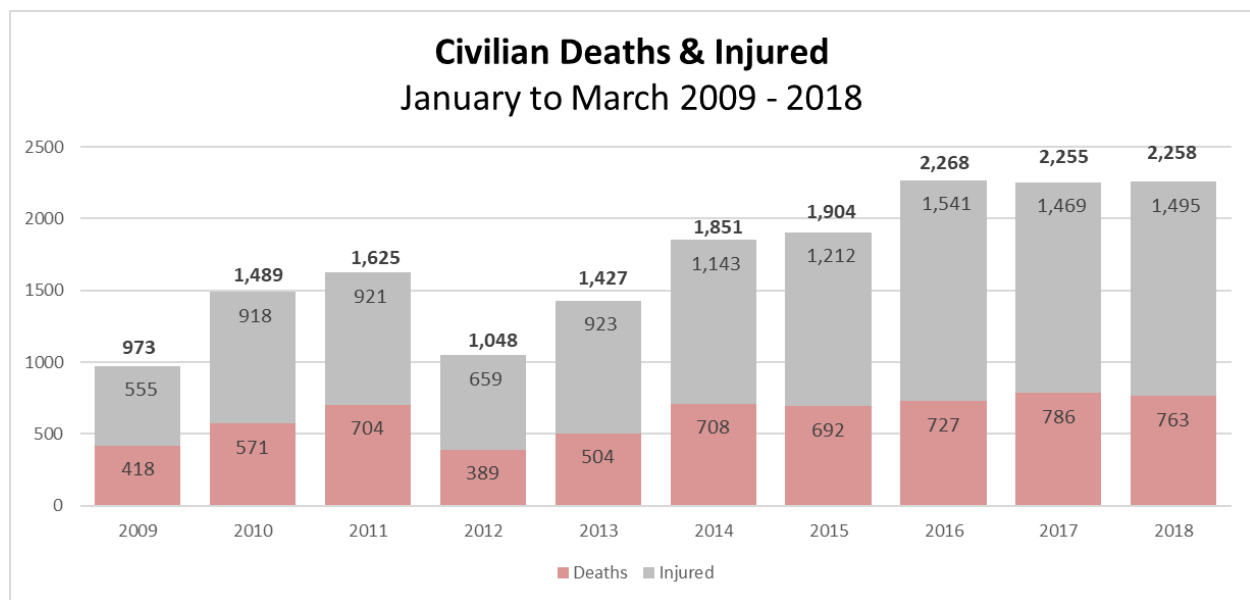




QUARTERLY REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT: 1 JANUARY TO 31 MARCH 2018

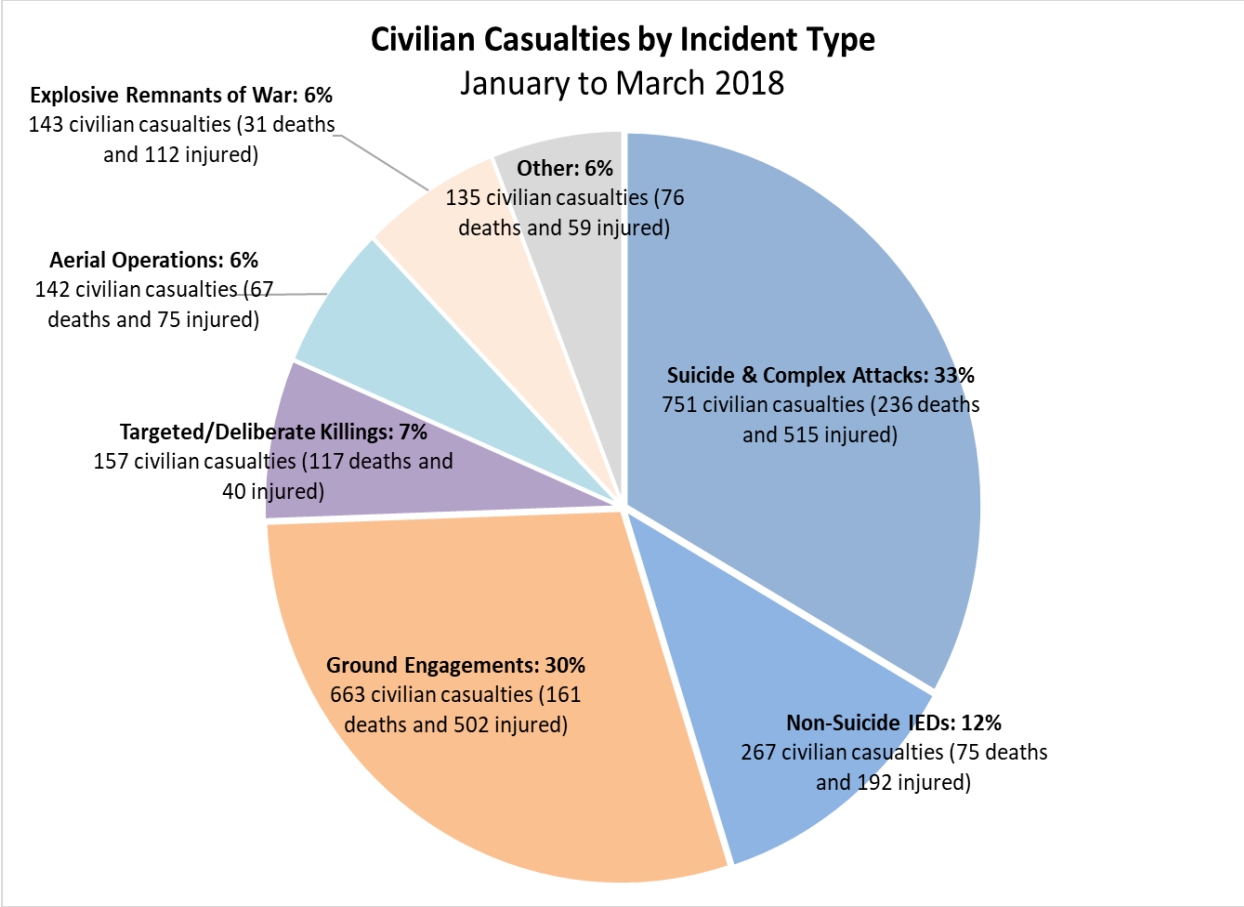
The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) renews its call upon parties to the conflict to increase efforts to protect civilians, as the number of civilians killed and injured by armed conflict in the first quarter of 2018 remained at the same high level recorded in 2017.

From 1 January to 31 March 2018, UNAMA documented 2,258 civilian casualties (763 deaths and 1,495 injured), reflecting similar levels of civilian harm documented in the first three months of 2017 and 2016.



Civilian casualties from suicide improvised explosive devices (IED) and complex attacks were the leading cause of civilian casualties, a new trend observed in 2018. Ground engagements were the second leading cause of civilian casualties, followed by targeted and deliberate killings, explosive remnants of war, and aerial operations, with those living in the provinces of Kabul, Helmand, Nangarhar, Faryab, and Kandahar most impacted by the conflict.

While the mission documented decreases in civilian casualties from some incident types, notably a 15 per cent reduction in casualties caused by ground engagements, as well as minor decreases from non-suicide IEDs and targeted and deliberate killings, UNAMA documented a disturbing increase in the number of civilian casualties caused by Anti-Government Element attacks that deliberately targeted civilians.



The armed conflict caused 217 women casualties (60 deaths and 157 injured) during the first quarter of 2018. Ground engagements caused more than half of the women casualties, and women also continued to suffer as a result of suicide and complex attacks and aerial operations. While overall women casualties decreased by 24 per cent, the mission notes with concern the continued high numbers of women casualties.

Children and Armed Conflict

UNAMA recorded 583 child casualties (155 deaths and 428 injured) as a result of the armed conflict in the first three months of 2018, an overall decrease of 23 per cent compared to the same period in 2017. The decrease mainly resulted from fewer children killed and injured during ground engagements, though this incident type remained the leading cause of child casualties. UNAMA reiterates concern that children again comprised the vast majority (89 per cent) of civilian casualties from explosive remnants of war. Child recruitment¹ by Anti-Government Elements remains a problem and the mission continued to receive disturbing reports of child recruits killed in military operations in the first quarter of 2018.

¹ As per international standards, a child is defined as under the age of 18 years.

Anti-Government Elements

UNAMA notes with concern that the number of civilian casualties attributed to Anti-Government Elements increased, including continued attacks targeting civilians. During the first three months of 2018, Anti-Government Elements caused 1,500 civilian casualties (511 deaths and 989 injured) a six per cent increase from the same period last year. UNAMA attributed 67 per cent of all civilian casualties to Anti-Government Elements, with 50 per cent attributed to Taliban, 11 per cent to *Daesh*/Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), four per cent to unidentified Anti-Government Elements (including self-proclaimed *Daesh*/ISKP), and two per cent to fighting between these Anti-Government Element groups.

Civilian casualties from attacks by Anti-Government Elements deliberately targeting civilians more than doubled compared to the first quarter of 2017, accounting for 39 per cent of all civilian casualties and 59 per cent of the civilian casualties attributed to Anti-Government Elements. Consistent with the disturbing trends observed in 2016 and 2017, Anti-Government Elements continued to direct attacks against the Shi'a population, causing 154 civilian casualties (49 deaths and 105 injured), nearly all from suicide and complex attacks claimed by *Daesh*/ISKP.

Suicide and complex attacks by Anti-Government Elements caused 751 civilian casualties (236 deaths and 515 injured), more than double the number of casualties recorded from this tactic in the same period in 2017 and comprising 33 per cent of all casualties. While civilian casualties from non-suicide IEDs decreased, the continued use of indiscriminate and unlawful pressure-plate IEDs by Anti-Government Elements caused 156 civilian casualties (49 deaths and 107 injured). While this represents a 34 per cent reduction compared to the same period last year, UNAMA notes with concern that children continued to comprise one-third of these casualties.

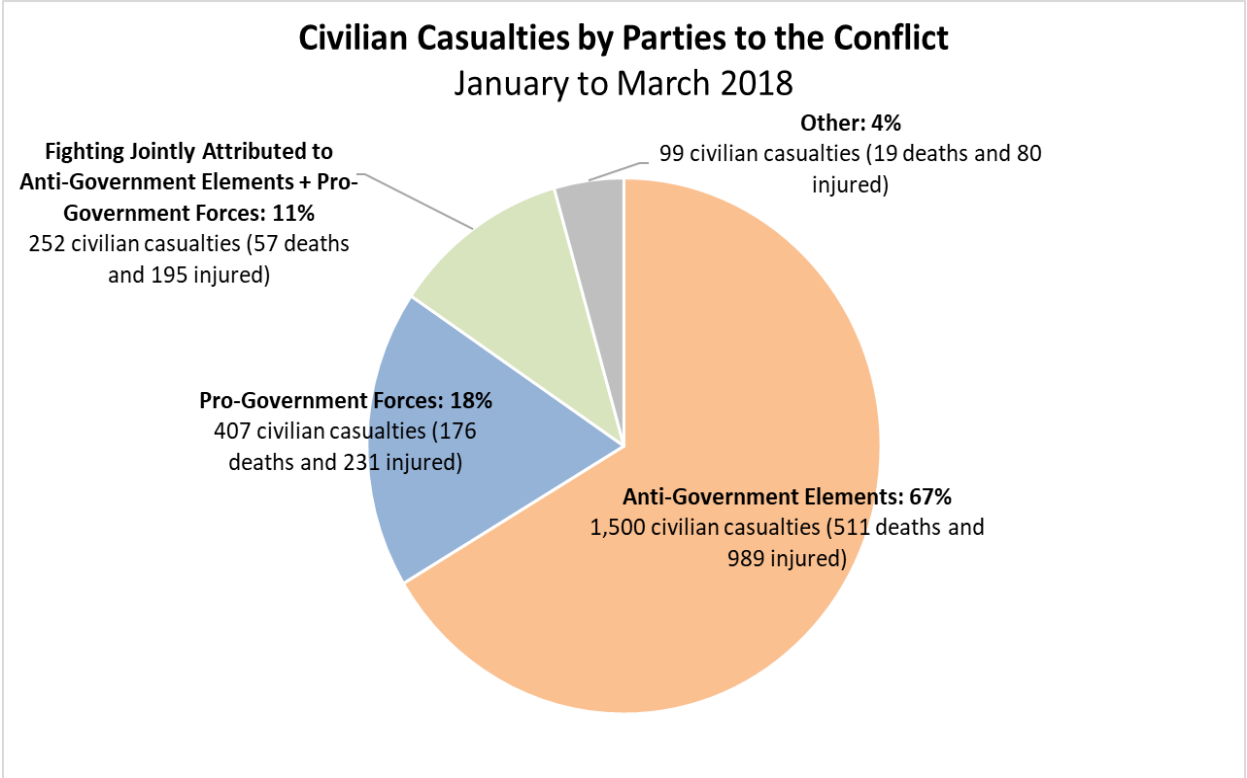
Pro-Government Forces

Continuing trends observed in 2017, civilian casualties attributed to Pro-Government Forces in the first quarter of 2018 reduced by 13 per cent to 407 civilian casualties (176 deaths and 231 injured). This reduction resulted mainly from the 36 per cent decrease in civilian casualties attributed to Pro-Government Forces during ground fighting. Pro-Government Forces caused 18 per cent of all civilian casualties in the first three months of 2018 (11 per cent by Afghan national security forces, two per cent by international military forces, four per cent by undetermined Pro-Government Forces, and one per cent by pro-Government armed groups).

Notwithstanding these trends, UNAMA reiterates its concern at continued high numbers of civilian casualties from aerial attacks, particularly among women and children, who comprised more than half of all civilian casualties resulting from these attacks. During the first three months of 2018, the mission documented 142 civilian casualties (67 deaths and 75 injured) from aerial attacks, similar to the number documented during the same period in 2017. The mission attributed 35 per cent of civilian casualties from air strikes to international military forces, 35 per cent to the Afghan Air Force, and the remainder to unidentified Pro-Government Forces.

Actions by the Government of Afghanistan to prevent civilian casualties continued, resulting in a reduction of civilian deaths and injuries from their operations, particularly from ground fighting.

UNAMA welcomes steps taken towards implementation of the National Policy on Civilian Casualty Mitigation and Prevention, and notes that on 9 February, the Government’s responsibilities pursuant to Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons concerning explosive remnants of war came into effect. As the Government now has obligations to track and mark locations of possible contamination from unexploded ordnance for potential removal or destruction, UNAMA encourages the international community to support the Government in meeting these obligations. The mission also recalls that international military forces must provide technical, financial, material or human resources assistance, and ensure that leftover devices are destroyed.



For more detailed information, please consult the UNAMA annual and midyear reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (available at: <http://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>).