction businesses also result in increased employment rates (up to 100). Crafts, trade and services constitute the major fields of economic activity, with general ware, carpet shops, butcher, bakery, groceries, and cloth being other common occupations. Main activities related to agriculture are fruit/vegetable and grain shops, while industrial sectors are mostly represented by vehicle repair, carpentry, and manufacture through tailoring activities. The latter also constitute a major source of employment for women. Urban areas generally present a greater diversification of activities, particularly through the provision of services and trade (drugstores, mechanics, clothing, etc.), which in some cases are non-existent in rural areas, where the economy is expectedly predominantly based on agriculture.

The public and NGO sectors also offer a fairly broad range of employment opportunities, at the provincial and central levels. Many Afghans benefit from the strong presence of the international community in major urban centers, particularly in Kabul. International organizations and foreign representations in Kabul generally apply wages far above general income levels. [...]

➤ [UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Broken futures: young Afghan asylum seekers in the UK and on return to their country of origin, October 2012](#)

[...] Forced return: what are former unaccompanied minors returning to?

[...] Poverty

Life in Kabul is also a challenge, particularly for young people whose families do not have a home there. Some shelters exist, but many returnees failed to meet their strict criteria.

Returnees struggle to find places to stay if informal networks fail, "because security means everything is closed off, nothing has its name on it, so if you don't know where you are going you are lost" (AP3). Poverty and homelessness leading to drug addiction was also noted to be a danger in Kabul, with two professionals telling of disused buildings occupied by heroin addicts. One staff member of an international NGO told that "it's prohibitively expensive to rent in Kabul because NGO staff renting has driven up the rental market" (AP3), and another confirmed that "if you want to live in Kabul, even for a simple one bedroom place with no luxury they will pay maybe \$300 per month. So your money will run out very soon. Clothes and food are also expensive these days" (AP5).

[...] Education and employment

[...] The professionals interviewed explained that within Kabul, returnees whose skill sets combined high levels of English with proficient written and spoken Dari or Pashtu and advanced computer skills were the best placed to find work, particularly within INGOs or other international companies. One professional had found that these young people were sometimes preferred because they have had experience living amongst foreigners. Several examples of young people working in this context were provided. However, most professionals also cautioned that large numbers of young men with similar skills were competing for relatively few roles, and so "a returnee has to be above and beyond a young person who has been to high school or college here" (AP8). Another professional noted that "the NGO community is the main source of employment for well-educated young people, but no-one knows how this is might change over the next

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few years if lots of NGOs leave” (AP3). Young people with this skill set were also possible candidates for working with ISAF as interpreters, many of whom relocate from Kabul for this work. However, a British trainer of these interpreters told us he would recommend this “only as a last resort” (AP13) because of the security risks both out on patrol and on return home. For young people with skills, but without connections, one professional suggested that the best chance of earning money is through starting a viable business, particularly “anything that caters to the foreign market such as security, internet, mobiles, or fixing laptops. But some of this will change when the troops pull out so they’ll need a back-up plan” (AP7). For young people without appropriate skill combinations, the outlook was somewhat bleak, and once again depended almost entirely on personal connections and networks. With such connections, work may be found, and one young person told us of his cousin who “was sent back to Kabul, and he is OK, he is happy now because he managed to get some work with a friend of our family” (YP11). One professional reported that young people were able to find work “if they have connections, like a friend who runs a shop” (AP5), but that otherwise they would face difficulties.

➤ [Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper \(Victoria Metcalfe and Simone Haysom, with Ellen Martin\), Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul, June 2012](#)

[...] Chapter 5

The economy and livelihoods

The Afghan economy is weak, underdeveloped and vulnerable to fluctuations in foreign assistance. There is virtually no manufacturing sector and a large proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) and employment in the country is derived from poppy cultivation and the opium trade (Doherty and Geraghty, 2011). Rural livelihoods are precarious, and in urban areas formal jobs are scarce and incomes low. This chapter places the search for sustainable livelihoods in Kabul in the context of the opportunities and challenges presented by the urban economy, the cost of living in Kabul and the strategies that residents employ to earn an income. The findings of this study indicate that successful integration in urban labour markets is difficult. Those displaced from rural areas are at a particular disadvantage. Few have the skills, education or network of contacts needed to secure employment in the city and most struggle to find even casual labour. Returnees from Iran who have settled in the city rather than their areas of origin appear to have greater skills, experience and contacts that would be relevant in the urban economy. However, this is not applicable to all returnees, many of whom continue to face a range of difficulties in accessing sustainable employment. While those who have lived in Kabul longer seem to have more consistent sources of income, barriers to sustainable livelihoods affect recently displaced arrivals, returnees and longer-term residents alike, including high levels of debt, low levels of credit and overstretched support networks. Fundamentally, the weakening Afghan economy is affecting the livelihoods of all of Kabul’s residents.

[...] Chapter 10

Conclusions and recommendations

[...] The findings of this report also challenge assumptions about the more positive experience of returnees. Whilst many may indeed have developed livelihood skills more relevant to the urban economy than internally displaced populations from rural areas, this is not always the case and many still face difficulties in securing employment.

➤ [Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan; Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process; Report from Danish Immigration Service’s fact finding mission to Kabul, Afghanistan; 25 February to 4 March 2012, 29 May 2012](#)

[...] 1.5.2. Access to the labour market

According to MoRR [Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation], the main problem in Kabul is employment for people coming from the provinces or returning from abroad.

AIHRC pointed out that the employment rate is very low in Afghanistan. 36 % of the workforce is unemployed and another 36 % is earning less than one dollar a day. Kabul has a relatively better employment rate, but people coming from the provinces will have difficulties in finding sustainable jobs.

According to AIHRC [Afghan Independent Human Right Commission], there are both wealthy people and poor people who have fled conflicts in their area of origin. The economic situation of most of the people has not improved by coming to Kabul. People who lived under poor conditions in their area of origin will

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also live in poor conditions in Kabul. There are people who had their land and were living from agriculture but who have ended up as daily labourers in Kabul.

Asked about the access to employment, UNHCR explained that it is better in the big cities than in the country side. According to UNHCR, many people come to Kabul in search of jobs because they think that here are lots of jobs in Kabul due to the presence of the international community.

However, because of the rapid growth of the population of the city in recent years, the access to employment is more acute in Kabul compared to other cities, and it is difficult for newcomers to establish a livelihood there.

Regarding access to the labour market in Kabul, DRC [Danish Refugee Council] explained that because many people do not have education, they are doomed to unemployment or to low - paid jobs as day - labourers, and it is quite difficult for them to earn their living. DRC assumed that persons with vocational skills have a reasonable chance of providing a minimal livelihood, and that is the reason why DRC has started activities with vocational training in motorbike repair, cell phone repair, tailoring and carpet weaving in some settlements. DRC also pointed out that persons with foreign language and computer skills have very good job opportunities in Kabul.

Compared to single women or families, single young males – even those with no education – have better chances to find jobs and survive in Kabul, according to DRC. As DRC explained, widows and single women are in an extremely vulnerable situation, particularly widows who tend not to be looked after by their families and some of them even end up in prostitution.

IOM stated that employment in general is a big problem in Afghanistan. IOM added that the labour market in Kabul is under a huge pressure as a result of the considerable growth of the city's population within the last ten years. The same source explained that due to the worsening security situation in the various provinces, many people are coming to Kabul. The source added that many returnees from the AVR programme are also staying in Kabul looking for job opportunities, instead of returning to their areas of origin which may be insecure areas. Moreover, there are people who have come from the rural areas to the city in search of better job opportunities and better life. IOM pointed out that the access to employment is still higher in Kabul and other big cities than in the rural areas.

IOM further said that young men will have the biggest opportunities for jobs compared to other groups and many young people decide to come to Kabul because of employment opportunities.

Regarding job opportunities, IOM said that most jobs are found in the private sector (often small businesses), and there are only few opportunities in the public sector. For people coming to Kabul from the country side without any education, the only opportunity available is often low - paid daily labour, mainly in the construction or service sector, according to IOM. These people will gain 5 - 7 US dollars per day, and it is especially difficult for families with children to survive with such low income. Others will try to make a living as shop keepers but they can barely survive on that. IOM said that most people who are fleeing the country side and who have previously been farmers will end up in a worse economic situation than previously, but they prefer to stay in Kabul because it is a safer place for them and their families than their area of origin.

IOM stated that compared to other newcomers, educated people have better opportunities to find a job within the government or in private companies, particularly those with foreign language or computer skills.

According to an international NGO, the main problem in Kabul is to find a job in order to sustain a livelihood. As many families have moved to Kabul due to insecurity, there is pressure on the available resources and jobs. The international NGO found that in general it is easier for a single man to settle and integrate in Kabul than for a whole family.

An Afghan law practitioner stated that to find a job is a considerable challenge for people moving to Kabul although there are more job opportunities in Kabul compared to other places in Afghanistan, especially for educated people.

An international organization said that a large part of the economy in Kabul is sustained by the international presence, in particular ISAF troops. It is expected therefore that the employment situation in Kabul will be catastrophic the day the international forces leave the country.

The same source stated that for men it is easier to find jobs than for women although the unemployment rate is very high even for men. There are many frustrated young men in Kabul who do not have a job due to lack of education. If you are educated, you have more chances to find a job in Kabul. Regarding young

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men, MoWA [Ministry of Women's Affairs] stated that if they come to and settle down in Kabul, they will not face so many problems as single women do and if they have relatives, it will be much easier. [...]

Criminality rate in Kabul

➤ [Tolo News, More Than 50 Crimes Registered Since New Year: Kabul Police, 4 April 2013](#)

[...] Kabul police officials on Thursday said that there have been more than 50 criminal offenses registered in the first 15 days of the Persian new year in Kabul province.

Gen Mohammad Zahir Zahir, head of Criminal Investigation Department of Kabul Police, told TOLONews that the 51 criminal offenses include two murder cases, six robberies, and eight physical abuse cases, all of which have taken place in Kabul since the start of 1390 (March 22, 2013).

"In the first fifteen days of the year, 51 cases including robbery, murder and other small cases have been registered at Kabul police headquarters," Gen Zahir said, adding that tens of people have been detained. He said that the police are working in new methods to decrease organised crime in the province.

"In the next six months, we will take strong measures to decrease the level of crime in Kabul," he said.

The number of criminal cases has decreased since last year, he noted. [...]

➤ [Tolo News, Armed Men Kill Kabul Resident at Home, 28 January 2013](#)

[...] Kabul residents are concerned that crime is increasing as a group of armed thieves stabbed a Kabul resident to death and injured his wife Sunday evening in the Karte Naw area.

According to people in the Karte Naw neighbourhood, the armed men were wearing police uniforms.

A spate of reported armed robberies in the area have raised fears among residents that crime is on the rise, and notably it carried out by men in police and army uniforms.

However, the Kabul police chief in charge of Karte Naw (Zone 8) Mohammad Naeem Qazawi dismissed the report of an increase in robberies, although he admitted there have been thieves active in the area.

Qazawi added that Sunday's murder was not a robbery gone wrong but an incident triggered by personal differences.

"The man had a phone argument the afternoon before he was killed – they had a disagreement over some land," he told TOLONews.

"If it wasn't related to personal hostility, then the thieves would have taken something from the house, but nothing was taken, and they stabbed to death the man who was the target," he added.

But residents say that at least five similar incidents have taken place in the area recently where armed thieves dressed as police enter homes and forcing residents to let them take their belongings.

"Groups of armed thieves – of five to ten or even 15 people – have entered houses, tied up the residents, and stolen their belongings. We have complained to the Zone 8 police station to stop it, but nothing has happened," a local resident told TOLONews.

Another said, "They roam around in groups, and when they are questioned, they would say 'We are on police patrol.' It's not clear if they are the police or not, because they are in police uniforms."

However the police chief argued that part of the problem is that so many people own guns which can allow thieves to mortally threaten others and pose as security personnel.

"Theft is something normal, but the main problem for Kabul police in general is that most people have weapons in their houses," Qazawi said.

Armed theft in the Afghan capital is not new. Earlier this month six armed men entered a house in the same area of Karte Naw at 2:00 pm, and breaking the hand of a female resident while attempting to take her jewellery. [...]

Scale of displacement in Kabul

➤ [UNHCR, Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report – Universal Periodic Review: Afghanistan, June 2013](#)

[...] C. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

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A significant increase in internal displacement has been witnessed in the last few years. Conflict, insecurity, human rights violations and natural disasters continue to trigger internal displacement in Afghanistan. The country's southern, eastern and western regions continue to produce the majority of conflict-induced internal displacement in Afghanistan. However, areas that previously did not have significant displacement, such as the central region of Afghanistan, are now recording displacement, which would tend to indicate a continued escalation and broadening of the conflict. At the end of April 2013, some 536,000 individuals or approximately / 83,000 families were displaced in Afghanistan. It should be noted that

UNHCR Afghanistan tracks conflict-induced IDPs in groups, and as such, the IDP statistics do not accurately reflect the number of individuals/families. Furthermore, the tracking system currently in use cannot systematically capture those who move as families/individuals through secondary displacement (e.g. moving or reuniting with family members in a third location), nor IDPs living in peri-urban or urban areas. With a large number of IDPs in situations of protracted displacement with limited prospects for return or other durable solutions, there is a need for longer term interventions to address livelihood and other needs in displacement. A vast majority of IDPs still continue to rely on their host communities for assistance. [...]

➤ [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Afghanistan; Comprehensive response urgently required as displacement crisis worsens, 25 March 2013](#)

[...] Displacement figures

[...] An estimated 100,400 people were newly displaced by conflict in 2012 (UNHCR, December 2012; UNHCR, January 2013). According to the National IDP Task Force, co-chaired by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR, 493,000 people remained displaced by conflict, in-security and human rights violations as of January 2013.

[...] Background to displacement

[...] In the last decade, mass migration of rural Afghans to towns and cities has led to rapid urbanisation. Up to 30 per cent of the population lives in urban areas and urban population growth is well above average elsewhere in Asia (HPG, June 2012, p.7). An estimated 60-70 per cent per cent of Afghanistan's urban population now live in unplanned – or informal – urban settlements characterised by inadequate water and sanitation provision and limited access to basic services. The population of Kabul doubled from two million in 2001 to 4.5 million in 2010: 70-80 per cent of the city's residents live in informal settlements (WB/UNHCR, May 2011, p.12;HPG , June 2012, p.7). [...]

Mental health treatment and psychological support

➤ [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Afghanistan; Comprehensive response urgently required as displacement crisis worsens, 25 March 2013](#)

[...] 4. Protection challenges and durable solutions

[...] Psychological and Mental Health Needs

Our data does not suggest a significant difference between the reported mental health needs of conflict and natural disaster-induced IDPs. Psychological support is particularly required for conflict-induced IDPs who have often directly witnessed or otherwise experienced violence in addition to the potential trauma of displacement itself. Young children are particularly vulnerable. Overall, 35.2 per cent of respondents indicated that they themselves or members of their households needed some kind of psychological assistance (see Graph 17).

It is generally believed that accounts of mental illness in Afghanistan are under-reported. When disaggregated by gender, our findings indicate more willingness on the part of female respondents to receive psychological support for both themselves (76.7 per cent) and their family members. Despite the apparent need for psychological support, less than five per cent of IDPs reported receiving any post-displacement counselling. [...]

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➤ [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\), Afghanistan Common Humanitarian Action Plan 2013, 26 December 2012](#)

[...] 1. Summary

[...] Insecurity remains the biggest determinant of humanitarian need. Armed conflict prevails in large parts of the country. It causes significant physical and psychological harm to civilians, as well as displacement and deprivation of basic services. Reinforcing the protection of civilians is therefore the predominant objective of the humanitarian community in 2013, and all sectors have plans in place to advance this goal [...]

➤ [Yousuf A. Rahimi and S. Azimi \(Royal College of Psychiatry, International Psychiatry; Vol. 9, Issue 3\), War and the crisis of mental health in Afghanistan, August 2012](#)

[...] Mental health and psychiatric services in Afghanistan have gone through various stages of development and crisis but the long-term impact of recent wars and conflict on the country's mental health services has not been evaluated. What is obvious is the shortage of trained mental health professionals in the country.

Mental health services in Afghanistan have suffered from the continuous crisis in its recent history, and a few times were hit so badly as to stop functioning altogether. [...]

Current situation

Since the fall of the Taliban, mental health services have slowly started to take shape again. In 2005 the Mental Health Department reopened at the Ministry of Public Health but now under the Department of Preventive Medicine, that is, at a lower level than previously. Although the numbers of doctors working in psychiatry and of allied mental health professionals as well as the number of NGOs providing mental healthcare have increased over the past decade compared with the 1980s, the need for mental health and substance misuse services has also increased, to the extent that both government and private sectors, with the help of international donors, are still unable to meet the mental health needs of the public. The absence of mental health services for children and women remains one of the chief challenges.

Currently, there are around 60 locally trained psychiatrists working in the country but no trained psychiatric nurses; nor are there postgraduate courses for allied mental health professionals. All nurses in the mental health facilities are general nurses who are self-taught and gained their experience working in the facilities, until last year, when a UK-trained nurse took up the challenge of training the 17 nurses at Kabul Psychiatric Hospital.

There are around 30 drug detoxification centres in the country, each with a capacity of around 10–20 beds, mostly supported by international donors and run by the Ministry of Health and NGOs. The treatment offered in drug detoxification centres is usually symptomatic, with no community follow-up or psychosocial rehabilitation services. The relapse rates of drug misuse and psychiatric disorders must therefore be high, although there are no reliable statistics. Although the national Basic Package of Health Services has included a mental health component with a strong emphasis on bio-psychosocial counselling, there are still no community mental health teams functioning in the country.

Despite all the improvements, vast challenges still remain, including:

- the high prevalence of psychiatric disorders, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder and unrecognised depression
- the ready availability of narcotics, which has led to a sudden rise in drug addiction in the country
- the shortage of qualified mental health workers

Until recently, heroin addicts gathered in large numbers under the bridges of Kabul city, which caused a public outcry. A government campaign to remove them as well as a very cold winter last year and a high volume of rain this spring helped to disperse them. No methadone replacement therapy exists for heroin users in the country except for a small pilot project run by Medicine de Monde. Kabul Psychiatric Hospital is currently receiving financial and technical support from a project funded by the European Union (EU) but it is still in need of qualified staff. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Little Succor For Afghanistan's Mentally Ill, 3 May 2012](#)

[...] Decades of war, widespread poverty, and societal restrictions can take a toll on the mind, making Afghanistan uniquely suited as an incubator for mental illness.

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But while the factors are numerous, the path to treatment is fraught with obstacles ranging from the shame felt by family members, to age-old traditions that compete with modern methods, and a deficiency of professionals and facilities equipped to deal with the situation.

Among the mental illnesses affecting Afghans most are depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder, but precise statistics are difficult to pin down.

One frequently mentioned figure estimates that 60 percent of the population is affected by some form of mental illness. Other estimates range from around the 15 percent range to as high as 98 percent.

Even one of the leading authorities in the field of mental health in Afghanistan, the World Health Organization, expresses skepticism at attempts to quantify the problem.

Ahmad Azadi, communication and advocacy officer for the WHO in Afghanistan, cites a lack of recorded data and mental-health professionals to properly diagnose patients. In an e-mail he simply says that "Afghans are in great need" when it comes to mental-health treatment.

That conclusion is difficult to dispute. With some 30 million inhabitants, Afghanistan has only a handful of mental-health treatment facilities nationwide.

In Kabul, the state's main facility has a capacity to treat just 60 patients at a time. There are specialized hospital wards in Jalalabad, in eastern Afghanistan, and Herat, in the west. In the northern city of Mazar-i Sharif a gleaming, private hospital helps fill the void.

Other than that there are no other medical facilities to treat mental patients throughout Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

Azizuddin Hemat, head of the government-run Society of Mental Health Specialists, says the situation is dire, especially in the country's regions, but that there are positive developments.

He singles out the private Alemi Neuro Psychiatric Hospital in Mazar-i Sharif -- the administrative center of Balkh Province -- as a particular source of pride when it comes to treating patients with mental health-problems.

Unlike the dilapidated state hospital in Kabul's crowded Alauddin area, the four-story Alemi facility is gleaming and equipped with modern equipment.

'Just A Drop In The Ocean'

Dr. Nader Alemi, the owner of the hospital, claims patients come from all over Afghanistan.

"In the past 12 months, 964 patients from different provinces have sought treatment here," Alemi says. "But it's just a drop in the ocean. We have millions of people suffering from depression in villages and cities who desperately need treatment."

Public awareness of the problem is seen as key to treating it in a country where mental illnesses are seldom recognized as a medical issue, and are often covered up by family members out of shame.

Traditional treatments, according to Alemi, involve employing mullahs to "cure" people by means of exorcisms or the reading of verses.

Sufferers often turn to holy shrines known as "ziyarat" for treatment. Prominent "ziyarat" such as Niali Saheb in Nangarhar, Shams Saheb in Ghazni province, and Shpole Baba in the eastern Mahipar town have become a popular destination for tens of thousands of people suffering from depression.

Only when patients' distress and suffering becomes unbearable for the patients and their families do they find their way to the country's few specialized facilities.

Alemi says that when it comes to proper treatment, psychological counseling "goes a long way."

He maintains that sufferers of mental illness are eager to share what they have been going through.

'Suffering In Silence'

Time and money are a hindrance, according to Alemi.

While treatment for depression, for example, usually takes many months, the majority of his patients come from remote rural areas and cannot afford extended hospital stays.

"So we have found the best possible solution under our circumstances," he says. "We hospitalize patients for a few days, during which they undergo psychological counseling, and we prescribe medications before they leave.

"We stay in touch over the phone; patients can call our doctors for any advice they need. And then they return for another check-up in two-three months."

"It's not ideal but it helps," Alemi says.

Meanwhile, in Kabul, the Society of Mental Health Specialists works to convince the government to allocate money to train experts and open mental health facilities in all provinces.

"People are suffering in silence, it's affecting their families and entire society," says Hemat.

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"If they had access to treatment, perhaps we would have less domestic violence, self-immolation and drug addictions, and even a lot less suicide bombings. You can't make a happy and healthy young man wear a suicide belt to blow himself and others up." [...]

- [World Health Organisation, Programme Areas: Mental Health, undated \(accessed 18 June 2013\)](#)
[...] Mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders are prevalent in all regions of the world and are major contributors to morbidity and premature mortality. More than 14% of the global burden of disease, measured in disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), is attributable to mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders. The Afghanistan National Survey on Mental Health 2003–2005 showed that 16.5% of the adult population in the country was suffering from mental health disorders. In Afghanistan, health care facilities specific to mental health care services are few and far between. The Ministry of Public Health has upgraded mental health from second tier to first tier, thereby making mental health among the top five priorities of the Ministry. Mental health is one of the components of the existing framework of the basic package of health services. Inclusion of mental health care into the basic package of health services is an important step in ensuring that psychological distress/mental disorders are recognized and managed by health personnel.
Lack of resources
However, it has not been fully integrated at the delivery level because of financial and human resource constraints. The inclusion of a mental health component as part of the essential package of hospital services mechanisms in Afghanistan is currently being reviewed. Lack of human resources (psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, psychologists and social workers) is a big challenge for mental health care service delivery in the country.
Stigmatization
The stigmatization associated socially with mental health disorders is the greatest barrier for addressing this important global health issue. The stigma and violations of human rights is not only directed towards people with mental, neurological and substance use disorders, but by extension it affects the mental health care providers in the formal and informal sectors further compounding the problem.
Mental health is misunderstood by society and the donor community alike. Not many donors allocate funds for mental health projects. Often mental health is not part of health programming budgets. The avoidance of mental health issues does more harm to societies than investing into proper care. [...]

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3.9 General security situation

Although the June 2013 Afghanistan OGN includes excerpts of the most recent 2010 'UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines For Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Afghanistan' in sections: 2.3 Internal relocation; 3.11 Locally engaged staff; 3.12 Women; 3.13 Minors; 3.14 Converts to Christianity; and 3.15 Hindus and Sikhs, UNHCR's position on the security situation in Afghanistan has not been included in the OGN. Note that the Guidelines state:

➤ [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\), UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 17/12/2010](#)

[...] B. Eligibility Under Broader International Protection Criteria, Including Complementary Forms of Protection

[...] 4. Summary Regarding Generalized Violence

UNHCR recognizes that the uncertainty due to the fluid and volatile nature of the conflict in Afghanistan has in the past been problematic for decision makers when assessing claims falling outside of the refugee definition contained in the 1951 Convention. However, in light of: (i) the worsening security environment in certain parts of the country; (ii) the increasing number of civilian casualties; and (iii) the significant population displacements, UNHCR considers that the situation in certain parts of Afghanistan, as set out below, can be characterized as one of generalized violence at the time of writing. Additionally, the overall situation in Afghanistan has also been recognized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as an internal armed conflict in accordance with the definitions and scope set out in Article 1(1) of Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions.

More specifically, based on information known and available to UNHCR at the time of writing, the situation in Helmand, Kandahar, Kunar, and in parts of Ghazni and Khost provinces has reached such a high: (i) number of civilian casualties; (ii) frequency of security incidents; and (iii) number of persons displaced due to the armed conflict, that the situation is recognized by UNHCR as one of generalized violence. Therefore, Afghan asylum-seekers, formerly residing in Helmand, Kandahar, Kunar, and in parts of Ghazni and Khost provinces may be in need of international protection under complementary forms of protection on the basis of a fear of serious and indiscriminate harm arising from the situation of generalized violence.

Furthermore, in light of the: (i) sustained large-scale military operations in the southern region in Helmand and Kandahar provinces; (ii) the ensuing struggle for territorial control by parties to the conflict; and (iii) outbreaks of violence in previously unaffected areas, UNHCR considers that no internal flight or relocation alternative (IFA/IRA) is available in either of these two provinces. [...]

The OGN concludes with regards to the general security situation that:

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

3.9.15 Conclusion. A state of civil instability and/or where law and order has sometimes broken down does not of itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Refugee Convention reason. The claimant must demonstrate a well-founded claim for asylum where he or she is at risk of persecution on Convention grounds. In addition, each case must also be considered under Article 15 (c) of the EU Qualification Directive/Immigration Rule 339C to ascertain whether the individual claimant would be at real risk of indiscriminate violence.

3.9.16 However whilst there is indiscriminate violence in some parts of Afghanistan, it is not currently at such a level in Afghanistan generally, or a material part of it, that substantial grounds exist for believing that any civilian would, solely by being present there, face a real risk of serious harm. Given the complexity and fluidity of the situation, asylum applications by Afghans claiming to flee generalized violence in parts of Afghanistan should each be assessed carefully, in light of the current country information specific to the profile of the applicant.

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For an illustrative, non-exhaustive list of security incidents in Kabul in 2013, see the COI presented above in the Actors of Protection section on: [*Ability of the police to protect against insurgent attacks, especially in Kabul.*](#)

A [*database of useful sources to consult on the security situation in Afghanistan*](#) to assist in case specific research on a particular location has also been included in the Appendix.

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3.11 Locally engaged staff

It is considered that the COI included at paragraphs 3.11.3-3.11.10 is broadly illustrative of the situation for persons working for or perceived to be involved with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Afghanistan Government or foreign agencies/employers and humanitarian agencies. However, it is considered that the highlighted conclusion below is not fully representative of the COI included in the OGN or available elsewhere in the public domain:

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

3.11.13 Conclusion. Individuals who, in fact or by perception, work or associate with the national or foreign governments, companies and aid agencies within Afghanistan, including UNHCR, are at risk of intimidation, harassment and even persecution as a result of their perceived collaboration with foreigners. **However in general the cessation of the employment, or relocation, will nullify the threat, unless there are specific factors which preclude this.**

3.11.14 The caseworker will need to take into consideration the particular profile of the claimant, the nature of the threat, how far it would extend, and whether it would be unduly harsh to expect the claimant to relocate. If a claim is well founded, then a grant of refugee status due to political opinion or imputed political opinion would be appropriate.

Note that the conclusion does not specifically address the reasonableness of relocation for this profile. See the [Internal Relocation](#) section for an analysis of this issue.

The OGN's highlighted conclusion above is based on the Executive Summary of the following European Asylum Support Office (EASO) report (as is also cited in the OGN at 3.11.20):

➤ [European Asylum Support Office, Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan: Insurgent strategies – intimidation and targeted violence against Afghans, December 2012](#)

[...] Executive Summary

[...] 5. Afghans working for international organisations, companies, NGOs and Afghan NGOs

The individual circumstances of the case determines whether the Taliban would further target or threaten a person after he quits his job or stopped activities. If an Afghan civilian working for an NGO, international organisation or foreign companies quits his activity and can flee the area and resettle in a safer area, he can normally escape intimidation or targeting by insurgents, unless there are specific individual circumstances which would preclude this possibility. [...]

However, it should be noted that this excerpt is EASO's summary of the information provided in the EASO report. The full report cites sources that identify examples of the types of profile that might not be able to nullify the risk by quitting the particular job (emphasis added):

➤ [European Asylum Support Office, Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan: Insurgent strategies – intimidation and targeted violence against Afghans, December 2012](#)

[...] 1.5 Victims' reactions

Escaping threats: defecting or quitting activity and fleeing the area

[...] Giustozzi explained in 2011 that government collaborators were aware of the effective Taliban intelligence system and avoided Taliban-controlled areas. The Taliban looking out constantly for government collaborators and alleged spies caused population displacement towards the cities where the government had more control, like Kandahar, before even there the government's control slipped away and many moved further to Kabul. Government officials also fled from their region to the cities or to Kabul. **Giustozzi stated that the Taliban have the ability to track down and target people who go to work and do not hide, but Giustozzi stated that those escapees who stopped their collaboration with the government were a low priority for the Taliban in the cities or in Kabul and they have not been actively targeted any longer, neither have their relatives. The Taliban did not seem to transfer information about targeted individuals from one area to another: they have no databases. There could be a request**

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for information on an individual from one area to another if needed, depending on the Taliban's activities (120).

Graeme Smith has already stated (in 2009) that Afghans resisting the insurgency in Kandahar are not safe anywhere in the province (121).

The UNAMA sometimes brings its staff to Kabul when they are facing a security risk. According to the Danish Immigration Service, the UNHCR also confirmed that, most probably, it would be possible for low-profile people fleeing a conflict with the Taliban in his area of origin to seek protection within his community in Kabul. But the UNHCR advised assessing this case by case. The UNHCR mentioned to the Danish Immigration Service that many Afghan ministers settled their family members in foreign countries in order to be ready themselves to move abroad (122).

Ahmad Quraishi stated that some people leave the area to escape threats and pressure from the Taliban. They go to a safer city and young people, especially, try to leave the country. He also stated that there have been no reports of threats to, or pressure on, people who quit their jobs and stay in the area (123).

According to a staff member of an international development agency in Afghanistan, for ANA and ANP soldiers it might not be sufficient to simply quit their job in order to escape the threat by insurgents. They would have to change sides in order to avoid further targeting. For NGO employees, on the other hand, it would be possible to escape a threat if they quit their job and left the province (124).

A local contact in south-east Afghanistan stated that the reaction of the Taliban against someone who quits their activity on their command or who shifts their family from a rural area to an urban place would differ depending on the circumstances. **The contact made clear that the Taliban would, for example, not be satisfied with the targeted victim quitting the job if he worked for the ISAF or the ANSF (125).**

Hadi Marifat assessed that, for example, in the south, people who did not take a Taliban threat seriously and continued their job, sometimes faced serious consequences, like assassination. On the other hand, people who took the threats seriously, and stopped their activities, could escape the threat and be safe. Marifat was referring in this instance to people such as teachers, doctors and court administrators (126).

A political analyst based in Kabul stated that someone could escape to the cities. According to the source, in Kabul, it would not be a priority for the Taliban to track someone down. The strategy of tracking individuals in the big cities would be militarily inefficient for the Taliban (127).

Another political analyst in Kabul stated the following when asked about the risk if someone quits their activity: "This depends upon the case. An interpreter, for example, could escape if he joined the Taliban or if he contacted them and proved to them that he was no longer supporting the government or the IMF. But even in around 30% of these cases, the person could still face targeting. It would be, for sure, required that such a person would contact the Taliban and prove that he quit. And this risk is also confined to areas in the easy reach of the Taliban, such as rural areas'(128).

Summary — Escaping threats: defecting or quitting activity and fleeing the area

There have been examples of the Taliban offering amnesty, examples of people moving to other areas in order to escape targeting, and examples of surrendering, defecting and making deals with the Taliban. The UNHCR illustrated that intimidation, threats and targeted violence were important reasons for internal displacement. UNAMA routinely brings people to Kabul for security reasons.

In one example, a commander was killed after making a deal with the Taliban. He had a long feud with the local Taliban commander.

In 2011, Giustozzi explained that the Taliban's threats caused displacement towards cities, but that, for example, Kandahar City also slipped out of the control of the government and people had to move further to Kabul. Graeme Smith confirmed that it was not possible to successfully escape targeting within Kandahar province. Giustozzi explained, in 2011, that people who quit their activity and moved to cities had not been targeted any longer. The Taliban had the possibility to track people who went to work, but it was not a priority for them in the cities, for example, Kabul. The UNHCR confirmed that it could be possible for low-profile people to escape targeting if they could relocate within their community in Kabul. The UNHCR advises assessing this case by case.

Several other sources confirmed that it would be possible to escape targeting by quitting an activity and fleeing to urban areas but, according to some sources, it would depend on the circumstances. Two sources mentioned that it would not be sufficient to quit a job for either ANSF soldiers or people working for the IMF. The former would have to change sides to satisfy the Taliban, according to one source. One source stated that a profile such as an interpreter would have to join, or at least contact,

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the Taliban and would then still face a chance of being targeted in areas which are within ‘easy reach’ of the insurgents (e.g. rural areas).

Analysis — Escaping threats: defecting or quitting activity and fleeing the area

1. Quitting or defecting

Looking at the available information, no evidence was found of further targeting by the Taliban after someone quit a job or activity, except for one case. In this case, a commander in Uruzgan was killed after he made a deal with the Taliban to surrender to them. In this case, there was an individual element present which obstructed the deal: the commander had a long feud with the local Taliban commander in which several relatives were killed on both sides. This is a perfect example of how individual circumstances can increase the risk. There were some examples found in the past of persons who quit and remained safe in Ghazni and of amnesty by the Taliban for policemen and officials in Helmand.

Ahmad Quraishi stated that there has been no report of people being further targeted by insurgents after they quit the job or activity. Hadi Marifat confirmed that someone who stopped activities could escape the threat and be safe. He referred to, for example, teachers, doctors or court administrators.

A contact in south-east Afghanistan mentioned explicitly that the Taliban would not be satisfied with the targeted person quitting if he worked for the IMF or was an ANSF soldier. Furthermore, the Taliban’s reaction to someone quitting a particular activity would depend on the individual circumstances. A staff member of an international development agency in Afghanistan confirmed this. According to him, it might not be sufficient for ANA and ANP soldiers to simply quit their job: but they would have to change sides in order to avoid further targeting. A political analyst stated that it would depend on the circumstances but, for some profiles, for example, an interpreter, they would be required to join the Taliban or at least contact them in order to escape the threat. But even then, they still face a chance of being targeted in areas to which insurgents have an easy access.

CONCLUSION

The individual circumstances of the case determine whether the Taliban would further target or threaten a person after he quit his job, stopped activities or defected. **Examples of circumstances increasing the risk could be: a feud with the Taliban; or the profile of the victim (working for the IMF or ANSF).**

2. Quitting and fleeing the area

Giustozzi stated that there is no reporting of further targeting of escapees who flee to urban centres. They would have the possibility to track down people who are working, but it would not be a priority for them. Several other sources confirmed that if it was possible for targeted people to move to urban centres, they could escape the threats by the insurgents, but several of them pointed to individual circumstances. The UNHCR mentioned, for example, that it could be possible for low-profile people to seek protection in their community and that it should be assessed case by case, and a political analyst referred to the profile, giving the example of NGO workers who could escape by quitting and leaving the province.

In Section 1.4.2 Cities v rural areas, how UNAMA, the UNHCR, AIHRC, IOM and CPAU agreed that it would not be a priority for the insurgents to track down low-profile people in Kabul City is discussed.

The IOM stated that the situation in Herat City and Mazar City is the same as in Kabul. Furthermore, several sources explained that there was a low risk for low-profile people in these cities of being targeted by insurgents. Giustozzi indicated that Kandahar was no longer safe and persons had to flee further to Kabul. Smith confirmed that an escapee would not be safe anywhere in Kandahar province.

CONCLUSION

If a low-profile person quits his activity and can flee the area and resettle in a safer area, such as Kabul City, Mazar City or Herat City, he can normally escape targeting by insurgents, unless there are specific individual circumstances which would preclude this possibility. [...]

There is additional COI contained in the OGN in the Internal Relocation section [paragraphs 2.3.3 and 2.3.6] and additional excerpts from the sources cited in this section of the OGN that indicate that insurgents have the capability and willingness to track down high profile targets, even after they have internally relocated, including to Kabul. This further undermines the position taken in the OGN that leaving the employment in question would generally nullify the threat:

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➤ [Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process: Report from Danish Immigration Service's fact finding mission to Kabul, Afghanistan, 25 February to 4 March 2012, May 2012](#)

[...] 1. Internal Flight Alternative

1.1. The security situation in Kabul

[...] An international organization stated that if someone is fleeing a conflict in his or her area of origin, it depends on the seriousness of the conflict whether he or she will be traced down in Kabul. Afghanistan is a tribal society with close family networks, which means that if you really want to find someone, you will be able to trace him/her down.

Concerning the possibility of tracking down someone in Kabul, an independent policy research organization in Kabul stated that Kabul is a big city and people do not even know their neighbors anymore. There are newcomers every day and people move around and stay in rented accommodations if they have the financial resources. On this basis, the source believed that if someone flees a conflict and moves to Kabul, it will be quite difficult to find him. The independent policy research organization in Kabul pointed out, however, that it is not difficult for the government to find people in Kabul if they are in search of a particular person. This means that if someone is fleeing someone senior in or well - connected to the government, police or army, they would be in greater peril.

When asked whether it is possible to trace down a person in Kabul who has fled from a conflict in his or her place of origin, an Afghan law practitioner replied that this possibility exists if one has the exact address of that person. However, the Afghan law practitioner added that due to the fact that there is no registration of address in Afghanistan, tracing down a person in a big city like Kabul without an address would be difficult. The same source added that people normally do not go to the police to ask about other people's place of residence because there is still not a good organized police system to help people to do so.

An independent research institute in Kabul explained that Kabul has grown tremendously over recent years. In Afghanistan, most people do not have a proper address in the way citizens of other countries have (street names are problematic, as are house numbers). The standard Afghan method to record and identify a person's name is to cite their father's name, e.g. Sarwar Ali,s/o (son of) Mohammad Naveed. In this way, it is very difficult to trace individual people, particularly in the big cities. [...]

1.2. Presence and activities of the Taliban in Kabul

1.2.1. Profile of the targeted

UNAMA did not rule out the possibility that the Taliban would target high profile persons in Kabul, but it did not find it likely that the Taliban would make it a priority or have the capacity to track down low profile persons in the city. This is, according to UNAMA, the main reason why UNAMA sometimes brings its staff who faces security risks from the provinces to work and live in Kabul. UNAMA informed the delegation that the greatest security risk in Kabul is posed by criminal groups.

UNHCR said that if a low profile person flees a conflict with the Taliban in the area of origin, it would be possible for him to seek protection within his community in Kabul. UNHCR stated that most probably the Taliban would not make it a priority to track down low profile people in Kabul. However, a thorough assessment of the claim and the IFA should be made on a case by case basis.

Regarding the Taliban activities in Kabul, AIHRC informed the delegation that the Taliban certainly has the means to act and kill in Kabul, and that the Taliban can harm high - profile people anywhere. As examples, AIHRC referred to the murder of Rabbani (in September 2011) and the recent murder (February 2012) of two American advisers inside the Ministry of Interior. When it comes to low profile people, it has however not been a priority for the Taliban to trace them down. Previously (in 2007, 2008 and 2009) the Taliban also targeted low profile people, but in 2011 and 2012 it has been a priority for the Taliban to go after high targets in Kabul. AIHRC also pointed out that if killings have taken place in Kabul it is not always clear who is behind these killings as it might also be a criminal act.

According to AIHRC, a low profile person who has fled a conflict with a Taliban commander in his place of origin would in most cases not be tracked down by the Taliban in Kabul as it is not a priority for the Taliban to go after low profile people.

Asked about the Taliban activities in Kabul and other major cities, IOM explained that the Taliban cells are certainly operating in Kabul and that their networks seem to be getting stronger and stronger. However, if a low profile person has had a conflict with the Taliban in his place of origin, the Taliban would most probably not make it a priority to track him down in Kabul, according to OM, as the Taliban's activities will

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mainly focus on targeting high profile persons. IOM added that the security situation in Mazar - e - Sharif and Herat with regard to the Taliban's presence is similar to that of Kabul.

An independent policy research organization in Kabul found it unlikely that the Taliban would chase down low profile persons who have fled a conflict with the Taliban in their place of origin and have come to Kabul. According to the same source, in the few cases where low profile people have been killed in Kabul, it is not certain whether or not it is the Taliban who is behind the killing.

The independent policy research organization added that the Taliban certainly are present in Kabul, but their actions are merely focused on high profile persons like for instance high level government employees, high level politicians or high level employees of the Defence Ministry.

Concerning presence of the Taliban in Kabul, DRC stated that the Taliban certainly is present in some settlements in Kabul, but DRC had no knowledge of the extent of their presence.

When asked whether low profile IDPs are a target for the Taliban or other insurgent groups, DRC replied that it had never heard IDPs in the settlements complain about their security situation, and it had never heard of any low profile person fleeing to Kabul and then being targeted by the Taliban. According to DRC, security is exactly the main reason why many IDPs are in Kabul, and they would not have come to Kabul if they felt that their security was in danger there.

CPAU had never come across cases where the Taliban had gone after low profile persons in Kabul. [...]

➤ [Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, The capacity of the Taliban to pursue individuals after they relocate to another region; their capacity to track individuals over the long term, 30 December 2011](#)

[...] In a telephone interview by the Research Directorate, an assistant professor who works at the Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism at Syracuse University, and who has published material about the Taliban, explained that the capacity of the Taliban to pursue individuals who relocate to other areas of Afghanistan, as well as their ability to track individuals over the long term, would depend, in part, on the level of sophistication of the particular Taliban group (Assistant Professor 13 Dec. 2011). He described the Taliban's structure as "groups within groups within groups," noting that some Taliban groups have developed sophisticated networks that span across Afghanistan, while others have only a local influence (ibid.). He also noted that it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether a group is "truly Taliban" or it has simply taken on the Taliban name (ibid.)

[...] A senior program coordinator for the Afghanistan Regional Project at New York University's Center on International Cooperation indicated, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, that the Taliban has a general capacity to track individuals, which is shown by its success in carrying out targeted assassinations (13 Dec. 2011).

[...] Both the Senior Program Coordinator (13 Dec. 2011) and the Assistant Professor (13 Dec. 2011) expressed the opinion that the profile of the individual would, in part, determine whether the Taliban would track down someone who had fled to another part of Afghanistan. The Assistant Professor explained that high-profile targets face a greater risk of being targeted (13 Dec. 2011). The Senior Program Coordinator stated that

[t]here are a variety of motivations behind the identification of targets. Often the Taliban just seek to remove individuals and families from local areas due to the influence they exert over the population. The relocation of these groups is often sufficient. If the motive is more political in nature or the target is high profile, this may not be sufficient. (13 Dec. 2011)

[...] Media sources explain that the increasing number of high-profile assassinations demonstrates the Taliban's capability to penetrate some of the most secure places (IWPR 13 July 2011; The New York Times 20 Sept. 2011). According to the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, "[m]any believe that everyone is now vulnerable, even President Karzai, and that the government is powerless to do anything about it" (22 Sept. 2011).

Area of relocation

According to the Senior Program Coordinator, the area to which the targeted individual relocates is a key factor in the Taliban's ability to find him or her (13 Dec. 2011). He explained that moving within a given district or province will leave the target "more exposed" than moving to a province in a different part of Afghanistan (Senior Program Coordinator 13 Dec. 2011). He indicated that the security level of the destination and the size of the community are also factors affecting the individual's vulnerability (ibid.). He said that relocating to a provincial capital may not offer "sufficient protection," but that there have been

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several cases in which both individuals and families who were threatened by the Taliban were able to safely relocate to Kabul (ibid.). The Assistant Professor similarly expressed the opinion that the Taliban has "less capacity" to track targets in Kabul (13 Dec. 2011). The reasons for this, he explained, are that the Kabul police and security forces "appear to be better trained" and that individuals in Kabul are "more anonymous" (Assistant Professor 13 Dec. 2011).

However, the Assistant Professor said that the Taliban might be able to track someone down in Kabul (ibid.). He indicated that he was also aware of cases in which mid- and high-level officials in Kabul were being threatened by the Taliban (ibid.). Giustozzi also indicates that the Taliban has harassed and targeted on a "small scale" perceived "collaborators" in Kabul, including police and army colonels and commanding officers in the security forces (Norway 9 Sept. 2011, 14).

[...] Family members

Both the Assistant Professor (13 Dec. 2011) and the Senior Program Coordinator (13 Dec. 2011) noted that another factor in the ability of the Taliban to track the target is whether the targeted individual relocates with family members. The Assistant Professor pointed out that relocating as part of a large or extended family can make it easier for the Taliban to find the target (13 Dec. 2011). However, the Senior Program Coordinator noted that if a targeted individual relocates on his or her own, the Taliban might lure the target back by threatening or attacking family members or relatives left behind (13 Dec. 2011). [...]

➤ [Landinfo, Afghanistan: Human Rights and Security Situation, Report of Dr. Antonio Giustozzi, 9 September 2011](#)

[...] 6. Insurgent Controlled Areas

[...] 6.4 Other Areas

[...] The Taliban has increasingly developed an ability to strike at will almost anywhere; harassment and targeting of 'collaborators' now occurs even in the cities, even if on a small scale in Kabul and in the north and west. Those who fled and have given up their jobs, as well as their family members, do not appear to have been actively targeted in the cities. The Taliban potentially has the resources and skills to track down people, particularly if these are not in hiding but have to work; extensive infiltration of the police also helps the Taliban's information gathering efforts. However, these escapees who no longer collaborate for the government are a low priority target to the Taliban, whose assets in the cities are limited and usually devoted to high profile targets, ranking from serving government officials upwards. In Kabul, for example, colonels of the police and army have been targeted, as well as commanding officers of the security services. In the provinces, particularly in the south, government officials of any rank, even low ones, have been targeted. The Taliban do not seem to systematically transfer information about targeted individuals from one area to the other; they maintain no databases. What typically happens is that the Taliban operating in a specific area will request information from other Taliban about a suspect individual, whenever needed. The flow of information therefore depends on the intensity of Taliban operations: the greater the presence, the greater the request of information. Often individuals apprehended by the Taliban as suspect spies are asked to provide references in order to verify their identity and activities. The risk to the escapees from Taliban-controlled areas seems to derive mainly from chance contact with the Taliban, who may consider them an opportunity target. Usually the poorest and the Pashtun-populated areas of the big cities are the places where most Taliban infiltration of the cities occurs; in Kabul these are Bagrami suburb, south-eastern Kabul, Southern Kabul and parts of western Kabul. In central Kabul, the Taliban are known to have developed a network of informers, among else buying shops in strategic locations and staffing them with members and sympathisers, the purpose being to observe embassies and government buildings. Such effort is clearly geared towards high value targets and collaborators. [...]

8. Conclusion- Main Factors Affecting the Security and Human Rights of Afghan Civilians

[...] The Taliban have been constantly expanding their information gathering operations; some parts of the country, in particular the south but also the south-east, the east and the provinces south and west of Kabul (Wardak, Logar) are thoroughly covered and there is little that the Taliban do not know, not least because they have extensively infiltrated the police and the state administration. In other parts of the country, like most of Kabul, most of the west and most of the north, the Taliban's presence on the ground is more modest and their ability to collect information more limited. More importantly, the Taliban's ability to auction off the information collected is more limited in these areas, where they have to rely on a few hit teams in order to carry out their strategy of targeted killing. As a result, while the Taliban target even low level collaborators in the areas where they are present in force, they limit themselves to high

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profile targets elsewhere. Killings of low profile collaborators of the government is not being reported in these areas We can expect they policy of targeted intimidation and killing to continue expanding, but the rate of expansion will depend on the ability of the Taliban to establish a strong presence in ever newer areas. There are already some areas of the regions less affected by the insurgency, where the Taliban are able to extensively target collaborators: a few suburbs of Kabul, Pashtun-populated areas of the north, etc. [...]

➤ [UNHCR, UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Afghanistan, 17/12/2010, section III, C, 1. Individuals at Risk of Targeted Persecution](#)

[...] C. Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative

[...] 1. *Individuals at Risk of Targeted Persecution*

In order for an IFA/IRA to be a relevant consideration in any given case, the area must be found to be accessible and without factors that could constitute a well-founded fear of being persecuted.

Given the wide geographic reach of some armed anti-Government groups, a viable IFA/IRA may not be available to individuals at risk of being targeted by such groups. It is particularly important to note that the operational capacity of the Taliban (including the Haqqani network), the Hezb-e-Eslami (Gulbuddin) and other armed groups in the southern, south-eastern and eastern regions is not only evidenced by high-profile attacks, such as (complex) suicide bombings, but also through more permanent infiltration in some neighbourhoods and the regular distribution of threatening “night- letters”.

Furthermore, some non-State agents of persecution, such as organized crime networks, local commanders of irregular or paramilitary outfits and militias, as well as the Taliban and the Hezb-e-slami (Gulbuddin), have links or are closely associated with influential actors in the local and central administration. As a result, they largely operate with impunity and their reach may extend beyond the area under their immediate (de facto) control. [...]

3.13 Minors

This is the first time that a 'Minors' section has been included in the 'Main categories of claims' section. This section of the OGN includes limited COI on the [impact of the on-going violence](#) on children (paragraph 3.13.3), some of the [human rights abuses](#) faced by children (paragraphs 3.13.4 - 3.13.6), [forced recruitment](#) of children (paragraphs 3.13.7 - 3.13.10), as well as the importance of family support-structures for the return of children to Afghanistan (paragraphs 3.13.11 and 3.13.12). An analysis of the COI included on the first three of these issues, together with additional non-exhaustive, illustrative COI published since the previous March 2012 'Still Human Still Here Commentary on the February 2012 Afghanistan OGN' is presented in turn.

Impact of the on-going violence on children

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

[...] 3.13 Minors

3.13.3 Treatment: The United Nations-led country task force on monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict received 166 reports of incidents involving grave child rights violations from 1 November [2012] to 31 January [2013]. A total of 79 deaths and 192 injuries to children were verified. Most were in the southern and eastern regions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed strong support for implementation of the action plan for the prevention of underage recruitment and its annexes on killing and maiming and sexual violence against children, including a commitment to convene the Interministerial Steering Committee and Technical Working Group on Children And Armed Conflict.

The OGN has included one source in the 'Minors' section documenting the direct impact that the armed conflict is having on children which reports on the number of incidents involving child rights violations, deaths and injuries from November 2012 to January 2013. Additional more recent sources documenting the [disproportionate impact of violence on children](#) in Afghanistan have been included below. Sources have also been presented that provide information on the [situation of children in displacement](#), as well as the [psychological and emotional impact on children and the availability of child mental health services](#), which are additional useful indicators on the impact the armed conflict in Afghanistan is having on children.

Disproportionate impact of violence on children

- [UNICEF, Sharp increase in child casualties in Afghan conflict raises serious concerns, 12 June 2013](#)

[...] The number of children killed or injured as a result of the on-going conflict in Afghanistan is on the rise, with a 27 per cent increase in the first four months of 2013 compared with the same period in 2012. From 1 January to 30 April this year, 414 conflict-related child casualties were recorded, compared to 327 recorded during the same period last year. Such a sharp rise early in the year raises serious concerns.

[...] Just last week, on 3 June, a suicide attack near a school in Paktia province killed ten children and injured a further seven. The following day, in Farah province, a father and his three children were killed when their vehicle was hit by a roadside IED. Later that week, on 6 June, an aerial attack by international military forces in Kunar province killed three children and injured seven more. These tragic incidents, and the many others that go unreported, serve as critical reminders of the devastating impact that the on-going conflict in Afghanistan has on children and the urgent need to bring it swiftly to an end. [...]

- [UNAMA, Ahead of Council meeting, UN envoy highlights rise in Afghan civilian casualties, 11 June 2013](#)

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[...] Ahead of next week's Security Council meeting on Afghanistan, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in the country, Ján Kubiš, highlighted that the security environment for Afghan civilians has worsened this year, with a 24 per cent rise in the number of civilians killed and injured compared to the same time period in 2012.

[...] According to UNAMA data, which Mr. Kubiš cited, 3,092 civilians were killed or wounded in the Afghan conflict between 1 January and 6 June this year. Children accounted for 21 per cent of all civilian casualties, a figure that Mr. Kubiš said was "unacceptable."

[...] A fuller accounting of casualties during the first six months of 2013 is expected to be released in a UNAMA report in July. [...]

➤ [UN Office of the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 May 2013](#)

[...] V. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

[...] A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

[...] Afghanistan

[...] 28. The country task force documented 1,304 conflict-related child casualties. Of those casualties, 283 cases of killing of children and 507 cases of injuring were attributed to armed groups, including Taliban forces. A total of 90 cases of killing of children and 82 cases of injuring were attributed to pro-Government forces, including the Afghan national security forces and the international military forces. The remaining cases, in which 116 children were killed and 226 injured, related to explosive remnants of war, crossfire incidents and cross-border shelling.

29. The vast majority of the incidents resulted from attacks with improvised explosive devices (399 child casualties) and suicide attacks, including by child suicide bombers (110 child casualties). Children were also victims of explosive weapons in populated areas, including mortar attacks, shelling and shooting between pro-Government forces and various armed groups (397 child casualties), explosive remnants of war (162 child casualties) and air strikes by the international military forces (74 child casualties). Some of the incidents were acknowledged by ISAF. Furthermore, artillery and mortar shelling from across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border killed at least 1 child and injured 25 others. [...]

➤ [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict: Concluding observations on the second report of the United States of America, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-second session \(14 January–5 February 2013\), 28 January 2013](#)

[...] III. General measures of implementation

Right to life, survival and development

The Committee takes note of the information provided by the State party during the dialogue that civilian casualties decreased over the last two years. The Committee is nevertheless alarmed at reports of the death of hundreds of children as a result of attacks and air strikes by the US military forces in Afghanistan over the reporting period due notably to reported lack of precautionary measures and indiscriminate use of force. The Committee expresses grave concern that in fact the number of casualties of children doubled from 2010 to 2011. The Committee further expresses serious concern that members of the armed forces responsible for the killings of children have not always been held accountable and that grievances of families have not been redressed. [...]

Situation of children in displacement

Also see the COI presented above in the [Internal Relocation](#) section on the humanitarian situation for IDPs in Kabul.

➤ [Amnesty International, Annual Report 2013 - The State of the World's Human Rights – Afghanistan, 23 May 2013](#)

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[...] Refugees and internally displaced people

By the end of October, about half a million people remained internally displaced as a result of the conflict and natural disaster. Many continued to seek refuge in city slums and other informal settlements, fashioning makeshift shelters from plastic sheeting, and living under the constant threat of forced and sometimes violent evictions. Poor sanitation and lack of access to education and health care coupled with bitter 2011/2012 weather conditions meant that scores died of illness, cold or both. Over 100, mainly children, reportedly died during this period amid criticism over the lack of timely humanitarian assistance provided. By March, the government had responded with an announcement that it was developing a comprehensive national policy on internal displacement. [...]

- [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Afghanistan; Comprehensive response urgently required as displacement crisis worsens, 25 March 2013](#)

[...] Vulnerable groups

[...] IDP children face a greater risk of forced recruitment than the non-displaced and many are engaged in child labour (NRC/IDMC/Samuel Hall/JIPS, November 2012; pp.34-38;UNAMA, February 2013, p.12)

- [Amnesty International, Afghanistan: 17 winter deaths in camps highlight government protection failure, 21 January 2013](#)

[...] At least 17 people, including 11 children, have died mostly from the cold in Afghanistan's displacement settlements in early January, highlighting the desperate and immediate need for improved aid delivery during the bitter cold winter months, Amnesty International said.

According to information Amnesty International has received, the deaths occurred in camps and settlements in Kabul and Herat provinces. Community leaders there criticized the Afghan government and international aid agencies for inconsistent and inadequate levels of assistance.

"These deaths were a preventable tragedy that unfortunately shows the inadequate co-ordination of winter assistance to hundreds of thousands of people living in displacement camps across the country," said Polly Truscott, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia-Pacific Director.

"The fact that children and the elderly are among the dead highlights the need to protect those groups that are most vulnerable to the harsh winter conditions. Priority must be given to those most at risk during the winter months, such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities and those needing medical care, including pregnant women."

The previous 2011/12 winter was unusually cold in Afghanistan, and more than 100 people, mostly children, died in displacement camps as a result of the harsh winter conditions. [...]

- [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Challenges of IDP Protection: Research study on the protection of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, November 2012](#)

[...] Employment and livelihoods

Many IDP children are engaged in street vending, scavenging plastic bags and washing cars. Children working in urban areas are particularly susceptible to violence, kidnapping and car accidents. [...]

Box 6. Cold 2011-2012 Winter for IDP [...]

Their poor housing conditions and poverty make IDPs vulnerable to winter cold. The death of at least a hundred IDP infants and children in informal settlements in Kabul during the winter of 2011-12 sparked international media attention.⁸⁷ IDP protection actors in places like Charahi Qambar were unable to provide warm clothes or charcoal, leaving young children without adequate resources or healthcare. Aid and attention to these relatively high visibility IDP children arrived too late for many. This is particularly alarming, given that these IDPs receive much more aid than their counterparts in less accessible provinces such as Kandahar. The impacts of cold need to be taken into consideration as a major protection concern.

"[W]e went to the clinic the day before. My husband was already [also] very sick. I do not know why. [My infant son] would cough up a lot of blood. They gave us medicine, but he still died. He was cold." Shehzeen, 25, who was displaced from Helmand to Kabul, lost her son during the winter of 2011-12. [...]

2 Child Protection

Child protection remains a pressing concern. Available studies do not fully capture the extent of IDP children's protection needs. As with VAW data, this study was faced with two primary challenges: a cultural tendency to under-report child protection issues, such as child labour, and a lack of clarity over

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the definition of a child. Therefore this report provides only a partial look into IDP children's protection needs as it discusses access to education, child labour and early and forced marriages. [...]

Psychological and emotional impact on children and child mental health services

Also see the COI presented above in the Internal Relocation section on [*Mental health treatment and psychological support*](#)

➤ [UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2013; Children with Disabilities, May 2013](#)

[...] Humanitarian Response

[...] Armed conflict and war affect children in direct and indirect ways: directly in the form of physical injuries from attack, artillery fire and landmine explosions or in the form of psychological conditions derived from these injuries or from witnessing traumatic events; indirectly through, for example, the breakdown of health services, which leaves many illnesses untreated, and food insecurity, which leads to malnutrition. Children are also separated from their families, their homes or their schools, sometimes for years. [...]

Assistance for child survivors

[...] In addition to the physical trauma, the psychological consequences of surviving an ERW [explosive remnants of war] or landmine blast are often devastating for the development of the child. They include a sense of guilt, loss of self-esteem, phobias and fear, sleep disorders, inability to speak and trauma that if left untreated can result in longterm mental disorder. Such psychological effects of war on children are difficult to document, and they are not limited to children who have sustained physical injuries.

The social and economic reintegration needs of child survivors also vary considerably from the needs of adults.

Addressing the psychosocial impacts outlined above relies heavily on age-appropriate psychosocial support and access to education. In many countries, child survivors are forced to cut short their education because of the time needed for recovery, and because rehabilitation represents a financial burden for families.

Access to free education for children with disabilities as a result of a landmine or ERW injury is necessary both to promote a sense of normalcy in their lives, enabling them to recover from the psychosocial distress of their injury, and to reintegrate them with their peer group and allow them to fully participate in society. Yet children left with a disability following a landmine or ERW blast are more vulnerable than others to the denial of this

right: They may no longer be able to walk to school, and other transportation alternatives are seldom in place. Even when they are able to get to school, classrooms may not be accessible for children with disabilities, and their teachers may not be trained in adapting to the needs of children with disabilities.

Opportunities for income generation and livelihood support are especially necessary to support children and adolescents left with a disability as a result of landmines or ERW. Unfortunately, such opportunities seldom if ever take age considerations into account. [...]

➤ [U.S. State Department, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 19 April 2013](#)

[...] Violence impeded access to education in various sections of the country, particularly in areas controlled by the Taliban. The Taliban and other extremists threatened and attacked school officials, teachers, and students and burned both boys' and girls' schools. For example, in August alone there were reports of killings of principals of girls' schools in Balkh Province and Faryab Province. In a range of cases between April and July, the government alleged that insurgents poisoned more than 1,000 students, mainly in northern provinces. However, with a lack of clear physical evidence to substantiate the poison claims, the World Health Organization alleged that the incidents resulted from the psychological trauma of a war-torn environment, a phenomenon called "mass psychological illness." [...]

➤ [Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Afghanistan: Children Traumatized by War in Kunar Province, 6 December 2012](#)

[...] Ten-year-old Noria is unable to go to school any more because she is so scared of the effects of war.

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“We are scared – there’s war here and rockets being fired. I used to go to school but now I can’t,” she said. “When night comes, my little sister and I have nightmares. One day a rocket landed close to our school, and we were saved only by God’s mercy.”

Her father Abdul Wahed, a farmer in Kunar’s Wata Pur district, says that living near the district government offices and a base used by international forces means the family has seen a lot of military action.

“There’s the district chief’s building and a US military base near our home. One day there was fighting around here and planes bombed the area,” he said. “There was pandemonium in our house – Noria fainted and fell to the floor, and my other little daughter was scared as well.”

Abdul Wahed said both Noria and the younger girl Selgai had suffered from problems for a year now, and doctors had been unable to help. He would seek medical help across the border in Pakistan, but he could not afford to go, he said.

Dr Faruq Sahak, head of Kunar’s provincial hospital, said he saw many patients with psychological problems, but he had virtually no facilities for treating children, and sent cases either to private clinics in Jalalabad, the main city of neighbouring Nangarhar province, or else to Pakistan.

Health officials say people living close to military bases are especially prone to signs of mental trauma.

Provincial governor Sayed Fazlullah Wahidi says he has previously asked the international forces to choose bases at some distance from civilian areas.

“Planes take off and land, and sometimes missiles are fired from these bases, making a very loud noise which troubles people a lot,” he said.

World Health Organisation studies show a high incidence of mental illness among Afghans, including children. [...]

➤ [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\), Afghanistan Common Humanitarian Action Plan 2013, 26 December 2012](#)

[...] Children in emergencies

Children and adolescents in conflict or in displacement have limited access to education and basic services. In the absence of broad-scale emergency education, there are few opportunities providing protective environments for children. There is a pressing need to establish child safe spaces as well as referral pathways and service provision. Grave violations of children’s rights occur throughout the country. Approximately 100 children and adolescents are killed or maimed each month. Other grave violations include sexual violence and recruitment of under- 18s into the ANSF. Appropriate referral pathways and response services for children used or recruited by armed forces and AGE are weak. The vulnerabilities of such children and risks of re-recruitment, trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation are increased. Finally, there is a significant gap in the provision of specialized and dedicated psycho-social counselling services for children affected by emergencies. [...]

➤ [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Challenges of IDP Protection: Research study on the protection of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, November 2012](#)

[...] 4. Protection challenges and durable solutions

[...] Psychological and Mental Health Needs

Our data does not suggest a significant difference between the reported mental health needs of conflict and natural disaster-induced IDPs. Psychological support is particularly required for conflict-induced IDPs who have often directly witnessed or otherwise experienced violence in addition to the potential trauma of displacement itself. Young children are particularly vulnerable. Overall, 35.2 per cent of respondents indicated that they themselves or members of their households needed some kind of psychological assistance (see Graph 17). [...]

Human rights abuses faced by children

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

3.13.4 A study conducted by the UK-based Refugee Support Network and funded by and produced for UNHCR carried out interviews in 2012 with former unaccompanied minors in the UK and professionals who have worked or work with them, both in the UK and In Afghanistan [sic], states that —the key

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issues that emerged include the vital role of extended family networks in reintegration processes, the impact of generalized insecurity and poverty in Afghanistan, a lack of education and employment opportunities, the perceived 'Westernisation' of returnees and the existence of mental health issues. The risk of forced recruitment by the Taliban or other anti-government groups was also examined, along with problems resulting from feuds, forced marriage and abuse. Interestingly, it was clear that the migration cycle does not necessarily end with forced return to Afghanistan, with many young returnees aiming to leave again as soon as possible.

3.13.5 UNHCR in their 2010 Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Afghanistan identifies the following potential risk categories: Children with specific profiles (a) forced recruitment; (b) access to education and (c) Sexual and gender based violence.

3.13.6 Sexual abuse and violence against children, including at the hands of family members, is reportedly commonplace in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the practice of bacha bazi (boy play) – keeping young boys for sexual and social entertainment, particularly by older and powerful men – has a degree of social acceptance, particularly in the north of the country. According to some reports, the practice, which involves boys as young as 10, is condoned and in some cases protected by the local authorities. The general climate of impunity and the vacuum in rule of law has adversely affected the reporting of sexual abuse and violence against children to the authorities and the prosecution of perpetrators. Children are reportedly trafficked internally for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced labour, including forced begging (through organized professional begging rings), and to a lesser extent trans-nationally for the purposes of forced prostitution and forced labour in the drug smuggling/trafficking trade in Pakistan and Iran.

These three paragraphs only briefly touch upon the range of human rights issues affecting children in Afghanistan such as poverty, access to education, sexual and gender based violence, including the practice of Baccha Baazi (boy play), trafficking, and child labour taken from sources published in October 2012 and December 2010. More recent sources providing an indication of the information available in the public domain at the time of writing this commentary which document the extent of these and additional human rights abuses faced by children in Afghanistan are listed under the following headings:

- [Kidnappings/abductions](#)
- [Sexual violence, including Baccha Baazi \('boy play'\)](#)
- [Trafficking](#)
- [Forced and early marriage](#)
- [Detention of girls for 'moral crimes' including fleeing forced marriage](#)
- [Access to education](#)
- [Child labour](#)
- [Criminal justice system for minors and treatment of children in detention centres and prisons](#)

Kidnappings/abductions

- [UN Office of the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 May 2013](#)

[...] V. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

[...] A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

[...] Afghanistan

[...] 27. The country task force reported 18 incidents of abduction involving 67 boys. Verified information attributed the cases to the Taliban, the local police and other pro-Government militias. Children were

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abducted for the purposes of recruitment, sexual abuse and also intimidation in cases in which families worked or were perceived to be working for the Government or the international military forces. In one case, on 29 August 2012, the Taliban abducted and beheaded a 12-year-old boy in Kandahar Province in retaliation against his brother, an officer in the local police. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Afghan traders announce indefinite protest against the killing of a kidnapped child, 3 February 2013](#)

[...] Trade unions and businesses in the western Afghan city of Herat have vowed to protest indefinitely until authorities arrest the killers of a businessman's son. On February 3, hundreds of mourners participated in the funeral of eight-year-old Ali Sina who was killed on January 31, a month after being kidnapped. Herat's factories have been shut down for three days to express solidarity with his family. The victims' uncle Hafizullah says that the kidnappers had demanded \$400,000 for releasing Sina, but he was killed even after the family paid them \$95,000. General Abdul Hamid Hamidy, the acting police chief of Herat Province, said that security forces have already detained several suspects. Herat is a major trading hub and borders Iran and Turkmenistan. Local traders have protested over a recent spike in crime that often targets their family members. [...]

Sexual violence, including Baccha Baazi ('boy play')

➤ [UN Office of the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 May 2013](#)

[...] V. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

[...] A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

[...] Afghanistan

[...] 30. The country task force received isolated reports of sexual violence against girls and boys by members of armed groups, the Afghan national security forces and the international military forces. While only five cases were reported during the reporting period, sexual violence against children continued to be underreported owing to stigmatization and fear of retaliation. Some boys held in detention on charges relating to national security also reported sexual violence or threats of sexual violence upon arrest by the Afghan national security forces or in detention. At least one of those cases related to the practice of bachah-bazi (sexual abuse of boys by men in a position of power). In this regard, it should be noted that a joint team, comprising the Ministry of the Interior and the National Directorate of Security, was established to detect and investigate such incidents. [...]

➤ [United States Department of State, 2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Afghanistan, 19 April 2013](#)

[...] Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

[...] Children

[...] NGOs reported increased numbers of child abuse victims during the year, and the problem remained endemic throughout the country. Such abuse included general neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, abandonment, and confined forced labor to pay off family debts. There were reports that police beat and sexually abused children, including a case in which a Kunar provincial police officer was jailed after raping a 14-year-old boy.

[...] Sexual abuse of children remained pervasive. NGOs noted that most child victims, particularly girls, were abused by extended family members. While boys were more frequently abused by men outside their families, NGOs noted that families often were complicit, allowing local strongmen to abuse their children in exchange for status or money. While the MOI tracked cases of rape, most NGOs and observers estimated that the official numbers significantly underreported the phenomenon, with AIHRC reporting an increase of rape during the year, with most victims being children. Many child sexual abusers were not arrested, and there were reports that security officials and those connected to the ANP raped children with impunity. The practice of "bacha baazi" (dancing boys)--which involves powerful or wealthy local figures and businessmen sexually abusing young boys who were trained to dance in female clothes--was

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on the rise. Although the practice was believed to be more widespread in conservative rural areas, at least one media report alleged that it had become common in Kabul. Media reports also alleged that local authorities, including the police, were involved in the practice, but the government took few steps to discourage the abuse of boys or to prosecute or punish those involved. [...]

➤ [Institute for War and Peace Reporting, In Afghan Child Abuse Cases, Victims Go to Jail, 26 March 2013](#)

The 15-year-old refused to give his name, his eyes cast down as he sat in an empty room in the children's correction centre in Kabul.

Slowly, he began to open up and tell his story. An orphan, he left his home province of Sar-e Pol a year ago and came to the Afghan city to study at an Islamic school. One day while out in the city, he saw a man struggling to carry two bags of groceries.

"I went to help him, and I took one of the bags and carried it to his home," he said. "The man invited me to come inside for lunch since I'd helped him, but when I entered the room, he attacked me sexually. I jumped out of the window to escape, but he came outside and shouted out that I was a thief. The local police arrested me for robbery. They wouldn't listen to me.... I've been in prison for seven months, and I don't know what I've done wrong."

As in other societies, sexual abuse of children is a highly sensitive issue in Afghanistan. The judicial system is not set up to cope, and the victims often end up being placed in juvenile detention centres under the catch-all terminology of "moral crime", while their adult assailants go unpunished.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, AIHRC, lists numerous recorded cases of sexual abuse of girls and boys, but it underlines that many others are never reported because of concerns about shame and honour, and because people have little faith in the justice system.

"Systemic corruption, weak rule of law, and impunity lead to the offenders going unpunished, while the victims are punished," Belal Sediqi, head of children's affairs at the AIHRC, told IWPR.

Accurate information about numbers is hard to get, since some official agencies refuse to provide data. Staff at Afghanistan's first-level children's court told IWPR that they could not give the media any information about the sexual abuse of minors. It is also difficult to gain access to children held in juvenile detention.

Inconsistencies in Afghanistan's laws impede justice. Child marriage is common in Afghanistan, and there is no age of consent. And while a 2009 law on violence against women made rape a criminal offence, it does not apply to male victims. The crime of "pederasty", sex between a man and a boy, carries a prison sentence of up to 15 years.

More often than not, the charge of "moral crimes" – which covers all forms of sexual between unmarried individuals – is applied in cases where a child is assaulted.

Since victims thus become "culpable", Sediqi says many of them – boys and girls alike – are simply locked up in the juvenile detention centre in Kabul.

Aziza Adalatkhwah, director of the detention centre, denied that any victims of sexual assault were being held there.

"This claim by the human rights commission is a lie," she said. "The victims of such incidents are not imprisoned."

At the same time, Adalatkhwah acknowledged that some of the minors at the centre were being held for "moral crimes".

[...] Keramatullah Sediqi, director of research at the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs, believes Islamic law offers effective deterrents.

He said the abuser should be put in a sack and thrown down a hillside. "If that was done, I am sure no one else would dare do such a thing," he said.

Sediqi says cases of sexual assaults on minors rarely reach the stage where any kind of law can be applied. While some perpetrators are arrested, he argues that they do not receive the punishment they deserve. He cites a recent case where a 13-year-old boy was allegedly abused by a member of the Afghan National Army in February. No action was taken against the soldier.

"The [human rights] commission exerts pressure on investigative agencies to prosecute those responsible in such cases, but we remain unsatisfied with the results," he added.

Lal Gul, the director of the Human Rights Organisation of Afghanistan, said that just as in other criminal cases, those accused of sexual assaults on minors can get away with it if they have enough influence.

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“There is massive corruption in state institutions, particularly in the courts,” he said. “Warlords and the supporters of senior government figures are immune from the law. Unless the law is applied equally to everybody, we must assume that injustices of this kind will only increase.”

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Don't Prosecute Sexually Assaulted Children: Urgently Reform Response to Sexual Abuse of Boys, 10 February 2013](#)

[...] The Afghan government should take urgent steps to ensure that rape and sexual abuse of children leads to prosecution of the abusers – not of victims, Human Rights Watch said today. In [Afghanistan's](#) western Herat province, in an October 2012 case that only recently came to light, a court convicted a 13-year-old boy on moral crimes charges, and sentenced him to one year in juvenile detention after he was accused of having sex with two adult men in a public park.

Afghan law prohibits “pederasty,” commonly understood to mean sex between a man and a boy, and makes it a crime punishable by 5 to 15 years in prison. “Moral crimes” charges, which under Afghan law include not only pederasty but also all sexual relations between people who are not married to each other, have frequently been used to punish the victim of a criminal offense.

“When a man has sex with a 13-year-old child, the child is a victim of rape, not a criminal offender,” said Brad Adams, Asia director. “The Afghan government should never have victimized this boy a second time, but instead should have released him immediately with urgent protection and assistance.”

A prosecutor involved in the case told Human Rights Watch that the boy was prosecuted because he said he had consented to engaging in sexual relations with several adult men. The decision in the case is under appeal. The authorities also arrested the men and charged them with moral crimes, but the outcome of their case is unknown.

There is no age of consent for sex under Afghan law. Children under age 19 convicted of crimes are entitled to reduced sentences under the 2005 Juvenile Code. United Nations bodies responsible for protecting the rights of children have said that countries should have an age of consent sufficiently high to protect children.

In spite of Afghanistan's strict prohibitions on sex outside of marriage, the United Nations and other organizations have documented numerous instances of sexual abuse of boys through a practice known as “*bacha bazi*.” The phrase, which translates as “boy play,” refers to boys who work as dancers, performing at parties attended by men, and typically living under the protection of a military commander or other patron. Afghan culture typically prohibits women or girls from dancing for a male audience. While their role as entertainers can be innocent, in many instances these boys are also the victims of sexual assault and abuse.

“The Afghan government needs to take urgent steps to protect children from sexual assault, including boys who are abused through the practice of *bacha bazi*,” Adams said. “Treating boys who have been raped as criminals undermines all government efforts to protect children from abuse.”

In 2009, Afghanistan enacted the Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women, which for the first time introduced the term “rape” as a criminal offense under Afghan law. The law imposed sentences similar to the 5-to-15-year sentences for pederasty and sex between people who are not married to each other. Although some alleged rapists have been prosecuted under this law, in 2012, Human Rights Watch documented repeated incidents in which prosecutors pursued criminal charges against alleged rape victims for engaging in extramarital sex. Prosecutors told Human Rights Watch that they had pursued criminal charges in such cases because they did not believe victims who said they had been raped, or they believed the victims were of “bad character.”

Since the law's passage, specialized units responsible for prosecuting crimes against women and children have been established in several Afghan provinces with support from international donors. The UN in 2012 documented numerous cases of sexual assault of boys and girls, including sexual assault of boys by armed men and in detention centers.

A major limitation of the 2009 law is that it refers only to the rape of women or girls. There is no comparable specific prohibition on rape of men and boys. A wide-ranging revision of Afghanistan's penal code has been planned for several years, but there has been little progress in drafting a new law.

“Afghan lawmakers should move forward promptly in revising the Penal Code to provide better protection for both victims and criminal suspects,” Adams said. “The revision should ensure that rape is seen as a serious crime, whether committed against men and boys or women and girls, and that victims are not treated as criminals.” [...]

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- [The Guardian, Afghan rape victim 'attacked again by government workers protecting her': Girl aged 15 says she was raped by employees and security guard at provincial women's affairs department, 23 January 2013](#)

[...] A teenage Afghan rape victim who secured a rare conviction of her attacker has said she was assaulted this month for a second time, by a group of government employees tasked with protecting her.

The 15-year-old schoolgirl, from Daikundi province in Afghanistan's freezing, poor central highlands, was first raped four months ago while she was on her way to school, said Nowruz Ali Ataee, head of the provincial criminal investigation department.

In an unusual move for a young girl in conservative rural Afghanistan, where a rape is often considered to bring shame on an entire family, she reported the attack. Equally unusually, for a country that passed a law banning violence against women four years ago but has been slow to implement it, police found and arrested her rapist. He was recently jailed for 16 years and an accomplice was given a five-year sentence.

But the girl had to travel to the provincial capital for the case, and was temporarily living in an "education reform" centre that Daikundi officials said shelters women and children with no family.

After four months, and with her attackers in prison, judges last week ordered that the victim should be sent to a shelter or back to her family, Ataee said.

Her home was not really an option, however. She comes from a remote district, where the roads are now blocked by heavy snows, and it was not even clear if her family wanted her back. The girl's father had died when she was young, and her mother remarried, to a man who one government source said did not treat his stepdaughter well, forcing her to spend long hours herding sheep.

And in Daikundi town there were no suitable shelters, said Ataee, so she was sent to spend the night in the provincial women's affairs department. "The next morning she made an accusation. When the acting chairman of the women's department went to her office and asked her if it was OK, she said some employees and one security guard raped her," Qurban Ali Uruzgani, governor of Daikundi province, told the Guardian.

The victim was not sure how many men had raped her, one source said, because she had lost consciousness at the start of her ordeal, but several men have already been detained.

"We arrested four employees and one security guard of the building and put them in jail," Uruzgani said.

The acting chairman of the women's department was briefly held but then released, he added.

After details of the case leaked to the Afghan media, the president, Hamid Karzai, sent a delegation to investigate, something he has done before in cases of extreme violence against women, contested civilian casualties or other cases that catch public attention.

The team, which included representatives from the ministry of women's affairs and the attorney general's office, has now returned to Kabul and is likely to report back within weeks. But regardless of the outcome, the case has already raised fears that a trend of rising violence against women, recorded last year, is continuing into 2013. [...]

Trafficking

- [United States Department of State, 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report - Afghanistan, 19 June 2013](#)

[...] AFGHANISTAN (Tier 2 Watch List)

Afghanistan is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Internal trafficking is more prevalent than transnational trafficking. The majority of Afghan victims are children subjected to human trafficking in carpet-making and brick kiln factories and domestic servitude, and in commercial sexual exploitation, begging, and transnational drug smuggling within Afghanistan and in Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Some Afghan families knowingly sell their children for forced prostitution, including for bacha baazi—where wealthy or influential men, including government officials and security forces, use young boys for social and sexual entertainment. Other families send their children through labor brokers for employment, but the children end up in forced labor. Opium-farming families sometimes sell their children to settle debts with opium traffickers. According to the government and the UN, insurgent groups force older children to serve as suicide bombers. Some Afghan families are trapped in debt bondage in the brick-making industry in eastern

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Afghanistan. Increasing numbers of men, women, and children in Afghanistan pay intermediaries to assist them in finding employment in Iran, Pakistan, India, Europe, or North America; some of these intermediaries force Afghan citizens into labor or prostitution after their arrival. Afghan women and girls are subjected to forced prostitution and domestic servitude in Pakistan, Iran, and India. Afghan boys and men are subjected to forced labor and debt bondage in the agriculture and construction sectors in Iran, Pakistan, Greece, Turkey, and the Gulf states.

The Government of Afghanistan does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government has not shown evidence of increasing efforts to address human trafficking compared to the previous year; therefore, Afghanistan is placed on Tier 2 Watch List for a fourth consecutive year. Afghanistan was granted a waiver from an otherwise required downgrade to Tier 3 because its government has a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and would devote sufficient resources to implement that plan. During the reporting period, the Afghan government recorded the first known convictions of trafficking offenders under its 2008 law. The government continued, however, to penalize and re-victimize trafficking victims for offenses committed in the course of being trafficked. Government officials' complicity in trafficking remained a serious problem. The level of understanding of human trafficking among Afghan government officials remained very low. [...]

Forced and early marriage

➤ [United States Department of State, 2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Afghanistan, 19 April 2013](#)

[...] Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

[...] Children

[...] Despite a law setting the legal minimum age for marriage at 16 for girls and 18 for boys, international and local observers estimated that approximately 60 percent of girls were married younger than the age of 16. Under the EAW law those who arrange forced or underage marriages may be sentenced to imprisonment of not less than two years, but implementation of this law remained limited. The Law on Marriage states that marriage of a minor may be conducted with a guardian's consent. By law the marriage contract requires verification that the bride is 16 years of age; however, only a small fraction of the population had birth certificates. Following custom some poor families pledged their daughters to marry in exchange for "bride money," although the practice was illegal. According to local NGOs, some girls were promised as young as six or seven years of age, with the understanding that the actual marriage would be delayed until the child reached puberty. However, reports indicated that this delay was rarely observed and that young girls were sexually violated by the groom and by older men in the family, particularly if the groom was also a child. Media reports also noted a growing "opium bride" phenomenon, in which farmer families married off their daughters to settle debts to opium traffickers. In one reported case, a father promised his 12-year-old daughter to a man 30 years her senior to repay a debt the father had incurred for his opium venture. [...]

➤ [Inter Press Service, Afghan Girls Give More Than Their Hands in Marriage, 26 February 2013](#)

[...] In Afghanistan, the maternal mortality rate is on the rise; hospitals are filling up with anaemic women and girls; and in over 200 districts, high schools are devoid of even a single female pupil. These issues are not unrelated – they are all products of a grave social problem in this country of 35 million people: early child marriages. According to Sadia Fayege Ayubi, head of the reproductive health department at the ministry of public health, early marriage (of girls younger than 16 years) is illegal in Afghanistan yet girls as young as 13 are frequently married, often to much older men. In 2013 alone, 53 child marriages have been reported, said Nazia Faizi, a representative of the rights department at the ministry of women's affairs.

And although that number is less than in previous years, it does not provide an accurate picture of the situation since "there are more unreported cases in the rural areas where women are more deprived and have no rights or access to legal help", Faizi added. Child marriages are most common in four northern provinces: Kunduz, Sarpol, Faryab and Herat, where women's "access to justice is poor", she said. Girls are coerced into marrying young. Many families consider it a matter of shame if their daughter is not married

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by the time she is 16 years old. Sometimes, young girls are also “traded” in marriage to save family honour or in compensation for a crime committed against a member of the family the girl is being married into. According to Sayed Salahudin Hashimi, a preacher in Abu Bakr Siddiq Mosque in Khair Khana, Kabul, although Sharia law allows the marriage of post-pubescent girls, the decision to take a husband lies entirely with the girl herself: she cannot be forced, and she has the right to reject the offer. But while this may be the case on paper, the reality for millions of girls is very different.

[...] According to Sadia Fayeque Ayubi, head of the reproductive health department at the Public Health Ministry, girls are married off between 13 and 17 years, and are often pregnant between 17 and 19 years of age. This statistic is put in sharper perspective when viewed alongside national maternal mortality statistics: one in 50 Afghan women is likely to die of pregnancy-related causes, according to the 2010 Afghanistan Mortality Survey. The lifetime risk of pregnancy-related death is five times as high in rural areas as it is in towns and cities.

But the survey’s maternal mortality rate of 327 per 100,000 live births in the survey area — which excluded parts of the country disrupted by conflict — is significantly lower than the 1,400 per 100,000 live births assigned by United Nations agencies and the World Bank for the same year. Meanwhile, divorce rates, suicide and self-immolation are on the rise, said Parwin Rahimi, in charge of the women’s support department at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). In 2010, former Deputy Health Minister Faizullah Kakar completed a study based on hospital reports and Health Ministry records, which showed that over 2,300 women and girls in the 15 to 40 age group attempt suicide annually. That same year, 100 cases of self-immolation were registered at the Herat City Hospital — 76 of those women succumbed to their burns. Experts and advocates suspect that early marriages are playing a role in pushing an increasing number of women to these desperate, often fatal, acts. Rahimi believes it is a “legal flaw” that girls can be married as young as 16 and allowed to start a family. Most of these teenage brides face exploitation and unimaginable violence at the hands of their husbands and in-laws. They have little access to justice, and more often than not their stories go untold. Child marriages could also explain the high drop-out rate for girls in Afghanistan — according to the international development organisation BRAC, 82 percent of Afghan girls drop out of school before the sixth grade. The Education Ministry says the situation is worse in rural areas, where girls rarely manage to finish school. It is estimated that 70 percent of Afghan women are illiterate. [...]

➤ [BBC News, Nagma, the Afghan girl sold to be a child bride, 29 January 2013](#)

[...] Taj Mohammad tries hard to hold back his tears as he describes the most painful decision of his life. "I had to sell my six-year-old daughter Nagma to a relative to settle an old debt," Mr Mohammad says, staring blankly at the tattered tarpaulin roof of his small mud shelter. A shy girl with a smiling face, Nagma is now engaged to a boy 10 years older than her. Mr Mohammad says his daughter may have to leave for the boy's home in Helmand's Sangin district in a year. His wife and mother-in-law sob inconsolably as they try to protect Nagma and her seven siblings from the harsh Afghan winter outside. "Everyone in the family is sad," says Nagma's grandmother, who was herself a child bride. "We cry. We are in pain. But what else could we do?" she asks before answering her own question. "The relatives wanted their money back. Taj couldn't pay, so he was forced to give them Nagma."

[...] "To keep my family alive, I took a loan of \$2,500 [about £1,600] from a distant relative," Mr Mohammad says. Years of war and poverty forced Mr Mohammad to leave his home in the southern province of Helmand and take refuge in Qambar's mud shelters. He says he was struggling to come to terms with the loss of his three-year-old son and an uncle, both of whom died in the cold earlier this month, when the distant relative sent a message demanding his money back. "He wanted his money back. But I couldn't pay. No-one would lend money to me," he says. "Then a relative suggested that I give my daughter in lieu of money." Nagma is too young to understand the ramifications of her father's decision. "She only cries when we talk to her about it," Mr Mohammad says. "If I can give my relative some money, then I can delay the marriage until Nagma is 14 or 16 years old." The legal age for marriage in Afghanistan is 16 for women and 18 for men. Dost Mohammad, the would-be groom's father, also lives in the Qambar camp. He agrees it is illegal to buy a child bride. "The government doesn't allow it," he says, but adds quickly: "I consulted the tribal elders and this is their decision." Despite the fact it is illegal under Afghan law, the practice of marrying off child brides for money is widespread in many parts of Afghanistan. No accurate figures exist for numbers of children involved, but human rights campaigners say it is not uncommon for girls as young as Nagma to be sold. Mohammad Musa Mahmodi, who heads the

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Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), expressed his concern at what he said were "traditions and economic situations that would force families to submit to the practice of selling their children". Cases like Naghma's go on all over Afghanistan, but are rarely reported. Before I leave, Taj Mohammad tells me: "Our eyes are dry - even the tears are not coming to free us from our pain." [...]

Girls for sale

- Child marriages are illegal but widespread in Afghanistan. They happen mainly in rural areas, especially near Pakistan
- They are usually aimed at strengthening ties with rival families and tribes, as part of deals or to settle debts and disputes
- Poor families often end up selling daughters for large dowries from wealthy people - the husbands are usually much older
- Decisions to sell off girls for marriage are made by men - wives, mothers and sisters have little or no say
- Few people report them because they think it brings shame on the family
- Very young girls sold as brides may initially be raised as children by the family that bought them. Others have been victims of child sexual abuse

Detention of girls for 'moral crimes' including fleeing forced marriage

- [Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Watch, Afghanistan: Surge in Women Jailed for 'Moral Crimes', 21 May 2013](#)

[...] The Afghan government should take urgent steps to halt an alarming increase in women and girls imprisoned for "moral crimes," Human Rights Watch said today. Commitments by senior government officials to end such abuses have had little practical impact.

Statistics from Afghanistan's Interior Ministry indicate that the number of women and girls imprisoned for "moral crimes" in Afghanistan had risen to about 600 in May 2013 from 400 in October 2011 - a 50 percent increase in a year and a half. Since October 2011, there has been an almost 30 percent increase overall in the number of women and girls imprisoned in Afghanistan's prisons and juvenile detention facilities.

[...] In a March 2012 report, "'I Had to Run Away': The Imprisonment of Women and Girls for 'Moral Crimes' in Afghanistan," Human Rights Watch documented that some 95 percent of girls and 50 percent of women imprisoned in Afghanistan were accused of the "moral crimes" of "running away" from home or zina (sex outside of marriage).

These "moral crimes" usually involve flight from unlawful forced marriages or domestic violence. Women and girls imprisoned on "moral crimes" charges who were interviewed by Human Rights Watch described abuses including forced and underage marriage below age 16, beatings, stabbings, burnings, rapes, forced prostitution, kidnapping, and threats of "honor killing." Virtually none of the cases had led even to an investigation of the abuse, let alone prosecution or punishment.

"Running away," or fleeing home without permission, is not a crime under the Afghan criminal code, but the Afghan Supreme Court has instructed its judges to treat women and girls who flee as criminals. Zina is a crime under Afghan law, punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Some women and girls have been convicted of zina after being raped or forced into prostitution. Prosecution of women who are survivors of gender-based violence has continued, and many abusers of women have continued to go free in spite of Afghanistan's 2009 Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW Law), which created new criminal penalties for abuse of women.

While several high-level Afghan government officials, including from the police and Justice Ministry, have in the past year publicly confirmed that "running away" is not a crime under Afghan law, such statements have yet to translate into policy, Human Rights Watch said. Some legal experts have suggested that a growing view that women and girls should not be charged with "running away" has merely resulted in a shift toward charging them with attempted zina. A charge of attempted zina unjustifiably assumes that women outside of the supervision of their male relatives must have attempted to have sex.

Women and girls accused of "moral crimes" are routinely subjected to "virginity tests" that courts rely on for the purpose of determining virginity and whether a woman or girl engaged in recent sexual intercourse. These exams can be ordered by any police official, and some women are subjected to

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multiple vaginal exams without informed consent for no justifiable reason. Use of such examinations is not limited to rape cases, and examinations do not focus on documenting medical injuries or collecting physical evidence to support an allegation of sexual assault. Although medical examinations can be a legitimate form of investigation in cases of alleged sexual assault, gynecological exams that purport to determine "virginity" have no medical accuracy. Use of such tests constitutes cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment under international law.

[...] Some women and girls who flee violence at home are able to access help - rather than being arrested - through shelters. The number of women's shelters in Afghanistan has increased from 14 in 2011 to 18 in 2013. However, the capacity of the shelters is far too limited for the number of women who require assistance, and fewer than half of the country's 34 provinces have even a single shelter. There are no shelters in the more conservative southern half of the country.

These shelters may not be sustainable as they are entirely funded by international donors, and donor assistance is dropping rapidly as the 2014 deadline for the withdrawal of international combat forces from Afghanistan approaches. The Afghan government has shown no interest in funding shelters through the government budget and has at times taken actions detrimental to the shelters, including a 2011 effort to take over the shelters and 2012 statements by the justice minister accusing shelters of "moral corruption." [...]

➤ [Institute for War and Peace Reporting, In Afghan Child Abuse Cases, Victims Go to Jail, 26 March 2013](#)

[...] The 15-year-old refused to give his name, his eyes cast down as he sat in an empty room in the children's correction centre in Kabul.

Slowly, he began to open up and tell his story. An orphan, he left his home province of Sar-e Pol a year ago and came to the Afghan city to study at an Islamic school. One day while out in the city, he saw a man struggling to carry two bags of groceries.

"I went to help him, and I took one of the bags and carried it to his home," he said. "The man invited me to come inside for lunch since I'd helped him, but when I entered the room, he attacked me sexually. I jumped out of the window to escape, but he came outside and shouted out that I was a thief. The local police arrested me for robbery. They wouldn't listen to me.... I've been in prison for seven months, and I don't know what I've done wrong."

As in other societies, sexual abuse of children is a highly sensitive issue in Afghanistan. The judicial system is not set up to cope, and the victims often end up being placed in juvenile detention centres under the catch-all terminology of "moral crime", while their adult assailants go unpunished.

[...] More often than not, the charge of "moral crimes" – which covers all forms of sexual between unmarried individuals – is applied in cases where a child is assaulted.

Since victims thus become "culpable", Sediqi says many of them – boys and girls alike – are simply locked up in the juvenile detention centre in Kabul.

Aziza Adalatkhwah, director of the detention centre, denied that any victims of sexual assault were being held there.

"This claim by the human rights commission is a lie," she said. "The victims of such incidents are not imprisoned."

At the same time, Adalatkhwah acknowledged that some of the minors at the centre were being held for "moral crimes". [...]

Access to education

➤ [Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 6 Million Afghan Children Deprived of Education, 2 June 2013](#)

[...] The Afghan officials on Saturday said that more than six million children are deprived of education across Afghanistan. The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) at the International Children's Day ceremony, criticized that the Afghan children who are deprived of education are involved in various kind of labor works in the country. The Ministry officials added that some plans and policies have been made in order to enroll the children into schools.

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[...] Afghanistan, a country which has 14 million children, and according to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, more than 6 million of them are deprived of education and they are made to work on the streets.
[...]

➤ [UN Office of the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 May 2013](#)

[...] V. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

[...] A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

[...] Afghanistan

[...] 31. The country task force documented 167 incidents affecting education, of which 49 per cent were attributed to armed groups, including Taliban forces, 25 per cent to pro-Government forces and 26 per cent to unidentified perpetrators. Armed groups conducted targeted attacks against schools, including using improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks, burned schools and abducted and killed education personnel. Armed groups were also responsible for acts of intimidation, threats against teachers and pupils and the forced closure of schools. In 2012, the Taliban issued five statements in which it denied attacking schools and announced that it would set up a commission for education. The Taliban also issued a letter in which it opposed girls' education and threatened girls who continued to attend school, however. Throughout the reporting period, the country task force verified 10 cases of use of schools for military purposes, including 3 by armed groups and 7 by pro-Government forces. It received reports of a further 30 incidents of attacks against health facilities and health personnel, mostly carried out by armed groups. Such cases include abduction of medical personnel and attacks on medical facilities with improvised explosive devices. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: Afghan Schoolgirls Hospitalized After Suspected Poisoning, 1 May 2013](#)

[...] A number of girls appear to have been poisoned at a school in the Afghan capital, Kabul. A teacher at the Sultan Razia High School told RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan that students fell ill after smelling some kind of gas when they entered their classrooms on May 1. The Education Ministry said that 20 schoolgirls have been hospitalized. However, a doctor -- who gave his name as Amin -- at the Kabul hospital that received the patients told the Reuters news agency that 150 girls had been admitted and 10 were in critical condition. Hospital officials also told Reuters that the girls may have become ill from something they drank. There have been false alarms in the past, but there have also been many substantiated cases of such attacks by religious conservative elements opposed to education for girls. [...]

➤ [United States Department of State, 2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Afghanistan, 19 April 2013](#)

[...] Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

[...] Children

[...] The status of girls and women in education remained a matter of grave concern. Key obstacles to girls' education included poverty, early and forced marriage, insecurity, lack of family support, lack of female teachers, and the long distance to school. President Karzai's July Decree on Governance and Corruption addressed the lack of female teachers, particularly in conservative rural areas, by charging the MOE with recruiting an additional 11,000 teachers and increasing the number of district-level teacher training support centers to provide training opportunities for female teachers. Violent attacks against schoolchildren, particularly girls, also hindered access to education. Violence impeded access to education in various sections of the country, particularly in areas controlled by the Taliban. The Taliban and other extremists threatened and attacked school officials, teachers, and students and burned both boys' and girls' schools. For example, in August alone there were reports of killings of principals of girls' schools in Balkh Province and Faryab Province. In a range of cases between April and July, the government alleged that insurgents poisoned more than 1,000 students, mainly in northern provinces. However, with a lack of clear physical evidence to substantiate the poison claims, the World Health Organization alleged that the incidents resulted from the psychological trauma of a war-torn environment, a phenomenon called "mass psychological illness." Insecurity, conservative attitudes, and poverty denied education to millions of

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school-age children, mainly in the southern and southeastern provinces. In May the MOE estimated that more than 530 schools in 11 provinces had been shut down due to insecurity. Nationwide the MOE reported that 4.2 million children lacked educational access due to security reasons. Particularly in Helmand, security concerns inhibited parents from sending their children to school. In May the MOE stated that it had managed to reopen only 100 of 170 schools in Helmand that had been shut down in the preceding months. Reports of abduction and molestation also existed. The lack of community-based, nearby schools was another factor inhibiting school attendance. [...]

➤ [IOM, Country Fact Sheet Afghanistan, October 2012](#)

[...] V. EDUCATION

[...] 1. General information

The once robust and well-respected education system in Afghanistan has fallen over the past two decades into a state of neglect. War has destroyed more than 70 percent of the schools and there are not enough teachers or necessities such as textbooks and notebooks to provide adequate educational services. Under the repressive regime of the Taliban, girls did not have access to education, Despite success in sending children to school now, gender disparity trends in education remain worrisome. The literacy rate for young women between the ages of 15 and 24 is only 18 per cent, compared to 51 per cent for boys. Afghanistan faces a daunting task in reducing illiteracy rates in the country with an estimated 11 million currently illiterate Afghans aged 15 and above. Improving literacy rates will require the combined efforts of the Ministry of Education and other partners within the Government of Afghanistan as well as communities, the private sector and other non-government actors. Education is however a government and donor priority, which has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of Afghans enrolled in the educational system, as well as large scale construction of new school buildings. As in the field of health, the country is in dire need of qualified teachers. Difficulties arising from human resources shortages are particularly acute in rural areas.

2. Developments

More than 5.4 million children are now enrolled in schools today. On average girls make up about 35 percent of school-attending children, but in the southern and eastern parts of the country the number of girls attending school is far lower. The Ministry of Education, in partnership with international organizations such as IOM and UNOPS, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and private nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as Help the Afghan Children has focused its efforts on the construction and refurbishment of school buildings throughout the country. The provision of education materials such as books and other supplies is also handled countrywide. The number of qualified teachers, especially women, remains low. At present, teachers' income also remains problematic. [...]

Child labour

➤ [Daily Outlook Afghanistan, 6 Million Afghan Children Deprived of Education, 2 June 2013](#)

[...] The Afghan officials on Saturday said that more than six million children are deprived of education across Afghanistan. The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) at the International Children's Day ceremony, criticized that the Afghan children who are deprived of education are involved in various kind of labor works in the country. The Ministry officials added that some plans and policies have been made in order to enroll the children into schools.

[...] Afghanistan, a country which has 14 million children, and according to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, more than 6 million of them are deprived of education and they are made to work on the streets. [...]

➤ [United States Department of State, 2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Afghanistan, 19 April 2013](#)

[...] Section 7. Worker Rights

[...] c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The labor law sets the minimum age for employment at 18 years but permits 14-year-olds to work as apprentices, allows children 15 years and older to do "light work," and permits children ages 16 to 18 to work up to 35 hours per week. Children younger than age 13 are prohibited from work under any

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circumstances. The labor law prohibits the employment of children in work likely to threaten their health or cause disability; however, there was no defined list of hazardous jobs.

The government lacked a specific policy on implementing the law's provisions on child labor, and the MoLSMD had only 20 inspectors for 34 provinces. Generally poor institutional capacity was a serious impediment to effective enforcement of the labor law, and the government made minimal efforts over the course of the year to prevent child labor or remove children from exploitative labor conditions. In addition reports estimated that fewer than 10 percent of children in the country had formal birth registrations, further limiting authorities' already weak capacity to enforce laws on the minimum age of employment.

Child labor remained a pervasive problem in practice, with indications that the problem could become more widespread as families became more reliant on income produced by children as development aid dropped and profit margins became lower. According to UNICEF estimates, almost two million children were in full- or part-time work.

Child laborers worked as domestic servants, street vendors, peddlers, and shopkeepers, as well as in carpet weaving, brick making, the coal industry, and poppy harvesting. Children were also heavily employed in agriculture, mining (especially family-owned gem mines), commercial sexual exploitation, transnational drug smuggling, and organized begging rings. Some sectors of child labor exposed children to land mines. Children faced numerous health and safety risks at work, and there were reports that children were exposed to sexual abuse by adult workers. [...]

Criminal justice system for minors and treatment of children in detention centres and prisons

For a thorough overview and analysis of the Afghan criminal justice system regarding children, see this report produced by Justice Studio: [Justice Studio, Afghanistan: Child Justice Brief, June 2012](#)

- [United States Department of State, 2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Afghanistan, 19 April 2013](#)
[...] Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons
[...] Children
[...] NGOs reported a predominantly punitive and retributive approach to juvenile justice throughout the country. [...]

For a thorough account of the treatment of children in detention centres and prisons, including reported incidents of torture and ill-treatment, view UNAMA's report: [UNAMA, Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees in Afghan Custody: One Year On, January 2013](#)

- [UN Office of the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 May 2013](#)
[...] V. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children
[...] A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council
[...] Afghanistan
[...] 26. The country task force documented 189 cases of boys detained in juvenile rehabilitation centres by the Afghan authorities in 2012. A further unknown number of children were held in detention facilities of the national police and the National Directorate of Security. The country task force expressed concern over continuing reports of ill-treatment in those detention facilities, the public display of child detainees in national media and the lack of documentation and follow-up on the release of those children. The exact number of children held in the detention facilities of the international military forces remained unknown. In July 2012 however, the country task force received information that at least 90 children were being held in such a detention facility in Parwan. On 25 March 2013, the facility was transferred to the Afghan

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authorities. My Special Representative was also informed by the legal counsel of Hamidullah Khan, a Pakistani male, that he had been arrested in August 2008, aged 14 year, by forces of the United States near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and had been detained at Bagram Air Force Base without formal charge, apparently for security reasons, for more than four years. The United Nations has no access or additional information.

[...] 30. [...] Some boys held in detention on charges relating to national security also reported sexual violence or threats of sexual violence upon arrest by the Afghan national security forces or in detention. At least one of those cases related to the practice of bachah-bazi (sexual abuse of boys by men in a position of power). In this regard, it should be noted that a joint team, comprising the Ministry of the Interior and the National Directorate of Security, was established to detect and investigate such incidents. [...]

➤ [United States Department of State, 2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Afghanistan, 19 April 2013](#)

[...] Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

[...] d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

[...] Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention

[...] According to the MOJ, 81 children were detained on national security-related charges in juvenile rehabilitation centers during the year; all were male, six younger than age 15. The juvenile code presumes that children should not be held to the same standards as adults. The code states that the arrest of a child "should be a matter of last resort and should last for the shortest possible period." A November 2011 report indicated that children in juvenile rehabilitation centers across the country lacked access to adequate food, health care, and education. Detained children typically were denied basic rights and many aspects of due process, including the presumption of innocence, the right to be informed of charges, access to defense lawyers, and the right not to be forced to confess. The law provides for the creation of juvenile police, prosecution offices, and courts. Due to limited resources, the special juvenile courts functioned only in six areas (Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Kunduz). In provinces where special courts do not exist, children's cases fall under the ordinary courts. The law also mandates that children's cases be addressed in private and like all criminal cases may involve three stages: primary, appeals, and the final stage at the Supreme Court. Some of the children in the criminal justice system were victims rather than perpetrators of crime. Particularly in cases of sexual exploitation, perpetrators seldom were imprisoned since cases seldom were prosecuted. Some victims were perceived as shameful and in need of punishment because they brought shame on their family by reporting the abuse. In some cases abused children were imprisoned because they could not return to their families, and shelter elsewhere was unavailable. Some children related to the perpetrator allegedly were imprisoned as a family proxy for the actual perpetrator. [...]

Forced recruitment of children

Note that the general issue of forced recruitment is dealt with extensively in the main category of claim 'Fear of the Taliban or other anti-government groups'.

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

[...] 3.10 Fear of the Taliban or other anti government groups

[...] Forced recruitment

[...] 3.10.17 In July 2012 UNHCR welcomed the EASO report and noted "The report focuses on forced recruitment by the Taliban and concludes that the Taliban only uses forced recruitment exceptionally. The report defines —forced recruitment" narrowly, limiting its scope of application to situations where individuals are forced to join the Taliban under the use or threat of immediate violence. The report does not include in this definition Taliban recruitment mechanisms based on broader coercive strategies, including fear, intimidation and the use of tribal mechanisms to pressurize individuals into joining the Taliban. The report's conclusion that forced recruitment is the exception rather than the rule should therefore not be taken to apply to these other forms of coercive recruitment. In circumstances where recruitment is based at least in part on fear, intimidation, tribal pressures or other coercive elements, it is exceedingly difficult in practice to make a clearcut distinction between

individuals joining the Taliban voluntarily and individuals being forcibly recruited. Where Afghan asylum-seekers claim to have fled forcible recruitment by the Taliban, decisionmakers [sic] in EU Member States will need to identify the precise nature of the coercion of which the applicant complains and decide the case on the basis of the applicant's individual circumstances". Amnesty International expressed concern that the term "forced recruitment" is defined narrowly in the EASO report: "In its conclusion the EASO does not acknowledge the situations of persons joining or supporting the Taleban as result of indirect methods of intimidation such as through instilling fear among the local population by threatening night letters, killing individuals, including children, perceived as spies or supporters of the government, the extortion of fines, as well as pressuring individuals to join the Taliban through tribal, family and religious mechanisms, and other indirect means of coercion. Also, in the current context of reintegration and reconciliation efforts with the Taliban, it is expected that more people, including members of ethnic minority groups, may submit to Taliban demands, fearing reprisals".

[...] 3.13 Minors

3.13.7 UNHCR notes in its Eligibility Guidelines that "In April 2010, the Afghan Ministry of Interior formally banned under-age recruitment in the police and provided for the demobilization and reintegration of children serving in the police forces at the time. However, there are concerns that children have been recruited by the Afghan security forces, including the Afghan National Security Forces and the Afghan National Police. Forced recruitment of children by armed groups, including the Taliban, the Haqqani network, Hezb-i-Islami, the Tora Bora Front and Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia, is reported, particularly in the southern, south-eastern and eastern regions. Internally displaced children and children part of isolated populations in conflict-affected areas are particularly at risk of recruitment into armed antiGovernment groups". The 2012 U.S. State Department report notes that "There were also reports that the Taliban and other insurgent forces recruited children younger than age 18, in some cases as suicide bombers and human shields, and in other cases to assist with their work, such as placing IEDs, particularly in southern provinces. The media, NGOs, and UN agencies reported that the Taliban tricked children, promised them money, used false religious pretexts, or forced them to become suicide bombers".

3.13.8 UNHCR in its comments on the EASO report (see 3.10.15 above) commented "pay particular attention to the meaning of forced recruitment in relation to children, taking in account their susceptibility to indoctrination. Given that the EASO report highlights that indoctrination of Afghan children in madrassas and refugee and IDP camps is widespread, the voluntary nature of decisions by children to join the Taliban is questionable".

3.13.9 The EASO report notes that "Recruitment of minors by different armed groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan is reported by different sources. Insurgent groups recruit minors as fighters, informants, guards or even as suicide bombers. Cases of forced recruitment of minors have been mostly reported in the border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Children are most vulnerable to recruitment by insurgents in areas where returned refugees and IDPs are living and where protective social and governmental structures do not exist". The same report notes on suicide bombers: "According to Giustozzi the Taliban have been quite ruthless in the recruitment of suicide bombers. They recruited adults for this but also young males 12–17 years old. Since 2010, female suicide bombers have appeared on the field as well. Giustozzi states there is no real evidence of forced recruitment of suicide bombers. Young boys are trained and indoctrinated, which takes from months to years. Many of them are madrassa students, Afghans or others in the Pakistani madrassas. Sometimes families linked to the Insurgency voluntarily give one of their youngsters to the insurgents for martyrdom in order to gain status within the insurgent organization". Amnesty International considers that "the focus should be not on whether or not there is a real risk of "forced" recruitment for a child, but whether there is a real risk that the child will be recruited".

In July 2012 the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published a COI report entitled 'Afghanistan: Taliban Strategies – Recruitment'. Excerpts from both UNHCR's and Amnesty International's opinions on this report have been included in the OGN under sections '3.10 Fear of the Taliban or other anti-government groups' and '3.13 Minors'. Both organisations highlight in their respective reports the importance of not defining 'forced recruitment' narrowly by only applying it to situations of direct violence or immediate use of force, but to take into account the full range of

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possible coercive recruitment strategies such as economics, fear, intimidation, pride and honour, religious persuasion and the use of tribal mechanisms to pressurise individuals into joining the Taliban, rather than by force. In order to have a full picture of their opinion as stated in their respective reports, see the relevant additional excerpts below:

➤ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International opinion on the EASO COI Report “Afghanistan: Taliban Strategies – Recruitment”, July 2012](#)

[...] Amnesty International believes that the EASO report conclusion, that the “Forced recruitment by Taliban military commanders, leaders or fighters [...] has to be considered as exceptional”, is untenable.

In the light of UNAMA's authoritative report “Afghanistan midyear report 2012 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict” as well as Amnesty International's own research, there seems to be a real risk of forced recruitment by Taleban and other armed groups especially in areas under their control and influence and government justice mechanisms and services are weak. According to the below findings cases of direct forced recruitment occur in areas other than those considered exceptional in the EASO conclusion.

[...] Additionally, the EASO report should acknowledge the lack of information available from areas under the Taleban control, since media and humanitarian agencies have restricted access to these areas because they have often been accused of spying and been threatened and physically attacked. Hence it should not be assumed that lack of reporting about forced recruitment means that it does not occur in these areas, or that if the Taleban are controlling particular areas the population are fully supporting them.

[...] In line with the above and the UNHCR's comments, Amnesty International urges EU Member States not to define “forced recruitment” narrowly only to situations of direct approach and violence when assessing asylum claims of forced recruitment. The EASO report conclusion and EU Member States should acknowledge that forced recruitment includes also indirect approaches and coercion that may provide plausible grounds for international protection. Moreover, it should be noted that there have been reports of forced recruitment using direct approaches and violence in areas other than those listed in the EASO report conclusion as described above.

When assessing claims of forced recruitment therefore, EU Member States must take into account whether such other methods have been used, as those described further above. The particular vulnerabilities of each individual must be assessed, as well as the state protection mechanisms available in the claimant's area. Every individual should have his/her situation assessed on a case-by case basis. [...]

➤ [UNHCR, Forced recruitment by the Taliban in Afghanistan: UNHCR's perspective, July 2012](#)

[...] 5. [...] For this reason, and while awaiting the publication of the second report, decision-makers in EU Member States are encouraged to take cognizance of the fact that recruitment under the use or threat of immediate force represents only the most extreme example of coercive recruitment strategies. In order to ensure that Afghans who are in need of international protection for reasons of intimidation or use of other coercive strategies by the Taliban receive this protection, the COI contained in the EASO report needs to be read with due consideration to the full range of possible coercive recruitment strategies, including those falling short of recruitment under the use or threat of immediate force. [...]

Excerpt from June 2013 Afghanistan OGN

Conclusion

[...] 3.13.14 There is no evidence of a threat in general for minors from the Afghan authorities on the basis of family connections to the Taliban or other armed groups opposing the Government. **Forced recruitment by Taliban military commanders, leaders or fighters (i.e. situations where individuals or their families are directly approached and forced to join up under threat of retaliation or violence if they refuse) has to be considered as exceptional.** In the case of HK and others (minors- indiscriminate violence – forced recruitment by Taliban – contact with family members) Afghanistan CG [2010] UKUT 378 (IAC) (23 November 2010) the Upper Tribunal (UT) found that while forcible recruitment by the Taliban cannot be discounted as a risk, particularly in areas of high militant activity or militant control, evidence is required to show that it is a real risk for the particular child concerned and not a mere possibility. It is important therefore that caseworkers refer to the most up-to date country information and take into consideration the nature of the threat of forced recruitment and how far it

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would extend. Guidance on the general fear for individuals and their families of the Taliban and other armed groups opposing the Government is provided in section 3.10.

In the concluding paragraph relating to forced recruitment of children the OGN repeats EASO's position and concludes that only in "exceptional" instances would individuals or families be directly approached and forced to join the Taliban or other armed groups opposing the Government. This fails to take account of the information included in the paragraphs highlighted further above and the opinions published by UNHCR and Amnesty International. Sources tend to report on the 'forced recruitment' of minors in general and COI linking the forced recruitment of minors with broader coercive recruitment strategies of their families is not easily available. The following sources provide information on the risk of children being kidnapped for the purpose of forced recruitment, the displacement of families who feared harassment and intimidation from armed groups who attempted to forcibly recruit family members, subtle coercive tactics being used by the Taliban to 'convince' families to provide their sons, as well as madrasas being used to indoctrinate their students:

➤ [UN Office of the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 May 2013](#)

[...] V. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

[...] A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

[...] Afghanistan

[...] 27. The country task force reported 18 incidents of abduction involving 67 boys. Verified information attributed the cases to the Taliban, the local police and other pro-Government militias. Children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment, sexual abuse and also intimidation in cases in which families worked or were perceived to be working for the Government or the international military forces. [...]

➤ [UNHCR, Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update UNHCR Afghanistan, April 2013](#)

[...] Key Protection Issues by Region

Eastern Region

Nangarhar:

Situation/Causes of Displacement: Due to AGEs [Anti Government Elements] physical harassment and intimidation as well as military/clean-up opera-on against AGEs conducted by IM/ANSF, 65 families/333 individuals were displaced from Hesrak and Khygyani districts of Nangarhar (28 families), Kamdesh district of Nuristan (35 families) and Tagab district of Kapisa (2 families) to Behshud, Chaparhar, Khygyani and Rodat districts of Nangarhar. They were displaced in November 2012 (27 families) and in March and April 2013 (38 families).

Assessments of IDP situation were conducted by DoRR, UNHCR Partner (APA) and WFP in April. IDPs stated that AGEs used to approach their residences and asked for man power support to fight against the government and they threatened the villagers, if they deny supporting Taliban. AGEs often approached their residences during the night, asking for food as well as threaten them through the villagers and night letters to quit working with IM and supporting Afghan government, otherwise they would face serious consequences. Reportedly, AGEs seized 30 to 100 goats of 4 families in Kamdesh district of Nuristan whose family members have been working with IM and ANA. Majority of displaced families are living in rented houses, while some with relatives and friends, two families are living in empty houses for free.

Response/Intervention: 53 IDP families were provided with food and NFIs by WFP and UNHCR, while 12 families were not recommended for humanitarian assistance.

[...] Western Region

Herat:

Situation/Causes of Displacement: Due to general deterioration of security, high presence of Taliban and AGEs intimidation, extortions/illegal taxation, forced recruitment and military operation, 375 families/2,038 individuals were displaced from Herat, Badghis, Ghor and Faryab (North) provinces to

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Guzara and Injil districts and Herat City. 59% were displaced during 2012 (Feb-Nov), while 41% in 2013 (Feb-Mar). [...]

- [ACCORD - Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, Anfragebeantwortung zu Afghanistan: Rekrutierung von Minderjährigen durch regierungsfeindliche Gruppen \[a-8321\], 29 March 2013](#)

[...] „Using children in suicide operations and training them for guerilla wars are some of the deliberate tactics of the Taleban and terrorists. In the past ten years, they kidnapped hundreds and thousands of children from southern and eastern parts of the country by threatening or using tricks. They took them [the kidnapped children] to their bases to brainwash and train in tribal areas and at religious schools, and then sent back to Afghanistan for war and destruction as a suicide attacker or armed force.“ (Daily Afghanistan, 4. Juni 2012) [...]

- [UNHCR, Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update UNHCR Afghanistan, March 2013](#)

[...] Key Protection Issues by Region
Northern Region

[...] Sar-e-Pul: 152 families/749 individuals, of Aymoq and Tajik ethnic origin were displaced from Sangcharak and Kohistanat districts of Sar-e-Pul to Sar-e-Pul center, as a result of insecurity, armed conflict, forced recruitment and illegal taxation by AGEs. They were displaced during October 2012 and February 2013. UNHCR, WFP monitors, NRC, Save the Children and DoRR jointly assessed their situation in January and February 2013. The majority of IDPs rented houses, while some were provided accommodation by the host communities and few joined their relatives/friends. Four Persons with Specific Needs (PSN) cases were identified among this group and are yet to be assisted. All IDP families were provided food and NFIs by WFP, UNHCR, NRC and Save the Children in February. [...]

- [UNHCR, Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update UNHCR Afghanistan, February 2013](#)

[...] Displacement Trends by Region 2013

Of the total known displacement in February 2013, the Western region reported the highest increase in the number of IDPs.

The key causes of displacement cited by IDPs was a general deterioration of the security due to high presence of Taliban/AGEs, military operation, armed conflict, forced recruitment, harassment and intimidation by AGEs and the Taliban and in-tribal disputes. The Northern region reported the second highest number of displacements mainly due to general insecurity, military operation, illegal taxation, forced recruitment and harassment by AGEs.

[...] Key Protection Issues by Region
Northern Region

Jawzjan: In February, UNHCR, WFP, IOM and DoRR [Department of Refugees and Repatriation] Jawzjan jointly assessed situation of 63 families (555 individuals) of Tajik and Uzbek ethnic origin who were displaced in October 2012 from Gurziwan, Belcheragh and Shirin Tagab districts of Faryab province to Eid Mahala settlement of Sheberghan City. They were displaced due to military operation, illegal taxation (food and money) and forced recruitment by Taliban. IDPs are living with host community and some in rented houses in Sheberghan. All families have been assisted with food and NFIs by UNHCR and WFP in coordination with DoRR Jawzjan.

[...] Western Region

[...] Ghor: Due to inter-tribal conflict, general insecurity, extortion, forced recruitment, intimidation and targeted persecution by AGEs, 301 families (1,692 individuals) of Tajik ethnic group were displaced from Shahrak, Dulania and Passaband, district of Ghor, and Jawnad, district of Badghis, to Chaghcharan center and Shahrak district. They were displaced between May to November 2012. All IDPs are living in either rented houses or in houses provided by the host community. 100 families among the group had been assisted with NFIs by World Vision. PRT assisted some families with NFIs as well. IDPs are due to receive food and NFIs by UNHCR and WFP shortly. [...]

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- [Giustozzi, Antonio, The Resilient Oligopoly: A Political-Economy of Northern Afghanistan 2001 and Onwards, December 2012, p. 50](#)

[...] The Insurgents

[...] The insurgents themselves are largely young men and boys, often uprooted from their communities and families through years of education in madrasas away from their homes - mostly, but not only, in Pakistan. Stories circulated in the past in the North about young men and boys in their mid-teens fighting with their father over decisions to join the Taliban, with the young recruit sometimes going as far as beating their fathers in protest. Whether true or not, the very fact that such stories circulate is noteworthy.

However, there are also signs that families resisting the recruitment of youngsters into the Taliban has been weakening in some areas, like some Faryabi communities. As a result, the flow of recruits towards the Taliban has accelerated. [...]

- [Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Country of Origin Information for Use in the Asylum Determination Process: Report from Danish Immigration Service's fact finding mission to Kabul, Afghanistan, 25 February to 4 March 2012, May 2012](#)

[...] 4. The Taliban

4.1. Recruitment by the Taliban

When asked about whether the Taliban recruit young people by force, AIHRC [Afghan Independent Human Right Commission] stated that there are no reports indicating that forced recruitment is taking place by the Taliban. AIHRC explained that most people join the Taliban voluntarily, but the Taliban put pressure on families in the regions where they are in control: they collect money and make them pay "zakat" (religious tax) by paying a fee on their crops.

UNHCR referred to a leaked ISAF report on the state of the Taliban in relation to the change of strategy of the Taliban. According to this report, the Taliban do not have difficulties in recruiting people for their force. They have many volunteers and there is a willingness to join the movement. The Taliban may recruit collectively in the villages by offering education to poor people's sons and by brain washing people. Considering the acceptance by the local population of the Taliban, it could be assumed that forceful recruitment is not widely taking place, however, UNHCR added that very little is known on this at the present time

[...] UNAMA explained that it happens in some areas of the country that the Taliban convinces poor people to give up their youngsters by telling them that they will be taken care of economically and that they will be given an education. Most of the recruited in these cases are under 18, according to UNAMA, and they are taken by the Taliban to madrasahs in Pakistan or madrasahs in insurgent controlled areas. UNAMA stated that recruitment usually happens village by village but also by the Taliban recruiters going family by family.[...]

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Useful sources to consult on the security situation in Afghanistan

Source	Type of source (information taken directly from website)	Website's search function
Afghanistan Analysis Network (AAN) publications	AAN is an independent non-profit policy research organisation which aims to bring together the knowledge, experience and drive of a large number of experts to better inform policy and to increase the understanding of Afghan realities. It provides thematic reports, policy briefings, discussion papers, occasional papers and blogs on Afghanistan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple search function which allows for keyword searches in publications
Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) reports	ANSO is an independent, non-profit project of the International NGO Safety Organisation providing free analysis and advice to humanitarians since 2002. It publishes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial reports: provides a country summary, NGO incident rates and AOG [Armed Opposition Group] incidents by province in Afghanistan Country reports: Quarterly statistical and analysis on NGO incident rates, AOG activity and criminality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No search function
Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit publications (AREU)	AREU is an independent research institute based in Kabul. AREU produces approximately 30 original publications per year in English, based on recent and ongoing research projects. AREU also produces a quarterly newsletter that lists newly available publications and information resources related to Afghanistan, and the annually updated <i>A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance</i> . In addition, AREU publishes: issues papers, synthesis papers, briefing papers, discussion papers, policy notes, briefs, case studies and translations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple search function which allows for keyword searches in publications
British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) resources	BAAG is a unique advocacy and networking agency which aims to support humanitarian and development programmes in Afghanistan. It provides key reports and briefing papers on Afghanistan from NGOs, think tanks, and governmental bodies. They are divided into the broad categories, including civil society, civilian casualties, corruption, development, economy, education, governance, health, human rights, peacebuilding, refugees, and women, amongst other topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple search function which allows for keyword searches in publications
Brookings Institution Afghanistan Index	The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, DC, USA. The Afghanistan Index is a statistical compilation of economic, public opinion and security data. It provides updated and historical information on various data, including crime, infrastructure, casualties, unemployment, Afghan security forces and coalition troop strength. The Index is updated every two weeks. (Brookings also tracks reconstruction and security in Iraq and Pakistan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No search function across the fortnightly indexes.

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Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Afghanistan publications	<p>The CSIS is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C, USA. It conducts research and analysis and develops policy initiatives. It regularly publishes reports on the current situation in Afghanistan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple search function which allows for keyword searches in publications
Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), Afghanistan pages	<p>The IWPR is a registered charity providing international news with the intention of giving a voice to people at the frontlines of conflict, crisis and change. The Afghanistan country pages provide recent news articles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple search function which allows for keyword searches and searches by phrases (“...”) • Filters searches by year
Pajhwok Afghan News	<p>Pajhwok Afghan News is Afghanistan’s largest independent news agency with headquarters in Kabul. News is provided on: governance, security & crime, accidents & disasters, health, education, migration, religion & culture, amongst other topics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple search function which allows for keyword searches in news articles • Organises searches by relevance, title or date
Radio Free Liberty/Radio Europe Afghanistan pages	<p>Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reports the news in 21 countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established. The Afghanistan country pages provides information in chronological order on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Latest news ○ Blog posts ○ Features & Commentary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple search function which allows for keyword searches and searches by phrases (“...”) • Allows searches within time frames • Refines searches by section
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)	<p>UNAMA is a political mission established by the Security Council in 2002 at the request of the Government to assist it and the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development in the country. UNAMA provides information on its activities, press statements, featured news and publications. Key documents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Security Council Resolutions ○ Reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council ○ Briefings of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Security Council ○ UNAMA Reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict ○ Reports of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict ○ UNAMA reports on women’s rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced search function which allows for searches by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Phrase; ALL words; At least one word ○ Limits search by categories and date range

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Useful sources to consult on the situation for internally displaced persons in Afghanistan

Source	Type of source (information taken directly from website)	Website's search function
Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit publications (AREU)	AREU is an independent research institute based in Kabul. AREU produces approximately 30 original publications per year in English, based on recent and ongoing research projects. AREU also produces a quarterly newsletter that lists newly available publications and information resources related to Afghanistan, and the annually updated <i>A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance</i> . In addition, AREU publishes: issues papers, synthesis papers, briefing papers, discussion papers, policy notes, briefs, case studies and translations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple search function which allows for keyword searches in publications
British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) resources	BAAG is a unique advocacy and networking agency which aims to support humanitarian and development programmes in Afghanistan. It provides key reports and briefing papers on Afghanistan from NGOs, think tanks, and governmental bodies. They are divided into the broad categories, including civil society, civilian casualties, corruption, development, economy, education, governance, health, human rights, peacebuilding, refugees, and women, amongst other topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple search function which allows for keyword searches in publications
IRIN News Afghanistan Country page	IRIN is a service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Humanitarian news and analysis by country and theme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country and thematic pages • Advanced search function which allows for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keyword searches (Exact Wording; All the Words; Any Words) ○ Limits searches by Services; Country; Theme; Report Type ○ Searches within time frames (From: To)
Relief Web Afghanistan country page	Relief Web is a specialised service of UNOCHA (see below) which provides reliable disaster and crisis updates and analysis to humanitarians. It provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-depth country profiles ○ Updates and analysis from more than 4,000 global information sources ○ Maps and info-graphics on crises and natural disasters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country and thematic pages • Advanced search function which allows for BOOLEAN searches (AND, OR, NOT) and searches for phrases (“...”) • Limits searches by: Country; organisation; theme; content format; feature; disaster type; vulnerable groups; publication date (by month); language
The ICRC Afghanistan country page	The ICRC, established in 1863, is an independent and neutral organisation which works worldwide to provide humanitarian help for people affected by conflict and armed violence and to promote the laws that protect victims of war. The ICRC Afghanistan country page includes sections on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Latest News 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country page • Advanced search function which allows for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keyword searches (Exact Wording; All the Words; Any Words)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facts and Figures ○ Highlights ○ Annual report ○ Reference documents 	
UNHCR, Afghanistan country page	<p>UNHCR is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. UNHCR country pages provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statistical snapshot ○ Latest news ○ UNHCR fundraising reports ○ Background, analysis and policy ○ Statistics ○ Maps ○ UNHCR research and evaluation papers on Afghanistan ○ Operational updates ○ Afghanistan policy papers (including Eligibility Guidelines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Country page does not have a search function ● UNHCR home page has an advanced search function which allows for BOOLEAN searches (AND, OR, NOT, ALL) and keyword by title ○ Limits searches by category, country of origin, country of asylum ○ Searches within time frames
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Afghanistan pages	<p>OCHA is the part of the United Nations Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. It operates the Humanitarian Response Portal for Afghanistan. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monthly humanitarian update reports ○ Incident reports ○ Thematic and reference maps ○ Information by cluster: Education; Emergency Shelter and NFIs; Food Security and Agriculture; Health; Nutrition; Water Sanitation and Hygiene; Early Recovery Networks; Information Management; Logistics; Protection ○ Media centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No search function